







# THE GOSPEL IN THE TREES:

WITH

Pulpit Opinions on Common Things.

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BY

ALEXANDER CLARK.

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*For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again,  
and that the tender branch thereof will not cease.—Job xiv. 7.*

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In Fellowship of Home, Work, and Worship.

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TO

MY ONLY BROTHER,

WILLIAM McCALL CLARK,

A TEACHER,

THROUGH THE WAR, A SOLDIER,

AND NOW

THE ASSOCIATE EDITOR OF OUR SCHOOLDAY VISITOR,—

AND TO

EDWARD E. RINEHART,

THE CHORISTER OF THE FIRST METHODIST CHURCH, PITTSBURGH,

A FAITHFUL AND FRATERNAL FRIEND,

THIS VOLUME IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

BY THE AUTHOR.



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# INTRODUCTION.

BY THE REV. WILLIAM REEVES, D.D.,

President of the Pittsburgh Conference.



THE productions of the pulpit, when published, if not generally, have often, been unpopular. For this fact a reason must exist somewhere ; and surely it can not be found in the nature of the subjects : these are so overwhelmingly important that it would seem next to impossible that they should not, more or less, engross the attention of all men. The being, perfections, and character of God, together with his relations to mankind ; his revealed will ; his holy law ; his glorious Gospel ; the origin, apostacy, redemption, and final destiny of man,—are all subjects of such transcendent interest to every rational soul, that it is marvelous, indeed, that discourses on these grand truths should fail to secure attention. Besides :—see what an infinite variety of topics these all-absorbing subjects and facts of the Bible suggest ! And these are to be enforced by divine authority, exhibited in different points of light, and illustrated by the tropology of the universe ! The subject

matter of the ministers of the Gospel, is absolutely inexhaustible, and should always appear fresh and new. Why then should a sermon on Salvation, preached or printed, be either *dull* or *dry*?

Assuming that preachers who publish their opinions are *par excellent* with other authors in the requisite qualifications for their work, having such wide and fruitful fields from which to gather their golden productions, if they fail to interest the reading public, is not the fault in the manner of communication, rather than in the subject matter of the communication itself? This thought is penned in the face of the fact that multitudes of men and women have no relish for real religion. For people of all shades of religious sentiment will go to *hear* an able preacher. Thousands of speculative skeptics would be delighted to listen to the logical arguments of Asa Shinn, the entrancing eloquence of T. H. Stockton, the angelic sweetness and persuasion of a Summerfield, the fervent zeal of a Spurgeon, or the religious earnestness of a Brooks, or a Talmadge. Then why not *read* the sermons of earnest authors? True they are without the charms of the living voice; so with other publications. Doctrinal discussions, to be sure, however important, do not generally interest the masses of the people. And let us sanction it or censure it, as we may, still the fact remains. But experimental and practical Christianity, ought to be, and can be, made interesting to the human mind.

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True it is, however, that, with a large class of readers of the present age, light literature, and that of a fictitious character, is the chief commodity called for: these intellectual and religious dyspeptics are incapable of either relishing or digesting any solid or nurturing mental aliment. Still, there are multitudes living in the land, both in the Church and out of it, who are not hopelessly infected with this literary epidemic, who eagerly embrace every opportunity to profit by the productions of the press, even though they spring from the pulpit.

Here, then, is a publication for the people, with the modest title of "*The Gospel in the Trees: with Pulpit Opinions on Common Things*," the author of which was my pastor the first year of his regular ministry, in 1862, in New Brighton, Pennsylvania. It is both natural and proper, therefore, that I should notice the work by this word of Introduction, which duty I do with real and solid satisfaction and pleasure.

But to the book itself; and it speaks for itself. Gotten up in the finest of style, its external garniture is a suitable index to the internal goodness and grace it contains. Suffer me to pen a few particulars:—

And first, the author is unique in his treatment and applications of topics. The thoughts, caught from Nature, the Bible, the Times, and the People, are made his own; and new in figure and adornment is the drapery with which they are clothed. And this is always a

cause of usefulness and success. His manhood is firm and bold, though modest and mild ; and he dwells on the practical applications of divine truth to men's hearts and lives, rather than the discussion of theological theories and doctrinal distinctions and differences. He thinks and speaks, as one accountable alone to God ; and, urging all men to a recognition of their individuality, hints that the Bible and Christ are distinct and peculiar to every soul in the race.

Another feature on the face of this subject, is, the adaptation of these discourses to the demands of the day. It is not simply truth of any sort, however sacred it may be, and earnestly presented, that succeeds ; but truth which stands related to times and seasons. This is the most conclusive *argumentum ad hominem*—the irresistible logic of facts, and facts before the people's eyes. And this course is sanctioned by the Saviour, "who spake as never man spake." See his inimitable parables, the facts of which were borrowed from the common avocations and occurrences of every-day life. Every thing visible, tangible, and audible, was used to illustrate the Gospel and the duties and privileges of vital religion. In this course, then, our author aims to tread in the footsteps of the Great Teacher himself.

Again : the style of these sermons may be denominated *discursive description*. Mr. Clark is not a polemic ; he possesses no taste for speculative divinity ; I may say in truth he is not a scholastic sermonizer ; he is not at

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home in homiletics. But this he has—an instinctive sense of the beautiful. All nature to him is one great garden; his *forte* is floral, and in his view the Gospel has charms which ought to win every human soul to Christ.

The writer confesses the fact, that while he himself is the antipode of this—a tame, plodding *doctrinaire*—his mind admires, and his heart appreciates the beautiful visions brought to view in such discourses as these and others unpublished. Moreover, our author is free and out-spoken; pointed in reproof; strikes any where and every where at the popular sins of the day; so that there is strong sentiment as well as savory meat in his sermons. In this he is a true minister; in his Master's name he utters his message, fearless of the frowns, and regardless of the smiles, of his fellow men.

Also, it is observable that Mr. Clark makes frequent use of the *types and symbols* of the Scriptures—and paints his pictures from these divine models. Did not the ancient seers the same? Both the major and the minor prophets wrote and spoke as they were inspired, and according to the *visions* they beheld—whether of weal or woe. Isaiah, the great model and master prophet, commences thus:—“The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem,” etc. And Jeremiah, the weeping or pensive prophet, says:—“Moreover the word of the LORD came

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unto me saying, Jeremiah, what seest thou? And I said, I see a rod of an almond tree," etc. And the impetuous prophet Ezekiel, who at the command of God, smote with his hand, and stamped with his foot, and poured out divine denunciations like a flood; yet even to him—while "among the captives by the river of Chebar, the heavens were opened, and he saw visions of God." So also, and more, of Daniel, a man so highly favored of the Lord. And so with the minor prophets; but the time would fail me to speak of them all. Zechariah blended *vision* and *symbol*. See a splendid specimen in his fourth chapter, respecting the "golden candlestick," and the "two olive trees," etc. And all are familiar, not only with the logical reasoning of St. Paul, the eloquence of Apollos, the point of Peter, the practicalness of James, but the wonderful visions and symbols of St. John. Indeed, in him are blended both the polemic and the prophet—the defender of the faith, and the son of consolation. Why, then, should not modern preachers make good practical use of the types and symbols, or other figurative passages of Scripture, to illustrate and enforce the precious truths of the Gospel? For *anagoge* afforded some of the sharpest arrows in the quiver of the great apostle of the Gentiles.

A true teacher never descends to the infinitesimal resemblances between a figure and a fact. With him a figure never goes on "all-fours." He makes a good use of a trope, type, or symbol, and leaves it without loath-

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ing or alloy. And thus it is that his figures are always fresh and full of interest.

And not the symbolical and typical parts of the Bible alone, but our author treats of the topical also. And his selections on these subjects are among the most interesting which this wide field affords. For as the Horse is, by common consent, regarded as the noblest animal in all animated nature ; so the Tree is the prince in the vegetable kingdom. And as, from their associations, we read of the "Sacred Mountains," and the "Sacred Streams," are not the Trees of the Bible worthy of the same appellation, and for the same reason ? What high honor our Maker bestowed upon the "*Tree of Life*" in the midst of the garden of Eden ? And the first precept God gave to man in this trial life, was touching the *test* tree, "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." For the health and the salvation of the world were placed in connection with these two trees ! The inspired penmen, in the days of old, often used the tree as a type of a saint. And in that beautiful and expressive symbolic vision of the holy waters issuing from the temple, by Ezekiel—upon the bank on either side of the river, were those emblematic fruit-bearing, evergreen trees, whose very leaves were full of meaning and for medicine. And the blessed Saviour, in his inimitable Sermon on the Mount, in giving a test of the genuine Christian, and to expose the spurious, used the same similitude. When we look upon the stately trunk,

the spreading branches, the beautiful foliage, to say nothing of the delicious fruit, of some trees, is it any marvel that they should have sacred uses in the Scriptures? And others of an humbler growth, and not so imposing in appearance, may be still more fragrant and fruitful.

Moreover, different trees have their peculiar characteristics, in form, location, and habitudes : and in these respects they are used for the purposes of illustration and adornment, if not of enforcement also, respecting the Church. And in this practical application, Mr. Clark makes a happy use of them. In this part of the book, particularly, the "*Gospel in the Trees*," the author seems to have broken new ground. For, save a few seed thoughts scattered abroad in biblical dictionaries, and elementary works, as "*Brown on the Metaphors*," in all the range of Biblical literature, so far as I am aware, no author has trodden this field before.

The author of this book breathes a truly catholic spirit. With some, perhaps, his Christian liberality may seem excessive, if not bordering occasionally on the ground of heterodoxy. But let them not take alarm, if in the out-pouring of heart-feelings the denominational *shibboleth* be not as audibly and distinctly uttered as could be desired ; or if there should be an apparent lisp of a technical vowel or consonant, according to our creed, on some minor points ; yet if, in general, we hear the sweet voice of the language of Canaan, and

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never a single sentence in the dialect of Ashdod, let our fears subside. While *Christ* and his *cross* are the leading theme, and we are often conducted to the top of Pisgah, let us rejoice, and hope for happy results.

May I give the religious genealogy of our author? By birth and education a Presbyterian of the strictest school; and by adoption and life a Methodist of the republican order. From such a Calvinio-Arminian Christian, might we not reasonably look for safe and evangelical opinions? To speak in the language of Phrenology, from such prominent indications, may we not say that the orthodoxy of such a minister ought, at least, to be above suspicion? And from the same premises, from the blending of such religious natures, ought we not to expect a little *mixture* of theological thoughts? Being also freed from some sectarian shackles, should we marvel at the repeated rebukes of denominational bigotry observable in this book? Further, in the providence of God, this anti-sectarian spirit, so prominent in his religious youth, was probably strengthened, if not intensified, during the formation of his ministerial character. Mr. Clark's second field of labor, was the junior pastorate of the Church of the New Testament, in the city of Philadelphia, in connection with Thos. H. Stockton, D. D., a man of God, whose mind can not be fettered with denominational restrictions, and the restraints of bodies of divinity; but with the universal commission of the Saviour in his hand,

and the love of Jesus burning in his heart, he longs to embrace all mankind, and press them to his bosom. This world-wide sympathy for sinners, while it is not opposed to the doctrine of the Methodist Church, but in exact accordance with it, doubtless tended to establish our author in his course, which was already bordering on ultraism, and induced him to neglect the doctrinal due-guards, which are considered necessary to a proper security against the appearance of error. And then, as if to confirm him in his extra-liberal faith, he next accepted a call to the pastorate of Union Chapel, in Cincinnati, Ohio, at that time an independent Methodist congregation, under no Annual or General Conference authority, where he remained until appointed by his own Conference to his present charge in Pittsburgh. From these facts, a seeming fault may be the more readily excused.

I heartily recommend this volume to all classes of people, and hope it may have a ready sale, and be extensively circulated, as it deserves.

NEW BRIGHTON, PA., *Jan.* 27, 1868.

*N. B.* I have permission to announce that the author of this work has in preparation, to be published at some future time, if Providence permit, two companion volumes to the present,—the one entitled “*The Gospel in the Waters,*” the other “*The Gospel in the Mountains.*”

W R.

# THE GOSPEL IN THE TREES.



## I.

### THE APPLE TREE

*As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. CANT. ii. 3.*



HERE is seldom a more interesting sight than that of a large and spreading apple tree, dense in foliage and golden in fruit, standing in its perfection, outside the orchard, and offering its shade, and fragrance, and fruitage to the traveler weary of wandering beneath the hot sun. In the oriental lands such a scene has peculiar significance. The hungry stranger, seeing the inviting apples and the welcome shadow, hastens to the refreshment which awaits him, and rests, eats, gives thanks, and is strong.

The word apple grows from a root, which in the original signifies fragrance. The term is generic,

and authorities differ in regard to its precise application, some believing that it refers to the citron, others to the orange, and a few to the quince. The most reliable information, however, gives the word a meaning in accordance with its specific use by modern horticulturists, the designation of a fruit different and distinct from the three varieties just named. In the book of Joel, (i: 12), the apple is classified with the fig tree, the vine, the palm, and the pomegranate, as among the principal fruit-bearing trees of Palestine. Elsewhere in the Bible the apple is spoken of as a valuable and pleasant product; and it is employed to ornament some of the most beautiful imagery in the Scriptures, as, for example, in Proverbs, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver."

The poets of many lands and ages have sung the charming beauties of the apple tree, and none more sweetly than our own Christian American, William Cullen Bryant:—

Come, let us plant the apple tree!  
Cleave the tough greensward with the spade;  
Wide let its hollow bed be made;  
There gently lay the roots, and there  
Sift the dark mold with kindly care,

And press it o'er them tenderly.  
As round the sleeping infant's feet  
We softly fold the cradle-sheet :  
So plant we the apple tree.

What plant we in the apple tree?  
Buds, which the breath of summer days  
Shall lengthen into leafy sprays ;  
Boughs, where the thrush with crimson breast,  
Shall haunt and sing and hide her nest.

We plant upon the sunny lea  
A shadow for the noontide hour,  
A shelter from the summer shower,  
When we plant the apple tree.

What plant we in the apple tree?  
Sweets for a hundred flowery springs,  
To load the May wind's restless wings,  
When, from the orchard row, he pours  
Its fragrance through our open doors ;  
A world of blossoms for the bee ;  
Flowers for the sick girl's silent room ;  
For the glad infant, sprigs of bloom,  
We plant with the apple tree.

What plant we in the apple tree?  
Fruits that shall swell in sunny June,  
And redden in the August noon,  
And drop, as gentle airs come by  
-That fan the blue September sky ;  
While children, wild with noisy glee,  
Shall scent their fragrance as they pass,  
And search for them the tufted grass  
At the foot of the apple tree.

