

HOME PREACHER OR CHURCH IN THE HOUSE.

FORTY-FIRST WEEK.

MORNING WORSHIP.

ETERNAL God, we thank Thee that Thou hast renewed to us our lives and Thy mercies this morning. We now ask Thy aid and blessings in entering on a new day. Thou that hast been about our bed by night, be about our path by day. We need Thee more by day than by night. The dangers of the night are many and great, but the dangers of the day are more and greater. The dangers of the night assail the body, but the dangers of the day assault and hurt the soul. We therefore pray Thee to keep us this day, both outwardly and in our bodies, and inwardly in our souls, to serve Thee both in body and soul, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.
Amen.

HYMN, *or Psalm* xcvi. 6-10.

HARK! it is the sabbath-day;
Distant echoes faintly swell,

Rising like a plaintive lay
From sabbath-morning bell;
Then declining, till they cease,
All is hush'd in sabbath peace.

In devotion here I kneel,
Finding here my place of prayer;
Angels all around I feel,
O sweet dawn and balmy air!
By myself, yet not alone,
Worship I before Thy throne.

While upon the earth I rest,
Heav'n, though far, is yet brought nigh;
In communion with the blest,
Blending earth with yonder sky.
Through the veil a way is riven,
Vistas opening into heaven!

1 Kings XVIII. 21-39.

AND Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered

him not a word. 22. Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I only, remain a prophet of the Lord; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifteen men. 23. Let them therefore give us two bullocks: and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: 24. And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken. 25. And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress it first; for ye are many; and call on the name of your gods, but put no fire under. 26. And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made. 27. And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud; for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked. 28. And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them. 29. And it came to pass, when midnight was past, and they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that there was neither voice, nor any

way to answer, nor any that regarded. 30. And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him: and he repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down. 31. And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the Lord came, saying, Israel shall be thy name, &c.

Prayer.

ALMIGHTY God, our Father and our Friend through Jesus Christ our Saviour, we humbly beseech Thee to hear us, and to accept our prayer, while we now present ourselves before Thy throne. We have sinned against heaven, and before Thee, and are no more worthy to be called Thy children. Enable us in an earnest and true spirit of repentance to acknowledge our transgressions, and to implore Thy forgiveness. Permit us in humble faith to cast our burden upon the Lord, the great sacrifice for sin; and dispose our hearts to set forth anew to-day, casting away the works of darkness, and putting upon us the armour of light. O Lord our God, we plead for all the children of sorrow and affliction; for all that are this day in any trouble

or distress, of mind, body or estate. We pray Thee to shed the bright beams of thy love upon all dark and desolate hearts, and to pour the balm of thy sweet comfort upon the minds of any of Thy children that are afflicted. May the Eternal God be their refuge, and lay underneath them the everlasting arms of His mercy and protection. Upbear them amid waves and storms; feed and nourish the youth of the flock during the season of their spiritual infancy; strengthen those that are weak-hearted and feeble-minded; arouse the careless, and especially those who are waxing cold in faith, and love, and prayer. On this Thy holy sabbath visit Thy people with Thy sacred presence, and with Thy Holy Spirit. May that Spirit guide us into all truth, and sanctify us wholly, and make us meet for the rest that remaineth for the people of God. O, may the dispensations of Thy providence lead us more and more near to Thee; let the discipline of Thy will concerning us chasten our spirit, wean us from the world, and make us more heavenly-minded. May the holy and sacred privileges of Thy gospel edify our hearts, and advance us day by day a further state toward heaven. Be Thou in the midst of every dwelling-place of Sion, and in all her assemblies this day -- ever present to bless Thy people, according to Thy promise. O Thou, only Source of wisdom, teach the teachers, empower Thy ministers, give them wise and understanding hearts; and to all Thy people give Thy heavenly grace, that they may receive with meekness the

engrafted word, and that the seed sown may be as the good seed planted in the good ground, and bring forth fruit abundantly to Thy praise and glory. Take from us all hardness of heart; and especially save us from the contempt of Thy word and commandment. Impart to us each day more and more of Thy Holy Spirit, as the quickening and sanctifying life of the soul, preparing it on earth for its inheritance in heaven. And may the savour of this day be “of life unto life,” food for the coming week, supplying strength and principle, that we may live as we ought to live, while set in the midst of so many and great dangers. And when our days are ended, and our course is run, may death (for all must die) become to us the gate of bliss, the entrance-gate of immortality. Teach us, O Lord, that we are born to live, that we live to die, and that we die to live for evermore. Grant us every blessing, and every needful gift and grace through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

THE CHURCH IN THE HOUSE.

