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## A Good Start: A Book for Young Men (Part Two)

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the author of this epistle enrols him amongst the heroes of the faith, "of whom the world was not worthy."

My dear brothers, many of you have a tough battle to fight, and you can be victorious only by allying yourselves, like Gideon, with Divine almightiness. Do this, and persevere in doing it, with a clinging faith that will not let Him go ; and, though you be the weakest soldier in Christ's army, you have warrant of ultimate triumph.

Oh, repel with indignation the sophistry which finds an excuse for sin in the force of strong temptation, as if there were a necessity that you should fall. God is stronger than the devil after all.

Yours is a struggle in which, indeed, every coward is defeated, every craven is beaten ; but in which every true and valiant warrior is ultimately crowned with the laurels of victory. Amen.



*THE NORTHERN IRON.*

*"Shall iron break the northern iron and the steel?"*—JER. xv. 12.



## XI.

### *THE NORTHERN IRON.*

**T**HIS question, I apprehend, was in Jeremiah's days a common Hebrew proverb, and was used to signify that in the battle of life the strongest will win. In order to achieve a great purpose sufficient force must be applied.

You can't cut a diamond with a penknife, nor pierce a hole in the rock with a wooden dibble. If you have tough work to accomplish, you must have a sturdy instrument ; the implement of attack must be stronger than the substance to be broken.

The prophet Jeremiah was constitutionally what the world would call a weak man ; naturally timid and retiring, sad and sensitive, he seemed a very unlikely agent for the task he had to fulfil and the rough characters he had to deal with. Unlike that prophet of iron, Elijah, who could march right up to King Ahab, and tell him face to face of his wickedness and his doom, Jeremiah was naturally of a shrinking disposition, and would rather weep in silent solitude over the iniquities that prevailed. When called to the prophetic office, he trembled, and said, " Ah, Lord God ! behold I cannot speak, for I am a child."

Not at all, then, you would say, the man to denounce the sins of an idolatrous age, and lay the foundations of a national reformation. For, remember, his lot was cast in difficult times. The land of Judah was in sore trouble. Babylon and Egypt, the two great powers to the north-east



and south-west of Palestine, were in mortal struggle, involving Judah in their disasters ; whilst within the sacred territory a fierce strife was raging between the abettors of foreign idolatry and those who were still faithful to the worship of Jehovah. Jeremiah, you may truly say, was a man ill-fitted, apparently, to breast such stormy times. Let him live quietly in his little native village of Anathoth, and spend his days in prayer and devotion. (Anathoth lay on a slope to the north of Jerusalem, on the road that led to Damascus ; it is still pointed out to the traveller, and bears the modern name of Anâta.)

But, just because he was, to all human appearance, so feeble an instrument ; for this very reason, probably, was he chosen by Him who "selects the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty, and things which are despised, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are ; that no flesh should glory in His presence."

It pleased the Most High to make choice of this man to be His messenger to His people ; and straightway the aspen-leaf becomes a pillar of iron. For, listen to these words which, in the first chapter, the Lord addresses to him : "Thou, therefore, gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee : be not dismayed at their faces. For, behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls against the whole land. And they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee ; for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee." If his enemies should prove strong as oak, he should be as iron ; if they should be even as iron, he should be hardened by Divine grace into "northern iron and steel."

Although this metal was found in Palestine--and, you



remember, Moses had long ago described that land as "a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass,"—a better variety of it was obtained from the borders of the Euxine Sea, far to the north. Even at the northern extremity of the Holy Land itself, as in the neighbourhood of the border city of Dan, a superior ore was obtained; hence we find Ezekiel, in his apostrophe to Tyre, exclaiming, "Dan also, and Javan occupied in thy fairs with bright iron."

"Steel," strictly speaking, was unknown to the ancient Hebrews, and the word so rendered in our text undoubtedly means rather a hard alloy of copper; so it is given in the Septuagint; and this makes the text answer more exactly to the promise God had already given to His servant—"I will make thee an iron pillar and as brazen walls."

The Jews might treat him harshly and unkindly; the men of Anathoth might beat and endeavour to crush him, but he would prove to be of sterner stuff than they; he should be able to stand and resist all their blows; how vain and foolish would be their attempts against him! Shall the common ore of Judea crush the bright metal of Dan and Javan, or even the hard bronze of Tyre? or (to quote the ancient Hebrew proverb), "Shall iron break the northern iron and steel?"

Now this singular text may readily suggest to such a company of young men as I see before me some very practical thoughts.

The age wants men of mettle, firm, robust men, with the grit of principle in them, able to hold their ground against any odds; not flabby, flexible milksops, who have no mind of their own, no power of will, no decision of character, but strong, resolute fellows, who will stand to their guns, and rather die than yield.



We want as much as possible of "the northern iron and the steel." Somehow or other, as wise men were said to come from the East, so strong men are supposed to come from the North (and you will not expect me to contradict this notion). As we advance southward, we find more of the luxury that tends to enervate, and a climate less fitted to brace up the system, and call all its energies into exercise. There is not a doubt that, speaking literally, the finest iron comes from the north. I quote a reliable authority when I assert that Sweden yields the best quality in Europe, the celebrated mines of Dannemora in that country, which have been constantly worked since the 15th century, supplying a very valuable ore. And I will take leave to say that, judging from such specimens as I have known, Scandinavian character and Scandinavian Christianity are of as noble a texture as I have anywhere met with. Many of you, though not born so near to the North Pole, come from a higher latitude than this; I hope you will never forget that we expect you to be men of a strong physical backbone, unbending as iron, true as steel.

I would not omit reference even to the physical frame. The Duke of Wellington, when once looking on at the boys engaged in their sports in the playground at Eton, remarked, "It was there that the battle of Waterloo was won!" Too long religion was associated with pale, lanky dyspeptics, afflicted with every form of invalidism, so that even Pascal observed that "disease is the natural state of Christians." Thank God that hateful fallacy is now exploded. The Church of Christ to-day wants strong, erect, full-chested, broad-shouldered men, men of vigorous constitution, high animal spirits, and dauntless courage, who will not be afraid to speak with the enemy in the gate. You should do all that you can to possess and to maintain a conscious and



abundant physical vigour. Bodiculture, if we may coin such a word, is a thing you ought by no means to neglect. See to it that, in the most literal sense, you have plenty of iron in your blood. This metal is an essential constituent in the blood-corpuscles of all vertebrate animals, and I believe that a man weighing say ten stone, should have at least forty grains weight of iron in his blood. With few exceptions, the grand and mighty men of history—famous statesmen, theologians, orators, warriors—have been men of robust physique. Brougham, Peel, Lyndhurst, Palmerston, Bismarck, Gladstone, what wonderful powers of endurance have they exhibited—the brain full of activity, the nerves healthy and strong, the digestion sharp, the sinews and muscles all in thorough working order. Although none of us are exactly hyperborean, we have all grown up sufficiently far from the equator to experience the hardening effects of a rough and changeful climate; and when we look at the puny and languid mortals of the sunny South, we may judge there are worse things after all than the bleak east winds of England. The brave old Scottish clansmen had almost a horror of physical comfort; like sturdy Macdonald of Keppoch, who, when camping out one cold night with a portion of his clan, arose and kicked from under his son's head a pillow of snow which the youth had piled up, declaring that the young rascal by his effeminate indulgence would bring disgrace on the whole clan. It used to be imagined—it was almost taken for granted—that a religious young man was necessarily a soft, boneless creature, a sort of hot-house plant that would wither up before the first chilling gust. So far from being of iron, he was generally called a "muff," I suppose because that is about the softest thing known. It would be hardly fair to the other sex to allege that he was half a girl, for some young



ladies show a wonderful strength of character ; but he was certainly unmanly, or supposed to be so. I am glad to say that the times have completely changed in this respect. Any man with half an eye can see that it is amongst Christian young men you will find the noblest specimens of the race.

I can truly say that the most finely developed young fellows I ever met with, the most splendid athletes, the most active and successful in outdoor games and exercises, as well as the most firm in purpose, are the men who have the fear of God before them. And this is only what we ought to expect. The writings of Paul abound with illustrations drawn from the life of the soldier, or of the Roman gladiator, teaching that the followers of Christ should exhibit the highest form of physical manliness ; and to every young man, no less than to Timothy, does the Apostle say, "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."

It is just possible, of course, to go a little too far in our eagerness to build up a powerful physique. Mr. Goschen recently expressed the hope that he would see some abatement in what he called the "mania of muscularity."

A few weeks ago I myself witnessed gymnastic performances by the members of a certain Young Men's Christian Association, that I defy any professional acrobat to surpass, and that reminded me of the monkey-house in the Zoological Gardens. I could not help wondering whether there was corresponding intellectual agility, and whether there was not some danger of forgetting that, as Mr. Lowell says, "In the scale of destinies, brain weighs more than brawn."

There is little likelihood, however, of any of you erring in that direction ; my fear is, that most of you make the opposite mistake. The London life of many a clerk is not



favourable to physical vigour. A close atmosphere, sedentary habits, and long hours, will soon tell upon a youth, especially if he has come from the country. Even "the northern iron and the steel" may degenerate into a very plastic metal. "Take warning from an old student," says that northern blade, Professor Blackie, "and let every man consider that his blood shall be on his own head, if he neglect to use, with a firm purpose, as much care in the preservation of his health as any good workman would do in keeping his tools sharp, or any good soldier in having his powder dry." Although I am far from regarding Professor Huxley as a safe guide for young men, I can thoroughly agree with him when he says that a man should be "so trained in youth that his body is the ready servant of his will, and does with ease and pleasure all the work that, as a mechanism, it is capable of; and his intellect a clear logic-engine, with all its parts of equal strength and in smooth working order, ready like a steam-engine to be turned to any kind of work, whether to spin a gossamer, or to forge an anchor."

Show yourselves capable men, full of power for hard, honest work; not men of tin, such as whirl round on wind-vanes, and never accomplish anything, but men of "northern iron" or Bessemer steel, determined to carry through the task assigned you. In the words of Oliver Wendell Holmes,—

"Be firm; one constant element of luck  
Is genuine, solid, old Teutonic pluck.  
Stick to your aim; the mongrel's hold will slip,  
But only crowbars loose the bull-dog's grip;  
Small though he looks, the jaw that never yields  
Drags down the bellowing monarch of the fields!"

But I must go a great deal further than this. I am



addressing myself to Christian young men ; and must remind you that your Master requires of you that you "set your faces as a flint" against every form of error and iniquity. To any young man who has come up from the country to live in the metropolis, I say, may God make you as "an iron pillar and a brazen wall," or you haven't a chance. The shafts of ridicule will be pitched at you ; the faith of your fathers will be laughed at ; your notions of purity will be held up to scorn ; every effort will be tried to bully you, and cajole you into doing as your neighbours do ; and if you are not made of sterner stuff than many lads around us, away all your principles will go, and down you will hurry to the pit of destruction. Well, how is it to be ? Are you to stand to your colours, and resist to the death ? Are you to hold your own against world, flesh, and devil ? Remember—God's grace helping you—you can do it. Say not, "I am a child," for Christ in you can make you stronger than every foe. "As an adamant, harder than flint" (said the Lord to Ezekiel, when he was surrounded by a scoffing people) "have I made thy forehead ; fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks." Specially in your enjoyments must you be upon your guard. In the presence of certain temptations you have need to be "fenced in triple steel." Oh, beware of so-called amusements that slope downwards to the gambling hell, the drinking saloon, the house of shame ; and with an iron resolve vow that you will neither taste, touch, nor handle.

The other day, when you were pressed to go to a place of unlawful pleasure ; when Brown wanted you to have a glass with him ; or Smith coaxed you to stake only a small sum on a bet, were you pliant as putty, or resolute like "northern iron and steel" ? "Be not afraid of their faces," said the Lord to His ancient prophet. He did not say, "of



their swords and spears," for many a man can meet a dagger or a bludgeon more easily than a look. When your companions "make faces" at you, turn to you the face of contempt, or the face of ridicule, then it is that you show what kind of metal you are made of.

A man's religion, to tell the truth, is worth nothing unless it proves an intolerable nuisance to companions who want to do wrong. If you are compelled, as some of you are, to mix with a bad lot, and they find you very agreeable company, it does not say much for your principles or your courage. If the business you are in compels you to wink at systematic fraud, and you are content to do so, there is not much of the "northern iron" in your nature. It was a noble thing that young fellow did, who last month listened here to my sermon on Christian integrity, and went straight on Monday morning to give up his situation, because his conscience would no longer allow him to participate in a business which was built upon a system of wholesale fraudulence.

A perfect stranger, he called upon me to tell me the course he had pursued. At my request, he let his employers clearly know why he left them, and I am happy to say he has now found another opening, where, with a clear conscience, he can earn his living. Oh, be true to your principles, young men, whatever troubles may threaten; your determination being like that of the brave Nelson when he exclaimed, "Victory, or—Westminster Abbey!" It's no use to mince matters here in London; as a young man said the other day, "It's out and out for Christ, or away to the devil!"

Then this Christian audacity must not only be negative, but positive and aggressive. "The northern iron and the steel" must be able to pierce the strongest ironsides of the enemy. If in a large city house you are the only man that



fears God, boldly avow your profession, and make the force of your piety felt all through the establishment. Vow you will never suffer profanity to go unrebuked, will never laugh at obscene or blasphemous jests, and that you will boycott and blast with righteous scorn any scoundrel who utters unclean sentiments in your presence.

Clad in the armour of Christian faith and purity, one true man is more than a match for fifty of the devil's servants ; a good conscience wraps him in a panoply of steel.

If God has called you to any work, oh, man, do it, if you die in doing it. The obstacles may be hard, but God can make you harder still. Who could have believed that the Alps would have been pierced, made as that mountain ridge is of one of the hardest of rocks ? Yet the tunnel of Mont Cenis tells us that there is a force still mightier than that rock, and a subterranean passage has been bored for the commerce of the nations. May God give to every one of you invincible courage, and resolute determination in the battle with sin.

Some of you, probably, want to be hardened a bit ; and by a process not unlike that used with iron and steel, must this be effected. Ay, perhaps you have already known something of the blast-furnace ; you have felt the sudden alternations by which the great Master tempers and toughens the metal He is to employ ; this may explain disappointments and trials which have fallen to your lot. Perhaps it has been shattered health, or unjustly injured reputation, or loss of a situation, or the treachery of a friend, or the death of dear relatives, or something different from all these ; but it has been a sore time with you. Like David, you can say, "We came through fire and through water." Well, believe that all this discipline has been sent to qualify you for better and more effective service.

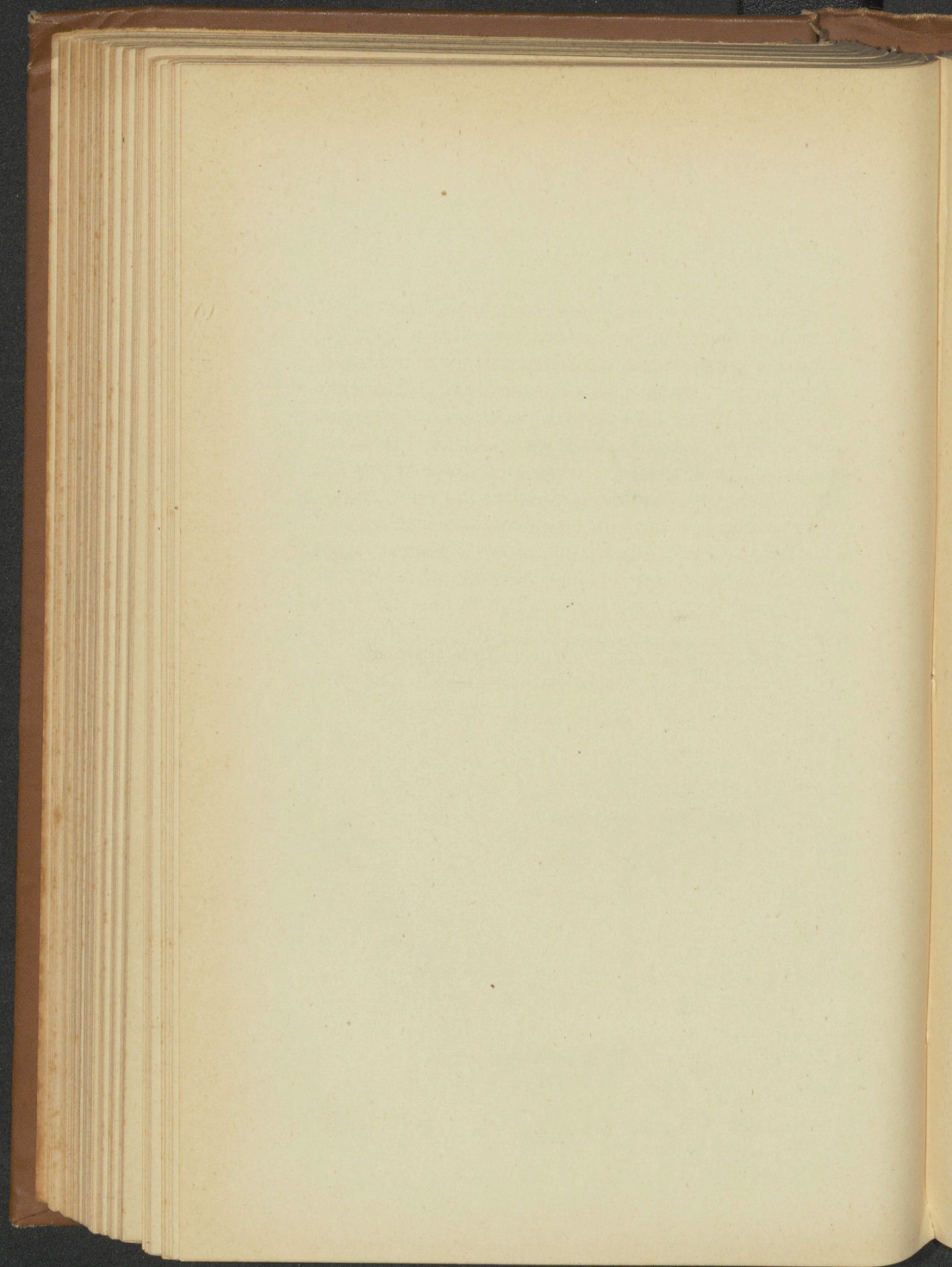


I wonder how much of the genuine metal we have got here?

The country needs you, young men, every one of you. We are told by many that perilous times are not far off; that trouble is looming in the future, that influences are at work which may, ere long, shake the nations of Europe to their centre. Where does the true security and protection of Britain lie? Not in her military equipment; not in her arsenals, and guns, and ships of war. Oh, no; but in her body of intelligent, Christian, high-principled young men.

Give us but this, the rising youth of our land brought under the power of a genuine and manly Christianity, then no fear of England; then, in Milton's words, she is "fenced in triple steel," or, to quote the northern bard,—

"Though crowns and coronets be rent,  
A virtuous populace shall rise the while,  
And stand, a wall of fire, around our much-loved isle."





*THE BRASS-FOUNDER OF TYRE.*

*"He was a widow's son of the tribe of Naphtali, and his father was a man of Tyre, a worker in brass; and he was filled with wisdom, and understanding, and cunning to work all works in brass. And he came to king Solomon, and wrought all his work."—I KINGS vii. 14.*



## XII.

### *THE BRASS-FOUNDER OF TYRE.*

**M**Y subject is Hiram, the brass-founder; and you young gentlemen who sit for six hours of the day with your pens behind your ears must not curl up your lips because you are going to hear about a working man; for there is many a wholesome lesson for every one of us to learn from this honest, industrious, and skilful artificer of Tyre.

True, it is not very much that we are told about him, but we know enough to awaken our admiration and respect, and I shall be disappointed if we do not find the subject so stimulating that we shall each go home resolved to do our work, whatever it be, more thoroughly and efficiently than we ever have done before.

Solomon was now proceeding to carry out his late father's pious purpose, to erect in Jerusalem a temple worthy of the God of Israel. "The house that is to be builded for the Lord," David had said, "must be exceeding magnificent, of fame and of glory throughout all countries." I suppose there is no building of the ancient world which has excited so much attention as that splendid sanctuary on Mount Moriah.

Its internal construction and arrangements have been the subject of controversy amongst countless antiquarians, and architects of every country have laboured to reproduce its



forms. Whilst, in the huge mass of limestone rock on which Jerusalem stands there was an ample supply of stone for the edifice, it was at once found needful to send to a distance for the timber and brass; and the city of Tyre being in the vicinity of the forests of Lebanon and the copper mines of Phœnicia—its king, moreover, being a friendly neighbour—Solomon sent to that wealthy seaport for the material that was required.

Nor this only, but acting on the instructions of his father David, he looked to the same quarter for the skilled labour that was required. Jerusalem had already afforded evidence of the competency of these workmen, for they had erected the Royal palace; as we read in the 2nd Book of Samuel, "And the king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and cedar trees, and carpenters, and masons, and they built David an house." So excellent had their work been that it was thought desirable to secure their services again in connection with the far greater undertaking; and in writing to the northern monarch Solomon frankly acknowledged the superiority of his workmen, saying, "for thou knowest that there is not amongst us any that can skill to hew timber like unto the Sidonians."

In addition to carpenters and masons, it was also needful to secure a skilful worker in brass; and amongst the Hebrews this would be still more difficult to find; so the story brings us to the words of my text: "And king Solomon sent, and fetched Hiram out of Tyre. He was a widow's son of the tribe of Naphtali, and his father was a man of Tyre, a worker in brass: and he was filled with wisdom, and understanding, and cunning to work all works in brass. And he came to king Solomon, and wrought all his work."