But the apple tree, like the other trees of the Bible, is illustrative of gospel truth, and may be

contemplated in its relation to the trees of the wood as an emblem of Christ in his relation to the people.

A tree in Paradise, standing among beautiful, fragrant, and fruitful trees, was made the test of man's obedience; but it became the occasion of his transgression; and Adam was driven, a sinner, without the gates.

But then a Tree in the outer wilderness was planted, the seed of an Eden promise, and although a long while appearing, in the fullness of time it sprang forth and grew as a root out of a dry ground, among deformed, obnoxious and barren trees, bearing in its branches a perfect cure for the disobedience of a banished race. As the first Adam ate the fruit of the forbidden tree, and thereby brought death into the world; so the second Adam bore in his own body, on the tree, the fruits of man's disobedience, thereby bringing life into the world: "For if by one man's offence death reigned by one, much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ."

Every thing that was lost in Adam shall be

regained in Christ for all the heirs of salvation. And as man fell by an exercise of his will, *choosing* the forbidden fruit; so is he restored, by an exercise of his will—by faith—*choosing* the proffered righteousness of Christ; for in all the plan of redemption, man's free agency is honored, because it is the crowning excellence of God's last and best creation. In the earthly Eden, we see the tree of life guarded; but in the heavenly Eden, we see the Tree of Life with saints having the right to partake of its fruits within the gates. The far separated ends of revelation at last unite. The Eden and the Patmos trees touch and blend their branches. Paradise is opened; sinners, redeemed, enter in; face answers to face; the beginning of the work of salvation answers to its end; and the Tree of Life bears its immortal fruits beside the crystal river which gladdens the city and garden of God.

Let us consider a few of the characteristics of the apple tree, taking it in its nature and relations as a type of Christ.

1. *The Apple Tree is a Tender Tree.* It requires the care of culturing hands to protect it against the roughness of accident, and the turbulence of the elements. The young apple tree, frail

and fragile as a plant in its stalk and branches, venturing from its clod to the open air and sunlight, comes into the range of storm; and the gardener's eye is over it long before it rises to the dignity of blossom-bearing. It has a helpless infancy, and must be trained up through scorching summers, bending storms, and pinching winters, before its fibers are matured sufficiently for autumn burdens of fruit.

So Christ appears, as a little child, tender and dependent, in Mary's arms. The infant Jesus is placed in the nurturing care of an earthly mother. God is manifest in the flesh, and assumes humanity in its lowest and weakest form, breathing his first breath in the chill dampness of a stable, and coming into the sphere of trial, and toil, and suffering, long before he reaches the age of manhood. He grows in wisdom and stature as any other human being, surrounded by the same alien atmosphere, and tempted in every point as other sons of men.

In lowly Bethlehem, a heavenly purpose becomes a tangible fact; in the poor shepherd's home village, humble and obscure, the King Almighty becomes a helpless babe. "God becomes his own interpreter, and translates his truth into a fact

which shall be tender and yet thrilling and powerful in all ages and in all lands." For the central theme of Christ's advent and reign is good will to men.

"As a tiny seed in the ground puts forth a stem which rises and spreads to a tree, with great boughs out-pointing in every direction, bearing leaves and blossoms, and fruits, and shades on every side; so the obscure birth of a little, tender babe, has influenced all history, sacred and secular, before and after, and become the exponent of the civilization of all nations."

"See how small room my infant Lord doth take,  
Whom all the world is not enough to hold!  
Who of his years or of his age hath told?  
Never such age so young; never a child so old!"

But see the child! Those tender little hands shall be torn. Those tiny feet shall walk a rough and thorny world, and be nailed to the tree. That blooming cheek shall be buffeted and spit upon. That radiant brow shall be crowned with thorns. That delicate flesh shall be mangled and bruised and broken. The tenderest heart that ever beat in any breast shall bear an unutterable grief. That fairest one among ten thousand shall thirst and be

mocked with vinegar, shall agonize, and bow his head, and bleed, and die!

We have the incidents of the Saviour's birth, of his ministry, and of his death; but the details of his youth are not written. Once, when he is about twelve years old, we have a glimpse of him in the temple, reasoning with the doctors; and yet, with mental strength to hold unanswering rabbis at bay, he moves in a body still watched and guarded by a mother; for, missing him from her side, she seeks him in maternal solicitude, apprehensive that accident might have befallen her absent child.

He passed through childhood to manhood in the home of Joseph, the carpenter of Nazareth, so like other young men in appearance, so modest and amiable in his life, that he was known as the pious mechanic's son, receiving the discipline of family training, and admired by all his neighbors for his filial obedience and industrious habits. Our Lord had a human body just like our own, save that it was healthful and perfect from infancy to maturity; and none the less so by reason of humble fare, and the physical exercise of daily work. Thus he taught, by his example, before his sacred ministry began, the gospel of human dignity and perfection

in lowly life and in honest toil. So educated, he acquired the wisdom and stature of a man, tender-hearted and gentle-worded, even though his hands were hard and his temples bronzed by out-door work. He was one of the common people, ready to rejoice with those who rejoiced, and to weep with those who wept. Tenderness was a distinguishing trait in his character, both as the Son of Man, and as the Son of God. In the full vigor of his perfected manhood, and in all the words and acts of his ministry as the anointed of Heaven, he was gentle, pitying, merciful, and kind. He never outgrew his sympathies. On his way, armed with Omnipotence to open the rocky grave of Lazarus, he spoke of him as his friend, and wept in brotherly affliction with the bereaved sisters of Bethany. The Builder of the Universe, and able to banish wrong and sorrow for ever from the remotest corner of his creation; yet, remembering man as a responsible moral agent, and looking down from Olivet to Jerusalem, he wept over the wicked city. On the very cross, upstretched, and bleeding at the cruel thrust of the Roman spear, surrounded by taunting enemies, he prayed, "Father, forgive them: they know not what they do." Looking for

the last time down to his mother, houseless and homeless as when she first looked down upon his infant form in the manger, he bespoke for her a friend in his beloved John. O was not Christ's a tender life?

And while Jesus grew in stature until he attained full maturity of form and feature, the grace and dignity and manner of a perfect man, so in his mind and heart there was development. His blessed faculties expanded; his divine knowledge increased; heavenly strength was communicated. There never was error to correct, for there never was any liability to sin. But there were the maturing and strengthening of all the faculties and forces of his life, just as in the case of any other youth in the human family. He assumed *our* humanity,—not a better. Gentleness, tenderness, and purity, the possibilities for every man to show through his entire life, with their accompanying graces of meekness, kindness, and love, by which his character was pervaded, were exhibited in all his looks, words, and actions as a child, as a mechanic, as a man, and as the world's Redeemer. His innate holiness, his entire conformity to the law and will of God, his undisturbed devotion, and

his serene outer life, made him pre-eminently a model for all who bear the image of God, and wear the habiliments of mortality. For tenderness of heart, and lovingness of life, Jesus is first and best of all! "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons of men."

2. *The Apple Tree is a Shadowy Tree.* Its spreading boughs are covered with foliage, and the wide-arching canopy of leaves is so low, and the shade so broad and cool, that the lightest breeze will fan a fragrance from the overhanging verdure to the face of the traveler resting beneath. There is a substantiality in the leaves, dense, close-textured and profuse, and a tenacity in clinging to the branches which make the shadows of the apple tree peculiarly grateful and refreshing. In the heat of the day there is no spot more inviting than the dark shade of an apple tree.

So Christ, in his perfect righteousness, having grown up sinless in thought, bountiful in word and work, and beautiful in life, through all the experiences of humanity from infancy to manhood, affords the shadow of protection and refreshment to his people. He shelters them from the wrath

of God which blazes down as scorching sun-fire from the firmament of eternal justice, from the curse of the broken law, and from the accusations of enlightened conscience. This figure of refuge for a weary soul is represented by at least three other emblems beside the apple tree, as if to intensify the thought until it become in every mind a blessed fact. In Isaiah, (xviii: 4,) soul recumbence by the way is likened to a cloud in harvest, high and wide-extending; but this emblem shows transientness, and is not complete. Then again it is presented as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land, dense, certain, and cool; but this figure indicates a one-sided shelter, and is not yet complete. Again it is typified in such words as these: "There shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat." This seems to include the close and local shadow-protection of a tree, the high and broad shadow-protection of a cloud, the intense and invigorating shadow-protection of a rock, as well as the complete and constant shadow-protection of the tabernacle itself. Thus Christ offers the weary soul ample, complete, and perpetual shelter from this sultry world; and beneath the shadow of this Divine Apple Tree, may every

perishing sinner come and sit down with delight! Here are refreshment, protection, and all the elements of accelerating strength, free as the air for all and forever!

There may be some poor weary heart, somewhere, which these words shall reach,—desolate, lonely, and tearfully anxious for some place in which to turn aside and rest. Do I address such an one? You are thus far advanced in life's journey toward the world unknown, struggling, perhaps, with a burden of sins and sorrows under the sun-lit sky of God's omniscience. You feel the weight, just now, and are sick and almost fainting under its pressure. It grows heavier every hour, and you have not found relief. You have sinned in the light of Heaven; and, unprotected as you are, you draw nothing from that light but piercing, penetrating beams of displeasure. You will perish—surely, speedily perish by the power of the light all reaching you—as consuming fire, unless you acknowledge your need of protection, and enter the circling shade of the Apple Tree growing in the wood. Come, come and sit down beneath His delightful shadow, O heart-famishing stranger, and

feel what it is to be cheered and strengthened beneath your sheltering Lord!

Are you an afflicted father, or a bereaved mother? Did God take the little child away from your arms, and home, and sight; and does your darling sleep under the summer grass, and on, and on, so strangely quiet, until the December snows fall over its tiny grave? Two or three days ago, I received a most touching letter from a father—a stranger, asking sympathy and prayer in his time of trouble. These words are in it, and they aid me more than the printed opinions of the profoundest commentary: “The daughter we have so lately buried was indeed the fairest flower—the most cherished treasure of our household; and although to the world she was but a *child*, to her parents she was the *world*, and it was hard to part with her. I am not yet a Christian; but I feel well persuaded that my dear daughter is now in heaven, and I long to join her there. I know there is but one possible way for me to do so—to become a Christian, to try to lead a blameless life by faith in Jesus Christ who has made full atonement for sin.”

Let me say to that dear friend and father: You

are almost under the shadow of the Apple Tree already! Only step forward a little farther, only a little farther, and you will feel the refreshing comfort and peace; only one step more, and the delicious fragrance will fan your fevered brow and revive your sinking heart, and you may sit down under the shadow with great delight; and thence, looking up, you shall see your child as a beautiful blossom unfolding and exhaling on one of the waving branches of the Tree of Life!

To all afflicted ones, tired with marching through this wilderness of toil and pain, to all bereaved ones, sick at heart, and faint with trouble, lonely, tearful, fatherless, motherless, mourning and sad: Come and rest and refresh your weary souls beneath the wide shelter of Jesus's love. The way is open and free from every side, and hither you may walk from sultry sunshine into perennial shade. Easily as you would stoop by a crystal stream to drink and quench your raging thirst,—easily as you would take the extended hand of a loving brother standing by your side; so easily, so delightfully may you come this moment, as you are, if you will, and sit down under the shadow of Infinite Protection, and be happy and satisfied forever. Then shall

the text be your song, "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste."

3. *The Apple Tree is a Fruitful Tree.* Perhaps no other tree, however prolific, yields a greater weight and wealth of fruit than the apple tree. This is its nature from the germ, the object of its planting, the glory of its growth, and the reward of the culturer's care at last. This tree will receive on its branches by engrafting, all varieties of apple scions, and send out its sap to every bough, and branch, and bud, to perfect and ripen whatever has blossomed on the engrafted stem. Little budding twigs from distant lands, completely severed from their native trunk, if only alive, and properly attached, may become parts of another and longer-living tree, and bear fruit by the vital forces of the new body of which they are made an identical portion. Upon the same individual tree, in spring time, may be seen a variety of blossoms differently textured, tinted and scented; and in autumn, a variety of apples, of differing sizes, tastes, shapes, and colors each distinct sort being permit-

ted to maintain its individuality from budding infancy to perfect applehood.

So is Christ a Fruitful Tree. What philosopher, what hero, what religionist of any age or land, has accomplished such a work as Jesus, the humble Nazarene? From the Cross has gone forth a resistless influence conquering and to conquer the world. That "beginning" at Jerusalem spread throughout Judea, reached the highest seats, the proudest hearts, and the farthest bounds of the Roman Empire, circled all over the civilized nations of the earth, gaining power as it spread, and spreading by its accumulating power, until heathen lands were gladdened by the gospel sound, —until the islands of the sea, and the distant regions beyond, were made to echo the song and story of the world's Redeemer.

As a tree rises and strengthens and broadens while the summer time grows longer and the sultry heats increase, so in the Christian summer Era, advancing toward its autumnal millennium, the Tree of Life the more gloriously towers into the heavens; and the branches, with leaves for the nations' healing, the more widely expand, waving their burdens of ripening fruit, the joy and song of

exultant angels. "He must increase," was spoken of Jesus and his blessed kingdom, and history gives emphasis to the words. For "the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ."

The Sacred Apple Tree of Heaven

In earth strikes deep its massive root,  
And spreads its branching life abroad,  
And bends and glows with luscious fruit.  
Long as the world itself shall last,  
This Tree of Life shall rise and spread,  
From clime to clime, from age to age,  
Its sheltering shadow shall be shed.  
Nations shall seek its fruit and shade,  
Its leaves shall for their healing be,  
The circling power that feeds its life,  
The blood that crimsoned Calvary. \*

Who, in all the universe of God, has brought such honor to the Father, called forth such hallelujahs in heaven, excited and answered so much heart-love on earth, as Jesus? O, the innumerable multitudes already in Paradise, robed in white and crowned with glory, the gathered growths of the Redeemer's perfecting power! And millions more are now ripening in the branches of the Apple Tree here in the wilderness—the Church on earth—all

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\* Changed from *Ficus Religiosa*.

developing by the mighty life-power of Jesus Christ! How many alien boughs have been grafted into this Apple Tree standing in the wood! Christ Jesus is not fenced in by any sect or party as an orchard tree, aloof, monopolized and guarded. *All the approaches are free.* He stands among the people, outside of walls, and alone, not merely as one of a row or group to be admired from a distance, and approached only through gates that men open and shut, and at times which men appoint. "As the apple tree *among the trees of the wood*, so is my beloved among the sons." Engrafted in this Hebrew Stock—the Root and Offspring of David—are both Jews and Gentiles now, barbarian and Scythian, Caucasian and Ethiopian, bond and free, white and black, rich and poor, young and old—of every nation, kindred, tongue, and people; all living and growing in Christ, mingling their thoughts and words and works, as mingle the blossoms, the leaves, and the fruits of an apple tree, waving and growing in the breezes of heaven.