O GOD of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, bless all of us thy servants, and sow the seed of eternal life in our hearts, that whatsoever in Thy holy word we shall

profitably learn, we may in deed fulfil the same. Give unto us Thy salvation, Lord. Keep our hearts in perfect peace, our minds being stayed upon Thee. Give us pardon of our sins, and the comfort of Thy free Spirit. So shall we praise Thee with joyful lips, and magnify Thy glorious name for ever and ever. To Thee, O Father, with the Son, and with the Holy Ghost, be all praise and glory, now and ever more. *Amen.*

HYMN, *or Psalm* xlvi. 1-7.

THERE stands amid the sea a rock,
The waves dash round its crested form,
Broken in fragments by the shock
And fury of the raging storm;
And yet though high the billows be,
The rock stands rooted in the sun.

Upon the mountain top a tower
Looks down upon the vale below;
The clouds, o'ercasting more and more,
With stormy wind and tempest blow;
Yet not a stone of that bold tower
But stands as it had stood before.

Once more doth storm its head uprear,
A tempest sweeps along the plain;
A leafy tree is rooted there --
That storm brings winter back again;
The leaves obey the tempest's will;
The tree abides, deep-rooted still.

Our God is faithful to his flock,
His love is equal to his power;
He stands unshaken as the rock,
Abides unmoved as that strong tower.
His bloom and blossom never cease,
'Mid winds and storm He whispers--Peace!

DEUTERONOMY XXXIII. 1-27.

AND this is the blessing wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death. 2. And he said, The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand went a fiery law for them. 3. Yea, he loved the people; all his saints are in thy hand: and they sat down at thy feet; every one shall receive of thy words. 4. Moses commanded us a law, even

the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob. 5. And he was king in Jeshurun, when the heads of the people and the tribes of Israel were gathered together. 6. Let Reuben live, and not die; and let not his men be few. 7. And this is the blessing of Judah: and he said, Hear, Lord, the voice of Judah, and bring him unto his people; let his hands be sufficient for him; and be thou an help to him from his enemies. 8. And of Levi he said, Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy holy one, whom thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom, thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah; 9. Who said unto his father, and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children; for they have observed thy word, and kept thy covenant. 10. They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law: they shall put incense before thee, and whole burnt-sacrifice upon thine altar. 11. Bless, Lord, his substance, and accept the work of his hands: smite through the loins of them that rise against him, and of them that hate him, that they rise not again. 12. And of Benjamin he said, The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him; and the Lord shall dwell in safety by him; and the Lord shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between his shoulders. 13. And of Joseph he said, Blessed of the Lord be his land, for the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep that coucheth beneath, 14. And for the precious fruits brought forth by

the sun, and for the precious things put forth by the moon, 15. And for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the lasting hills, 16. And for the precious things of the earth, and fulness thereof, and for the good will of him that dwelt in the bush: let the blessing come upon the head of Joseph, and upon the top of the head of him that was separated from his brethren. 17. His glory is like the firstling of his bullock, and his horns are like the horns of unicorns; with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth: and they are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manasseh. 18 And of Zebulon he said, Rejoice, Zebulon, in thy going out; and Issachar, in thy tents. 19. They shall call the people unto the mountain; there they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness; for they shall suck of the abundance of the seas, and of treasures hid in the sand. 20. And of Gad he said, blessed be he that enlargeth Gad: he dwelleth as a lion, and teareth the arm with the crown of the head. 21. And he provided the first part for himself, because there, in a portion of the law-giver, was he seated; and he came with the heads of the people, he executed the justice of the Lord, and his judgments with Israel. 22. And of Dan he said, Dan is a lion's whelp: he shall leap from Bashan. 23. And of Naphtali he said, O Naphtali, satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the Lord; possess thou the west and the south. 24. And of Asher he said, Let

Asher be blessed with children; let him be acceptable to his brethren, and let him dip his foot in oil. 25. Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be. 26. There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky. 27. The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee, and shall say, Destroy them.

SERMON XLI.

“THE ETERNAL GOD IS THY REFUGE, AND UNDERNEATH ARE
THE EVERLASTING ARMS.”

-- Deut. xxxiii. 27

THIS text, which is to occupy our attention at present, is one of those oft-interspersed passages and edifying sentiments which here and there occur in the historical books of the Old Testament, and which, for their richness and depth of meaning, so amply repay the diligent student of those portions of Holy Writ. The historical Scriptures are too often and too systematically overlooked, and a great loss is thereby incurred. Amid the mere details, and at

intervals throughout the genealogies, and pedigrees, and histories of men and generations, we find such precious truths and promises as that of the text -- great golden nuggets for those who search in the prolific vein of the inspired word, hid pearls dug out of the deep soil, green spots for the soul to feed upon, and such as are particularly refreshing to the hungry and the thirsty soul that seeks the Manna and the Rock for spiritual food and spiritual drink. In this delightful sentiment of to-day we have an expression of all that is good and true and hopeful in the covenant of God in Christ with man.

