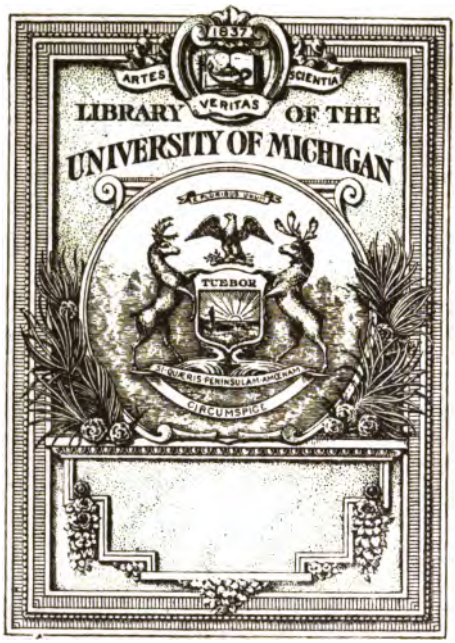
1837
ARTES
SCIENTIA
VERITAS
LIBRARY OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
TUEBOR
CIRCUMSPICE

Essays for Sunday Reading

Essays for Sunday Reading

By the late

Principal Caird of Glasgow University

With an Introduction by

The Very Rev. Donald Macleod, D.D.

LONDON : SIR ISAAC PITMAN & SONS, Ltd.
1 AMEN CORNER, E.C. 1906

PRINTED BY
SIR ISAAC PITMAN & SONS, LTD.,
BATH.

(2518)

CONTENTS

JOHN CAIRD, D.D.

An Appreciation

DURING the later half of the nineteenth century Scotland produced scarcely any man of finer intellect and nobler character than John Caird. He was undoubtedly the most eloquent preacher of his time and occupied no mean place among the philosophical students and thinkers of the period.

He was born in Greenock in 1820, and died in 1898. His father was partner and manager in a well-known firm of engineers, and young Caird, on leaving school, was taken into the office, and for more than two years worked as if engineering was to be his destiny. But a year or two at the University of Glasgow inspired him with new tastes and aspirations, and when the engineering firm was dissolved on the death of his father, followed shortly by the death of an uncle, he resolved to give up business and study for the Church. The love of learning which had been kindled during his brief period at College, and religious impressions deepened by the death of his father and uncle combined to fix this decision, and so when twenty years of age he resumed his studies at

the University of Glasgow. The period was one of intense ecclesiastical controversy, for "The Ten Years' Conflict" was rapidly approaching its sad climax in the so-called Disruption of 1843. But from temperament and conviction John Caird had little caring for these fiery disputes. While loyal to the Church of Scotland, he never was, then or afterwards, a "party man," and had no liking for Church Courts, which he seldom or never entered during his whole life. What did move him was the bitterness which had been engendered, while the questions in debate failed to enlist his sympathies or to stir his enthusiasm. The spiritual and practical aspects of Christianity attracted him, ecclesiastical warfare utterly repelled him.

His first charge was Newton-on-Ayr, a parish which from that day became for several years the happy starting point of several of the most celebrated preachers of the Church. John Caird was the first and by far the greatest of these. But his fame spread rapidly, and eighteen months afterwards he was appointed minister of Lady Yester's parish in Edinburgh. The Church was a plain building in an obscure neighbourhood, but soon after his arrival it became the chief centre of religious interest in a city at that time renowned for famous preachers and famous men of letters and science. Yet here was a lad of about twenty-six years of age whose extraordinary eloquence and power were such that long before the hours

of service eager crowds hurried from all parts to gain admission to the very unpretending edifice which had suddenly become a focus of commanding spiritual influence. I can myself remember the sensation which his preaching then created, and the extraordinary impression it made upon myself, young as I was. His very appearance fascinated me and the peculiarly rich voice and musical accentuation thrilled the hearer. Nothing can be truer than the picture given of his preaching at that time by Dr. Mackmillan, quoted by the Master of Balliol in his beautiful but too brief memorial of his brother. "Profoundly impressed himself, his words rang out strong and fervent, emphasized by the most appropriate gestures. Standing back from the book-board, tossing his long hair from his forehead, his eye kindling with a dusky yet piercing light, "*orb within orb*," he poured forth a succession of impassioned sentences which fairly carried you away. There was no pretence, no studied unnatural effect, but the fire and rapture of native eloquence. . . . With a long and highly-wrought peroration, in which he seemed to exhaust all his oratorical powers, he brought his discourse to a conclusion; and the loud sob of the audience indicated how profoundly they had been thrilled and strained in the course of its delivery."

His preaching at that time was in certain aspects better fitted for mere popular effect than in his after life. It was more unrestrained, and

while he never fell beneath the requirements of his inborn fastidiousness as to literary quality, yet his *abandon* to the deeply stirred emotions he experienced was in continual evidence and the consequent passion of his oratory became frequently overpowering. The whirl of the splendid periods and the self-forgetfulness which often led to the piling up of his appeals until his voice approached almost a scream in his desire to emphasize the thought he was enforcing, lent a quality to his early efforts which gradually vanished or became moderated as his style became more chastened. Yet those who heard him then will recall these early years of his ministry as having displayed his gifts as an orator in a form which for mere effect was unique in their experience.

After three years of immense toil during which the mental and nervous tension was more than flesh and blood could stand, he sought retirement in a country parish, where he might have quiet for study, and enjoy the calming influences of the Scottish Manse with the congenial interests of pastoral work among the rural parishioners. He thus became minister of the parish of Errol in the Carse of Gowrie, and soon displayed the practical side of his nature by devising methods for the benefit of the young, especially for the girls engaged in weaving and field labour. For this end he built and organised a school—of a character not so commonly found then

as now—which might be an attraction and a place where the interests of the girls might find a healthy stimulus through instruction in domestic economy, dress-making, cooking, etc. The result was all he had hoped for. The sordid and careless lives soon showed the improvement which his wise project effected, and the keen interest he experienced in guiding his venture, and the hard work he undertook in raising the necessary funds and in placing the school on the best working basis revealed that practical aptitude which found ampler scope when he became head of a great University.

It was when at Errol that, in 1855, he was invited to preach at Crathie before the Queen and the Prince Consort, and delivered his sermon on "The Religion of Common Life," which was afterwards published by command of the Queen, and at once drew the attention of the nation to the preacher. Although the teaching was of a kind which has since become more common, yet it is proof of its exceptional power that after more than fifty years the sermon is still sold in thousands.

It was, however, impossible that such a man could be allowed to remain in retirement. The quiet years at Errol with their hours of hard study and systematic reading could not have been regarded even by himself as an end. The result of these days of reflection, the enlargement and maturing of his views, and the stronger

grasp he gained of the principles which formed the basis of all his work could not fail to command an outlet in a more important field than a retired Perthshire parish, and, accordingly, in 1857, he was forced to make a choice between St. George's Church, Edinburgh, and what was then the unfinished Park Church, in the West of Glasgow. After some deliberation he decided in favour of Park Church, and on the last Sunday of 1857 he was inducted. I well remember the wide interest which the services of that day created. The forenoon service was conducted by Norman Macleod and in the afternoon by John Caird. At once the success of the new Church was more than assured. Not only was every seat let but crowds waited Sunday after Sunday for admission, and were glad if they could obtain standing room. The four years he remained in Park Church were years of hard work and splendid achievement. In my opinion his power as a preacher reached its zenith at that time. There was a fulness of thought, a sustained brilliance of diction, a masterly exposition and impassioned application of practical principles which showed spiritual and mental growth when compared with his earlier ministry. The very fact that he was addressing people immersed in business, the intelligent merchants and captains of industry, the lawyers, and physicians of a great city, gave a practical turn to his teaching and a direction to his earnestness that was often

startling and not in such evidence afterwards, when it was his duty to address an audience of professors and students, and when questions of another kind pressed upon his attention. For while ever presenting the noblest ideals, yet sometimes in scathing language he would set the vulgar pursuit of wealth for its own sake in vivid contrast with the nobler uses of riches and of life itself. His oratory as a preacher also reached its highest point in Park Church. If it lacked the unrestrained *abandon* of the days when he was at Lady Yester's, yet the perfection of style, which seemed his birthright, was charged full of a passion held in greater restraint, yet because of the restraint more moving and convincing. At the forenoon services he generally gave an exposition of Scripture from such brief notes as left the impression of extempore speaking, but so interesting were these simple addresses that many preferred them to the finished and glowing orations of the later service. We can appreciate, as far as the difference admits between printed discourses and those delivered with the fire of burning earnestness, the high standard reached during his first year in Park Church by referring to the volume of sermons he published in 1858.

As on the conclusion of the intervening ministry of Dr. Charteris I became minister of Park Church, I had special opportunities for learning what Dr. Caird's pastoral work had been. No one

could have been more faithful in the visitation of the sick. "His visits when I was ill," a lady once said to me, "were like those of a messenger of God. I can never forget the simplicity, tenderness, and beauty of his words and prayers." At the request of Norman Macleod, he undertook a mission in a poor and degraded district in the large Barony parish, and laid down lines on which the work was conducted, and inspired the energies of the workers so effectually, that it was continued for years afterwards by the congregation, and still remains in the fuller form of an endowed parish. He had little caring for the calls which "Society" made upon his time, for by taste he was a scholar, and loved what he termed "his hermit's life" among his books. Yet when he did enter into social life no one could be more charming. But it was among his intimate friends that the richness of his genial nature was unveiled and his native sense of humour manifested. Some of his amusing stories were about himself. I remember one he used to tell with immense delight. It referred to the time when in Park Church his fame as a preacher was highest, and when he went for a brief rest to the Bridge of Allan. On the Sunday morning a message came that the minister of the parish was so unwell that he could not preach and Caird was pressed to take his place. The church was crowded and the audience thrilled, but as he was escaping home with that shy avoidance of observation

which was characteristic, he overheard one old woman saying to another, "D'ye ken I wadna wonder but that yon young man may get a parish!"

"The Essays for Sunday Reading" which are embraced in this volume consist of gleanings from the sermons he preached in Park Church, and were contributed to *Good Words* in 1863, the year after he had entered on his duties as Professor of Theology in the University. It is necessary to remember that fact because, as might have been expected, these sermons contain the substance of teaching which naturally appears in other forms in later publications. But the similarity of thought does not indicate re-production but simply the continuity of his convictions presented in the more mature form which experience and requirements different from weekly congregational teaching created. If there is any similarity at all it is because his views were fundamentally the same throughout, although he passed into other fields and had to deal with other subjects and interests. If there are also contrasts these are only such as may be looked for when there is spiritual and mental growth and a deeper understanding of the relative problems which philosophy and science suggest.

One recollects with sadness how in those days of a narrow and intolerant evangelicalism the suspicion was whispered that John Caird was not "sound," and that he "did not preach Christ."

If any man ever preached Christ he did, although not in the dogmatic form or expressed in the Shibboleths which were then deemed incumbent. Similar insinuations were made against Norman Macleod, John Tulloch, and others whose souls were on fire with the love of Christ. The accusation was in each case as untrue as it was stupidly ignorant. I can never forget while he was preaching in Park Church late, I think, in the eighties, the burning words with which in an unexpected outburst he made a pathetic confession of his devotion to the Word of God and to the Gospel of Christ as the source of all his light and all his hope. It came as a surprise, not because he so felt. but because of the intensity of the emotion displayed, and the eloquence of the apparently interjected passage.

Dr. Caird entered on the duties of Professor of Theology under a deep sense of responsibility and with the firm determination to dedicate all his powers to the task of educating those who were afterwards to be ministers in our Scottish and other Churches—for he attracted many non-conformist students as well as those who were preparing for the Church of Scotland. He became himself a student and showed full sympathy with his class, dealing with the questions on hand in the loving spirit of one seeking to "commend the truth to every man's conscience in the sight of God." The whole trend of his nature was opposed to the enforcement of mere external

authority. He had such confidence in truth that he did not fear to submit every subject to the test of the closest reasoning, and endeavoured to lead the young minds he was instructing to perceive the eternal fitness of the views he was commending. He studied hard, sparing himself no fatigue and so lectured that he ever kindled a fine spiritual and intellectual enthusiasm. All felt the influence of that noble soul and worked for him "with a will." He had a marvellous analytic power and, as with the sharp knife of the dissector, he would lay bare the weak points in not a few accepted theological arguments, and again pour forth his positive beliefs with a clearness and an earnestness which carried conviction. His methods were certainly not those of the "crammer," but of the teacher who stimulates living thought and makes men think out problems for themselves, training them in principles and methods. He was at once a keen dialectician and an idealist, cutting deep foundations and building high. His students were devoted to him and carried from his class the inspiration of the high tone and exalted aspirations of a great and good man who was at once their teacher and their friend.

On the death of Principal Barclay in 1893 a petition was forwarded to the Government, signed by all the members of the Senate, requesting the appointment of Dr. Caird to be his successor. At that time the University had been

recently removed from the small but picturesque academic buildings in the High Street, hemmed in by a population and surrounded by the social and sanitary conditions of what may be termed "slums." The spacious buildings erected on Golmorehill at the west of Glasgow are nobly situated and, as in contrast to the ancient pile in the High Street, are surrounded by a fine park. The change had a stimulating effect on the life of the University, and it synchronized with a series of legislative and other measures of reform which greatly altered its constitution. The office of Principal accordingly involved Dr. Caird in discussions which required all the technical knowledge he had gained during the years he was a member of Senate, and brought into play the wisdom and tact and firmness combined with a spirit of conciliation which were so important for the safe guiding of the University at this period of transformation. It will be heartily conceded by all who bore an active part in moulding the future of the College that his influence and counsel were of the utmost value. He at once maintained the dignity of his office and displayed the open mind and wise judgment of a statesman.

The years when he was Principal afforded more opportunity than he previously had possessed for prosecuting those philosophical studies which had ever a profound attraction for him. Delivered from the daily exactions which his professorship

entailed, he turned, like one athirst, to the works of the great thinkers in philosophy ancient and modern and worked with absorbing devotion. His brother, now the famous Master of Balliol, became Professor of Philosophy in Glasgow and was rapidly gaining the position, he now holds without challenge, of being one of the prominent philosophers of our time. The two brothers thus like-minded were moving in orbits which, if not wholly identical, were at all events similar, and each afforded stimulus and the benefit of acute criticism to the other. Almost daily might they have been seen taking their long walks together and apparently engrossed in most earnest talk.

The results of these studies were made manifest in the rich literary productiveness of his later years. From the time of his entrance on the duties of Professor of Theology to the end of his career there was a visible deepening of his intellectual life, and while retaining the religious convictions which had formed the groundwork of his character and teaching, yet every one felt the change in the wider outlook of his views and the firmness of his grasp of the multitude of questions which modern research suggested. He was a man who grew mentally and spiritually to the very end, and his later works reveal a power which mark the greatness of the advance. His oratory remained—for it was inborn—but it was greatly chastened, and his style assumed the character rather of the thoughtful scholar than

of the popular preacher. As specimens of literature these later works undoubtedly excel the earlier, for as examples of English pure and undefiled the University Sermons and University Addresses, the "Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion," and his Gifford "Lectures on the Fundamental Ideas of Christianity" can scarcely be surpassed for clearness and beauty of expression, and for an eloquence in which imagination brilliantly illuminates argument without suggesting the slightest desire of using it for mere effect.

Looking back on these prelections delivered annually in the University one can scarcely think of any more useful work on the part of an academic chief than the series of Addresses which served to raise the minds of the students from the mere grind and specialisation of class studies, to the contemplation of far-reaching and ennobling principles. Taken together they give us the best insight into the richness of intellectual culture, the breadth of sympathy, the warmth of human emotion, and the sanctity of the spiritual mindedness which characterised Principal Caird.

But only those who knew him personally can fully appreciate what the man was. For myself, among the many distinguished persons it has been my privilege to meet, I have known no one, except perhaps the venerable Lord Kelvin and another, who was at once so great and so modest,

simple, honest and sincere. He disliked display, and absolutely shrank from ostentation and from the deference which the staring crowd pays to its heroes. Although the most famous preacher of his time, yet so self-diffident and even nervous was he that I have seen him all a-tremble when about to take part in some such function as a marriage.

Pure as a child, and child-like in his reverence, gentle and loving in heart, he consecrated his great gifts to the highest ends and having faithfully "served his generation by the will of God, he fell asleep."

DONALD MACLEOD.

6th July, 1906
1 Woodlands Terrace,
Glasgow.

Essays for Sunday Reading

Essays for Sunday Reading

I

Has the Gospel Lost its Ancient Power?

HAS the regenerating influence of the truth died away with the lapse of years? The same in form, though it be, as in the primitive times, are we now fallen upon evil days, in which the body alone remains, while the spirit and life are gone? The old rod is here, once wielded by the magician's hand. Has it lost its power to conjure? The ancient sword of the Spirit which in the great days of old wrought mighty work against the hosts of evil, still hangs in the Church's armory, but we cannot now tell of thousands and tens of thousands as the trophies of its power on a single field. Shall we conclude that its edge is blunted or that the puny hands of modern men are too weak to wield it? We never witness now, or only at rare intervals, and with doubtful resemblance, any reproduction of the scenes of Pentecost. We never read in the transactions of modern churches any authentic narratives such as those with which the records of the Church's early history abounds —of thousands converted by a single sermon; of the simultaneous movement of souls stirred and swept together as the multitudinous waves of the

sea by the same wind of heaven; of whole communities and nations born in a day. Of old, a simple, unlettered man, destitute of intellectual culture or rhetorical art, would pass from country to country, and wherever he went, in hamlet and town and city, the hearts of men were strangely moved by his words.

In our day the ablest and most cultivated minds, after long and laborious training, armed with all the influence which learning, eloquence, dialectic skill, can lend to human lips, will fail throughout the course of a long ministry to elicit any such marked authentication of their teaching. What then? Shall we conclude that the force of the truth has become spent, that the living, quickening power of the gospel has fled? Is Christianity an agent that loses, like a spring, its elasticity by use; a specific whose virtue evaporates by long exposure; a voice from heaven once pealing in thunder tones on a startled world, but whose echoes are falling now faint and ever fainter on the ear? Or if not, why are its effects so different? If the agent be unaltered, why are the phenomena by which its presence was manifested in other days seldom or never paralleled in our own? Human hearts are the same. Human needs are the same. Still souls are perishing, and need to be saved. Still souls are slumbering, and need to be roused ere they sleep the sleep that knows no waking. What then is different? What is wanting? Why can we only

tell, as the highest result of ministerial effort, of cold formalities observed, and decorous proprieties maintained; at best, of one soul here, and another there, at wide intervals, owning the power of the truth?

Now, whilst the answer to such inquiries would undoubtedly involve much that is to the dishonour of the Church in modern times, yet the difference in question admits to some extent of a less unfavourable explanation. Whilst the diminished power of the truth must, in part at least, be ascribed to the colder spiritual atmosphere in which it acts—to the weaker faith and more languid energy of its preachers—to the greater secularity and indifference of its hearers; yet on the other hand, it is not invariably to be concluded that the influence of the gospel is really less, simply because it is less palpable. The results of preaching may not be less important, though from the altered circumstances of the Church and of society, they are, of necessity, less striking and demonstrative. How far it is so, it will not be uninteresting or unprofitable to inquire. For, knowing how much of the admitted difference of results is to be set down to the altered conditions of the problem, we shall be able to form a more just estimate of what is to be ascribed to less venial causes. If it can be shown that the apparent number and the marked and striking character of conversions, cannot, from the nature of the case, be the same now as in another and

different age, then we shall, to some extent at least, be saved from disappointment at the comparatively slight apparent results of Christian effort. We shall know what we have to look for, and we shall be taught to avoid the distortion of aim, the misdirection of effort which is implied in the craving for countable results. We shall cease to measure the success of the preaching of the gospel by external excitements and palpable conversions; and we shall no longer be oppressed with a sense of failure because we do not witness in our day any literal reproduction of the incidents of an earlier age. To these ends, therefore, it will be useful to indicate one or two points of difference which must necessarily obtain betwixt conversions to Christianity in modern, and conversions to Christianity in apostolic times.

1. One most obvious point of difference is, that *then* conversion consisted in *the adopting of a new religion*, whilst *now* it consists, generally, in *the realizing of an old and familiar one*. Formerly, in other words, it was a new faith espoused, now it is only an old one quickened.

There may be, in reality, fewer conversions now than in the Church's earlier and brighter days; but few or many, they are of necessity, in the great majority of cases, less palpable and appreciable. For when men became Christians *then*, they had openly to renounce one religion and adopt another—to pass at one step from Paganism or Judaism to Christianity: when men

become Christians *now*, in most cases they simply pass from nominal to real Christianity. There is no external act of renunciation, no visible recanting an old, and professing of a new creed; all the difference is, that what was before a mere form becomes a reality, that old creeds are realized, old forms become instinct with the sap of reviving spiritual life. But it is plain that this last sort of conversion, though equally real and important, attracts much less notice than the former. Dig up a tree and transplant it from one soil to another, and every passer-by will be aware of the process. But what observer can note the moment when, through the blackened trunk and the dry and leafless branches of the tree that has stood bare and barren through many winter days, the first stirring of the new spring sap is taking place?

Let a man desert from the enemy's service and enlist in yours, and all can perceive and appreciate such an accession to the ranks the moment it occurs; but though the gain in strength may be as great when a traitor who has long worn your country's uniform renounces his secret treachery, and becomes a loyal-hearted soldier and subject of the Queen; this is a change which passes unobserved. So in the case before us. When a heathen was converted to Christianity, his whole life became revolutionized. It was a root-and-branch change, a transplantation to new ground, an open forswearing of the enemy's

service and enlisting in the ranks of Christ. Unhallowed rites and ceremonies were no longer frequented; sacrifices and festivals ceased to be observed; habits of life were completely altered; idolatrous customs and usages, which interpenetrated domestic and social existence, were renounced; licentious excesses, formerly regarded as venial, if not committed under the very sanction of religion, were succeeded by a pure and strict morality; from a despiser or persecutor of Christianity, the neophyte became an open and devoted follower of the Lord Jesus; and, of course, a change so radical, so revolutionary, could not fail to be instantly observed by all to whom the convert was known. Every such conversion would count at once as an unmistakable accession to the Church's ranks. The power of the truth would receive in it a new authentication, and the Church could openly bless God for the salvation of another soul.

But, on the other hand, conversion in our day is in general a very different process. The same in essence, it is, in form, much less obtrusive. For it consists simply in a man's becoming a real and earnest believer in those truths of which he had already and perhaps all through life, been a formal and nominal believer. The whole mechanism and organization were here before, only they become now, for the first time, instinct with life. There was action and motion before, but they were the action and motion of an

automaton; now they are the same outwardly, but a soul has crept into the anatomical machine.

For what, I pray you, does any unconverted man in a Christian Church need in order to make him a true Christian? Not, in most cases, new knowledge, but mainly the power to realize old and familiar knowledge; not a new creed or form of belief, but the making that creed a reality which has hitherto been but a form. We do not require to teach him the facts and doctrines of Christianity, or to convince him of their truth. He believes in them all; he assents to them all. They are all in his memory, in his head; what is wanted now is to get them into his heart. It is not more food the sick man wants, but the reviving of his appetite and digestive functions, that he may assimilate the food he has got. It is not more fuel the fire wants: pile coals on an expiring breathless fire, and you only put it out; but it wants kindling and draught to lay hold of and consume the fuel that is already there. So, in order to make a worldly man spiritual, a careless man a Christian, we do not need to ring the changes for ever on the old story, to repeat and reiterate, in order to inform his mind, the old news about death and judgment, sin and salvation, heaven and hell, God's wrath and God's love in Christ Jesus. Are there not hundreds of irreligious, worldly men in every Christian community who are most thoroughly conversant with the facts and doctrines of Christianity; who need

no long-drawn proof to gain their assent to the historical truth of the gospel; who believe in the life, sacrifice, death, and resurrection of Christ, in the offered mercy and love of God through his dear Son, in the necessity of faith, repentance, and a holy life? Question them, and would not the answer be, "All this we steadfastly believe!" Yes; but what they do need is, that all this mass of torpid matter, this lumber of unprofitable dogma, should be vitalized. The form of religion is there already, but there is no breath in it; what is wanted is to breathe a soul into these ribs of death.

And so if some worshipper in a Christian congregation should this day become a sincere and earnest Christian—if God should bless the preaching of the truth to his conversion—in all probability the whole change would be, that he now in the secret depths of his spirit begins for the first time to *feel* and *realize* what hitherto he had theoretically believed. His mind would be roused to lay hold, with the appropriating grasp of faith, with the vitalizing energy of trust, that truth as it is in Jesus, which formerly it had but intellectually trifled with. This would be conversion. But for a time at least it would be an unnoticed and secret thing. The changed demeanour, the softened aspect, the trembling lip, the tearful eye, some secret friend might note, but for the world there would be little or no difference. The old organization, the stem and

branches of the winter tree are there all the same, and only God's eye perceives that the stirring sap of spring, betokening a glorious summer's fruit, has begun to rise within it. The follower of sin has become a soldier of Christ, but he wore the same guise and uniform before; and the Master's piercing gaze alone it is that can discern that the traitor-heart is gone, that a new heart and right spirit are there, and that the badge of the cross betokens one who has now the right to wear it.

2. As another difference between conversions in apostolic and in modern times, I may specify the greater *suddenness and swiftness of the process*, in most cases, in the early Church.

In so far as any mental or spiritual change can be outwardly observed, it will of course be more or less striking and notable in proportion to its rapidity. Gradual changes may be equally great but spread over a long lapse of time, and advancing by gradations, each of which is by itself all but imperceptible, they attract comparatively little notice from superficial observers. If we were plunged by a single step from mid-winter into mid-summer—one day a bleak, dreary, snow-clad waste, the next surrounded by beauty and fragrance and balmy warmth—the transition would of course be much more impressive than the silent and gradual one of our actual experience. Or again, if in recovery from disease, there were no long intermediate stage of convalescence; but

the patient whom we left at night a poor, worn, emaciated sufferer, with shattered nerves and utter prostration of physical energy, we found in the morning in the flush of health, animation in his look, and bounding elasticity in his step; here again, the transformation could not fail to arrest the attention of the most careless spectator. And in like manner a moral change, which is not the slow and silent result of long processes of education, discipline, thought, reflection, conviction, brought about by the gradual converging influence of a thousand events, agencies, teachings of providence and of grace, but which, under some condensed and potent influence, transforms, as if at one stroke, selfishness into love, profligacy into purity, the raving moral maniac into a meek and childlike saint sitting at Jesus' feet—this of necessity is a kind of conversion which is the most palpable, and which may attract universal notice, while the more gradual, but not less real change, passes unobserved.

Now, from various causes, moral and spiritual changes were in the early Church much more generally of a sudden, rapid, condensed character, than in our own and other times. There is nothing in the nature of things to prevent a rapid intensifying of man's spiritual history, so that the moral life of years might be condensed into hours. There is no necessary and constant ratio between thought and time, so that so many ideas, feelings, resolutions, mental acts and experiences,

must take so many minutes, hours, or years, to go through. It is quite conceivable that the rate of thought might be so altered that the varied fortunes of a lifetime—with all its multitudinous experiences of joy, sorrow, hope, fear, love, hate, all its inquiries, studies, doubts, beliefs, convictions, errors—might be crowded into a few hours or minutes. And this of course may be as true of our religious and spiritual, as of our other mental experiences. The whole history of a soul, with all its stirrings of thought and awakenings of compunction, and conflicts of doubt and fear, its convictions of faith, its joy of trust, its aspirations, hopes, devout contemplations—onwards from the first step in the path of holiness till it stands at the very gate of glory—might be transacted in as many minutes as it ordinarily requires years to accomplish. The winter of the soul might be made glorious summer by the instantaneous outflashing, on its inner darkness and coldness, of the Sun of righteousness. One touch of the divine healer's hand, and with no long and weary interval of slow reviving moral health and strength, the soul in which the ravages of moral disease have been the most disastrous, might pass into the full maturity of life.

Now, whilst in all ordinary times the phenomena of the spiritual life are slowly developed, and character is a thing of very gradual formation, in the early days of the Church's history there was a marked intensification of spiritual life, and

moral and religious transformations were often rapid and sudden. As the outward miracles of Christ might be said to condense natural processes—as, for instance, the slow and long-protracted processes of husbandry and the cultivation of the vine, were abridged into a few moments when the loaves in the desert grew in Christ's hands into food for thousands, or the water passed into the form of wine; or, again, as the ordinary process of recovery was accelerated, when the lame or paralytic leapt and walked, or the fever-stricken arose in health at His omnific word;—so also, by his moral miracles, were the inner processes of man's ordinary spiritual experience condensed and abbreviated. And thus, not as now by the slow and sedulous labours of parental instruction and the discipline of early years, or by the gradual dawn of clearer conviction and a deeper moral feeling on the soul through the teaching of Scripture, but by agencies and influences almost instantaneous, were moral revolutions in the old time achieved.

The persecutor fresh from the murder of Christ's first martyr, envenomed with bigotry, and hurrying on a mission of cruel hostility to the saints of God, is arrested on his progress, and in a few hours the mantle of a Christian apostle falls upon him. The foul and guilty woman listens to the words of incarnate Purity, and soon trembling, hoping, weeping, praying, she is at the feet of Jesus, and at the words, "Daughter, be of good cheer, thy

sins be forgiven thee," undying love and devotion take possession of her soul. The malefactor nailed to the tree of shame, a wild, reckless, sin-stained wretch, listens to the dying words of Jesus, and in the course of a few brief hours passes from recklessness and vice into the home of eternal purity, the paradise of God. Now in these and all similar instances the rapidity of the change would arrest observation, and the contrast would furnish a ready criterion of its magnitude. At one glance the spectator could view both sides of a picture that was instantaneously reversed. The impression of the dark and repulsive side would still be fresh on the eye, as the brighter one started into beauty before it, and all the marvel of the transition would therefore be seen and noted. "Is not this he who destroyed them who called on this name at Jerusalem? And they were amazed." "They heard only that he which persecuted us in times past, now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed, and they glorified God in me." On the other hand, even on the supposition that conversions, as numerous and as complete as these, were taking place around us, they would fail to attract the same attention. The spiritual transformation, on the whole of equal magnitude, might yet in each successive gradation be too minute to measure. The light of purity and love in many a once dark and godless soul may be shining as brightly now as in other days, but it has risen slowly,

shining brighter and brighter to the perfect day, and multitudes fail to note it who might have been filled with awe and wonder had the moral transition been as if at one instant from midnight into noon.

3. One other point of difference which renders conversions to Christianity less marked in modern than in apostolic times, is that whereas *now conversions are generally isolated, formerly whole multitudes were often converted simultaneously.*

There are, as we know, many events which, befalling separately and at intervals, do not create the same impression as if they took place simultaneously. Births and deaths supply an obvious illustration of this. When, by some dreadful railway accident, or shipwreck, or other disaster, hundreds of hapless souls are hurried simultaneously into eternity, we are of course much more deeply affected by their deaths than if the same number of human beings died in succession, at intervals, and from ordinary causes. Or if each successive generation of men—instead of slipping away, now one, now another, the former generation overlapping its successor, so that some specimens of several generations are always with us—were, at stated periods, by some sudden and simultaneous catastrophe, swept away, and a new race arose in their vacant places, such an event, though in point of fact it would not in the least alter the universal lot of mortals, would render it much more obtrusively striking than according

to the present order. And so also is it in the moral world. Here, too, the critical events in man's history, in the common order of God's government separate and isolated, sometimes come simultaneously to multitudes, and it is as if a whole generation of souls leapt together into life. In the ordinary routine of events, it is apart, and as solitary pilgrims that souls knock at heaven's door, and the wicket gate is wide enough to let them in; but there have been times in the Church's history when in joyful crowds they press on together, and it is as if the great golden gates of paradise must be flung wide open to receive them. Angels rejoice over one sinner that repenteth, but sometimes they have struck their harps to louder, more exulting strains, for nations born in a day.

Nor is it difficult to understand the reason of this—the causes why such events have occurred, and may, for aught we know, recur again, in the history of the Church. There are conditions of men's minds in which they are singularly liable to simultaneous movements and impressions. There are times when a single bold word will fire a thousand hearts, and souls, in ordinary life insulated and unsusceptible, will thrill together as by a common electric shock of feeling. To some extent we see this fact illustrated in the power of the public speaker over a crowded and sympathetic auditory. Why is it that the same words, read in private with little or no emotion, have

seemed so much more powerful, have touched our hearts and interested our minds so much more vividly, in public? It is because there is a new element at work in the latter case, which is wanting in the former; it is because the local contiguity of a crowd has elicited that strange element of physical and mental sympathy, and induced a highly electric state of the moral atmosphere. Again, there are times when the same influence is seen operating on a much wider scale—when not through a congregation or a public assembly merely, but through a whole community or nation, a common thought or feeling spreads. Let men's minds be disciplined by circumstances affecting all alike into a common state of susceptibility, and over a whole country or community, emotion will fly like wildfire. Railway manias, a wild spirit of adventure or speculation, intoxicating half the nation with a common commercial drunkenness, social and commercial panics, a war fever passing over the land like an epidemic—all these are instances of a social contagion affecting with instantaneous rapidity, all but simultaneously, whole multitudes of men with a common thought or feeling.