And as the apple tree recognizes in its nature the identity of each engrafted bough, and sends out to every blossom the power that shall develop it as

an apple of its own distinct character,—so does Christ recognize in every human soul united to him by faith, its individuality,—its special endowment or gift in creation, and gives it the power to richly and roundly develop itself according to its capacity. Conversion does not produce uniformity in thought, or word, or action; but controls and consecrates every human heart in the life-work for which it is best adapted. It sets a man to doing what God made him for; and duties are as varied as human faces and human wants. When a sinner is separated from his sins, and severed from the associations that caused him to sin, and is joined by living faith to Christ, his talent remains the same, his distinct personality is unchanged, even though he become a new creature in respect of living for new purposes and working from new motives. Henceforth Christ becomes the center and source of life, and his glory and the good of all men the impulse of the believing heart.

“And his fruit was sweet to my taste.” Yes, these are blessed words! All that nature which springs from Christ’s great, loving heart to the hearts of his disciples, produces fruit of most delicious sweetness. Humility, charity, meekness,

gentleness, brotherly kindness, temperance, forbearance. These are a few of the fruits. Have you not tasted them in hours when the soul was weary, an-hungered, and athirst? In times of affliction and bereavement, and sorrow,—did not Christian people all seem and speak as neighbors, gently and consolingly to your heart? Did not some dear friend in Jesus pray with you then? Did not some lover of the Saviour and your soul—an affectionate mother, or father, or sister, or brother, or child—take you by the hand, and utter low and touching words of sympathy, and do something, in some way, for you in the time of need? That was fruit from this Holy Tree. And was it not sweet to your taste?

Would to God that our own branch of the Divine Apple Tree might cluster full—so full of these rich, glowing fruits of the Spirit—that, bending beneath its precious burden—bending low, the poorest and lowliest might reach, and taste, and be refreshed! May all weary ones passing this way through the wilderness, not only come and sit down under the shadow with great delight, but be led to exclaim, The fruits—*the fruits* of Christian experience on that Methodist branch were offered to me, I received them, and they were sweet to my taste!

“Graft me into Thee forever,  
Tree of Life, that I may grow  
Stronger heavenward, drooping never,  
For the sharpest storms that blow,  
Bearing fruits of faith and truth ;  
Then transplant me out of time  
Into that eternal clime,  
Where I shall renew my youth,  
When earth’s withered leaves shall bloom  
Fresh in beauty from the tomb.”

## II.

# THE CEDAR TREE.

*The righteous shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.*

PSALM xcii. 12.

HE cedars of Lebanon are renowned in sacred and secular annals as the most magnificent trees of the East. The Psalmist calls them "the trees of the Lord." They are held in great veneration by the Syrian people to this day, a holiday being set apart by them for the Feast of the Cedars.

It is a tree of long life. Observant travelers express the opinion that some of the cedars now standing on the Taurus Mountains are twenty centuries old. The wood of this tree is reputed to be indestructible; in some instances portions of the timber have been taken from old buildings uninjured, firm, and fragrant, after a lapse of two thousand years.

The cedar belongs to the family of pines, the resinous, aromatic, needle-leaved group of trees,

which, as silver fir and larches, crown the mountains,—and, as spruce and hemlock, fringe the deciduous forests and winding water-courses at their base.

Did you ever wander alone into the heart of a dense pine forest in a summer day? It is one of the quietest, grandest scenes in Nature. The busy noises of the human world, and even the dreamy murmur of the woods and waters, are unheard there. No song of bird, or hum of insect, intrudes upon the solemn stillness of the place. The only sound is the plaintive whisper of the low wind sighing through the harp-like branches overhead, or the mournful coo of the dove in some distant solitude, making the aisles of the wood sacred as a sanctuary. There your soul communed with God in the sweet serenity of silence; there you breathed your inmost wants as a prayer into the ear of your listening Father; there, in the hush and calm of the ancient forest temple, you worshiped and were blest. There was a hallowed influence in the air, the scene, the hour, which put you in communication with heaven; and precious truths were told you there in psalms of tenderness, sweeter than the melody of flute or organ to the pensive spirit. The cathedral-like

quiet was balmed and holy with fragrance, as if pervaded with the incense of sacrifice; the high dome of the sky seemed to arch more closely over you with its celestial blue; and the dark green foliage about you was trembling with the harmony of vespers chanted only for your soul. Then your thoughts were called away from the fading vanities and turbulent excitements of the world, and directed to the serene and imperishable glories of the heavenly Paradise. Then you comprehended the meaning of the prophet's words, as never before, "I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together: that they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together that the hand of the Lord hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it."

The cedar, using the term in its generic sense, is the most widely diffused of all the trees of the forest. Some species of it may be found from the snowy ridges of Lapland in the North to the torrid plains and low sea-islands of the middle zone, and beyond to the regions of the antarctic circle. And in some form, from the level of the ocean to the elevated mountain ranges—to the highest line of vegetation,—the cedar flourishes round and round

the world. It has been said of the cedar, "that its branches shall cover the earth." The acknowledged fact of its distribution is co-extensive with the soil of the globe's broad surface; for the cones and spines of this tree point toward the sun in his eternal noon; and if his shining is perpetual on any one green thing growing, it is upon the cedar.

But there are special regions where the cedar attains its greatest perfection and glory. "The palm tree is perfect in the tropics, and symbolizes the summer of the world. The cedar is tallest and strongest and most fragrant in the north temperate zone, and might be called the symbol of the winter of the world." The one represents luxuriant foliage and abundant fruitfulness; the other represents wealths equally great and important as they,—patience, endurance, unchangingness, and strength. The cedar flourishes best under bleak winds, gray clouds, and piling snows. It is the most beautiful when skirting the rugged mountain sides; or, standing on the heights where palmate leaves and delicate fruits are never known, a graceful inhabitant of the barren peaks, and a sentinel on the outposts of vegetation, to meet, to challenge, to grapple with the storms which sweep, wild and mighty, from

the wintry skies. And there, in the very struggle which it accepts alone, the cedar imparts an odorous balm to the breath of the blast, tempering its pitiless power that it may pass down to the tenderer trees and plants of the valley with benediction instead of destruction beneath its wings.

In Switzerland, avalanches are stayed along the slopes and summits of the mountains by the faithfulness of the cedar and its kindred evergreens, while the herdsmen and the flocks repose in safety below. Upon the desolate Norwegian hills, the cedar forests keep incessant conflict with the polar winds, holding them in check, and toning down their fierceness, and thus protecting the southward valleys while that humble people cultivate the soil and lead a contented life. The land of Palestine is sterile, tempest-driven, and almost uninhabitable to-day, because its cedared groves have been laid waste. Every group of these honored trees has been planted by a Beneficent Hand, and every individual of the evergreen brotherhood is appointed to answer a specific purpose in the economy of Nature. The country that loses its pine forests shall never be able to recover the loss in wells of running oil!

Not in rich soil; not under gentle showers and warm sunbeams; not with the open smile of an unchanging sky playing upon it day by day and all the year;—not thus does the cedar grow; but in the scant and sandy ground of rocky mountain sides, beneath the fierce training of tempest, in the thin atmosphere where clouds dissolve, where frosts are shaped and sharpened, where hardiest birds will scarcely venture,—up in the region of that rough and rugged discipline where storms and avalanches are fashioned—there the cedar is developed in all its fibers to glorious strength, and clothed upon in all its branches with fadeless verdure.

The cedar lives where no other tree could live. And it grows at the expense of no other vegetation. Its shadows blight no other living thing; its roots crowd the roots of no other tree; its sap is drawn from a soil that promises nothing to any other growth. It lives in its own clear right, owing nothing to the courtesy of neighbor plants for making room; but it rises independent of all growing things beneath and around, and climbs into the atmosphere nearest to heaven, and shoves its most vigorous branches and tenderest buds the farthest through the high skies toward God, as if to lodge its bright-

est leaf and most beautiful cone against the windows of that eternal house not made with hands!

The leaves of the cedar tree are aciculate, or needle-shaped, and tough in fiber, and clustered in the strictest economy of strength, so that the winds may pass through the tree without dislodging them, and that the snow may rest upon the branches to beautify them by its white, rather than break them by its weight. The cedar tree is like an organ, gothic in architecture, through which the winds of the mountain blow, making delightful music, and bearing its sweetness to heaven, murmuring melody forever, and yielding with every gentle note the undying fragrance of its own heart, and blending all as an offering of praise to Him before whom "the mountains and hills break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field clap their hands."

The cedar wood, on account of its beauty and durability, was used by the ancient church for sacred purposes. The ark of the covenant, that most holy structure, and much of the elaborate work of Solomon's Temple, as well as that of Diana at Ephesus, were made of cedar. The Bible often refers to it as applied to most honorable purposes, as if, though dead as a tree, its foliage all faded and gone,

and the place of its birth and life knowing it no more, it should still speak by its perpetual fragrance from the dwellings of men, and continue to breathe as an immortal presence upon the passing generations.

Now let us, from this outline, consider a few special points of Christian character, as illustrated by the cedar tree.

1. *The Cedar is a Strong-rooted and Perennially-growing Tree.* Its roots spread broadly, and penetrate in every direction through the shallow soil, and fasten themselves firmly by infinitely branching fibers to the unevenness of the rock beneath. What is wanting in depth of root foundation is more than compensated by the extent of soil, and the twining rock-holds secured as the broad base of the tree. By this natural adaptation of the living roots to the condition of the soil, the cedar is most effectually planted, and is, in every increasing branch above, and in every insinuating fiber below, strengthening itself to the location and condition of its existence.

And the cedar grows all the year round. In winter storm as well as summer sun, its boughs enlarge, its roots extend, and its trunk toughens, hardens and enlarges, in uninterrupted increase.

It may not grow so rapidly as other trees in auspicious weather; but it grows all the time. And thus the cedar flourishes, and is the most vigorous and beautiful of trees.

“The righteous shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.” The Christian is rooted and grounded in faith and love, the broad soil of God’s eternal truth resting on the Rock, Christ Jesus; and the fibers of his rising life may strike wide and reach far into all science, into all art, into all literature, drawing power to grow from all that the Infinite Father intends shall nurture and develop the human character. The Christian, while in his body of mortal flesh, can not live independent of the world, any more than the cedar can live independent of the soil. As long as men walk the earth, believing in Christ, and eating their daily bread, they may grow as the cedar of Lebanon, deriving strength and beauty through agencies which reach the heart by local appointments and associations,—growing alone or in social and family groups, as grows the cedar; and taking into life from Nature all that can be worked into religion, as the tree takes in from ground and air the elements which make its buds and leaves and very wood. The Christian is not required in

the gospel to ignore the world, and boast of freedom from all its social and secular pursuits; but rather to make the most out of it, using all the good in that part of it with which he comes in immediate contact, as a means of enlarging his humanity, and by God's grace discerning and overcoming the evil: and thus, in proportion to his broad-rooted foundation on all that is nurturing and ennobling here where the Lord planted men to grow and not wilt,—to rise here with a show of life, wide, high and evergreen toward the fadeless perfections above.

For the idea of Christian growth is one of the most emphatic in the Bible. The believer grows in grace, and in knowledge, and in experience; and he can never attain a point where growing is not an essential condition to his spiritual life and health. The notion of Christian perfection, as expressed by some religionists, that a human heart may be so completely Christianized or "sanctified" as to cease growing, as to be freed from the possibility or tendency to sin, as to be quite out of the range of temptation, is a teaching of more modern than apostolical authority. And yet we often hear this lifeless doctrine pressed by its advocates in uncharitable, and, sometimes, in pharisaical persistence into the ears

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of the people as an attainment possible to all, even in this life! If so, then what shall we say of expanding mind and soul, the result only of the drill and discipline to which all Christians are appointed here below? What shall be done with the phrase in the Lord's Prayer, pronounced for *all* believers, "Lead us not into temptation?"—What concerning our hope for the opening glories and eternal developments of heaven? Jesus was tempted in every point as we are. Shall the disciple be greater than his Lord, and boast deliverance from the temptation to sin? Shall the Christian attain an elevation of purity, experience, and usefulness, in this probationary world, beyond which there shall be no more growth? while at the same time we read of the immaculate Jesus himself, that he increased in wisdom and stature as a man! How far behind some of these latter-day perfectionists is the great apostle Paul, who, sainted and crowned in glory, forgetting his eminent attainments already accumulated, is still *pressing* "toward the mark for the prize of the *high* calling of God in Christ Jesus!"

No, no: Christian perfection is the perfection of love, of desire, of effort,—not the climax of attainment. A man can never be too righteous to grow,

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—not until a cedar can be too healthy and strong to grow,—too full of sap to put forth a new bud, expand a new leaf, start out a new bough, fashion a new cone, and enlarge its own trunk. “The righteous shall grow as a cedar of Lebanon,” and Lebanon’s cedars grow till they die.

2. *The Cedar is an Honored and Stately Tree.* The cedar of Lebanon is associated, in Bible reference, with the honor of temples and altars. Its dignity attracted the eye of prophets and sages of old. Ezekiel speaks in a figure: “The Assyrian was a cedar in Lebanon with fair branches, and with a shadowing shroud of an high stature.” “I have made him fair by the multitude of his branches: so that all the trees in Eden that were in the garden of God envied him.”

Travelers to this day visit the groves of Lebanon with an interest equaled only by that which is excited by a view of the City of David. Some of the old forest patriarchs which flourished in the time of David’s Greater King still stand and grow on the Syrian mountains as unburied witnesses of Bible records and Bible revelations.

The cedar has a world-wide reputation for durability, gracefulness, fragrance, and the thousand

associations that cluster around it as a tree of the Lord. It occupies a place of honor not only in the Scriptures, and in the history of the church; but naturalists classify it as one of the most useful and eminent of trees. The majesty of its appearance, its continuous verdure and fragrance, make it a crowning glory in forest vegetation. The Arabs attribute to this tree a power to live eternally, and a wise instinct by which it anticipates the changes of the weather, folding nearer its heart its spreading branches before a storm. Standing at its elevation of six thousand feet above the sea, with roots firmly set in the everlasting mountains, and with many a lightning scar, and mossy bough, sometimes bending under the burden of Lebanon's gleaming snow, and with the dust of Israel's kings and mighty multitudes sleeping far down beneath its shade, the tall cedar is an inspiring theme for the poet and artist of every age.