Those who meet together for purposes of religious worship and edification ought to cultivate a certain measure of “curiosity” (of a right sort) in their attendance on the means of grace, both public and domestic, each worshipper presenting himself before the Lord in the spirit of anxious expectancy: -- “I wonder whether my soul will receive comfort from this day’s service? Will the hymns that are sung express my wants or my joys? Will the text be a promise to encourage me, or a command to discipline me, or an admonition to correct me? Whether shall I have enough food administered or shall I remain unsatisfied and unedified?” Such thoughts as these in our assemblies would infuse new life into our services; there would be the suspense of expectation, a desire for food, a vivacity and liveliness throughout all the exercises of the day, which

would be sure to bring down a great blessing from on high, to the refreshment of our souls.

Well, here, at all events, is a copious promise -- “The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.” Great Promiser! make good Thy gracious promise unto us to-day! If any of us be weary and faint in our minds, and need much of Thy sweet comfort, through means of that promise grant us some of the joy of thy salvation!

The text is part of the blessing which Moses at the last bestowed upon the tribes of Israel. Before he ascended to his lofty death-bed on the mount, he delivered his dying message to his people. In speaking these, Moses was a prophet, and his utterances were prophetic, peculiarly and individually belonging to the tribes, in their temporal and spiritual interests. But all these belong to us also. Scripture history, scripture death-beds, scripture blessings, and scripture sentiments, are common property, belonging to all of us. It is not so in ordinary experience: a blessing pronounced upon me does not belong to you; and a deathbed benediction on you does not belong to me. Each man’s history is his own, and no one else’s. But the Scriptures, and all that they contain, are for all the world -- “Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning.” The blessing of the Spirit of God covers all. Though spoken originally to others, the promises of

God are opened to us, and serve as stepping-stones across the flood, sure places on which we may set our feet, and be established in our goings. This blest promise of our text is one of these.

There are two kinds of promise here: One that is strong, and brave, and valiant, and heroic -- “The eternal God is thy refuge:” and the other, tender, delicate, and sympathetic -- “Underneath are the everlasting arms.” To one class of minds the one commends itself, and to another class is the other more adapted, in proportion as the spiritual strength is great or small, stronger or weaker. And it is well to make a difference; there ought to be a classification of promises; for, as in all the other scriptures, so in this, there is “milk for babes,” and “strong meat” for those who by reason of age are able to bear it. To the bolder spirits a promise would need to be in the form of a watchword, a war-cry, a rallying-shout, as the shout of a king in their camp. To the more sensitive Christian the promise must come as a tender thought, as a still small voice, as “a word in season to them that are weary.” Different minds must needs be approached in different ways. Some, like the strong warriors of Gideon, amid the din of battle, the breaking of the pitchers, the flame of burning torches, and the battle shout, would need to be addressed with a voice loud as the voice of a trumpet; whereas there are others of God’s children, who, like those

that are sad and pensive and pining on beds of sickness, must be approached gently, and spoken to in soft whispers of sympathy and love. Both of these classes are included in this promise.

I. "The eternal God is thy refuge." This is the bolder, grander, stronger promise, given to them that are bold and strong. "The eternal God!" Know ye in whom ye have trusted? No mere idol, no vain imagination, not a God made with men's hands. Nay, but the God of gods, the eternal God, the God of heaven -- *He* is thy refuge! And with the eternity of his being, He is infinite in everything -- infinite in power, Omnipotent; infinite in knowledge, Omniscient; infinite in space, Omnipresent; over all, within all, all in all. This is the God who is our refuge; as the Psalmist expresses it -- The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower" (Ps. xviii. 2). Unto this we are to flee, and be safe. It is neither disgrace nor cowardice for the strong warrior to take refuge within the fortress. It is no part of the duty of the soldier to abide always in the field. There will be times of weakness, and exhaustion, and extraordinary danger, in which he will be more in the path of duty out of the field than in it. Even Samson aided his great natural strength by entrenching himself in the rock Etam. Almost all David's spiritual experiences, as expressed in the Psalms, have their

temporal counterpart in David's personal history; and as he had his seasons of temporal adversity and sorrow and disaster, and these were seasons of retirement from the fray, so is it in the spiritual history of every man -- from the battle to the "refuge," from the field to the rock of defence.