Now, the first thing I have to observe about this superior artisan, is, that he was a foreigner, and a stranger to the



true God. As to his nationality, we are told, both here and in the First Book of Chronicles, that his father was "a man of Tyre"; but whilst in the latter book it is stated that his mother was a woman of the daughters of Dan, it is here asserted that she was of the tribe of Naphtali. Such apparent discrepancies only add to the naturalness, and confirm the authenticity of the Bible. For, either her own mother belonged to the tribe of Dan, and her father to Naphtali, in which case she herself belonged to both; or, more probably, the "Dan" spoken of in this chapter is not the tribe, whose territory was further south on the west of Ephraim, but the city of that name, which was situated on the extreme north of the land of Naphtali, and indeed was the most northern point of all Palestine, just as Beersheba was the most southern; hence the familiar phrase so often met with, "from Dan even to Beersheba."

Hiram's mother, then, was strictly speaking a Hebrew, though—residing as she had done on the very confines of Syria—she had probably acquired many of the notions and habits of that people.

Tyre is a very ancient Phœnician city, and was at an early time famous, not only for its wealth and luxury, but also for its worship of Melkarth or Hercules, whose temple there was believed to be the oldest sanctuary in the world. "A man of Tyre," therefore, was to Jewish ears a synonym for an idolater and a heathen.

It is remarkable, that, apparently with the Divine approval, the son of an uncircumcised Tyrian should be selected as foreman to superintend the finest work needed for the Holy Temple of Jehovah.

God uses the instrumentality even of men who know Him not to carry forward His purposes. To Hiram He might have said, as He afterwards did to Cyrus, king of



Persia, "I girded thee, though thou hast not known Me." Such men are like the external buttresses of a Gothic building : though not within it, they minister to its support.

St. Paul clearly teaches us that, in secular affairs, in matters of mercantile business, we are not to dissociate ourselves from unbelievers ; " Else," he adds, " we must needs go out of the world." We are, our Lord says, to " make to ourselves friends of the unrighteous mammon"; and nothing is more opposed to the whole spirit of His teaching than the narrow and self-righteous attitude of those who will hardly have even commercial dealings with persons that have not the same way of thinking as themselves.

Away with such mean and miserable action ! It is neither manly, nor charitable, nor Christian.

But, apart from the religious question altogether, the fact that foreign skill was imported into Jerusalem is very significant.

I dare say the Hebrew workmen did not like it at all. I dare say they were inclined to " strike" at the notion of fetching this artisan from Tyre. Had they not plenty of brass-founders and coppersmiths in their own city, without bringing foreign hands from Phœnicia ? It was only the superior excellence of Hiram's workmanship that led the king to take this step.

He had no wish to oust his own people ; but he wanted the work done to the highest possible perfection. He looked to quality of labour. Jerusalem must learn from Tyre. Let the Jewish workmen see to it that they won't be beaten by the foreigner.

The question comes before ourselves in England in a very practical way.

Both as regards clerks and artisans, our young men will be more and more put upon their mettle. If, in the ac-



quiring of languages, and steady application to work, and knowledge of science, and improvement of tools, and so forth, you allow your Continental brothers to outstrip you, you must not be surprised if they slip into berths and situations which you had coveted. The President of the British School of Pharmacy remarked last week that "the German pharmacist leaves his English brother really nowhere."

Well might Sir Henry Roscoe ask why it is that so much more is done on the Continent than we in England can boast of, in the preparation of rare drugs, and in the discovery of new ones. I suspect it is the old story of the discreditable neglect in this country of technical education. At the time of the Exhibition of 1851, and indeed long before, it had been urged as a reproach against our English artisans, that they were ignorant of the principles of art and science, and consequently of their application to the work in which they were engaged. Our brethren on the Continent were more "wise in their generation." They took care that, generally, wherever a manufactory existed, there was freely placed at the disposal of the artisans the means of rendering them well informed; so that workmen were intelligent operators, and not mere machines.

Well, it is never too late to mend; and the effort now being made to supply the metropolis with efficient technical schools is worthy of all encouragement and support. If we do not keep at least abreast of our neighbours in knowledge and skill, we must not complain though the Hiramis are brought over from other countries, and push us to one side. At the same time, let there be reciprocity. It is not fair that the immigration be all on one side; that desirable posts in this country be filled up by foreigners, whilst they on their part take good care to exclude the English.

If there is to be free trade in labour, let it be inter-



national. It will hardly do for us to open our doors freely to strangers if they shut their doors against us ; and, as it seems to me, the present retrograde policy of France—inspired as it is by deep-rooted jealousy of her neighbours, and that constant dread of war which is the curse of Europe—merits the emphatic condemnation of all true statesmen.

Secondly, the next thing I notice about this man is, that he was a widow's son. Now, that is not mentioned here without a purpose. His father had been in the same line of business, "a worker in brass ;" but he had been taken away early ; so that young Hiram had to be the support of his mother ; and I can believe that the very fact of this responsibility being thrown upon him, would stir him up to cultivate his powers, and employ his energies, so that he might still keep a roof over her dear head. It has often been so ; and I can conceive of no more shameful case, or one more fitted to fill a man's soul with bitterest remorse, than where the opposite result has followed ; and over the very coffin of his father, a youth, now freed from restraint, has abandoned himself to a life of indolence and selfish pleasure, bringing down the grey hairs of his mother with sorrow to the grave. My dear young men, you who have buried one parent, be kinder than ever to the one that survives ; and if it is your mother that is left, remember, she has suffered the greatest of all earthly losses, and do your utmost to fill the place of him that is gone.

But I have a notion that Hiram's mother is specially mentioned here and elsewhere for this reason : though brought up in Dan at the northern extremity of Palestine, she was one of the chosen race, and doubtless was no stranger to the knowledge of Israel's God. I presume she had not been decidedly religious in her youth, else she would not have married a man of Tyre ; but perhaps,



when her earthly support was taken away, she returned to the God of her fathers, and was now the more eager to bring up her son in the true faith. A true daughter of Naphtali, she "gave goodly words"; and hence her memory was fondly cherished.

Oh, who can gauge a mother's, especially a widowed mother's, influence! I think I see her proud—if such a pride was permissible—that her own son is to have a share in building the Temple of the Lord.

Thirdly, I must have a word with you about his trade. He was brought up to his father's business. A highly respectable one it was. The text calls him "a worker in brass"; but this is scarcely correct. The composition to which we give the name of brass, and which is a mixture of copper and zinc (in the proportion, I believe, of two-thirds of the former, and one third of the latter), was not invented until the thirteenth century. Where the word occurs in Scripture it ought generally to be rendered "copper," which was a metal much used by the ancients and abounded in certain parts of Palestine.

Canaan was described by Moses as "a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass"; but as brass is an artificial composition, and is never found in a natural state, there can be no doubt that it is copper that is intended. In some places, however, bronze would probably be the more correct translation; for there is historical evidence that this alloy of copper and tin was in use at a very early period. It was employed for a great variety of purposes: for musical instruments; for armour and weapons of war; for chains and fetters; for mirrors; and for ornaments of all kinds. The word "copper," curiously enough, occurs only once in our English Bible, if you except the reference in one of Paul's Epistles, to



"Alexander the coppersmith"; the passage I refer to being in the Book of Ezra. But it is morally certain that in our text, and in the hundreds of places where the word "brass" is found, it stands, either for copper in its pure form, or for a composition made of copper and tin. The latter I think the more likely; and I may say that the men of Tyre and Phœnicia have always been renowned as workers in bronze. The trade exists in those regions to this day; and when there I brought away with me a small vessel of this material as an interesting memento of my visit. Hiram's work must have been on an enormous scale; he was a founder as well as a finisher, and appears to have been a very genius in his trade.

Amongst the articles which he cast were two magnificent pillars, which, not including pedestals or capitals, were thirty-two feet long! a "molten sea," or huge open vase, measuring eighteen feet in diameter; as also twelve oxen or Assyrian bulls: and we are told in the forty-sixth verse, "that in the plain of Jordan were these cast, in the clay ground between Succoth and Zarthan." This enormous foundry was sufficiently distant both from Tyre and from Jerusalem to secure that neither city would be annoyed by the smoke and copper fumes; whilst the marl and sand with which the Jordan valley abounds would be of the utmost value in the process.

But Hiram was equal to fine and delicate work as well; chains and lily work of exquisite design; rows of pomegranates and festoons of leaves; along with smaller vessels, such as bowls and candlesticks; all came in perfection from his magic hand.

See what industry and application can do. This orphan lad of Tyre, by dint of personal diligence and attention to his work, advances step by step, until, more than any



other man's, his name is identified with the building of the grandest temple ever reared to Jehovah's Name.

He followed his father in the business ; just the thing that some vain puppies will not deign to do. Not for the world would they wear an apron, or soil their white hands. Whence in all the world did the insane notion come, that a young man apprenticed to a handicraft is socially inferior to one who sits on a high stool with a desk before him ? How is it that, rather than put their hands to honest work, so many lads would earn a scanty pittance as clerks, or starve in one of the over-crowded professions ?

One lesson that Hiram teaches you is, not to be ashamed to throw off your best coat, and buckle on up to the elbows in some useful industry. The conventional notion that trade is vulgar is one of the silliest ideas that can take possession of the mind. I have fifty times more respect for the industrious mechanic, the carpenter, gasfitter, boiler-maker, brassfounder, or other active artisan, than I have for the perfumed young gentleman who hangs idly about his father's house, because he can find no opening to suit his refined and cultivated taste. It is at least as honourable to make bread, or clothing, or furniture, or watches, or locks, or steam-engines, as it is to negotiate the purchase of a house, or to arrange for the transfer of stocks.

It is the man that determines the dignity of the calling ; I believe that Hiram would have been a genius and a gentleman anywhere.

More than that, may we not hope he became a devout worshipper of Israel's God ? May we not hope that the influence of his widowed mother, and the teaching he could not fail to listen to in Jerusalem, would lead him up to a knowledge of the true God ? Is there not a significance in the very names he gave to those two noble pillars of



bronze which he cast for the porch of the Temple? the one being "Jachin," and the other "Boaz"; words which respectively mean "He shall establish," and "In it is strength"; as though he would say, "That only is strong which is established in the strength of the Lord."

Think ye not that he was a man scrupulously honourable in business, and blameless in outward life, who was feeling his way towards the light? And if so, what a contrast between him and another of the same trade in Paul's day, who, having seemingly embraced the truth, cast away both faith and a good conscience, and "greatly withstood the apostle's words"!

I say, rather a thousand times be a Hiram than an Alexander; the coppersmith of Tyre than the coppersmith of Ephesus!

Fourthly, I must have you notice the thoroughness of Hiram's work. Over and over again we are informed that what he took in hand he finished. Moreover, the forty-fifth verse tells us that all the vessels he made were of "bright" metal, or, as the Chaldee version has it, "good brass"; he used only first-class material; and so trustworthy was he, that, as the historian says, the king provided it without counting. Well, what a lesson to our London workmen! What a contrast to many of them, who seem generally to leave half-done any job they begin, to use poor material, and to waste a good deal even of that! The time was, when the foreigner said, "I can trust English-made articles to be genuine, and therefore I deal with English makers;" but now, too often, the foreigner shrugs his shoulders at the mention of English goods, and directs his praise to Belgian and other manufactures. The names of Watt, Stephenson, Brunel, Arkwright, Brassey, Nasmyth, are synonyms for solidity and thoroughness, and excellence of



workmanship; but men of this stamp are now few and far between; need we wonder then that various branches of trade are leaving us, and going to other lands?

It is said that Thomas Carlyle, who wrote so fiercely against what he called "the gospel of shoddy," was one day immensely gratified by being told of a tanner whose manufacture was remarkable for its excellence, and who explained the fact by saying, "If I had not read Carlyle, I should never have made my leather so good!"

I do not deny that Mr. Ruskin carries some of his conceits a ridiculous length; but he will always be honourably remembered as an inveterate enemy to the whole kingdom of "sham"; and it were well if he were more widely listened to. Plain copper is better any day than pinchbeck; and honest deal than sham mahogany. The principle, mind you, applies to the whole round of human occupation, and bears as much upon the professions as upon mechanical trades. Whatever is worth doing is worth doing well. A young law student was complaining to Daniel Webster that the legal profession was so overcrowded a man had not a chance. "Always plenty of room at the top!" was the laconic reply. And the way to get to the top is to be always thorough and always reliable.

This brings me to my fifth and last point about Hiram, namely, his success.

Step by step he rose, until, in all the coasts of Sidon, there was not so famous an artificer as he. The king himself took him by the hand and singled him out as the best workman in his dominions.

I do not know whether he gave him his own name or not. "Hiram" was a common name in Tyre, from royalty downwards; so we must not make too much of this, but, clearly, he was in favour in high places. And,



observe the last clause of our text: "he came to king Solomon, and wrought all his work." Higher honour he could not aspire to. The reputation of Israel's monarch had gone out into all the world, and many a man, I am sure, envied Hiram his well-merited distinction.

Success in this world may not always crown a career of righteousness, but such a career is the safest road to it.

I read the other day, with much interest, a book, printed as yet only for private circulation, and entitled, "The Story of my Life," by the late Leone Levi.

Dr. Levi, you all know, was Professor of Commercial Law in King's College, and the highest existing authority upon Statistical Science and International Jurisprudence. During nearly forty years it was my privilege to enjoy his intimate acquaintanceship, to mark his steady progress from obscurity to fame, and to admire, not only his intellectual gifts, but the modesty and simplicity of his character, especially as it was moulded by a genuine piety. Like Hiram, he belonged in his youth to another nation and another religion; and like him he steadily rose, by dint of quiet energy and perseverance, till he occupied a high step of the ladder, and was received by potentates and princes.

The enemy of all sham and pretence, he built up a European reputation on a basis of solid work and worth, and was not without his reward. That was a red-letter day, when, to his plain lodging in Charterhouse Square, there came a summons from the late Prince Consort to attend at Windsor Castle, and receive a Royal acknowledgment of his work on international law. His fellow-boarders, he tells us, were a tall, lean Methodist minister, a Church of England curate, small and very infirm, and one or two commercial travellers. When the day arrived for his going

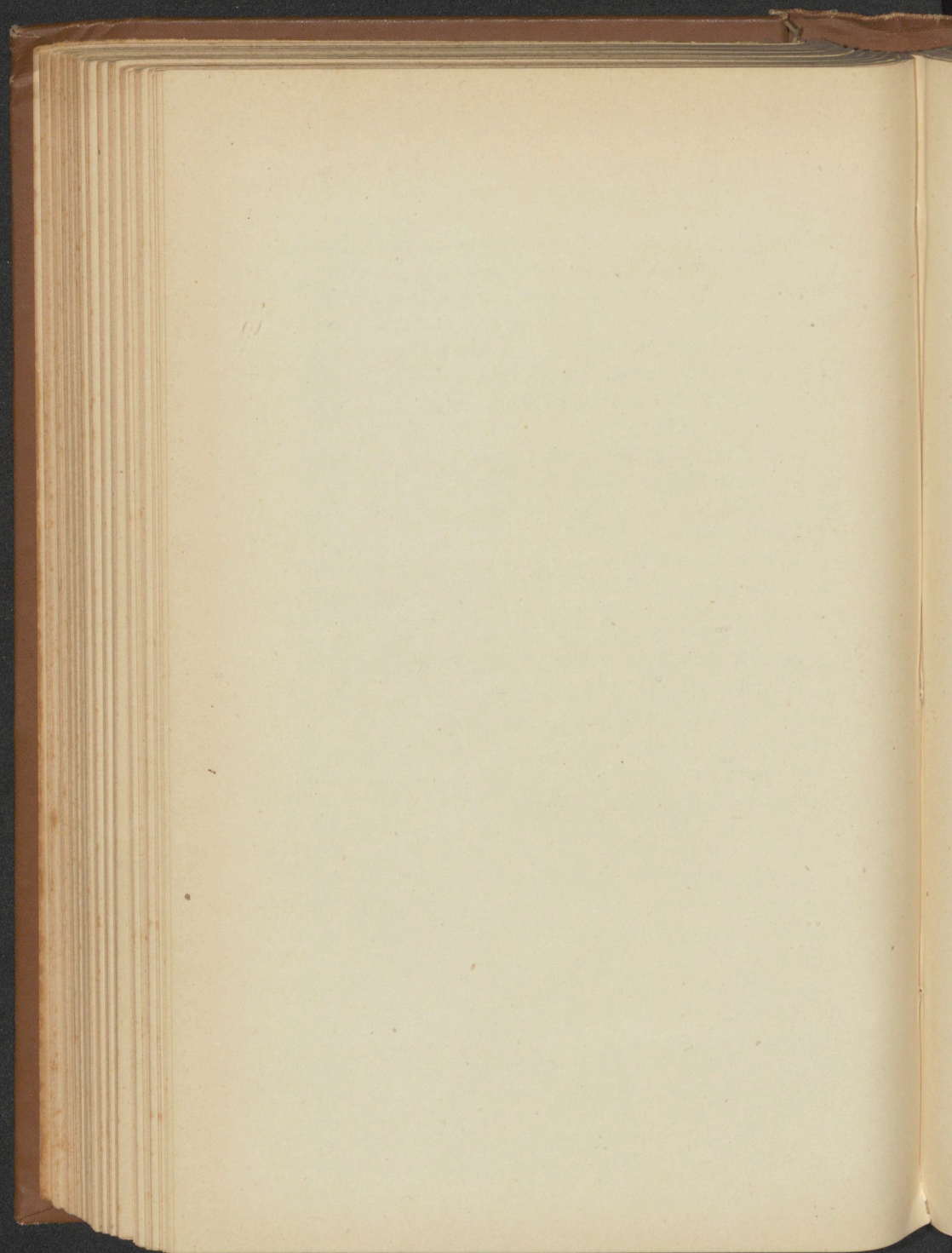


to Windsor, every one of them waited to see him off, each offering whatever service he could render; the good landlady and her three servants adding to the group. When all was ready, and a cab for Paddington was at the door, the tall Methodist minister, waving his hat, shouted out as the vehicle drove off, "Seest thou a man diligent in business; he shall stand before kings! he shall not stand before mean men."

Well, it may not be the destiny of all of you to be summoned to Windsor Castle, but I trust that a yet nobler dignity is in store for you, even to stand before the King of kings in glory.

I think it is good Matthew Henry who says that Hiram united the piety of an Israelite with the skill of a foreigner; the head of a Tyrian with the heart of a Hebrew; and why should not both go together? Why should not God be served with the best? Ay, why should not every one of you, even to the humblest artisan hearing me, aspire to have a hand in building the temple of God, to wit, that spiritual, that living temple that shall endure for ever? First, give your hearts to Christ, and then consecrate all your talents to His service. Amen.







*ELIEZER OF DAMASCUS.*



*"O Lord God, I pray Thee, send me good speed this day."*—GEN.  
xxiv. 12.



### XIII.

#### *ELIEZER OF DAMASCUS.*

SOME time ago, being in the company of a friend who had acquired a considerable fortune, I took the liberty of asking him: "Suppose you could command whatever income or capital you chose to name, what is the amount of wealth you would specify, as sufficient to make you perfectly happy." The answer was significant. "Give me," he said, "such and such a sum (naming the figure), and (added he with emphasis) a confidential clerk or steward, to whom I could safely entrust the management of all."

Large possessions mean heavy cares; and many a man with twenty or thirty thousand a year, and a corresponding amount of varied anxiety, has confessed himself to be really less happy than when he was earning twenty-five shillings a week.

A late Scottish nobleman, being accompanied by a friend one day to the top of a hill which overlooked his wide estates, honestly acknowledged, in reply to the remark, "Surely your lordship must be the happiest of men," that he did not believe there was, in all the country round, an individual more ill at ease than himself. His property involved a burden of care, and he had no trustworthy subordinate on whose shoulders he could lay it. To such a man what an enormous relief it must be to secure the services of one who makes his master's interests his own,



and can at all times be implicitly relied on ! In this respect few have been more fortunate than Abraham. As a land-proprietor on an extensive scale, he was at the head of an immense establishment. He was one of the great magnates of the East. We read of him in the 13th chapter, that he "was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold"; and again, in this chapter, that he had become very great, for he had "flocks, and herds, and silver, and gold, and menservants, and maidservants, and camels, and asses."

If we are to believe an ancient and not improbable tradition, Damascus or its immediate neighbourhood was the temporary home of Abraham, when called of God to go forth from Ur of the Chaldees, and establish his abode in the south of the Promised Land. It was, we are told, on a mountain to the west of that city that he stood, on the eventful day when he solemnly abjured the idolatrous worship of his fathers; and (as the legend relates) seeing sun and moon and stars sink in succession behind the horizon, cast them off one after the other, as the objects of his adoration, and lifted up his heart to the great and only Jehovah.