And so especially is it in religion. For here lies man's deepest nature; here are those springs of thought and emotion that rise from profoundest depths of his being; here those common organic susceptibilities which affect all men alike, and which, if you can reach them, touch our common

nature to the quick. It was this diffused susceptibility of many minds, for example, that gave the leaders of the Reformation their power over the awakening nations. The world, unconsciously to itself, had grown sick of superstition. Ages of religious deception and unreality, of hollow formalities and bare-faced impositions, of ceremonial solemnities mocking man's wants, and when he cried for bread to feed his soul's hunger, offering him a stone, had awakened an irrepressible longing for something better, something real, something to tear away the veil between man and the God without whom he cannot live. And so when Luther rose, the world was waiting to receive him. The mountain mass of superstition was everywhere undermined, the train was laid, all was ready for the catastrophe; and when one firm, brave hand applied the match, the subtle fire flew hither and thither at once, and the vast fabric, rent and shaken in a thousand places, came crashing down. And so especially was it in that age of the world to which our text relates. For then, indeed, if ever, men's hearts were everywhere in strange expectancy, weary of bondage, and waiting for their Deliverer. The fulness of the times had come. Old faiths had everywhere become effete, old moralities corrupt;—the Hebrew impatiently fretting, and groaning under the yoke which yet he was impotent to throw off, yearning with passionate longing for the hope of Israel;—the Heathen, amidst the utter extinction

of reverence, amidst the relaxing of social bonds, and the intense corruption of national and social life, unconsciously ready to respond to any voice that would rouse him to hope and aspiration after better things. And so when He came who is the world's glorious hope, and when His emissaries went hither and thither telling of redemption to the slave, of purity to the guilty, of immortal life and glory to wretched dying souls, there was as if a simultaneous cry of deliverance, a deep responsive "All hail!" that broke from hearts which God's Spirit had touched by the good news from heaven. It was not as now, when, in the cold damp atmosphere of worldliness, but few hearts—one here and another there—are ever touched and kindled by the truth. Conversions were then, as when in the autumn warmth and drought fire falls on Canadian wood or prairie. An hour ago, and all was dark: the spark fell, and all but simultaneously the whole forest for miles around has become one sheet of flame. It is evident that religious changes, when thus embracing masses of men, are, from the nature of the case, much more observable than when, as in the ordinary routine of the Church's life, they affect only individuals. Even if the souls reached by the heavenly influence be now equally numerous as at such epochs of simultaneous movement, yet will the result in the former case, of necessity, lack the impressiveness of the latter. As many dumb lips may now be opened at Christ's touch,

but the voice of their gratitude uttered, each apart from the rest, is but as the repetition at wide intervals of a solitary cry: it lacks the obtrusive force and grandeur which belongs to the voices of a great host bursting forth in blended adoration to their common Redeemer and Lord.

Desisting from any further prosecution of this train of thought, the caution must be added, that to such considerations as have now been suggested too great weight should not be attached. It would be easy to derive from them a false comfort. They afford at best only a partial explanation of the diminished apparent power of the truth. Doubtless, the lessened influence is not altogether in appearance only. In many respects "the former days" seem, only because they actually were, "better than these." No one can deny that there is in reality much spiritual dulness and coldness in modern society, and that, by our very familiarity with religion, its truths have lost somewhat of their original power to move us. It is not that the mighty motives and principles of religion have been deprived of their inherent efficacy. It is not that by any arbitrary decree the gracious influence has been withdrawn, which in the ancient days rendered the truth mighty to save. God's loving, life-giving Spirit does not act by fits and starts. In his Church it is not now a flood now a drought—the channels of gracious influence left at one time dry as a

summer brook, and anon flooded like a river or as the waves of the sea.

God is never fitful, never partial, never arbitrary. He willeth not the death of a sinner. He will have all men to be saved. His Spirit is always poured out, and always in infinite, overflowing abundance. God's helpful influence is as a wind ever blowing, a stream ever flowing, a tide that is ever at the flood. The cause of failure is to be sought, not in Him, but in us. It lies not in the Agent, but in the subject, not in the giver but in the receiver. It is that at one time men catch and treasure the precious element, at another let it run to waste. The productive powers of the earth are as great in some far away undiscovered island, or in some rich American backwood, as in our peopled England; only in the former there is no human hand to till the fertile earth and gather in its fruit. Age after age it has been running waste, lavishing its fertility in wild luxuriance of wood and gay profusion of ungathered fruits and flowers. And so the germinating, fertilizing influences of God's grace are ever acting upon us and around us—breathing in the air and basking on the soil of man's spirit—ready, if the heart will but open to them, to quicken all its energies into life and beauty. On our guilty indolence, on our unreceptive hardness, must the blame rest, if any other region be fairer, or any other age have proved more fertile than our own.

II

Covetousness a Misdirected Worship

THE prevalence of error is often to be traced to the latent love of truth, and in sinful excess may not seldom be discerned the aberration of a nature by its original structure designed for good. In almost all wide-spread misbelief careful reflection will discover a disguised or distorted basis of truth, and in men's darling vices the counterfeit of pure and noble objects of desire to which their fascination is to be ascribed. For just as forged money could never gain currency if men set no value on the genuine coin, and as spurious wares impose on the undiscerning only because of the desire for those things of which they are the worthless imitation, so falsehood and sin would have no universal attraction, even for man's fallen nature, if they bore no deceitful semblance of that truth and goodness from which he has wandered. The popularity of the false is thus often a silent homage to the true, and the avidity of desire for evil an unconscious tribute to the beauty and nobleness of good. The best way, therefore, to expose any popular error, is to extricate the latent truth which it pretends to be;

and the true way to disengage our affection from any sinful object of desire is—not to declaim against it, and denounce all sorts of penalties against him who persists in his devotion to it—but rather to seek out and place side by side with it that true and genuine good, the admiration due to which it has borrowed. Confront the fictitious with the true, the caricature with the reality; set beside the base and showy jewel the pearl of great price, or by the meretricious, painted face of vice unveil the sweet, calm, holy form of goodness beaming with heavenly beauty upon us, and you have taken the sure way to divest evil of its charms. Provide, in other words, the true satisfaction for man's deep and universal desires, and he will turn with distaste from that which only pretends to please. Let him find at last the substance after which he has been blindly groping, and he will grasp no more at shadows.

Now it is this thought which lends peculiar force to certain expressions of Scripture with reference to the vice of covetousness. The expressions to which we refer are to be found in such passages as the following:—"Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength; but trusted in the abundance of riches." * "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." † "Nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God." ‡

---

* Psalm lii. 7. † Matt. vi. 24. ‡ 1 Tim. vi. 17.

"Covetousness, which is idolatry."* "No covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of God." † In these, and other passages which might be adduced, two states of mind, two affections of man's nature, are contrasted, viz., devotion to money, and devotion to God. And the idea which runs through them all seems to be that the latter of these stands to the former in the relation of the genuine to the counterfeit, the true to the fictitious, the reality to the unsubstantial but showy and imposing imitation.

In the restless and insatiable craving for wealth there may be detected, it seems to be intimated, the aberration of a nature that was made for God, and is still unconsciously seeking after Him. The passionate self-surrender with which so many give themselves to the pursuit of riches, is but the diseased action of a being formed for self-sacrifice to an infinite object, of which riches is the base, indeed, and miserable, yet, in many respects, most deceptive imitation. The love of money, if we may so express the thought, is but the love of God run wild. If money did not present to the heart's deep yet unconscious longings and aspirations some shadow or substance of that of which it is in quest, it would not call forth such an ardour and intensity of devotion. But it does make believe to give what can

* Col. iii. 5. † Eph. v. 5.

truly be found in God alone. And it is because it does so; because it presents a false copy of infinitude to the soul that it becomes the object of a morbid craving, an attachment extravagantly disproportionate to its real worth. Let me try, in further prosecution of this train of thought, to indicate one or two features in which this illusive resemblance between money and God, as objects of human desire and devotion, may be traced, and then to show that it *is* an illusive resemblance, a likeness fatal to all who are beguiled by it.

1. The soul of man was made for God, and can never find true rest or happiness till it confide itself to Him. But in its restless pursuit of happiness, it often mistakes the true object of which it is in quest; and there are qualities common to that Divine object and riches which, unconsciously to the mind itself, constitute the attraction of the latter. There are superficial similarities which secretly persuade the heart that that divinity of which it is in search it will find in wealth. What are these? If we try to think how money is like God, may it not be said to possess a certain shadowy semblance of His omnipotence; a strange mimicry of His omnipresence, His boundless beneficence, His providence, His power over the future, His capacity, not only to procure for us an endless variety of blessings, to give us all that our hearts can desire, but also to become, in and for Himself, apart

from all that He can give or get for us, an object of independent delight; so that it is happiness to possess him, to enjoy Him, to make Him our portion, to know and feel that He is ours.

Take, for a moment, any of these qualities or attributes, and you will see that the resemblance of which we speak is not a fanciful one. There is in money, for instance, a shadow of the Divine *omnipotence*. Weak and helpless in God's world, as man feels himself to be, his unconscious longing is for some power of succour and defence in which to confide. I want, in my conscious helplessness, something to stand between me and danger—some presence ever near me to which I can repair, in want for sustenance, in weakness for strength, in danger for protection. I require some Being or Power that will give me calmness, reliance, security, and make me feel that I have at hand a friend in need—that whatever betide me, I have a solace for my sorrows, a secure rock and refuge amidst the fluctuations of circumstances, and the unknown cares and troubles and emergencies of life.

Now, for this deep and universal craving, there is no true response but in Him, who is the One omnipotent Friend, the rock and refuge of his people in all generations. But the heart that has turned away from Him finds in Money a strange semblance of His omnipotence. Whether for the supply of present needs, or as a provision against future emergencies, does not Money seem to many

a mind that which can give it a solid sense of security? With a mimic almightiness and omnipresence it rules the world. Make it your friend, and it will summon from every region of the globe whatever can contribute to your use and enjoyment. At its all-potent touch your board will be spread, your person clothed, your senses gratified, your eye fed with beauty, your ear ravished with melody, your mind furnished with the richest results of human thought. At its bidding, the earth will yield the fruits that grow upon its surface, and the minerals that are hidden in its depths; the East will send you its silks and spices, the South the produce of its vineyards, and the West of its plantations. It will command the lower creatures to give their strength and their fleetness to minister to man's uses, and their beauty to his pleasure, and their very life to his support. Men, too, at its resistless summons, will hasten to work for you; and not only those around you, but thousands whom you have never seen, in every land and clime under heaven, will contribute, for your gratification, the highest products of their toil. Day and night, for you, the husbandman and the artisan, on the field, in the quarry, at the mill, and the loom, and the anvil, and the manufactory, will labour on; for you the sailor will risk his life on the sea, and the soldier on the field of battle, and the miner in the bowels of the earth. For you, at the omnific word of this all-controlling master, the rarest

powers of the most gifted minds will be exerted. The most curious contrivances, the most exquisite inventions, will be placed at your service. For you the poet will sing, and the artist paint, and the historian and philosopher and scholar will produce the long results of thought and toil. The lawyer will give you the sharpest of his wits and the profoundest of his learning, the physician exert all the skill which, by study and observation of the human frame, he has gained, to mitigate your ailments or cure your diseases ; and even the divine, for you, will ransack the treasures of sacred lore, and the preacher, for your instruction, preach his best. What wonder that a power that can achieve all this, borrows, to man's fallen imagination, the very sceptre of Omnipotence, and that the heart that knows no other Divinity, confides in it as a God ! And add to this, that not only does money seem to exert an almost universal dominion over the present, but that it possesses a mysterious power, to the worldly imagination, to secure it against the chances and changes of the future. It represents, by its silent presence, to him who has amassed a fortune, the supplies of long years to come. It is his security against a thousand evils with which the future may be fraught. It contains in it the virtual promise, that, as long as life shall last, his wants shall be satisfied, his pleasures provided, his difficulties smoothed, and if not his sorrows and trials averted, yet a thousand solacements procured to

lighten them. It places in fancy its votary above the fear of coming ills, and enables him to look calmly around, and say, "I need fear no evil." What wonder then, I repeat, that that which can do all this comes to be regarded with an almost slavish dependence; that it gathers round it the feelings of abject homage and respect, and that the irreligious mind yields to it the very sentiments of trust and confidence due from man to his God!

Another attribute of Divinity which money may be said to borrow, is *the capacity to become an object of desire and delight in and for itself.* That which is the object of man's worship must constitute, in itself, the Supreme Good of the soul. It must be contemplated, not as a means but as an end, not as the condition of achieving some ulterior gain or advantage, but as containing in itself all the gain we seek, and capable, in the mere fact of possessing it, of bestowing perfect satisfaction on the possessor. The highest experience of the devout heart is to rest in God as its final portion and joy. To seek an interest in God's favour merely because the divine patronage is necessary to our safety and happiness, is not true religion, but only religious selfishness; and he who loves God only for His gifts, loves really the gifts, not God. Let him have the benefits, and he could do without the Bestower. Whilst, therefore, there may have been, in the experience of many a pious mind, a preparatory

discipline of gratitude or fear, an earlier stage of its moral history in which God was regarded chiefly as the Dispenser of favours, or the Deliverer from penalties; yet then only does the soul reach that attitude towards God which can be rightly designated religious, when all self-regardful thoughts and feelings are eliminated, and God Himself becomes the desire and delight of the heart. When hope and fear are lost in love, when it is perfect bliss simply to love and to be loved by God, and the sincere utterance of the heart is, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth I desire besides thee,"—then only does the object of worship become our Supreme Good—our God.

Now, in this respect too, may it not be said that Money is the counterfeit of Deity, and covetousness a distorted faith? It is true, indeed, that money is but the conventional representative of other objects of desire, and may be prized simply because we look at the things we like through money—caring not for the medium, save for the sake of that which by its aid we contemplate beyond it. The love of money is always at first, often never more than, the love of meat and drink and dress, of the pleasures of the table, of luxurious living, of power, of applause, of books or art—of that, in short, which meets some natural desire or propensity. But, as we all know, money may become, and often does become, more than this. Intercepting the feelings

of which it has been the medium, it begins to be loved, not as a means, but as an end. The heart learns more and more to rest in it, all ulterior objects forgotten. All the scattered rays of desire, to which it was for a while transparent, become concentrated on it. All the streams of passion, the inclinations, wishes, hopes, delights, that went forth formerly to their proper objects, now flow into this channel, and lend their combined force to the intensity of this one passion.

The heart, ever craving after that for which, by its original structure, it was made—some one object to which all its manifold energies may be devoted, and in which it may find satisfaction and rest, learns more and more to rest in money as its end. The sense of possession is its bliss, and all the bliss it seeks. To have money, to know and feel that it is mine, to commune with it, think about it, plan how to get more of it, and enjoy the success of getting it; to be content never to part from it, or give it up for the sake of anything that could be exchanged for it—this becomes the sovereign good, the happiness, the heaven of many a human spirit. There have been those who, if they could give expression to their unconscious feelings, might almost travesty the language of devotion, and say of wealth, "What have I on earth but thee, and there is no heaven that I desire besides thee!" And though it may be true that the cases are rare in which the passion of covetousness reaches this height of

extravagance, yet, in as far as any man approximates to this state of thought and feeling, in so far are his wandering, objectless desires fastening on Money as the Divinity they are in search of, and he is transferring to money that confidence which is due to God alone.

I will only adduce one other quality of the divine object of trust which money mimics—His *infinitude*.

That which constitutes the highest good of man, the object of his profoundest desire and delight, must be not only good independently, but also good inexhaustibly. We cannot rest in that which is limited. To be satisfied with what he has got, is not possible for man. Weariness soon creeps over the familiar joy; and if it is to continue to attract us, it must grow with the desire it gratifies; it must expand with the ever-expanding appetite. If you could leave out from a man's mental structure the elements of hope, of aspiration, of imagination, then might he find rest for his soul in that which is bounded, without one sigh of satiety, without the consciousness of one wistful glance into the future and the ideal. But it is not so. God has not made us for that which is finite. We cannot stop. We cannot allay the heart's quenchless thirst. The eye cannot be satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing. Gazing on the most glorious scenes of this world's loveliness, listening to the strains of its most voluptuous melody, surrounded by every element

of material and temporal happiness, the unconscious cry of the heart is—"More, more still, more than that; I am not satisfied, I am not at rest!" Only in the contemplation of that Beauty which eye hath not seen, in hearkening with ever-growing, ever-gratified yearning to that Melody which ear hath not heard, in beholding in beatific vision that Mind from the depths of which ever new and more ravishing revelations of unearthly splendour are breaking on the pure in heart—only, in one word, in the enjoyment of God, is there rest for that nature which has in it the boundlessness of its object.

Now, it is just because it puts on a faint mimicry of this illimitableness, that wealth presents to many a hapless mind so potent, so resistless an attraction. The desire for money grows with what it feeds upon. When once it has taken firm hold of a man's nature, it is its notorious characteristic to be ever unsatisfied with past acquisitions, ever conceiving and contriving how to get more. And ever at each fresh accession there seems to open up and stretch away before the imagination an endless possibility of future gain. Men may talk of the irrationality of such a passion. Its folly may point the homily of the moralist and the epigram of the poet; it may be the theme of a thousand formal denunciations and warnings from the pulpit;—still covetousness laughs at them all. It will not yield to satire or solemnity. It will not be dislodged by human

reasoning. Nothing but the entrance into the heart of that holy love—that high, pure and heavenly principle of which it is the mocking make-believe, can ever expel it, forasmuch as it borrows in man's heart the strength and intensity of that boundless devotion that is due to God alone.

2. Such, then, are some out of many points in which this shadowy resemblance between money and God as objects of desire and dependence may be traced. That it *is* a shadowy and deceptive resemblance, and that the trust in riches, therefore, is a misplaced devotion, it will need few words to show. In this, as in many of our commonest experiences, we do not know our own meaning. The lover of money does not understand himself; he is not reflectively conscious of what it is which he is in quest of. There is a deep, inextinguishable need of God within him; but, as often happens, the desire becomes creative. It fastens upon an object beneath itself, gilds it with imaginary beauty and attractiveness; and then the mind fancies that it sees in the object those qualities with which its own wistful imagination has endowed it. The wish becomes father to the thought. The faint outline is filled up by the busy, eager, shaping fancy, till it attains a visionary completeness; and often it is only the bitter experience of disappointment—of wasted affections, misplaced confidence, and ruined hopes—that at length undeceives us.

And such must ever be the final disenchantment of him who unconsciously idealizes wealth into the Supreme Good of the soul; who fashions, in other words, money into a mimic God. For, whatever semblance of divinity it may assume, money lacks all those elements that are necessary to constitute any object the Supreme Good of man. It is *material* and *outward*, and nothing can be the final joy and rest of the soul which is not inward and spiritual; it is *limited*, and the Supreme Good of man must be inexhaustible; it is *perishable*, and that can only be our highest object of reliance—our God, which abideth for ever.

Not in the *outward* can man rest. That which constitutes the first, last joy and satisfaction of a human spirit, must be Spirit too. You can no more satisfy the soul's hunger with that which is material than the bodily appetite with that which is mental. Fine thoughts will not feed starving bodies, nor flowing fancies quench a raging thirst. And neither will money, or any material good, allay the craving of a spirit for the bread and water of life. Weigh thought in scales, measure the height of desires and hopes by square and compass, test by the thermometer the intensity of love, sound by line and plummet the depths of a human heart—then will you be able by material satisfaction to fill the void in a spirit that is crying out for God, for the living God. Money can do much. It can avert and alleviate many ills, procure innumerable and unmistakable

enjoyments. Declamation against wealth and luxury is often little better than sounding commonplace. But, all mere conventional moralizing apart, there are few whom sad experience has not taught that there are ills, and these the heaviest that can befall us, which money cannot cure; and one lesson which, sooner or later, most men learn is that the real happiness of life is altogether independent of it. Money cannot always avert even temporal calamities, and there are deep inward woes which it can do nothing to heal. Pain and disease often baffle all the expedients which wealth can purchase; and still more impossible is it for money to minister to a mind diseased. Stretched upon the bed of hopeless sickness, tortured by constitutional and incurable maladies, what would many a possessor of wealth not gladly surrender for the peace of health, one hour of which countless treasures could not buy? Money cannot delay the rapid course of life, nor arrest the progress of decay. It cannot restore the buoyancy of youth to the old, nor buy back fair fame to the dishonoured, nor bring again around the bereaved and lonely the forms and faces that smile on him no more. And for the deeper ills of the spirit—the sense of guilt, the anguish of remorse, the self-tormenting power of an awakened conscience, or, again, the wretchedness of an impure or selfish, or unquiet and ill-regulated mind, for the pangs of jealousy or envy, of ungratified hatred or balked revenge—for all

these, and similar ills, the most fatal to man's happiness, the world's wealth were all in vain to compensate. Money, with all its fancied omnipotence, fails to reach the seat of man's deepest joys and sorrows. Invoked by its most abject worshippers, like Baal of old, it hears not, interposes not, in the hour of their sorest need. Trust in it, and it proves, when wanted most, a weak and treacherous divinity.

The other two elements necessary to constitute any being or object the supreme good of man, are, as I have said, *inexhaustibleness* and *perpetuity*. It is obvious, to speak only of the latter, that that cannot be man's trust and rest, man's highest Good, the duration of which is not co-extensive with his own. The joy on which I mainly depend must not only reach the deepest region of my nature, but it must last. Nothing that does not abide can be a god to man. The very sweetness of any source of delight would make it the spring of the direst ill, if it fostered the craving in us for a while, and then, when it became necessary to our happiness, suddenly ceased to flow. Better no staff than one that breaks when our weakness needs most its support. Better no lamp than one that burns only in the daylight, and goes out as the shadows fall fast and thick around us. Better no protector than one in whom we have learned to confide, and who deserts us as the foe draws near. But that which renders the condition of him who

lives for money the most pitiable, is just this, that he is learning more and more to identify his happiness with that which cannot last, with that which will belie his confidence in the hour of his greatest need. Money, and the pleasures, comforts, luxuries which money can procure, are good and desirable enough in themselves. It were the grossest affectation to pretend to despise them. But give your whole heart to them, make them your chief delight, live for them till they become necessary to your happiness, and they are indeed the things which, if they render life dear, render also death terrible. The fall from wealth to poverty is often a dreadful calamity in this world. Poverty is no such ill to the born pauper as to him to whom life-long habit has rendered those things necessities which to others are luxuries and rare indulgences. Penal servitude, whatever it may be to the felon in low life, is an incalculably more terrible punishment when it falls, as sometimes it does, on the man whose life has been one of affluence and ease. And so, hard though it be at the best to part with sweet life, it is hardest of all to him whom death tears from all he loves and cares for in the universe—from the softness and ease and sunny brightness of a rich man's lot on earth—and sends out, in darkness and loneliness, to meet his fate. It is godless wealth, even more than guilt, that makes men cowards in the face of death. Let money be the great good of life, the divinity to whom you offer up the devotion of

your heart and the labour of your hand, and it is a god who may reward your devotion for a while with no slight or stinted returns. The joys of appetite and sense, rich and graceful attire, the pleasures of the table, gaiety, good fellowship, a luxurious home, walls resplendent with the rarest products of art, and rooms crowded with articles of *vertu*, a position of influence in the community, the attention of equals, the obsequious respect of inferiors—these and the like are the boons which often on its votary this god bestows. But, alas! his gifts are fatal, disastrous benefactions, if they foster in their possessor an effeminate attachment to life, if they make the sensuous pleasantness of a soft, bright, sunny existence all too dear to us, if they shut out from our view that awful other world to which we haste.

Yield then your heart's love, the reliance of your deepest nature, not to money or any finite object. God, and God alone, is sufficient for the happiness of the spirit which in His own image He has made. He is the supreme and all satisfying Good. He is not only the possessor of the resources of the universe, but He is, in Himself, better than all His gifts. He contains in Himself all that is necessary to our happiness in time and eternity. While all besides is outward and limited and perishable, He is spiritual, infinite, enduring for ever. He has access to the inmost recesses of the human heart. He can hold immediate communion with us, not as when hand touches

hand, but by the ineffable fellowship of spirit with spirit. He can come into contact with the soul, and by His blessed presence with it, calm all its perturbations, heal all its wounds, cleanse away all its stains of guilt, let in the sweet light of hope on its darkness, and infuse into its weakness the very strength of Omnipotence. Possessed of Him the believer can say, "My mind to me a kingdom is." Stript of all else the world holds dear, in Him the soul has that which can compensate for every privation—in outer darkness, an inner sunshine; in poverty, a hidden treasure of priceless wealth; in pain, a secret bliss that makes even suffering sweet; in death, a life that can never die. While life lasts, His love alone can enable us to extract the deepest enjoyment out of its blessings; and in the hour when life and all its possessions pass from us, when the rich man is as the poorest, and the loftiest reduced to the level of the lowest, when deaf becomes the ear to all earthly voices, and dark the eye to the dearest earthly faces, when humanity is reduced to utter loneliness, and nakedness, and weakness —oh, thrice happy he who can say, "Perish all else, God is with me still! I go, I know not whither, into regions and worlds unknown; but this I know, that neither life, nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate me from the love of God which is in Jesus Christ, my Lord."

III

The Expediency of Christ's Departure

We can understand how difficult it was for Christ's disciples to perceive the truth of that saying, "It is expedient for you that I go away." It must have been hard for them to comprehend how they could gain by losing Him. There are men, indeed, of whom it may be said with truth that it is for the world's advantage that they should go away; with respect to whom we can clearly see that it would be well for society to be rid of them. But these are not such as He from whose dying lips this strange intimation fell. The selfish man who absorbs, in the gratification of his own desires, what was meant for the general good; the profligate whose base delights are purchased at the cost of others' ruin; the ruthless, malicious, revengeful man, whose unbridled passions render him the torment of his associates; the tyrant and oppressor, whose selfish lust of power is gratified at the expense of the freedom and happiness of thousands, whose wealth is their poverty, whose exaltation the trampling of their rights under foot; of these, nay, of every wicked man, whose presence, influence, example, are a curse and not a blessing to mankind, it may,

without hesitation, be pronounced that it is expedient for the world that they should leave it. But can the same thing ever be averred with respect to the good, the gentle, the generous-hearted and open-handed, whose resources are ever employed, not for self, but for the good of others? Is it possible to think that when the man of profound wisdom and large experience, whose far-seeing, sagacious mind constitutes him the intellectual guide, the revered instructor, the ever-trusted master of less gifted men; or the man of eminent piety, whose pure and saintly life, breathing the spirit of heaven, hallows, softens, ennobles all within the reach of its influence;—is it possible to think that when these and such as these, are taken away from us, it is a gain to us, and not rather a grievous privation? And is not the difficulty greatest of all when we are asked to believe this of the world's Greatest and Best; of the only perfect Life this world has ever seen; of Him from whose lips flowed wisdom such as its sages had never reached; from whose life streamed forth beneficent influence on all around Him; whose whole history is but a record of benignity and love, of self-devoted, self-sacrificing zeal for the good of men? Is it conceivable that men's advantage could ever lie in the loss of a being such as this?

There are indeed those who seem to themselves to gain by the passing away of greatness or goodness from the world. Envy or

interested selfishness, wounded pride or jealous inferiority, may feel relieved by the removal of those for whom others mourn. The expectant heir not seldom grudges long life to the man who keeps him out of the inheritance; the death of a rival in place or power may, in the secret soul of a selfish competitor, be regarded with a guilty complacency. But not so could it be in the case before us. Neither worldly power nor wealth belonged to Jesus; from fame or fortune His continued presence constituted no barrier to any; and those to whom He now spoke knew no honour that was not theirs because they dwelt in the shadow of His greatness. Their whole hope and happiness were embarked in his cause, and their sole dependence for the successful prosecution of it was on His leadership. Strange, then—nay, had they fallen from other lips, almost bitter and mocking—must have seemed to them those words in which Jesus announced that it was for their advantage that He should leave them. As well almost might it seem expedient for the hapless voyagers that the sagacious and experienced pilot should be swept overboard, while in darkness and storm the ship is being guided by his firm hand through shoals and breakers; or for the army that their great captain should be shot down in the very act of carrying out his dispositions in the heat of the fight; or for the family that the beloved father, on whose exertions their present support and future welfare depend, should

be torn from them by sudden disease in the midst of his years and his usefulness ; as well might it seem expedient for these that their head should be removed, as for Christ's followers, in their ignorance and weakness and dependence, that their Lord should " go away."

Yet, I need scarcely go on to say, this declaration of Christ contains a deeper truth than meets the eye, and one the import of which it will be most instructive for us to consider. Let us, then, proceed to inquire how it could be said to be expedient for Christ's disciples, and for His Church in all ages of her history, that the visible presence of their Lord should cease. Can we discover the grounds or reasons for the averment, " It is expedient for you that I go away " ?

1. It may be suggested as one consideration preliminary to other and deeper reasons, *that the conceptions which the disciples formed of Christ, of his person, character, and mission, were rendered much more true and elevated by his removal.* Paradoxical as it may seem, they could entertain truer thoughts of Christ in His absence than when He was visibly and palpably before them. It may help us to understand this, if we reflect how often our conceptions of earthly greatness are vivified by death. It not seldom happens that great men are never truly known or adequately honoured till after they have passed from amongst us. There is something in the very fact of their bodily presence with us which tends to falsify our

estimate of their character, and to render our impression of their greatness less reverential and profound. The loftiest spirit is, alike with the meanest of mortals, compelled to submit to the commonplace conditions and necessities of life. Genius, with all its glowing aspirations and rapt contemplations, and communion with truth and beauty, must eat and drink, and dress and sleep, like base and common men. The poet must fold the ethereal wing of fancy, and stoop to the dull region of appetite and sense; the philosopher must come down from the mount of vision, where with eternal truth he has held high fellowship, to mingle with the crowd whose thoughts never range beyond the common-place toils and gross cares of life; and whilst all men are capable of seeing and noting the lower half of his life in which he is on the same level with themselves, few or none may be capable of following him into the sphere of hidden thought and feeling which constitutes the higher and truer moiety of his being.

There is in the mere daily familiarity with a great man's person, in coming into contact with him amidst the little minutiæ of common life, a strange power to refine away the feeling of respectful inferiority which is due to his inner and spiritual excellence. So that often the last to recognise a distinguished man's merit are his familiar friends and associates. And the world may be ringing with his fame long before his

neighbours and immediate connexions have permitted themselves to recognise it. No man is a hero to his personal attendant. "Is not this the carpenter's son, whose father and mother we know? Is not his mother called Mary, and his brothers, James and Joses; and his sisters, are they not all with us?" Moreover, besides this illusion of familiarity, the estimate which his contemporaries form of a great or good man is often further biased by personal rivalries, class prejudices, and the like, so that not till this refracting atmosphere has been swept away can they discern his real position and eminence. And finally, it is to be considered that the effects of a great man's labours, the results of his life and work, are often slowly developed, and only become fully apparent in the progress of time, and after he himself has passed away. A great principle is slow of being recognised, encounters often a thousand stubborn prejudices and antiquated but deep-rooted absurdities, before it begins to spread and obtain general recognition. A great discovery in science or art flashes in some moment of inspiration on the mind, but it may be long before the rude conception can be perfected, and embodied in a presentable form; for years it may be known only to a few men of thought and research; and perhaps not till the great author of it is beyond the reach of earthly honour does his work become the world's admiration, and his name a household word.

The Expediency of Christ's Departure

Now these considerations may open up to us one view of the expediency of Christ's departure. No little weaknesses or imperfections, indeed, ever discovered themselves to the closest inspection of His earthly life, yet that illusion of familiarity, that unconscious underrating of greatness near at hand, of which we have spoken, could not fail to operate even more fatally in His case than in any other. If the littleness of common life contracts our estimate even of earthly greatness, how much more of that wondrous Being whose inner, spiritual grandeur transcended, by the distance between the finite and the infinite, the loftiest excellence that ever dwelt in human form. If it be difficult for the friends or associates of human genius to emancipate their minds from the deceptive influence of the mean details, the vulgar trivialities in which it is enveloped, to pierce through the coarse robe of common life, and discover the concealed kingly nature within, how much greater, how almost insuperable, the difficulty of shaking off this illusion, in the case of Him who was Lord of heaven and earth—of seeing the Eternal Purity in the beggar's raiment. Looking on but one side, and that the mean and carnal one, of His nature, insensibly their conceptions of Him became carnalized, and the carnal must be dissolved ere the spiritual could be truly discerned. In the Being so simple, lowly, gentle; who wandered by their sides in the same daily journeys, and retired at night to the same slumbers

of exhausted nature; who looked like themselves, was hungry and weary like themselves, wore the same raiment, partook of the same meals—in that most gentle companion, that kind, ever accessible friend, who took up little children in his arms, who went out to spend quiet nights with the family at Bethany, who suffered one loved disciple to lean on his bosom, and who washed the feet of all—in that most intensely real human nature, how almost impossible for them to realize what a transcendent presence was ever near them. Through the rudely-shapen lamp they could catch but an occasional gleam of the inner glory; and the lamp must be broken ere the full brightness of that light of the world could burst forth upon their eyes. Death must dissolve the illusion of familiarity, and gather around the Man of Nazareth the mystery and awe of the world unseen, before they could rise to the apprehension of His awful greatness, and see in Him at once the Son of Man and Son of God. His great life must be seen no longer in separate parts and isolated incidents, but from the standing-point of enlightened reminiscence, viewed in all its completeness and symmetry as one perfect whole. The mighty power of His mission must begin to tell upon the world, the heavenly leaven to spread, the seed sown by His life and watered by His blood, begin to germinate and spring forth in a world's regeneration, ere they could learn to comprehend what a glorious contiguity had been

theirs. Inasmuch, therefore, as only when He had vanished from their earthly eyes, could they see Him truly with the inner vision of the spirit, it was "expedient for them" that Jesus should "go away."

2. The more important explanation of this declaration of Christ yet remains. It was expedient that He should go away, *because the outward and bodily presence of God in Christ was to be succeeded by an inward and spiritual manifestation of God to the souls of his people.* It was this to which Christ especially pointed in the text, as we are taught by the following words: "For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart I will send Him unto you." "I will pray the Father," He elsewhere declares, "and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth . . . whom ye know, for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."

Great as their privilege had been who had lived in personal contact with the Son of God, a nearer, deeper, more blessed divine presence even than that of God manifest in the flesh, was in reserve for them; and the departure of Jesus would be no loss but a gain to them, if He who vanished as a visible material presence should come again as an inward and spiritual power and life dwelling within their hearts. As it has been sometimes expressed, in the religious history of the world God has manifested himself as dwelling

successively in three temples; first in the visible material temple at Jerusalem, then in the temple of Christ's body, greater than the former, and finally in the temple of his redeemed Church, the hearts and souls of believers, which is the greatest of all. Now, as the destruction of the first temple would have been no loss, if it were necessary in order to the coming of one greater than the temple, so it was expedient, advantageous to man, and not the reverse, that the second temple, glorious though it was, should be removed, in order to the final manifestation, the climax of all God's revelations of Himself to man. And the truth of this statement you will perceive, if you consider one or two of the points in which the dispensation of the Spirit or Comforter is superior even to the dispensation of the Son.