So is the Christian honorable and comely in his life, his growth, and in all his associations. The annals of his faith through all past ages are a record of dignity, devotion, and self-denial. The eye of the world's artists and historians has been fixed with wonder and admiration on the consecrated disciple

of Jesus, as he towered high in grace and good works ever his unregenerate fellow men. The Christian has been first in benevolence, first in reform, first in science, first in art, first in literature, first in freedom; and infidelity itself can not but acknowledge the growth and grandeur of the man who lives in the faith of the gospel. As the trees of Eden which envied the cedar for its fair form and spreading branches,—so the leafy, summer skeptic of this age envies the rich, round character of the righteous man who grows like a cedar of Lebanon.

We have seen how the cedar grows in all latitudes and in all levels; how it battles with storms, and flourishes best in dreary places; how it disarms the tempest of its fury, and sends it, conquered and calm, a balm-bearer to lowlier vegetation; how it holds the awful avalanche in check; how all the year it glories in the severe tuition of blast and thunder along the heights; how it lives where other trees would die; how it grows supremely original in its inherent right and room; how it sends its proudest branches nearest to heaven; how its leaves are formed to receive the storm, and yet to hold their place; how its branches are ornamented and glorified by what would crush other trees to the earth;

how through all these rigid tests it sends music and incense to the skies ; how, even after death, its wood is applied to most sacred uses, holding its perfume forever. In all these particulars the cedar aptly illustrates the conflict, the patience, the grandeur, and the glory of the Christian's life, and the precious memory of the Christian's death.

So, if you are a true disciple of the Lord, you will be fitted to useful living here, and eternal living in heaven—not in ease, not in quiet, not in sunshine, not in idleness, not in luxury ; but, rather, you will be sanctified by work, by care, by antagonism, by affliction ; you will be the Christian anywhere and everywhere ; you will cheerfully breast the wild drift of persecution for the sake of the discipline it brings ; you will realize the dignity of personal accountability to Christ, independent of family or sectarian prestige, as the cedar which draws and uses power in its appointed place, uncompromised with any other vegetation under the sun ; you will send your highest, brightest thoughts in praise to God, and diffuse the incense of your love to heaven and earth the same ; you will so grow in Christ Jesus that the winds of false doctrine will howl harmlessly by, without dislodging a thought or an affection of the

soul, as the wild mountain winds pass by the cedar without detaching a leaf; you will even be stirred to sing psalms of thanksgiving by the very influences which shall blast the hopes of the ungodly forever. Yes, if converted and Christ-imagined, you will grow stronger with every added day, and be developed the more by every adversity, bereavement, loss, and sorrow, enlarging in heart and mind and soul as you live and are tempted, standing firm on the Rock till you die. And then, being dead, your memory shall speak to succeeding generations, as the fragrance of the cedar breathes evermore when its foliage has departed, and its branches have been laid low in the dust.

Is not such a life honorable, and such a life comely? My Christian brother, are you growing as the cedar, all the more strong and stately because of trouble and toil? This is the way to be developed for heaven. "The righteous shall grow like the cedar of Lebanon; and Lebanon's cedars have become honorable and stately in a region of barrenness, tempest, and cold.

" Here let us stand with planted feet  
Steadfast, where Paul and Silas stood;  
Upon us let the tempest beat,  
Around us swell and surge the flood:

We fail or triumph on this spot;  
God helping us, we falter not."

"O how sublime a thing it is  
To suffer and be strong!"

3. *The Cedar is an Evergreen Tree.* Through sun and shadow, calm and storm, the whole year round, although other trees, in milder atmosphere, lose their foliage, and in autumn stand naked and desolate, with arms stretched pleadingly toward the pitiless skies,—the cedar remains fresh and evergreen. When snows lodge on its branches, its dark emerald glows all the more beautifully by contrast; and although chill winds blow loud and long, its leaves murmur the more melodiously, and its perpetual fragrance is the more richly diffused. Though individual leaves fade and fall from the cedar, one by one, the tree never loses its verdure; for its foliage is continually renewed, and it is even green the summer and winter through.

A few days ago, in the country, I stood beneath a tall cedar, a student of its nature, and an admirer of its glory. I observed that the lower branches showed the only signs of decay; and that they seemed to be appointed to removal, in order that the sap of the tree might pass uninterruptedly up-

ward to develop the higher boughs and to hold the top in full evergreen. The trunk of the cedar is made the more grand and substantial by the disappearance of the lower branches, year by year, and the avenues to communicate life and beauty upward are thus the more direct and effectual. And so does the Christian grow. The habits of his childhood, his embryo notions and opinions, as he rises into manhood, are lost; and like the cedar, as he grows, his lower affections and attachments, love of the world, of fame, of position, one by one, die and disappear, and his higher nature is all the more comely and complete. Any man may thus die unto sin, and live unto God,—loose his attachments from the things of time and sense, and fix them upon those things which are eternal and divine.

Beautiful emblem of immortality! The Christian shall hold the life eternally which comes to his soul by faith in Jesus Christ, for his manhood is enlarged and educated for heaven by the discipline of toil and tears. Like a cedar sparkling beneath its burden of snow, a true and faithful disciple exhibits all the more beautifully his unchanging confidence and hope, when the world piles its drifting cold-

nesses upon him. The Christian is never so beautiful, never so strong, as when bearing his cross!

Though other religionists lose their brilliant leafage of word and form when adversity blows upon them, and stand in trouble's hour like trees stripped and exposed to the deathful blast, the righteous man welcomes the storm, and though, at last, bending to the grave before its mighty power, yet he shall spring forth again, in the strength of Him who conquered death, and rise triumphant in the Paradise of God, to grow and wave and breathe music forever as a tree planted by the River of Life. "The righteous shall grow like a cedar of Lebanon;" and Lebanon's cedars teach immortality in their every leaf, and through their life-time of centuries cease not to whisper of peace forever and ever. Then when this flesh shall fail, these eyes be sealed, and this trembling tongue be still,

"O let the rootlets of that tree,  
While creeping downward, twine round me;  
And from the dust that crumbles there,  
Drink in the food they need, and bear  
It upward to the topmost boughs,  
To give them life through winter snows,  
And keep them green long as they wave—  
A type of life beyond the grave.

“ While cedar grows, and upward shoots,  
And downward sends its tender roots—  
Defiance giving to the blast,  
As through its leaves it rushes past—  
Remember, friends, the soul shall live  
In worlds on high. Then who would grieve,  
Since death is only a remove  
From storm below to calm above?”

### III.

## THE OLIVE TREE.

*His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as  
the olive tree. HOSEA xiv. 6.*

HESE words were spoken of the Church of God by the sententious prophet, Hosea, at a period about eight hundred years before the advent of Jesus Christ. The figures employed by this, the first of the minor prophets, are forceful and distinct, and refer, mainly, to the captivity and dispersion of Israel, the deliverance of Judah from Sennacherib, the then present state of the Jews, their future restoration and union with the Gentile world under the Headship of Messiah, the Saviour's return from Egypt, and his resurrection on the third day.

The language of the text is applicable to the church in all ages and lands, and indicates that prosperity which always attends the truth of God when once planted in the hearts of men.

The increase and comeliness of Christ's kingdom on the earth are compared to the intertwining

branches and beautiful symmetry of the olive tree.

The word olive signifies fairness or brightness. A grove of these trees, with their grotesquely arching and interlocking boughs, and dense foliage of pale, silvery green leaves, is one of the most charming sights in the oriental land. The vast leafage of an olive forest spreading along the base of the hills, and rising in billowy rounds along their slopes in the distance, resembles the sea in color and grandeur; and the profusion of the scene speaks of plenty, beauty and peace. For the olive tree furnishes food to the hungry, shade to the weary, medicine to the diseased; and whispers in its leafy branches of quiet and gladness to every traveler on the plain.

The olive tree flourishes best when its roots penetrate through the drifted sands, down to the chalky marl and flinty pebbles of the more solid substratum which holds the secret treasures of oil. If the tree can not reach the rock beneath, its blossoms will be few, its leaves thin and frail, and its berries small, bitter, and immature.

The olive is a tree of slow growth; but if sufficiently rooted below the surface sands of the

plain or mountain side, it becomes hardy and tough to its topmost bough. It bears no fruit till its seventh year, nor much for fifteen years; but then it continues to yield berries in abundance through centuries of age. It is prodigal of blossoms, bending under the density of their weight; but casts off showers of them to the wind as snow-flakes are cast from a cloud. If one blossom in every hundred produced a berry, the tree would break in autumn beneath its excessive fruitfulness. Job speaks of the wicked man as one who casts off his flower as the olive, referring to this accident of the tree, and aptly illustrating the thoughts and words of him, who, trusting in vanity, never bears his promises out to performances. There are many professors of religion all in bloom with smiles and good resolutions; but they have not the root-plantedness on the Rock which insures the development of a single such fair blossom to the maturity of a duty done. But the olive tree, well rooted and grounded in its native place, although millions of blossoms fall away, and although the branches may appear dry and warped and knotted, will continue to produce its harvest of rich, oily berries for a thousand

years. And it is fruitful, even if neglected. It grows and yields independently of the culture of men's hands, unlike the vineyard, that, without dressing would crisp and perish; or the mulberry, that, uncared for, would die. A traveler speaks of an olive grove on the desolate hills above Antioch, although no one had given attention to it for half a century, still flourishing and fruitful as ever.

This tree may well be estimated as one of the most valuable gifts which the beneficent Creator has bestowed on man. Its oil is a certain and indispensable article of food whose nourishing properties are equal to those of the manna in the wilderness; it has a sanitive property which heals wounds like a balm from Gilead; it has a magic power which expels the poison of insect's or serpent's sting from the human system; it burns to illuminate the cottage of the poor and the palace of the rich with equal radiance; it was used in the Old Testament church to consecrate offerings to the Most High, and to feed the lamps which burned before the Testimony in the Tabernacle of the great congregation. Its wood has been appropriated to most sacred purposes. In Solomon's temple it was used for the posts of the entrance

doors, and for the cherubim within the gold-laid oracle, and for the doors of the mercy-seat.

The olive tree strikingly represents, by its oily fatness drawn from the rock, the mercy and sustaining power of God toward the human race since Adam's fall; and since that day it has typified divine and abounding grace in healing all the spiritual diseases and infirmities of degenerate man, and the influence of the Holy Spirit in driving out the poison of moral corruption from the heart, and enlightening the souls of rich and poor in heavenly truth.

From the nature of the olive tree, and its honored associations in the Bible, we learn that when any thing is compared to it by historian, prophet, poet, or apostle, in the Sacred Word, it is to indicate prosperity, utility, and excellence.

Let us notice two or three prominent characteristics of the olive tree.

1. *The Olive Tree is a Tree of Resolute Growth.*

It was the living green branch of an olive tree which Noah's dove brought in to the ark after its weary flight in search of land and resting place. All other growths were still overwhelmed and prostrate beneath the surging waves, unable to lift

their trailing branches from the current ; but from some eminence, with roots firmly fastened to the everlasting rock, and with sturdy trunk and elastic limb, the lanceolate leaves of the olive sprang first to sunlight, and beckoned to the longing dove, the earliest green of the renovated world !

This tree is firm-textured in its wood, fine and hard in fiber, and although growing slowly, grows strong and secure in its appointed place, a match for storm and time, to stand through centuries of change, the same evergreen and unwearied burden-bearer of good to men. Its sap circulates to every twig and bud, unchilled by frost and unfevered by heat, producing a full, round strength of trunk and branch and leaf, spreading and strengthening from heart to utmost bough and topmost bloom, as a tree of life and health and power. The root of the olive is almost indestructible, preserving its vitality for ages, and sending up new shoots every summer, and ample supplies of nourishment to its constantly enlarging life. The trees now standing on the Mount of Olives are supposed to be the same under which our Saviour often walked, and beneath whose shadowy branches he wept and prayed alone in the dark hour of his Passion.

Sometimes three or four trees have been known to rise and mature from the same vigorous root; and although the trunk of an olive tree may be hollowed out by age, by insect boring, or as the result of injudicious pruning, so that but a thin piece of wood remains next to the bark; still, the tenacity of life is so great that the vital sap will be transmitted to the boughs to hold their leaves in evergreen, and to perfect their forming fruit as richly as though the trunk were solid from core to bark.

The combined branches of the olive tree, circling out in every possible form of curve, twist, cluster, and intertwining, although each separate branch, viewed alone, might be considered distorted and intrusive, make a symmetrical completeness, each part of which fills its appointed place to add dignity and majesty to the whole tree. The development of the tree is not one-sided; the sap rises in equal distribution, and runs out through every bough, however crooked, and flushes every vein of the farthest leaf, however delicate, making the tree, as a whole, green and strong in the unity of its life. By this unifold and unfailing power which Nature supplies, the olive tree spreads, enlarges, covers itself out of very gratitude with blossoms,

and matures to the perfectness of fruit all that its branches will bear for centuries.

So is the church of Christ resolute in its growth. When all the world was submerged as with a flood by idolatry and formalism, an angel came flying across the midnight gloom with the song of good will to men. An olive branch of peace was brought from the heavenly shore. The Messiah appeared. His early life was obscure; his ministry was local and misinterpreted; his professed friends forgot their promises in the trial hour, and fled; his body was nailed to the cross, and bled, and agonized, and died. A small upper room held all the disciples, at first, and the narrow grave their Master and Lord. But not long, not long! The third day Jesus rose; and when he joined his bewildered followers again, their hearts burned within them as never before. The dove that once descended on him with a benediction of peace and a recognition of Sonship, now descends on all the believing disciples! Still, like their Master, they are poor, still friendless; and nobody seems to know or care for them. Their purposes are not yet settled, their influence not yet concentrated or felt. What are so few among so many?

Never mind. Only wait. The olive tree grows without men's oversight. This tree of eternal growth and immortal bloom and celestial fruit, the church of Jesus Christ, is already planted on the earth, and its roots are twining securely about the unfailing Rock. This sacred Tree may not rise to broad foliage and abundant fruitfulness in a season, or in a century; but it is planted—O it is planted! The spade that parted the sod on Calvary for the upright beam of the cross, planted a Tree which rises still, expanding, and blooming, and bearing fruit, not only for a summer, or a thousand years, but forever and ever!