During his residence in that quarter, Abraham apparently had added to his household staff a young Damascene, whom he named "Eliezer," and whom he subsequently took with him to his settled home in Mamre. It is true that in chapter xv. 3, Eliezer is spoken of as "one born in my house"; but the expression in the original is simply "son of my house," and points to him as a member of his domestic establishment. Clearly, Eliezer was a young slave; but, so greatly did he endear himself to his master by his admirable character and trustworthiness, that he rose not only to be Abraham's chief servant and confidential steward, but failing any issue to the patriarch, to be sole heir



to all he possessed. Nor, if you consider the customs of the East, need you be surprised at so great a leap. Not only was such slavery as I refer to a mild and gentle servitude, but it was not unfrequently the precursor of a splendid elevation: and from the bottom, by a whirl of fortune, men would suddenly rise to the very top of the wheel. Who does not remember the story of Joseph? To-day a slave in the house of Potiphar; to-morrow raised to such a position that he could say, "My master hath committed all that he hath to my hand: there is none greater in his house than I." Or Esther; now, a poor Jewish slave in Persia; and shortly raised by the King to share his bed and his throne! It is still usual in India, especially amongst the Moslems, that, in default of children, and even where he may have nephews or other blood relations, the master of a house adopts his slave as his heir. It is a custom not only of great antiquity, but prevalent amongst the most refined and civilized peoples of the East. Of course it occurs only where such a servant has secured his master's esteem, and endeared himself to him by a long term of faithful service.

But, are such leaps altogether unknown amongst ourselves?

Thank God, it is long since slavery, at least in its literal sense, has been known in any land under the British flag; but there are, even in a free country, positions of drudgery and toil that are not much better. Yet from time to time we meet with the case of one who, by sheer dint of energy and exemplary fidelity, has won his way upward from the very lowest to almost the highest step of the ladder, and who, though a servant or subordinate, becomes "a brother beloved."

I have, in these special services, traced the career of



almost every Scriptural character I know that presents a model for young men; but it seems the catalogue is not yet exhausted; for there is before us now a man well worthy of your admiring study; and there is something for every young man to learn from the story of Eliezer of Damascus.

For true high-mindedness and unselfish fidelity, no name on the page of Scripture is entitled to more respect.

The story we were reading in this chapter brings out the real character of the man. Remember that the birth of Isaac—though to his parents an event of great joy—was a complete overturning of the worldly prospects of Eliezer. It at once displaced him from the heirdom; and, humanly speaking, decided that he must remain a servant to the end of his days. Had he been a selfish and scheming man, it was a death-blow to his hopes of preferment. But it is clear he took it in a very different spirit, heartily welcomed the child of promise, and even loved the boy who had come between him and a splendid fortune. And when, in course of time, the lad grew up to be a man, and his father wished him to be allied in marriage, not to a Canaanitish woman, but to one of his own Mesopotamian kindred, who so worthy as Eliezer to be entrusted with this important business?

Without repeating the charming idyllic story we have read—whose simple beauty casts your modern vulgar sensational novel into the shade—let me just bring you to the point where our text comes in.

This good man fully justifies the confidence his master Abraham imposes in him. Having in the most solemn manner entered into a vow that he would carry out his wishes, he sets forth for the distant land, laden with gifts for the future bride, and attended by a suitable escort. How



many days or weeks the journey occupied we do not know ; but at last he approaches his destination, arrives within sight of Nahor, and dismounts to water the camels at a well outside of the city.

It is the evening hour ; the heat of the day is over, and in roseate splendour the sun is sinking in the west.

This is the time when the women go forth to draw water at the well ; even those of rank preferring work to idleness "deeming it no more dishonour," as Dr. Guthrie says, "to bake bread than to eat it, to make a dress than to wear it, to draw water than to drink it"—in short, thinking it no shame to engage in what we call, and many despise as, menial vocations.

Would that the young ladies of our own land imitated in this respect their sisters of the East ; and, in the picture of Rebekah gracefully poising her pitcher on her shoulder (as I have seen the women of Nazareth doing at the "Fountain of the Virgin"), could read the needed lesson, that beauty is never so attractive as when combined with active usefulness.

Now, thinks Eliezer, as he sees the women of Nahor trooping to the well, now is the time for me to accomplish the errand on which I have come. "Who knows that the future bride of my master's son may not be one of those comely women drawing water for the camels." And, knowing that all good success, even in matters temporal, comes from above, he instantly lifts up his eyes to heaven, and asks God to prosper him in the business he has undertaken : "O Lord God, I pray Thee, send me good speed this day."

My earnest advice to every young man now hearing me is to make this petition of Eliezer his daily prayer, to look up for the Divine blessing on everything you take in hand.



It is a grand thing to feel that every step you take in life is ordered and arranged by God, and that His blessing is resting upon you.

It is very significant what Eliezer says in the 27th verse : "I being in the way, the Lord led me." If you are in God's way, His hand will always lead you. It is a delightful thought, that even "the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord"; that he cannot so much as lift his foot and put it down again without God's supervision and control. Some of you are destined to go to the Colonies, or to some other distant region of the earth. A few months will find you off and away to a land all unknown to you, to dwell among strangers, with whom you will have little sympathy.

It is not unusual, I believe,—at least, in times of war or danger—for captains of ships to leave their own home ports without knowing their destination. They are sailing under what is called "sealed orders"; and not until they reach some solitary part of the ocean are they to open their commission. Dear, dear lads, some of you are sailing under sealed orders; you are going out upon the voyage of life, not knowing whither you go.

And oh! you don't know what a sense of loneliness you will often feel, what home-sickness will come over you, what intense yearnings to see the smile, and hear the voice, and grasp the hand, of loved ones, whom leagues of ocean now divide from you.

Ah! there will be gushing moments when the heart-pangs will seize you, and the tears will start into your eyes, and you will feel that the best worldly prospects cannot compensate for such a wrench as you have made. There is only one thing that at such times can comfort you, and reconcile you to your position, and it is the belief that the Lord has directed your steps, and that His blessing is



resting upon you. Oh, do not go abroad, and leave your father's God behind you! Do not think to find any true success, unless the Lord speed your way.

Even the strictest fidelity to your earthly master will not take the place of pious faithfulness to God. When Colbert, a successful merchant of France, was on his death-bed, a letter was brought him from the king; but he refused so much as to have it read to him. "Let him leave me in peace," he exclaimed; "had I done for my God what I have done for that man, I could die content."

It was a remarkable expression, showing that it is possible, with all worldly integrity and success, to forget that we have a Master in heaven; and so to fail of reaching true happiness. The mere making of money comes a long way short of meaning true success; to be worth having, it must have the Divine blessing upon it. When Jacob Astor, the American millionaire, who had by his own abilities raised himself from a very humble position to be one of the foremost men in the United States, when he was laid down with his last illness, he asked for a sheet of paper and a pencil, and what, do you suppose, he wrote upon it? The man who had been the envy of all his fellows, and had amassed more money than he knew what to do with, scratched with his trembling hand the melancholy confession, "My life has been a failure."

Young men! the life of every one of you will be a failure, unless the smile and blessing of God rest upon you.

What strikes us so forcibly in the character of Eliezer, is, that with him fidelity to his master on earth was united with fidelity to his Master in heaven. He felt that he best served the interests of Abraham when he sought the direction and help of Abraham's God. Observe his words: "O Lord God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send



me good speed this day, and show kindness unto my master Abraham."

Young men! do you ever pray for your employers? Do you ask God's blessing on the firm under which you serve? Do you entreat Him to show kindness to your master, and make you a blessing to him in his business?

It is an unspeakable advantage to any mercantile house to have godly assistants employed in it; to have Christian men at the head of the various departments; to have as confidential clerk a man who has the fear of God before his eyes. The prayers of such men will do more to bring good speed to the establishment than all the sharp tricks of persons who have no higher thought than to make gain. It is a fine thing to see young men, who have no selfish ends to promote, and who get no commission or percentage of profit from the business they turn over, working as diligently as if all the products went into their own pockets. Let such be sure they will be no losers in the end.

You see we learn from the text that prayer is not to be restricted to matters of a purely spiritual character. Many good people stand so much upon the dignity of prayer, that they never think of taking their common wants to God. They would deem it almost a profanation to ask the Lord for a day's good trade, or for the success of some new business undertaking. Eliezer sets us a different example. He has got a serious job on hand, to find a good wife for his young master; and he looks straight to God to prosper him in it. Possibly some of you are wanting a treasure of the same sort for yourselves; you can't do better than try his plan. Yet it is about the last thing many a Christian man would ever think of doing. He will pray for almost every blessing, but never dreams of asking



God to find him a Rebekah. Perhaps there would be more happy marriages if young men would borrow a leaf from Eliezer. Solomon says in Proverbs, "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing"; but that depends on the sort of wife he finds; and that again where he finds her; for the next chapter asserts that "a prudent wife is of the Lord."

There are two persons that have more to do with a man's happiness than all others in the world: the one is his mother, and the other is his wife; as to the former you have no choice, but as to the latter you have. May the Lord give you "good speed" when you come to seek for one!

But do not hesitate to ask every morning for "good speed" on all the work of the day. Nothing too secular, too trivial to take to your Father above. Rowland Hill once greatly shocked the prejudices of a Christian family in Scotland by imploring at morning prayer for the restoration of a disabled horse. It would make our devotions far more real if we learnt to carry everything that troubles us to the Lord. Commence every day upon your knees with God. Oh, how it will lighten your load, sweeten your temper, brighten your spirit, to hand over everything to His care, and trust Him to superintend and prosper all!

Just try it. Begin to-morrow. I am speaking to Christian young men, who do ask Him daily for pardon and eternal life. I want you to add this petition to your prayer, "O Lord God, send me good speed this day."

You can ask for immediate success. Eliezer did, and got it.

Of course this does not mean any slackening of effort on your own part. There is sound truth in Æsop's old



fable of "Jupiter and the Waggoner," where a waggoner, whose wheel has got fast in the mud, is pictured as shouting to Jupiter for aid; whereupon the king of the gods, looking down from his Olympian throne, bids the indolent clown cease his supplications until he puts his own shoulder to the wheel. Like Abraham's steward, you must remit no exertion on your own part; must work as if all depended on yourself; must pray as if all depended upon God.

A man of a healthy spirit is never so happy as when he is busy; and it is generally in our times of leisure that Satan obtains his victories over us. Keep body, mind, and spirit actively employed, and temptation will have less hold upon you. Have no idle hours, no, nor half-hours. When a young man's work is over, then his chief danger begins. If your business does not involve much physical exercise, then be sure you take outdoor recreation. If it does not involve much mental work, then give your spare hours to hard reading. Keep every part of your being employed.

Down in the New Forest in summer-time you may often see a tourist or holiday-maker, who will go and throw himself, pipe in mouth, and novel in hand, on some grassy bank for rest and repose. But shortly he jumps up, not well pleased with his company. There are some busy little denizens of the forest who have found him out, and give him no peace. They buzz about him and pester him till he finds that a pleasant lounge is impossible. By-and-by he sees a woodman hard at work felling some sturdy trees. "Aren't you bothered with these insects?" asks the young man. "Insects!" replies the other. "No, they don't trouble me; hard work keeps them away!"

I often get sad letters from dear young fellows, who are



terribly assaulted by temptations which I cannot name; and they want me to tell them of some royal way by which these temptations can be resisted, and crushed, or put to flight. I always tell them that one of the most effectual methods, under God, is to keep all the powers of their being, physical and mental, in active and vigorous exercise; for at no time are you so likely to fall a prey to the devil's wiles, as in your slack, idle, desultory hours. Young men who are always employing their time to good purpose, and looking straight to God for a blessing on what they do, rarely give way to the lusts of the flesh; their powers are pre-occupied; the enemy attacks them at disadvantage. But that which above all things you need is what Dr. Chalmers called "the expulsive force of a new affection"; the love of Christ welling up in your hearts, the living energy of the Holy Spirit stimulating and controlling every faculty of your being.

My brothers, this is within the reach of all of you.

I see so many wasted lives on every side, that I am jealous lest even one of you should add to the number. Just as, in sailing out to the mouth of the Thames, one may sometimes see a green and tattered flag inscribed with the word "Wreck," floating over a broken but invisible hulk, and seeming to utter the warning, "Here a ship went down"; so, in my Christian ministry, I am almost every week coming across some wasted, ruined life; and, therefore, I am urgent in entreating you to go to the proper quarter for blessing and success, and every morning you rise to make the prayer of Eliezer your own: "O Lord God, I pray Thee, send me good speed this day."

And oh (I say finally), let yours be an unselfish and beneficent religion. Lay not yourselves open to the reproach of thinking of nothing but your own salvation.



With every advance in grace, be more eager to prove blessings to your fellow-men.

This year may be said to be famous in the history of mechanical enterprise. It has witnessed two triumphs of engineering skill that are unique, and surpass anything that has yet been accomplished. On the Champs de Mars, in Paris, stands a loftier tower, and crossing the Forth, in Scotland, stretches a bridge of wider span, than man has heretofore constructed. The one for height, the other for length, stands unequalled. Would that morally and spiritually we were also rising and expanding, that we had loftier views and aspirations, and at the same time broader sympathies ! It is remarkable that both of these achievements should be effected in one and the same year ; but in the spiritual world this is a conjunction that may be always looked for. The nearer we get to God, the broader shall be the area of our genuine catholicity. The Lord give every one of you "good speed," and prosper you in all you undertake ! Amen.



*A LAWYER SEEKING THE LIGHT.*



*"And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, He said unto him,  
Thou art not far from the kingdom of God."—MARK xii. 34.*



#### XIV.

##### *A LAWYER SEEKING THE LIGHT.*

A CELEBRATED professor in one of the German universities once remarked, "Whenever I appear before my pupils, I feel inclined to make them a respectful bow." On being asked the reason of this, he replied, "Because I see before me the men of the future, the hope of the country and the State."

For a similar reason I always feel a special interest in addressing such an audience as this. If I can at all succeed, by the help of God, in forming your principles and moulding your character, I shall accomplish something, the results of which will be felt in society long after I am dead and gone. When Catiline attempted to overthrow the liberties of Rome, he, with infamous astuteness, began by corrupting the young men of the city, and forming them for deeds of violence and crime. It is as the young men of a country are uncorrupted in morals, and grow up enlightened and devout, that the foundations of social order and national happiness are secure.

It is a gloomy picture of the religious condition of the youth of our country that the Bishop of Liverpool draws in a recent little book he has written. Indeed, the first assertion which he makes is that there are few young men anywhere who have any religion at all. "How dreadful the thought"—I give you his own words—"that every time I meet a young man, I meet one who is, in all probability, an



enemy of God, travelling in the broad way which leads to destruction, unfit for heaven." I am thankful to say that I am very far from endorsing the pessimist views of Dr. Ryle. My own impression is precisely the opposite of his. There is no class of the community amongst whom, as a Christian minister, I find so much to make me hopeful.

I assert, with all deliberation—and heartily praise God for it—that I have met with more earnest thoughtfulness, more desire after a true and noble Christian life, among young men than amongst any other class of the community.

The contents of my desk tell of many a painful struggle with temptation, and of many an eager yearning after God. I find numbers who are heartily wearied of a life of sin, who feel there is nothing to meet their wants in the whole circle of the world's vain pleasures, and of whom, if they are not actually converted, I can truly aver that, like the hopeful young lawyer before us, they are "not far from the kingdom of God."

As this expression probably denotes the precise condition of some of you, let us try to understand what it means.

No doubt there is a sense in which all who are yet out of Christ are equally far from the kingdom. The difference between the dead and the living is a difference not of degree, but of kind. Amongst a number of corpses you cannot say that some are deader than the rest. There is a hard and extravagant way of putting it that violates our deepest convictions, and is repugnant to cultured minds.

There cannot be a question that, of persons who are still unsaved, some are nearer to salvation than others.

There are conditions of mind, elements of character, circumstances in life, which have a perceptible bearing on a man's attitude toward Christ.

Now, I am going to point out four features of the case



before us, which, if I am not mistaken, combined to draw from the Master's lips the remarkable words of my text.

I. A man may be said to be "not far from the kingdom of God" who has begun to think seriously on the subject of religion. I can find nothing in the manner or language of this gentleman of the legal profession to suggest frivolity or captiousness. I think you do him injustice if you imagine he was wanting merely to get up an argument, to provoke a discussion. I am satisfied he was an honest inquirer after the truth. He was not a mere idle casuist, much less was he a scoffer; he was given to think for himself, and, like most men who think for themselves, he had his difficulties, and one of these difficulties he brought to Jesus. This spirit of earnest inquiry is to be encouraged. If a man is an honest seeker after truth, he has my sympathy and respect. You have no right to silence him, to snub him, to extinguish him. He should be dealt with in a kind and considerate way.

There are some minds so constituted as to have an innate tendency to scepticism; they doubt everything. They cannot accept of any proposition whatever until it is demonstrated by an invincible logic.

Remember, there are two gates to our inner nature: there is the gate of the head and the gate of the heart. Well, there are some men who say to me, "Look here; if you want to get at my soul, you must come to it by the gate of the head. You must deal with my intellect. You must convince my reason." I am not one of those who would say sharp things to such a man. My sympathy with him is too profound to treat him harshly or bitterly. His mental agony, God knows, may be acute enough, without being intensified by the cruel taunts of those who have no such difficulties, perhaps because they scarcely think at all.



It is when I see a young fellow with the smallest modicum of intellect, and the largest stock of self-conceit, deeming himself competent to deal with questions which he is no more qualified to touch than my little dog is to learn astronomy—when I see such a youth, ignorant, brainless, and cynical, deliberately plunging into an ocean of scepticism, it is then, I confess, that sympathy gives place to indignation, and that I think of Solomon's adage, "A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the fool's back." But this man who was interviewing Christ was clearly a person accustomed to think. His profession was one fitted to sharpen his wits, and train him to weigh evidence.

I can well believe that members of the legal profession are specially liable to rationalism. Argument and debate are the very atmosphere in which they live. They are wont to ignore the emotional, and magnify the reasoning faculties. They are shy to accept any statement that does not admit of mathematical demonstration. And hence the Gospel of the Lord Jesus, that makes its first appeal to the burdened heart, is apt to meet with prompt rejection. And yet the legal profession has furnished some of the most devoted and eminent followers of Jesus.

Though Paul was urgent that Christians should not go to law, he probably felt that, amid certain complications, he would be all the better for a little legal advice himself, for he begs Titus to bring a solicitor with him to Nicopolis.

"Be diligent to come unto me to Nicopolis; and bring Zenas, the lawyer, with you." I am sure Zenas was a good man, or the apostle would not have wanted his help. Thank God, the legal profession has supplied many a bright ornament of the Christian faith, such as Blackstone, and Wilberforce, and Sir Thomas More, and many more.



Never in my life did I hear a nobler testimony to the Gospel than I listened to from the lips of the Lord Chancellor of England, Earl Cairns ; and when Lord Selborne occupied the same high office, he might be seen one day seated on the woolsack, and the next teaching a class in the Sunday-school. Well now, a man may be said to be "not far from the kingdom of God," when he really thinks seriously upon religion.

Remember, the converse is quite as true ; a person who has no serious thoughts on the subject is undoubtedly far from the kingdom. Oh, it is perfectly marvellous how little some of you think on the matter at all ! The trouble is, we cannot get you to think. I had rather hear a man start all manner of difficulties, and raise all sorts of objections, to the Gospel, than see him in that utterly dead, boorish, indifferent condition of mind in which so many thousands are living. A man has seriously injured his hand, and the doctor whispers of amputation : "I fear you must lose that finger," he says. How the man shudders at the prospect ! "Doctor, can't you save it ?" he imploringly cries. He is as much taken up about the loss of that poor finger, as if it were worth the whole world to him. But, if I say to him, "You are in danger of losing your soul !" no anxiety, no concern ! "Far from the kingdom of God." How is it with you ?

A boy picked up a bright stone one day, and ran with it to the jeweller's, and said, "What will you give me for this ?" The jeweller gave him a sixpence, and the lad went off delighted. He didn't know its value. It was a diamond, and was worth £50.

So the great mass of people do not know the value of the soul, and never think *seriously* about it. I emphasize that word "seriously."



Surely, none of you will charge me with preaching a morose, gloomy Christianity. God forbid. At the same time I must frankly say, that one of the greatest evils of our time is the want of seriousness. On every side you find levity, flippancy, frivolity.

There is a generation that seem incapable of treating any subject otherwise than lightly, and on its farcical side. They must jest at everything. On the gravest things they must be amusing, must have their laugh and their joke. They are never thoughtful and solemn. This is a dangerous aptitude, and should be checked. A man is a fool who is not sometimes serious. And, because this lawyer was reflective, and was giving to the subject of religion his earnest attention, eagerly feeling his way into the light, our Lord looked him kindly in the face, and said, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God."

II. He was not far from the kingdom, because he had already begun to attach greater importance to the spirit than to the letter. He came to see that the spiritual side of religion was of far more consequence than the ceremonial. Indeed, I am amazed to find a Jewish scribe so far advanced in what I may call Christian intelligence, and so totally free of anything like religious prejudice and bigotry. Listen to what he says to Jesus, as he states his own deepest convictions: "There is one God, and there is none other but He; and to love Him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices."

This was marvellous, to come from one who had probably been steeped in Jewish prejudice, and who had been a stickler for every punctilio of the Mosaic Law. I don't say that he was yet a true believer in the full sense of the term.



There is no evidence that he yet recognised the Teacher he was speaking to as Divine, or that he understood the great doctrine of the atonement: and yet, his singular charity of judgment, and his broad catholicity, showed a heart that was being prepared to receive the Gospel.

Amid all the superstition and empty religious externalism that then prevailed, it must have been refreshing to the heart of Christ, to meet with one who rose above this low and miserable level, and was able so far to break through the crust of a lifeless conventionalism, as to see that rites and oblations, sacrifices and offerings, were nothing, so long as the heart was not charged with love to God and man.