There is no illustration so bold as that of "the rock" -- the everlasting hills; so strong, because so deeply rooted; so safe, because so really impregnable; so secure, because so high and so far removed from the reach of danger. And in our God is all this -- strength, security, lastingness; and all that is lasting in Him is *ever-lasting* -- the Eternal God," eternal in wisdom, in goodness, in power, and in love. And as it is true that "the eternal God is our refuge," so it also means that God is our "eternal refuge." We are safe in Him to-day, safe in Him tomorrow, safe yesterday, to-day, and forever. It is a grand thing thus to trust in Him; not in the arm of flesh, not in the help of man, not in the face of clay, not in chariots or in horses, not in kings or princes, but *in the Lord*: "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty" (Ps. xci.1). "Under *the shadow*" -- What other shadow could thus protect us? "Under the shadow of his wings" -- What substance half so protective and defensive as this shadow? Oh, if the shadow be thus helpful, what must the substance be? If such be the abundance of the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim, what shall the vintage of Abiezer be?

II. And now, the portion of the promise appointed for the weak, the feeble, and the tender ones. We must know that while there are warriors who can take refuge in the stronghold, there are also those that are wounded and faint and weary, who can neither fight nor flee: What are they to do? Here the promise enters -- "Underneath are the everlasting arms!" The stronger men may walk, may run, may march, may flee unto the refuge; but the weak and wounded ones must be *carried*, and underneath them must be the carrying arms of the kindly bearers. If there is one word to express this condition it is the word -- "weakness." Now in the promise, "The eternal God is thy refuge," we seem to see suggested only the idea of strong walls, strong gates, strong defences, and strong defenders; but in the gentle promise -- "Underneath are the everlasting arms" -- we see the result of the carnage and strife; we see the ambulance, and within its curtains the weary limb, the blanched and pallid face, the bleeding wound, the throbbing heart, the fainting soul. O God, upbear our souls in days of sorrow, in hours of weakness, and in the fury of the fray. We trust in thy sweet promise -- "And underneath are the everlasting arms!" Let us feel this, let us know it, let us be persuaded of it, and it sufficeth, Lord! When consciously borne in Thine arms we can surely say -- "Thy will be done!" The peculiar phases of our spiritual weakness, in which we most need the assurance of this promise, are --

1. *Weakness of spiritual youth and infancy.* -- The infancy of the body is a time of weakness, and then we are borne and carried by the arms of the mother or the nurse placed underneath us. And so it is with spiritual infancy. It is a period of special need, and so it is also a period of special help. Babes in Christ are often exposed to trying temptation at home and abroad, within and without. May not Moses have had in mind the day of his own exposure and casting out, when as an infant he was committed to the waters of the river? And surely, if ever, it must have been then, that “underneath were the everlasting arms.” So it is with the spiritual infancy; there are spiritual Pharaohs, spiritual edicts, spiritual persecutions, spiritual foes. But though they be mighty, the Lord our God is mightier. Still, it is hard to realize the promise -- “as thy days, so shall thy strength be.” Young beginners are very earnest, and very zealous, and they think they ought to carry all before them -- temptations, sins, infirmities, and everything. They have yet to learn that this is a season of peculiar weakness, which must not be overtaken -- the extreme infancy of the soul. For such an age the “everlasting arms” are needed. And for such as these may be suggested that significant passage, expressive of God’s care of his people Israel -- “He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; He led him about, He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of his eye. As an eagle stirreth up her

nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings; so the Lord alone did lead him” (Deut. xxxii. 10-12). Here are the people of God in their national youth, upborne by God; fed as a child, without labour or toil; led as a child, by a Father’s hand; instructed as a child, by the visible lessons of a ceremonial religion. It is, indeed, the imagery of the great eagle teaching its young to fly. First of all she “stirreth up” the nest, that is, to make them feel uncomfortable, and to drive them out; she fluttereth over them, so as to provoke and teach them to follow her; she “spreadeth abroad her wings, and beareth them on her wings.” That is, the eagle plunges underneath her young ones, so as to protect them if their untried wing should prove unequal to the flight. They rise *from* her outspread wings in their attempt; and if they fail, and the wing is weak and weary, they alight *upon* her wings in their descent, and are safe. And even such are the “everlasting arms” to the young Christian -- strength in proportion to their day and to their need. The good shepherd will not overdrive the flock by a single stage (Gen. xxxiii. 13, 14), but He doth gently lead them, and still more gently carry them -- in his arms, close to his bosom: “Underneath are the everlasting arms.”