The principles of the church of Jesus Christ are enduring and ever-expansive. It holds in its life the power to withstand the changes of empire, and all the mutations of the secular world; and it grows strong and grand in its place against the storms of persecution, the same through all the changeful years. To use another figure, the blood of Christ circulates from his own heart out to all the members of his mystical body—the church. The Saviour's own illustration still more nearly parallels the figure of the text: "I am the Vine; ye are the branches." The eternal life-power of

Jesus is sent into every true disciple's heart, as the sap of the vine into every branch. So every believer is made partaker of the life of Christ, and derives from Him alone the ability to enlarge in thought, in affection, in work, and in all that rounds up a full life, and clusters it with blossoms of good will, and matures it to the fruitage of noble deeds, to the honor and glory of God.

And thus the church as a whole, in its heart vitalized by the life of Christ, grows and gains power with the passing years. It spread from its center at Jerusalem out to adjacent neighborhoods; out to surrounding lands; out to distant nations. It sent its blooming branches to overshadow the weary poor on every side. It forced its wide-extending boughs of evergreen over the Roman Empire, beyond the cities of Asia, across the household of Cæsar, against the walls of every school of philosophy,—bearing its fragrance into literature, into learning, into art, into science, into the laws and languages of the world. The more it was obstructed the more it spread. It was, and is, and shall be forever more, to all the nations, the Tree of Life, made fruitful in every branch by the conversion of individual men, and bountiful all over

and ever more by the civilization of empires and republics. And its fruits are the fruits of the Spirit, in all and to all the same, "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."

And the church, as an olive tree, grows symmetrically. It is not a one-sided growth—not a disproportionate expansion. No one olive-berry ripens because of prominent position on some front-side bough, at the expense of the clustering fruits below or behind. Each leaf and shaping olive derives its life only through the trunk of the tree, sustains equal relationship to every other leaf and fruit, is loyally attached to the tree as a whole, and bows in obligation to no presumptive, oily-faced berry above!

And in the church of Christ there is no one branch appointed to bear royal sap for the development of ecclesiastics only,—no peculiar virtue running into the religion of preachers by which they receive authority to rule the consciences of the people.

The symmetry of an olive tree permits an infinite variety of curve and turn and cross-linking of branches, but never an abrupt, morbid superfluity;

and hides even the symptom of such a thing by an extra covering of leaves.

Neither does the church of Christ, if healthful in growth, permit such an excrescence as clerical lordship over the laity. That is an ecclesiastical deformity, unsightly and injurious, and destroys the healthful proportions of the Divine Olive Tree, where every immortal bud and blossom and fruit is fashioned as a distinct original, to develop in the free air and sunlight of heaven as the Almighty wills, and not a man!

The evangelical denominations are but the branches of the Tree, all growing out of Christ, all sharing the same nature, opening the same kind of blossom, and maturing the same kind of fruit. A tree with but one bough would indicate a diseased root, and be a monstrosity in nature. But Christ, in the perfection of his character, adapts his grace to the identity of every man, whatever his talent, his location, or his opportunity, and thus enlarges his universal church by strengthening individual men to do what they were born to do, in their appointed spheres, related to one another and composing a symmetrical whole, as the branches and leaves of an olive tree. As every distinct twig of

the tree fills its place, and grows where God started it and helps it, so every truly Christian sect, and every individual member, is appointed to a life and growth peculiar to itself as a unit, and yet sympathetic and symmetrical with all others as a whole. And as no two branches of an olive tree, however crooked and gnarled by nature, ever embarrass one another by elbowing for the same place in the air, the same number of leaves, and the same rough coating of outer bark, nor for the same identical holding-on point to the trunk of the tree,—but grow and wave from the attachment which nature fixed; so, it would seem, should Christians realize that their spiritual health and power are in the sphere where grace has grafted them to Christ, whether that be in pulpit or in pew, in business or in art, in literature or in science, in the city or in the country,—whether on the Methodist side, or the Presbyterian side, or the Baptist side, or the Lutheran side, or any other side of the trunk.

Perhaps all these differences of opinion on non-essentials are permitted to men, just as the round-and-round growing room is permitted to the branches of the olive tree. And as the blossoms of the tree are so intermingled in the spreading

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branches in spring time; and as the fruits hang in equal distribution over the whole tree in autumn; and as the leaves, the whole year round, are interwoven in the tree's seamless garment of protection and grace,—thus hiding the distinct limbs by verdure and blossom and berry,—so should Christian people's thoughts and words and works so enrobe and adorn the universal church as to conceal the sectarian branch-forms forever! For Christly recognition among the saints is not in the hard wood of theology and doctrine, however important as agents of good; but in the fruits of the Spirit, ripe and delicious. As an olive tree instinctively hides its dry-barked branches, and hangs out foliage and fruit to the eye, so should Christians rather screen their denominationalism by healthful profusion of loving words and charitable actions! The question is not, in autumn time, On which branch did this berry grow? but, Is it an olive, ripe and mature? And at the judgment, in the world's autumnal gleaning day, the question will not be, In which sect did this soul grow? but, Is it developed in Jesus Christ?

“'Tis the sublime of man,  
Our noontide majesty, to know ourselves

Parts and proportions of one wondrous whole!  
This fraternizes man, this constitutes  
Our charities and bearings."

2. *The Olive Tree is a Perennially Beautiful Tree.* It holds its greenness the round year through, and is, in this particular, an exception to almost every fruit-bearing tree. Its foliage is not for a season merely, but is renewed as it fades, and kept perfect in verdure, summer and winter, on through the long ages of its fruitful life.

Most trees are very beautiful in the pleasant summer days, when showers fall to refresh and sunbeams to cheer the branches, and when all the air is balmy with the breath of growing vegetation. But the frost touches the fairest leaves, and quickly tinges the whole forest and orchard with the scarlet fevers of the fall. The broad luxuriance which waved under the sunlight and glittered beneath the summer rain, crisps in autumn, detaches itself from the trees, and scatters as dust along the ground.

Not so with the olive tree. It forms its leaves to endure the cold and storm, and gives them the grace out of its own oily roots to shine the more because of the tossing wind and the chilling snow.

There is no time in the year when this tree is not beautiful, in leaf, in bloom, in fruitage growing or mellowing on the branches.

Another beauty of the olive tree is in the intricately entertwining boughs,—the irregularities of the curve and branching of each distinct part being made graceful by harmonious association with other originals all through the tree. The apparent defect of a branch, when viewed alone, becomes a peculiar beauty when viewed as a part of the whole. “I do not want painters to tell me any scientific facts about olive trees. But it had been well for them to have felt and seen the olive tree; to have loved it for Christ’s sake, partly also for the helmed Wisdom’s sake which was to the heathen in some sort as that nobler Wisdom which stood at God’s right hand, when he founded the earth and established the heavens. To have loved it even to the hoary dimness of its delicate foliage, subdued and faint of hue, as if the ashes of the Gethsemane agony had been cast upon it forever; and to have traced, line for line, the gnarled writhings of its intricate branches, and the pointed fretwork of its light and narrow leaves, inlaid on the blue field of the sky, and the small rosy-white stars of its spring blossom-

ing, and the beads of sable fruit scattered by autumn along its topmost boughs—the right, in Israel, of the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow,—and, more than all, the softness of the mantle, silver gray, and tender like the down on a bird's breast, with which, far away, it veils the undulation of the mountains; these it had been well for them to have seen and drawn, whatever they had left unstudied in the gallery.”\*

The unique beauty of the olive tree represents the peculiar grace and comeliness of the church. Its beauty, too, is perennial. It holds its evergreen leafage of form, sacrament, and ordinance through all the changing centuries. Other religious systems have flourished in auspicious times, spreading out a dense foliage of show and ceremony, and have offered refreshing shadows, and held out blossoming promises of good to men. But when the storms of trouble blew, and the winter of death announced his coming, these summer religions faded in leaf, and stood, at length, the naked wood, shadeless and fruitless after all.

There are, growing here and there, in life's fair summer days, many attractive religions, broad in

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\* Ruskin.

leaf, and beautiful in blossom,—the fashionable, free-and-easy sects, where a man can be a saint, and yet take hand with the sons and daughters of perdition in the dance, at the bar, and at the gambling table. But the coming autumn—and O how soon it comes!—will reveal the barrenness and desolation of all systems that have not rootage about the Rock of Eternal Truth,—that draw not the oil of the Spirit which alone produces ever-greenness of leaf and abundant fruitfulness down to old age in every branch of the church whose beauty is as the olive tree.

The Christian church has lived, beautiful and prolific in all seasons, in all ages, in all lands, steadily increasing, and always blooming and bearing, more and more beautiful in the sight of angels—beautiful in promises, beautiful in performances, beautiful in every ordinance, in every service, in every association! And although the members, one by one, may disappear, as the task-done leaves of the olive when they fall, still the church, as an organization, lives in perennial and ever-expanding verdure, as the olive tree whose foliage is over-full and evergreen!

“O where are kings and empires now  
Of old that went and came?  
But, Lord, thy Church is standing yet, •  
A thousand years the same!”

We mark her towering branches,  
And her deep rootage strong;  
We hear among the quivering leaves  
Her sweet, unending song.

Unshaken on eternal hills  
Immovable she grows,  
To yield for all the world a balm  
Which heals the sinner's woes.

We have seen that the symmetry of the olive tree, although comprising such odd and unsightly branches, is all the more beautiful because of Nature's triumph over all irregularities by weaving them into far more exquisite than any architectural design.

And this is a special beauty in the church. The various gifts and distinct personalities of men, all infused by the life of Christ, and consecrated to his service, are, taken together, so wisely adjusted by divine grace in the hearts of all, as to make, in angels' sight, a spectacle unequalled in beauty and grandeur in all the universe beside.

The world may apply its fastidious magnifying glasses to some individual Christian, and, looking

at him alone, may criticise and censure his life and work; but the world is too low to see one single disciple, even the humblest, from the proper standpoint; and it is not susceptible of sufficient culture to view the church as a whole. There is a consistency in every member growing and fruit-bearing in his place, high or low, close in or far out on the tree, which radiates in glory to God! It is said of the whole church of the faithful, "His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree."

3. *The Olive Tree is a Type of Peace.* There is a tradition among the Greeks that the first olive branch that reached their country was carried by a dove from Phœnicia to the temple of Jupiter in Epiris. It is a remarkable fact that almost every nation has adopted the olive branch as an emblem of peace. Even in remote and barbarous countries, on newly discovered coasts, and among savage sea-landers, the green olive branch, carried in the hand, or inserted in the ground, is a pledge of peace; as if the whole family of man, wherever wandered and however lost, were influenced by a secret Providence to recognize the same identical sign of amity and good will. This custom, religiously ob-

served by all tribes and conditions of people, although unknown to each other, dwelling on opposite sides of the globe, seems to connect, by its association the whole human race to the fatherhood of Noah and the familyhood of the ark. It links to the memory of all generations the incident recorded on the page of inspiration,—that of the dove bringing in its mouth the beautiful token of God's anger turned away, of receding waters, and of a new covenant of peace with men. Not a nation or a race of people to this day, has forgotten the great lesson which the dove—emblem in itself of the Holy Spirit—taught to the world in that early day when all human hearts were kindred indeed.

It is observed by travelers that doves delight in resorting to olive groves. The branches and foliage of this tree afford a home, where, unmolested, they may rear their young, and sing the quiet hours away. The soft, low cooing of the dove blends in sweet and perpetual unison with the breeze that whispers through the boughs, and murmurs the sacredness of the relation they bear, the one to the other, the olive and the dove!

So does peace dwell in the church of Christ the Lord. The Holy Spirit breathes, as music sweet

and low, through all the branches, waking melody in every soul. The echoes of the angel-song still vibrate in the air about the Sacred Olive Tree, "Peace on earth, good will to men!" Yes, the Kingdom of Christ is a peaceful kingdom! The disciples of Jesus are called peace-makers, and blessed are they as the children of God! "Peace I leave with you," said the risen Redeemer, before he ascended to glory. O such peace!—holy, perfect, constant, heavenly peace! It is the same in all the world, wherever a heart loves Jesus, and believes. The olive branch, universal emblem of peace, has more than full realization of meaning in the Omnipresent Spirit, speaking peace to thousands in a day—the Omniscient Spirit, illuminating the church in all the world—the Omnipotent Spirit, reaching and conquering rebellious millions!

As Noah's family were the more closely united in love by the grandeur of their deliverance, and by the sympathetic fellowship within the ark, receiving the olive branch from the dove with one thrill of grateful emotion as if their hearts had but one pulse and one hope,—so may all believers in all churches receive the Holy Spirit in that deep unity of affec-

tion and love and gratitude which makes Christians  
all one in Christ the Lord!

“ O first of human blessings! and supreme!  
Fair Peace, how lovely, how delightful thou!  
By whose wide tie the kindred sons of men  
Live brothers like, in amity combined,  
And unsuspecting faith.”

“ Then, then shall all men's good  
Be each man's rule, and universal Peace  
Lie like a shaft of light across the land,  
And like a lane of beams athwart the sea,  
Through all the circle of the golden year!”

## IV

# THE MYRTLE TREE.

*I saw by night, and behold, a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle trees that were in the bottom.*

ZECHARIAH, i: 8.



ZECHARIAH, a fellow-prophet and co-worker with Haggai, has been styled the "sun among the minor prophets." His visions and announcements, almost the last in the Old Testament record, refer, with peculiar distinctness, to Christ. The text is the beginning of a revelation which was intended, doubtless, to comfort the Jews, but lately freed from Babylonian captivity, and to stimulate them in the building of the temple.

The first portrayal of this inspired and eloquent teacher opens upon a grove of myrtle trees clustered in the valley. The picture is outlined by surrounding hills in the dim distance, by night; and a changeful mingling of shadows and starlight among the swaying branches, gives life to the scene. The lowly myrtles, trembling in the night-

wind, veiled by the darkness, unprotected by watchmen or walls, but standing silent in the gloom, and obscure in the valley, impressively represented the solitary and pitiable condition of the Jewish church in the time of the prophet.

But this is only the background of the picture. The center and glory of the vision is the man riding on a red horse, pausing, standing still in the midst of the myrtle trees, as if he had come to remain, to protect, to endure, to drive away the shadows, and illuminate the valley! If the myrtle trees symbolize the church in the days of adversity, the rider upon the red horse symbolizes the man, Christ Jesus, the same who appeared to Joshua, with drawn sword in his hand, as the Captain of the host of the Lord—the same who appeared to John, long years thereafter, the Rider with the bow and the crown, going forth conquering and to conquer.