I only wish we had this intelligent young lawyer among us to-day, to teach a much-needed lesson; and to put to shame a lot of highly esthetic, silly, empty-headed Ritualists, who would fain put the hands of the clock backwards, and bring us into the bondage of priestcraft and Romish superstition once more.

Most firmly do I believe, that, were our Lord in bodily presence upon earth, and did He deign to notice one of these vain, narrow, and bigoted High-Churchmen, who talk so much of "their beautiful service," and go in for all the puerilities of a bastard Popery, and, moreover, look with supreme contempt upon all people who are not of their own way of thinking; I verily believe he would startle him with the statement, "Thou art yet far from the kingdom of God."

III. This man was not far from the kingdom, because he was sincerely desirous of acting up to the measure of light he possessed. As I have already said, he was no frivolous caviller, merely wanting to raise an argument, that he might display his own learning and cleverness; he was honestly groping his way into the light, and desirous to



know the truth that he might believe it, and to know the will of God that he might do it. Such a man is seldom left long in the dark. Christ promises the humble and ingenuous seeker after truth, who desires to do the will of God, that "he shall know of the doctrine," whether it be divine or no. For this reason, I have not a doubt that the inquiring lawyer before us eventually got into the kingdom. It is my misfortune occasionally to meet with a brother who is nothing if not disputatious and controversial; he cannot touch a subject without becoming polemical; he dearly loves an argumentative spar; and, rather than not have a fight, would be prepared to maintain the most outrageous proposition. Such men are almost hopeless to deal with; theological pugilists, religious Ishmaels, their hand is against every man's; and you generally find you must just leave them to their own self-sufficiency. To tell the truth, there is perhaps no class so far from the kingdom of God.

It is not likely that any of that sort are here; but if there are, I would say to them, "You will be wise, my friends, just to lay down your weapons at once, and, humbly seeking for light from above, come to the teaching of this old Book."

Oh, shake yourselves free of those dreary semi-infidelities with which you have become entangled, and let conscience make her voice to be heard.

I invite you back to the good old-fashioned religion of your fathers, to the God whom they worshipped, to the Christ whom they adored, to the promises on which they leaned, and to the cross on which they hung their eternal expectations. You have not been happy a day since you broke off from the gospel anchorage, and you'll have no rest of soul till you come back to it again.

It is an encouraging fact, which all of you ought to know,



that the higher intellect of our country is distinctly much more religious than it was even twenty-five years ago. Scientific materialism has almost no following to-day compared with what it had then. Evolutionism is no longer brought by men of thought into an attitude of hostility to the Bible. Agnosticism has no following that is worthy of notice. Even the advocates of what is called freethought are far more respectful towards Christianity.

The New Testament has passed scatheless through an unprecedented fire of criticism—the Old Testament is doing the same; and now we are being brought more immediately face to face with the personal Christ and His apostles than at any time since the early centuries—all to the gain and consolidation of the Christian faith. Our religion does not shrink from the most searching inquiry. Only prosecute that investigation in a devout and becoming spirit, and in the very eagerness of your pursuit I shall see hopeful evidence that you are “not far from the kingdom of God.”

IV. I have yet one thing more to say, and I trust none of you will misunderstand it. This man was pronounced to be not far from the kingdom, because his outward character was unimpeachable. He was strictly moral, circumspect, pure. He was no rake nor profligate. He had never wallowed in the mire of vice. His life had been above reproach. He was indeed a thorough gentleman in the best sense of that word. I don't say this because he was a lawyer; by no means. There are in that profession as consummate rogues and blacklegs as you will find anywhere. There were humble fishermen in Galilee quite as true gentlemen as Nicodemus the ruler, or Luke the physician, or Joseph the rich man of Arimathea. It is not a man's money or his calling that determines this point. The most perfect gentleman that ever lived was a carpenter. But you



see at a glance what was the character of this young solicitor. Intelligent, pure-minded, high-principled, his life was a clean record. He had not, like so many around him, run a career of debauchery; he had not given way to his passions; he had kept himself pure.

Now, we know very well that all that virtuousness would not save him. Not all the graces and excellencies of the most cultured humanity would bring him into the kingdom of God. Moreover, we also know that had he been the vilest scapegrace on earth, Divine mercy was able to save him. The long arm of infinite love could have dragged him out of the mire, and pulled him into the kingdom.

All true; and yet I say—and say it with emphasis, because in these days it needs to be said—that his high-toned principle and blameless character were in his favour, and made him nearer the kingdom than had it been otherwise. If Christ declared that the publicans and harlots would enter into heaven sooner than the self-righteous Pharisees, it was not because these Pharisees had not plunged into open vice, or because He wished to put a premium upon profligacy. Oh, no! All that He meant was, that the pride, the self-esteem, of the Pharisees placed them, notwithstanding their outward correctness, at a further distance from God than did even the gross wickedness of the class whom they despised.

I say it is perfectly detestable to hear the way in which some well-meaning but foolish and ignorant people speak; as though depth in depravity were positively the most fitting qualification for receiving the Gospel. By some street preachers, and in certain mission-halls, things are said that are fitted to convey the impression that, other things being equal, drunkards, libertines, and profligates are positively more acceptable to God than those whose lives are morally



pure ; and if some vile wretch has been picked up out of the gutter of bestiality, and persuaded to utter the Gospel shibboleth, he is trotted out before the community as a living proof that, compared with the better classes of society, thieves, adulterers, blacklegs, and villains of every kind, are very near the kingdom of God.

I call this a hideous and blasphemous burlesque of the Gospel. It is high time the notion were for ever exploded, that a man must be a rake before he can taste the joy of true conversion ; and that human hearts, like boots, must be smeared and blackened before they are polished. This sensational evangelism is as hateful as it is unscriptural.

Had this scribe been a gross libertine, I undertake for my Master, to assert He would certainly not have addressed to him the words of my text.

So long as one of you is going on in open sin, you are searing your conscience, and hardening your heart, and building up obstacles against your return to God. Be you very sure of this, that all that way has to be travelled back in tears, and that downward slopes of iniquity are hard to climb again. Let the clean, the moral, and upright man be but free of self-complacency, he is by so much the nearer to the kingdom.

Thus I have pointed out four elements of hopefulness in the case before us ; dear lads, there are some of you in whom all the four are united, and yet you are not saved.

Thank God, you have begun to think seriously on religion ; you do realize the far greater importance of a new heart than of all outward ritual ; you do desire to act up to the knowledge you possess, and you have thus far been kept back from open vice. You are, therefore, "not far from the kingdom of God" ; but oh ! what will that avail if you are not in it ?



Your very nearness to it may be your danger. You think all is well. If some are so far away that their conscious distance makes them despair of ever entering it, others are so near that they never question their safety, and so are in no concern. Ah! the far-off may come to be nigh, whilst those that are nigh may be shut out for ever! The little distance that still separates you from Christ may be as fatal as if it were ten thousand leagues. A chain is useless if it be but one link too short. Brothers, let me put it to you, is that one link still wanting?

Some of you, I am sure, are not far from the kingdom. Won't you even now just take the leap of faith across the narrow chasm that divides you from it? Throw yourself into the embrace of our great Redeemer; and to-night, as you bend your knees in your quiet room before you turn in to bed, repeat the joyful words we are presently to sing:—

“’Tis done! the great transaction’s done!  
I am my Lord’s, and He is mine!”

Amen.



*THE MYSTERIOUS YOUNG MAN.*



*“ And there followed Him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body : and the young men laid hold on him : and he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked.”—MARK xiv. 51, 52.*



XV.

*THE MYSTERIOUS YOUNG MAN.*

THERE is one—only one, I think—of all the young men specially mentioned in Scripture, whom I have not yet brought before you ; to whom I have never, even in the most indirect way, referred ; a mysterious individual, concerning whom indeed many guesses have been made, but of whose identity nothing is certainly known. A brief and passing notice in one of the Gospels is all the record that we have of him.

I have often wondered, and wondered, who this youth could be, and what could be the precise reason why he is mentioned on the sacred page at all.

There must be some reason ; the incident must have some lessons to teach. What shall hinder us from taking it up now ? St. Mark gives us the story ; no other writer in the Bible makes allusion to it.

A strange tale, is it not ? So abruptly and quickly told, and so full of mystery !

Suddenly the curtain rises, disclosing to view a singular and dramatic figure ; our interest is excited ; we strain our eyes to see ; when as suddenly the curtain falls, and like an apparition the figure vanishes from sight.

As when standing on the lonely shore at night, we look far out on the wide waste of waters, and lo ! a solitary ship, emerging from the blackness, crosses the quivering pathway



of the moonbeams, to plunge as quickly into the gloom again; so this young man for an instant flashes on our sight, and then disappears, never to be heard of more!

Ah! without going further, he reminds me of young men I have myself known; they burst unexpectedly on our acquaintanceship, and for a brief space were amongst us, their conduct open to a variety of construction; but without notice they vanished, and we have never heard of them since. Our impressions of them are of a mixed and doubtful character.

Well, but I am curious to know who this "certain young man" was. A diversity of opinion has existed.

Shall we surmise—a maniac? Some unhappy creature, whose mind, amid the awful excitement of the occasion, had become unhinged; and who, almost nude, and in a wild fit of frenzy, sprang in amongst the shouting throng?

No; dismiss this thought; there is not an atom of ground for the notion that this man was a raving lunatic.

Such an incident, unlikely on the face of it, and without any practical lessons for us, would not have been introduced here.

The ancient Ambrose conceived that the individual was none other than the Apostle John. It was the opinion of Ewald—surely an extravagant one—that it was young Saul, who afterwards became the famous apostle to the Gentiles.

Langè inclines to the notion that it was St. Mark himself, the writer of the Gospel. Professor Plumptre argues in favour of Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary. Theophylact long ago suggested that it was one of the family in whose house Christ had just held the Passover. Others have imagined that it was James, commonly called "the Just"; whilst another view has been that it was the owner of the garden of Gethsemane. But these idle guesses



are sufficient to show how ignorant we are on the matter. Clearly it is of no importance that we should know; suffice it to be informed that it was "a certain young man."

Permit me to say that in this little sentence there is something very pleasing to my ear—"And there followed Jesus a certain young man." Alas! Of how many young men would the opposite be only too true; they have forsaken Jesus, and turned their back upon Him! Ah! The crowd still goes the opposite way; only the units follow Christ; one here and one there; a certain young man in this district or congregation, and a certain young man in that, casts in his lot with the Blessed Redeemer. But for every such unit we are thankful; may I hope there is such a one here? Praise God, the record has oftener than once been borne after these special services. On many, perhaps, the message has produced little impression; and some may even have jeered and trampled on the mercy of God; nevertheless the recording angel has borne the tidings to heaven, and even to our own ears the welcome news has come—"But there followed Him a certain young man."

I am wondering on which of my hearers I may fix my eye now, and say, "That is the certain young man who this very night shall get up at the call of God, and begin to follow Jesus."

Remember our Incarnate Lord was peculiarly the young man's friend.

Belonging to that class Himself, and in fullest sympathy with them, His ministry proved specially attractive in that direction. The case in the text is not by any means the only one in the sacred record of a young man feeling impelled to arise and attach himself to Him. I do not recollect of any old men being lured by the spell of His personal



presence. His very youthfulness made them distant and suspicious. They contrasted their own grey locks with His unsilvered hair, and disdainfully said, "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and dost Thou teach us?" His apostles, all of them probably, most of them certainly, were young men.

There was much in the Lord Jesus that addressed itself to the ardour and ingenuousness of youth; and you know how responsive was His affection, and how He would look with loving eyes upon such inquirers, and point them the way to eternal life.

Never mind, though the text does not give us name and address, the personality of the individual is of far less importance than the occasion and the act; the story remains anonymous, just to stimulate our more close and curious attention.

For eighteen centuries this little tale has been read—read by myriads; yet not a soul on earth has been able to say who the subject of it was; but there is One above who knows; and this verse stands on the Bible record to assure the many in the background, whose names are never heard, and who, with strange history and experiences, seem to live unnoticed and unknown, that there is a Divine Eye ever watching them, and cognizant of all their career. Again and again have I come across some singular history, whose central figure was a youth who had stately worshipped with us here, but who had maintained so strict an incognito that, not until a striking incident brought him to light was his very existence known.

But let us turn to the story before us.

Never fell there upon Jerusalem—upon the world—so dark and awful a night. The cross is preparing on which the Redeemer is to be nailed to-morrow.



The hour of Christ's deepest humiliation is drawing near. Amid the gloomy olive-trees of Gethsemane He is wrestling in prayer with His Father, and seeking strength to drink the bitter cup.

The hush of night is broken by the noise of Roman soldiery, the wrangling of priests and Pharisees, the shouting and profanity of the course rabble. The quivering moonlight glitters from a hundred spears. Hark to the tramping of innumerable feet. See in the dim light the Satanic hate and desperate resolve on the faces of those men who have come to apprehend the Innocent One.

Lanterns and torches are flashing amid the old olive-trees. Every moment the excitement deepens, the horror becomes more awful. In that motley crowd only one figure is unmoved and calm ; it is the Divine Victim who is being hurried off to His doom.

The last gleam of hope in the hearts of His disciples is now extinguished, and mad terror takes its place. Without an exception, they all take to their heels ; yes, even the loving John, the fiery Peter—every one ; they forsake their Master, and flee. At that dread moment, when Christ is unbefriended, not one remaining by His side, an unknown young man, roused from slumber by the terrible din, springs from his bed ; and, without taking time to dress, but only wrapping around him the *sindon* or linen sheet in which he had been sleeping, he rushes out to defend his Lord, and rescue Him, if it be possible, from the malice of His foes. Certainly it was a noble and generous impulse, a brave and heroic act. When all the apostles fled, this young man might be pardoned for shrinking from the danger.

Perhaps he had often heard Jesus preach ; perhaps he had been intimately acquainted with Him ; ay, perhaps he had heard from those Divine lips the precious words, "Thy



sins are forgiven thee.' Therefore he could not but love Him; and, burning with indignation at the thought of the insults offered to his Lord, he leaps out of his chamber, and runs through the garden towards Him, if by chance he can render Him protection.

But there are other young men there, very different in their leanings and character, who have already, in their hatred of Christ, been shouting, "Away with Him! away with Him;" and they seized hold on this enthusiast, probably threatening to serve him as they are to serve the Master; on which his courage instantly breaks down; panic-stricken and bewildered, he slips from their grasp, leaving the linen sheet behind; and plunging in amid the deep shadows of the olive-trees, he is lost to sight, and never heard of more!

What are we to make of him? We just learn enough to awaken our interest and curiosity; and then suddenly the curtain falls, and shuts off the sequel from view. And yet two things, I think, are prominently depicted here; first, a beautiful enthusiasm of belief, the power of a warm and generous impulse; and secondly, the shame of a cowardly desertion. Here is a man whose devotion to the Person of Christ is enough to carry him a certain length, but miserably collapses at the point of extreme danger.

Grand was the start he made; we admire the promptness of his action, his fearlessness and pluck; just think of the distinction which he almost earned, of being positively the only one of all mankind to stick to the Redeemer to the last, and (amid the treachery of friends, and desertion of apostles) to go with Him right up to the fatal cross; think, I say, of the honour he almost won, of being "faithful among the faithless found"; think of the richly jewelled crown he nearly secured! and then, to miss it after all!



to turn tail in the last crucial hour; is it not a sad and humbling picture, and one full of solemn warning to all of you? When this young man fled, Jesus was left absolutely without one earthly friend. Oh, if he had but stood firm to the bitter end, content to mingle his blood with that of his Lord, what benedictions would have rested on his memory, what a splendid reward would have awaited him in glory!

This nameless youth has many successors in our own day. Early manhood has a generous warmth, and artless impulsiveness, which, happily, is often turned in the direction of true religion. There is a glow of ardour, which we know only when we are young. As age advances, we may indeed become more reflective and deliberate; but we want the fire, the eagerness, the enthusiasm of our early years. There is a susceptibility to religious impressions, too, which too soon, alas! passes away. A congregation of young men is therefore a far more promising field to a preacher than one of old men.

The great majority of Christians have become so in early life. God wrestles with us in the dawning of the day. I find no class of hearers more open to receive religious truths than young men. In no class do I find so many hopeful cases of earnest desire to follow Christ. It has been said that in youth it is the heart that controls; as we grow older, it is the head. Well, in matters of religion, give me the warm impulses of the heart. It is easy to talk slightly of impulse, and applaud the cold deductions of reason; but it is in our moments of intense feeling that we get up and move Godward.

Christ's first demand was, "My son, give Me thine heart. If you cannot understand Me, at least love Me."

It was under such impulse that this young man started



up from his bed, and, heedless of appearance, ran after his blessed Lord. For one brief, memorable moment, he was the only human being in all the world that bravely stood on the side of Jesus.

There have been times with some of you when you could almost have done the same ; your conscience was tender, your heart was full. Christ was very real to you, and very precious.

Though you stood almost alone, you did not mind that, and you were prepared to venture all for Jesus. Indeed, perhaps the very thought of martyrdom would at that time have been attractive to you. It is of such a period in spiritual experience that the Lord speaks when He says in Jeremiah, " I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after Me in the wilderness."

It was a blessed, a delightful condition of soul ; but it is apt to be ephemeral. The fire dies out ; the love cools down ; the enthusiasm passes away. Lesson : do not depend too much upon impulse, upon emotion ; there is needed a groundwork of living faith. It is said, in regard to the Church of St. Isaac's, at St. Petersburg, that more money and labour were spent on the piles underneath it, to get a good foundation, than on all the marble and malachite and costly ornamentations that are within the building. Many people are so occupied with the superstructure of religion, that which is, so to speak, above ground, that they forget—what is of still greater importance—the hidden work, the unseen foundation on which it rests. When I ask myself why this strange little story before us is in the Bible, I have no difficulty in answering : it is here to teach us, first, the danger of depending too much on youthful and sudden impulse.



And the other lesson it suggests is just as pointed—and some of you need it yet more—the danger of being frightened out of your religious profession.

Observe, the text tells us of one young man being driven by other young men from following Christ. Perhaps these were former companions of his own, who had known him in thoughtless and frivolous days; comrades in sin and folly, who were enraged to find him now turned into a religious enthusiast; so they ridicule and jeer him, hustle and torment him, and tug at the linen covering he had wrapped around him; their vexatious bantering is more hard to stand than all the dangers of the sword and the cross; and, as impulsive in his desertion as he was in his attachment, he bolts from the midst of them, and is lost in the gloom of night.

Not for a moment would I suggest that he denied his Lord, and became a traitor. No; but that his faith and courage failed in the hour of extreme trial; his pious devotion was not equal to the terrible strain; and when the young men laid hold of him, he fled. We do not know what became of him; but this is certain, he missed the high mark he might have reached, and the brilliant crown he might have won.

Ah! Shall I give you a brief biography of thousands in this city? I will give it in these condensed words of our text—"And there followed Jesus a certain young man; and the young men laid hold on him, and he fled."

That is precisely the story that has been repeated before our eyes, times without number.

The unit follows Jesus; the many revile him; and by the many the unit is frightened away. When a stranger youth comes up to town, it is the young men that lay hold



on him, for good or for evil. None have so much influence upon you as those of your own years and standing.

Hence the value of Christian fellowship associations; their importance is incalculable. Many a dear young fellow has found his connection with such a society an unspeakable blessing.

I have had countless letters testifying to the benefit thus derived.

Young men far away in the Colonies, scattered to the ends of the earth, young bankers and merchants, write to declare it was the saving of them that they joined such a band of brothers; and at a crucial point of life, when their character was just hanging in the balance, they were thus won over to the side of purity and truth.

Oh, there are so many emissaries of the devil ever on the outlook for each new comer, eager to ensnare him and poison him, and drive all the religion out of him, that we may well thank God for every Christian confederation of the kind I indicate.

Young men, it is impossible for you to be too careful as to the set you are thrown amongst. One night of vile company may neutralize all the blessed influences of an early and pious home. That cynical laugh, that filthy innuendo, that corrupting story, that brilliant lie, may be the fatal poison that shall never be eradicated from your soul.

Numbers have cursed to their latest hour the unhappy day when they were lured into the society of men who could do them no good, but only evil.

It was there they were first made acquainted with Agnostic philosophy so-called, and obscene literature; and were inoculated with the virus of rank infidelity. Probably hardened old sinners would have produced little effect



upon them, or might even have awakened recoil; but the fact of these being youths of their own standing made their influence overpowering; so that all their pious impressions vanished; "the young men laid hold on them, and they fled."

What a night that deserter must have passed after he reached his home! I think I see him, excited and breathless, laying him down to snatch a little rest, but haunted by the face of his forsaken Master, so full of sorrow and touching appeal. Never to the end of life would he forget that night, and the shame of his sad cowardice.

O my brothers, is there not much here, after all, that speaks to you in tones of earnest warning? You do not wonder now, do you, that this story has a place on the sacred page?

Clearly, the Evangelist deemed it full of meaning and instruction. For a moment he lifts the curtain on that strange nocturnal scene; and instantly it drops again, but leaves a vivid impression behind, of two figures in that gloomy garden—Jesus, and the last young man of Gospel narrative.

The tragedy of Gethsemane is suspended till this incident occurs; an incident that reminds us that it is no easy matter to follow Christ; and that if we would be His true disciples, we must be prepared to follow even to the bitter cross.

In the early days of Christianity one of the Roman emperors resolved to build a great colosseum in the capital. A young man was appointed as architect, and took in hand the gigantic enterprise. In due time it was completed, a noble and stupendous structure. The day of inauguration came, and thousands were assembled in the presence of the monarch. But, during the years of its building, that



young architect had embraced the cause of Jesus. This was unknown to the emperor, who, with the multitudes, crowned him with every honour.