It is so, for instance, in this respect, that the presence of God in Christ was an *outward* and *sensible*, whilst that of God the Spirit is an *inward* and *spiritual* presence.

In ordinary cases we lose for ever a good man's presence by his departure. His remembrance may be cherished in the hearts, his influence may be felt in the lives of the survivors, but with himself the world has no more direct and immediate intercourse. Poetry or affection may sometimes entertain the fond fancy that the dead are with us still, cognisant of the fortunes of those whom they loved on earth, hovering over us like unseen guardian spirits, when we wot not of their

presence. But this is at best but the fanciful expression of our own yearning and wistful hearts to which reason lends no countenance. Our loved ones return no more. Their place who but as yesterday were with us, our advisers, guides, associates, entering with all our own earnestness into life's many interests, is vacant for ever. The gap can never be filled, the broken thread never taken up. Their influence is a finished thing, their life an accomplished fact. If we need counsellors or friends, objects of love and fellowship, we must turn to others; for *their* voice we shall hear no more; we shall never more speak to them, consult them, feel the strengthening power of their stronger minds, or the sweet consciousness of their ever-watchful love. They have been borne away into regions and worlds unknown, and all that they were to us is a blank, a dead loss, never in the slightest measure to be retrieved till the eternal morning dawn.

But not so is it in the case before us. That which, with reference to our earthly friends, is but a dream or a fancy, is with reference to Jesus a sober fact, a most blessed reality. Heaven indeed was enriched, but earth, nevertheless, was not despoiled of her best treasure when Jesus passed away. He departed but in form, to return and dwell in more real and intimate communion with his people for ever. The wondrous phenomena of Pentecost, the rushing wind and lambent flames, the miraculous gifts and simultaneous

conversions, were but the glorious inaugural of the returning Lord of the Church, no more as a mere outward and occasional visitant, but as an everlasting resident in the inmost souls of His people. It might seem to many, perhaps, an unspeakable privilege, beyond which they could not conceive a greater, if Jesus Christ, their divine Lord, should return in visible form, and, in like manner as of old He frequented earthly homes, so come and abide in theirs. What would it be to have the Lord Jesus himself coming back to spend a year, a month, a single day beneath your roof and within your family circle? What a home would that be where such a presence rested! What an atmosphere of heaven would pervade it! What a resource would its happy inmates possess in all difficulties and perplexities! What holy ardour, what strength for duty would fill every heart! And as the intelligence of this glorious visitation spread throughout the Church, might we not conceive the whole world filled with amazement at the signal honour conferred on this highly-favoured home, and multitudes from every land flocking to share in their privilege, and to catch if but a glimpse of the glorious visitant!

But we do not hesitate to say that a more inestimable privilege even than this is, in the dispensation of the Spirit, bestowed not upon one favoured family or individual, but upon every true-hearted member of the Church of Christ. Jesus comes no more as an outward visitant, He

crosses in visible form no earthly threshold, and sits at no man's board; but He comes to every believer in a visitation nearer and more intimate than that. He enters not into the home, but, passing through all material barriers, into the very heart, and becomes a presence transfused, as it were, through the inmost soul of the believer. If it would be any help to you, longing for the goodness which you cannot reach, harassed by the evil from which you cannot escape—if it would be an unspeakably blessed resource to you in your contrition, your sorrow, your struggles and difficulties, to betake yourself to the visible presence of the Lord, to pour out your sorrow and faith at His feet, to take hold of His hand, to touch but the hem of His garment, to hear Him speak to you and comfort you, and to retire from that holy and august Presence soothed, strengthened, nerved for duty—then surely it must be a most blessed thing to know that He is nearer still than this. Open the door of your heart to Him, and He will come in to you and bless you. He will not touch the hand, but dispensing with outward organizations, pass into and thrill the heart; your spirit will be suffused with His; the very heart of God will be beating within your breast. Say then, if this be the glorious fellowship by which it was to be succeeded, was it not indeed, in order to the bestowment of it, "expedient" that even the visible presence of Jesus should "go away."

Another respect in which the dispensation of the Spirit may be conceived of as an advance on that of the Son, is that the latter implied only a *local and occasional*, the former involves a *universal and constant* presence of Christ with his people.

The visible, corporeal presence of Christ was of course possible only at one spot, and to, at most, a few of his personal followers at a time. The consecration which, it is natural to feel, that august Presence lent to every scene in which He moved was of necessity only an occasional and limited one, narrowed by the inevitable conditions of space and time. It is no mere fanciful or sentimental feeling that leads us to attach a special interest to the scenes of the Saviour's earthly life—that bears the steps of the Christian traveller to Palestine, and fills his mind with a strange awe as he gazes on the Galilean hills, or pushes off in the fisher's boat upon the lake of Gennesareth, or sits pensively on Olivet, or breathes a silent prayer in Gethsemane. It is a natural instinct which impels us to trace with interest the external scenes associated even with earthly greatness. You remember the well-known words of the great moralist when visiting our own country: "We were now treading," he writes, "that illustrious island which was once the luminary of the Caledonian regions whence savage clans and roving barbarians derived the benefits of knowledge and the blessings of religion.

To abstract the mind from all local emotion would be impossible if it were endeavoured, and foolish if it were possible. Far from me and from my friends be such frigid philosophy as would conduct us unmoved over any ground which has been dignified by wisdom, bravery, or virtue. That man is little to be envied whose patriotism would not gain force upon the plains of Marathon, or whose piety would not grow warmer among the ruins of Iona." And surely if local associations lend interest to scenes of earthly greatness or goodness, such feelings may well attain their deepest intensity when we revisit—

> "Those holy fields,
> Over whose acres walked those blessed feet,
> Which, eighteen hundred years ago, were nailed
> For our advantage on the bitter cross."

It is something, we feel, to breathe the very air He breathed, to gaze on the very mountains and valleys on which His eyes looked, to stand where once of old He stood who is the Lord of our salvation: for every spot associated with His presence is to us holy ground.

And yet, all this admitted, it is our blessed privilege to rise above the mere sentiment of local association into the far more spiritual, more truly Christian experience of communion with an everywhere present and living Lord. Not the traveller standing at Bethlehem, or Nazareth, or Jerusalem, but the devout and loving-hearted Christian in every scene and spot on earth, may

feel himself near to Jesus. The memories and associations of that sacred presence may linger still on the hills and valleys, the shadow of His earthly form haunt the cities and villages, of Palestine. But if the mere pietistic and sentimental mind should seek Him only there, the voice of the angel by the vacant sepulchre might well seem to sound in his ear the intimation, "He is not here, He is risen." Not these plains, and hills, and streams only are hallowed by His presence. Not amidst a few humble followers or scanty groups of listeners is the great Teacher to be found.

Love Him, believe in Him, trust in Him, open your inmost heart and soul to Him, and lo! He is with you always unto the end of the world. Wherever you go, every hill will be to you a Carmel, every brook a Kedron, every home a Bethany. The cross where eternal love incarnate bleeds will rise before the eye of faith in every scene you behold, for the world will be crucified unto you, and you unto the world. You will "bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus," and Christ will be "in you the hope of glory." "Wherever two or three are gathered together in Christ's name"—not in sacred temples or at solemn communion seasons only—but in every family circle, at every common meal, in all the daily intercourse of life between Christian men, Christ will be in the midst. Work will become worship, daily toil as temple service, our

common garments priestly robes, the world and human life, with all its manifold scenes, and objects, and events, holy and sacramental, because hallowed by the presence, transubstantiated into the symbols, and vivified by the communion and fellowship of Christ. By how much therefore the constant and universal is better than the occasional and local presence of the Lord, by so much was it "expedient for" His people that He "should go away."

IV

The Alabaster Box of Ointment

AMONGST the incidents which marked the close of Christ's earthly history, there is none more touching or suggestive than that which the Evangelist thus narrates :—

" And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as He sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard, very precious ; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head. And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made ? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her. And Jesus said, Let her alone ; why trouble ye her ? she hath wrought a good work on Me. For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good : but Me ye have not always. She hath done what she could : she is come aforehand to anoint My body to the burying. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her."—*Mark xiv.* 3-9.

We have here a noble and beautiful action rescued from detraction, and consigned by One, from whose judgment there is no appeal, to immortal honour. And you will notice with what exquisite delicacy our Lord here balances censure with commendation, sets honour over against detraction. " There were some that had indignation," it is said, " within themselves,"

6—(8518)

when the woman, in her lavishness of devotion, poured forth the rare perfume on the head of Him she so loved and honoured. "Nay," is the burthen of the Saviour's reply, "condemn her not; this very deed which in your narrowness and coldness ye censure, shall go down to unborn ages, and be the theme of praise to countless tongues. Wheresoever this Gospel is preached, this that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her." Or, again, did the censurers regard her action as that of a mere thoughtless, unmeaning prodigality? "Why was this waste of the ointment made? It might have been sold for so much and given to the poor!" "Nay," is the Saviour's reproof, "her deed is neither meaningless nor profuse:"—not meaningless, for she has in this, her strange demeanour, a deeper meaning than meets the common eye. She has in her heart a love which yearns for expression, and yet which transcends the power of mere uttered language to express; and the only way she can find to give vent to her irrepressible emotion is to declare it thus. All she can do is to symbolise it, to pour forth as if her very soul in the precious ointment with which she besprinkles her Lord's head, and to feel the incense of her gratitude, with the fragrance of the perfume, floating forth on the very air He breathes. "She hath done what she could to express her affection."

Nor, our Lord teaches them, is her act to be regarded as profuse and wasteful any more

than unmeaning. For the precious material she so lavishly expended might indeed have been turned into money, or into meat and drink and clothes, and so, as her censurers suggested, have been given to the poor. But in so conceiving of it, they applied to an act of beauty a mere utilitarian standard; they would fain test by the criterion of material utility a deed belonging to a far higher and nobler order of things. As well might they have sought to weigh love in scales, or measure thought by rule and compass, or try to detect the presence of moral evil by a chemical test, as judge by a money-standard an act of most delicate spiritual nobleness. As well might they have looked on the summer fields and asked to what purpose this waste in the growth of lily and rose? Might not all this fertility of nature, instead of running to waste on useless flowers have gone to grow provender for cattle or food for man?—as well so have questioned as have asked, in their gross irrelevancy of thought and feeling, "might not" the material wasted on this act "have been sold for three hundred pence?"—might not this beauty have been turned into hard cash, "and given to the poor?" Yes, it might have been, but the world had been no gainer by the exchange. The bodies of a few hungry men might have been fed with bread, but an act had never been done which has fed, age after age, countless hearts with the inspiration of nobleness and self-devotion and love. Saved and

turned into money, the means of a slight dole of alms might have been gained, but there had been irrecoverably lost the opportunity for an act of touching pathos of almost prophetic tenderness to the dying Redeemer of the world. "For," said the Lord to the utilitarians of Bethany, "the poor ye have with you always, but Me ye have not always. . . . She is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying."

We have here, then, exception taken to a noble act of Christian feeling and devotion, and our Lord's defence of it: from which defence three thoughts, with reference to acts of which this woman's is the type, suggest themselves, viz. :—

1. The immortal honour that attends them.
2. Their symbolic power of expression.
3. The non-utilitarian standard by which they are to be measured.

1. Condemned by other observers, this woman's action was consigned to immortality by Jesus. "Wheresoever," said He, "this Gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her." Though not the motive, yet it constituted one element in the reward of her act of simple devotion to her Lord, that it should be held in undying remembrance, and that her name should go down to future ages linked with the name of Him she revered and loved. Not many names, amidst the myriads who have lived and died on this earth, have survived in the world's

remembrance. Of the deeds which men have done in the past, how few are those which still live in history! But amidst that bright galaxy of men renowned for the great words they have spoken or the noble deeds they have done—poets, philosophers, statesmen, warriors, philanthropists, heroes, martyrs—amidst the world's noblest who have made this earth illustrious by their presence, and who shine as the stars for ever, how strange to reflect that the only one to whom inspiration has assigned a place is this simple villager of Bethany; and that the one act to which undying fame is promised is not an achievement of genius, or power, or heroism; no production even of inspired intelligence, or daring, or devotion; no glorious poet's song, or warrior's victory, or martyr's death; but a simple insignificant tribute of affection offered to her Lord by a lowly woman at a village feast. She aspired not to greatness; she dreamt not of fame; but there, on the firmament of glory, next to that bright and morning star, her pure light in unobtrusive beauty shall shine for ever. To have her name united in honour to the name of Jesus was a destiny to which her humble spirit, in its highest visions of happiness, could never have soared; yet, as the sculptor of old engraved his own name indelibly on the marble of which the statue was fashioned, so that that must perish ere he could be forgotten; so, though by no presumptuous act of hers, this her deed of love has graven her name, as with

a pen of iron, on the rock for ever, in that Gospel which is her Lord's everlasting memorial.

And yet it may be said, of what avail to her is all this fame and honour? Of what avail to any man is posthumous fame? Satire has often aimed its keenest invectives against the desire of posthumous fame, and in one view of the matter, not unwisely or unjustly. "What's fame?" exclaims the moralist:

> "A fancied life in other's breath,
> A thing beyond us even before our death;
> Just what you hear, you have, and what's unknown:
> The same to you if others or your own."

Strange illusion, surely, it is, when men throw away life to acquire after death a renown which they can no longer enjoy—when their imagination anticipates a fame they shall never know, and the applauses they are never to hear ring in their ears and prompt them to the sacrifice of present ease and enjoyment. What shall it matter to you, whether you are remembered or forgotten, execrated or applauded, when of neither praise nor censure can you any more be conscious—when you are for ever beyond the reach of the world's honour or the world's malice? Why seek or care for that which will be to you as if it were not, the gain or the loss of which will be alike to you? What worse than childish folly to waste thought and energy in the pursuit of that honour which is to be won only when the ear is deaf to the voice of applause and the pulse of ambition is stilled

for ever! And so, was it not, after all, a boon of little worth which in this promise the Lord conferred on his humble follower? Gone for ever from the world, does it not seem as if it would affect her just as little to be set, like Judas, as the mark of the world's undying scorn and abhorrence, as to be cherished and honoured for ever as the loved and loving friend of Jesus!

Now, though there may be some ground for that view of the matter, which makes the absurdity of the desire of posthumous fame one of the stock moralities of ethical writers, yet, as we might well infer from its forming the subject of an express promise of our Lord, it must be not altogether an unworthy or unchristian object of desire; it must, at any rate, be no despicable result of noble acting, to be cherished in men's remembrances when we are gone, and to have that "which we have done spoken of for a memorial of us."

And of this a moment's reflection will convince us. It is, indeed, unquestionable that fame, applause, glory, the honour that cometh from men, can never, considered in itself, be a legitimate object of a Christian's desire. To interpret the words of our Lord as implying or inculcating such a notion, would be to set them in direct contradiction to other passages of Scripture—as where those are condemned who "do their works to be seen of men," "who love the praise of men more than the praise of God," who "seek the honour

that cometh from man and not the honour that cometh from God only." No! the first aim of a Christian is not to *appear*, but to *be* right, not to gain the *honour* of nobleness and goodness, but to *be*, through Christ's grace, noble and true and good. Reality, not seeming; goodness, not glory; sincerity before God, not show or semblance, however imposing before the eye of man —this is what a Christian seeks. His love for Christ, and devotion to the will of God, should ever be such as that he would do the right, not only, though in doing right he be unknown and unhonoured, but though it expose him to dishonour and infamy.

Who can doubt that obscure goodness is infinitely preferable to illustrious sin? If the two are incompatible, could a Christian hesitate for a moment to sacrifice the love and honour and respect that make life sweet and death less bitter—to tear from his heart the most cherished hope and wish, rather than wound conscience or tamper with truth and holiness? Would it be a light thing, in reason's eye, to gain immortality of renown at the expense of one untrue word? Or to be hooted and hounded out of the world with scorn and shame, and consigned to eternal infamy amongst men—would not this be a fate, however terrible, from which a wise man should not shrink, if only thus could he keep true to Christ? Or what avail the acclamations of a world he has left behind, to the soul that is

trembling in dismay beneath the frown of God? Or can it alleviate one pang of a lost spirit's agony, that the far distant scene of its former life is ringing with its praises at that very moment when it is stretched on the rack of Jehovah's wrath? Nay, better one smile of God, than a world's hallelujahs; more appalling one shadow darkening the brow of Infinite Justice, than to be for ever execrated by the whole race of men.

But, all this admitted, it is yet not the less true, that, though not the motive of a Christian's actions, it is a most noble result, a glorious reward of them, when a good and holy man's memory is embalmed in the affections of mankind. To dwell with God is the chief desire, but who that knows what it is to love and to be loved would not wish to be remembered, when he is gone, by those who were dear to him on earth? If the memory of the sainted dead be dear to us who survive them, if there be homes where the loved and lost, still in the sacredness of an undying affection, may be said to live, if there be scenes which are haunted and hallowed by an invisible presence, where the dear old voices seem sometimes to fall sadly and sweetly on the ear, and we name softly and reverently the household names of those whom God hath taken, is it not natural that we, in our turn, should wish so to be remembered? It is a natural, and by no means an unchristian feeling, that makes us cling to old scenes and friends the longer we live; that makes

it sad for a man of strong affections, as the end approaches, to think that the hour is coming when on all he loves and has cherished so long he shall look his last—that in a few brief months his step shall fall no more on the old path or the familiar threshold, and that on these dear faces he shall never, never, in all the ages, look again. And so it is something to be told that, like this woman, we shall still in memory survive, and that our name and our deeds shall live on loving lips. We seem to ourselves to gain thus, even on earth, some triumph over death—to enlarge and prolong existence in the hearts of those that shall never cease to love us. And if we extend the same thought to others beyond the circle of our immediate friends, surely to a man of large and expansive Christian spirit it must be a thought unspeakably delightful, that some word he has spoken, or deed he has done, shall survive, age after age, to enkindle holy ardour in many a mind, and to prompt to deeds of Christian nobleness while the world endures.

And who can tell of what incalculable results each Christian act, a word spoken in season, an act of noble truthfulness, or tenderness, or self-sacrifice, may be the seed? Who can trace the innumerable lines of influence along which a Christian's example may be propagated? What mind can embrace the calculation of all the possibilities of good, on through age after age, down the ever-growing future, which may spring from

one holy Christian life ? And if earthly greatness has sometimes caught inspiration to deeds of heroism from the dream of posthumous fame, if it fired the poet's heart, old, blind, and poor, to think that he was writing words which the world would not let die, or if the dying warrior has ever found strange consolation in the thought of his country's gratitude, a name in her annals and a sepulchre among her heroes, surely to a Christian heart not less dear should be the thought, nor less inspiring to holy deeds in Christ's service, that the good we do shall live after us ; that our example, if not our name, shall survive us ; that our influence at least shall be associated with all that is holiest and purest and noblest on earth, even if it may not be said of us literally as of this woman, " That wheresoever this Gospel is preached this which she hath done shall be told for a memorial of her."

2. The second view of this woman's action to which I propose to direct your attention is its *silent, symbolic, power of expression.* She had in her heart feelings which craved for outward expression, and yet which, in their intensity and illimitableness, transcended the power of mere words to express. And so she did what she could. As always, in such states of mind, feeling clothed itself in the form of imagery or symbol, and she gave vent to her emotion in the expressive act here narrated. And a moment's reflection will teach us how exquisitely true to nature, and so

how fraught with instruction in this respect the narrative before us is. For are we not all conscious often of states of mind, of thoughts and feelings, which it is impossible adequately to express in words; and if we try to express them, we find that we have miserably failed? The attempt to convey by words to others all that is in our hearts is often vain, not simply from our imperfect command of language, but from the inherent insufficiency of language, with all its compass, copiousness, flexibility, as a medium of expression for our internal experiences. And so, when language fails us—when either from intensity of feeling we have not the heart to speak, or when we try, and feel it to be all in vain—we voluntarily betake ourselves to that other mode of telling forth our soul, the silent mode of sign, of symbolic look or act.

The word joy is but a poor, cold vocable, that conveys to the outward ear no meaning save, as the auditor already knows, the emotion for which it conventionally stands. But who fails at once to see what is meant by a smile or look of delight beaming on the countenance, or to know what the feeling is that tells itself out in a merry laugh ringing from the lip? The word sorrow is not like the thing it represents, and any other word, if men agreed upon it, would serve as well. But who mistakes the meaning of the trembling lip and tearful eye? and when in deep grief the sufferer's lip is dumb with an

anguish which cannot shape itself into words, the blank look of unutterable sorrow may be stamped, in language far more expressive than the tongue could utter, on every lineament and motion of the face and form. Hours would be insufficient to describe emotions that may be conveyed by a glance, and in a moment of high-wrought feeling there may be concentrated into a single look what the most eloquent observer could not exhaust in the longest verbal delineation. "And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter." Imagine yourself present at that scene, and conceive that it had been yours to witness that look, to behold that face, with all its majestic purity, its awfulness, its gentleness, its unearthly sorrow and tenderness, turned upon the wretched disciple when that cruel word of thrice-spoken falsehood had just crossed his lip. Do you think that the most eloquent tongue might not weary itself in the endeavour, by all forms of uttered speech, to convey all the mingled sorrow and love, the reproachful pity, the lofty scorn of baseness, yet unwearied forbearance and love to the base, the more than kingly dignity, yet also more than womanly tenderness, which that one glance of Jesus expressed?

And in the same way with symbolic actions, such as that of the text. The beauty of such actions lies in this, that they condense into a moment thoughts and feelings which it would require a long and elaborate description verbally

to portray, and which even then would be but faintly and inadequately expressed. Take, for instance, one most touching incident in the history of David. As he lay, we are told, worn and faint, in a mountain cave, there came on the warrior an irrepressible longing for a draught of water from the well of Bethlehem ; and though his longing seemed vain and foolish, for the foe lay encamped between him and the fountain of whose streams he had so often drunk, he could not refrain from giving vent in words to the craving, " Oh that one would give me to drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem that is by the gate ! " There were those around him who loved their chief so dearly that they were ready to imperil their life for the gratifying of his slightest wish. And without a word, caring not for the dangers to which for so slight an end they exposed themselves, " three mighty men " fought their way through the host of the Philistines, and brought back to him who was dearer to them than life that for which he craved. But we are told the king, when he received it, would not drink that draught which at such cost had been gained, " but poured it out unto the Lord," saying, " Be it far from me, O Lord, that I should do this ; is not this the blood of men that went in jeopardy of their lives ? " What wantonness, what worse than childish fickleness, are we not at first tempted to exclaim, is here ! To what purpose this waste of that for which such a price has been paid ?

What gross ingratitude in return for heroic devotion. Nay, it was far otherwise. For is there not more in this action than meets the eye? As we try to fathom and express its meaning, do we not begin to perceive what a world of unexpressed feeling, of lofty thought and nobleness, and generosity and piety, is involved in it? This simple draught of water, so procured, is to David's eye the type of that which is most noble in humanity, of love and faith and courage and self-sacrifice; it is an offering not fit for such as he, too great for mortal to receive. To God alone is it meet to be offered up. And so, in kingly humility, in unselfish piety, he pours it out to Him to whom life and love and all that is noblest in man are due.—This, and infinitely more than this, is involved in that simple act. What long-drawn words would be required to unfold all its expressiveness!

Precisely analogous is the case brought before us in the text. This woman owed herself, and all that made life dear to her, to Jesus. His mysterious hints of a dark doom that was at hand told her that from that dear Lord she soon must part. Love and faith and self-devotion, boundless tenderness and sorrow struggling in her heart, she was conscious of feelings that craved for expression, and yet which, in their intensity and illimitableness, transcended the power of words to express. She could not speak, but she did what she could. Spontaneously feeling clothed

itself in a form that was its own. The affection, the self-surrender, the yielding up of all that was precious, the yearning to pour forth as if her very being in the service of this all glorious One—this, and infinitely more than this, of which she was herself unconscious, she involuntarily shadowed forth in the breaking of the vessel, and the pouring forth of its precious deposit on the head of Jesus.

And He to whom the offering was made discerned a meaning in her simple act, which words had been poor to tell. Happy we, let me add, if in our symbolic acts our Lord can discern the same spirit of love and faith and self-devotion. Our holy communion service, for instance, might, in one view of it, seem as the woman's act seemed to the unsympathising spectators, a mere meaningless work, or a waste of substantial food on empty ceremonial. The material of our holy offering, too, might be sold for so much and given to the poor. But not useless or unmeaning will it be, if, like hers, it be to many a devout spirit the medium of holiest thought and feeling. As we assemble at our simple communion feast, there will come amidst us the same Divine guest who sat at that humble board at Bethany. Here, too, to the Lord's side many a Mary-like spirit may repair, to hallow and ennoble these poor earthly elements, by that which to Him who reads all hearts they silently, yet so touchingly, express. Happy, we, if, as we break the bread and drink the wine, we feel our Saviour near; and by this

our simple act, tell forth a love, a trust, a high resolve and holy aspiration, a boundless affection and self-surrender, such as that which through her offering breathed. Then will the odour of a more precious ointment, a fragrance sweeter far than this earth's rarest incense, fill the house. And of us, too, will our gracious, loving Lord declare—"They have wrought a good work on Me."

3. The last point to which I call your attention is the *unworldly or unmaterial standard by which the woman's action is to be estimated.* To her censurers it seemed an act of unmeaning prodigality. They saw in it only a resultless expenditure of what might have been turned to substantial, material uses. If there was to be such expense incurred, why not get some substantial result from it?—why not, instead of wasting the costly essence on the empty air, turn it into hard cash and buy meat and drink and clothing with it for the poor? "Why was this waste of the ointment made? for it might have been sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor."

Now our Lord's reply condemns this view of the woman's action as false and shallow. There was no real waste in its seeming profusion. It was a good and noble action, and it was made to appear otherwise, only by the application to it of a narrow and fallacious standard. In conceiving of it as they did, they applied to an act of beauty a mere utilitarian measure, and would

fain test a deed of spiritual nobleness by a criterion which had no relation to the order of things to which it belonged.

Now, the error which these superficial censors committed is one which in principle lies at the root of many of our false judgments, both in matters secular, and in matters spiritual—the error, viz., of reversing the order of importance, and judging of that which is the end, as if it were only the means. There are some things, which, according to the nature which God has given us, we admire and love as ends, others which we come to admire and love in a secondary way as contributing to those ends. The latter may be compared to the ladder by which we climb, useful only because it helps us up; the former to the object we wish to reach. The one is as the road which leads homeward, or the carriage in which we travel, valued only because of the facility and speed with which they enable us to reach our journey's end; the other is as that desired end itself, valued for itself, as our ultimate destination.

Now the error into which, even in secular things, we are very apt to fall, and which in spiritual things may be described as the essential spirit of irreligion, is that, either of stopping short at the means, and prizing them as if they were ends in themselves, or of absolutely reversing the right order, and valuing the ends only as means, while we elevate the means to the place of honour, as ends. To take one of the grossest examples of

this error, money, which is obviously only a means to the attainment of something else, may become an ultimate object of desire, in and for itself. It is of course beyond dispute, that money were mere dross if it did not stand for food and raiment, and shelter and comfort; if it were not the conventional representative of innumerable objects of desire, which it is the means of procuring. But it is also notorious, that men often begin to like money as an end, to drop out of sight all that can be got by means of it, and to seek to accumulate it with a more and more intense desire only for its own sake. Nay, sometimes the diseased craving goes to such a height, that everything which money can procure, all that renders money valuable, will be sacrificed for the sake of money, and the covetous or avaricious man will pinch his appetites, dress sordidly, live meanly, never expend a farthing on the gratification of the intellectual or religious part of his nature—in short, give up all the ends which alone are money's worth for the sake of money's self. And the insane standard by which such an one measures all things, the question by which every action is to be decided, is, "How much money will it save or spend?" Plead with him the cause of religion or charity, set before him some noble end of patriotism, of social or national honour, of intellectual or moral worth—his only answer is, "To what purpose this waste?" Nay, visit the home where the miserly wretch is denying himself

and his family the common comforts of life, wholesome food and warm clothing. Pelf is dearer to him than these, and still his answer is, "To what purpose this waste?"

Another and more common, though less palpable example of the same error, is the false estimate of the value of knowledge. There is a constant tendency to degrade knowledge from the position of an end to that of means, to value it only in so far as it contributes to practical uses, and to regard the time and money expended on those kinds of knowledge which cannot be turned to practical account as so much sheer waste. It is undoubtedly true, that knowledge is useful as the means towards a thousand valuable ends. But it is also true that there are few of the things which knowledge can enable us to get—money, food, sensual gratification, social position and rank, fame, honour, and the like—which are more worth having than knowledge itself; and to say that the time spent in filling the mind with any kind of knowledge, which cannot help a man to make money and get on in life, is wasted, is to say, that money, and getting on in life, are higher and better things than knowledge.

Of what use are learning and scholarship? Why let your son waste precious years in mastering dead languages, or studying philosophy, or cultivating a taste for poetry and art, when he is intended not to be a clergyman or an author, but a practical man of business? These things won't

help him on in life! All the scholarship on earth won't make him a better judge of dry goods. The learning of Porson or Bentley would not help him a bit in a speculation on cotton, or an investment in bank or railway stock. The youth must push his fortune as a manufacturer, or merchant, or engineer—what will all the poetry and metaphysics in the world do to help him here? No! let the few years he has to spend on education be devoted to the practical branches; let him learn to write a good hand, be ready at accounts, acquire if need be, a knowledge of the modern languages; but that is all the learning he needs. Other kinds of learning might only make him a book-worm, and at any rate, if they did not spoil him for a man of business, they are practically useless—to what purpose such waste?

Now it is, as I have said, quite true that in the sense of being directly turned to account in the business of life many kinds of knowledge are utterly useless. And if the chief end of a man, even in this world, be to be a clever and successful man of business, to spend his time in acquiring such knowledge is sheer waste. Moreover it is also true, that forasmuch as to live is the condition of all other enjoyments, it is a very important thing for a youth to master those kinds of knowledge which are technical or professional, which will qualify him to earn his bread, and creditably to discharge the duties of his secular calling. · Nor can any man be such an idiot as to despise money,

or the qualifications that enable us to make it, seeing that money is the means not of low enjoyment only, but of all sorts of enjoyment and influence, high as well as low. Yet, on the other hand, when all this is said, it leaves the broad principle unaffected that practical utility is not the test of knowledge, seeing that knowledge in itself, and for its own sake, is, to him who knows its worth, better and higher than all that can be got by means of it. All that can be gained at the very best by excluding what is called useless learning, and confining a boy to the kind of knowledge that will help him to push his fortune in life—all that at the very best can result from this is, that he makes a fortune. But a fortune is worth only what a man can enjoy out of it; and if his mind is narrow and uncultured, if he has not in youth acquired the invaluable power of conversing with the great minds of all ages, of appreciating and enjoying those things which a cultured taste and a comprehensive, broad, liberal intelligence alone can enjoy, then is he shut out from that which gives its chief value to money and leisure. He may indeed, without this, have everything that can minister to animal and sensuous delight; but a man can't get more than a limited animal enjoyment out of his money. If he try, he is drawn back by the warning hand of physical disease; if he persist, he soon, by the endeavour after excessive sensual enjoyment, destroys the very power of enjoying.

A Big Purse and Nothing Else

The only way in which affluence and leisure can extract more out of life is when its possessor can thereby command the means of wider intellectual happiness, when his large and liberally cultured mind can rise beyond the narrow limits of sense, and by the expansiveness, the elevation, the intensifying of existence which knowledge communicates, live as, compared with the mere moneyed man, three lives for one. It is no waste, then, to cultivate and inform the mind in youth even with what seems useless learning. It is false economy to restrict it to the narrow beat of practically convertible information. There are not a few men of business, who even in the secular sense, have chosen for themselves and their children this better part—men who, amidst all the toil of business, manage to keep up liberal tastes, and who can escape from the feverishness and shake off the dust and soil of life's conflicts ever and anon, in converse with the great minds of ancient or modern times, of their own or other countries and tongues. But no man who has ever happened to witness the spectacle which you have sometimes observed—that which is presented by a man who has got on in life, who has succeeded in amassing affluence, yet whose lack of culture leaves him with money but without the larger part of money's worth—the coarse, narrow-minded, ill-informed man of small ideas and a big purse, with a plethora of wealth and a collapse of thought, at whose table your body is

overfed and your intellect starved, whose walls are covered with pictures which he cannot appreciate, and shelves filled with books of which he can enjoy nothing but the gilt backs, the man of soulless unrefined affluence and vulgar magnificence—no man, I say, that has ever witnessed and understood such a spectacle, would be disposed, in answer to the exhortation largely and liberally to cultivate the mind, to say, "To what purpose this waste?"

But the last and most deplorable example of the reversal of the order of importance between means and end is that which relates to the highest of all ends—those of religion. Most mournful is it if, with respect to these, a man ever, either in express words or virtually by his conduct, says, "To what purpose this waste?"

Religion, religious faith, religious acts, are of those things that are their own ends, and with respect to which it is foolish, as well as wrong, to ask of what use are they? what shall we gain by them? or to what purpose this waste? This question may be asked in two ways—one of a more gross and material sort than the other, but both equally false in principle. "To what purpose this waste?" may be an inquiry with reference to the rewards or profitable results of religion, either in the life that now is, or in that which is to come. And in both cases the same answer must be given. The value of religion does not consist in these things—not in anything

out of itself—not in what it brings or gains, but in what it *is*.