Although the church was weak, despised, and desolate, Christ was nevertheless seen in the midst of it, prepared for conflict, to bear in his own body the suffering that should bring liberty and peace. Looking upon the shaded myrtle grove, and beholding the strange Horseman there, how

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forcefully the language of Isaiah sounds in the ear!

“Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in his apparel, traveling in the greatness of his strength?

“I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.

“Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth the wine-fat?

“I have trodden the wine-press alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment, for the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come.”

In the Old Testament we see Christ riding on a red horse, representing the terror of that dispensation; but in the New Testament, we see him seated upon a white horse, the Faithful and True, showing that he has gained the victory, and rides henceforth the Prince of Peace, triumphing in the hearts of all his people.

The man upon the red horse clearly signifies Christ, the Deliverer of the church; and the

myrtle trees, grouped in the valley, represent the saints of God, the immortal children of the crucified, but risen and reigning Lord.

The myrtle, among the Jews, was an emblem of justice. The Greeks and Romans dedicated it to Venus; and used it to make wreaths to crown accepted lovers, and to decorate the brows of successful contestants in the race.

It is a diminutive tree, almost a shrub; but it grows from a hard, woody root, with an upright stem, branching closely, and forming a dense round foliage of ovate and lanceolate evergreen leaves. It flowers profusely, in star-like clusters of snowy white, fringed with tints of delicate purple. Its berries are aromatic and astringent, and have been celebrated by the ancient poets as possessing a peculiar medicinal property, efficacious in healing the maladies incident to the climate where it grows. Its fruit produces both wine and oil, and, in either form, is esteemed a delicate luxury among the inhabitants of the East.

The myrtle is most beautiful when small, standing in its youthful vigor as a mere shrub, with elastic branches and glowing leaves; for when it rises to maturity, its lower boughs, overshadowed

by the thick top, lose their leaves, roughen in bark, and become unsightly in appearance.

In the valleys, myrtles grow among laurel roses to the height of twelve and fifteen feet ; and when in bloom are surpassingly beautiful. The perfume of the myrtle is richer than that of the rose, enchanting every one, and filling the soul with delightful sensations, such as are inspired by no other aroma in the world.

1. *The Myrtle Tree grows in Groups.* This tree belongs to that species of vegetation which flourishes only in associated growths. A single root has sufficient vitality to send forth, at different points through the sod, a number of flexible stems, each one of which will become a distinct tree, deriving all the sap it requires, and growing as one of a cluster of trunks from the same support. It will wither and die, if an attempt be made to cultivate it as a single myrtle tree, separate and alone. It must share the influence of surrounding myrtles. It will readily divide its own root-sustenance to maintain and mature kindred trees by its side, to grow up into the same sunlight, and wave, and cast fragrance through the same free air. If it would be appropriate in speaking of an inanimate

thing, to say it, the myrtle might well be called the most unjealous of trees! For it flourishes best when in the midst of flourishing fellows: it seems ever growing and glowing the more beautifully when touching its glossy leaves against the leaves of adjacent myrtles, a dense grove of them standing and waving welcomes to one another from every branch, and whispering sweet sisterhood in every leaf by day and night.

So do the saints of God on earth best develop their thoughts and affections by association. The Christian is pre-eminently a social being; and his faith and work require a constant fellowship of heart and mind and soul. No man can be a prosperous Christian, shut out of the world as a monk; and no woman can fill her appointed sphere in grace by vowing herself into a nunnery, and living apart from the church of the common people. The true disciples of the Lord Jesus are intuitively drawn toward each other, and are never so happy as when in hand-reaching proximity, and mingling their voices in prayer and praise; or, seated together in the sanctuary as a company with mutual rights and kindred interests, receiving lessons of divine truth from the Book.       \*       \*       \*       \*       \*

Malachi, the last of the prophets, tells us that they who loved the Lord spake, often, one to another. When Jesus himself was on the earth, his followers circled round him in companies and multitudes, and he taught them together, and encouraged their fellowship. Just before he was crucified, he met the twelve in social converse and repast, blessing and breaking bread for them all, and instituting as a perpetual ordinance the Eucharistic Communion. And after his resurrection, he greeted the little band of his friends in an upper room, breathed a benediction upon them, and emphasized his desire that they should love one another and sympathize with one another, and help one another forever more.

The establishment of the Christian church is to group the true-hearted and like-minded together for mutual edification, enjoyment and growth. It is to bind as a family all the faithful in any community, and thus to develop the capacities of all by instituting a fraternal brotherhood of heart, in which all Christ's friends shall be equal in right and in privilege. Paul recognizes and intensifies this thought, in his letter to the Galatians, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all

men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." And again, in one of his letters to the Thessalonians, "Ye are taught of God to love one another            We beseech you that ye increase more and more." And yet again to Colossians; "Ye are called in one body and be ye thankful." The same idea is more elaborate in the twelfth chapter of First Corinthians, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."

There is a sad oversight of duty among Christian people in this relation. They are not all like the myrtles, satisfied with their grouping, and forever growing grander and nearer to each other in the connection which God has instituted in the church. There is a disposition to group with the world,—as if myrtles should be mingled with brambles and thorns! Look into the social relations of church, families, and you will find them mixing and mating with infidels, skeptics, and blasphemers. To an alarming degree, Mammon gauges the social attachments, after all, and not Christ. How seldom, when parties and entertainments are given in Christian homes—proper

enough as culturers of acquaintanceship and strengtheners of social ties—how seldom are church affinities recognized; and how slow are invitations in reaching the poor and obscure of the household of faith; and at the same time how the enameled *billets-doux* will fly as if with swallow's wings to the doors of the aristocratic disbeliever, who, receiving the missive with a mischievous curtsy, will laugh behind a sleeve at Christians courting the devil, and disdaining their own!

Instead of Christians being distinctly grouped, and flourishing by the influence of one another's example under the sunlight of God's Spirit, and standing uncompromisingly separate from the "evil communications that corrupt good manners," we see them too often blighted to a half-and-half kind of growth in grace, leafing and blooming religiously, but emitting the odor and bearing the fruit of perdition. When will the disciples of Jesus learn the duty and enjoy the glory of living in the world, unconquered by its deceitful powers?—living and laboring to exemplify by truth, soberness, dignity, consistency, and all the amiabilities of a truly consecrated heart, the spirit of the Servant-master? For thus, only, may Christians, in faith

and form, become evangelists in nature and life, mingling with sinners daily, not to learn, but to teach, by intuitive example as well as by doctrinal and emotional word, the power and beauty of relationship with Christ, and the blessedness of association with the pure in heart who see and commune with God.

As an organized band of believers, it is the business of the church not so much to be spiritual policemen, beating about the walks of men, to see who of the saints may have been decoyed into trouble, and to bring them by the collar to the ecclesiastical lock-up; but rather to be councilmen—fellow-helpers and patient workers—to provide for the reclamation of delinquents, and for the safety, comfort, and culture of all. The church should take the question of amusements, for example, into prayerful consideration, and adopt and consecrate such exercises as accord with the gospel in educating and refining the people. Satan aims to purloin from the church certain auxiliaries to educational development,—music, art, literature, science,—and if he succeed in appropriating *all* these agencies to himself, leaving nothing in the church but restraint, awe, fear,

monotone, and form,—he will as effectually accomplish his purposes, as if he had piled brimstone barriers between the sinner and the Saviour. The church should have its parlor, its library, and its wholesome social entertainments, as well as its pulpit, its pew, and its weekly lectures. The Scriptures authorize the one as much as the other. The young people, baptized into the Holy Communion of the Saints, should be not only granted, but graciously furnished, at any cost, that essential sociality they desire; and the privilege should be so freed from the unhallowed fashions of the world, as never to invite improper exercise, or indulge in alien companionship. The Christian Home and the Eternal Heaven are alike in affinities, in associations, in pleasures, in purity, and in peace; and if their doors swing open toward each other to afford a passage from mortality to immortality, why should the church be made a stumbling block between, by prohibiting in its creeds, what it confers in its gospel upon all,—the liberty of a thorough physical, mental, moral, and spiritual education—a rich, round, life-development, from which the foolish dance, the trifling theater, and fastidious fashion, by all their glittering parapher-

nalía, can no more tempt a human soul to stoop, than they can tempt an angel out of Paradise in search of joy!

Christ made religion attractive by his own amiable and loving life, so that little children circled around him to be blest, and were taken up bodily in his arms, and compared to the inhabitants of heaven—happy, cheerful, free, exultant, and full of song and pleasantry. And if the church to-day would but provide for the proper social culture of its youth, turning the breath of its censorious criticism into kindly counsel and advice; if Christian people would consecrate every legitimate and healthful amusement for the good of all, then would young disciples not only be more thoroughly Christianized and useful in the world, but Satan would be completely disarmed of a power which he continues to wield for the destruction of human souls. The methodism of men may rack itself to pieces in fitting humanity to its contracted formula; but the Methodism of the Gospel glorifies itself by developing all the faculties of the human mind, by enlarging all the affections of the human heart, and by strengthening all the muscles of the human body. And it demands that this training shall be

afforded in a righteous and reasonable manner; and until religion corrects indolence, removes dyspepsia, regulates the pulse, and the markets, and amusements, and all secular, as well as all spiritual thought and life, it is defective and un-Christly. When the spirit of the Master shall possess and prompt the hearts of all Christian people to work for souls as they are, prisoned in fleshly bodies,—to win, to draw, to help, to happify, to bless, and elevate human beings, by bringing them to the living Christ, rather than to the dead letter of a sect,—to Him who sets men free from the law of sin and death, then will the world's low and corrupting substitutes for amusement and instruction, the theatre, the ball-room, and the gambling-table, be thrust out, and kept out where they belong, in the blackness of outer darkness forever. Then the Christian man and woman will be so educated, and so supplied by perpetual aids to their development, as to mount up on wings as eagles, and soar grandly beyond the world's vain baubles to the region of celestial joys. And then the association of all rising Christian people will be complete; then in honor will they prefer one another; then in mutual affection and in co-operative

work, will they grow up into Christ in all things as if millennial summer were come !

“ Even so, who loves the Lord aright,  
No soul of man can worthless find ;  
All will be precious in his sight,  
Since Christ on all hath shined :  
But chiefly Christian souls ; for they,  
Though worn and soiled with sinful clay,  
Are yet to eyes that see them true,  
All glistening with baptismal dew.”

2. *The Myrtle Tree Grows in the Valley.* The man on the red horse stood among the myrtle trees that were in the bottom. The myrtle is indigenous to low, moist ground, and flourishes in retired and quiet places, in secluded valleys, along the damp soil by winding water courses, hidden from the traveler's eye until he comes immediately upon it, in its shrubby green clusters surrounded by hills. It does not grow tall to be admired from a distance ; but it is most beautiful in its lowly stature, and shining leaves when viewed closely in its native place ; and it bears the touch and test of familiarity with greatest honor to itself. There is a gracefulness in the form of its branches, and a fineness in the texture of its leaves, which captivate the eye of the stranger standing near, and bespeak his

admiration at first sight. Down to the valley the myrtle invites the lover of beauty and the student of Nature, for lessons which the mountains and their high forests are unqualified to teach.

The saints of God on earth are like the myrtles; they dwell in the valleys. Their graces are most comely and comforting down in the quiet retirements of home and neighborhood. The great hills of the world's business, forested all over by politics and fashion, and mined all through for mammon, however they may hide Christian communities, do not vail away the sunlight of heaven above, nor prevent the refreshing dews of the Holy Spirit.

The Christian is humble and childlike, influencing the sinner, and enjoying Christ in his own soul, more by his domestic life and every-day temper and talk, than by the formal religionism which is known by the solemn tones and pharisaical straight-edgedness of sanctuary and Sabbath alone.

The wicked are lofty, high-minded, and haughty, ever striving for the front places in society, for self's dear sake,—robing themselves in fashion's gaudiest style, broadening their acres, enlarging their mansions, exalting their own reputation by every sort of inflation to greatness and glory,

along the heights of the world. There is an unhallowed ambition in men and women to outshine, rather than to outlove; to outgather, rather than to outgive; to outsoar, rather than to outsing; to outenjoy, rather than to outsuffer; to rise to giddy elevations in the community, in business, in fame, in wealth; and all of this merely to glorify self at the expense of others, and at the sorrow of Christ.

But the prophet saw the man on the red horse, not riding among the great oaks of the hill, but down among the myrtles in the bottom. Jesus is with the humble, the few, the faithful, low in their appointed place. He is among the weak, the obscure, and the unknown, if they are grouped in equality as brothers, with common aims and mutual recognition; and he is in their midst to bless, to defend, and to deliver. Jesus stands to-day as Conqueror with any people, however insignificant in number, and dishonored in name, who love one another, who recognize the republicanism of the gospel, who believe the personal privileges and conscience-rights of all saints to be equal, and the interests of all mutual and inseparable forever! O, brethren, loyal to a country like ours, and to a Leader like Jesus, it is better for us to be in the

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valley of the ecclesiastical world, unpruned of religious rights, than to be trimmed and transplanted upon the hill, and shadowed by foreign growths! Better to be lowly, evergreen myrtles, a little arm-entertwining group in the bottom, with the Red Horse Conqueror as only Leader and Lord, than to be magnificent poplars on the height, growing a summer greenness which the autumnal frosts shall wither in a night!

The saints of God are most effectually defended, and most richly developed in the valley. They are left here for that discipline and training which only the soil and shelter of the low ground will produce. They shall never be forsaken if they remain humble and contented in the sphere where grace has appointed them to grow. If an angel cheered Hagar in the wilderness; fed the hungry pilgrims in the desert; strengthened the Son of Man in the garden, and stood sentinel at his grave; delivered a persecuted apostle from prison at midnight,—surely the lowly and troubled Christian of any age or land shall not be overcome by reason of his obscurity.

And at last, when the valley of the shadow of death shall be trodden by the trembling pilgrim

alone ; then will the angel of the Lord, the rod and staff of promise, the death-conquering Redeemer himself, sustain the sinking soul, and bear it across the waters to the shore of everlasting peace.

“ Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed,  
And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.”

Wherever the Christian may have been exalted in the esteem of his fellow-men ; to whatever eminence he may have attained, in learning, in work, in benevolence, or in earthly honor,—he must at last go down to the valley. “ For it is appointed unto men once to die.” Christ is with his disciples anywhere and everywhere ; but he is nearer, and therefore stronger, down in the valley of the last shadow. Zechariah saw him as a Conqueror for his people in the valley. The angels saw him a Victor for himself, and all believers, in the tomb. The disciples saw him risen, with Death put under his feet, and watched him ascending the skies to heaven. And now he is the first fruits of all who sleep in the valley of the grave. Have you not followed a dear one down into this shadow ; down, down, until your own eyes were dim in the strange darkness ? And there, when all earthly friends had fled, and all worldly honors faded away, away,—

there was Jesus seen all the more distinctly in the night as a Conqueror, standing among the myrtle trees, to defend and to deliver his own redeemed!