As a part of the inaugural sports, five Christians were led out, nearly naked, to be thrown to the hungry lions; and the crowd eagerly waited to see the wild beasts let loose, and the followers of Christ rent in pieces. Just at that moment the young man's face was a study. Shall he deny his Lord? An invisible One was near him, breathing words of strength. Rising to his feet, he exclaimed, in tones that sent a thrill through the assembly, "I, too, am a follower of Christ, and am ready to suffer for His sake!" Instantly the laurel crown was torn from his brow, and he was hurled amongst the lions, amid the curses and execrations of the people. Could any of us do this for Jesus? Or, is it even so, that, at the sneer of our companions, we shall forsake Him, and flee?



*THE TRUE TEST OF RELIGION.*



*“He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the  
Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly  
with thy God?”—MIC. vi. 8.*



## XVI.

### *THE TRUE TEST OF RELIGION.*

I THINK it was Charles Kingsley who divided men into three groups—honest men, knaves, and fools. Honest men, who wish to do right, and do it ; knaves, who wish to do wrong, and do it ; and fools, who wish to be right, but still to do wrong.

It is no breach of charity to suspect that some of the last class are here. They abounded in Jerusalem in the days of the Prophet Micah. To them the passage before us is specially addressed. They wanted to be religious, and yet to practise iniquity at the same time ; to be on good terms with their Maker whilst their lives were full of unrighteousness. "The Lord's voice cried to the city" through His faithful prophet, and black indeed was the indictment he brought against them.

In their houses of business were "the treasures of wickedness," the scant measure, the unequal balances, the bags of deceitful weights. Their mouths were full of falsehood, their commerce was worm-eaten with fraud, over-reaching and extortion prevailed on every hand. Nor were matters a bit better in the higher orders of society. As the next chapter asserts, princes, judges, and great men were alike contaminated ; bribery and corruption everywhere prevailed ; society was rotten to the core.

Yet, with all this there was no want of pious profession.



These men did not openly cast off God. They did not break with the Church nor renounce religion. Not at all. They avowed great earnestness. Their cry was, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God." By their own account they were willing to make the greatest sacrifices to propitiate their Maker.

If thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil, or even the slaughter of their own offspring, would meet the case, and prove a sufficient atonement, they were willing to submit. Anything, everything, to quiet conscience, and leave them undisturbed in their sins. No wonder then that, as the first verse of this chapter states, the Lord "had a controversy with His people." He sends Micah to bring them to their senses, and show them how alone they could find favour with Heaven.

And here I must have you notice, that of all the Old Testament prophets, Micah was that one who gave the clearest intimation of the coming of the Divine Redeemer, who was to be the embodiment of all the sacrifices of the Jewish ritual. In the previous chapter are the well-known words, on which, for seven hundred years after they were uttered, the hopes of the wise and pious rested: "But thou, Bethlehem-Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth that is to be Ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting;" and then it is emphatically added: "And this man shall be the peace," *i.e.*, the peace-offering, or propitiation, whereby God and man shall be reconciled.

In the face of so clear an intimation of the only basis of acceptance with God, how foolish and futile that scream of affected penitence, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord?" How senseless the proposal to win the favour of



Heaven by sacrifices of rams, or by oblations of oil ! Looking straight into the face of such a hypocrite, or fool, the prophet declares, " He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good ; He hath already pointed thee to the true, the only propitiation, to that one Sacrifice that doth for sin atone ; and what the Lord now requires of thee is, that, with thine eye of faith resting on that all-sufficient peace-offering, thou shape thy life accordingly ; do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God."

As in a nutshell, then, the whole Gospel is here. Here you find the secret of pardon, purity, and peace. No true peace without a holy life ; and no true holiness without a sight of the Cross.

My brother, is your soul restless and unhappy ? Are you longing to be at peace with God ? Well, " He hath shewed you what is good " ; He hath pointed you to Calvary ; He hath " set forth Christ as a propitiation for your sins ; " believe the Gospel, and accept the outstretched hand of a Father reconciled.

But, oh ! do not forget what is now required of you. You must show your faith by your works. This prophet was never more filled with holy fury and indignation than when he denounced the men of his time, who, whilst practising gross iniquity, professed a pious trust in God. " Truly I am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord," he says in the third chapter, eighth verse, " to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin ; " and the *gravamen* of this charge is, that, going on in all forms of unrighteousness, " yet will they lean upon the Lord." It is an awful thing to go on sinning because grace abounds, and thus to " make Christ the minister of sin."

I have not a doubt that most of you are evangelical in your views ; whatever spiritual peace and hope you have are



founded on the belief that Jesus is your Substitute, has suffered in your room, and paid your debt; is it not so? then my solemn errand is to bring you this plain, straightforward message from Heaven; the Lord requires of you these three things—that you do justly, that you love mercy, and that you walk humbly with your God.

Will you for a few minutes let me be frank with you on these points.

I. The Lord requires of you, that you do justly. No young man enters on a business life with a hopeful future before him who does not determine at the outset, that, under no conditions whatever, will he participate in unlawful gains, or lend himself to any form of fraudulence.

Alas! many of you, on going into the mercantile world, are introduced to an arena where deception, chicanery, and fraud must at once be met. Again and again a dear young fellow, uninitiated in the cheateries of trade, has come to me and said, "I am at a loss what to do; in the business on which I have entered I find a great deal that is not straight; practical lies are told every day; and I must either wink at them, or give up my situation." Remember, it wants tremendous strength of moral character for such a lad to go to the manager or to his employer, and say, "I will have nothing to do with these business dishonesties." The consequence is, that the greater number just keep silent; they say nothing on the matter; but quiet their conscience by thinking it's their master's look-out, not theirs. And so they become inoculated with the poison, and their moral sense is permanently destroyed.

An American wit recently observed that the youth of his country reminded him of the three degrees of comparison: their first aim was to get on; their second to get honour; and their third to get honest. On, honour, honest. Now



you will do well just to invert the order. Let strict honesty come first, and no fear that honour and success will follow. The scandal of Christianity to-day is that so many men who profess "to be leaning upon the Lord" are not square in their bargains.

I know it is sometimes said that there is now more honesty in the world than ever, and that, whatever adulteration of goods is now practised is insignificant; this I know, there is quite enough to make us hide our face for shame.

The Merchandise Marks Act tells its own tale. The big blue-book published on the matter two years ago revealed a moral rottenness, fitted to be more harmful to English trade in the long run than a succession of bad harvests, or even a wasteful war.

The readiness to put a false name, description, or mark upon manufactured articles appeared in almost every trade.

In the watch trade, for example, foreign works were put in an English case which bore the Hall-mark; and the whole article was then sold as an English-made watch, which is more popular than one of foreign make. So with iron. An inferior metal, imported from abroad with English marks, was sold for less than genuine English iron.

Almost every article that can be purchased for money yields its percentage of imposture. Be it Sheffield cutlery, or Brussels lace, or Irish linen, or French calicoes, it is all the same; swindle the public if you can, and make the article fetch more than it is really worth.

The devil is always busy tempting men to dishonesty; and the eighth and ninth commandments are voted out of the Decalogue. The best apples are placed at the top of the barrel; the milk-can holds more than the cow is responsible for; tea at two prices comes out of the same chest; wool is mixed with cotton, and sold at thirty-five



inches to the yard ; flaws are hidden with varnish ; shams, impositions, and evasions abound on every side. Right in the face of all this comes the message of my text—"The Lord requireth of thee, O man, to do justly." Be straight in all your transactions. Abhor every form of dishonesty. Refuse to touch any but clean money. Remember that a full purse is a poor exchange for a clear conscience. It never pays in the long run to have God against you. It all depends on the mint it comes from, whether your money will be a blessing or a curse to you.

The Lord's penny is better than the devil's pound any day. A pure conscience and a stainless character are the best capital a young man can possess. Strict integrity is an article of high commercial value.

Tempted you are sure to be ; do not wait until that moment of trial to determine what your rule of life shall be ; fix it now ; put your foot firmly down and vow before God you will never, and under no circumstances, transgress the line of absolute truth. Put your ban upon every form of "white lies," which are generally the blackest of all. Young men do not generally admire false teeth or false hair, but a falsehood is the ugliest of the three.

I urge this upon you, not merely because "honesty is the best policy"—that is but a poor standard of morality—but because the Lord requires it of you.

Mirabeau once said, "If there were no honesty in the world, it would be invented as a means of getting wealth ;" but, if a man's motive is no higher than that, he may, while outwardly honourable, be a thorough rogue at heart.

The youth who refused to pilfer the till, and to whom a companion suggested, "Nobody will see you," gave an admirable reply, "I shall see myself." It is a grand thing when a man has such an inherent hatred of all that is



underhand, that, policy or no policy, he will be truthful and honest to the backbone; and so will merit the epitaph carved on the tombstone of a recently deceased merchant, respected by all :—

“ His nay was nay without recall ;  
His yea was yea, and powerful all ;  
He gave his yea with careful heed ;  
His thoughts and words were well agreed ;  
His word his bond and seal.”

II. The Lord requires of you that you love mercy. This is a step in advance ; but a step demanded of every one who would wish to be a child of God.

If a man stops short at even-handed justice, content with “an equal balance,” he is a poor creature after all ; he has no heart ; he is not a man. At least, he clearly shows he is not in touch with God. It has been said that to return good for good is human ; to return evil for good is devilish ; to return good for evil is Divine.

But nothing short of the last of the three is what the Master requires of us. Our life is to be regulated, not merely by the cold arithmetical rules of rigid justice, but by the law of love engraven on our heart ; for, whilst we are to give to our neighbour all that is his due, we are to give him yet more than that, even the beneficence that loads the scale, “full measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over.”

Yea, our deeds of kindness are to spring from a warm and holy affection, for, while we are required to “do justly,” we are also required, not merely to do deeds of mercy, but to “love mercy,” our very heart glowing with the purest sympathy.

All selfishness, pride, malice, and envy are to be raked



out of the bosom, and a new and heavenly fire kindled within.

Young men do well to be reminded of this ; for the softer graces are sometimes lacking, even where there is a high sense of honour, and a stern uprightness of character.

To be hard and overbearing is never manly ; nor is gentleness of disposition any token of weakness. It is the bravest and noblest of young men that are the most easily touched by some tale of woe, or by the sight of another's suffering ; and that, like President Garfield or General Gordon, always speak the most fondly of a precious mother, or a beloved sister. Never be ashamed of having strong domestic affections.

Never forget, you who are far from your parents' dwelling, the frequent letter home, with all its detail of your daily life, so interesting to the dear ones far away. You who have risen a bit, and are getting on well, have a kindly thought of your poor relatives, who have a hard struggle to keep body and soul together. If you are at variance with any of your own circle, try to have the difference healed ; put resentment and bitterness far from you ; and remember that God requires of you "to love mercy." The love of mercy will lead you, too, if you possibly can, to bear a hand in doing good to the ignorant outcast poor, of whom such numbers are at our very door. It is a fine thing to see a young man in the centre of his Sunday class, or speaking a few words in the humble mission-room ; and if you really "love mercy," I guarantee we shall find something for you to do.

Don't forget, then, the second requirement of the text.

III. But the last is the highest attainment of all. "The Lord requireth of thee, . . . that thou walk humbly with thy God." Of two of the saints of Scripture is it



specially recorded, that they walked with God. Enoch and Noah have this honourable distinction.

Of the former, indeed, we know little more of the character and life than are implied in this significant testimony, "he walked with God." He has generally been regarded as a type of perfected humanity, as one who spent his life in immediate converse with the spiritual world. This, you observe, is a great advance upon the two former points in our text. A man may "do justly, and love mercy" (and therefore pass amongst his fellow-men as an exemplary, almost faultless, character), and yet be a long way distant from the saintliness expressed in "walking with God." We are apt to think this is a standard to be reached only by one or two in a generation : a Janeway, a Haliburton, a McCheyne, men of rare spirituality, who have close companionship with Heaven. But this is a mistake. The Lord requireth nothing less of thee, O man, whosoever thou art.

It speaks of a life of prayer and communion with God ; each day begun with fresh self-dedication to Him, and ended in the serene consciousness of His love. Christian young men, never be content with a lower level. Never be tempted to imagine that a life of honesty and moral rectitude will suffice. Never be satisfied without daily fellowship with God. Strive to feed on the hidden manna, and to know the secret of the Lord which is with them that fear Him. Show that it is possible to live in the world, and yet above the world. Aim at a very high standard of godliness.

The literal rendering of this last clause of our text is remarkable : "that thou humble thyself to walk with God."

Yet a great truth lies here. As it is only with the



humble that God will walk, you have to come down, down, down, to a lowly level, if you are to enjoy His companionship. It is a strange paradox ; but the highest is here also the lowest level, as Montgomery sings :—

“The saint that wears the brightest crown,  
In deepest adoration bends ;  
The weight of glory bows him down  
The most, when most his soul ascends ;  
Nearest the throne itself must be  
The footstool of humility.”

I do not wish to enlarge ; let me sum up in a few closing words.

You may take this text as a brief compendium of the Christian's faith and practice. God points us here, first, to the great atonement, as the one and sole ground of our acceptance with Him ; and then He tells us what He expects and requires of all who are resting on this basis.

Make sure, to begin with, that you are upon the Rock. The soul must have some confidence to lean on ; there is but one that will stand. He hath showed you what is good, what is acceptable to Him, and sufficient for you ; he hath pointed you to the Blessed One who was born in Bethlehem-Ephratah, and who died on Calvary ; and who by His perfect sacrifice hath opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. God is satisfied with this atonement, and is satisfied with you, if you are satisfied with it.

As of old He looked upon the work of creation and pronounced it good, so has He looked upon the work of redemption and pronounced it good likewise ; and now He directs you to it, He shows you what is good, a good foundation for the soul, and wants you to build your eternal hope upon it.

This is the first thing in religion, and without it all else



is vain. With every pang of conviction or distress of soul He would send you to the Cross.

I do believe some of you are wretchedly uneasy within, and often heave a sigh like this, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord? How shall I make amends for the past, and secure the forfeited favour of my God?" Oh, dream not of any expiation you yourselves can make. Speak not of "thousands of lambs, or calves of a year old." God hath provided a Lamb for a burnt-offering.

Think not to please Him with "ten thousands of rivers of oil"; the stream of blood from Emmanuel's wounds can wash away thy stains. Whisper not of giving "thy first-born for thy transgression, the fruit of thy body for the sin of thy soul." God has given His first-born for thee, and no other sacrifice is needed.

My brothers, this is the old-fashioned Gospel, but it has done for our poor humanity what all the philosophies of the ages have failed to effect, and has yielded a peace which agnostics covet, but never know.

Oh, see that you have clear views of Christian truth. A worthy sea captain told me he would rather be with his ship in a furious hurricane that would tear the hair off his head than come up the Channel in a dense fog on an unrippled sea.

And I tell you, I would rather see you in a very agony of spiritual distress, tossed up and down amid a tempest of conviction, than I would have you floating on the dead calm of indifference, or shrouded in the mist of a vague perplexity. A thousand times rather the storm of an awakened conscience than the lull of a fatal apathy. The agonising cry of the sixth verse speaks of a storm raging within the soul; but our text is God's "Peace! be still," that quiets the troubled heart.



And then it is, when you have found true peace beside the Cross, that you feel the inspiration to a life of integrity, of beneficence, and of humble devotion; and have the guarantee of all needed strength to "do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God."



*A PROMPT AND PERSONAL APPEAL.*



*"Run, speak to this young man."*—ZECH. ii. 4.



## XVII.

### *A PROMPT AND PERSONAL APPEAL.*

THESE are the words of one angel to another, according to what the Prophet Zechariah heard and saw in one of his remarkable visions.

No less than nine distinct visions are described in the earlier chapters of this book—nine dramatic and highly coloured representations, each one being full of prophetic meaning.

The first is the vision of a man, mounted on a red horse, riding through a grove of myrtle-trees; the second is the vision of four horns, and four artificers who came to fray them and cast them down; whilst the third (which is before us in this chapter) is the vision of a man with a measuring-line.

This figure is generally understood to represent the Messiah, "the angel of Jehovah," as he is called in the former chapter; and he it is who bids a subordinate messenger to run and speak to a young man—that young man being Zechariah himself.

Now, when we remember the particular period at which Zechariah lived and prophesied, we get some light upon this vision, and so upon our text.

Born far away in Babylon, he was literally a child of the Captivity, and was amongst the first caravan of exiles who



returned to Jerusalem under Joshua and Zerubbabel. He was then only a boy; but the strange and stirring events of that time made a deep impression, which would be strengthened by the influence of his grandfather, a venerable priest of the name of Iddo, and also, as Nehemiah informs us, one of that company of returned captives.

His father, Berechiah, had apparently died early, for his name disappears from the record; and, according to Hebrew custom, young Zechariah, though in reality the grandson, is sometimes styled "the son of Iddo," because he became the lineal representative of the family.

The affection of a grandparent is often peculiarly intense; and though, in some instances, there may be just a little tendency to idolize and spoil the child, yet, in many a case, where it has been united with fervent piety, the influence has been most blessed and abiding.

The usefulness of Timothy as a minister of the Gospel was distinctly traceable to the early teaching and example of his grandmother Lois: and we can well believe that Zechariah owed not a little of his religious devotion and burning patriotism to the impressions of those tender years, when the venerable long-bearded priest would take the boy between his knees, and tell him thrilling stories of his nation's history.

About the time that Iddo died there was a notable prophet in Israel of the name of Haggai, who also was one of that group of returned exiles from Babylon of whom I have already spoken: but, unlike Zechariah (for he was greatly his senior), he was one of the surviving few who had been carried away into captivity, and who had seen the first temple at Jerusalem in all its splendour. Haggai and Zechariah became closely associated in friendship and in sacred service. Both were raised up for the same mission.



namely, to summon their countrymen to national repentance and to the restoration of the ordinances of religion ; and both directed all their energies to the rebuilding of the temple.

The work had indeed been begun before Zechariah had entered on his ministry, for it was commenced in the reign of Cyrus, 535 B.C., but for some years it was suspended owing to the bitter opposition of the Samaritans. However, on the accession of Darius, 521 B.C., these two prophets urged the people to resume the work, and secured the permission of the king to carry it forward, so that, within five or six years thereafter, it was completed, and dedicated to God.

The success of the undertaking was greatly due to the holy zeal of these two men. Listen to this testimony, given to them in the Book of Ezra (vi. 14), "And the elders of the Jews builded, and they prospered through the prophesying (*i.e.*, not merely predicting, but teaching and preaching) of Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo ; and they builded, and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel."

Not only did they do this, but they co-operated in preparing a form of service for the sanctuary when it should be ready to be opened : and several of the Psalms they jointly composed for this purpose.

I find, on looking into the Septuagint, that Psalms 138, 146, 147, and 148, have each this title, "A Psalm of Haggai and Zechariah" ; and methinks I can hear the two singing together, in the words of one of these Psalms, whilst the restoration of the ancient city is going on—"The Lord doth build up Jerusalem ; He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel ; He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds."



The older prophets, when foretelling the happiness and glory of the times which should succeed the captivity in Babylon, had pictured in glowing terms the gathering together again of the scattered nation in the land of their fathers ; and the vision in the passage before us was designed to confirm this expectation. The figure is seen of a man with a measuring-line, taking the precise dimensions of Jerusalem. Whilst Zechariah is gazing on the mysterious picture, and wondering what it means, another angel is instructed to run and speak to him, and tell him that, so great would be the influx of the returning people, Jerusalem within the walls would not be able to contain them ; they would have to spread themselves out into the open country beyond ; nevertheless, the city would not be without an effectual rampart, for God Himself would be as a wall of fire around it.

The question has frequently been put to me since my return from Palestine, whether I believed there would yet be a literal return of the Jews to Jerusalem, and whether there are any signs pointing in that direction. Now, I think that this vision of Zechariah throws some light upon the matter. Already the population of the sacred city is surging out beyond the walls towards the north and west, so that there is no room for a great increase of its inhabitants ; but, that the prediction must be mainly spiritual in its import, appears to me clear from the terms of the promise, that stony battlements shall not be the city's defence, but the presence of Jehovah Himself, surrounding it as a wall of fire.

This whole passage may teach us that "the Man Christ Jesus" is the great Master-builder of the Church ; that the Church's boundaries shall yet extend far beyond any limits within which our conceptions would confine her ; that God



Himself will be her defence ; and that the pre-eminent glory of the spiritual Jerusalem shall not be any external grandeur nor gorgeous ritual, but the living and manifested presence of Jehovah in the midst of her.

We learn, too, that God is pleased to use the instrumentality of young men in carrying forward His glorious purposes, and that the holy angels delight to co-operate with Christ in the interests of man.

But there are specially three lessons which, from this little text, I would have rivetted on every heart.

I. The importance of promptness and alacrity in the service of God.

Christ bids the angel "run." He is not to creep, nor walk, nor loiter on the way ; for the "king's business requireth haste." The sight of that heavenly messenger in human form running towards him would produce its due effect on the mind of Zechariah. No use for persons to speak to us in God's name who are not filled with energy and zeal.

Utterly ineffective for good shall be any religious efforts that are not manifestly the outcome of profound conviction and overflowing sympathy. Unless an intense interest possess us, unless we are fired with something of a passionate enthusiasm, we need not attempt to morally influence our fellow-men.