There can be no question that, in so far as external advantages in this world are concerned, much that we include under the designation "religion" is utter waste. Religion is not a marketable commodity. Its duties are not only not conducive to temporal gain and advancement, but often in many ways act as a drag or hindrance in the pursuit of them. The *time* spent on religion, for instance, is so much abstracted from other occupations: a sincerely pious man will, in proportion to the earnestness of his piety, be withheld from that exclusive devotion of his best hours and energies, that unremitted self-surrender to business, which is often the indispensable condition of great success. The man whose heart is set on a heavenly reward cannot throw himself with the same intensity of desire into the pursuit of earthly honour or fame as those who have no higher end in view, to whom these things are all in all. He who is living in habitual communion with God and the things unseen must often slacken the ardour and shorten the hours which the man who lives only for the things of time may devote—and successfully devote—to worldly industry. For the latter objects, much of the time that is spent in prayer, meditation, holy exercises and employments, is mere waste. Moreover, the *money* devoted to religious objects, to charities, schemes of Christian usefulness — churches,

Sunday-schools, religious instructors, missions at home and abroad—all this is a direct abstraction from the gains which a non-religious man is permitted to retain. And, in general, whilst good conduct tends in some sort to success in life, it is yet true that that which constitutes the essence, the life and soul of religion—its internal spirit, its exercises of love and faith and aspiration, its self-denials and struggles, its inward conflicts and triumphs—has no connection with earthly advantage, and has often led to earthly ruin and loss. "We have left all and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?" was the miserable question of religious selfishness: and the answer, as we contemplate the earthly issue of many and many a Christian life; its utter lack of earthly good; its poverty, obscurity, ill-health; its family troubles, bereavements, early death—still more if we go back in history and stand by the martyr's side as he is hurried in shame and horror out of the world, the answer is—"Nothing, worse than nothing." And we are thus unable, from his point of view, to utter one word in reply when the observer to whom this world is all in all asks, "To what purpose this waste?"

But this world is not all. And the answer, which might seem a sufficient and satisfactory one to many, would be:—there is no waste in all this worldly expense and loss, for the religious man will reap, for all his religious toils and sacrifices in this world, a rich recompense in the world to

come. But this is an answer only less defective and fallacious than the other. For my last remark is, that religion, in so far as it is real and pure, is not a thing which is precious to a man because even of an eternal reward to which it leads, but simply because it is in itself, now and for ever, the supreme delight, the chief joy of the soul. It is true that there is a reward in store for the child of God, that there are blessings outward as well as inward awaiting him—a prize of ineffable joy and blessedness in comparison with which this world's highest moments of rapturous delight are faint and cold; and to this coming joy and happiness, the Christian, in all his efforts and sacrifices, is not forbid to look. Still it is not less true that that which gives to religion its value, to religious acts and exercises their preciousness, is not anything future, anything eternal. They are precious in and for themselves.

He is not a true lover of this world's knowledge who loves it only for the prizes which scholarship wins, for the distinction or emolument which attends it. But he is the true lover of knowledge who loves it for itself;—to whom to know truth, to bring the mind into contact with it, is all the reward he seeks. And in like manner of divine knowledge. The truth of God to the earnest and holy-minded man is not precious only or chiefly because to believe it is the means of salvation, because only by the knowledge and belief of it can he escape hell and gain heaven. If this were all, in his study

of God's Word the believer would be but getting up his salvation-lesson, going through the necessary drudgery for the prize of a future heaven. But to the truly spiritual man divine knowledge is its own end, the contemplation of truth its own most precious reward. To know God, to have the eye of the soul opened to the perception of infinite purity, to be brought in mind and spirit into contact with that light of the knowledge of the glory of God which is revealed in the face of Christ; this is as much the immediate reward and delight of the soul as natural light and beauty are the immediate delight of the eye or sweet melody the present joy of the ear. And as it is with knowledge, so is it with love. What true-hearted child ever asks of what use is it to love my father or mother? What shall I gain by all this expenditure of affection? To what end or purpose all this waste of tender words, and loving, reverential acts? Or what brother, husband, or friend ever dreamt of inquiring, Why should I repair to the presence, and reciprocate the affection of him who is so dear to me? What practical future benefit shall I gain by all this expression of fondness, by all these words and acts and gifts of love?—Would it not be an insult to love to ask such questions as these? Would not the all-sufficient answer be: "Gain! reward! result! I seek none, dream of none. Love is its own most precious reward; the richest joy that love can confer is simply to love, to love more,

to love on for ever." And so with the divine object of a Christian's reverential love, the Father of his Spirit, the Lord, Redeemer, Lover of his soul.

Earth knows no sublimer emotion than that mingled awe and tenderness, reverence and affection, which breathe in the Christian's heart towards the Father in heaven. And if it be joy for the loving child to cling to the father's presence, or to rest in the mother's arms, ask not of what use it is for the soul, amid the anxieties and perturbations of life, to repose in the Infinite Affection, and in all doubt and sorrow, through all change and care and trouble which the changing years are bringing, to rest in the Everlasting Arms. If earthly affection or friendship has ever known the strange bliss of sacrifice, the sweetness of toil or sorrow or pain borne for the sake of one who is dearly loved, ask not the Christian soul why, or for what ulterior end, it gives and spends and suffers for Jesus? What practical gain shall issue from it? To what future good or reward does it tend? To what purpose this waste? Oh, cold heart! Oh, ungenerous spirit of calculating selfishness! What reply can such questions merit? The goodly fellowship of the prophets, the glorious company of the Apostles, the noble army of martyrs, the holy Church of Christ throughout all the world, with one consenting voice reply, "We count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our

Lord; for whom we have suffered the loss of all things—rejoicing even in this that we are counted worthy to suffer for His sake."

V

The Old in the New

In one sense there is nothing so true, in another nothing so false as that saying of the wise man, "There is no new thing under the sun." Viewed in one light it is the utterance of profoundest wisdom, viewed in another it is contradicted by universal experience. To the common observer the world seems full only of novelty; to whatever quarter he turns the eye, change, variety, fluctuation—everything rather than unvarying sameness seems to be the law of life. In that vast system of worlds with which the astronomer is conversant, for instance, the telescope never at any two successive moments reveals the same aspect of the heavenly bodies—the same orbs presenting the same phases or in precisely the same relations to each other, the same firmament stereotyped into changeless stillness, but rather ceaseless variety and vicissitude of suns and stars and systems—of bodies rising, setting, waxing, waning, crossing and recrossing each other's orbits, as in the mazes of a bright and endless dance of worlds. The earth beneath our feet, again, contains in its secret depths a record of countless revolutions in its structure—telling to the eye of the geologist

a strange story of submerging and upheaving, of dissolving and solidifying, of ocean beds that once were continents, of tracts of solid land or mountain summits over which once flowed the waves of the sea. Or, as we narrow the range of observation to the period of man's existence, how do the proofs multiply of change and newness as the condition of all created being. What is history but a record of changes—of the rise and fall of races, nations, dynasties; of the progress or decline of knowledge, freedom, and civilization; of the perpetual shiftings and sortings of characters on the world-wide stage of life? Everywhere the old is seen giving place to the new. On the ruins of ancient cities, and amidst the buried remains of an extinct civilization, modern habitations are built. The trim and luxurious mansion rises beside the grey ruins of some stern old border peel; the modern church confronts the crumbling shafts and shattered cloisters of the ancient abbey —telling to the living generation of the men of a ruder, wilder age, and of forms of faith and worship that have long yielded to other and newer types of religion and of life.

And we, too, ourselves are changing. Our views of life, our opinions, tastes, pleasures, our outward circumstances and relationships have altered with every year of our history. From some of us the experiences of the earlier years of life have long passed away, or are gradually fading into the indistinctness of retrospection. The exuberant

mirth of childhood, the buoyant cheerfulness of youth, the emotions of delight which commonest pleasures could once evoke, the light that once shone to our eye on the world's face, the immature views and rash expectations of early life, all have passed from us and come no more; another and newer consciousness, other feelings, tastes, habits are now ours. New men, new manners, new opinions, and habits, too, are ever developing themselves in society, so that sometimes where life is long protracted the old man will begin to feel as if he were almost a stranger amidst the race that is rising around him, and that it is time for him to quit the stage where everything is becoming so inconsistent with the type of life on which his opinions and habits were formed. Thus to the cursory observer it would seem as if the new were everywhere obliterating the old, and as if it were more consistent with experience to aver that everything is new rather than that "There is no new thing under the sun."

Nevertheless this saying, after all, contains a profounder truth. Amidst all this seeming change there is real sameness. Novelty and variety are in very many instances but the superficial aspect. In the world and human life there is a something that never alters, a grand stability amidst seeming fluctuation, a deep and firm substratum of reality underneath all the hurried flow and tossing of the restless stream of appearances. Let me endeavour to illustrate this view of the matter, and to

deduce some of the lessons with which it is fraught.

Notwithstanding the appearance of ceaseless change and novelty, the averment that "There is nothing new under the sun," will be to some extent borne out, if you consider that *much which seems new is but the reconstruction or revival of the old.* The forms of things are ever varying, whilst the substance or essence remains the same.

Each successive spring and summer budding plants and flowers come forth with a rush of beauty and freshness on the world; but, with apparent newness, the glory of each season is but a recreation or revival of the past. The leaves of bygone autumns withered and fell, not to be annihilated, but to moulder away into the earth, from which new forms of life are again brought up. Nature only, as it were, melts the old materials in her crucible, and moulds them into shapes of grace and beauty again. Not an atom does she ever suffer to go to waste; not one particle of matter, with all her vast wealth of materials, does she ever lose. There is no annihilation in the world, only decay, disorganization, and reconstruction. Never since the world's creation has there been one new atom of matter under the sun. And not only the same materials, but the same types of things are continually reappearing. Multifarious, almost infinitely diversified though they be, yet it is after the same patterns that the successive productions of nature, the flowers of each spring,

the successive races and generations of animate existence, are formed. No two plants, indeed, are ever shaped exactly alike; every acorn unfolds a different oak; each separate flower, each tiny insect's wing, is tinted with different loveliness: still all this variety is subject to a law of unity. The individuals slightly differ, the race or type remains the same. With lavish munificence, yet at the same time with wondrous frugality, ever changing, yet ever repeating and reiterating, Nature works so that, amidst her myriad aspects and forms of organic existence, it may yet be pronounced that "There is no new thing under the sun."

And the same thing holds good of man and of human life; the elements of which it is composed are ever the same. The individuals vary, but the type is constant. Each separate soul is a new creation; each separate history differs more or less from all that preceded it. Still in substance human nature is the same wondrous product of Infinite wisdom, the same thing of thought and feeling and will, of restless desires and mysterious capacities, of awful responsibility and immortal destiny. The varieties are but on the surface. In outward circumstances, in the accidents of fortune, birth, station, in the peculiarities of personal aspect, in the degree of talent or intellectual attainment, in the greater or less prominence of special elements of character, men may differ from each other; but these, after all, are

but the surface forms of life, the root or essence is everywhere the same. The substantial agreement is infinitely more real and important than the outward and accidental differences. Everywhere man is the same creature of thought and feeling and energy, possessed of the same moral nature, tainted with the same guilt, capable of the same glorious restoration, and with the same untold possibilities of being and of blessedness before him. That which is really great and wonderful in human life changes not with the changing years. Wherever mortal man exists, the same story, inexhaustible in its interest, is told anew—the strange story of "a being breathing thoughtful breath, a traveller 'twixt life and death." Can any repetition ever change the wonder and interest of childhood to the eye that can read it truly? Ever in each new beginning of a life it comes, appealing to our pity and tenderness, "symbolizing to us our unuttered conceptions of innocence and simplicity," of unworn freshness and unworldly purity; coming, as if it had just wandered hither from some more glorious region, and with the light of its former home still lingering upon it—a nature over the silent chords of whose being no hand but that of God has swept, no breath of lawless passion yet made discord of its notes, or rough wear of circumstance left them jangled and out of tune. Ever, too, in human life as it proceeds are to be found the same moral elements of love, and sorrow, and hope, and

disappointment—of short-lived raptures and enduring cares, of temptation issuing in the strength of conquest or the weakness of discomfiture—the same strange medley of greatness and littleness, things mundane and things celestial—of contrasts that move now our laughter at their incongruity, and now our terror at their awfulness;—in one word, in all times and places, under a thousand accidental varieties, human existence is the same rapid course, run out beneath the silent heavens, with the shadow of the awful future creeping ever nearer and more near, till the darkness closes round us, and our little life is lost in its impenetrable mystery. In this respect, emphatically it may be averred, that "That which has been is that which shall be, and that there is no new thing under the sun."

Again, not only with respect to the essential elements of human existence may this be averred, the same thing may be said of *the moral spirit and character of human life.* In this respect, too, amidst endless incidental diversities, there is in successive ages a continual reproduction of that which has already been. In the course of the world's history there have been occasionally instances of reproduction so marked as to strike the most superficial observer. The great of past times seemed to come alive again and revisit the world in the forms of modern men. Old friends of bygone times are ever meeting us in modern history with new faces, and between some of them

the resemblance could scarcely be closer if the spirit of the ancient hero or sage had in very deed transmigrated into the breast of his modern representative. The student of history is sometimes conscious, in going over the annals of the past, of the same sort of feeling with which, in visiting old mansions, the seat of long-descended families, one has mused in the dim old picture-gallery over the portraits of a long series of representatives of the same line. How curious, amidst external diversities of dress, of form, of circumstance, of sex, to trace ever and anon some unmistakable characteristic, some family peculiarity of feature, or expression, or bearing, reappearing. How unlike in all his surroundings that old, fierce, half-savage, mail-clad warrior with the scar across his brow who bore off that mark of his manhood in the wars of the Roses, to the "ruffled and wigged courtier" in the costume of Charles II; or he again to that grave college dignitary, or that bustling, common-sense matter-of-fact country gentleman, or magistrate, or member of parliament, who is the present inheritor of the family name and honours. Yet as you pass from portrait to portrait, *there*, lost occasionally at intermediate stages, but ever and anon re-appearing, meeting you on the canvas again, and yet again, is that contour of face, that moulding of lip, that indescribable something playing around eye or mouth, that trick of motion or gesture, which tells you that there is in the

latest bearer of the name, a something reproduced or revival in our day which lived and died and lived again and again in the men of ages and generations past.

But these are but outward and superficial reproductions. There is a far deeper and more real resemblance between men, age after age, in virtue of which it may be averred that " That which hath been is now, and that that which is done is that which shall be done." There may be, and often there actually is, a most real identity of life betwixt men, the outward scene, form, circumstances of whose history is as dissimilar as can be conceived. It matters little to the real meaning of a man's life what its outward form may be. As the same thoughts may be conveyed in many different languages, so through a thousand different forms of expression, you may decipher substantially the same thought, the same spiritual meaning in many different lives. You may never do one single act in a whole life-time exactly as another man has done it; in all that lies on the surface and constitutes the shape and semblance of life, you and he may be utterly, irreconcilably unlike—he poor, you rich, he famous, you obscure, he one who has made for himself a deathless name on the page of history, you a man never heard of beyond your own narrow sphere and whose very name will be forgotten almost as soon as the grave has closed over you; he—shall we say—an old Greek philosopher, a Roman patriot, a Jewish

prophet or psalmist, a Christian apostle, a monk of the middle ages, a feudal monarch or warrior, and you a man of business, a shopkeeper, a humble artizan, a domestic servant, pursuing the common-place round of duties in our prosaic modern life; and yet, strip off the mere superficial covering, go down to the root and core, the moral essence of a life, and your life and his may be substantially identical.

For instance, men will tell you that the age of chivalry and romance is gone, never to be revived. The silly sentimentalist dreams of a bright and brilliant Past—of fair women and brave men, of courts and camps, of feudal pomp and pageantry, and sighs perhaps to think that his lot has fallen on our dull and common-place life of shops and manufactories and merchandise, when all the poetry and the beauty have vanished from the world. But it is not so. The essence of chivalry lay not in the mere glitter and pomp of castle and court and hall, in its tournaments and forays and coats of mail and cloth of gold; to revive these were but a silly and ineffectual attempt to bring back the past. But if the essence of chivalry lay deeper far than that, if it consisted in unselfish nobleness of mind, in stainless honour, in scorn of baseness and cowardice, in respect for womanhood, in tenderness to the weak and oppressed, and implacable hostility to the oppressor—then, though it be that outwardly the old order has passed, giving place to new, yet

surely as God fulfils himself in many ways, there are amongst us in many a lowly scene and amidst many a common-place sphere of duty, brave and gentle and true-hearted souls in whom the ancient spirit of chivalry is living still.

Or shall we ascend in search of illustration to a far higher type of character, and ask, what is it that gives its unity to the church of Christ in successive ages, if it be not this, that Christ is born afresh in every Christian soul, and the Christ-life repeated with more or less distinctness in every Christian biography? In this sense there is in the history of the Church, as of the world, nothing new under the sun. For whatever of nobleness or purity, or self-devotion, of zeal for God or love to man, whatever peculiar feature of greatness or goodness has ever shone forth in any Christian life, was long ago anticipated in Christ. He is the great head and founder of the family, the first of the long ancestral line; and as in the annals of the Church's history, in the biographies of saints and martyrs and eminently holy men, you study the successive portraits in that vast gallery, ever as you look, beneath a thousand accidents of age, fortune, circumstances, there the old and well-known lineaments of the Christ-face are unmistakably discernible. Down through the lapse of ages we trace a glorious succession of Christ-like ones—each face with a halo of spiritual nobleness shining round it. And they are with us still—men and women in whom, now one, now another,

feature of the Master comes out in more bold and marked relief—in whose unselfishness, or tenderness, or large-hearted affectionateness, or considerate many-sided sympathy, in whose combined magnanimity and lowliness, power and gentleness, fervour and calmness, hatred and hostility to wrong, yet pity and helpfulness for the erring and the fallen—in whose persons you can detect ever and anon as if the very face of the Crucified haunting in bright glimpses the homes and ways of men. What matters the outward guise of such a life—the age, the place, the rank or calling? These are but the changeful dress through which the same form of one like unto the Son of Man can be discerned.

King or craftsman, scholar enriched with the ripe results of study, or little child lisping the first accents of its simple faith and love to the good God at a mother's knee, delicate and soft-natured woman surrounded by all the refinements of rank and education, or hard-featured, rough-handed mechanic, blackened with the toil and sweat of labour, Christian soldier on the deadly march daring all for country and home, and breathing with dying lips the one undying name, or frail, attenuated invalid stretched helpless on the bed of sickness—in all alike there may be traced with more or less distinctness, the spirit that in the ancient days breathed in all its fulness in one glorious life, the manifold copies of the same character ever old, yet ever fresh and new,

which eighteen hundred years ago reached its crisis on the cross. And so, surely in this fact there is the grandest fulfilment of that saying: "The thing which hath been is that which shall be, and that which is done is that which shall be done, and there is no new thing under the sun."

That there is nothing new under the sun, that only appearances and accidents change, whilst realities are permanent, is true, again, with relation to the *laws of God's moral government*. With all the apparent variety and novelty of Nature's aspects, we have seen that there is in principle nothing really new, but that her great laws remain constant from age to age. And still more emphatically true is this of the laws by which the moral world is regulated. Of these only can it be said, that "that which has been is that which ever shall be," that they are by the very idea of their nature absolute and immutable. Material laws, with all their apparent constancy and stability, are only temporary. They remain indeed, constant, so far as human experience extends, from age to age. They have been the same from the creation of the world, they will endure to the consummation of all things. Yet are they in their nature mutable. They have no inherent necessity. We can at least conceive the thought of their subversion.

The laws of light and heat, of attraction and repulsion, of chemical combination and solution, are what they are, by no internal

necessity, but simply because a Supreme will has ordained them. The planets might move in other than elliptical orbits and at different times and distances from those which now obtain. A projectile might describe a different curve, water might freeze or ice melt at different temperatures, had the mechanism of creation been differently arranged. A revolution in the course of Nature might take place, and heaven and earth be henceforth organised according to different laws. Our Lord himself, by his miraculous interferences with her order, proved that Nature is mutable, that no everlasting necessity presides over the processes of the material universe; that there is a Will to which earth and sea and skies, winds and waves, seed-time and harvest, the processes of growth, the whole physical order of things is flexible and pliant. It is not impossible to believe, therefore, that in the outward world with all the seeming stability and constancy of law, the old order may one day give place to a new. The glory of the earth and heavens is but after all as the beauty of a fading flower. Nature may serve her day: and when the purposes of her Great Author are answered with it, the present material economy may give place to "a new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness."

But no such arbitrariness of flexibility can be predicated of the laws of the moral world. Heaven and earth may pass away, but these are the transcript of the very being and character of God, and

Deity can change as soon as they. The time may come when we shall find ourselves in a different material system, in worlds whose course is strange and new, where other suns are shining and other seasons come and go. The time may come when the accumulated experience of ages of investigation into Nature's laws shall be superseded, and all the lore of science shall be as the waste lumber of a bygone epoch. The time may come when the calculations of the astronomer shall be useless, for other orbs differently constituted and ordered by different laws shall surround him: when the experiments of the chemist shall be futile, for the old affinities and attractions, the old laws of combination and solution, may no longer hold: when the skill of the mariner shall be vain, for other seas may roll and other winds may blow; or the treasured experience of the husbandman be worthless, for the old seed-time and summer and harvest that for uncounted ages have come and gone in orderly succession, may come no more.

But here and for ever there is a law which shall never change. Go where we may, into whatever regions and worlds unknown—let a thousand revolutions change and rechange all besides—never shall the soul that loves God and has built its happiness on the foundation of holiness, find its trust betrayed. Those grand principles of truth and justice and goodness, of love and purity and self-devotion on which all religion is based, which Christ by his Gospel fulfils, not destroys,

shall follow us wherever we go. Their goings forth have been of old from everlasting ere ever the earth was; and when the earth shall be no more and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll, still unaltered and unalterable, in the grandeur of changeless, eternal stability, the law of God shall reign—the one thing that above or beneath the sun is, like God himself, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

VI

Marriage and a Single Life

It is a narrow view of the office of the religious teacher which would confine him to the discussion of theological doctrines or the inculcation of devotional duties. Religion is character, and the ultimate end of all religious teaching and discipline is to produce character, to make men holy, and loving, and pure. But character is not a thing that can be developed or cultivated *in vacuo*. It requires the manifold persons, relations, circumstances, interests, trials, difficulties of social life, in order to its manifestation—to some extent, to its very existence. It is true indeed that there is one side or aspect of religion which might exist if there were but one created soul in all God's universe. The essence of goodness, holiness, piety, might be developed in a man's being if he were alone with God in the world. As gravitation might be manifested if all the material system were annihilated, save the sun and one solitary planet revolving ever in a lonely heaven, so the primary element of true religion—love, might find ample sphere for its manifestation if all created beings should be swept away save one soul,

and that were left to pass an eternity in isolation of worship, in the ceaseless exercise of aspiration, reverence, adoring gratitude and affection, towards the Great I AM. But the religion of man, religion according to the human idea of it, is not mere aspiration; it is the outgoing of thought, feeling, energy towards the creature as well as the Creator, towards equals and inferiors as well as towards the supreme Lord of all. The religious teacher, therefore, has to do not merely with theology and devotion, with the unfolding of the relations and duties of sinful man towards God, but with the elucidation of the principles of social duty, with the right modes of thinking, feeling, and acting in the varied situations and intercourses of daily life. He has to do with man, not as a recluse, a devotee, a divine, but as a member of the family, the community, the nation—with the duties of the husband, the father, the child, the citizen, the subject. Religion is, or ought to be the regulating principle of man's being in each and all of these relationships. And as gravitation is acting, and is in its principle illustrated, as really by the falling stone as by the planet revolving round the sun, so religious principle may be developed as truly in a kind word or a self-denying act in the family circle as in repentance towards God and faith in Jesus Christ. A man's mind may be in a religious attitude, engaged in a spiritual, evangelical contemplation, when considering how to behave towards his wife, or

treat his servants, or invest his money, or vote for a member of parliament.

Piety may be brought into exercise in the endeavour to bring Christian principle to bear on the gains, losses, rivalries, competitions of business, on the cares and toils and sacrifices of domestic life, as really as in meditating on the doctrine of justification by faith or the perseverance of the saints. Principle elevates everything it touches, ennobles every phenomenon in which it can be traced. Facts lose all their littleness when transfigured by principle or law. The chemist's or geologist's soiled hands are no signs of base work; the coarsest operations of the laboratory cease to be mean or mechanical when intellectual thought and principle govern the mind and guide the hands. And religious principle is the noblest of all kinds of principle. Let it be brought to bear on life, and all its littleness, meanness, vulgarity, all its secularity vanishes. Not only the holy offices of the sanctuary, but the trivial common acts of the household and the family circle gather thus a sacredness round them. The relations of husband and wife, of parent and child, become types of heavenly things; the daily meal becomes sacramental, common work is transmuted into worship, and the very attire of the person converted into priestly raiment. It is upon this principle that we explain the importance which we find the writers of the New Testament attaching, and the

frequent and minute reference they make, as to the other relationships of life, so especially to that around which they all converge, the relationship of husband and wife.

Has religion, then, anything to say as to the formation of the marriage tie ? Is this a question which is to be relegated to the province of worldly prudence or of worldly passion ? Is the union of two human beings for life a matter too light and sportive to be settled anywhere else than in drawing-rooms and social festivities, or, at best, too secular to be discussed, save in the chambers of the lawyer, over financial contracts, jointures, and deeds of settlement ? As there are matters too grave and sacred to be introduced amidst the flutter of ball-rooms, the light play of jest and song, of sparkling compliment and blushing retort, so, on the other hand, are there matters too light and gay to come under the cognisance of religion, and to be discussed by its ministers. Is the question, Shall I bind myself irrevocably to another, for weal or woe, on to my life's end, one of these ? Whatever answer we may be disposed, under the influence of modern conventionalities, to give to this question, it is obvious that if we wish to regulate our conduct by Scripture precept and example, there is but one answer which it admits of. For not only do we find, in the instructions addressed by inspired apostles to the members of the primitive churches, frequent counsels and admonitions as to the duties of the

married state, but also repeatedly an authoritative opinion is pronounced as to the kind of marriage which alone is legitimate for a Christian; and, in one passage at least, a discussion of the question, whether in certain circumstances a single or a wedded life is that in which we can serve God best. I do not think, therefore, that it is in any measure a breach of Christian propriety, whatever it may be of conventional clerical decorum, if I throw out a few thoughts on each of the points which I have indicated as treated of by the sacred writers: viz., first, the general question, whether in any circumstances marriage or a single life is the state in which we can best serve God; and secondly, where marriage is best, what is the sort of marriage into which it is lawful or desirable for a Christian man or woman to enter.

1. As to the former of these, the only direct instruction to be gathered from Scripture is contained in a well-known passage in St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthian Church. The question whether, in the existing circumstances of the Church, it was better to marry or remain single, seems to have been submitted to him for solution. And the answer which, in various forms of expression, he seems to give, is to the effect that, whilst in no case could marriage be absolutely forbidden, in most cases celibacy was best. "I would," says he, "that all men were even as I myself," that is, unmarried; "but every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner,

and another after that. I say, to the unmarried and widows, it is good for them if they abide even as I." And again, "I suppose that it is good for the present distress, for a man so to be. Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife." But that these and similar expressions are not to be taken absolutely, as a recommendation of celibacy as the holier or better state for a Christian, is proved not only by St. Paul's general tone of speaking in other parts of his writings, but especially by one passage in his First Epistle to Timothy, in which he denounces the prohibition of marriage as one of the most deplorable errors of false teachers. "The spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils . . . forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth."

Whatever, therefore, be the import of St. Paul's advice to the Corinthians, it contains no sanction of that notion which became so common in later ages of the church—the notion that a special dignity and holiness characterises the virgin life; that they, of all others, live nearest to God on earth, those holy men or maidens who tear themselves away from all the soft amenities, the tender charities, and sweet associations of home and wedded life, and devote their whole existence to

solitary prayer and perpetual self-denial. For this and kindred errors were but parts of a system which, even amongst Protestant communions, has not yet been altogether eradicated: a system which identified piety with austerity, and regarded the privation and pain of the creature as, in and for itself, acceptable to the Creator. Yet it can never be too often repeated that pain as pain, gloom as gloom, evil in any form, is not pleasing but hateful to God. Our Father has no grim jealousy of his children's joy. Himself the blessed and only Potentate, He delights in the communication of happiness; and it would be not only not contrary, but infinitely congenial, to His nature that all the world should be flooded with joy; that every heart should throb with delight, every countenance be radiant with happiness, every home, with its reciprocation of domestic sympathies and affections, become to man and woman a very heaven on earth.

The ascetic conception of religion, therefore, which of old led men and women to choose a life of loneliness, pain, and privation, as in itself, of necessity, holier than one of human love and tenderness and innocent joy, and which in modern times associates religion with a severe look, a whining half-querulous tone, a grim distaste for all that is bright and festive and graceful, a suspicious tolerance of beauty and poetry and art, and the manifold delights of sense and imagination—this conception of religion is a miserably mistaken one. There is

a kind of pain, suffering, sacrifice, that is noble and pleasing to God—pain endured for others' good, suffering which is borne for the sake of truth and conscience, sacrifice that surrenders its dearest wish and casts to the winds its most prized earthly treasure, rather than forsake Christ or betray His cause. But then the suffering or privation, in this case, is good, not in itself, but merely as the means for the attainment of something else which is essentially good; and if the good could be reached without the suffering, it would be all the better. Disconnect the suffering from the good result, and it is not only not meritorious, but sheer unmitigated folly or wickedness. To let money go, rather than tamper with conscience, and, if need be, to become a beggar rather than a fraudulent bankrupt, is noble loss, for it is to become poor in worldly substance in order to be rich in spirit; but to fling away money into the sea, or take a vow of poverty for no end but to be poor, would be either stark madness or fanatical folly. Our Lord admonishes us to pluck out a right eye, or cut off a right hand, if need be, rather than be shut out from the kingdom of heaven; but no one would infer from this that it is a meritorious thing in itself to maim or blind one's self. To be sad when there is reason for sadness, when the hand of God's chastening providence lies heavy upon us, or when He awakens us by His word and spirit to a sense of our guilt and danger as sinners, is a sign of a right state of mind and heart; for

levity in bereavement, or making light of sin, indicates utter heartlessness or moral insensibility. But to go about with a lugubrious face, or to connect piety with a starched aspect and a chronic tendency to sighing and groaning, is a piece of weakness which we may overlook in well-meaning, good people, only because we believe that their hearts are better than their heads. Our Lord commanded men to forsake all and follow Him; to hate father and mother and wife and children for the Gospel's sake; and declared that "whosoever he was that loved father or mother, or wife or child, more than Him, and that forsook not all that he had, was not worthy of Him." And so, full often in the history of His church has this test been applied to the strength of a Christian's principles, and applied not in vain. How often have the dearest earthly ties been severed, and home, friends, kindred—all that makes life sweet to a man—surrendered, fearful though the struggle it cost to give them up, for a dearer Master's sake!

How often have men of large-hearted, genial, loving natures, thirsting for human love and sympathy, formed to bless and to be blessed amidst the charities of home and wedded life, condemned themselves at the call of duty, like Paul, to a wandering, homeless, loveless existence, carrying, perchance, on to the grave the secret burden of an ungratified affection, the ever-bleeding wound of a love that might be

lacerated, but that could not die! And it was this that St. Paul meant when he inculcated on others, if need were, that solitary life of which he himself gave notable illustration. It seemed to him at such a time as that in which he lived, and for men called to such work as his, that there was a possibility of more entire devotion to the work of the Lord, of a more complete and heart-whole surrender of self, of time, thought, energy, to the one great service to which his own life and being were dedicated, if men were undistracted by family cares, unhindered by the entanglements of domestic life. He did not love loneliness for its own sake, or scorn the support and strength and soothing of sympathy from man or woman. Far otherwise. Yet, with a nature singularly open to love, ardent, genial, impassioned beyond that of most men, he was ready at Christ's call to sacrifice all natural yearnings, in order that, as the sap of the lopped branches of the vine rushes with greater intensity into the shoots that are left, or as the force of the stream, cut off from diverging courses, flows all the more impetuously into the main channel, so might the ardent vital force of an undivided affection, the current of his being's energy, not one drop lost by diffusion, flow out only and ever to Christ. There once sat upon the English throne a Queen who lived ever, as has been said, "In maiden meditation, fancy free," and the explanation of whose solitary life is contained in her own well-known declaration, that

"England was her husband, and all Englishmen her children," and that she desired no higher character, or fairer remembrance of her to be transmitted to posterity, than this inscription engraved on her tombstone, "Here lies Elizabeth, who lived and died a maiden Queen." Whether it was a right expediency, or a false pride, or motives of mistaken policy, to which her conduct is to be ascribed, surely her words are suggestive of that nobler solitariness which explained itself in the language of the great Apostle, "Who is weak and I am not weak? Who is offended and I burn not? In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches."

The character of the age in which we live, and the circumstances of the church in our day, are very different from those of Apostolic times, and rarely, for the same reasons, are any now called to imitate the self-denying solitariness of St. Paul. Yet not seldom voluntarily, often involuntarily, are Christians in our day called, in the providence of God, to a lot apart from the cares and joys of wedded life; and wherever this arises from arrangements of society over which they have no control, or from other inevitable causes, there is addressed to such, a call as clear and sacred as that which came to the inspired Apostle: "This is the lot in which thou canst best glorify God and

do the work of thy Master in the world." To the unwedded, as to the wife or husband or parent, there is a special mission assigned by Christ. "The unmarried woman," it is written, "careth for the things of the Lord that she may be holy both in body and spirit; but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband." And though the special work or mission of those who are called to lead a single life cannot be definitely pointed out, forasmuch as it varies with the special conditions of each individual case, yet it might not be difficult to indicate generally the direction in which that work very frequently lies.