“Courage! We travel through a darksome cave;  
But still, as nearer to the light we draw,  
Fresh gales will reach us from the Eden air,  
And wholesome dews of heaven our foreheads lave,  
The darkness lighten more, till, full of awe,  
We stand in open sunshine—unaware!”

“Thither we hasten through these regions dim;  
But lo! the wide wings of the seraphim  
Shine in the sunset! On that joyous shore  
Our lightened hearts shall know  
The life of long ago;—  
The sorrow-burdened past shall fade  
Forever more.”

3. *The Myrtle Tree is Ever-fragrant.* The fragrance of the myrtle is not in blossoms that open, glow for a little season, and then fade away; but in the evergreen leaves. It is fragrant all the year, yielding its sweet odors through winter's rough blasts, as well as through the showers and sunshine of summer time. And the more the leaves are tossed, the more richly do they exhale their delicious aroma; and when bruised, they are most fragrant of all, diffusing as they are crushed, the same delightful odors as long as a fragment of leaf remains.

Such is the nature of Christian example. It is not the mere influence of word, of promise, of sunny summer song, or the friendship of prosperity, when times are easy, and health and honor fair. There is an unconscious, but perpetual power circling out from a true disciple's life which breathes the same good will and performs the same kind actions, regardless of circumstances, the rolling year around, and all of life-time through. The Christian is like his Lord, who is "the same, yesterday, and to-day, and forever." His temper is even, his patience unbroken, his enjoyments un-failing, his peace like a river, sparkling and singing evermore. There is no set time for show, or glitter, or display. There is no rehearsal of piety for great occasions! There are no programmed scenes to be unrolled according to chronometer and audience in the panorama of his life, and accompanied by phrasely word and tinkling music set to the exhibition.

The believer's influence is like the fragrance of the myrtle tree, an inseparable sweetness of life, gracious as it is undying; and it breathes through storms of adversity and bereavement as freely as in mornings of dewy joy. And when he is most

severely tried, troubled and persecuted, then is his example the most Christly in forbearance and love. Like the myrtle-leaf, bruised and torn, the saint of God, in the time of his sorest affliction, exhales the most heavenly spirit all abroad, as if the airs and blooms of Paradise should yet make Eden of this wilderness!

“Praisèd be the myrtles green,  
 In the quiet valley seen,  
 And the dark which makes us think  
 Of the sunny river-brink,  
     Where the ransomed tread.  
 Praisèd be the vision gleams,  
 And the storm that worketh dreams  
     Of calm unfinishèd.

“Praisèd be the day and even,  
 And the night-time’s solemn need ;  
 For in God’s dear book we read,  
 ‘No night shall be in heaven.’

“Earth, we Christians praise thee thus,  
 Even for the change that comes,  
 With a grief from thee to us !  
 For thy cradles and thy tombs,  
 For the pleasant corn and wine,  
 And summer heat ; and also for  
 The frost upon the syeamore,  
 And hail upon the vine.”

O more than seet or self the truth we praise ;  
 Above our friendships hold we God ;  
 And stricken be these feet ere they despise  
     The path their Master trod ;

So let our banner be again unfurled,  
And spread its motto to the breeze,—  
The Heavenly Conqueror subdues the world,  
And stands among the myrtle trees !

V

THE WILLOW TREE.

*By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea,  
we wept, when we remembered Zion.*

*We hanged our harps upon the willows thereof.*

PSALM CXXXVII. 1, 2.

*They shall spring up as willows by the water courses.* ISAIAH XLIV. 4.



HERE are many varieties of the willow, exclusive of the poplar, to which it is kindred in nature. In some species it is found in almost every part of the world; and it becomes acclimated by culture to the conditions and changes of temperature in every zone.

The willow is a very graceful tree, with slender and swaying branches, long, narrow, and pointed leaves, equally brilliant on both sides, though generally differing in shade of green, and always of fine and shining texture. The limbs are flexible and bright, and because of these excellent qualities are often wrought into familiar—though not always appreciated—articles of home and church furniture, such, for example, as canary cages and collection baskets!

Planted near water courses, its wide-extending roots serve to bind together the particles of moist earth, and thus to resist the ravages of the floods. The willow protects the banks its ornaments; and it is easily transplanted to the shores of distant streams, and may be cultivated to make firm and beautiful the sandy margins wherein it weaves its roots and along which it spreads its verdant covering of foliage.

There is no latitude into which man has penetrated, where vegetation does not exist. Even on the bleak arctic plains, out almost to the very pole, along the frozen edges of rivers where light and heat are at a minimum; there, mantled nearly all the year in snow, is the lichen, and not far south of it, its hardy neighbor, the willow, sharing in the desolation, and both content with a short summer and a diminutive growth. But hitherward still farther, where streams flow beneath warmer sunshine, and where man has cultivated the soil, and built cities, and cut canals, and enjoyed the most bountiful of earth's luxuries through many generations;—in that region, once the center of civilization and greatness, now “an outlying province of the Turkish Empire where sultan and firman are

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often superseded by the lawless will of sheik or Pacha;" where two renowned rivers converge, upon whose banks cluster the most hallowed histories of the past; in the range of low-land between the rivers, and upon the shores of both, and within the broad valleys that extend outward from either; in Mesopotamia, upon the sacred banks of the Euphrates and the Tigris, rivers of Babylon,—there do we find the willow growing luxuriantly still, almost the only living thing in that now melancholy waste,—growing green and graceful yet, as in former centuries, a tree of peculiar interest, and a teacher of patient lessons to us this side of the sea, and far down the Christian Era.

Tradition, strengthened by the opinions of several eminent Bibliographers, locates the garden of Eden at the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates. Even the calm, untheoretical Calvin inclined to this belief. The ancient world has been searched through all its area to trace, if possible, the boundaries of Eden; but the site of that blessed place is not known to mortal man. But if the waters of the Euphrates murmur ever so faintly of the first Adam, the rippling Jordan speaks plainly of the second, the Lord from heaven. Promised in

Eden, he came in the fullness of time, a man of sorrows, bringing joy to the world. If the paradise of Adam is lost, with all the original perfectness and beauty of man's estate, and its once magnificent river-shores are obscured in unlifted shadows,—there is, after all, a brighter and broader paradise yet to open its gates of pearl for all who love and serve the Lord; and through that happy place shall flow the River of Life; and there shall grow the Trees whose leaves never wither, and upon whose branches no untuned harp shall be suspended by trembling captive's hand! But here,

“The river whispers to the willow  
With a sad, mysterious tone,  
As the bubbles of each billow  
Gurgling break on bank and stone;  
What saith the river as it glistens  
In the sun-glints through the tree,  
While the bough stoops down and listens  
To its plaintive melody?

“Like my waters, life is flying—  
Brightest joys have shortest stay—  
As my waves speed onward sighing,  
With thy singing far away:  
Human hopes are like the bubbles  
Sworn and glittering on my tide,  
Till the rocks, like earthly troubles,  
Meet and wreck them as they glide.

“High o’er willow, high o’er river,  
Soars a lark in airy rings,  
While his voice thrills to the quiver  
Of his sun-illuminated wings ;  
And the ether-vault is riven  
With his glad song as he flies—  
‘Seek, like me, thy joys in heaven,  
And thy hopes within the skies.’”

Though the grandeur of former scenery and the glory of ancient days have departed from the rivers of Babylon, still, the willows upon which the exiled Hebrews hung their harps, and under whose shades they wept with memories of Zion far away, have kept the rivers fringed with green, and have never ceased to whisper, through their drooping branches, sad memories of the past, and longing hopes for the better time to come.

Doubtless, somewhere near these rivers’ mingling waters, the first accents of mercy were heard, when Eden’s gates were closed and guarded by the angel of the Lord. Here, hopes which seemed quenched in darkness, were re-lighted; and from that hour of promise, the fulfillment has been more and more complete with passing years to all the scattered sons of men. The thunders of Sinai did not drown the whispers of the Eden willows. David, in his day, was not unmindful of the hover-

ing benediction, and seized his harp and sang, "The Lord is my shepherd: I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters." Then David's Lord exclaims, "Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me;" and, at last, he added; "*It is finished!*" Then the promise of Eden was fulfilled; and that is far better than if its literal boundaries had been kept unbroken. The old Eden is lost, that the heavenly Paradise may henceforth be the only attraction for all earth's toiling and troubled people. All the hopes which were kindled in the human heart somewhere near the Euphrates and Tigris at the beginning, became abundant fruitage near the Jordan and Kedron in the fullness of time. If we can not find the garden where Adam sinned, we can find the garden where Jesus suffered; if we can not trace the borders of the earthly Eden, to the mystic Eastward, we can point to Calvary and the cross, and beyond, to the Eden of immortality in heaven, which is far nearer and far better.

But, to-day, opposite Diarbekir, in the dreary Babylonian land, there stands a small village called Cutterbal, desolate and waste, like all the Turkish towns; but there are a few Christians at Cutterbal,

humble, devoted, and happy, who have been won to the Saviour by the words of an American missionary. One of these converts is said to have waded in secret, by night, across the Tigris, groping out to the farther shore from among the willows, prompted by pity for his countrymen, and animated only by Christian love, parting the drooping willow-boughs by one hand, and holding his New Testament in the other, to read and speak of the world's Redeemer. The result of the effort is a church of more than fifty equally zealous members, organized and working for Jesus! There where the harps of the disconsolate Israelites were hung upon the willows, where Zion's songs were silenced in the sadness of captivity, now are heard the exultant hymns of Christian praise. There the native children of the world's Old Eden ground, are learning the melodies of Zion redeemed; and the name of Jesus is honored even by the willow-shored rivers of Babylon, where the Hebrew captives sat down to weep in the ancient days!

The river flowed; the willows stooped;  
The lonely Hebrews crouched and wept;  
The people mocked; the mourners drooped  
Over the memories they kept.

No child of Israel smiles or sings,  
Or smites the harp with cunning hand ;  
We will not speak the sacred things  
Of home, here in the stranger's land.

“Remember Zion once again !  
Remember Zion, Lord,” they cry ;  
“Repent thee, Lord, and turn our pain !”  
Silent the broad, bright waters lie :  
Silent, the shining firmament ;  
Silent, the towers in glory set ;  
Silent, red Edom in his tent  
Sleeps ; *but the Lord will not forget !*

But, one or two special lessons :—

1. *The Willow is a Tree of the Riverside.*  
Willows are mentioned in both passages before us in connection with rivers, or water-courses. This tree grows only in soil saturated perpetually by the moisture of running streams. In speaking of the willow, we intuitively think of the water washing its roots, and reflecting its beautiful proportions of curving branch and rounded foliage. And in selecting from the great variety of willows a single species for this hour's contemplation, our thoughts have been guided to the banks of the Euphrates by the botanical name which scholars have attached to the weeping willow, *Salix Babylonica*, showing at once the sacred historical associations of the tree. This reference is emphasized by the writings of

different authors of ancient times; Herodotus, who pays tribute to the watery willow; and the Latin poet, Ovid, who weaves its pliant and shining boughs into exquisite imagery on pages which shall be honored while rivers run, or time endures.

But, perhaps, nothing more beautiful has ever been said of the willow and its association with the rivers of Babylon, than the lines from a current periodical, by Mrs. Akers:—

O, willow, why forever weep,  
 As one who mourns an endless wrong?  
 What hidden woe can lie so deep?  
 What utter grief can last so long?

The spring makes haste with step elate,  
 Your life and beauty to renew;  
 She even bids the roses wait,  
 And gives her first sweet care to you.

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The sunshine drapes your limbs with light,  
 The rain braids diamonds in your hair,  
 The breeze makes love to you at night,—  
 Yet still you droop, and still despair.

But still, though April's buds unfold,  
 Or summer sets the earth aleaf,  
 Or autumn tints your robes with gold,  
 You sway and sigh in graceful grief.

Mourn on forever, unconsol'd,  
 And keep your secret, faithful tree!  
 No heart in all the world can hold  
 A sweeter grace than constancy.

The willow would die on a desert plain, or a mountain slope; its leaves would turn yellow and wilt in a midsummer's day, and its branches lose their graceful arches by breaking into angular fragments under the heat of the sun, or the pressure of the wind, were there no water to refresh and fructify its thirsty roots. The moisture which the willow requires, is that which comes from running streams, not the dampness of stagnant pools, or salty sea. By clear, fresh-watered rivers, alone, it flourishes in all its vigor and beauty, where every draught taken into its life is pure from a plentiful fountain of supply.

So do Christians spring up as willows by the water courses. They grow best when planted near that stream which makes glad the city of God. In the seventh chapter of the Gospel by St. John, the Holy Spirit is compared to a river. The influence of the Spirit is perpetual and refreshing, like the flowing of a river; and it is this which gives life to the soul. And this river has a channel, the church; and only by drawing near to its reviving current as it flows in the word, in the ordinances, and in the appointments of the gospel, can any human soul be sustained by this heavenly grace.

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If a Christian be removed from his Saviour, and from the ever-flowing graces of the Spirit as communicated through the sacraments of the church, he will wither and die in holiness. Jeremiah writes the record of the man who trusts in mere humanity, who "maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land, and not inhabited."

And then, to draw the most striking contrast between such a self-trusting or man-trusting mortal and the true believer, he adds, "Blessed is the man who trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is: For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit."

The Holy Spirit, in its constant and vitalizing influences, is as essential to Christian growth as springs of water to the willow tree. Though its leaves scatter in autumn upon the waters to be floated away; and though its bare branches are

exposed to the icy blasts that freeze the waters over; still, down beneath the frost, and secluded from the touch of the furious winter's breath, the roots of the willow drink in sweet life for summers to come, and the graceful tree stands unchilled in its place by the river side. So there must be unwavering faith in Christ, through all the changes of fortune and governings of circumstance,—in every condition and relation of life, in sickness and in health, in youth and in old age, on Sabbaths and on weekdays, ever and forever more.

In time of drought, a willow by the water courses is fresh and green, though all other vegetation be crisped and faded by the heat. Its leaf does not wither, because of its root-plantedness by the un-failing river.