When Aaron found that the people of Israel had grievously offended God, and that the plague had already commenced to sweep them off, he ran into the midst of the congregation to offer up an atonement for them. When the holy women who were first at the sepulchre of Jesus found He had already risen, we are told they "departed quickly, and did run to bring the disciples word." How many of us go at snail's pace when we are engaged in the



mark, you will be always witnesses for God. No true man of God can long preserve an *incognito*. The evangelists tell us of the Master that "He could not be hid"; and if you are His disciples, the same will be true of you. You will not be afraid to rebuke the scoffer, or chide the man who utters a profane oath in your presence. You will not keep silent when you hear the Bible attacked, or Christianity assailed.

You will not be ashamed to ask a blessing before your meals in that City restaurant, nor to kneel down in your dormitory before you go to rest.

I have seen a great deal of good done by private correspondence. Your brother John is very careless about religion; your cousin William is getting into bad company; the next time you write, say something very pointed and kind; it may make more impression than all he hears from the pulpit.

If any of you ever visited the castle of Wartburg, you have doubtless been shown a great black blotch upon the wall, which they tell you was made in this way:—When Martin Luther was in this retired spot, he was so haunted by the devil, that at last, in a fit of righteous indignation, he took up his ink-pot and hurled it at the imagined figure which he took to be his adversary.

The pot broke upon the wall, leaving an ugly splash behind; but the devil vanished, and troubled him in that fashion no more. I will not guarantee this story to be literally true; but I am pretty sure of this, that a well-administered pot of ink has often put the devil to flight.

At the same time, thirdly, we may learn the special value of oral testimony. Personal interview is the best way of getting at a human heart. "Speak to this young man." Nothing like the living voice.



"I believe," says Dr. Storr, of Brooklyn, "that the kingdom of God advances more on spoken words than it does on essays written and read ; on words, that is, in which the present thought and feeling of the mind break into natural and forceful expression."

Happy the preacher who, independent of MSS., can pour forth rich thought in eloquent and telling language ! But, gift how rare !

I will apply the text, however, in a somewhat different way.

How many young fellows there are in London, who, without reason, complain that nobody ever speaks to them about these matters. A tract may be thrust into their hand, or they may be invited to church ; but not a soul has a kind, brotherly word to say to them. If they come to the house of God, ten to one they go away without any one accosting them ; and as they have few acquaintances in the great city, they get somewhat chilled and discouraged. It is marvellous what even one kind, hearty word can do. I have seen repeated instances of it.

When a stranger comes in amongst us, perhaps in a somewhat morbid and depressed frame of mind, a warm, genial greeting may be like a burst of sunshine to him ; he feels the world is not so cold after all, and that there are kind hearts that wish him well.

The text is a piece of advice I would often wish to give to the members and office-bearers of the Church, especially on such occasions as the present. Speak to this and that young man ; don't be too shy ; a kind word will cost you little, but may do much good.

I believe that many a one is just longing to be approached in this way, but does not like to be the first to make advance. If you would only break the ice, you don't know what service you might render. There are warm, generous



hearts that are only waiting for the opportunity; if addressed, they would respond in a way that would surprise you.

I cannot tell you how many letters the post brings to me from persons wishing a little counsel in the Christian life; a sheet of writing-paper is very good in its way, but in most cases I feel that a few minutes' personal interview is far better. There are difficulties and problems that cannot be solved by a few strokes of the pen; but, when heart comes in contact with heart, and with a sweet reasonableness the matter is discussed, light breaks in, and the path of duty becomes clear.

There are few things that occasion more perplexity to a certain class of well-disposed young persons of both sexes, than the question, how far they may, without sin, enter into the pleasures of the world. Some time ago the representative of a society of young men wrote me, requesting an answer to this question: "How far may a young man, who is trying to lead a godly life, join in athletic sports and recreations?"

My reply was to the following effect:—Generally, every recreation is to be avoided by Christian young men, which (1) naturally leads them into evil or doubtful company; or (2) tends to produce reaction, either in the form of mental depression or physical lassitude; or (3) is in any way associated with betting or gambling; or (4) disinclines and infits for religious duties.

I believe you may apply this fourfold test as rigidly as you like, it still leaves a wide range of outdoor and indoor recreations and amusements, sufficient to satisfy the most high-spirited youth, and brace him up for his daily toil.

But there are questions to which, in my judgment, the Christian teacher is not called upon to give either an absolute "yes," or a decided "no."



Doubtless many persons would like such an oracle, because it saves them from mental conflict, and relieves them of responsibility. But it is part of the spiritual discipline that is appointed for you, to grapple with such difficulties and come to your own conclusions.

For example, a young Christian says to me, "Is it wrong to go to the theatre?" Well, a very great deal can be said on both sides; but, instead of giving a prompt and crisp reply, affirmative or negative, I should prefer to lay down such rules for your guidance as I have already indicated, and ask you yourself to determine your duty. All along the course of our daily life, God puts us in positions where the line between right and wrong is not distinctly defined, and it is a part of our moral training to decide for ourselves what we ought to do. Remember that consciences, as well as judgments, vary. St. Paul distinctly lays down the principle that in regard to certain things, what may be wrong for me to do may not be wrong for you. In such cases, each person must decide his own course. I am not to condemn you for doing what for me would be inexpedient; nor have you any right to call me narrow if I cannot allow to myself the liberty you enjoy.

But this is just one of those instances in which, probably, a little private talk is likely to be more useful than any formal discussion.

Let me just say, in closing, that throughout this prophecy of Zechariah, there is the ardent glow that comes of manhood early consecrated to God.

Much as we rejoice when a man of fifty or sixty is converted, our joy is greater still when the strength of a young life is given to the Lord.

Oh, do not waste a single month of these precious years. Youth will soon fly past. You will wonder to find how



quickly ripe manhood comes and old age follows. There is not a day to be lost. Those of you who are still unsaved, down on your knees this very night ; and, ere you rise, give yourselves up unreservedly to Christ. He is eager to save you. He bids His messengers "run" after you.

Oh, to see the same eagerness on your side ! a running after Him, like the young man of whom St. Mark tells us, that he came running to Jesus, and, kneeling down to Him, asked Him the way of life. Some of you are only creeping towards God in a slow, hesitating, half-hearted way. That will never do. Get up at once, and say, "I will arise, and go to my Father," and He who, while yet the returning prodigal was a great way off, saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him, will meet you too with the same loving welcome, and make you blessed both now and for ever. Amen.



*THE MEDITATIVE MAN.*



*"And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at eventide."*—  
GEN. xxiv. 63.



## XVIII.

### *THE MEDITATIVE MAN.*

AS I was debating with myself what subject I should select for this occasion, it occurred to me that in this grand picture-gallery of saints there is one worthy figure I have not yet touched upon ; and I thought that the gentle, guileless character of Isaac, and his modest, peaceful life, might yield some lessons for young men, both interesting and wholesome.

It is a happy coincidence, that the prominent men in Bible history are of so varied a type, representing all kinds of disposition, and all orders of mind ; for with one or other of them each of us must feel in sympathy ; and we may safely judge that every class of men have their fitting sphere in the service of the kingdom of God.

I am not going to offer you a full biographical sketch ; but, focussing your attention on that point in Isaac's career where we find him in the text, I shall bring so much of his early life before you as to show the man in his true character, and emphasize the lessons we are about to deduce.

All through his life he was a retired, home-loving man, a person of strong domestic affections ; no lover of travel or adventure, but quite content to "dwell among his own people." His birth-place was in the extreme south of Palestine—a bare, upland district between the Judæan hills and the Arabian desert—and there is no reason to believe he was ever many miles from the spot where he was born.



To most men, probably, such an existence would seem insufferably monotonous ; but many a happy and fruitful life has been spent far from the stir and din of cities ; and Isaac shows how possible it is to serve one's generation and to honour God in a quiet, sequestered sphere just as well as in a life of prominent action.

Don't imagine that it is only brilliant philosophers, and orators, and statesmen, and warriors that live for the good of their race ; or that happiness is mainly found amid the excitement of Courts and public assemblies. Ah ! in some shady nook, "far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife," there may be found a serener joy, and a piety that shall for generations leave a blessing behind it.

Ay, some of you are the sons of parents now, it may be, passed into the skies, whose godly lives shed a fragrance around them, and whose names are never mentioned in the district without loving respect. No wonder you cherish their memory as your richest inheritance ; but the big world never heard of them.

"Remote from towns they ran their godly race,  
Nor e'er had changed, nor wished to change, their place."

It is by no means the star-decked chieftains and notables of earth that are most to be envied. A noiseless, meditative life like Isaac's may have the choicest benediction ; and even "Solomon in all his glory" was ready to acknowledge that "better is he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city."

I believe that we are justified in taking the text to denote not merely an isolated act, but a characteristic habit. It was this good man's practice to court retirement, and, in the sacredness of silent solitude, to seek communion with nature and with God. I have, on former occasions, spoken to



you of the stirring lives of Joshua, and Gideon, and David, and Joab, and many another conspicuous personage of Old Testament history. Let me now direct your thoughts to a very different type of man, and speak specially of two features of his character, namely, his fondness for home and his love of meditation.

I. His fondness for home. From his birth, Isaac may be said to have been the idol of his mother, as he certainly was (so far as his own recollections could go) the only child in his father's dwelling. Under these circumstances, and brought up in the midst of wealth and abundance, it is remarkable that he betrayed none of the unseemly features of a spoiled child.

In too many sad instances an only son has proved a heart-break to his parents, their doting affection being returned with selfishness and base ingratitude. If it is "good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth," it must be bad for him to be early pampered and indulged; and few of us are not able to point, within the circle of our own acquaintance, to some distressing example of the mischief that flows from overweening parental tenderness.

There is no reason, however, to doubt that, though Isaac's mother was a somewhat impulsive and imperious woman, she was a person of strong decision and religious principle, and, as we shall see, she drew out towards herself the most devoted affection of her son.

Then, we cannot forget (nor fail to connect this with the admirable character which Isaac developed) the conscientious faithfulness of his godly father, to whom the Lord had already borne the noble testimony: "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord." The quiet, domestic life in the midst of which Isaac was reared, with



the pure example ever before him in both his parents, served, under the blessing of God, to mould him into a gentle, guileless, and religious nature.

I have, indeed, seen his character described as soft, and almost womanly ; but it is very evident it was not destitute of firmness and courage, for few young men could have stood the ordeal which, on a well-known and memorable occasion, he had to endure.

Josephus informs us that Isaac had just reached his twenty-fifth year, and was in the full vigour of his youth, when that mysterious summons came to his father to offer him up as a sacrifice upon the hill of Moriah. Perhaps some of you have thought of him as but a child, when the awful command was heard from heaven. But this is clearly a mistake.

Not many details, indeed, are given us in the Book of Genesis, but we are distinctly left to believe that the brave and pious youth placed himself as an obedient victim at his father's disposal ; and the Jewish historian puts these words in his lips : " I should be unworthy of life were I capable of showing reluctance to obey the will of my father and my God. It were enough for me that my earthly parent alone called me to the altar ; how much more when my heavenly Father re-demands His own ? "

By Divine interposition that life was spared. None the less truly was it, so to speak, laid upon the altar of God.

The fond love of mother and home is not inconsistent with a brave and manly character.

The lad who, born of godly parents, and come from a Christian household, feels but very slightly those domestic ties, and would almost be ashamed to betray any loving, filial tenderness—if he has it—is a despicable and unmanly creature.



There is a certain stage in young-manhood (generally in the latter part of the teens), when large numbers contrive to make themselves particularly disagreeable.

I honestly believe there are scarcely any, perhaps none, of that class in this audience ; for self-conceit makes them curl the lip at the idea of joining such an assembly. But they are to be met with everywhere around ; indeed, some would almost call them the young men of the time. They are the horror of all sensible people, and particularly of sensible people of the other sex. They have lost the open frankness and generous simplicity of boys, and they have not acquired so much as a single quality of men. They are neither the one or the other, but just at a stage between, where intelligence and good sense and modesty are at zero, and little indeed remains but astounding self-sufficiency. I believe they are called "hobble-de-hoys," though I do not know that the word is in the dictionary. They assume airs that make them quite ridiculous ; treat their superiors as simpletons ; will not listen to advice ; will not brook restraint ; feel no ties to the domestic hearth ; speak irreverently of their father as "the governor," and their mother as "the old woman," and consider themselves infinitely wiser than all their elders. I hope, for God's sake, there is not a single youth here of whom this is the portrait ; for a more objectionable type of humanity does not exist ; and such a character deserves to be roasted on the gridiron of universal contempt.

It is well to let such beings know that they are the objects of your abhorrence ; and that, in the judgment of all good men, a lad never seems so small and despicable as when he betrays a heartless indifference to home, and jauntily affects a proud independence. I know no better augury of a young man's future than true filial devotion.



Very rarely does one go morally wrong whose passionate love to his mother is a ruling force in his life, and whose continual desire is to gladden her heart. Depend upon it, next to the love of God, this is the noblest emotion.

I do not remember a single instance of a young fellow going to the bad who was tenderly devoted to his parents. The biographer of President Garfield states that, amid all his wonderful successes, the chief pleasure he found was the thought of the gratification which the news of each advance would give to his mother's heart.

When Goethe, long after his mother's death, visited Frankfort, he made a point to seek out every one who had been kind to her, and personally thank them.

The poet Gray never mentioned his departed mother without a deep sigh. One day I went to Stoke Pogis, just that I might have a glimpse of the scene of his exquisite "Elegy"; and I was touched by observing that, on the memorial which he erected over her grave, he describes her as "the careful, tender mother of many children, one of whom alone had *the misfortune* to survive her."

Although William Cowper's mother died when he was but a child, her memory was to him, throughout his whole life, an inspiration; and he declared that for fifty years there was not a single week that she was not uppermost in his thoughts.

An interval of three years elapsed between Isaac's loss of his mother and his marriage; but he had had the satisfaction before her demise of introducing to her his future wife. All the charms of Rebekah did not weaken the bonds of filial affection. Not till three years after Sarah's death was he "comforted"; but the depth of his love as a son was a good omen of his devotedness as a husband. There is something here for young women to note; the man who is tenderly



considerate to his mother is the man whose love a maiden may safely rely on.

Advice on the matter of matrimony is seldom much heeded ; but, would our fair sisters listen to me, I should bid them beware of the attentions of any man who has treated his parents with coldness or disrespect. If you give your hand to such an individual, I judge you will not have your sorrows to seek. The man is not worthy to have a good wife who has not been tenderly kind to his mother.

Isaac's peculiar relish for a quiet, uneventful, domestic life is not without its lessons for us in these days. Many a foreigner has rallied our countrymen upon their too great fondness for home ; but I think we may be proud of the reproach.

May the day be far distant when this feature of English and of Scottish life shall give place to the *café*, or hotel, or *pension* existence so much in vogue in other lands !

Sir Walter Scott expressed a true national sentiment when, on his return to Abbotsford for the last time, after a long stay on the continent, he ordered himself to be slowly wheeled on his chair through the various rooms, and then said, "I've seen much, but nothing like my ain house ; give me one turn more." Nor does the remark hold good only in the case of lordly and well-furnished mansions ; a lowly thatched cottage may have an equal charm. Although, as I believe, the ever-popular song, "Home, sweet home," was written by one who never had a home of his own, there are probably no lines that find a truer echo in every refined and virtuous English heart ; and the more that real religion exerts its benign sway, the more is such happiness intensified. I hope then, my lads, that you have got more than a touch of Isaac's nature.

Many of you are at present far from home. The scene



of your childhood is probably hundreds of miles away ; but strong is the cable of attachment that binds you to it ; may that cable never snap ! Show kindness to your father's house. Don't forget how your letters are prized at home. Be especially thoughtful and considerate towards her who bore you. Would that every man were as devoted to his mother as Isaac was to Sarah.

II. Now I want a word with you about the other feature of his character—I mean his love of meditation.

It would be an excellent thing for many of you if in this also you could make him your example. Meditation is very profitable to the mind ; but it is too little known in these bustling, busy times.

Perhaps it would be a good thing for most of us if we talked less, wrote less, worked less, read less, and meditated more. I am sure some of you have such long hours at business you have scarcely any time for reflection. You seem to be working at high pressure from morning to night, driven from pillar to post all day long, and then fit for nothing but to lie down and rest ; and so the days run on, and the weeks glide by, and you hardly know what it is to take a few moments for serious meditation.

It is certainly far from being a desirable thing to stagnate in a sleepy hollow, but most of you are exposed to the opposite danger ; this feverish, tearing, hurry-scurry life of London gives you little opportunity for taking stock of your spiritual condition, and musing on the ways and works of God.

This bustling, restless condition is not favourable either to mental or spiritual growth. I have known men spend years after this fashion, and not until some serious illness laid them on their back did they really ask themselves the question, "Am I right with God?"



Nay, I could tell you of cases which have come under my personal notice, in which this vehement, impetuous, disquieted existence has been continued right up to the lip of the grave ; and the man has suddenly woke up to realize that the concerns of eternity had never even received his serious consideration.

We are left to make our own guess as to the themes which occupied Isaac's mind, as he took his evening stroll in the fields of Beersheba ; but not a doubt they were of a pure and elevating character.

Isaac was a man of God ; this is beyond question. His conduct on Mount Moriah can only thus be explained ; his whole life was in keeping with this belief ; and our Lord not only indicated in His argument with the Sadducees that Isaac was then at rest with God, but spoke of fellowship with him as a feature and privilege of the heavenly state, saying of the redeemed of all lands that they should "sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven." You are not to see in the text the picture of a morose and melancholy recluse, of a morbid misanthrope who shuns society—not at all ; but, rather, the picture of a thoughtful saint who is able to find true enjoyment in communing with nature and with God.

The best of men have found pleasure in occasional retirement, and it betokens some moral defect when one does not desire sometimes to be alone. An hour of reflective solitude should not only be very profitable, but very enjoyable ; and it generally is so to those who are consciously at peace with God. The saintly Dr. Love, of Glasgow, once made the striking remark, "I have found retired places to be the secret haunts of the Son of God." Milton, Wordsworth, Cowper, Gray, and many others of our sweetest poets have sung the charms of solitude.



Those who assert that it is good for man to be sometimes alone, do not contradict that utterance of highest authority, "It is not good that the man should be alone"; and I have the notion that, in those quiet evening hours, Isaac was illustrating their harmony. Who can doubt that many of his thoughts were then given to the important change he was about to make in his condition, and to the new duties and responsibilities it would involve? It was whilst he was thus musing that the fair form of Rebekah broke upon his view, and the living answer to his devout prayers stood before him. You may observe that the word "meditate" is in the margin rendered "pray," and these exercises are very closely akin. There would be fewer conjugal quarrels and domestic broils if lovers always took God into their counsels as did Isaac and Rebekah.

The picture may seem to some of you to have a touch of the sentimental. None the worse for that. Our age is getting just a little too prosaic and utilitarian. There is a reaction from the ecstatic, rapturous, rhapsodical style of fifty years ago, and, like all reactions, it is apt to be extreme.

It is possible to make matrimonial arrangements too much of an affair of convenience, or business, or *£ s. d.*, but such unions are rarely suggestive of Eden. Love, even in its most romantic sense, is a beautiful thing; and, when combined with thoughtfulness and piety, is the fairest flower that has escaped the Fall.

But I must not run into this vein. My point is the duty and profitableness of devout meditation. Every young man should seize a little time every day to be alone with God. The Bible is a sweet companion to every one who has got the new heart. Office hours may be long, but surely a few minutes out of the twenty-four hours can be snatched for



fellowship with Heaven. The flame of piety must be burning very low if you can find no time for meditation and prayer.