To take the case of one sex only. It is at least one part of that special duty to which the unwedded woman is called, to remove from her sisterhood that reproach of sourness and censoriousness which often most unjustly points the cheap sneers of superficial and flippant witlings. It is not true, whatever the frequent tone of coarse jocularities would seem to imply, that the spring of human tenderness is often turned to gall in her whose youth is fading or has passed away, uncheered by wedded bliss. It may be so in some cases where the fountain of love is not fed from the deeper sources of Christian faith and fellowship with God. There may be those whose whole hearts' desire in early life has been given to the world, and who cannot bear the passing away of those pleasures which had become necessary to

their peace. The beauty which once perhaps attracted admiration is gone, but the admiration is as much longed for as before, and, when yielded to younger and fairer candidates, the sight of it excites envy and bitterness in the heart, and envenoms the poison of detraction on the tongue. The old home is broken up; brothers, sisters, companions have settled into their own separate circles of interest, apart from her. No longer occupied with education, or sought after as a gay and welcome participant in the round of youthful festivities and amusements, and having never cultivated her mind so as to find solacement in intellectual resources, or her heart so as to occupy herself with pleasure in works of Christian charity, she can contrive nothing to fill up the vacant thoughts and the time that hangs heavy on her hand, but an intrusive and impertinent inquisitiveness into the private affairs of her neighbours, the maintaining a strict keen-eyed surveillance over the conduct of younger women, and the performance of the duties of fetcher and carrier of petty gossip and small scandal to a whole district. No spectacle certainly can be more unlovely or provocative of censure than that of one of a sex in which all the gentleness, the tender sympathies and kindnesses of life should predominate, dried up into unwomanly hardness, or settled, like thin sweet wine, into a condition that is saved from insipidity only by its tartness. But God forbid we should present this picture as the type of a

class. Far otherwise. There are unwedded women, not a few, who, though they have outlived their youth, have not outlived a beauty that fades not with the bloom on the cheek or the light of youth in the eye. There are those whose Christian cheerfulness and good sense, whose ready sympathy and serviceableness, whose equanimity and helpfulness and hopefulness, render them universal favourites. The unwedded aunt, who with all almost, if not all, a mother's love for children, herself set free from domestic responsibilities, becomes the dear friend and confidant of others' cares; ready ever to enter into their difficulties and share the burden of their sorrows; to whom the little ones fly for story or song, or well-contrived sport, the more advanced for sympathy and advice in all their youthful struggles and perplexities; who bears about with her ever the "sunshine of a gentle smile" and the melody of a voice sweet and low—"a most excellent thing in woman"—surely this is a picture taken from real life which some of us can fill up from our own observation, and which, to all who rightly study it, far more than removes the reproach which unwedded women less amiable have brought upon their sisterhood. And if, in addition to this, you reflect on the more public usefulness of others who, set free from family cares and engagements, gladly and earnestly devote themselves to works of Christian love and charity, to the care of the poor, the sick, the aged—consecrating their gifts of

leisure, of education, of gentle and refined habits, to the service of their Lord in the various works and enterprises of His church—is there not presented to us a view of unwedded life which may well convince us that Christ in our day, as in the earlier times of the Church, has a place and a work not insignificant or ignoble for the unmarried man or woman "who careth for the things of the Lord?"

2. Let me now add a few sentences on the second topic, viz., the kind of marriage proper for a Christian man or woman. Without attempting any formal exposition of the language of the sacred writers on this subject, I think we may gather from it generally that a Christian marriage is one in which there exists between the parties the sentiments of mental fellowship and moral or spiritual sympathy. For instance, we are told by St. Peter that the husband and wife are to dwell together "according to knowledge," and they are to regard each other as "heirs together of the grace of a life." And by this account of it there is excluded from the idea of Christian marriage a union of mere passion, or a marriage of convenience. A relationship that is indissoluble should not be based upon things that are destructible and that may perish in a moment. "Of all earthly unions," writes one, "this is almost the only one permitting of no change but that of death. It is that engagement in which a man exerts his most awful and solemn power—the

power of doing that which in this world can never be reversed—the power or the responsibility which belongs to him as one who shall give account of abnegating his freedom, of parting for ever with the right of change. And yet it is perhaps that relationship which is spoken of most frivolously and entered into most carelessly and wantonly.

It is not a union merely between two creatures, but between two spirits; and the intention of the bond is to perfect the nature of both by supplementing their deficiencies with the force of contrast, giving to each sex those excellences in which it is naturally defective—to the one strength of character and firmness of moral will; to the other, sympathy, meekness, and tenderness. And just so solemn and just so glorious as these ends are for which the union was intended, just so terrible are the consequences, if it be perverted and abused. For there is no earthly relationship that has so much power to ennoble and exalt, and, on the other hand, to wreck and ruin the soul. There are two rocks in this world of ours on which the soul must either anchor or be wrecked. The one is God, the other the relation we are considering. On the Rock of Ages, if the human soul anchor, it lives the blessed life of faith; against it if the soul be dashed, there is the wreck of Atheism, the worst ruin of man. The other rock is of a different kind. Blessed is the man, blessed the woman, whose life-experience has taught a confiding belief in the sex opposite to their own—

a blessedness second only to the blessedness of salvation. And the ruin in the second case is second only to the ruin of perdition. For these are the two tremendous alternatives—on the one hand, the possibility of securing, in all sympathy and tenderness, the laying of that step on which man rises towards his perfection; on the other, the blighting of all sympathy, the being dragged down to the earth, and forced to become frivolous and commonplace, losing the zest and earnestness of life, and having the whole being degraded by perpetually recurring meannesses and vulgar causes of disagreement.

If such be the alternatives in the marriage union, can it but be that they fearfully risk the worst who rush into marriage in the frivolous haste of passion, or, if with deliberation, with the deliberation not of Christian wisdom, but of cold and calculating worldly prudence? That man miserably errs who lets himself drift into a connection which may make or mar his happiness to the grave, and mould his being for eternity, as lightly and thoughtlessly as he undertakes a brief excursion, or accepts an invitation to a party of pleasure. If the charm that lures him be mere physical beauty and attractiveness, then this is the deplorable incongruity, that whilst the relationship is lasting, that on which alone it is based is not: accident may disfigure it, disease may stamp its ugly seams on it, advancing years will surely wear away the beauty that consists in the bloom

and symmetry of face and elegance of form. Even if the toy could keep its glitter, it would soon cease to please. But it will not keep it. The gloss rubs off, the surface polish wears away; and when the man who has married a pretty doll for its prettiness finds that that is gone, all that made the marriage real goes too. In the heat of passion, and amidst the fresh charms of novelty, even a man of sense is sometimes blind to the weakness or silliness which youth and beauty conceal. There is a time when even nonsense sounds charming when it falls from pretty lips; but the misfortune is, that the prettiness goes, but the nonsense remains. And so it comes often to this, that that which ought to be the strength and solacement of life—that relationship in which there should be found the soothing of wise sympathy and the strength of mutual confidence and counsel—becomes, if one of the parties be possessed of sense or principle, a yoke which ever galls and frets, but is borne, like other self-made burdens, in silence, because nobody else can be blamed for it, and because it is inevitable. Nearly the same thing may be said of the marriage of convenience. Prudential motives are not, of course, to be despised; but to make prudential considerations the beginning and end of the matter is as foolish as it is base.

The only union, then, that deserves and does not dishonour the name of marriage is one in which, whatever external attractions accompany

it, there is mental and moral sympathy, and, above all, the hallowing presence of religious faith. For this alone brings us into real union with another. We may dwell in the same home with another, and yet be wide apart as if oceans rolled between us. But where there is congeniality of taste, sympathy of souls, union of heart in the same God and Saviour, no external distance can affect, or lapse of time weaken it, nor can even that which breaks up all other connections, dissolve this. The hands that were clasped at Mammon's altar may soon drop from each other's grasp. The hearts which passion's force united, when passion's fire has cooled, may fall off from each other, or, in the recoil, fly far apart.

But they whom God and holy love bind together, none can ever put asunder. Money may go, hardship and ill-fortune betide them, but there are those, many and many a one, whom sorrow and toil and suffering, borne together, have only bound into a closer, deeper, dearer affection. The ardour of youthful passion may evaporate, but there is a calmer, serener, profounder feeling that rises, as the years pass on, in hearts that have known and trusted each other long. The fair face may lose its outer loveliness, and the form its roundness, and the once light and airy step its elasticity. But even on the outward face and form there is a beauty which steals out often, to replace with a more exquisite charm that which the years bear away—the beauty of

Christian gentleness and sweetness, of maturing character and more deeply settled inward peace —" the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit." Onward through life's path, stage after stage, truer and more trusted, loving and more beloved, they who are thus united may tread together ;— on, amidst the gathering evening shadows and the soft waning lights that tell how fast their sun of earthly joy is westering—pensively, it may be, yet not sadly or despairingly ;—on, hand clasped in hand, heart knit to heart, till the hour when the inevitable parting comes. And yet even in that which to all besides has in it a horror of darkness too dreadful to be calmly contemplated, there is no lasting gloom for them. A little longer, and the loved and lost shall be once more and for ever united ; and when the churchyard shadows in summer and winter days play softly on the grave where side by side their dust reposes, bright with immortal beauty, loving as immortal spirits only love, they shall dwell together in the presence of the Lamb.

VII

The Co-operation of the Laity in the Government and Work of the Church

THERE are two incidents in Scripture history which seem to suggest corresponding lessons with respect to the government and work of the Church. The first of these occurs in the early history of the Israelites. In the book of Exodus it is recorded that, at the suggestion of his father-in-law Jethro, Moses introduced a very judicious change in the management of the civil and ecclesiastical affairs of the people over whom by divine ordination he ruled. For some time after their escape from Egypt he had borne unaided the burden of directing the affairs of the community. He was their sole instructor and guide. "The people," he said, in answer to the inquiries of Jethro, "come to me to inquire of God . . . and I do make them know the statutes of God and his laws." But, besides this, the proper and legitimate function of his office, there had devolved upon him the entire management of the secular affairs of the nation, the settling of disputes, the decision of

difficult cases, the multifarious and incessant occupations of the man of business. The consequence of this was, as very soon became apparent to the eye of his sagacious relative, that by taking too much upon him, Moses was doing injury both to himself and to the people whom he wished to serve. In the attempt to do everything, he did nothing thoroughly and well. Let him select his own proper province and stick to it—devolving upon others the work that properly belonged to theirs. Let him confine himself mainly to the duties of his high vocation as the interpreter of the Divine Will to the people, and not cramp his energies, waste his strength, and abstract from the time so precious when devoted to thought and reflection and communion with God, in order to fritter it away on the perpetual demands of secular business. Other men, pious and wise in their own department, might be found among the community who could attend to its inferior interests as well, or better, than he. Let him call in the aid of these men of practical sagacity in the daily government and discipline of the people, and thus secure for himself liberty to devote his thoughts and energies more undistractedly to the peculiar duties of his sacred office. Such, in substance, was the advice which Jethro gave to Moses. "And Moses' father-in-law said unto him, The thing that thou doest is not good, thou wilt surely wear away, both thou and this people that is with thee, for this thing is too heavy for

thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone. Hearken now unto my voice, I will give thee counsel, and God shall be with thee. Be thou for the people to God-ward that thou mayest bring the causes unto God; and thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt show them the way wherein they must walk and the work they must do. Moreover, thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them; and let them judge the people at all seasons. And it shall be that every great matter they shall bring unto thee, but every small matter they shall judge: so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear the burden with thee." (Exodus xviii. 17-22.)

Here, then, is a specimen of the way in which many of those arrangements, to which the name Church government or Church polity is applied, took their rise. Another and precisely analogous example in New Testament times we find in the account given in the Acts of the Apostles of the institution of the order of deacons. The Apostles, it is related, had somewhat inconsiderately permitted themselves to be encumbered with the direction of the secular and external affairs of the Church. But as the community of believers rapidly increased, complaints arose that the business was mismanaged and the interests of many neglected, whilst by a multiplicity of secondary cares and duties, the Apostles were diverted from

their proper and more important vocation, the ministry of the Word. They therefore proceeded at once to apply the proper remedy to the evil, by separating in a great measure the pastoral from the administrative functions in the government of the Church, and selecting certain wise, experienced, and pious men, on whom the burden of external affairs might greatly devolve, whilst their own thought and time might be given without distraction to the great work of Christian instruction. "It is not reasonable," they said, "that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and of wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the word." (Acts vi. 2-4.)

1. Now, in calling attention to these transactions in the history of the Church, the first remark I desire to make is, that in all matters of form, ritual, outward organisation and government of the Church, no fixed rule seems to be laid down in Scripture; the principle on which such arrangements were made being merely that of expediency or reasonableness. I do not believe that there is to be found in the Bible any prescribed and definite Church polity, any form of Church government rigidly and unalterably stereotyped for all future ages. I am persuaded that whilst the great truths on which the existence

of the Church is based are immutable and everlasting, as the infinite mind from which they emanated, yet that the forms of worship, and arrangements of government and discipline, under which these truths are to be propagated and professed, have been by the great Head of the Church left indeterminate and flexible. So that whilst the grand verities of sin and salvation, of redemption by the blood, and sanctification by the spirit of Christ—whilst these and the great practical duties of the Christian life are set forth with such explicitness, and enforced and reiterated with such clearness and frequency in Scripture, that he that runneth may read; in vain will any unprejudiced and simple-minded student of the Bible seek for either Episcopacy, or Presbytery, or Independency, or any one form of Church government imperatively laid down in Scripture. The simplest peasant seriously applying his mind to the study of his Bible will never fail of conviction as to the former; but it requires all the resources of learning, and all the subtlety and ingenuity of practised reasoners, to extract with any show of plausibility a recognition of any one of the latter from Scripture.

And the reason for this is very obvious. The Church and Church arrangements do not exist for themselves; they are but means to an end. The grand design of God by his Church is to make men holy, to Christianise the world, to convert and save souls. The Church is neither more nor less

than a spiritual corporation for putting down sin and making men good. Now, it is a very inferior consideration by what particular means or machinery it accomplish this end, if only it *be* accomplished. It is of very secondary importance by what road out of half-a-dozen I reach my journey's end, if only I get there. It is of minor consequence of what colour, texture, form, be the clothes I wear, or of what style of architecture the house I live in, if only they afford me shelter, warmth, and comfort. It matters little in what form the medicine be administered to me, if only it succeed in curing the disease. And so in the case before us. The end for which all Church ordinances and arrangements exist is, I repeat it, to Christianise and sanctify the world; and the question as to the particular means and machinery by which this end is attained is altogether secondary. Whether by the highway of Prelacy, or the footpath of Presbytery, or the open common of Independency, I reach the presence of my Saviour, it may cost me little thought, if only I win Christ and be found in Him. Whether my spiritual home be reared with all the splendour and beauty of the noble cathedral, or with the unpretending aspect of the simplest church or chapel, that is not the main consideration; but it is this—whether beneath its roof I shall find a shelter from the storms of temptation and trial, a sweet place of rest for my spirit, amid a world of care and sin. Whether the healing medicine for my spiritual

hurt, the balm in Gilead, the divine prescription of the Great Physician of souls, shall be administered to me by bishop, priest, or presbyter, whether I shall be taught its virtues by the voice of learning and eloquence, or by rude and stammering lips—this is a matter of comparative indifference; the infinitely momentous thing is that I do in very deed receive it into my sick and dying soul, and live. Inasmuch, then, as the end is more important than the means, it is to be expected that in the Bible we should find, as we do, much with respect to truth and holiness, and little or nothing with respect to outward forms and arrangements.

But, besides this, as the best means are those which in given circumstances best attain the end in view, and as circumstances are always changing, it is to be expected that no rigid and unalterable forms of government and ritual would be found in a religion intended for *all* nations and for *all* times. Truth and religion are suited to all lands and ages, but a mode of teaching and propagating truth, or a form of religious worship or discipline, which might be well adapted to the state of society in Jerusalem or Ephesus in the year 63, may not be the best, may need considerable modification to make it fit for England or Scotland in the year 1863. And the same sound reason and practical wisdom which dictated the adoption of some institution in one age or country, may dictate its alteration or abandonment in another. The

mode, for instance, of building houses, towns, cities, that was quite proper in an unsettled and warlike age, would be highly unsuitable in quiet and peaceable times; so that no one dreams of keeping up the strong fortifications and grim, thick walls of our ancient cities, now that safety and comfort can be procured by less impregnable but more commodious edifices. But the end in both cases is the same, not to erect houses and towns, but to afford secure and comfortable dwellings to their inhabitants. Or again, it is clear that law and government are good things for all nations and times, because all men are happier in a condition of peace, order, and security, than in a state of anarchy. But it is not equally clear that one particular kind of government is alike good for all nations and times. On the contrary, from the national temper and character, from the particular state of civilisation, from climate and other causes, what may be a good system of government for one nation, may be a very unsuitable one for another; what may be well adapted to one age, may, as new exigencies arise, and new national characteristics emerge, require great and progressive modification in other and succeeding ages. Absolute monarchy may be the only sort of rule that will maintain order in some countries and in some stages of national civilisation. Oligarchy, or limited monarchy, or democracy, or a mixed and balanced constitution, may best answer the end of government among others.

And the very wisdom that suggested one plan or theory in one case, would suggest its alteration or subversion in another; because in all cases the end in view is not to plan out a theory of government for its own sake, but to promote the prosperity and happiness, the individual, civil, social welfare of a nation.

Now, in precisely the same way I would maintain that we cannot expect to find in the Bible any rigid, uniform and unalterable form of Church government; for no one unbending form would be adapted to the endless varieties of clime and character, of time and circumstance, for which the religion of the Bible is designed. That is the best style of ritual and government which is best adapted to the particular age and country in which it may be established. We are not, with narrow-minded bigotry, to endeavour to torture Scripture texts into the exclusive recognition of Episcopacy, or Presbytery, or any one form of Church polity which we may favour; or attempt to force upon others, or condemn others for not accepting, that very form, which, though it may be the best for the culture of *our* religious nature, may not be the best for theirs. I can quite well conceive that one man's mind may be so constituted as to derive more benefit from an elaborate ritual, whilst the spiritual needs of another are better supplied by a simpler form of worship. I see nothing absurd or unscriptural in the supposition that one class of minds may be soothed and

strengthened by the pathos, the beauty, the completeness of a liturgy or set form of devotion; whilst another class, from natural temper, education, old association, or other causes, may enter more heartily into, may relish and receive, greater spiritual aid from the practice of extemporaneous prayer. Far from being irrational or latitudinarian, it seems only consistent with Scripture and with those laws of human nature to which Scripture is so marvellously adapted, to suppose that, considering the national diversities of character and history, Episcopacy may be best in England, and Presbytery in Scotland. Nay, I can conceive it quite possible that in the progress of events a gradual revolution or modification might so come over the mind and character of a nation or community—there might be such an advance in education, such a change in civil, social, domestic relations, as to require a gradual and corresponding modification of the form of worship or Church government—a more or less elaborate ritual, an approach or recession from the purity of Presbyterian, or the graduated and stately order of the Episcopalian form of polity. And in such cases to insist on rigid adherence to the old platform, to stickle for every atom of the old ritual or constitution, would be as absurd as it would be to compel men to live in castles and to rear the fortified cities and strongholds of a bygone age, now, in settled times of peace. In one word, the great rule in all Church arrangements is that we adopt,

modify, abandon, external forms just as they serve the great end of all such machinery—the Christianising, sanctifying, saving of our own souls and the souls of others.

It was obviously on this ground—the reasonableness and expediency of the thing, and not any direct Divine appointment—that the change in the management of the civil and ecclesiastical affairs of the Israelites, and the analogous alteration in the government of the primitive Christian Church, to which I have referred, were adopted. And it is on a similar ground, and not any dubious inference from Scripture precedents, that I would defend any existing Church institutions, or the modification and re-arrangement of such institutions amongst ourselves.

2. There is, however, another subject which the incidents to which I have referred naturally suggest to our thoughts, viz., *the duty of the laity to take part in the management and work of the Church.*

The reasons which led to the appointment of judges over the Israelites, and so the institution of the office of deacon in the Primitive Church, are precisely analogous to those for which the clergy in our day may claim the co-operation of the laity in the practical work of the Church. It is still a misconception too commonly entertained that the work of the Church is the exclusive vocation of the clergy. The duty of attending to the religious interests of others is, it is supposed, the peculiar function of their office, and one with

which it cannot be expected that the laity should interfere. If amongst the laity there are found devout and earnest-minded men who, whether by teaching in schools, or visiting the poor, or in any other capacity, interest themselves practically in the spiritual welfare of their fellow-men, the majority are disposed to regard this as a manifestation of exceptive zeal. Such men go out of their way in so acting. This semi-clerical activity is by no means a duty of common obligation, and ordinary men may be excused if they feel no vocation for it. A man of business would be going out of his province if he began to dabble in medicine, an amateur lawyer would be regarded as interfering with another man's business in attempting to draw up title deeds and conveyances of property; and in like manner, the latent or half-acknowledged notion is, that a layman who begins to care for the souls of others, is obtruding himself into another man's office. Theology is thus but too often regarded as a technical science, quite as distinctly as law or medicine, engineering or navigation. Religious zeal and energy come to be looked upon as the characteristics of a class or calling; love to the souls of men, enthusiasm for the cause of Christ, self-denying exertion for the diffusion of the truth, are regarded as the special qualifications of a profession or art, and as by no means to be looked for in ordinary men. No man dreams that he is neglecting his duty by not attending to the

spiritual welfare of his neighbours and friends, any more than by not interfering with the medical man in prescribing for their bodily ailments. The common tone of thinking and talking in society is in entire consistence with this narrow view of religious exertion as appertaining to a technically sacred office. A youth who studies theology is "preparing for the Church." One who is about to be ordained is "going into the Church," as if all but clergymen were outside of the Church, and had nothing to do with theological studies and religious activities. When an oath or improper expression is blurted out in the presence of a clergyman, though all the company may be professing Christians, everybody looks as if *he* should be specially offended and a particular apology were due to him. Thus by these and many similar indications the tendency is manifested to degrade spiritual things into technicalities, to keep the Church and the world apart, and to carry on the work of Christ in the world as most men fight their country's battles, by a set of functionaries who have nothing else to do, and who are paid for the purpose.

Now, in order to correct this misconception, it is not necessary to enter on any general discussion of the idea of the Church and the relations of the clergy and laity which are involved in it. The subject may suggest one or two obvious reasons why the whole practical work of the Church should not be left to the clergy.

The first of these reasons is, that by the co-operation of Christian laymen in the practical work of the Church, *the clergy are enabled to give more time and thought to the work of public instruction.*

The burden of his manifold duties was too heavy for Moses. By a multiplicity of employment his attention and energy were withdrawn from the more peculiarly spiritual functions of his office as the divinely-appointed guide of Israel. It was therefore a most rational expedient which was suggested by Jethro, that those duties which others could discharge as well as he, he should share with others; that he should associate with him pious and prudent men drawn from among the people, who might aid him by their counsels, relieve him of much unnecessary labour and anxiety, and permit him to devote his whole energies to that peculiar part of his duties for which he alone was competent. A similar remark obviously applies to the institution of the office of deacon in the primitive Church.

Now it is obvious that some such expedient as we find recorded in these cases is not less necessary in our own times. The modern teachers of the Church need relief, as much as those of any other age, by the division of labour. In most cases the management of the religious interests of a parish by a single office-bearer is utterly impracticable. If, in addition to the studious preparation of weekly discourses, there be imposed upon the

minister the sole superintendence of the moral and religious state of a large district, implying a familiar acquaintance with the character, history, necessities, trials, attainments, deficiencies, of each household, the devising of plans for the physical and moral welfare of the population, the administration of discipline, the visitation of the sick, the religious instruction of the young, with a whole host of similar duties arising out of these—if the attempt be made to devolve all these upon the single spiritual instructor of a congregation or parish, it is quite clear that it must prove an utter failure. Either he will apply himself mainly or exclusively to one class of duties, and then all the rest will be neglected; or, in the attempt to overtake all, he will do none of them efficiently. And I need not say that in both cases the result is one greatly to be deprecated. It is never good for a man to feel either that he is neglecting a part of his duty, or discharging the whole in a superficial and perfunctory manner. Whatever a man's work be, he should feel that he is fairly master of it. Better to cultivate a patch of ground well and thoroughly than a large farm carelessly and ill. Better even to be a good and clever day-labourer than a bad physician or lawyer. A ship should never have more canvas spread to wind than the crew can manage when the gale rises. We should never kindle more fires than we can tend.

But this error will undoubtedly be committed

in the instance before us—the working of a parish —if the laity do not help the clergy: for unquestionably the minister's first, most legitimate, most important office, is that of a religious instructor or teacher. Whatever be neglected, this should have the first and best of his time and thought. Now, in very many situations, if a minister give himself conscientiously to the work of preparing weekly two such discourses as are at all presentable before an intelligent auditory—discourses not thrown off in haste, the mere skimming of a superficial and presumptuous mind, but the careful result of thought and toil—then no one who has the least idea of what intellectual labour is, but will admit that in this work the best part of a man's weekly hours and energies must be exhausted. It is of course quite possible, without much time or trouble, to preach in a sort of way; to come, for instance, to the pulpit week after week with a hastily concocted piece of talk; to fill up two half-hours on the Sunday with a weary, vapid repetition of the same threadbare thoughts and illustrations; to take refuge in the same well-worn stock ideas and phrases of systematic theology, which everybody has heard again and again till they have become meaningless to the ear, and rouse the mind as little as the ceaseless murmuring of a stream or revolutions of a wheel. If a religious instructor can satisfy himself with serving up this sort of spiritual fare to his people, he may leave himself plenty of time—well nigh his whole

time—for other avocations. But it will be at a sad expense to the interests of his people. That which ought to be a weekly feast of intellectual and spiritual nutriment they will speedily detect to be but a serving up of viands, poor, shabby, ill-cooked and ill-dressed at the first, and certainly not improved by age and keeping. Even the simplest of the people will nauseate such wretched fare, and turn away from it.

Now, it is to obviate such a result as this, to secure to the minister time for careful study, meditation, enriching of his mind by all those resources of literature, learning, intellectual culture, without which the ablest mind would soon become shallow; to enable him, in short, to give his whole heart and soul, the main force of his energies and current of his thoughts, to this one chief part of a pastor's work, that the help of the laity is needed. In so far as their position and duties in life may permit, it becomes the lay members of the Church to aid the pastor in the management and supervision of its moral and religious interests. They can give him the benefit of their knowledge of the world and more intimate acquaintance with its ways, and suggest to him such modes of action as would not be likely to occur to his comparative inexperience. They can take part, if possible, in the visitation of the sick, and the instruction of the young. It is in their power, in short, to become, in some sort, eyes, ears, and hands to the minister; giving him, by

their knowledge and activity, a sort of omnipresence in a parish which in no other way consistently with his higher duties could he attain. Like the elders of the people whom Moses appointed by the advice of Jethro, they can " bring every great matter unto him, but every small matter judge themselves, that so it may be easier for him, and they may bear the burden with him."

Another reason for the co-operation of the laity in the work of the Church, is that the *labours of a layman for the spiritual good of others are sometimes more influential than those of the clergyman, as being gratuitous and unprofessional.*

Voluntary and disinterested acts of kindness are always more highly appreciated than those which come within the scope of a man's ordinary and necessary duties. The regular soldier who is paid for fighting may get some credit for courage, but never so much as the patriot who voluntarily and with disinterested bravery devotes himself to his country's cause. The paid physician or hired sick nurse may win our gratitude by the kind way in which they discharge their duties, but we prize far more highly and feel far more deeply in our hour of need the spontaneous attentions of one whose unwearied acts of kindness, whose affectionate inquiries and solicitous efforts, whose every look, and word, and deed, betoken the motive from which they spring—pure, unmingled, disinterested affection.

So, too, is it in the case before us. However

unjustly, yet not unfrequently, the labours of ministers, their good advices, and serious talk, and visitations in sickness, often fail to be appreciated, from the secret feeling that it is all their trade, that they are paid for looking solemn and speaking seriously, that it is nothing more than people might expect from them. Clerical seriousness, it is to be feared, is looked upon very often as purely professional. Nobody regards it as of necessity implying much personal earnestness. It is listened to as the stock language of the profession. It excites as little surprise as to hear a farmer talk of crops, or a merchant of bills and investments, or a politician of diplomacy and affairs of state. There is a latent feeling that the clergyman is as much bound to be serious as the comedian on the stage to be merry and comic: and thus, in the way of influence and example, the piety and painstaking efforts of a minister sometimes lose part of their natural effect.

It is different with a layman. Who has not often noticed that a serious word from a layman in common life will do more good and produce a more powerful effect than a whole sermon from a professional instructor? People feel that it can be nothing but conscientious conviction that makes him talk so. They can ascribe his words to no mixed motives, to nothing but a disinterested sense of duty and the desire to do good. And so the kindly counsels of a Christian friend in private life, the visit of a private Christian to

the home of poverty, the scene of suffering, the house of mourning, the beneficent efforts of a layman to alleviate the temporal or spiritual wants and sufferings of his neighbour—these are labours of love which are at once attributed to their proper motive, and carry with them the overpowering influence of whatever flows from genuine, disinterested regard for others. The Church therefore ever acts wisely when she avails herself of this great power of voluntary and unprofessional agency, and seeks to combine with the regular training and practised skill and energy of the clergy, the spontaneous zeal and unsuspicious labours of the laity.

The last consideration I shall adduce in illustration of the peculiar advantages of the combination of lay with clerical agency in the work of the Church, is that it *constitutes an admirable means for carrying the influence of the Church and of religion into the affairs of ordinary life.* Important as the office of the minister—the public official, teacher, and pastor—may be, there are many circumstances which limit the range of its influence. There is great need for a supplementary agency to carry the streams of Christian thought and principle in various channels from the central reservoir down into the field of common life. Public instructions, sermons, solemnities, may tend very much, by their periodic recurrence, to elevate the mind; but they only supply the theory of religion —they set before us the ideal of the Christian life.

In order to the highest religious effect on men's minds, you must bring down theory to the test of practice, reduce the ideal to the actual. Show them by a life of elevated Christian piety amidst the exigencies of the world, not only that the thing ought to be done, but that it *can* be done. There is a secret feeling often in the minds of practical men that ministers do not know much of the world; and that, if they did, they would see how impossible it is to carry out all this fine talk about heavenly-mindedness and superiority to the world's vanities and pleasures amid the rough business of every-day life. Men like very well to hear all this solemn, elevated sort of discourse about piety and holiness. It is the sort of thing for the Sunday and sermons; but the feeling is, "we must make allowances for clerical ignorance of life; sermon goodness must be discounted before we can make use of it in business. We need rougher tools to work with than Sunday rhetoric supplies. The theory is a very fine one, no doubt, but it is too fine-spun for this world—it won't work."

Now, it is true that this objection might, in some measure, be met, if we who preach would live up to our preaching; if the man who propounds the theory on Sunday, would himself furnish the practical illustration and test of its excellence throughout the week. But it is to be remembered, that a minister's example would not supply all that is wanted. It is not an example of

what a clergyman's life should be which men need; but of what the life of a man of business should be amidst the temptations and difficulties of common life. From the secular transactions of life, its commerce, trade, politics, its bargains, buyings, sellings, marketings, a clergyman is in a great measure shut out; and yet these are the affairs in which a religious example, the manifestation of religious principle and motive, is most needed. The world does not need so much specimens of religious ministers, as specimens of religious lawyers, and physicians, and merchants, and magistrates, and tradesmen. The great lack is not of an exhibition of official, clerical piety, but of piety in the counting-room, the exchange, the shop, the market-place. It is in these places, and not in the comparatively safe and sheltered walk of clerical duty, that the severest and most numerous temptations occur; and, therefore, in which the restraining and impelling influences of Christian principle can most strikingly be manifested. It is not the way in which the vessel will float in the haven, or sail in the smooth and well-defined course of river or lake, that we need to see; but how, when she puts off into the wide, wild ocean, amidst its perils and hardships, its winds and storms and currents, she can withstand and triumph over them. · Of theoretical soldier-tacticians in the closet—men who stand apart upon a height while the battle rages, and exhort to valour—we have enough; what we want most,

is men who can go down into the thick of the fight, and prove their mettle there. . . . . .

Every profession and calling in life has its special difficulties and duties, its special temptations to be overcome, its special opportunities of being and of doing good. The profession of the clergyman is only one among a hundred. But the Church wants illustrations, not merely of clerical goodness; it demands an exhibition not of this one narrow aspect of Christian piety only. The thing to be desired is that the Church should be able to send forth special emissaries into all the varied walks of life, Christian officials without the official stiffness, officers of the Church out of uniform; to the end that men may have irrefragable evidence afforded them that in every several walk of life it is possible to live for Christ, and the world may have everywhere brought to its very door, and forced on its notice, a specimen of what a Christian man should be.

Moreover, this also is to be considered, that the influence of a clergyman's example is greatly neutralised by the assumed air of decorum that is generally maintained in his presence. A clergyman bears about with him an atmosphere of formal propriety. He cannot make his personal influence tell for what it is worth on society, because men do not let themselves out in their intercourse with him. People are generally on their good behaviour before a minister. Habitual coarseness or impropriety of speech or conduct are for the

nonce kept out of sight, and good-company manners produced for the occasion. When the minister of a parish makes his rounds, the children are smoothed into decorous trimness of dress and demeanour, the house is swept and garnished, the Bible is brought out, and everything puts on a Sunday look till he goes away. It requires, of course, no great amount of discernment to see through and allow for much of this artless ostentation; yet it does serve in a great measure to frustrate the personal influence of the clergyman. If there be asperities to soften, bad tempers to correct, evil habits to reform, rough, selfish, sensual ways of speaking and acting in the ordinary intercourse of the family on which the power of Christian example might be brought to bear, the clergyman is precluded from exerting it. Just as the Queen, when she goes on her progresses, can scarcely form a right estimate of the ordinary look of the country, for all before her is holiday garb, smiles and shouts, music and gay attire, and the beggary and squalor and misery are studiously kept out of sight; so in some measure the clergyman is an imperfect judge of the ordinary character and ways of men, and cannot adapt his influence to the real state of matters in society, forasmuch as very generally society hides as much as possible the moral rags and obscenity, and puts on its best looks before him. But the influence of a layman is not thus hindered. The daily inmate of the home, the companion of the workshop, the

familiar acquaintance of the market-place, the friend of the festive board, sees all things as they really are, neither better nor worse. His presence creates no occasion for concealment. No refracting medium needs to be allowed for in his view of the world. Whatever his salutary influence, he acts in the full cognisance of the evils to be remedied. In this respect, therefore, his power to do good is likely to be greater than that of the clergyman.