2. *Weakness of spirit.* -- There are such times in the Christian’s life, when the heart is faint, and the spiritual pulse but feebly beating; when the nights are dark and long,

and the days are sad and dreary, and faith and hope and love wax cold toward Jesus. Spiritually it is this state of health -- "The whole head is sick, the whole heart faint." What is to be done then? Whence is strength to be sought? "Underneath are the everlasting arms." Therefore saith the Psalmist -- "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe" (cxix.117); and again, "Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not" (xvii. 5). And where is there strength for this like the arm of our God? Thou fainting spirit, thou fainting soul, awake, revive! "Underneath thee are the everlasting arms!"

3. *Weakness in prayer.* -- Moses may have had his own experience again in mind, that day of Amalek when his hands were weak, and how the fortune of battle answered to the upholding of his hands in prayer (Exod. xvii. 11). On that occasion his brethren upheld his hands, a foretaste of the power of Christian communion; but there is no aid, and no upholding like that of the "everlasting arms." All else must fail, but these never. There are many temptations and inducements that come upon us to make us weak in prayer. This is to relax our grasp of the sceptre, and to cease to wrestle. Let us beware of this; it is spiritual weakness; if yielded to, it will make us more weak; and cold, formal, heartless prayer is an abomination in the sight of God. Much of the Christian's strength in prayer may be sustained by oft-uttered ejaculations, thoughts, wishes, sent up to

heaven. Wherever we may be, whatever we may be engaged in, the heart may surely be lifted up in a passing prayer. It is like the flight of a bird, which may be a distant flight, across a continent or across the main; but it assists the weary wing by oft alighting on a branch of a tree, or on the bosom of the wave. It may be but for a moment, but that moment renews its strength, and gives rest to the sole of its weary foot. Thus may we assist our spirit by oft snatches of prayer, every one of which would enable us to touch the throne of the Eternal, and rest upon the “everlasting arms.”

4. *Weakness in death.* -- “My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever” (Ps. lxxiii. 26). In this hour of bodily weakness, in this assault of the last enemy, this gracious promise is indeed manifested in loving graciousness -- “Underneath are the everlasting arms.” Satan often tries to seize upon this last time to disturb the dying Christian with doubts and temptations; but God is ever true to his promise, and never more so than at this trying hour. If ever there is a time that Jesus is near his people, it is then. Angels were nearest to Jesus in his most trying seasons -- in the Temptation, the Agony, and the Crucifixion. And is it not wonderful the glory that is imparted to the sunset of man’s day, and the vigour communicated at the end of his journey? Hence our encouragement -- “For which cause we faint not; but

though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day” (2 Cor. iv. 16).

So that, whether in life or in death, the child of God has this covenant promise of his covenant-keeping God -- “The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.” We need add no more than this further guarantee of all God’s promises (and therefore of this one), that in Christ they are “Yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us” (2 Cor. i. 20).

“O Father-Eye that hath so truly watch’d,
O Father-Hand that hath so gently led,
O Father-Heart, that by my prayer is touch’d,
That loved me first when I was cold and dead;
Still do Thou lead me on, with faithful care,
The narrow path to heaven, where I would go;
And train me for the life that waits me there,
Alike through love and loss, through weal and wo.”

R. MAGUIRE, M.A.

THE CHILDREN'S SERVICE.

HOW AN ORPHAN STRANGER CAME TO BE A QUEEN.

THE kings of Persia, once on a time, were very rich and great monarchs. They ruled over a very wide empire, and were much feared for their power. One of them, who lived at the time when the story happened of which I am now to tell, has in scripture the long name of Ahasuerus. The story is about a little Jewish girl that came to be his queen.

Ahasuerus had resolved to make a feast, the like of which had never been before in his dominions. He called to the feast all his princes and nobles and great men, and they kept the revels up for half-a-year. Never was such a time. After this, the king made a feast for the whole people of the city where the palace was, and the court of the royal gardens was turned into a gorgeous banqueting-hall. You never saw such a display of gold and silver, and marble, and silks -- curtains, and carpets, and couches, and cords and tassels of all colours -- all arranged on a beautiful mosaic pavement, till it looked like a palace in fairy-land. The meats too, were in great abundance, and the wine flowed as free as streams do.

Now the king had a very beautiful lady for his queen, and while her husband was giving a feast to the lords and noblemen, she was entertaining the women in another part of the palace. For in those days, in the east, and indeed to

the present time, the ladies and gentlemen did not dine together. So while the separate feasting was going forward, the king being very merry, and recollecting that his queen was an exceedingly beautiful person, began to think he would like to show her in all her royal splendour to the people. That was a thing which, according to the custom of those times, he would never have thought of, if he had not been made vain and foolish by the feasting and the flattery around him. But in his present mood he did not think of what was fit, and sent seven officers to bring the queen, with her crown on her head, to let the people see how lovely she was. The queen heard the message, but she thought it so wrong and unworthy, that she would not pay attention to it. So the seven lords came back and told the king, that Queen Vashti, (for that was her name) had said she would not come. The king, when he heard this, was extremely angry to think that any one should refuse to obey him, and that one his own wife.