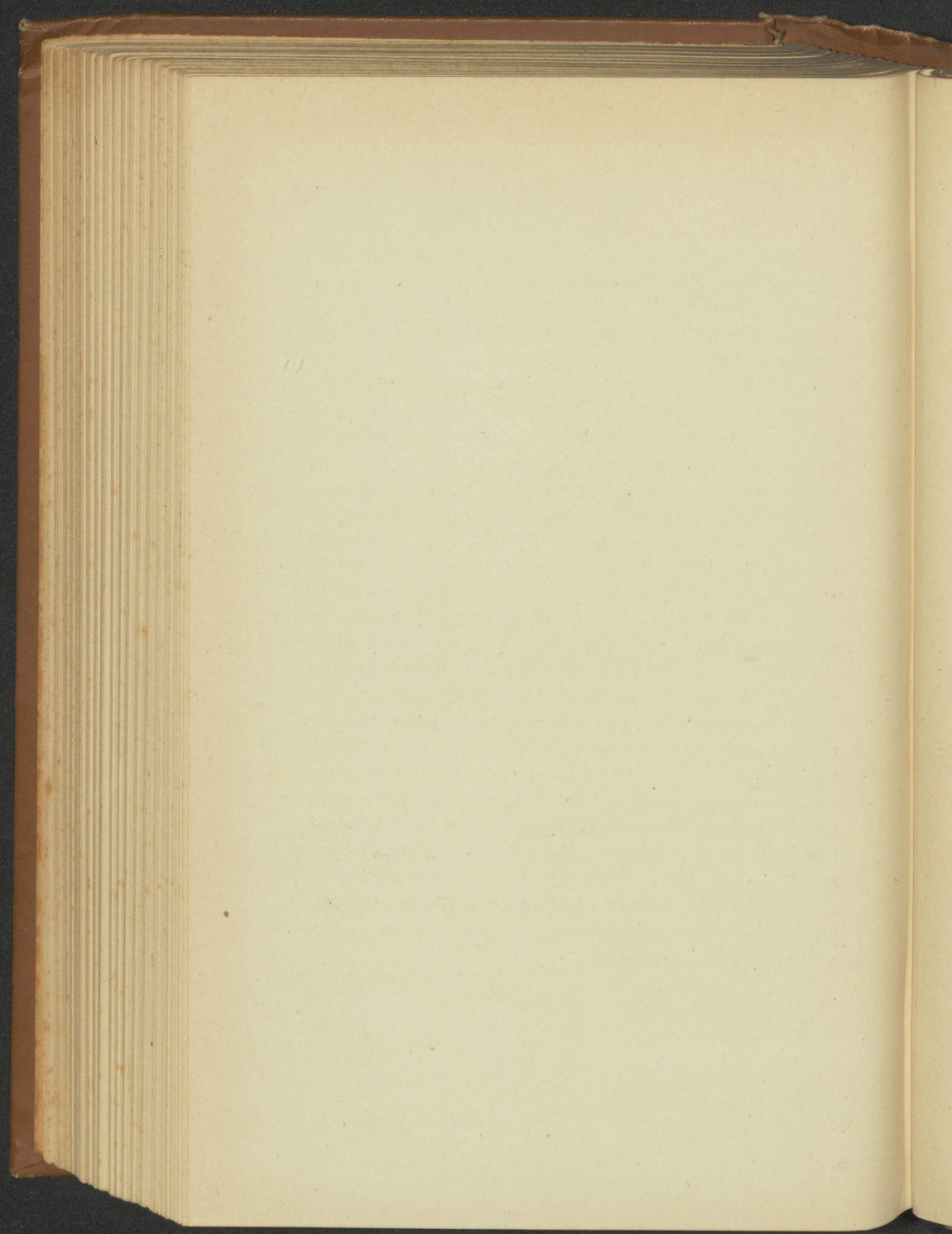
I am pleased to observe some of you slipping in here for a quiet hour at the Week-night Service. I wonder that more of you do not value the opportunity.

It is a helpful break in the middle of the week's turmoil and care. I often think how delightful it is, in the midst of this noisy London, to meet together for a calm, still hour of devotion, and, leaving the world behind, to lift up our hearts to nobler things. Some of you don't know how good it is, because you have never tried it. Just make the experiment. If you cannot get to the fields like Isaac, you have what he had not, a house of worship to meditate in.

Above all, remember, each of you, that you have a spiritual and immortal nature; and that has claims upon you which throw the interests of Mammon infinitely into the shade. Some men, I am told, reject the Gospel because they think too much; but I find a much larger number reject it because they do not think at all. Christianity does not demand that you give a blind assent to its teachings; nay, it wants you to submit them to continuous thinking; and St. Paul's advice to a young man is, "Meditate upon these things: give thyself wholly to them: that thy profiting may appear to all."

God's blessing be on each one of you who, like Isaac, loves the still and meditative hour, and whose heart kindles with every thought of home! Amen.







*STRONG IN THE GRACE OF CHRIST.*



*"Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ  
Jesus."—2 Tim. ii. 1.*



XIX.

*STRONG IN THE GRACE OF CHRIST.*

ONE day, a friend of the late Lord Palmerston put to him the question, "At what age do you consider a man to be in the prime of life?" The instant reply was, "Seventy-nine." "But," added the famous statesman with a smile, "as I have just entered my eightieth year, I fear I am slightly past it."

Now, being myself just five and twenty—in spirit, I feel like claiming each of you young men as a brother; but, inasmuch as more than twice that number of years have slipped over me, I have a right to be somewhat paternal in my tone, and therefore I look each of you affectionately in the face, and as I grasp your hand, adopt the style in which St. Paul addressed the juvenile Timothy, "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."

In many respects, I think, this young man was in need of the exhortation to *cultivate physical strength*. Clearly, he had not a robust constitution. His character was cast in a somewhat effeminate mould. He had a timid, shrinking, sensitive, emotional nature. There was with him just a little tendency towards an ascetic life. He wanted vigour, stamina, backbone.

In a former letter, Paul refers to Timothy's delicate health, and bids him take care of himself, and not be too abstemious.

The young man had been a strict abstainer, as every



young man ought to be ; but the apostle suggests that a little wine would be good for him. There are many excellent people who have never been able to forgive Paul for giving this piece of advice. Many consider it a most unwise and dangerous thing to say to a youth, "Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake, and thine often infirmities." But surely their common sense is at fault in the matter. Observe, there is no encouragement here to the use of stimulants as a beverage. Paul was addressing a young abstainer, and was recommending a medicine. "Drink no longer water," is rendered in the Revised Version more accurately : "Be no longer a drinker of water" ; implying that Timothy was a teetotaler ; and, had he not been so, probably this medicine would have been of no benefit to him. Alcohol is useful as a drug only to those who in health never touch it. It is the greatest mistake to accustom yourselves to it when you are well ; it will then be of no medicinal value to you when you are sick.

It has been generally inferred, from the absence of any allusion to Timothy's father, that he had died during his son's infancy. The care of the lad had therefore devolved upon his mother and grandmother ; and such training possibly tended to make him just a trifle effeminate. Anyhow, Paul assumed the place of a father to him ; and in these two letters gave him excellent paternal advice. He was concerned to see him so pale, sickly, and dyspeptic ; and he wanted him to become strong and robust for his Master's service.

You may feel perfectly safe in giving a young man this counsel, under the four conditions that are indicated here—first when he has hitherto confined himself to water ; secondly, when he uses wine only as a medicine, and not



as a beverage ; thirdly, when he takes only "a little," as Paul suggests ; and fourthly, when he gives it up as soon as his health is restored.

In addition to all this, I do not hesitate to say—for it is Bible teaching—that there may be circumstances in which, even though a little wine would be safe and useful, it is our clear duty to abstain, ay, even to the detriment of our health, if we have reason to know that our abstinence may be helpful to a brother who is liable to fall.

Well now, let us clearly understand that there is no necessary connection between invalidism and piety. For the service of Christ, and for the recommendation of religion, we want our Christian young men to be broad-chested, stalwart, and vigorous ; we want sound lungs, and quick circulation, and good digestion, and brawny muscle, and buoyant animal spirits, not omitting a clear and energetic brain.

That Timothy was of a nervous, timid, and even desponding temperament, would appear from many a reference in Paul's writings. Thus, to the Corinthians he says, "Now, if Timothy come to you, see that he be among you without fear ; let no man despise him." To himself he writes : "Let no man despise thy youth" ; "take heed unto thyself" ; "endure hardness" ; and so forth. Not a doubt, his physical temperament would give colour to his whole character. Cheerfulness and indigestion rarely go together. To the question, "Is life worth living?" it was once wittily answered, "That all depends on the liver."

Dr. Alexander, of New York, when asked if he enjoyed the full assurance of faith, somewhat startled his interrogator with the reply, "Yes, except when the wind is from the east." It is not inappropriate that I should say to some of you, as Paul in effect wrote to Timothy, "Take care of



your health. Do not neglect the body. Give attention to your diet. Take sufficient exercise. Do all you can to strengthen your physical frame." I have known many a student who deliberately violated the laws of hygiene, and in his eagerness to develop his intellect, let his body go to waste and ruin. It was when pointing to such a mere scarecrow of a man, that Sydney Smith once said, "There is my friend So-and-so, who has not body enough to cover his mind decently with ; his intellect is improperly exposed."

We never gain in the long run by any disproportionate treatment of one part of the complex being. For the battle and work of life you will want all the healthy animalism you can acquire. It is not needful, indeed, that you be able to lift a weight of a thousand pounds, or vault a six-foot wall, or walk a hundred miles in so many hours ; be thankful if—unlike Timothy—you have a sound constitution that never troubles you ; and neglect no means for keeping it in thorough and efficient repair.

The next thing I would say, in carrying out the spirit of Paul's admonition to Timothy, is, Be strong *in the doctrines of the Christian faith*. Have a firm grasp of the great and essential truths of religion. See that you have a clear apprehension of the Gospel, and don't be moved away by the drifting currents of opinion.

No man can be spiritually strong, or restful, or happy, who does not possess a well-defined creed. If there is no series of propositions which you can preface with an honest "I believe," then I cannot see how you can claim to be a Christian.

In this chapter and the preceding, Paul refers to several persons by name, and to many more without name, who were drifting away from the faith ; there were Phygellus,



and Hermogenes, and Hymenæus, and Philetus, each adopting some form of error ; and others who were "striving about words to no profit," indulging in "profane and vain babblings," and attempting to grapple with "foolish and unlearned questions," that only gendered strife. Timothy must keep clear of this folly, and be strong in his convictions as to Christian truth. "Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me." Continue in the things which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of.

This age is characterized by a restless impatience under anything like a creed. It is quite the common thing to hear one say he won't be trammelled by any confession or Articles of Faith ; he will subscribe no formulated statement of his religious belief ; he will keep himself free from every such bondage or restriction. Well, all I have to say is, if you have no definite creed, you cannot be spiritually strong. A firm grasp of truth is the only solid basis of character : the man who believes nothing, or anything, or everything, is little better than a jellyfish.

St. Paul knew both whom he believed, and what he believed ; and herein lay the secret of his moral strength. You are surrounded by countless plausible fallacies and insidious errors, which are but reproductions in a new form of old and exploded follies ; and a poor figure you will cut, my friend, if you have no definite and well-grounded convictions of your own. The phases of modern infidelity are extremely subtle ; the assaults upon our faith are dexterous and incessant ; and there are clever sceptics who will twist you round their little finger, and within ten minutes blow all your religion to pieces, if you are without an intelligent and well-defined belief. Wholesale doubting, so far as religion is concerned, is at once the fashion and the weakness of these times in which we live. Now, a



sturdy character can never be built up on a foundation like that. There is weakness, not strength, in doubts.

Tennyson's oft-quoted line is generally applied in a way he certainly did not intend :—

“ There is more faith in honest doubt,  
Believe me, than in half the creeds ; ”

for he did not mean resting content in doubt, but spoke of one fighting his way eagerly out of it. His words are :—

“ He fought his doubts, and gathered strength ;  
He would not make his judgment blind ;  
He faced the spectres of his mind,  
And laid them. Thus he came at length  
To find a stronger faith his own,  
And Power was with him in the night,  
Which makes the darkness and the light,  
And dwells not in the light alone.”

Ah ! full well you know that a large measure of so-called intellectual doubt has far more to do with the heart than with the brain : he that desireth to do the will of God shall know of the doctrine whether it is Divine.

“ One lesson,” as Mr. Froude well says, “ history repeats with emphatic distinctness, and without the least ambiguity ; and that lesson is, that the world is built on moral foundations, that in the long run it is well with the good, and in the long run it is ill with the wicked ; and that one lesson is the old doctrine taught long ago by the Hebrew prophets, that the fear of the Lord is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.”

This brings me to the third point. In the spirit of Paul's admonition to Timothy, I say, Be strong *in resisting the lusts of the flesh*. It may almost seem strange that in addressing a delicate, refined, cultured, almost effeminate youth such as this, the apostle should deem it needful,



with such explicit and emphatic reiteration, to warn against the indulgence of the lower passions of his nature. "Be an example in purity." "Keep thyself pure." "Flee also youthful lusts." But it is often sadly the case, that young men of such a temperament and constitution are the most liable to fall.

A sentimental nature and a sedentary life are not unfrequently associated with a morbid animalism. It is not the muscular and well-developed form, the robust athlete, that is in most danger here. The truth is, every one of you needs to be on your guard; and the bright jewel of unblemished chastity, that gem which, once lost, can never be re-possessed in this world, may be stolen from you in the hour when you think you are most safe. What power of resolute determination does it demand, to banish unclean thoughts from the mind, and give them not a moment's quarter! How terrible is the battle you have sometimes to fight, if the flesh is not to obtain the mastery over you! The enemy of souls is always most busy in your time of idleness. Keep the mind well occupied, and the bodily powers in exercise, and you are less likely to become his prey. It was sound advice which, just a hundred years ago, Samuel Johnson gave to Boswell: "If you are solitary, be not idle; if you are idle, be not solitary."

But it would be with little hope of your victory in this battle that I urge you to hold your ground, if you had no higher strength than your own. Many a young man has told me, or written to me, that he utterly despaired of success. "It's no use," he says; "I'm powerless. It is this that is keeping me from being a Christian. What good is it for me to join the Church, when I know that, in the presence of certain temptations, I am as weak as water?"



"My son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." This makes all the difference in the world. God assures you, His grace is sufficient for you. He declares that "He is able to make you stand." "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might."

For God's sake get out of London as fast as you can, if you are not determined to resist to the death. Oh, you must fight as though you had no strength but your own; and yet you must trust God as though you had no strength but His. Dear young man, the pride of your mother, the hope of your father, the joy of your sisters, I adjure you that you keep your garment unspotted by the flesh.

This is not all. Still reading the text in the light of the whole epistle, I say it means, Be strong *in the endurance of hardship*, in the carrying of the cross. "Thou therefore, endure hardness." Perhaps young Timothy was just a little in danger of being a hot-house plant, of being defective in self-denial, and courage, and manliness. He needed to rough it a bit, as we say. He was slightly lacking in self-reliance. Ah! it is not in some sheltered nook or warm conservatory that sturdy plants are reared, but away on the rugged Alpine cliffs, with the wild storms beating around them. What many of our young men of the present day sadly want is to "endure hardness." They are in danger of taking things too easily. They wish to shirk real, solid work. Why, what is this I see in the morning paper? "A young man advertises for a light situation." I am ashamed of him! Remember, sirs, you have to work; be it with brawn or brain, you must work; whether you handle a pick-axe or a quill pen, whether you drive a wheelbarrow or edit a journal, success will be contingent on downright honest work. It is this that gives you appetite for your meals, and enjoyment of your night's rest, and full appreci-



ation of your occasional holiday. There are young men who are never willing to endure any kind of hardness ; but the world is not proud of them ; they are born to be mere nobodies. Find out what your appropriate task is, and then off with your coat, and buckle on to it with all the vigour you possess.

It is said that the young German Emperor, wishing to know the experience of a common soldier on guard, put himself on duty for twenty-four hours in an extemporised guard-room in the garden at Potsdam, and stood sentry during the four spells of two hours each. He wore the uniform of a private soldier, carried a rifle, and ate of the soldier's simple fare.

If the story is true, I honour him for it. The other day there passed away, at a ripe old age, a man who all his life was a firm believer in the advantage of "enduring hardness," and who was the sworn enemy of kid-glove labour. James Nasmyth was one of the most interesting personalities of our day, and his career in many respects a noble example for young men. I remember how deep was the interest awakened at the Great Exhibition of 1851 by the wonderful steam-hammer which must ever bear his name, which was shown alternately cracking a nut without touching the kernel, and pounding a mass of metal with a thump that would shake a parish. One great secret of his remarkable success in life was the stern thoroughness with which he set to accomplish any work he had to do. "To encounter and overcome a difficulty," he says in his autobiography, "is the most interesting of all things." He did not believe in the future of any young man who was not prepared to climb the ladder by his own exertion. It was his conviction that true men are manufactured rather by obstacles than by helps ; more, through the difficulties they



have to overcome, than the facilities they may enjoy. The hardships and trials of early life have often proved unspeakable blessings.

Many is the distinguished man who never would have risen above the level of a tame mediocrity, but for the baffling and thwarting through which he had to push his way.

Don't be afraid, young men, to "endure hardness." It is God's appointed way by which you will grow strong. Hundreds have thanked Him with all their hearts for it, that in the beginning of life they had to pass through a rough discipline.

And this I will say to some of you, that if it is otherwise with you, and your lot is an easy one, you will need special grace for the building up of a strong and noble character.

Whatever be the circumstances in which God has placed you, an honourable and saintly life is possible of attainment ; and to me it is an unspeakable joy to see not a few of you giving promise of such a future. Oh ! if it were not so, I should get utterly disheartened.

God knows there is enough around us to make us sometimes almost despair of our country. When we hear of young men who have been brought up in pious homes, and who know their duty as well as the pulpit can tell them, deliberately casting not only religion but even decency behind them ; reading books which they know they ought to pitch into the fire ; coming home to their lodgings at two in the morning in a state of beastly intoxication ; neglecting their business, and associating with the vilest companions ; going one night to a low theatre, and another to a dancing saloon ; staking money on a race, or even sitting at a gaming-table ; and in all this deliberately trampling on the



counsels and pleadings and prayers of loving parents and faithful friends, stifling the voice of conscience, and crushing out every serious thought, one is ready to cry, "Shame ! A thousand times, shame !" And yet, even amid the outburst of indignation, a feeling of pity will arise, and a yearning desire to rescue them, even still, from the pit of ruin that is before them.

Remember, young men, there is a witchery about sin. One indulgence in vice, one bet upon a horse, one night of carousal, may so damn you in your own eyes, that all self-respect is gone, and you are henceforth but a plaything of the devil.

I speak out plainly, because facts demand it ; but I speak hopefully, because in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ there is salvation possible for you all.

Oh, believe it, this Divine Redeemer is "mighty to save." In Him there is pardon for all that black record of the past, which you would fain, but cannot, forget : and there is power to meet the fiercest temptation when it comes, and stamp it under your feet. Only fight the battle bravely, determined that you will win.

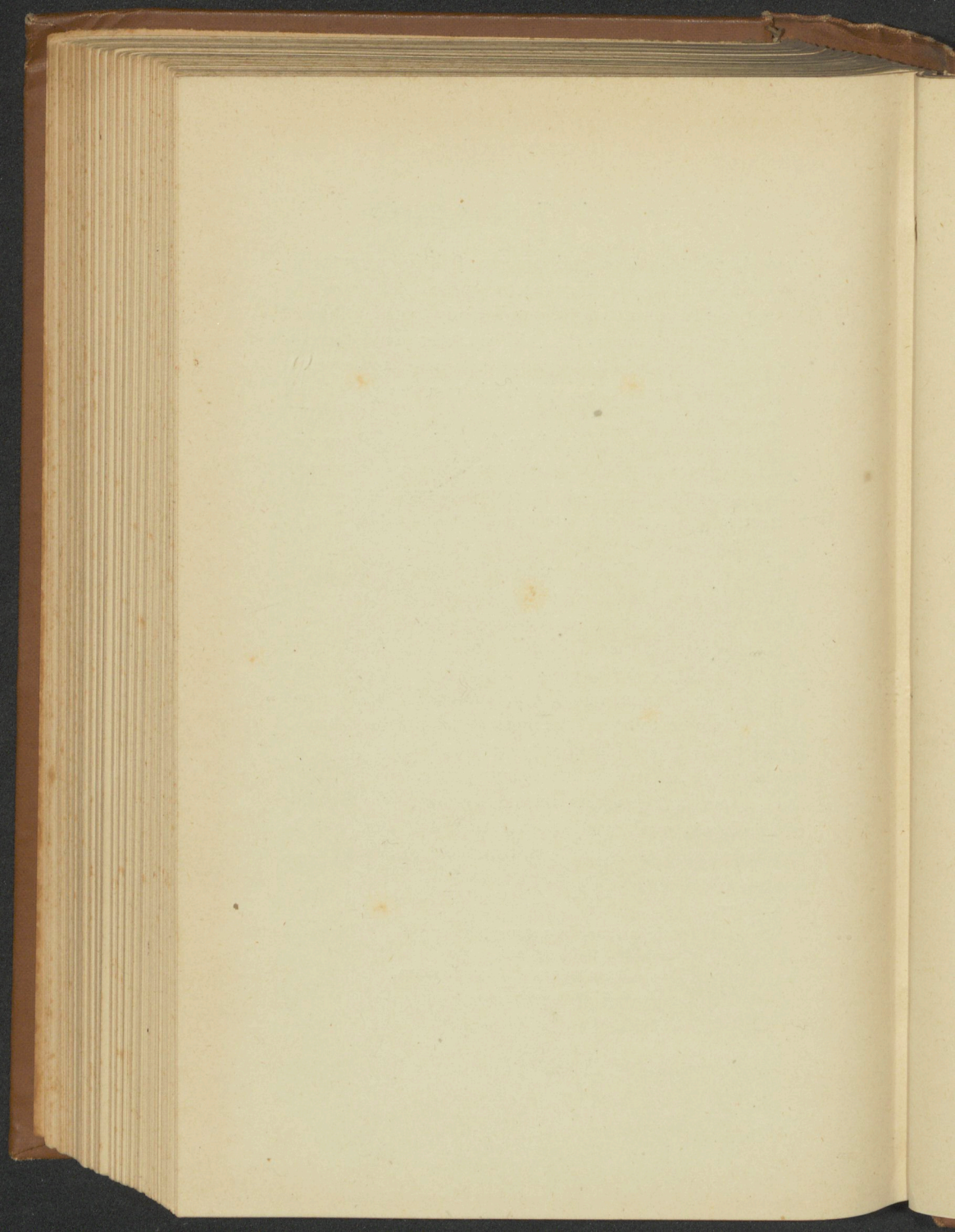
I am amongst you this evening, recruiting for the army of the Lord ; won't you join the ranks ? Come, and be enrolled as soldiers of the Cross, take the oath of allegiance, and don the panoply of faith.

Then—

"From strength to strength go on ;  
Wrestle, and fight, and pray ;  
Tread all the powers of darkness down,  
And win the well-fought day."

Amen.







*A PERFECT MAN.*



*"Till we all come . . . unto a perfect man."*—Eph. iv. 3.