Not only, therefore, is the work of the Church—the Christianising of the world—a work too vast to be undertaken by any limited or official class, but it is a work in performance of which an official character in some respects narrows a man's influence. It is a work, moreover, let it be remarked finally, which can never be done by proxy. From the nature of the case it cannot be devolved by the members of the Church upon any special functionaries. As a matter of order and arrangement, the public offices of religious worship may be conducted by an official personage; special training may be necessary for the adequate performance of the duties of the pulpit; and it is well that a single representative of the Church should be specially responsible for the pastoral care of a particular locality. But there is a limit beyond which, in the work of the Church, official mediation cannot go. Responsibility for the care of souls can never by any Christian man be devolved upon another. Society may commit to

certain of its members the work appertaining to special trades and callings. It may leave entirely to men trained for the purpose the business of cultivating its fields and building its houses, and preparing its food and raiment. Having hired trained experts to do for it the work of the physician, the advocate, the soldier, the engineer, it may give itself no further concern about the matter than to see that the deputed work is efficiently done. But society cannot thus do its religious work by proxy. The clergyman cannot act for others as the physician or the lawyer, each in his vocation, can act for others, if for no other reason than this, that the personal influence of each individual man is an intransferable deposit. It is something lodged in an individual, and can be used by him alone. Every one who reads these words is endowed, each for himself, with a special gift of salutary influence, a peculiar benign power, which he can no more get another to employ for him than one flower can get another to breathe forth its fragrance, or one star depute to another star its shining. Your individual character, the special mould and temper of your being, is different from that of all other beings, and God, in creating it, designed it for a particular use in His Church. Your relations to your fellow-men are peculiar to yourself, and over some minds—some little group or circle of moral beings—you can wield an influence which it is given to no other man to wield. Your place and lot in life, too, is one which

has been assigned to you alone. For no other has the same part been cast. On your particular path no other footsteps shall ever leave their print. Through that one course, winding or straight, rapid or slow, brief or long protracted, in no other course shall the stream of life flow on to the great ocean. And so to you it is given to shed blessings around you, to do good to others, to communicate, as you pass through life, to those whose moral history borders or crosses yours, a heavenly influence, which is all your own. If this power be not used by you, it will never be used.

There is work in God's Church which, if not done by you, will be left undone. As no priest can mediate between you and God, so can none mediate between you and your brother. You can no more do good than you can be saved at second-hand. The true ideal, then, of the Church is that of a Christian community in which each individual member exerts his own gift of usefulness for a common end. Wherever it is realised, the province of exclusively clerical effort will be a very limited one. By their charities, their prayers, their active and unremitting exertions, their earnest, holy lives, the laity will co-operate with the more official labours of the clergy. Each individual will be a priest to his own home, a minister of God to all who come within the range of his influence. The Sunday sacredness will not cease, but it will be less distinctive; for, instead of being checked and

thwarted, its influences will be perpetuated by those of week-day life. One man will no longer vainly endeavour to preach up, on one day, what on all other days multitudes are preaching down ; but a thousand week-day preachers, by the all-potent eloquence of pure, earnest, self-denying, holy lives, will silently and constantly plead for God. Each man will feel a solemn obligation resting on him to do for Christ and for the world's good all the work he can. No smallest scruple of holy influence wherewith God has endued his Church shall be lost ; but all Christian men, in all positions and relations in life, of all crafts and callings, of all talents and endowments, at all times and seasons, will do each his own share of Christ's work in the world.

VIII

The Harvest Joy

"THEY joy before Thee," writes the prophet Isaiah when depicting the happiness of the Church at the advent of its great deliverer—"They joy before Thee according to the joy in harvest." And the image here employed is one which we must all recognise as a most graphic one. There are probably few who would not sympathise with the cheerful emotions congenial to such a season as the present, when Nature, arrayed in all her loveliness, has again begun to pour the rich tribute of her bounty into the lap of man. As you pass through some fair and fertile district of our land, where every breeze is laden with fragrance, every field teems with fertility, every tree is covered with foliage or hangs heavy with fruit; or as you climb the hill that skirts some noble landscape where for miles on miles the broad acres are waving, a mimic sea of gold, beneath you, and survey the busy toils of the reapers and listen to the merry shouts that rise, blended with the voices of birds and streams, now faintly echoing from the far hamlet, now more distinctly heard from the nearer homestead, and as, moreover, the happy associations connected with such a scene

as this come before your mind—visions of plenty and peace and comfort, of garners overflowing with goodly store, of homes and hearts made glad by nature's bounty—you cannot resist the universal sentiment of cheerfulness and gratitude, and as it steals over your mind, you feel yourself, before the great Bestower of all blessings, "rejoicing with the joy in harvest."

Let me endeavour, in further illustration of the analogy which these words suggest, to point out in what respect the joy or happiness of the individual believer as well as of the Church at large may be conceived to resemble the harvest-joy.

1. One aspect of the harvest-joy which suggests a corresponding emotion in the spiritual experience of the believer is that of *a joy which succeeds to a period of suspense and uncertainty.*

It is very obvious that the pleasure experienced from any happy or auspicious event will be more or less vivid in proportion to the degree of doubt and anxiety that preceded it. Regularity and certainty in our enjoyments in some measure diminish their intensity; rarity and suspense greatly heighten them. The longer you labour for any good thing, and the more numerous the conditions which render the result a dubious one, the greater will be your delight when all goes right at last, and the matter is brought to a successful issue.

Of this simple principle the passage to which I have referred affords us two examples: "They

joy," says the prophet, "before Thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil." In the latter of these we are led to contemplate the consummation of some warlike enterprise, the close of the brilliant campaign, the victorious warriors in the first flush of success, when after all the excitement, anxiety, and hazard of some mighty conflict on which vast consequences were staked, the thrilling shout of victory has been heard, and the victors are just beginning to repose amid the glory and the rapture and the rich rewards of conquest. The other example is one with which we are more immediately concerned. It is that of the husbandman, who, in the language of St. James, has "had long patience, waiting for the precious fruit of the earth until he might receive the early and latter rain." Exercising all his skill and experience in the selection of the crop and the preparation of the soil, he has ploughed and sown and gone through all the processes of his husbandry, and then with anxious eye he has watched the course of the seasons and the progress of his work. Through the slowly rolling months, the fluctuations and uncertainties of weather and the remembrance of many past disappointments have kept him in much doubt and uncertainty as to the result. But as the season crept on, the genial influences of Nature have come forth in unwonted benignity over the ripening fields; and at length, as he watches the busy reapers engaged in their rapid

12—(8518)

and peaceful conquests, his heart gladdens with the satisfaction of successful industry, and he "rejoices with the joy of harvest."

Now to this sort of joy—joy after long labour and suspense—many parallels may be found in spiritual things. The successful termination of any inquiry or enterprise for our own good, or for the moral and spiritual welfare of others, would give rise to it. For instance, is it not emphatically realised in the feelings of the Christian parent when he contemplates the happy results of his watchful care over the early years of his children? No province of labour upon earth can call forth more anxious and incessant care, more thoughtful wisdom and sagacity, more forbearance, prudence, patience, than that of parental discipline and instruction. In none, I believe, will carelessness or neglect be more frequently avenged, even in this life, on those who are unfaithful to their trust, and in none on the other hand is the reward of fidelity more precious, or, in general, more sure. What soil can be compared with the soil of mind in fertility, in richness, in tractability, in the scope it presents for the most varied and skilful cultivation? Neglect it, and its very richness will be manifested in the rank vigour and abundance of the crop of weeds that will speedily overspread its surface. Tend it, study its capacities, give yourself in good earnest to the sowing of the seed of knowledge, truth, piety, to the fostering and tending of their growth, to the eradication of

the weeds of sloth and ignorance and selfishness; and, though it may cost you many a weary hour, many a day and year of untold anxieties, yet a thousand instances prove how sweet, how unspeakably precious may be your reward even in this world. One can imagine—would that it were oftener something more than imagination and theory!—the case of a wise, tender, watchful Christian parent, as he prosecutes this high and laborious work of education. Dedicating his little ones in holy baptism to the Saviour, one can conceive him seizing the earliest moments of opening consciousness to sow the first seeds of Christian knowledge and holy thought and principle—eagerly watching the first indications of character, the first up-growth of disposition, and temper, and talent, above the yet virgin soil of mind—cheered, it may be, by the hopeful signs of gentleness, goodness, native vigour, or pained, humiliated, and discouraged by the already too obvious germs of a stubborn, or selfish, or dull and intractable character. As years roll on, we can well suppose, even in the most fair and hopeful cases—nay, in these more than others—how much trembling hope and anxiety, and alternate elation and sinking of spirit, a pious and thoughtful parent must experience. When sickness visits the home, for instance, and the prattle of childhood is hushed, and the bright eye grows heavy and dull, and the fair young plant, bright with opening promise, droops and seems ready to

wither away, the very beauty, and delicacy, and rare attractiveness of its unformed being will make the thought of losing it more sad, and call forth a more thrilling suspense and anxiety in the parent's mind. Or when temptations beset its path, and the auspicious progress of character threatens to be arrested, or the fond hopes and flattering promises of past years are rudely checked and disappointed by some grievous fault or failure, who can tell what poignant grief, what inexpressible heartfelt bitterness, such lapses in his child's history occasion in a good man's mind ?

But let us suppose, on the other hand, amidst all such occasional misgivings and anxieties, that as time slips on and the characters of their offspring become developed, the father or mother can perceive the more and more manifest proofs that their long labours have not been lost ;—let us conceive them, as they look round on one and another and another member of that family circle, discerning in the innocent gentleness that beams in the countenance of one, and the manly integrity and truthfulness of another, and the gravity, and thoughtfulness, and intelligence of a third, and in the mutual love and amiableness and Christian sincerity of all, the fruit of many prayers and efforts in years bygone ; or yet again, as the little group becomes thinned of its numbers and one and another goes forth to the struggle of life, let us realise the fond delight of the parent in hearing of their advancement and honour ; or, what is

better still, in watching their holy and Christian lives, and finally, as the evening of life gathers on, let us imagine them cheered amid the infirmities of age by the reverence, the fond regard, the tender love and care of those over whose infant years they had watched, and looking forward to a blessed re-union with them in the loftier and purer intimacies of heaven—oh, who can doubt that such parents would feel in all this a rich recompense for their former toils and fears, that in the fulness of their present satisfaction all their bygone anxieties would be forgotten, or remembered only to render that satisfaction the sweeter, and that in the fulfilment of their hopes and the frustration of their fears, there would be indeed to them a realisation of that text :—" They joy before Thee according to the joy in harvest."

2. The joy of harvest may be regarded as typical of the Christian's joy in this respect, that it is *a joy that is connected with active exertion.*

The mirth of the harvest-field is not a mere listless amusement. The shout that rings, or the song that rises cheerily from the reaper's lips, is the shout that inspires to effort, and the song that beguiles toil of its weariness and fatigue. When it catches your ear as you pass by the wayside, or is borne along and re-echoed from distant plain and valley and upland, it does not pain you like the vacant laugh of indolence, or the wild ribaldry that breaks forth from the tavern. It tells not of folly and reckless enjoyment, of wasted hours

and wanton carousing, but of busy and strenuous toil, of profitable industry, and manly and honest exertion. It speaks not, like the sluggard's or the drunkard's merriment, of squandered substance, and squalid homes, and beggared broken-hearted families; it is the symbol rather of plenty, and peace, and comfort, of smiling faces and well-clad forms, of garners overflowing with corn, and homes where the sunshine of prosperity smiles. It conveys to us besides, the tidings not merely of labour that is profitable, but of labour that is pleasant, of toil that is pursued neither in grim silence like the work of the over-tasked mechanic, nor amid groans and curses, like the work of the slave or the felon, but with the merry and light-hearted song and jest that tell how the labourer *likes* his work.

And when it is averred that the joy of a Christian resembles the harvest-joy, may not the comparison remind us of that great law of man's nature which connects his true happiness and dignity with work? Man was not made for idleness. The world is but a great harvest-field, in which, each in his own place, we are called forth to take our part, and do our share of labour. Neither by the structure of our nature, nor by the constitution of society, is there any room for the idler, or any possibility of true enjoyment and happiness without work. If you want to be truly happy, to attain in any measure to the real use and enjoyment of life, work of some kind you must

have. There ought to be no play without work. No man is entitled to enjoyment who does not purchase it by labour. The sweetest holiday is that which we have earned by strenuous application. God has so made us that we must find our pleasure either *in* working, or as the *reward of* working. It is quite true that we may set a man to work for which he is not adapted, and which, therefore, will not be pleasant, but irksome and disagreeable ; or we may so overburden him, even with work of the right kind, as to exhaust and break down his strength of body and vigour of mind. If God has endowed a man with high mental gifts, and you set him—weak, it may be, in physical strength, and utterly deficient in manual dexterity—to a trade or handicraft, where little or nothing of his intellectual power is called forth ; or if, on the other hand, God has bestowed upon a man a sturdy frame and strong hand, and instead of setting him to the plough, or the saw, or the trowel, you must needs make a student and scholar of him—no wonder such men are unhappy, no wonder they drag on, ill at ease, out of place and proportion, as would be a cart-horse on the race-course, or a high-mettled steed harnessed to the hay-waggon. But in no such case is the unhappiness any disproof of the law in question, that man's true joy is in labour. The only conclusion to be drawn from it is that every man must be put into his own peculiar sphere of labour,—set to do his own work. Or again, if you put a man

even into the sort of place for which his talents are adapted, and yet goad and drive him on to incessant application, make his life all work and no play, till the jaded faculties, whether of mind or body, lose their elasticity, till the wheels of energy and buoyancy roll off, and the frame-work of life, like Pharaoh's chariots, drives heavily, no wonder such a man feels work to be no pleasure, and sighs for emancipation from its bondage and misery. Overwork we admit is bad, but that does not prove that no work is good. In this, as in many other cases, happiness is to be found in the medium between extremes. God has created you with a nature made for work, and whatever be your peculiar sphere of duty, your own happiness and that of society at large will be found in doing your work to the best of your ability. Do not say that this is not a topic for the Christian teacher, that religion has nothing to do with this. Religion, I assert, has to do with everything that affects man's duty and happiness. It goes with you, or should go, to the shop, the plough, the anvil, and takes cognisance of what passes there; and the idle servant, the dawdling, trifling workman, the man who wastes his time and hangs listlessly over his work, sins against religion just as certainly as the man who neglects prayer or seldom opens his Bible.

Constituted as human nature and human society are, there is something holy, something divine in work. "My Father worketh

hitherto," said Jesus, "and I work." Angels are happy beings, for they are working beings. They continually "do God's commandments, hearkening to the voice of His word." Civilization, progress, goodness, have sprung from work. The world has reached its present height of intellectual and social greatness because it is a busy and working world. And as with society at large, so with individuals. Nobody in the world is so contemptible, next to the profligate man, as the mere idler; and between profligacy and idleness there is a close connection. A man who has nothing to do but enjoy himself, will never know what real enjoyment is. The hardest of all work is doing nothing. The mere man of pleasure, the hanger-on upon life who sets before him no duty, no distinct object and aim, no definite work in short, is of all others the man who is least likely to extract true enjoyment out of life. If men are born without the necessity of toil, exempted from labour for daily bread, the true course for them—that which wisdom, prudence, even selfishness, as well as Christian principle points out—is to devise some path of active duty, to consider what work they can do in God's world, and strenuously to set themselves to do it. For not only will you look back on your working hours with greatest comfort, not only is it true that those parts of our lives which we remember with most pleasure are always the busiest parts of it, not only will relaxation and amusement be far sweeter and more intense after

hard work, than if we spent our whole life in the pursuit of pleasure and amusement; but, I repeat, when the first difficulties of labour are over, and habit has smoothed away the roughness of toil, no man but will find that there is happiness in the very putting forth of his energies in some congenial sphere. Whether it be in the toil of the hand, or the trouble of the brain, the true joy of life is in working, with a sense of God and of duty upon us, as well and as hard as we can. No one who has tried it but must feel that in thorough and earnest occupation there is a buoyancy of spirit, a lightness of mind, an ease of conscience, a superiority to petty cares and troubles, an elasticity and animation diffused throughout a man's whole being, which the listless and idle can never know. The world is but a great field of duty in which they who labour the hardest may not only reap the richest results, but in their very labouring rejoice the most.

But upon this point I would remark still further, that the comparison of the Christian's to the harvest-joy may teach us that the Christian is one who does God's will because he loves it; or, in other words, that the true motive of Christian obedience is not fear of punishment, or desire of reward, but love. If I am a true Christian, the reason why I do my duty is not because I would escape hell or gain heaven, but because I love to do it. A man may begin an outwardly religious life from inferior motives, and may indeed feel

for many a day that to do one's duty, to avoid sin and obey God's will is a hard and difficult task. Nor would we discourage any from attempting a life of duty because they feel no love to it. On the contrary, we would warmly encourage those who have been roused, from whatever cause, to serious thought, instantly to renounce their sinful and selfish ways, and to begin at once, however hard and irksome it may be, to try to please Christ, in the assurance that sooner or later duty will grow, first easy, then pleasant, then delightful, and at last that the service of Christ will become perfect freedom. When a man is learning a trade or profession, or beginning a new branch of study, the first attempts are almost always hard, blundering, uneasy efforts. The endeavour to construct or utter a sentence in a new tongue is invariably sad and rugged work. You cannot catch the right accent, the grammatical rules are laboriously followed, and a thousand niceties escape you. But be not discouraged, only persevere; and the difficulties will gradually vanish, the efforts will become less and less formal and elaborate, till at last, by dint of regular and constant practice, you will learn to talk and write with fluency, elegance, and ease. Or to take another case: when an artist first takes the pencil in his hand, what sad work often does he make of it! Even in his earliest efforts, indeed, there may be detected amid all the rude scratches some signs of incipient taste or genius. But the power of expression for

long will be fitful and feeble. Yet on he works; and with work and perseverance, facility grows. The eye and hand become quicker, more delicate, more powerful, till by degrees the labour vanishes, the difficulties are forgotten, and at last there will come such a pleasure and fascination in the work, that it becomes the most delightful pursuit of life.

It is the same, I believe, with the grandest of all pursuits, the service of God in Christ Jesus. Hard and stern and laborious at the first, yet to him who perseveres, in the strength of grace and in the consciousness of duty, it will infallibly grow lightsome and easy in the end. Self-denial, temperance, purity, truthfulness, strict integrity in thought and word and deed, the giving up of our own ease and pleasure for the good of others and to please God; prayer, self-examination, the reading of God's word, realisation of God's presence in the active duties and intercourses of life; these duties may be difficult and severe to observe at first, may often impose on a man an almost intolerable yoke; so that in the weariness of effort and amid the heart-sickening sense of frequent failure, many a one may be, and has been, tempted at the very outset to abandon a religious life in despair. But if only, in reliance on the Holy Spirit's aid and in dependence on the Saviour's cheering promises, the attempt is persevered in, sooner or later a sweet sense of freedom and ease in duty will begin to dawn on the soul. Love to Jesus will increase, and what we do for

him will lose the feeling of hardness and effort. Spiritual employments will assume an attractiveness and gather around them a pleasure we knew not before, till by degrees we shall reach that condition in which the Psalmist's language will not be strange to our minds: "Oh, how I love thy law; it is my study all the day:" "My soul fainteth for the longing that it hath to thy judgments at all times:" "I have longed for thy salvation, O Lord, and thy law is my delight." In the daily round of duty such a man may come to feel free, happy, and rejoicing as a bird on the wing. What is hard to others will be to him "a yoke which is easy and a burden which is light." Obstacles and efforts that formerly seemed insuperable will yield before him as gently as the dungeon doors before the angel-guided apostle of old. A sweet sense of heavenly companionship and love will gather round his daily toils. He will go forth to his appointed duties with the light of holy love to cheer him, as when the reaper goes forth amid the bright beams and free air of the autumnal morn. In the fulness of his love and devotion to his Lord, he will feel that, amid all hardships and labours and even sufferings, there is for him a secret blessedness, and that beneath the eye of his heavenly Master, it is given to him ever to "joy according to the joy in harvest."

3. I name one other obvious point of analogy between the joyful labours of the harvest-field and those of the Christian, that they are in both cases

the labours of those who *combine to help and cheer each other on in their work.* Work, as every one knows, is always more efficient, more hearty, more energetic, when men combine and work together, than when each man works by himself. When men labour together they can divide the work better, and each take the place and do the portion of the work for which he is best adapted. When men work together, again, they can help each other, and two can often do together four, ten, twenty times the work of men working separately and apart. When men work together they not only help, but they cheer and instigate each other; sympathy brings out a new power of exertion, emulation quickens energy, the cheering voice of a brother sends new alacrity through the frame, an electric chain of fellow-feeling binds each to all the rest; in the sense of community, toil loses its irksomeness and fatigue is forgotten; a generous rivalry stimulates the powers, and the sluggish and indolent, stirred up by the example of the energetic and ashamed to lag behind the rest, feel themselves possessed of energies and putting forth powers and performing feats that astonish themselves as much as others.

Now so it is very strikingly in the two cases already referred to—that of warfare, and that of husbandry. An army is just a little community in which each has his own place and station and work allotted to him, and in which all cheer and help each other on. It would not do for all to

be generals, colonels, captains; there must be those who execute as well as those who devise and issue orders. It would not do for all to be infantry, or all to be cavalry. There is needed alike the steadiness and compactness of the one, and the more active and impetuous movements of the other. And so, when the hour of battle comes, all in their place, and all under strict command and discipline, they move rank and file, shoulder to shoulder, a vast assemblage, yet with the concentration and quickness of an individual will. The command is issued from the central authority, it flies from rank to rank, and from company to company; a common sympathy binds heart to heart and hand to hand, so that every heart beats high and every hand grasps the weapon with a firmer and steadier hold; in the sight of his fellows and with the memory of home and country rising in his soul, each feels the common impulse to brave all perils and do valiant deeds; and when the shout of battle rises, there is a tremendous power called forth by common action with which the mightiest individual and separate achievements could never cope.

Now turn for a moment to the more peaceful illustration, to that quieter scene which is not less graphically illustrative of the principle in question: for where more vividly than on the harvest-field are you taught of the power of sympathy, combination, common action, and mutual helpfulness? Here is a little company

each at his own work and all cheering, encouraging, urging each other on. There is perhaps the farmer who superintends and watches the progress of the work; there are those who cut, and those who bind, and those who glean, and those who load the cart or lumbering wain and bear away the result of the common toil. And as the reapers nimbly ply the sickle, and each band or individual strains every nerve and pushes on that he may not be surpassed by others, and as the cheering word, or shout, or merry song rises up in the clear bright air over the scene of blithe and busy toil, one perceives again a most striking proof of the increased power of common work and mutual helpfulness. Now so it is, or should be, in that noblest of all communities, bound together for the grandest of all works—the Church of Christ, the company of Christ's true soldiers and faithful workmen on earth. Religion is not a solitary thing, a thing with which each man has to do exclusively in the hidden solitude of his own heart. It must begin there, and in many of its deepest exercises it must be carried on there; and without the private intercourse of the soul with God, the private discipline and governance of a man's own secret heart, all other religion would be vain. But, on the other hand, as little will it do to make religion altogether an individual and secret thing. In many of its highest privileges, exercises, and engagements it is social; and one of its most momentous duties is that of mutual sympathy,

encouragement, and helpfulness. If you are a sincere Christian, you ought to feel that all you have and all you are, your wealth, time, talents, power, influence, your penitence, faith, virtue, Christian experience and wisdom, all your blessings and privileges temporal and spiritual, have been bestowed upon you, not for your own use alone, but for the common benefit of that holy family, that household and brotherhood of God's redeemed to which you profess to belong. Your portion of meat God has given you not to hasten away to devour it like a greedy child in secret, but to share it with all your brethren in Christ. Your light was not kindled that it might be hidden for ever underground, illuminating only the walls of your own tomb-like solitude. You are to "let your light shine before men," and not only by your example, but by your active exertions and sympathies, you are bound to help on the work and the workmen in Christ's Church. No member of Christ's Church but can do something to promote the cause of religion, and by his kindly aid, his visits of sympathy, his soothing charities, his cheering encouragements, his recountal of his own experience, be of some use to his fellow Christians. What a happy state of things would it be if each parish in our land were as the dwelling-place of a band of brothers enlisted in some noble and heaven-blessed enterprise, fighting for home and country, in the cause of freedom, truth and justice! What a happy scene would that be in which the

12A—(2518)

wise and experienced were ever ready with their advice and aid to help the untried and ignorant, in which the powerful aided the weak, and the weak in turn were ready to bless, honour, and stand true to the strong; in which by the head or by the hand, by endurance, forbearance, courage, zeal, self-devotion, all were ready to act together in the work of putting down sin and winning the world to Christ! What a parish that in which the scene that is now enacted on many a bright summer field were but a symbol and representation of our work in the nobler field of Christ's Church; where from year to year all of us together, and each in his own place, were straining every nerve to be and to do good, to help and encourage each other in the work of the Lord, to prepare for the great harvest-home of eternity! Then, indeed, might our Sabbath song of praise be a prelude of that glorious song in which we all hope to join, in which the thousand times ten thousand voices, but one mighty heart of the redeemed in glory, shall celebrate the praises of the great Husbandman, affording the noblest, most glorious fulfilment of that text, "They joy before Thee according to the joy in harvest."

IX

The Day of Death Better than the Day of Birth

"A GOOD name," it is written, "is better than precious ointment, and the day of death than the day of one's birth." The idea in the first clause of this verse may be, that the love and honour that follow departed worth are a better embalming than all the preparations and perfumes that steal the body from decay. The latter succeed only in preserving for a little what is at best a ghastly semblance of the outward form of the man. The former seizes hold of the spirit or essence of his inward being, the central principle of his life, and suffuses that with the fragrance of sweet and tender memories, the preservative of human respect and love. It is well, when Death, has claimed his own, to let him do his worst to that which alone it is in his power to touch; enough for us to feel that there is an immortality which love confers on which he cannot lay his destroying hand. When we have looked our last on the dear old face, calm with the changeless peace of death; or when the great or good man, at the close of an honoured life, is carried to the grave, true affection shrinks from any miserable attempt to confer a

spectral show of life on that which is our friend no more. But embalm him to the heart. Let the idea of his life rest in the sanctuary of imagination. Open for him in the inmost shrine of the living temple a place where the name and memory of our noblest and dearest are treasured; and gather round him there the myrrh and frankincense, the sweet spices and fragrant ointment of loving thoughts and tender recollections, of sympathy and reverence for all in him that was noble, and honourable and good;—so will you obtain a better triumph over death, and more truly arrest the progress of decay; for "a good name is better than precious ointment."

But how shall we understand the words that follow, and for which I wish specially to claim the reader's thoughts—"and the day of death (is better) than the day of one's birth?" Surely it is only within very narrow limits that the truth of this assertion can be maintained; at any rate, it is directly opposed to the common sentiments and usages, which treat birth as the joyous, and death as the sad and deplorable event. There are few homes where there is no joy that "a man-child is born into the world," perhaps fewer still where there is no heart made sad when another place is left vacant. In many cases how eager the welcome, how loud the gratulations and rejoicings, that wait the entrance of a new life into the world! The mother clasps her first-born to her heart, bends over its feebleness with the strange delight of a

new affection, and feels as if a fresh interest had been lent to all the future of her life. The rich man's heir, the inheritor of a noble name, the destined occupant of a throne—when the first feeble wail of an infant born to such destinies is heard, is it not the signal for widespread festivity and joy? and in all ranks, down to that of the humblest peasant or labourer, are there not many who can trace much that is sweetest and gentlest and happiest in their life to the hour when the infant's voice first woke the echoes beneath their roof?

On the other hand, I need scarcely go on to say, to common thought and feeling, the day of man's death is never a joyful day to think of. Philosophy and religion may in a few minds induce exceptive states of thought and feeling; and men may school themselves into an artificial indifference, or even an unnatural elation and rapture, at the approach of death. Yet for most natures the real ills of death are too palpable to permit the dread of them to be put to flight either by reason or faith. Though Christianity may discipline the bereaved heart into resignation, still its involuntary utterance is, that of all dark days, the blackest in its history was that when death came and left it bleeding; and as youth and hope and joyous activity, nay, as even age and penury and misery look forward to the future, there is no day on which the thoughts love less to linger than the inevitable one when death shall come. Thus, in many ways it

seems false to the common sentiment of humanity to say that "the day of death is better than the day of one's birth." Granting, then, that there is expressed in these words what is only a partial truth, it may be worth while to reflect a little longer on some of the exceptions to it, before we consider, in the second place, in what sense it must be admitted as beyond question true, that "the day of death is better than the day of one's birth."

1. Even to the holiest and best of men, though hovering on the verge of eternal blessedness, the day of death is not in all respects the brighter of the two. Much less can this be averred of him to whom that day is the termination of a worthless or wicked life, the last of a long series that have been spent in selfishness and sin.

To take the latter case first: is not the beginning of an evil life less mournful to contemplate, in many respects, than its close? The birthday of the worst of men, though it ushered a new agent of evil into existence, though it was a day fraught with more disastrous results to the world than the day in which the pestilence began to creep over the nations, or the blight to fasten on the food of man, or any other physical evil to enter on a career destined to spread terror and misery over the world;—the day when the vilest of humanity first saw the light, might yet in some aspects of it be regarded as better than the day of his death. For, to take only one view of it, when life

commenced, the problem of good or evil to which death has brought so terrible a solution, was, in his case, as yet unsolved. The page of human history which he was to write was yet unwritten, and to that day belonged, at all events, the advantage of the uncertainty whether it was to be blurred and blotted, or written fair and clean. The battle was yet unfought, the campaign only just entered on: who could prognosticate whether victory, a drawn conflict, or shameful defeat and ruin, should be the result? There was at least the possibility of hoping and auguring the happier issue.

Life, even in the most unfavourable circumstances, has ever some faint gleams of hope to brighten its outset. The simplicity, the tenderness, the unconscious refinement that more or less characterise infancy, even among the lowest and rudest, soon indeed pass away, and give place to the coarseness of an unideaed, if not the animal repulsiveness of a sensual or sinful life. But at least at the beginning, for a little while, there is something in the seeming innocency, the brightness, the unworldliness, the unworn freshness of childhood, that gives hope room to work. Nay, is not the divine plan of life, for every human being that enters on existence, a noble and glorious one? Is there not, for every child, not in the dreams of parental fondness only, but in reality and in God's idea, the possibility of a noble future? The history of each new-born soul is surely in God's

plan and intention a bright and blessed one. For the vilest miscreant that was ever hounded out of life in dishonour and wretchedness, there was, in the mind of the All-Good a divine ideal, a glorious possibility of excellence, which might have been made a reality. When, therefore, in any case opportunity has been wasted, and this heavenly birthright bartered for meanest joys, is it possible to echo the judgment of the wise man? Look on this picture and on that: *this*, the day when the new object of love, and hope, and tenderness entered on an unstained existence; *that*, the day when a ruined life reached its consummation. *Here*, you contemplate what the man was; *there*, what he has made himself to be: *here*, the simple, smiling face, with all the softness and roundness, the wonderful simplicity and confidingness of infancy; *there*, a countenance stamped with the unmistakeable traces of a life of selfishness, if not darkened and deformed by grosser vices and crimes: *here*, though it grew by the lowliest paths, amidst the most desolate wastes of life, a weed or wild-flower that had yet some vernal sweetness in it; *there*, perchance, a broken, withered, fetid waif, trodden under feet of men, fit only to be flung out of sight. And say, if this contrast ever be realised—if there be those over whose cradle there were rejoicings, and over whose bier those most terrible words in all Holy Writ may be pronounced—"It had been better for this man if he had never been born"—say if there are not cases

in which it is impossible to assent to the averment, that "the day of death is better than the day of one's birth."

Nor, again, can it be maintained that this saying is unconditionally applicable even to the holiest and best of men. Are there not considerations to make us pause ere we pronounce that the day even of a Christian's death is better than that of his birth? To name only two of these—the day of death severs the ties, and it terminates the salutary personal influence, which the day of birth originates. Death is the going away from much that is dear to every man—dearest to the best. It is the breaking up of the pleasant associations that from the day of a man's birth have been silently gathering round him; and nothing can ever make that severance in itself a desirable or happy thing. Religion does not make the heart less susceptible of attachment to the world and life. Superiority to the world, indeed, a Christian acquires; but it is not a superiority which implies disdain or insensibility towards all in it that is innocent, or noble, or beautiful, but only repugnance to that which is evil, or becomes so by detaching the heart from God. We do not need to love our earthly friends less that we love God more; but forasmuch as religion stirs new springs of benignity and tenderness in the breast, and forasmuch as it gathers round our earthly relationships the significance and pathos of that eternity to which we are hasting, all the more intense do

the universal human affections become in the Christian heart.

Moreover the things which interest a cultivated mind—literature, science, art, the pursuits of the scholar, the philosopher, the man of refined and liberal tastes—do not lose their zest, but rather gain fresh interest when prosecuted in a Christian spirit and with a religious aim. The very world in which we live—the visible material world—becomes more attractive to the man who has learnt to trace a Father's wisdom in its structure and laws; and whose appreciation of material beauty has been quickened by the love of Him of whom all created loveliness is but the faint reflection. For the religious man, therefore, in proportion to the very depth and fervour of his piety, it must be not easier, but harder to part with all that he has known and loved so well. It may, indeed, be better for him—a thing infinitely desirable—to depart in order to be with Christ; but the act of departure in itself has no pleasure in it. Even if faith be strong enough to communicate an air of reality to that unseen world to which he goes, what man, however saintly and seraphic the spirit of his piety, but would feel some heart-string break with a nameless pang, if called, in the suddenness of an unanticipated summons, to look his last on all he loves on earth? The very thought that we must go, lends often a new and tenderer interest to the scenes and objects we are

about to leave. There have been those to whom, as they felt the day of their departure drawing near, even the familiar scenes and aspects of nature have gained a new though more pensive beauty; and the morning freshness, the summer noontide, the evening stillness, the old hills and meadows and streams, have seemed lovelier than ever to the eye that was soon to cast the last look upon them. But it is not the rupture of local associations that makes the moment of departure so painful; it is to touch the dear hand—to look with yearning fondness on the familiar face—to hear the voice, tremulous with love and anguish, name our name once more as the shadow gathers over us—and then never, never again in all the ages, to see or hear them more. No; if to come is better than to go, to meet than to part—if the beginning of love and friendship and happy intercourse be better than the end—death, even with heaven in prospect, is not all brightness, nor "the day of death better than the day of one's birth."