In this angry mood he sent for the wise men of the court, who knew the laws of the kingdom, and asked them what would be the proper thing to do to punish Vasti's disobedience. I daresay they saw already what the king would like them to say. They advised, therefore, that Vashti should have the crown taken from her, and be no more queen. Let another lady, they said, be made queen in her place, and the whole people shall know that the king is

determined to make all wives do honour to their husbands, and keep good order in the land. The king thought the advice good, and he made letters be written and sent into all the empire, stating his purpose, and saying that it was for the good of all families, and to teach that every man was to rule in his own house. The proud king did not know about Christ's law of love, and of ruling by serving.

Queen Vashti being thus put from her place as the king's favourite wife (for in those countries and times they did not know God's law as to having only one), it became needful that another should be chosen in her stead. So a great many beautiful young ladies were brought to the palace, that the king might choose from among them one whom he liked best. Now, among the young women that were thus taken to the palace was a very lovely Jewish maiden, who was good as well as beautiful. She was an orphan; her father and mother had been taken captive out of the land of Judea, and had died in the stranger's country, leaving little Hadassah behind them. An uncle of hers, called Mordecai, who had also been made captive, took the orphan child after that to his house, and brought her up as if she had been his own daughter. He was very fond of her, and she loved him in return very much. He lived in the city where the king's palace was, and saw all the feasting and jollity that had ended in putting away the queen.

The people that had care of the maidens while they waited in the palace to see who should be the king's choice, were greatly pleased with Haddassah, she was so gentle and winning and easy to please. The king, also, was quite taken with this beautiful Jewess, and resolved to make her his queen. He did not know, indeed, that she was a Jewess; but he probably would not have minded that, if he had known it, he was so much delighted with her. Everybody that heard Hadassah was to be queen was equally pleased. Her name was changed to Esther, or Star; and she was indeed the star of the king's palace. Another feast was held in great splendour, and all the kingdom was made to know that Esther had been put in Vashti's place.

About this time a thing happened at court, that had much to do with after occurrences in this story. There were two servants of the king that made a plot to lay hold on him, and take his life. But Mordecai the queen's uncle, who had now a post of trust in the palace, keeping the entrance, came to know of their design, and told Esther about it. Of course she let her husband know, and the two traitors were arrested. Search was made for proof, and when it was found out that they really had plotted against the king, they were both hanged. An account of the whole affair was also ordered to be written in the annals of the king's reign, which were regularly kept in a book in the palace.

Another thing happened at this time also, out of which the occurrences of the after story grew. There was a courtier of the name of Haman, who began to rise in the king's favour. From one post to another this man was promoted, till there was no other in the palace that got the same honour with himself. The king gave orders that all the servants, whenever Haman passed out or in by the gates of the palace, should bow low when they met him, and do reverence to him, almost as they would to the king himself. There was only one person in the court that did not care for him. Mordecai the Jew, who sat as guardian of the gate, never bowed to him, but let him pass without any notice. The rest of the officers about the palace saw this, and wondered at it. They even spoke to Mordecai, and reminded him that the king had given orders to bow to Haman; but the Jew -- believing that it would be wrong to do it, either because such worship as was asked was due to God only, or for some other reason -- would not change his conduct, but let the favourite pass and repass without once doing him reverence. The other servants, angry, perhaps, that he had not minded their remonstrance, drew Haman's attention to Mordecai's neglect, and said to him that the man was a Jew, asking if he thought he should be allowed to keep his place? or if the king wanted to have people of that nation about him?

After this Haman constantly watched Mordecai, as he came in and went out through the doors of the palace, and was mortified and enraged when he saw that the Jew never once stirred from his place, or bowed to him, Every day his anger was made fiercer, till at last he could think of nothing else but the contempt shown him by this Mordecai. It was wonderful how this one little thing made all his grandeur seem to him as nothing. The king's favour, the flattery of others, the pride of his family in his great prosperity, were all of no consequence to him, so long as Mordecai would not bend the knee to him. He fretted about it continually, and began to plan a cruel revenge. He thought he would get rid not only of Mordecai, but of all of his nation, at a blow. He would wring his heart when he made him see that his refusal to bow to Haman, the king's favourite, was to be the death of all his kindred. Having, therefore, formed his scheme, he made the people of his house cast lots, to find out what would be a lucky time for carrying it into effect. He then went to the king, and began to tell him about the people of the Jews, what a singular, obstinate, dangerous, class of persons they were; and how it was not safe to let them continue any longer in Persia. He therefore suggested, that a decree should be issued for their destruction everywhere throughout the king's dominions. The king weakly consented, and an order was sent out commanding the slaughter of all Jews, old and young, on a

certain day, and giving all their property to their murderers. It was a cruel, wicked edict; but the bad man that planned it, thinking he would now get rid of Mordecai, sat merrily down to a feast with the king.