## XX.

### *A PERFECT MAN.*

WITH a certain class of religious teachers there is a tendency to be always speaking to the disparagement of man.

They never weary of talking of poor human nature, and no epithets are too strong in which to cast dishonour upon it. If they made it clear that they are referring only to fallen and sinful humanity, there would be no occasion to find fault; but too frequently this is not the impression conveyed, and their vituperation is made to extend to man as he is in himself, and apart from the blight which sin has brought upon him.

I wish you to observe that, for this style of language they have no sanction in Holy Scripture. On the other hand, the Bible throws a halo of dignity about man. It sets him at the apex of creation. It puts a diadem upon his head. It crowns him with glory and honour.

There are many passages in which it exhorts us to "be men," to "show ourselves men," to "quit us like men," to rise to the stature and grandeur of true manhood.

Of course, something else is meant than humanity in its weak and degraded aspect. We are to spring to God's ideal of manhood.

Christianity, indeed, may be described as the Divine art of making men; whole men, complete, well-proportioned,



perfect men. It does not come merely to show how we may be better than we were, but to show how we may develop a perfect manhood. Its tendency is a tendency towards perfecting every power of the body, every talent of the mind, every faculty of the soul, and rounding the whole into a complete man.

This ideal manhood can never be reached without religion, and, what is more, it can never be reached except in Christ Jesus. Religion would save a man; Christ makes him worth saving.

My business at present is nothing less than, with the help of God, to fire you all with the ambition to reach the perfectness of Christian manhood.

This is, indeed, presumably, the design of all ordinances, churches, and teachers, of the whole elaborate organization of the Christian system, all given and appointed by God for this end (as St. Paul here plainly tells us), "He gave some to be apostles, and some to be prophets, etc., for the perfecting of the saints . . . till we all come . . . unto a perfect man."

This, then, is the terminus, the ultimate end and aim. Not to make us less "men" than we were before, not to make us more than men, not to make us something else than men, not to make us angels, or some other superior class of beings; but to restore us, first of all, to the dignity we had lost, and then to make that manhood greater and nobler than ever.

Should you ever be tempted to forget the original glory that belonged to you in the morning of creation, call to mind the earliest use of the word "man." Here it is, in the first chapter of Genesis, perfectly astounding, when you think what these words mean: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." Think of that!



and couple the words with the statement that shortly follows, "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground."

Marvellous Being! linking the Deity and dust; on the one side, an associate of the worm, and on the other, reaching up to the image and likeness of God!

It is true "the crown has fallen from his head"; yes, but that implies it once was there—he was King of creation. True, "the gold has become dim"; ay, but it is gold still.

And what, suppose ye, was it that God called "man"? Was it a mere complex-organism of flesh, and blood, and bone—an upright animal on two legs, with head, and trunk, and arms?

No such thing. Go back to the infallible Book again. "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Man became—not merely possessed, not merely contained, but became—a soul.

Apart from your soul, sir, apart from your spiritual being, you are not entitled to the name of man; you are more closely allied to the brute; for, saith the Scripture, "Man that, being in honour, continueth not, is like the beasts that perish."

Now, first of all, in applying the text, I exhort you to aim at being *full, all-round men*. Let there be the harmonious and concurrent development of all the parts of your triplex nature. "I pray God," says Paul, "that your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved entire" (for that is the word in the Revised Version). An entire spirit, an entire soul, an entire body; all combining to make "a perfect man."

The true manhood includes all that God put into man when He made him. There was nothing superfluous, nothing



which he could do as well without. There is an unhappy type of religion to be met with, which seems to set itself to dwarf a man, to lop off this, that, and the other part of his nature, till there is very little left; a religion that only pinches and contracts; that makes small men, narrow men, mere Lilliputians. Understand, that it is not a true Christianity.

Do not let people persuade you that you are to become so spiritual that you are to neglect the body. Why, it is as sacred as any other part of your being.

Christ is "the Saviour of the body." Know ye not that "your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost"? It is to be cared for, cherished, honoured. All its organs are to be developed, its powers cultivated. The temple is to be kept in good repair, so far as is possible; sound and strong, and beautiful in all its parts.

"The glory of young men is their strength;" yes, even physical strength. If you would develop that strength, you must use it; and if your daily occupation is of such a nature as to leave your physical powers unexercised; if its tendency is to contract the chest, and thin the blood, and blunt the appetite, and depress the system, you should make a point, by some form of athleticism, of doing all you can to brace up the frame, and give yourselves a robust and manly carriage.

Be men, every inch of you; be yours the iron sinew and the brawny muscle; the firm foot, and the erect bearing; and, as you walk the earth, may your step be that of the noblest race God hath put upon it.

This means temperance and self-discipline; to pamper the body is the unlikeliest method to ennoble it. It is wonderful on how plain a diet, and how little of it, a stalwart frame may be built up, when the conditions as to fresh



air and exercise are satisfactory. Why, the Roman soldiers who made such splendid roads, and carried such a weight of armour as would almost crush an average English plough-boy, lived on coarse brown bread and sour wine. The Spanish peasant works all day long, and dances half the night, and looks fairly strong; yet all he has to live upon is his black bread, onion, and water-melon. The coolie, fed on rice, is more active, and can endure more fatigue, than his negro brother fed on animal food and luxuries.

Temperance and exercise are the best doctors.

It is a pleasant feature of these monthly gatherings, that we have generally some little fellows amongst us who are just entering on their teens. Their great ambition is to be men. They want to leap all at once from boyhood into manhood. How is it to be done? Easiest thing possible, some of them think. A stiff collar, a walking-cane, and a cigar—the thing is accomplished. Oh! boys, I insult you by supposing for a moment that there is such a fool among you. And yet, don't we see hundreds on these streets of silly lads who imagine that manliness is thus to be acquired? I hope you will listen to me now, as I show you the true way to reach the dignity to which you aspire.

But, in the second place, I wish to impress upon you all the importance of being, *intellectually*, full men. Writing to the Corinthians, St. Paul gives this good advice: "In understanding be men." You are all familiar with Francis Bacon's well-known saying, "Reading makes a full man, conversation a ready man, and writing an exact man"; and I am inclined to think that St. Paul's advice to young Timothy covered very much the same ground when he said: "Give attention to reading, to exhortation, to teaching" (Revised Version); for the last of these would no



doubt imply the use of the pen. I am quite aware that many of you have little time for reading and study ; your business hours are long, and your leisure for recreation all too scanty ; still, no youth who has much self-respect will be content that his days pass on without attending to the culture of his mind. The art of printing has opened up to the intelligent man boundless pleasures. "Were I to name a taste," said Sir John Herschel, "which would be a perpetual source of enjoyment, that taste should be reading." Persons indeed there are who seem to have no such appetite. I have known men who were never short of money, but rarely spent a shilling of it in the purchase of a book. Their daily reading, apart from the Bible, extended no further than the newspaper. With others, third-rate books of fiction form their whole intellectual pabulum. You can generally have a pretty correct guess of a young man's mental calibre by glancing at the books that lie on his table or fill his shelves. Beware of being men of but one idea, however good that idea be ; of letting the mind run only in one groove or rut. We should all try to keep clear of narrowness, trade narrowness, professional narrowness. Good as your business may be, do not live wholly and solely in it.

Try to be in touch with the whole wide circle of human life. A man who is always in one atmosphere, who stands several hours every day upon a few square yards of shop-flooring, who never gets away from ribbons and yard-measures, or from groceries and a pair of scales, is almost certain to suffer in respect to his manliness. He will be a small man. And it is quite as true in relation to the professions.

Doctors ought not to be too much with doctors, nor lawyers with lawyers, nor soldiers with soldiers, nor school-



masters with school-masters, nor ministers with ministers ; they should go out amongst other men.

We all need mixing. And the more we mix, the better. Remember that manhood is higher and nobler than any of the sections into which it is broken up ; and if we confine ourselves to one section, like a fly to one window-pane, or a minnow to one pool, we shall be in danger in the long run of being less than men ; at least, less than the true ideal of men. Beware then, my young brother, of burrowing like a rabbit in a hole, when you have a broad, open field to run over. It is good for the mind as for the body to dwell on a high level, and with a wide prospect on every side.

Again, thirdly, aim at being *morally* full, well-developed men.

Christianity comes, not to lop off any of our human affections, or crush them out of us, but to purify and expand them. The life of the monk, the celibate, the anchorite, the recluse, is contrary to the whole genius of our religion. There is not one of the affections common to us all, which being taken out of us leaves us more manly than we were before, but quite the other way. There are foolish people who would treat our moral nature after the fashion of the physician (if such can be imagined) who, in order to improve a man, would begin by depriving him of two or three of his existing bodily members.

It is all very well for you to say, if you are suffering from toothache, "That tooth must come out" ; for you can get along without it, or if you cannot, another can be put in its place ; but, if you have earache, you do not say, "Then off with the ear !" or if you have headache, "Then off with the head !" or if you have gout, "Then off with the toe !" No ; you will impair your perfectness as a man if you sole



the smallest of your members ; and so is it with the moral and social affections, which are to be guided and purified, not crushed or withered up. A very matter-of-fact man, who has no musical taste, may say, in reference to the instrument behind me, "Take away all those fancy stops ; the hautbois, and the clarionette, and the celeste, and the *vox humana*, and so forth ; take them all away ; the organ will lead our psalmody perfectly without them."

No doubt that is true ; but all these stops contribute wonderfully to the fulness and richness of the music. So it is with the various elements of our moral nature ; which, when duly regulated and controlled, give to our manhood a richness, sweetness, versatility, and beauty it could not otherwise possess. But, just like the stops of the organ, they need delicate tuning and adjustment. In the 12th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, the Apostle seems to me to be going over the various stops of the moral organ, like a tuner with the instrument, and giving to each the needed touch.

Love—"let love be without dissimulation." Liberty—"he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity." Sympathy—"he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness." And so on ; and when all are corrected, and brought up to the sweet pitch and standard of Jesus Christ, then a man's entire character becomes musical, and his whole life one rich, full melody.

In the fourth place you must strive to be, *spiritually*, full men. Without that fellowship with God which is the essence of true religion, you can never arrive at the perfect manhood. The grandest side of your being lies fallow until you have consciously entered into a gracious relationship to your Maker.

Many, I know, will tell you that religion belittles and



bemeans a man, and that outside of the Christian enclosure there is a liberty and a joyousness—yes, they will even say a manliness not known within it. I have heard cynics say that some are too manly to be godly, and others too godly to be manly. I do not altogether wonder to hear this. For you do meet here and there with some very mean-souled and unmanly Christians.

When the only apparent effect of piety is to make a man insipid, narrow, childish, full of whims and affectations ; when the main difference between him and other men seems to you to be that he is more selfish, and that he is ruled by but one aim, namely, to save his soul from future torment, it is no matter of surprise that many are repelled. But is that the sort of portrait Christ presents to us in the Gospels? No ; a thousand times, no. Rather is that the man He pillories and excoriates. Show me the open forehead, the beaming countenance, the manly gait, the chivalrous air, the large and generous heart ; and I shall be more ready to think of Christ's ideal. For the true Christian is the largest built of any man, has the biggest heart, and the widest sympathy.

Many within the Church are largely responsible for the aversion that is felt towards religion by those without.

The language of public worship in most churches is of a kind that is appropriate only to a fraction of the worshippers. And the world sees this—and abhors the sham. The words that are uttered in prayer and praise express an ecstasy of devotion that is felt by few ; and to the majority, therefore, are unreal and untrue.

That martyr-like fervour, prostrate self-abasement, passionate love to the unseen Saviour, and eager longing to pass beyond the veil, which find such fluent expression, are out of keeping with the known character of the actual life,



and the effect is most prejudicial. The sense of truth is dulled ; and that which ought to be the truest of human occupations becomes, in fact, the most hollow and unreal.

But it is only weak people who are led by the baseness of the counterfeit to despise the genuine article.

The fact is, that not until you actually enter upon the Christian life do you find your own selves, do you know what you are made of, do you realize your grandeur and your dignity ! When a man finds God in Christ, and tastes His love, and knows he is forgiven, and comes to hate all that is evil, and fairly to set sail heavenward, he seems to be in a new world altogether, a world of light and liberty he never dreamed of before ; from being a mere pigmy, a poor, dwarfed, contracted creature of the earth, he expands into the proportions of a noble manhood.

There are many of you to whom the task would be a very easy one to bring forward many names of men, taken from the ranks of devout Christian believers, who have attained to the highest point of manly dignity and moral grandeur, and who have proved themselves the greatest benefactors of their race. Though I am not prepared that Christianity should stand or fall by the average character of those who bear its name, I am quite prepared that it should do so by the men it has shown itself able to produce, grand and noble men, who never would have been what they became but for the religion of Jesus Christ.

Mark what the apostle here says about the means of attaining to perfect manhood : "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man." Apart from the knowledge of Christ and faith in Him, the standard is not to be reached.

In vain all your best efforts after self-ennoblement till you come to Him.



A pure Christianity has proved itself the only effective regenerator of our race.

The religion of Jesus alone can repair the breaches of humanity, can set fallen man upon his feet again, can clarify his reason, rectify his will, and reprint the effaced image of God upon his soul.

There is an old legend of the Empress Helena, the mother of Constantine, how she went to the Holy Land in order to find the identical cross upon which our Saviour suffered. Excavations were made, and three crosses were found; but how were they to know which was the true one? They brought a human corpse and laid it upon each cross in succession, but as soon as it touched the cross of Christ, it started into life.

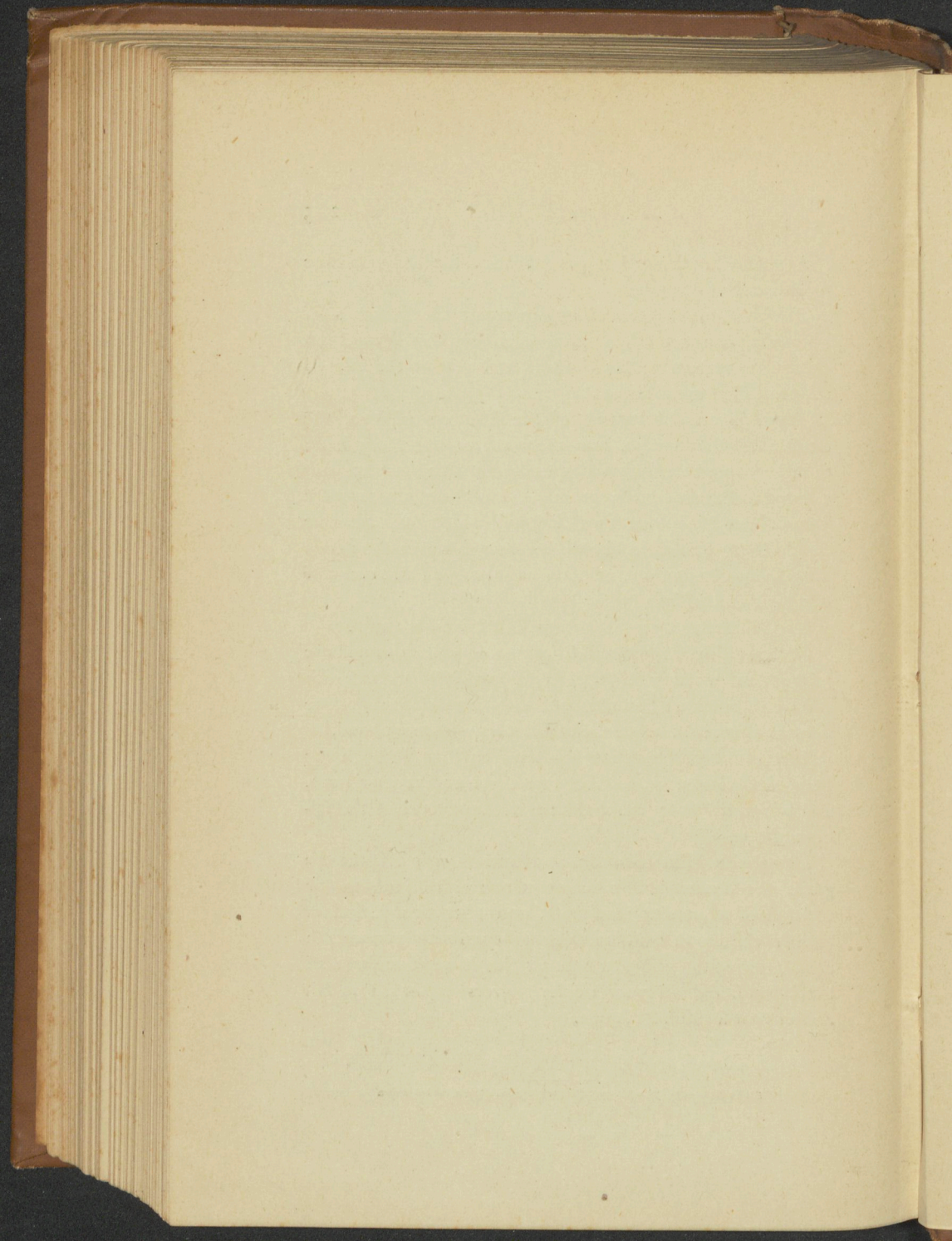
The fable may be a foolish one, but it has its moral.

Ah! my dear brothers, believe me, it is only as you are brought in contact with the Lord Jesus Christ, and with Him as a crucified Saviour, that you can know what true life is, and can spring to the ideal of a perfect manhood.

Let no meaner ambition possess you than, through the help of Divine grace, to become altogether like your Lord, and to reach "unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

Dying with Him unto sin, and buried with Him in the grave of self-renunciation, may you rise with Him into the newness of a grander manhood; and after this period of earthly childhood and tutelage is over, may you awake amid resurrection glory, to find all that is weak and sordid left behind, and all your nobler powers expanded in full and eternal fruition! Amen.







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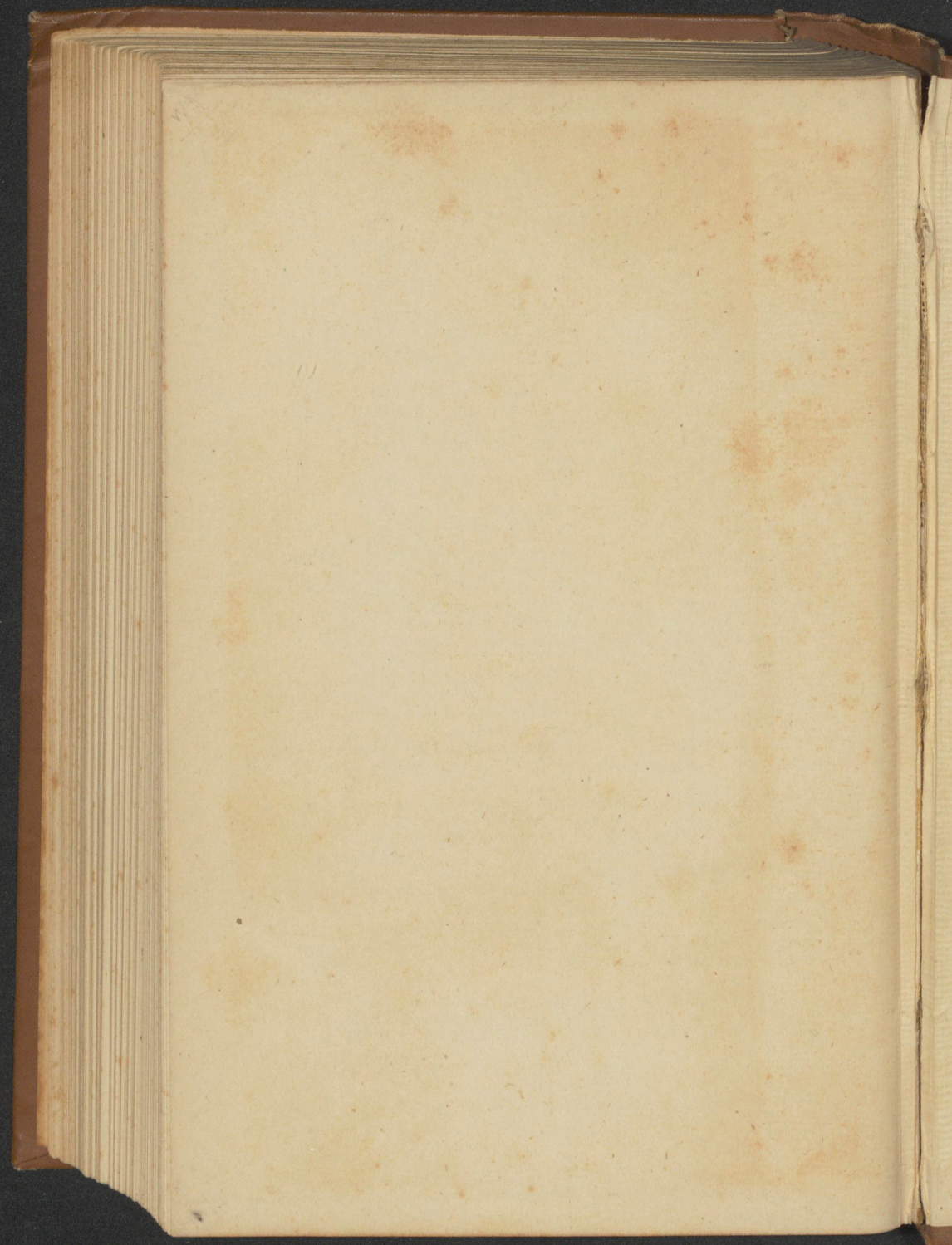
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