Moreover, to a Christian, the day of death is that on which his active personal usefulness in the world terminates, and the interruption or cessation of a benign activity cannot be regarded as better than its commencement. In so far as a good man's influence depends on his personal presence and agency, it terminates at death. The extinction of a noble life is the stopping of a machine that had worked long and profitably for society. It is the drying up of a spring by which

many a faint and weary step had paused, at which many a parched lip had found refreshment. It is the quenching of an altar fire before which many a heart had gained fervour and inspiration. It is true, indeed, that the good or evil we do lives after us. The moral influence of a life is not arrested by death. Not one great or good man ever left the world without leaving behind him an indestructible impression of his character and life, to spread and propagate its salutary power so long as society exists. We may be able only partially to trace this influence, but in innumerable lines of action and interaction it is working amongst us—hallowing, purifying, ennobling mankind. And perhaps, if cognisance of earthly things be granted to those who have passed into the invisible world, it may constitute no slight element of their happiness to watch the undying influence of their words and deeds, to feel that they are still the unseen benefactors of mankind, and that though their voice is heard no more by mortal ear, yet in the undying moral power of their character and life there is a silent language more touching, more persuasive, appealing more irresistibly to men's hearts, than any words that fall from living lips. And yet, admitting all this, it is not the less true that one kind of salutary influence—that which is implicated with one personal presence of the agent—is for ever terminated by death. The old impulse may be propagated by action and reaction, but no new force from the

same centre of power can ever again be generated. The words formerly spoken may be echoed and re-echoed far and wide, but the voice is for ever still from which they emanated. We may reproduce indefinitely fresh copies of the great master's works; but no new production, glowing with the inexhaustible power and versatility of genius, shall ever reach us from that master's hand. And forasmuch as in this respect it interrupts the continuity of a noble and benignant influence, the day of death cannot be regarded as better than "the day of one's birth."

2. Passing now to the positive side of the subject, I go on to point out in what sense it may indeed be averred, that "the day of death is better than the day of one's birth."

The idea of the writer, if we connect these words with the preceding clause of the text, "a good name is better than precious ointment," may be, that a good and wise man is richer at death, by all that has won for him a good name, by all that has gained for him true glory, than he was on the day of his birth. Whatsoever the condition and circumstances in which a man enters life—though he be born to wealth, rank, hereditary honour, and greatness, there is one thing which at birth he cannot have. The only honour that is truly valuable, is that which cannot be arbitrarily conferred, but which each man for himself must earn. Of true greatness, it may be averred that none can be born to it, none can have it thrust upon them,

that he who would possess it must achieve it. The babe may bear an ancient name which time has rendered venerable, around which are clustered the associations of great deeds done in the old time when it first became historical, and which has gathered accumulated fame from the successive generations that have borne it. But though at the very day and hour of birth such a name and lineage may shed some glory on the child who inherits them, this, after all, is but a borrowed lustre; and if he can claim no more than this when life's course is run, his is but a worthless honour. Even in this world's annals of greatness, none can be included amongst the illustrious dead save those who have earned renown by noble deeds. The poet's, philosopher's, statesman's, warrior's fame, no fate or fortune can bestow. To the pinnacle of conventional rank the accident of birth may raise you, but would you gain a place amongst the few whom the world delights to honour, you must "climb the steep whence fame's proud temple shines afar." In this sense we can call no man happy before his death, for not till then can we know all that it was in him to accomplish. And when his work at length is done—when the grave closes over the wise, the brave, the true—over the wisdom that has grown ever riper with the years, or the genius that has been gaining fresh laurels to the last, or the heroism which no failure has ever tarnished, and which falls at last laden with a weight of accumulated

honours—surely in so far as the acquisition of true greatness is concerned, it must be pronounced that " the day of that man's death is better than the day of his birth."

And in the highest sense in which the words " a good name " can be understood, the same thing is true. Whatever the conditions of birth in a religious point of view, whatever the Christian privileges, the advantages of education, or church, or home, there is one blessing they can never confer upon us. There is one thing which, as a mere gift, no power on earth can bestow, which by no arbitrary act of favouritism could Heaven itself confer. Goodness, moral excellence, Christian perfection—that which these words denote is, according to the very conception of it, what cannot be given. It is not the boon of beneficence, but the result of effort. Through the struggles and self-denials, the long toils and sacrifices, the earnest, single-minded devotion of a Christian life, this prize by each Christian soul for itself must be won. There is indeed a love which we can never merit, a forgiving mercy which human effort has done nothing to gain, and yet which on us the undeserving, through Jesus Christ has been freely bestowed. Yet it is not the less true that God saves no man, confers heaven on no man, apart from the concurrence of his own will and energy. And, just as the social advantages to which a man is born do not of themselves ensure the attainment of great success in

life, nay, may rather, by contrast with inherent weakness, provoke contempt, or by the missing of the great opportunities which they present, brand the idle or worthless with a deeper disgrace; so, all that infinite love and mercy have done for us, all that inheritance to which, as born in Christ's church and baptized in Christ's name, we succeed, may, if neglected or squandered, only serve, by increasing our responsibility, to darken our doom. No, in the Church as in the world, in the roll of saintly as of earthly greatness, "a good name" must by earnest effort be won. And when it has been won, when, setting before himself a glorious ideal of excellence, a man through life with calm determination has pursued it, when baptized into the spirit of the cross, rising superior to the lures of ease or pleasure, the attractions of wealth, or the rarer charms of fame or power, that betray often the nobler natures to their ruin—he has yielded up his life to the happiness of others, to the world's good, to the true progress of humanity —when each year as it closes finds him riper in wisdom and richer in goodness—nay, when no day passes without adding some new deed of nobleness to the sum of life's services, some fresh touch to the growing beauty and completeness of a Christ-like life—when the last year, the last day of life finds him wiser, happier, better than all that went before, and into the garner of death the grand result of all the years is gathered—a nature true and tried, a fair and perfect soul—what mourner,

bending over the closing grave, even in the bitterness of irreparable bereavement, can refuse to say with the wise man, "The day of death is better than the day of one's birth?"

I remark, finally, that the day of a Christian's death is better than that of his birth, because, rightly viewed, his death-day is but a better birth-day. It is the day of his entrance with a nobler nature into a grander world. "Our birth," it has been said in well-known words,

> "is but a sleep and a forgetting;
> The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
> Hath elsewhere had its setting,
> And cometh from afar:
> Not in entire forgetfulness,
> And not in utter nakedness,
> But trailing clouds of glory do we come
> From God, who is our home."

But that which a poetical imagination sees in the infant's birth, the eye of faith and hope discerns more truly in the Christian's death. What, seen from one side of death, is the setting, from the other, is but the rising of the soul on a world more glorious far than this. Nor does it pass in forgetfulness or nakedness to Him who is its eternal home. He who has lived nobly, loses not in death any one of the best results of life. The treasures of learning with which years of study and thought have enriched the mind, the wisdom and experience gained by long converse with men and things, the ripe judgment, the cultured taste, the exquisite susceptibility to all that

is beautiful and noble in nature and life, the affections and sympathies expanding and deepening, growing in tenderness and purity to the last, above all, the high qualities that give dignity and greatness to man's moral nature—generosity, truthfulness, unselfishness, gentleness, humility, reverence, piety—nothing of all this is lost in the transition from time to eternity. Rich with all this accumulated spiritual wealth, does the soul enter on its new career. God has uses for it all. It is all precious to Him. He will not suffer one atom of it to be lost when He recalls the spirit to Himself.

The sentimentalist may sigh over the brevity and vanity of human existence, and speak of all that is great and noble in man and in human life as created only to become the prey of death. Struck by some instance of what we call untimely death, the premature extinction of some great and gifted mind, we are disposed sometimes to wonder at this strange squandering of what is so rare and invaluable. All this learning and experience, all this acuteness and polish of intellect, this slowly gathered wisdom, this ardour for truth and goodness, from which the world might so much have benefited—how sad and unaccountable that by one seemingly arbitrary stroke it should be destroyed! What mockery of human exertions that man should toil passionately and painfully for long years to gain that which, ere it has well begun to be used or enjoyed, is in one instant

wantonly swept away! But does not this so common moralising betray after all a miserable narrowness and impiety? Why should we talk as if our little world were co-extensive with the universe, as if there might not be other and grander spheres of effort, other and greater work to be done in regions and worlds unknown, to which our Father, when He has need of them, calls our best and bravest-hearted away? Important though the world's work may be, do we not greatly exaggerate when we speak as if in the measureless order of the universe, in the carrying on of the affairs and destinies of His boundless government, God might not have, for the highest minds, places of trust to be filled, plans and schemes to be developed, high and holy achievements to be performed, work to be done affording wider, grander scope for wisdom and energy and ardour, than this world's most momentous business and affairs? There is no waste of power when an able and gifted man is called from some obscure sphere to a position of dignity and responsibility. So, surely, there is no waste, no annihilation of what is most precious, no frustration of the long education of life, when, in the very midst of their years and their usefulness, God calls away the best and wisest of the sons of men to play their part on a wider, grander stage. The very fact that they are the best and wisest, may be the reason why they are earliest called. God cannot spare them longer from the greater destinies that await them. So,

not seldom "the good die young, while they whose hearts are dry as summer's dust, burn to the socket." And even the hour in which we mourn over their untimely fall, is that in which they have attained their grandest exaltation—while we talk of their sun as having gone down when it was yet day, already they have begun to shine as the stars for ever and ever. Death here is birth into immortality.

Compare, then, the two days spoken of, and say which is the "better." The day when a great and good man dies is like the day of his birth, that on which he enters on a new existence. But the first birth was in feebleness, and unconsciousness, and ignorance; the second is in the noble maturity of powers ripened by the discipline of years. The first was the birth of a nature possessed at best of the negative innocence and guilelessness of infancy; the second is that of a nature purified by trial, strong with the strength of conquest, attired in raiment that has been "washed and made white by the blood of the Lamb." The former birthday beheld a weeping child clinging in blind instinct to the mother's breast, the latter witnesses a redeemed and glorified spirit, enfolded, in the ineffable consciousness of love and life, in the everlasting arms. An earthly home and a little circle of earthly friends welcomed at the first the new entrant on life: the glorious society of heaven, angels and spirits of the just made perfect, hail

the coming of another brother born to immortality. The first birth was into a world whose beauty has been marred by sin and strife and care and crime; the second ushers the soul into the home of eternal purity—a world on which the faintest shadow of evil can never rest—the new heavens and earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. Who, then, if all this be so, can doubt that "the day of a man's death" may be "better than the day of his birth?"

X

Nature a Witness Against the Sinner

It often seems to us as if Nature preserved a strange indifference to the evil of which she is the constant witness. Her smiles and frowns are distributed impartially on the righteous and the wicked. She lends the aid of her laws to the vilest crimes as readily as to the holiest deeds. Her most bounteous gifts are bestowed on sinner and saint alike. Her sweetest influences are shed not more frequently on the path of purity and goodness than on that of ungodliness and vice. When some great crime has been committed, or when, as sometimes happens in the history of nations, society has become deeply corrupted, the restraints of morality and religion have been thrown off, and all purity and reverence lost in shameless licentiousness and impiety, the thoughtful observer has been tempted to exclaim, "Why sleeps the avenging justice of God—why do the heavens thus look on in calmness and silence, and the tranquil earth smiles in beauty—while such deeds are being done? Strange, if all this fair material order be the work of infinite goodness and righteousness, that no lightning-bolt leaps forth on the impious

head, or that the solid earth does not yawn beneath their feet and ingulf the perpetrator of such iniquity ! "

But Nature yields no response to such feelings. The outraged conscience looks in vain for any indication of sympathy from her moveless face, the cry for vengeance on oppression and wrong fails for one instant to disturb her awful apathy. She seems to take no note of what is done. The moment after crime the whole aspect and order of the visible world is just as it was before. The wronger of innocence retiring from the scene of his guilt, the murderer reeking with the blood of his victim, finds the material world as if unconscious of the deed. The summer sun is smiling, and the birds are singing, and the flowers are blooming still upon his path. The earth covers the slain, and the soft grass creeps gently over him, as if Nature would fain obliterate every trace of crime. Where a moment ago the hapless vessel sank, and the shrieks of the pirate's victims rose wildly to heaven, the returning waters come again, and the spot soon retains not one ripple to mark and register the wickedness of men. And all over the world in which we live we are constantly treading on ground that has been desecrated by human vices and crimes. Generation after generation has come and gone, each with its innumerable untold moral histories wrought out amidst the very scenes which now surround us. Yet the earth betrays no consciousness of the past.

Nature a Witness Against the Sinner

The hills and plains, the woods and meadows and streams, retain no records of the strange and terrible deeds they have witnessed. No echo of the innumerable impurities and blasphemies with which it has been burdened is borne to our ears on the silent air. No reflection of the sins and crimes it has beheld is mirrored on the bright and calm expanse of heaven.

Yet notwithstanding this apparent insensibility of Nature to the evil deeds of which it has been the theatre, the Scriptures frequently speak of it as if it were indeed no unwitting witness of the moral history of man. In the prophetical writings especially the Divine Being is often represented as appealing to the material world for a testimony against His intelligent creation. The lower elements and orders of Nature are summoned into court, so to speak, to bear witness to the sins and crimes of which they have been cognisant. "He shall call," it is said, "to the heaven from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people." (Psalm l. 4.) Again, in the opening words of the prophecy of Isaiah we read, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me!" And we have the same idea in many such passages as these: "Hear ye, O mountains, the Lord's controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth; for the Lord hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel." (Micah vi. 1.) "Gather unto me all

the elders of your tribes, that I may speak these words in their ears, and call heaven and earth to record against them." (Deut. xxxi. 28.)

What then, let us ask, is the import of this appeal? How shall we understand this conception? In what way may we conceive of Nature as endowed with a power of moral testimony, and the very inanimate world as rendered capable of bearing witness against erring and sinful man? The idea, of course, is a highly poetical one; but the profoundest truths, lessons of most sober practical wisdom, are often couched in an imaginative form. What then is the meaning of this personifying of Nature, this invocation of the heavens and earth, as if possessed of the power of moral observation? How can we conceive of the material world as becoming a witness against man? I shall endeavour to suggest one or two of many considerations on which we might conceive such an appeal to be grounded.

1. The material world may be summoned to bear witness against man, *as containing the scenes of his crimes*. Nature keeps a silent record of the sins of men in the associations connected with the places where those sins were committed. The silent power of witness-bearing that lurks in the very scenes and objects of material Nature, is one the force of which has not seldom been felt by guilty man. Bring the sinner to the scene of his past misdeeds, and he will sometimes feel as if the very inanimate objects around him were endowed

with a voice of reproachful reminiscence. For moral feelings and actions have, as we know, a strange power to fasten themselves to the scenes in which they have been called forth. A sanctity gathers, to the eye of every thoughtful observer, around the great or good man's home. The spot where some noble or heroic deed has been done is thenceforth sacred ground to all who can appreciate or sympathise with it; and, on the other hand, a horror broods over the scene of great crimes, and the spectator has felt his flesh creep and his blood run cold as he stood in the chamber or on the very spot where some horrid act of ruthlessness and infamy has been committed. And, if such be the power of local association over the mere spectator, much more potent must its influence be over the actors themselves. We all, perhaps, feel that there are places in this world which, hallowed by this invisible charm, are capable of rousing in us emotions which nowhere else we feel. It is no mere sentimentality, when we revisit the old home, the scene of many a happy hour in days bygone, when we enter the room or tread the garden walk or woodland path where, with dear friends now passed away from us, we often and often took sweet counsel, and where there comes upon us with a rush of tender recollections the irrepressible wish,

> "O for the touch of a vanished hand
> And the sound of a voice that is still!"

It is no mere sentimentality that compels us

to feel how impossible it is to repair to such spots as these without a throbbing pulse and a moistened eye. And, on the other hand, there may be places in this world on which some of us never wish to look again, because we could not revisit them without feeling as if the very walls of the room, or the silent hills and woods around us were looking on us with a stern, watchful eye of reproach, or as if an accusing voice were there summoning up before us, with humiliation and remorse, the shameful or guilty deed to which these scenes were once witness. On this principle, too, there is a certain grim propriety in the sentence that sometimes condemns the malefactor to be executed on the very spot where his crime was committed, that so he may face death with all the horror of recollection adding poignancy to his doom. Thus, from the operation of this principle, we may conceive the whole visible earth and heavens to become by degrees fraught with reminiscences, stamped with associations of blessing or cursing to mortal men, because of the holy or sinful deeds which they have witnessed. Nay, more than this, Nature is not only a treasure-house of moral associations, it has been maintained as beyond question that in consequence of a certain physical law, Nature becomes a receptacle of indelible material impressions from human actions, good or bad, and therefore, that these impressions will constitute, so long as Nature lasts, an imperishable register of goodness or of

guilt. "The mechanical philosophy," it has been said, "assures us that, on the principle of the equality of action and reaction, no motion impressed by human agency on Nature is ever obliterated, no sound which has once been uttered is or can be lost. The vibrations of the air which that utterance set in motion, continue in their effect to operate still, so that every sound or sentiment may be recoverable in the most distant ages.

No deed has ever been performed without leaving behind, in some part of the material universe, an indestructible witness of its perpetration. Had any one of all these words never been spoken, had any one of all these deeds never been done, certain impressions would have been wanting, which the material elements now contain. So that they constitute at this moment, to an eye capable of reading them, a minute and faithful record of all the eventful past." They present to the eye of Omniscience a vast book of remembrance, from whose unerring pages He can read forth the moral history of the human race and of each individual man who has ever lived. And surely it is no fanciful or extravagant conception to suppose that a day may come when all this vast repository of moral impressions shall be unsealed. On the great day of account, when before the eye of Infinite Justice the guilty soul shall stand trembling and aghast, may it not well be that there and then not only Conscience within, but

Nature without, shall be called to bear witness against man, and that the very material elements shall at last render up that record which they contain of his moral history? Might we not conceive the silent air around the sinner becoming vocal, and ringing in his horrified ears the echo of all the vain, or impure, or blasphemous words he has spoken; and the light of heaven reproducing, as in a mirror on the very face of the sky before him, the reflection of this or the other deed of iniquity and wrong which he would fain blot out from his sight and his memory for ever; and all Nature, from her every region, in heaven above and earth beneath, rendering up again as it were the buried spectres of his sins? If any such progress of material resurrection of the traces of bygone guilt be possible, would there not be contained in it a terrible explanation of that witness-bearing of Nature against sinful man of which the Scriptures speak?

2. Another way in which we may conceive of Nature as bearing witness against man is, *by its fulfilling, in contrast with man, the end of its existence.* The heavens and earth, by showing forth the glory of their Creator, bear a silent but impressive testimony against those of God's intelligent creatures who glorify Him not.

It is a very simple and obvious principle, that the worth of a thing is to be measured by the degree in which it answers the end of its existence. To possess many admirable qualities, to be useful

in promoting many other and inferior ends, does not save from condemnation that which, for the special end for which it was made, has proved a failure. A watch, to take a simple illustration, is constructed to indicate time. That end answered, you may desire that the watch you purchase should be elegant in form, of tasteful design and workmanship; but the first consideration is that it keep time accurately, and no elegance of shape or structure can compensate for inaccuracy or defective workmanship. And, suppose the watch you have bought be ever so beautiful in form and structure, yet if you discover that it is continually going wrong, and cannot be trusted, would you be content to retain it? No; it might satisfy a child, whose eye is caught by the mere glitter of the bauble; but pretty though it be—good, in other words, as a toy,—you condemn it, you throw it aside as worthless, you pronounce it a failure, because it answers not *the* end for which it was made. So, again, to take another case, you plant fruit-trees in your garden, or rear vines in your conservatory, with much care and cost, in order that you may gather from them the fruit in due season. Would you be satisfied, when the time for fruit-bearing came, if the vine only bore leaves, or the tree, at best, beautifully tinted blossoms? What would it matter that the plant pleased the eye, that it hung in festoons of exquisite gracefulness, that it filled the air with fragrance? All *that* would be well enough in plants or flowers

which you cultivate only for their beauty; but the sole end you had in view in all the pains and expense you have been at with *this* plant is, not that it should look fine or smell sweet, but that it should bear fruit; and if fruit you do not get, you regard all your labour as thrown away, and you condemn the tree as a failure, because it answers not the purpose of its existence.

And now consider how it stands between God and the creatures of His hand. The one great end for which all creatures exist is, as both reason and Scripture assure us, to serve and glorify God. Each creature, according to its nature, is intended to fulfil this end—matter and material organisations in a lower way, spirits, and spiritual, intelligent beings, in a higher and nobler way. By their admirable structure and arrangements, by their infinite variety and harmony, by the perfect adaptation of means to ends, by the constant and undeviating regularity and order which they exhibit in all their movements and processes and phenomena, the heavens and earth, and all orders of being in God's lower creation, yield an unconscious tribute of glory to their Creator. But man is capable of yielding to God a higher homage. The great Father of all desired, if we may so speak, a nobler obedience than that which is given unconsciously and involuntarily. He longed for minds that could know Him, and hearts that could love Him, for beings who could yield to Him, not blind submission, but free and filial obedience.

The glory of service rendered, not in mindless, passionless subjection to material force, but in intelligent recognition of the wisdom and justice of the law, and in loving devotion to Him who enacts it. This was, with reverence be it said, a glory which Nature could not yield to Him, and yet which God sought to gain ; and so He created man, a rational, loving, active, responsible being, endowed with a nature made in His own image, and capable of communion with His own infinite Mind. He gave to man powers capable of rising above all that is finite and temporal. A subtle mind, a restless heart, thoughts that wander through eternity, affections that nothing earthly can satisfy, aspirations that soar above the range of earthly ambition, a spirit capable of finding satisfaction and rest only in God Himself. In one word, the great, the supreme, end of man's being, that for which he was called into existence, and which gives to his existence its chief meaning and worth is, that he might "love the Lord his God with all his heart, and soul, and strength, and mind."

Taking this, then, as the criterion of man's worth or worthlessness, let us ask whether in all cases we find him answering the end of his being. The question is not whether we are living fair and reputable lives, whether we are possessed of many qualities that attract admiration and esteem, whether we are clever, amiable, accomplished, whether no exception can be taken to us in our

earthly and social relations. All this may be, all these inferior uses we may subserve, and yet the great and all-important end be left unanswered. The touchstone of our being is, Are we living for God? Do we feel that it is our daily thought how to please Him, our chief desire and delight to win His approval? Do we desire His favour more than all earthly good, and dread His frown more than all earthly ill? Can we declare that there is nothing that lies nearer to our hearts than to do the will of the All-Good, and that if put to the test, there is nothing we hold dear which we would not sacrifice—money, honour, ease, power, the very ties of love and home—at the call of duty to God? Alas! what answer can many of us make to such questions as these? With all our good qualities, our talents, attainments, social virtues, with much in us that is capable of winning the esteem and admiration of our fellow-men, is it not so that multitudes—perhaps the great majority—are living without the shadow or semblance of devotion to God? How many minds busy with a thousand studies, enquiries, contemplations, are never visited by one thought of Him for whom alone the power of thought exists! How many hearts, soft and gentle and loving, glowing with tender feelings or burning with impassioned desires, the seat of a thousand eager, restless, ardent emotions and affections, are blank of all love to Him for whom the very capacity to love was given! How many lives, blameless perhaps

to human observation, are spent so that it would cause no real diminution of enjoyment if there existed no God at all! And if this be so, what is it but to pronounce that, measured by the true standard of human excellence, such lives are a failure? What matter that they escape the censure of the world, that they possess even all that can win the world's admiration. Outward grace and beauty, intellectual ability, social attractiveness, integrity, natural amiability—these are all qualities that adorn and ennoble man's life, but they are not *the* quality for which life was given, and they cannot atone for the lack of it. Let an earthly father behold his child adorned with all such excellences, would he be satisfied if yet he knew that that child's heart was cold and hard to him? And can it be otherwise with the Father of spirits? He constructed with exquisite skill the mechanism of man's being, that it might ever go true to him—keep time and harmony with the movements of the sun of Truth and Love: of what avail the external grace and symmetry of the machine, if as to this its main use and purpose it is made in vain? He created man's nature as a "noble vine, wholly a right seed," that it might bring forth the fruit of holy love and purity, and devotion to His will; what matter that it puts forth the clustering leaves and fair blossoms of a mere social virtue, if year after year as the vintage time returns He comes, the great Lord of the Vineyard, and finds upon it no

fruit? Surely all such surface excellences will not save it from condemnation as a failure, inasmuch as it has not answered the great end of its existence.

Now it is this thought which the Scriptures suggest when they represent the Almighty Creator as summoning the lower orders of being to bear witness against man. For His glory were both Nature and man created. Nature answers that end; man, alas! but too often does not. To show forth the glory of His power and wisdom and goodness, the heavens and earth were made; and there is not one star that shines, nor one flower that blooms, that is not rendering up its unconscious tribute of glory to Him who made it. Earth and sea and skies, mountain and forest and stream, the round ocean and the living air, the stormy wind and the swelling tide, nay, every ray of light, every whisper of the vagrant breeze, every rippling wave upon the measureless surface of the sea—all material agents, from the mightiest to the most minute—blend with unconscious utterance in the universal anthem of creation—Glory! glory in the highest to Him who made us all! And when amidst a world thus resonant with His praise, God looks down on the cold, unloving heart and godless life of man, need we wonder that He appeals to these His lower creatures, for a witness against him? "O can it be"—may we not almost hear the great Father exclaim?—"can it be that thou, my child, art silent whilst even

inanimate Nature is vocal with my praise? I look to the heavens for glory, and they give it, for 'the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth his handiwork.' I look to the earth for glory, and it gives it, for 'the whole earth is full of my glory.' I look to man, the child of my love, made in mine image, redeemed by the blood of my dear Son, for glory, and he gives it not. 'Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me!'"

3. The heavens and earth may be appealed to by the Divine Judge as *affording proof of the unerring certainty and strictness of His laws.* The order of God's government in the natural world is a type of the order of His moral government. As there is no arbitrariness, no uncertainty, no deviation, by one slightest exception, from the fixed and uniform operation of law in the material world, so, we are taught, there will be no exception to the uniformity and exactitude of those higher laws to which all moral beings are subjected. Against all, therefore, who transgress or are disposed to tamper with the strictness of moral laws—an appeal lies to those natural laws the strictness and uniformity of which no man can dispute, and which all men know it to be madness to tamper with.

In so far as their operation is known, the laws of material nature regulate the conduct of men. All men believe, and act as if they believed, that

the sun will continue to rise and set, and the seasons in regular sequence to return; that the seed sown in the earth will produce fruit after its kind, that the tides will continue to ebb and flow, that water will drown, and fire burn, and food sustain, and poison destroy life, according to laws which admit of no infringement, of no alteration, of no exception. To act as if the laws of vegetation, of light, heat, electricity, mechanical and chemical combination and solution might perhaps in one case not be so strict as usual, would be the act of a madman. A revolt against the law of gravitation is not conceivable within the bounds of sanity. No man ever imagines that if he built a house with walls off the plumb, gravitation might for once make an exception to its uniformity, and the fabric be preserved from ruin. No engineer constructs his steam-boiler of slighter thickness than his calculations tell him will be necessary to resist a given pressure, in the insane hope that possibly in this instance the thin plates may not burst, and the dreadful catastrophe may be averted. In short, wherever Nature's laws are known, we act, all of us, on the belief in their constancy and invariableness. No temptation ever shakes our conviction that, down to the minutest shade of exactitude, they will infallibly in given circumstances work out fixed results.

But do all men believe, or act as if they believed, that the moral laws by which the universe is regulated are characterised by the same unvarying

certainty? Do all men act on the conviction that it is as likely that a stone should fall *upwards*, as that a sin should go unpunished, that the sun should to-morrow or on some future day rise in the West, as that the favour of God should ever shine upon a soul that has lived in selfishness and sin? Does the conduct of all sane persons prove that they deem it as incredible that the human frame should be sustained without food, or that harvests should be gathered where no seed has been sown, or that tares should yield wheat or that flowers should bloom on ice, or on hard and soilless rock, as that without a holy life here it is possible to attain to eternal happiness hereafter? It is quite clear that no such conviction of the uniformity and inexorableness of moral laws, and of the certainty of their results, has lodged itself in the minds of many. The sequence between cause and effect which all men believe, and on the belief in which all men act in the natural world, they show that they regard as much less infallible in the moral: and whilst they plough, and sow, and reap, prepare food, build houses, sail in ships, observe in science, construct in art, on the principle that material sequences will never, by the faintest appreciable variation, be altered—yet they speak and act, live careless, easy, irreligious lives, gratify their passions, resist the demands of duty, act, in short, in a thousand ways on the obvious persuasion that there is no such inevitable certainty in the sequence between holiness and

happiness, between sin, and misery, and death.

Now the appeal to Nature, of which I have spoken, may be said to be grounded on the supposition that there is no difference in point of certainty betwixt moral and physical laws. When it is said, for instance, that the Almighty "shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people," may we not interpret this invocation as implying that the results of moral acts are as inevitable as those which depend on material causes? Heaven and earth, the whole order of physical nature, may be called to witness that God's moral laws shall not with impunity be transgressed; that selfishness or goodness, sensuality or purity, malice or benignity, pride or humility, ungodliness or piety, shall work out results as sure and invariable as those which obtain in every experiment of the chemist, in every process of the husbandman. . . . . .

It is true, indeed, that moral laws do not work with the same rapidity as material laws. In many cases the consequences of physical acts—acts of obedience or disobedience to natural laws—are all but immediate. Thrust your hand into the fire, and the smart of burning, which is the penalty of the reckless act, comes in a moment. Fling yourself from the toppling cliff, and on the maimed limb, or crushed and lifeless body, gravitation instantly avenges the transgression. Inhale the deadly vapour, or swallow one grain of the

poisonous acid, and with incalculable rapidity the fatal result succeeds. Sow bad seed, or on ill-cultivated ground, and a few revolving weeks bring on the inevitable consequences. If the sequence of cause and effect were equally rapid in the moral world, unbelief would in this case be equally impossible. Disobedience to moral laws would be as inconsistent with sanity as disobedience to natural laws. If every act of sin were followed by an immediate penalty—if, for in instance, the hand that had just committed the ruthless act were instantly stricken palsied by the side—if the tongue of the blasphemer were struck dumb the moment after the impious word had crossed the lip—if the eye that had just darted the angry or lascivious glance, glazed over on the spot with incurable blindness—if dishonesty stole the hue of health from the cheek, and premature age blanched instantaneously the traitor's head—if the remorse that sometimes attends a course of guilt, instead of coming after a long interval or settling down on the spirit at the close of life in gradually darkening, deepening horror, were the immediate and universal consequence of sin—if, in short, moral penalties trode on the heels of transgression swift as material results on their causes—then would disbelief and disobedience be as much precluded in the one case as in the other.

But this distinction does not affect the appeal before us. The difference is only a difference in

time. Nemesis, though slow, is not less sure of coming. Moral retribution ripens gradually but not less certainly than the seed which the sower casts into the earth. The virus of evil may operate only after a longer interval, but the deadly result is as inevitable as when the poison works in the veins. The descent to ruin may not be so rapidly accomplished as when the wild leap is taken over the fatal brink; but there is a moral gravitation that hurries the impenitent soul to a destruction which is as inevitable, though longer delayed:—nay, even more inevitable. For material laws, though never changed, are not, like moral laws, essentially unchangeable. Gravitation may cease to act, but justice and righteousness and truth shall endure for ever. The material system in which we live may one day be subverted, but not the will of Omnipotence could change the essence of a moral act. "The world may pass away, but he that doeth the will of the Father abideth for ever." Therefore does all nature respond to the summons when called to bear witness by its uniform and changeless order to an order that is more constant still. And every circling orb fulfilling its appointed course, and every returning season that revisits the earth, and every swelling tide and rushing stream, and every ray of light, and every springing blade, and every falling stone—nay, every vagary of each wandering wind, and every capricious motion of each vapoury cloud that appeareth for a little

while and then vanisheth away, all in the constancy of their obedience to inexorable laws respond with one consent to the summons when, in testimony of the unchangeable fixedness of the order of His moral government, the Judge of all the world "shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people."

To the principle on which we have been insisting, the invariable and uniform operation of moral laws, an objection may be urged, to which, in conclusion, I shall offer a brief reply. If this principle be true, where, it may be asked, is there any place for the redemption that is in Christ Jesus? Every moral act, it is averred, shall infallibly work out its retributive effects; how, then, can it be maintained that Christ redeems us from the consequences of transgression? If no sinful act can go unpunished, can it be any longer averred that Christ saves us from sin and from all its fatal results? Must we not give up either our belief in the unchangeableness of moral law, or our faith in Christ?

I answer, No; we are reduced to no such alternative. The law that connects sin and punishment, transgression of moral law and its penal consequences, is not abrogated though every sinner who believes in Jesus Christ shall be saved. For it must be considered that it does not imply the abrogation or suspension of one law, when another and higher law interferes with or modifies its results. By the law of gravitation a stone

falls to the ground; but that law is not abrogated, or altered, or infringed, when the interposition of my hand prevents the stone from falling. It is only that the lower law is modified by the higher law of muscular action; nor, again, is there any subversion of the laws of winds and tides, according to which a boat would be swept down by the rushing stream, or by the force of the wind, if the power of steam introduced into the vessel enable it to beat up steadily against wind and tide. In this case it is, as in the former, only a higher law that is modifying the operation of a lower, and the result is the combined effect of both. Or, once more, the chemical laws of nature acting on a lifeless body would disintegrate and decompose it; it does not imply the subversion of these when the principle of life knits together indissolubly flesh and bone, and sinew and muscle. Here, again, the two laws are both acting, are alike constant and invariable, yet the lower is modified by the higher.