Neither of the two knew as yet that there was a Friend, mightier than they, watching over his captive people, who would deliver them from their enemies. How He brought it about that the bloody decree was never carried out, I must tell in the next story.

QUESTIONS FROM THE BIBLE STORY.

1. What queen was it that, during a feast, gave good advice to a foolish king?
2. What royal person's wife was it that, during a feast, made a very wicked request of him?
3. What willing exile from her native land was it that, in a new country, married a great man, and became mother of a race of kings?
4. Who was it that was afraid and tried to protect himself by an equivocation, because his wife was very beautiful?
5. What wise men gave a king advice which he, foolishly, did not take?

6. Where do we find the duty of husbands stated by an apostle, according to Christ's mind and the law of love?

7. Who was it that chose a beautiful maiden to be wife to another, according to an answer that had been given to his prayer?

8. Who was it that got favour in the eyes of all that had to do with him, because he was prudent and kind, and the Lord was with him?

9. What two persons made a successful plot against a king's life, but in the end lost their own life by the deed?

10. What king was it that bade every one bow the knee to an honoured servant of his, who deserved all his master's confidence?

11. What king was it that, for the sake of making sure of one whom he feared, told his soldiers to kill many?

12. Where do you find in a letter a statement that the Jews were a very troublesome rebellious, people?

ANSWERS to the foregoing may be found by consulting the following chapters: -- Dan. v.; Matt. xiv; Ruth iv.; Gen. xii. and xxvi.; 1 Kings xii.; Eph. v.; Gen. xxiv.; Gen xxxix.; 2 Sam. iv. ; Gen. xli.; Matt. ii.; Ezra iv.

Prayer.

O LORD, who hast by the word of Jesus taught us to call Thee our Father, be kind, as Thou hast graciously promised, to all orphans. Bless asylums where fatherless and motherless ones find a home. May the day soon come when these institutions will not be needed. Help all of us who have kind parents, or other near relatives who love and cherish us, to be thankful and loving to them. May we so act, in any place we may fill, as to please Thee, and win the approval of good men. Turn all plots of bad people against the righteous into foolishness, for the sake of Jesus Christ the righteous, to whom be glory for ever. *Amen.*

EVENING WORSHIP.

ALMIGHTY God, great author of our being, we Thy creatures would now present ourselves before Thee, to give Thee thanks for Thy good care of us during the day, and for the many privileges and opportunities we have enjoyed. Forgive us all our sins; create within us a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within us. May we now commit ourselves to Thy mighty keeping during the night. Watch over us, and with Thy great mercy keep us. When no other eye can see us, let Thine unwearied eye be upon us, for our protection and care. We humbly commit the keeping of ourselves, body, soul, and spirit, to Thy good providence, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

HYMN, *or Psalm cxxxvi.* 1-8, 23-26.

GOD, who madest earth and heaven,
Darkness and light;
Who the day for toil hast given,
For rest the night;
May thine angel-guards defend us,
Slumber sweet thy mercy send us
Holy dreams and hopes attend us,
This live-long night.

Guard us waking, guard us sleeping;
And, when we die,
May we in thy mighty keeping
All peaceful lie:
When the last dread call shall wake us,
Do not Thou our God forsake us,
But to reign in glory take us
With Thee on high.

JOHN XIII. 1-27.

NOW, before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. 2. And supper being ended, (the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him.) 3. Jesus knowing that the father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; 4. He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. 5. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towels wherewith he was girded. 6. Then cometh he to

Simon Peter: and Peter said unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? 7. Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter. 8. Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. 9. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. 10. Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not, save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all. 11. For he knew who should betray him, therefore said he, Ye are not all clean. 12. So, after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? 13. Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. 14. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one's another's feet. 15. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. 16. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. 17. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them. 18. I speak not of you all; I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me. 19. Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he. 20. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me. 21.

When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, That one of you shall betray me. 22. Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake, &c.

Prayer.