In like manner the moral laws according to which unrepented sin inevitably issues in wretchedness and ruin, are not subverted, when he that repents and believes in Christ is saved from all the effects of sin. It is only that the lower law of moral retribution is modified by the higher law of love and mercy and purifying power in the Redeemer of the world. There is proclaimed through Him pardon to the guiltiest, purity to the vilest, peace to the wretchedest, eternal life to

those who are dead in trespasses and sins. Accept the interposition of His outstretched hand who is omnipotent to save, and the gravitation of sin will be arrested, and the soul that is being borne down with ever-accelerated velocity to perdition will be stopped on its fatal career. Open your heart to the mighty internal force of his love and grace, and though the winds of passion, the strong tides of evil habit, the overmastering current of temptation, be beating you down, by the help of that divine energy you will beat them back. Receive the vital spark of heavenly life into your soul, and though moral corruption have set in, and the whole moral nature, rendered foul and loathsome by the ravages of sin, seems beyond the possibility of recovery, that divine power will restore it. He who stood by Lazarus' grave of old, hastes ever at the cry for help to stand by the deeper, darker grave of moral decay; and still as ever there is restoring virtue in the Voice which declared "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

XI

The Madness of St. Paul

It is not difficult to account for the conduct of the Roman governor when he accused the Christian Apostle of extravagance or madness. From Festus' point of view the words and actions of St. Paul seemed to admit of no other explanation. For if ever two men existed alien from each other in spirit and character, acting from motives reciprocally unintelligible and irreconcilable, it was here. On the one hand there was the cold, sagacious, sceptical, self-interested worldling; on the other the lofty-minded, impassioned, and self-devoted religious enthusiast. In the Roman procurator we have one who probably reflected the tone of polite scepticism, characteristic of his class and age—the hard, passionless incredulity, or at best the contemptuous toleration of one to whom the pursuit of truth was but the play of intellectual idleness, and religion an instrument of state policy to be used and despised in all countries alike. In the Christian Apostle we have one to whom his faith in truth and God was all in all—a man of strong religious convictions, whose every word and act breathed the intensity of his belief, and who was ready to dare and suffer everything in

its defence. Here sat the man of the world, the time-serving hack government official, living only for preferment, to whom this world's good things —money, advancement, power, pleasure, luxury —were the sole ends of existence, and who knew not, or rather scorned as the dream of fools the notion of any other world than this: and over against him, calm in the strength of a heavenly hope, the man to whom this world was nothing, who had sacrificed all that renders life dear to most men, and was ready to surrender life itself in the assured expectation of another and nobler life beyond the grave. How *could* such an one as Festus understand a man like Paul? What common measure was there by which the one mind could interpret the expressions of the other? Compelled by his official duty to take notice of him, to observe him and listen to his words, we may imagine Festus for a little amazed or puzzled by the enigma which the man's conduct and bearing involved, and at length when some words more outrageous than the rest fell from the Apostle's lip, making up his mind that the man was mad. A man, he thought, probably, of natural intellectual vigour and force of character —for his whole tone and bearing indicate that— but who has permitted himself to pore over old Jewish records, till his brain has been heated by some mystical visions, some contemptible vaticinations of Hebrew superstition. The healthy balance between imagination and sense, the world

of thoughts, fancies, speculations, and the world of material realities, has been disturbed, and this clever man, of whom better things might have been made, has become a morbid dreamer and enthusiast—" Paul, thou art beside thyself, much learning doth make thee mad."

Great wit is, proverbially, to madness near allied, and in appearance, if not in reality, the same thing is true of great piety or moral earnestness. To an observer who has not the key to his mode of action, the conduct of a man whose views, motives, principles are greatly elevated above his own, will often seem to be that of a dreamer, an enthusiast, a hare-brained fool. As the motions of the heavenly bodies are to the eye of ignorance but a mazy, inexplicable dance, capricious as the whirlings of leaves in the blast, or of insects in the summer air, though to the scientific observer all are reducible to laws fixed, regular, invariable; so to the careless, worldly mind, destitute of spiritual sympathy and insight, the movements of the spiritual life, the path and orbit of those who are living for God and eternity, seem often little better than the wildest aberrations, the most fitful vagaries of unreason or madness. Nor is it difficult to trace in many points between intense religious earnestness such as St. Paul exhibited, and madness, a superficial resemblance sufficient to give colour to the charge of Festus.

The madman, for instance, *is very frequently a man of one idea*. Some one oppressive thought

has taken possession of the brain. Some object of eager pursuit, some one dire and dreaded evil, some scheme or invention, some notion or conception too subtle or exciting for the mental capacity of the thinker has been dwelt upon, brooded over, has absorbed day after day, and hour after hour, to the exclusion of all besides, the whole spiritual energies, till it has at last crushed or overset them by its continuous pressure. And when reason totters or falls, still in its ruins it will cling to the old familiar thought. Visit the poor victim of an overburdened mind, and you will find the brain still busy and the lip still babbling with strange persistence on the one unvarying theme; and however with well-meant kindness you attempt to divert the thoughts to other topics, back again speedily by a diseased perversity of association they fly to that which wrought the mind's ruin. Now, it is no indistinct analogy which can be discerned betwixt this aspect of the disordered mind and that which to a superficial and unsympathising observer would be presented by such a mind as Paul's. St. Paul was pre-eminently a man of one idea. His whole life of thought and action was but a comment on his own words: "This one thing I do." Whoever came into contact with him, his discourse ever turned to the one topic that was continually uppermost in his mind—Christ and Him crucified. All the wisdom and philosophy of the world were foolishness to him. He ignored them, refused to

let his mind dwell upon them, counted them all but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord. He would speak and think of nothing else. This thought ruled his actions by day, coloured his very dreams by night. Nobody could be with him for ever so brief an interview, but it was sure to be introduced. What wonder that to men altogether out of the plane of such ideas—to the worldly, the sensual, the selfish ; to the Jew, who hated, or the heathen who supremely contemned, this absorbing subject of his contemplations—the readiest solution of such unparalleled absorption of mind was that the man was mad.

Another aspect of insanity to which religious earnestness might seem to be allied, is that its victim *dwells in an unreal world*. Often when reason has lost its sway, the illusions of mental disease deprive it of half its terribleness. The sober matter-of-fact world vanishes from the sight, and fancy conjures up out of the most unlikely materials a world of visionary brightness and splendour. The veriest beggar will enact the prince, the poor wretch beholden to the hand of charity for support will strut about arrayed in tinsel and finery. Rags become purple robes, bare walls a palace, and twisted straws a crown. Or the lonely and friendless man, whose very bereavements perhaps have unhinged his mind, will regain in the world of unreason the happiness which in the real world he has lost—begin to talk

of departed joys as still present, of friends and companions long gone as living still, accost the merest strangers by the old familiar names, and please himself by transforming them into loved ones whose faces he shall never see again. And what but this, or a not remote semblance of this mental condition, would be presented to the eye of the world by a character such as Paul's. He too seemed to live in a world of illusions. He was heard to declare that he looked not to things that were seen, but to the things that were unseen. The visible and temporal world—its hills and plains and fields, its cities and towns, its wealth and honour and greatness—was but a world of phantoms and shadows to him, whilst he gazed seemingly with rapt eye on a world invisible and eternal. Poor, he was heard to speak of himself as making many rich, having nothing, as possessing all things. A miserable tent-maker, familiar with gaols and stripes and the experiences of a vagabond life, he babbled of himself, and such as he, as the only free men upon earth; as possessed of the glorious liberty of sons of God, as kings and priests unto God and His anointed. And though to common eye he was but a homeless, friendless wanderer, the companion at best of the very dregs and offscourings of the earth, he seemed to be ever fancying himself surrounded by a glorious fellowship of unseen yet loving friends, dwelling in the midst of an innumerable company of angels and spirits of just men made

perfect, and in the sweet society of Jesus of Nazareth, whom every one knew to have been years ago crucified at Jerusalem. Of such a fantastic despiser of realities, of such an unpractical dreamer, what so natural for the world to conclude as that he was "beside himself?"

It is a further extension of the same thought, that the man of intense religious earnestness may to the eye of the world appear to resemble the madman, in his being *scared by fanciful, and rushing recklessly on real dangers.* He is the sport of fancies, trembling at the rustling of a leaf or the sound of the harmless wind, shaping the viewless air into spectres of horror, rushing madly from the presence of the imaginary assassin, and conjuring out of the most innocuous objects causes of danger and destruction. And yet, on the other hand, the madman will not seldom be reckless of real dangers, climb heedless of peril the giddy height, dance on the brink of the precipice, or play with firearms and destructive implements—sporting thus in a thousand ways with life, whilst the sober spectator is filled with horror and dismay. And somewhat similar, doubtless, would be the impression left on the unbelieving observer's mind by such a career as Paul's. What seemed unreal terrors were ever before his eye; by invisible enemies did he act and talk as if he fancied himself beset;—wrestling, not with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers of darkness; flying as if he heard the howl of the

wild beast, from some terrible imaginary foe "seeking whom he would devour." And, on the other hand, equally heedless did he seem of real dangers. He was a man reckless of life. Dreaming of some unknown future joys, he seemed to be insensible to stripes and imprisonments and torture; and, gazing with rapt eye on things unseen by others, he treated those injuries and disasters from which other men would have recoiled in dismay, and under which his own weak frame was wasting away, as "light affliction, but for a moment." Amidst the horrors of shipwreck on the deck of the reeling, crazy vessel, when experienced and practical men saw nothing but imminent destruction, he seemed strangely calm and unconscious of danger. And often when, by a slight sacrifice of foolish scruples, he might have turned aside from peril, he rushed with foolhardiness into the very jaws of death. What could sober practical men think of all this, but that his conduct was no longer under the restraints of reason—that the man was mad.

Such, then, was the accusation—an accusation not, as we have seen, without a colour of plausibility. In his answer St. Paul simply denies the charge, and avers that his words and actions were those of "truth and soberness." "Whether we be beside ourselves," said he, on another occasion, "it is to God." If there was madness in his conduct it was a divine madness, madness with a method in it, inspired insanity. If he had got

off the world's centre it was because he had become attached to a new and higher one. If he ceased to regulate his actions by its standard, it was because they had become amenable to an infinitely loftier one. His career was not wayward, methodless, ungoverned, now any more than formerly, only the governing power or principle was unseen and unintelligible to common men. Suppose a steam-vessel were to approach for the first time the shores of some land where the application of this agent to the propelling of ships was unknown, as it sailed along, or changed its course, and swept rapidly hither and thither, its varied movements would seem to the ignorant gazers from the land utterly unaccountable—they would be filled with amazement, and if very ignorant or superstitious, ascribe the movements of the vessel perhaps to the agency of magic or of supernatural powers. Or if one of the planets of our system should suddenly be disconnected from its relation to our sun, and begin by some more potent attraction than gravitation to revolve around some new and undiscovered orb; its new movements, to observers ignorant of their cause, would perhaps appear as the wildest vagaries; it would seem to be undergoing some strange perturbations; lawlessness, disorder, anarchy, would appear to be introduced where formerly all had been subjected to the absolute and unvarying dominion of law. And yet in both these cases there would be no real arbitrariness, and the

charge of arbitrariness would arise simply from the spectator's ignorance of the new power or influence at work. Explain to him the application of steam to machinery, point the telescope to the new orb, and all would become clear.

Now, so it was in the case before us. To the cold and unspiritual contemner of an intensely earnest religious nature it might with emphasis be answered:

> "All anarchy is art unknown to thee;
> All chance, direction which thou canst not see;
> All discord, harmony not understood."

To those who knew of no higher than earthly motives, whose only principles of action were love of money, or pleasure, or fame, or power, or learning, he might well seem mad, whose conduct could be accounted for by none of these, who set them all at nought, who, with splendid talents, devoted them to the service of an obscure sect; with golden opportunities of fame, position, wealth, chose a lot of poverty, ignominy, and association with the wretched, the base-born, the abandoned; whose whole life, that might have been one of ease and pleasure, was one long pain, one continuous self-sacrifice. To easy, comfortable, prudent, worldly observers, what wonder that the path which such a man followed seemed the wildest eccentricity? For such observers knew nothing of that new-discovered power, that strange, sweet, irresistible affection which had

been kindled in the hearts of men, and which superseded all old motives and passions—the love of Christ. To men whose whole hearts bound them to the world, to whom this life, its beauty, and brightness, and joy constituted the whole universe, and all beyond it was a horror of thick darkness, who with all the desires and energies of an earthly and selfish nature gravitated to the world, what wonder that a life such as Paul's, cut off from all mere earthly attractions, dead to the world, and devoted to God in Christ Jesus, disrupted from *their* sphere and revolving round an invisible sun and centre of the soul, seemed to be eccentric, orderless, anarchical? But one little sentence, could they have comprehended its glorious import, would have explained it all:—one little sentence would have supplied the key to the enigma, read the heart of Paul's mystery, shed the luminous beauty of heavenly law over his unintelligible life; and that little sentence was: "The love of Christ constraineth us."

And as with Paul, so will it ever be with those in whose hearts this heavenly impulse acts. They will be in the world, but not of it—exceptions to its rules, unintelligible on its principles, acting with a sort of eccentricity in the eyes of its votaries. The world knoweth us not because it knew Him not who is our model, in whom and to whom we live. Even in the world's own sphere, men who act from higher secular motives, are often unintelligible and strange to those who act

from lower ones. The poet with his rapt thoughts, his flights of fancy, his glorious visions, his fine frenzies, looks half mad, at best an utterly unpractical dreamer, to many a plain and prudent man of trade or business. The scientific enthusiast, squandering health, ease, resources, in the ardent pursuit of knowledge, shutting himself out from the pleasures and amenities of life, scorning delights, and living laborious days—such an one's pleasures, aims, manner of life, are to the illiterate, the sensual, the indolent, utterly unintelligible. The cold, the unloving, the selfish, again, cannot understand the philanthropist, who abandons comfort, ease, home, to spend existence in prisons and lazar-houses. They may vaguely assent to his praise, perhaps; but a life so exceptional, so imprudent, a beneficence so Quixotic, is set down by them as a sort of fantastic modern knight-errantry, and they account for it by the notion that the man is not altogether sane.

But far above all such motives, far above all worldly ambitions, all natural philanthropy even, and therefore far more unintelligible to those who are out of its sphere, is the strange, unearthly, all-swaying motive of Christian love. Even earthly love, where it is pure and deep, is the most unpractical of motives. There is a certain strange unworldliness about it. Under its strong impulse, a man will oftentimes set ordinary motives at defiance. Take it in that form to which the name is commonly attached, and is it not a passion

which oftentimes, for a brief season at least, raises the most selfish, practical, unimaginative mortal out of himself and the sphere of his common motives? He rises for the time into a life poetic, where common principles cease to rule. He thinks not of selfish ease, of money-making, eating, drinking, worldly comforts; he becomes self-sacrificing for the nonce. And when this passion spends its force, and the man settles back into the dull round of common life, many a sober, prosaic, prudent, money-making citizen looks back from amidst the business of life on that brief dream of love, and, utterly out of sympathy with his former self, as he recalls himself, a foolish, hot-brained, hot-blooded youth, scorning money and business and all practical sobrieties of life, thinks, perhaps, of that passage in his history as at best a brief madness.

But there is, as I have said, a motive more unintelligible to the world, because more potent, comprehensive, all-constraining, all-superseding, than these. Let the love of God in Christ Jesus come in its power upon the soul, and it will absorb and conquer all besides. Where they conflict, it has mastered, it will master every other motive, and raise a man above their influence. It enters into the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, and conforms us to the spirit of his cross. And that spirit is of all others the most unworldly, the most unpractical, the widest apart from motives which the world can understand. It is superior to the

love of money, for it is the spirit of Him who, the Lord of heaven and earth, for our sakes became poor ;—to the love of fame and honour, for it is sympathy with Him who made Himself of no reputation, who was despised and rejected of men ; —to the love of ease, comfort, pleasure, for it is fellowship with Him whose life was one long sorrow, and whose dying couch was a cross ;—to the love of friends, for whosoever loveth father or mother more than Christ is not worthy of Him ;— to the love of life itself, for it reaches beyond the grave, aspires to an immortal inheritance, and when the hand relaxes from every earthly treasure, and the eye grows dim to every earthly attraction, only then, in what would seem the ruin of all earthly aims, attains the consummation of its desires. Assuredly if to be superior to earthly motives, governed by no earthly hope, living for no earthly end, be madness, the man in whose heart the love of Christ beats strong and true, is one who is " beside himself."

XII

The Reformation and its Lessons

THE value and importance of any great movement in human history seems to be determined by these two considerations, first, that all history is the record of a divine plan, the manifestation of a purpose or design for our race, in which each successive event has its definite place and influence; and, secondly, that through all history there is to be discerned a constant progression towards some higher state, an ever-advancing movement of humanity towards perfection. It is very obvious that our interest in any event, great or little, in civil or ecclesiastical history, will be greatly enhanced if we view it in the light which these two principles throw upon it. For, to take the first, the idea of a divine plan will make all the difference in the importance of any given event which there is between the disorderly wayward movements of a crowd, and the exact, systematic, well-conceived and executed movements of a disciplined army on the field, or in the progress of a well-organised campaign. In civil history, the Persian invasion, the Roman

conquests, the inroad of the Goths and other northern nations, breaking like successive waves of a rolling tide on the effete civilisation of Rome, the dissolution of the Roman Empire, the revival of letters, and the like events; in ecclesiastical history, the call of Abraham, the exodus of Israel from Egypt, the rise of the judicial and prophetic offices, the captivity, the decline and final extinction of the Jewish polity, and then the propagation of Christianity, the conversion of Constantine, the rise of the Papacy, the absorption of the barbarian races into the Church—on to that great crisis in the Church's history, the Reformation of the sixteenth century —obviously our interest in any of these great movements will be vivified if we regard it, not as one of a thousand isolated and disjointed incidents each of which might have occurred at any other time as well, but as playing a distinct and essential part in the great purpose for humanity which runs through all the ages. The Reformation, for instance, is not as a mere chance sound breaking upon the ear amidst a dissonance of voices, but it is a note clear and loud in a great choral harmony of which the universal history of man will be the completion; it is not a mere purposeless displacement of men and nations, but there belongs to it the peculiar interest with which we watch the procedure of a skilful player in a game of chess, in which each separate move, each new relative position of pawn or king or bishop or

knight, has a purpose and exerts a definite influence on the final issue of the game. In itself it may be interesting to read of that strange heaving of society, that disturbance of old relations, that breaking up of the smoothness of long-settled conventions, that swelling and tossing of the waters under the strong breath of new thought which characterized the religious movement of the sixteenth century; but its deeper interest, its true meaning and importance, will be lost to us if we view it in its isolated aspect, just as we look on one of the myriad waves that ruffle the wind-swept lake, and not rather as one definite sweep onwards of a great advancing tide, one out of many of those risings and impetuous onward rushings of the great billows which we have watched on the beach when the waters are making steadily and rapidly to the flood.

And this illustration suggests also the second principle which I have mentioned as lending interest to our view of any great event in history, viz., that in all history there is discernible not only a plan, but that plan one which involves a progress, a sure and gradual movement or march onwards to a glorious consummation. In knowledge, in purity, in happiness, the world has a splendid destiny before it, to which each successive event and epoch in history is helping us on. The life of the race, no more than the life of the individual, is a stationary thing, but is ever through successive stages—infancy, childhood,

youth, manhood—advancing to maturity;—with this difference, that whilst the life of the individual in this world reaches its zenith, its highest point of development, and then declines again into the second childhood of old age, the life of the race is one ever growing, never, in the long run, retrograding, and its glorious maturity is a point yet to be reached, from which it will still ever advance into new developments of knowledge and goodness and blessedness. In this the race of man differs from any of the lower races of animal life that are our fellow tenants of this earth. For these last have only a progress of individuals, not of races. Each individual in this world reaches its zenith, its highest term of life, through which it grows, developes, and declines, but the whole species does not grow. The bee built its cell thousands of years ago exactly as it does now in an English garden. The instinct of the swallow has guided its migrations with precisely the same accuracy since the first of its race took its first flight from the approach of winter to a summer clime;—and so universally. But reason, conscience, will, in man, are not, like instinct, fixed, but ever making new acquisitions of power, each generation handing down its gathered treasures to the next, and the latest ever becoming the heir of the intellectual and moral wealth of all the ages past. All that was great or good in the past is immortal, and lives in the deeper life of to-day; and all that God's Church is now, is but the promise of a

nobler Church of the future which the world will one day see. For ever

> "——thro' the ages one increasing purpose runs,
> And the thoughts of men are widen'd with the process of the suns."

It is true that, in one view of it, the Reformation of the sixteenth century, and other great crises in the history of the Church, do not present the appearance of progress or advance, but rather of the clearing away of corruptions from primitive truth, the removal of the accretions of falsehood and impurity that had gathered in the course of ages around the ancient fabric of the Church, and the reproducing again in its original beauty and nobleness of the Church of earlier days. In one aspect of his divine mission Christ came to restore, not to innovate; to fulfil the law, not to destroy it. Spurious admixtures and additions, Pharisaic glosses, traditions of the elders, tithings of mint and anise and cumin, minute and elaborate ceremonial observances which had become a grievous burden which men were no longer able to bear, —in one word, the casuistical sophistries that had distorted the simple letter of the law, the superstitious rites that had supplanted the piety of the heart and life—all this Christ came to sweep away, and to bring back the minds and hearts of men to the grand eternal law of love to God and man. And so in the case before us, what Luther, Zwingle, Knox, and the other Reformers did, was,

what that designation literally means, to re-form, or re-mould the Church into her older and better state of doctrine and worship. Their ideas of the sacredness and supremacy of the individual conscience, of the impossibility of any human priesthood or mediation between God and the sinful soul, of the absurdity of all penances and meritorious works and bought or borrowed goodness, of atonement through participation, not corporeally, but spiritually, in the one sacrifice of Christ, of religion as a thing developed from within the soul, and not to be manufactured from without by sacramental spells and ceremonial charms—these and the other ideas of the Reformers, on which we find them ever ringing the changes, were not new, were not fresh discoveries breaking upon the world like the discoveries of Kepler, or Galileo, or Newton, and increasing at one stroke incalculably the world's treasures of knowledge. They were not new stars breaking out on the spiritual firmament where before was nothing but blank space, they were only the old lights that had shone there for 1,500 years; and all that was done now was to bring them out from that eclipse under which for many ages they had been hidden from the common eye. In this point of view the Reformation was not an advance to new, but a going back to old ground; and, instead of illustrating that law of progression of which I have spoken, it would seem rather to indicate that for ages the race of man had been

spiritually retrograding, and was only now returning to the position from which it had receded.

Yet it was not so. In religion as little as in science is there any period in the past that can be regarded as the moral high-water mark, the time of the highest spring-tide of souls, from which they may have receded, but beyond which they can never hope again to rise. The history of the Church from the Apostolic age is not a record of corruptions and restorations, a recital of a weary succession of struggles, with varying success, to regain a lost level of purity and truth. The notion that found expression in the dream of successive ages—first a golden age, then a silvern, then one of brass, and the last one of iron, each as we descend deteriorating from that which went before—is an utterly false one. The reverse order is the true one. The iron or the brazen may be now, but humanity may find incitement and ardour in the hope, nay assurance, that the golden age of the world is ever ahead of us.

For whilst it is true that, as in the Reformation, there is often in the great movements of history a going back to former truth, a return to lost ground, it is yet a return which is virtually an advance. A river in its windings may often seem at the bend to be going back in the direction from which it has come, but though partially it does, yet at each successive winding it is further on in its course. There may seem, to a careless eye, when the tide

is rising, to be nothing but a ceaseless flux and reflux of waves, each advancing billow only recovering what the retiring wave had lost; but we know that all the while there is progress, and that in its recession each wave has retired only as a man recedes a few paces for a leap, to gain fresh impetus and heave itself higher up on the shore. Or, to take a case still more closely analogous, when one is ascending a steep hill by a zig-zag path, at each turn you come back in a direction contrary to your last, and so are just in one sense retracing your steps, but at the end of each retrogression you find yourself a stage higher than before, and with many returns you are rising nearer, ever nearer to the summit.

Now so is it in the history of the Church, and therefore of the race of man. There never in the spiritual history of man recurs a facsimile of the past. The Reformers might seem, even to themselves, to have no higher aim than to produce a simple copy of the unadulterated truth and fresh spiritual life of the primitive Church, but unconsciously to themselves the attempt must have failed, and the copy contained touches, lines, colouring in it which made it altogether a deeper and richer thing than the original. The truths which the Reformers preached might be a revival of the very truths which were the creed of the Apostolic age, but they were held with a firmer grasp because of the conflicts through which they had passed, and with a profounder realisation of

their meaning by contrast with errors and caricatures from which they had been rescued. The religious life of the reformed Churches might be a revival of the purity, the personal earnestness, the devotion, the godliness, the brotherly love of the infant Church, but it was as the piety of the aged Christian is a revival of the piety of the child —the same but different, alike in form and pattern, but of a texture richer, firmer far—both pure, but the former the purity of untried and unstained innocence, the latter the purity that has passed through many a fiery trial, been soiled and stained by many a fall, but has struggled through them all, and emerged at last from the strife with all its pristine loveliness, yet with a strength and consolidation which before it never knew. In one word, the Church at the Reformation went back in the direction from which it had come, to regain its lost faith and purity, but it was to find it at a higher level, nearer to the summit of the everlasting hills; her movement was a reflux of the retiring wave over the very space through which it had fallen, but it was to find herself, at the end of that reflux, higher up upon the eternal shore.

And as with those who have preceded us, so, we cannot doubt, it is with ourselves. As they held the truth of an antecedent age, so do we hold the truth of theirs. But as in their case so in ours, it is the same, but with a deeper meaning, a profounder spirit infused into it. The mind of

man did not stop just at the period when the Reformers of the sixteenth century passed from it. The wheels of human progress were not then arrested, so that in matters spiritual and ecclesiastical, any more than in matters secular, we are to stick for ever at the point which the Church then reached. Innumerable moral problems have risen for solution since their day, of which the Reformers never dreamt, and on which therefore their writings can throw no light. The social life of man has become infinitely more complicated, science has made vast advances; in philosophy, in art, in literature, the mind of modern society has received an incalculably wider culture, and on all quarters there are emerging a thousand questions, difficulties, discussions, in which religion is deeply implicated; and although to the solution of these the same fundamental principles of religious truth must be applied, yet obviously the result will be to develope meanings in them which could not possibly be contemplated by the men of that earlier day.

It would therefore be no true honouring of the Reformers to pin our faith to their teachings, to canonise them as the permanent masters of the Church, and to treat with blind deference their dogmas and creeds and confessions. Instead of true homage, this would be treachery to the very spirit of their lives; it would be to make new Popes and infallibilities out of the very men whose glory it was to have shaken

off the old, and to seat them in that chair of irresponsible supremacy over the conscience from which they had driven its former occupant, declaring that therein no mortal can sit. And just as in politics the true followers of the great Reformers of other days—of the men who set their seals to the great Charter, of the great statesmen of the Commonwealth or the Revolution—would not be those who determined to stick by Magna Charta or resolved not to budge one step beyond the Revolution settlement, but rather they who, going on in the same direction, were in modern times the authors of the Catholic Emancipation Bill, of the Reform Act, of the measures for the promotion of Free Trade; so in matters spiritual and ecclesiastical, the true successors of the Reformers of the sixteenth century are those who, imbibing their spirit, go on to apply their principles to the new and deeper life of the nineteenth, and instead of blindly adhering to, are ever seeking to reform the Reformation.

It is impossible on the present occasion to illustrate at length this view of our relation to the Reformers of the sixteenth century. I shall adduce but a single specimen of the deeper and truer interpretation of their principles to which the progress of events has led or is leading the Church of our day.

The Reformation, in one and perhaps the most important aspect of it, may be described as a revolt of the individual conscience against an

authoritative and impersonal religion. It was the long oppressed and enslaved spirit of man rising in insurrection against an unreal and degrading spiritual supremacy. Deep in the heart of man lies the conviction that its relation to God is a personal matter, that religion can never be deputed, that no created being can come between the soul and God, or relieve it from the awful burden of individual responsibility. A mind awakened to a sense of its spiritual wants can never find rest by devolving the care of the soul and the business of religion upon another—believing blindfold what another declares to be true, or doing what another declares to be right and good. I can no more believe by another man's faith than I can see with another man's eyes. In my deep sense of spiritual want, I can no more be satisfied by another man's creed than in bodily hunger and weakness I could be fed and strengthened by another man's food. Second-hand piety is as much a contradiction in terms as second-hand health, or happiness enjoyed by proxy.

Now the Reformation was virtually a revolt of this first instinct of the soul against a Church which presumed to satisfy man's religious needs by prescribing his faith, and authoritatively controlling his life. An authority arrogating to itself religious infallibility, and armed with the terrors of external power, demanded of him to believe only what it declared to be true, and do what it declared to be right and holy. And when,

submitting to this through long ages of intellectual and spiritual darkness, the mind of man began to awaken to thought and reflection, and the conscience to a sense of personal responsibility, a bitter feeling of indignity and wrong was engendered in earnest souls over Christendom, till at last, roused by some new and more flagrant insult, some monstrous demand on the mind's credulity, or assault upon the inward sense of right, the long pent-up spiritual force broke forth, and, through all ancient conventionalities, tore its way to liberty.

Now this great principle of the individuality of religion, is one which no lapse of time, no progress of society can ever subvert or alter. It is the principle of the Church in the nineteenth as it was of the reformed Churches in the sixteenth century. But though we must ever recur to it and hold by it, yielding all honour to the men by whose struggles and sacrifices it was extricated and realised, yet perhaps the course of events has gradually been leading us to infuse into this great principle a deeper meaning, and to hold it in a sense which at the first was not attached to it. For the individuality, the personal contact of the soul with religion, to which by degrees, from causes into which we cannot enter, importance was mainly attached, was an intellectual contact, the assent of the understanding to logical creeds and confessions. Religion no longer consisted in belonging to an outward Church, but it came to

be regarded but too much as the acceptance and profession of what was deemed a sound and orthodox creed. The free, flexible, glowing, unsystematic teaching of Scripture was digested by subtle and scholastic minds into long and elaborate confessions, catechisms, and articles of faith, assent to which was demanded as the condition of Church-fellowship. Intellectual harmony thus became the basis of communion, and difference of opinion an adequate reason for separation or ejection from the Church.

Now I believe that on this point, slowly indeed, but surely, the Church of our day has been reforming the Reformation. The conviction is gradually winning its way that too much stress has been laid on doctrinal accuracy, and that the relation of the individual soul to Christ—that to which He attaches chief importance, and therefore which in His Church should be the true badge of membership—is a relation not of the head but of the heart. The essence of religion, it has begun to be felt, is not orthodoxy, but piety—not that which a man can learn by a clear or clever understanding, but that which implies a loving and earnest heart. However valuable and important correct opinions in systematic theology may be, it is felt that that is quite separable from what makes a man a true Christian, that there may be the utmost intellectual accuracy where there is little or no piety, and the purest and most fervent piety where there is little intellectual accuracy.

The Bible not a Philosophy

If the truth as it is in Jesus were a philosophy, and the Bible a book of reasonings and notions, like a system of metaphysics, then would intellectual soundness of belief be everything, and the tie that connected the soul with Christ be the vigorous application of the critical and logical faculties of the mind to propositions and demonstrations. But it is not so. The Bible is no philosophy. Its glorious truths are to be apprehended not by the critical intellect but by the humble and loving heart. As a man may perceive and love music who knows nothing of thetheory and laws of sound or of harmony, or whose perception of that theory may be imperfect or erroneous; as a man may have the faculty to perceive and relish the loveliness of nature who cannot analyse and construct his emotions into a theory of beauty, so a man may know and delight in the things of God, whose theoretical knowledge of theology is of the slenderest or the most inaccurate. The consciousness of spiritual need, the shrinking of a contrite heart from sin, the longing for pardon and reconciliation to God, the contrition, the humility, the meek self-renunciation and self-surrender to Christ of an earnest heart—these constitute the soul that possesses them, be its intellectual or ratiocinative conclusions what they may, a true member of Christ's Church. There may be sympathy amongst the possessors of such qualities where there is little intellectual harmony.

Devout Christian men who from the natural diversity of intellect, from habit, education, training, may extract very different systematic views and interpretations from the letter of Scripture, may yet be thus most truly united to Christ, and so to each other as brethren in Him. The logic of the heart, in one word, may overleap the logic of the head; and as the all-embracing firmament overarches the mountains and seas that separate nations and countries from each other, so the all-comprehending spirit of love in Christ may breathe over, and bind into purest fellowship, men whom a thousand intellectual differences divide. And so, with the gradual admission of such views, there is growing up in the minds of all thoughtful men a spirit of larger and wider charity, a disposition to be less exacting and stringent in the demand for intellectual conformity, and a willingness to waive a thousand scruples of reason for the sake of one grain of Christian love. It is beginning to be regarded as the true mark of fidelity in a Church to her Great Head, not when she can strain at every gnat of so-called heresy, but when she can contrive to embrace within her pale the largest number of men who, whatever their diversities of mind, are on the way to heaven. The ideal of a Church platform which commends itself to all but bigots is that, not which presents the longest array of articles and points of belief drawn out with the most keen-eyed logical subtilty and minuteness, but that which under a

creed or confession of the simplest form—enunciating but those grand facts and verities of God, of Christ, of sin, of salvation, on which the great mass of Christians are agreed—can comprehend the largest range of opinions in the sympathies of a common faith and love.

Thus, after the lapse of ages, are we returning to the principles of the Reformation, but on a higher level, making individual relationship to Christ our first aim, but that a relationship the essence of which is in the heart. Thus are we doing what is better than any reviving of the past—anticipating the glorious Church of the future, the bright era to which all earnest souls are looking on, when truth shall be no longer a watchword of contention nor purity a ground of strife, when individualities shall only contribute to a deeper and richer concord—when as the many voices of a great host are gathered up into one grand choral harmony, we shall "lose our dividual selves to find our true selves in that distinctness where no division can be—in the Eternal I Am, the Everliving Word of whom all the elect, from the archangel before the throne to the poor wrestler with the Spirit until the breaking of the day, are but the fainter and still fainter echoes."

THE END.