ALMIGHTY God, Maker of all things, Judge of all men, we present ourselves before Thy throne this evening to make account before Thee of this day, and all its thoughts and words and deeds. All that has been pleasing unto Thee, accept as the free-will offering of our hearts; and all that is unworthy, do Thou cleanse with the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Sanctify us now, we beseech thee, with thy Holy Spirit; and ere we give sleep to our eyes, or slumber to our eyelids, may we have the sweet assurance that Thou art enshrined within our hearts as Thy chosen dwelling-place. Thy mercies have been largely vouchsafed to us during the course of his day -- in sparing our lives and bestowing upon us the privilege of Thy true religion. Make us ever to rejoice in the tokens of Thy love and remembrance, being taught and learning thereby Thy goodness towards us. We

would to-night offer to Thee all the praise and all the glory for every good and perfect gift that we enjoy, for Thou art the Author, and Thou the Giver, of them all. We thank Thee for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for the unspeakable gift of Thy Son. May we accept this Thine inestimable benefit. May we put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and clothe ourselves in His righteousness, as with a garment -- not over, but instead of, our filthy rags. Give to each one in this house and family the spirit to think and do all such things as be rightful. Grant us peace -- peace with God, peace with our fellow-men, peace with our own selves. Renew our tempers and dispositions, and conform us in all things to the likeness of the meek and lowly Jesus. Let our words be kind, remembering the words of Thy holy apostle -- "Be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another; love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous." Bless, we beseech Thee, the children of this house; may they grow, not only in years and in stature, but also, as Thy holy Child Jesus did, in wisdom, and in favour with God and man. We beseech Thee also to bless the servants in this family; may they with us become servants of the Great Master, all of us fellow-servants in His sight. Look mercifully on the sick and the poor; give them Thy comfort in their souls, and raise up friends to render them all needful help for their bodily wants, and the supply of their temporal necessities.

And now that we retire to sleep, we would commend ourselves, and all that we love, to Thy good care; may our slumber be refreshing, may no ill dreams disturb our rest, nor any temptation of our spiritual enemy. Awake us in the morning with new vigour for a new day's work. And now, Great Author of our being, accept the charge of our souls and bodies; keep us safely in thy good protection; and grant us Thy peace all the days of our life. And to Thee, O Father, with the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be all praise and glory now and for ever. *Amen.*

MORNING AND EVENING MEDITATIONS.

MONDAY.

Morning.

I will be glad in the Lord.

Thou shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God in all that thou puttest thine hands unto.

I will be glad and rejoice in thee: I will sing praise to thy name, O thou most High.

Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.

The righteous also shall hold on his way; and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.

Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God.

Ps. civ. 34. Deut. xii. 18. Ps. ix. 2. Ps. xxxii. 11.
Job xvii. 9. Luke xii. 34. Joel ii. 23.

Evening.

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice; and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.

And let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

Rev. iii. 19, 22. 2 Thess. iii. 5. John xvi. 20. 2 Tim. ii. 19.

TUESDAY.

Morning.

For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground.

And they thirsted not when he led them through the deserts, he caused the water to flow out of the rock for them: he clave the rock also, and the waters gushed out.

And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem.

Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.

The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.

Isa. xlvi. 3. Isa. xlvi. 21. Zech. xiv. 8. John iv. 10, 15.

Evening.

And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass, with reeds and rushes.

In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.

He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

(But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive; for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

Isa. xxxv. 7. John vii. 37, 38, 39.

WEDNESDAY.

Morning.

Deliver us from evil: for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.

We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

For thou hast delivered my soul from death: wilt not thou deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living?

Matt. vi. 13. Jer. xiii. 23. Heb. x. 10, 14. Ps. lvi. 13.

Evening.

Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.

Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season (if need be) ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations;

That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:

Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

Heb. xiii. 8. 1 Pet. i. 6, 7, 8, 9.

THURSDAY.

Morning.

And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.

But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,

Even when we were dead in sins hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved;)

And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus;

That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Eph. ii. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10.

Evening.

Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence;

As when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil; to make thy name known to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at thy presence!

When thou didst terrible things which we looked not for, thou camest down, the mountains flowed down at thy presence.

For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, besides thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.

Isa. lxiv. 1, 2, 3, 4.

FRIDAY.

Morning.

Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou. These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day.

But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him.

And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also?

Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth.

Isa. lxv. 5. Luke vii. 30. John ix. 40, 41.

Evening.

Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin.

Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils.

And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumblingblock, and a recompence unto them.

Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:

For our God is a consuming fire.

Eze. xviii. 30. 1 Cor. x. 21. Rom. xi. 9. Heb. xii. 28, 29.

SATURDAY.

Morning.

We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair.

Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.

For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.

For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better.

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; he that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

2 Cor. iv. 8, 9. 2 Tim. iv. 6, 7. Phil. i. 23. Rev. ii. 11.

Evening.

And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and for and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.

And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

And hast made us unto our God kings and priests and we shall reign on the earth.

Rev. v. 8, 9, 10.