And so it is with the Christian "rooted and grounded in love;" he holds his peace and joy, and is vigorous and useful, when all who have trusted in sect or self, in human philosophy, or in any other shallow, unfountained pool of the world, are blighted by spiritual disease and death. How many mistaken men there are trusting in their own inherent strength, far removed from the stream of that blest fountain opened in the

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house of David for sin and uncleanness! How many professors of religion in Christendom who are holding an unnourished foliage of form and word and work, whose hopes are already beginning to wither—whose hearts are already parched hard in unbelief—whose lives shall be utterly consumed by the anger which blazes across the plains where streams of mercy never flow! The righteous spring up as willows by the water courses; while sinners wither away as heath and stubble on barren ground!

Then, come ye all to the waters! Only upon the brink of the living stream that gladdens the city of God, and flows as a river of salvation along the valleys of the world—only on the margin of this healing stream—may any Christian hold his spiritual life and grow in grace, until the eternal atmosphere shall breathe its blessed balm about the soul—until every believer become immortal beside the River of Life!

“There the crystalline stream bursting forth from the throne,  
Flows on and forever will flow;  
Its waves as they roll are with melody rife,  
And its waters are sparkling with beauty and life  
In the land which no mortal may know.  
And there on its margin, with leaves ever green,

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With its fruits healing sickness and woe.  
The fair Tree of Life, in its glory and pride,  
Is fed by that deep, inexhaustible tide  
Of the land which no mortal may know."

2. *The Willow is a Tree of Rapid Growth.*  
Along the Ohio river, where willows have been planted to protect the banks, it is remarkable how soon an abrupt and yellow line of shore becomes willowy-walled in dense and even verdure. Twigs severed from willow trees, and inserted in the moist ground by little children's hands, and no larger in circumference than the tiny fingers that plant them as play, take root, rise, spread, interlock, weave in and through each other, until a mighty forest borders the river, even before the children who assisted in planting it have themselves ceased growing.

The prophet expresses the thought of rapid increase when he says that the willows *spring up* by the water courses. There is scarcely any growing thing which so quickly rises from a reedy shrub to a stately tree, as the willow. And although it develops so rapidly, there is a fineness in its fibers, a polish to its bark and leaves, and a gracefulness in its general contour, which none of the more slowly maturing trees so strikingly exhibit.

So, when a wandering youth or a lost sinner is planted, by repentance and faith, beside the stream of heavenly grace in the church, and receives the influences of the Holy Spirit into the motive-centers of his being, it is surprising how quickly he will develop as a Christian. Although he was set growing in the society of the saints with scarcely a bud of promise, or leaf of life,—a mere spiritual willow sprig,—yet, being nurtured by divine grace, his little, isolated branch-existence soon takes root for itself, and becomes an individual life—a real identity, rising and perfecting in manhood, or womanhood; and thenceforward related to community as a producer of thought and performer of work, rather than as a mere out-pushing, bough-wise, of a family prestige.

The religion of Christ develops men as distinct originals; and every true believer so receives the Spirit of Truth as to best direct and use his talent, his time, and his opportunities in doing good. And this makes religious duty constant pleasure; and, working, the Christian rapidly strengthens in his graces and powers, and springs up into large and symmetrical life, as a willow by the water courses.

How soon, when the spirit of Jesus controls the heart, does the disciple forget the trifling amusements and idol worships of the world; and, in the new relation, constantly sustained by the divine Presence, how quickly he enlarges in affection, in charity, in benevolence, and in all the amiabilities of a living faith! When the breathings of the Spirit enter the interiors of the soul, telling of the better joys of the kingdom of God, Fashion, and Mammon, and Sect, and Fashion are banished in an hour, and Christ takes room!

In times of revival in the church, how often do new converts, whose gifts had thitherto been unknown or buried, suddenly stand up and speak for the Master! The heart cleansed from sin by the blood of Christ, the intellect illuminated by the Holy Spirit, no wonder that there should be a marvelous change in the life and language of the sinner saved by grace! He rises as a new creature, breathing a new atmosphere,—as if indeed the winter were over and gone, and the eternal summer had come; he rises from the cramp stiffness of old habits, from the stagnant level of selfishness, carnality and sin, and, by the grace of God, he springs forth as a willow by the water courses, beautiful in

outer life, and full of peace and glory! Praise the Lord!

But these words are more especially spoken of the young, who are trained in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. By proper home instruction of children from their infancy to love the truths of the Bible,—to respect the sanctuary, the Sabbath, and the sacred ordinances,—to be infused in childhood with the spirit of Christ, and kept ever on the margin of that river which makes glad the Church and City of God;—this is to see them spring forth in the graces of religion as flowers among the grass, and as willows by the water courses.

Parents, the little willow boughs are in your keeping. Have you planted them by the river side? Or are they neglected, and wilting and warping, lying prostrate beneath the scorching sun, in danger every day of that deadness which not even the Holy Spirit may start into everlasting life? Plant them, before they be gathered as branches for burning! Pray and sing and talk with your children, and watch them taking root as young willows along the heavenly river-banks, that they may grow forever! Then, although the Hebrew

captives of old hung their harps upon the willows, and wept by strange Euphrates' shore, you shall stand free and redeemed among more beautiful willows at home, and sing, in chorus with your dear ones all, the songs of Zion, again and again; and, at last, renew the music, without a missing voice, and with golden harps to glorify the sound, beside the River of Life in Heaven!

O, this healing river of redemption! From its Heavenly fountain, how grandly it rolls down the world! How the immortal willows are springing up along its sunny shores!

In this land of light and freedom, you are standing, not by a mournful Euphrates, but on the margin of this glad river of salvation. It flows sparkling at your feet. Stoop down and drink, and live forever.

Here,

“Your harps, ye trembling saints,  
Down from the willows take,  
Loud to the praise of Love divine  
Bid every string awake.”

You are captives no more, oh ye redeemed children of God. Take down your harps! Key high the chords! Send the invitation, as a song of pardoning, emancipating love, from heart to

heart—from home to home ! Send the glad tidings as music in circling echoes around and around the world, to every sad Babylonian plain, to every mourning captive, until the remotest soul shall hear, and awake, and drink, and live, and join the song. Take down your harps. Take up the music. Sing and rejoice until the angels meet you shouting on the river shore !

Then, when the judgment flames have licked up our beautiful rivers and the old rivers of Babylon, and the great oceans between ; when weeping willows rustle over closing graves no more ; when the last tomb-door is opened by the power of the resurrection ; and when the sun itself is veiled in the smoke of a burning world ; then away—away, in the vales of Paradise regained, the River of Life shall flow on forever and forever, widening and sparkling—,no harp upon, nor grave beneath, any willow of its shore ; no captive sitting and weeping upon any of its verdant banks ; but the dead alive ; the long lost found ; the aged young again ; sundered dear ones met ; all harps in tune ; and the new song begun, and every soul eternally happy and free !

## VI.

# T H E P A L M T R E E.

*The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree.*

Ps. xcii. 12.

*They took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. JOHN xii. 13.*

*A great multitude stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and with palms in their hands. REV. vii. 9.*



**A**MONG the Bible trees there is no one more prominent or significant than the palm tree. It is first mentioned on the sacred pages in the account of Israel's escape from Egyptian bondage, when its branches were taken, with the boughs of thick trees and willows from the brook, and woven together as a nightly covert or tabernacle within whose protection the freed pilgrims, resting on their journey to the promised land, rejoiced before the Lord.

The last reference to the palm is by St. John, in the book of Revelation, when he beheld the ransomed multitude, clothed with white robes, and waving palm branches of victory in the heavenly

Canaan above. A token of joy when the Israelite begins his march through the wilderness, the palm branch is seen at last in the hand of the Christian as he stands crowned and exultant by the River of Life. Of no other tree can it be said, that, after serving its purpose on earth, it is named and honored in heaven as a gift to redeemed immortals, bestowed by the same Hand which confers the robe, the crown, and the harp of the blest. And of all the intermediate references to the palm tree, from the beginning of the Old Testament to the close of the New, the casual mention of its branches having been waved along the Saviour's pathway as he rode into Jerusalem, amidst the clapping hosannas of the people, has the greatest significance. For here the enlightened eye is lifted from the thronging crowd, the judgment hall of Pilate, the cross of Calvary, and the tomb of Joseph, to the streets of the New Jerusalem, the throne of the King of kings, and the welcoming applauses of saints and angels when the everlasting doors are opened, and the Lord of glory returns.

No wonder that this tree, so tall, so stately, and so fruitful, should have been selected by the Psalmist as an emblem of the righteous! In all ages, the

palm tree has been the poet's theme, the artist's delight, and the traveler's joy. The Hindoo scholar, Amarasinga, long before the Christian era, crowned the palm tree "king among the grasses." In later days, and in enlightened lands, the honor has been confirmed by all, who, in the words of Lenæus, agree in proclaiming the palm the "prince of vegetation." It is indeed a royal tree. Strong, majestic, unchangeable, rich in inexhaustible treasure, and wearing a coronal of fadeless beauty, its claim is conceded by the world.

The Greeks gave to the palm the name of their fabled bird with ruby breast and golden plumage, the Phoenix, which, when destroyed, arose again in broader strength and more brilliant life; for when the tree was consumed by fire, it literally fulfilled the marvel of springing up young and beautiful from the ashes of its ruin.

The Egyptians associated the palm with their sacred flower, the Lotus, an emblem of immortality. Even to this day, it is the custom of the women of that ancient land, to break palm branches over the graves of loved ones, and to strew the leafy fragments about the tombs. In Cairo, every Friday, branches of the palm tree are conveyed by devout

Arabs, and, with solemn religious ceremony, laid upon the graves of relatives and friends who sleep in the dust.

The early Christians read, in the upright, uprising palm tree, the truth, vividly emblemized, of "the victory that overcometh the world." When a saint suffered martyrdom, exultingly dying in the faith, he was said to have "won the palm." The same thought, by association, comes down to our own time in such expressions as "bearing the palm," and "in his palmy days." The resurrection, also, was typified to our primitive fathers by this apparently never-dying tree; and in holy faith a branch of its evergreen was laid over the heart of every one who died in the Lord, and was buried with the body, as a pledge of rising again and living forever.

The palm tree in its uses,—furnishing, through its different varieties, to the inhabitants of the countries where it grows, fruit, bread, wine, milk, honey, sugar and oil; wax, ivory, paper, cups, salt, vinegar, and medicine; fibers to be woven into cloth; cradles for infants, and coffins for the dead,—stands pre-eminently the friend of man and the servant of God. There are, it is said, about six hundred varieties of the palm tree, and wherever it flour-

ishes, it is a minister of good. As a tree of the desert oasis, of the tangled forest, of the coral islands of the sea, or of the slopes of the mountain,—a bearer of food, of clothing, of shade, or of medicine,—the palm is an emblem of the true, the beautiful, the grand, and the glorious in the lives of men.

In the Song of Solomon, Christ is represented as addressing his Bride, the church, in the words, “This thy stature is like to a palm tree,” recognizing in this tribute of admiration, her strength and majesty when looked upon in her complete proportions. Holiness in individual Christians becomes a beauty which adorns the whole church with grace and glory, and Jesus is delighted in viewing the unifold possession of it by his people; and exclaims, as if addressing his beloved *One*, “How fair and how pleasant art *thou!*”

1. *The Palm Tree is Straight and Uprising in Stature.* Palms are exceedingly tender when young, and it is common for culturers to plant several of them together, so that, rising, they may strengthen each other by interlocking their boughs, and thus grow up mutually supported, until they become tall and strong trees, when some of them may be re-

moved to make room for the maturer development of the remaining ones. In wild forest plains, also, young palm trees arise in groups.

Firmly rooted, the palm holds fast its place in every soil, whether it be in shifting sands, on the arid rock, along the cliff-side of the mountain, or down in the timbered valley's fertile ground. It rises tall and straight in its trunk, branching near the top in a crown-like cluster of boughs, covered with dark green glossy leaves, growing on long and slender stalks, and curving gracefully outward and downward until the feathery tips of its pendent foliage are swayed like tresses of hair in the breeze. There are no branches starting out irregularly from the sides of this towering tree; but all its verdure is made to unfold high up toward the sunlight of heaven; and of all green things that grow, the palm-leaves are first to meet the refreshing dews and rains as they fall.

The palm tree becomes vigorous in proportion to the pressure it has to resist; and no matter what obstruction of the forest may fall upon it, it can never be warped out of its upright course, but will rise against and through all barriers, straight and true to its nature as the princely palm, worthy of

its crown of evergreen above the swinging tops of all other trees. The Greeks chose the palm as a type of the true athlete, one never to be overcome or cast down; and for the significance of this virtue, the sculptured columns of ancient temples were frequently ornamented with representations of the palm tree.

So the Christian rises. When young, he is tender and timid, and if left alone, might easily be crushed. But the Heavenly Culturer has provided for the care of the young convert by instituting the church and its associations. How often do we see a company of young people influenced by the Holy Spirit at once, and simultaneously springing up to life in Christ! They are planted near together, as young palm trees, so that, by sympathizing word, by arm-entertwining confidence and help, they may mutually strengthen each other as they grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord. And as they become rooted and grounded in love, and confirmed in habits of holiness, and in the experiences of true religion, they receive the strength to rise against oppositions; until, by the grace of God, every disappointment, every sorrow, every persecution, instead of being a hindrance to the development

of the Christian, becomes the occasion of more compact, decided growth, and the necessary discipline by which to overcome the temptations of the world.

The righteous man tends upward eternally. His heart is set on those things which are above. He rises steadily, surely, omnipotently in Christ Jesus, who is his life, every day acquiring symmetry and majesty and power and beauty in the Lord. As the palm tree rises to wear its coronal of evergreen high over surrounding trees when their boughs are naked in the winter storm, so the Christian rises to wear his crown of everlasting life when the great throng of summer-foliaged moralists are stripped and shivering before the judgment!

The Christian, with his affections fixed on eternal things, can not be crushed. The more the world piles weights upon him, the more stoutly and perpendicularly does he grow. He may be criticised, censured, burlesqued, abused; but, no matter,—he grows right up through all triumphantly, the stronger, the taller, and the more beautiful. He can not be kept under. Earth has no power to divert, nor hell to subdue, his consecrated spirit. Because Christ is risen, he seeks those things

which are above. He must rise, growing and glowing in health and glory, over all oppositions.

“But he, who lets his feelings run  
In soft luxurious flow,  
Shrinks when hard service must be done,  
And faints at every woe.  
Faith’s meanest deed more favor bears,  
Where hearts and wills are weighed,  
Than brightest transports, choicest prayers,  
Which bloom their hour, and fade.”

Do I address any young disciples whom the world is watching with jealous eye? Yes: and no doubt you have felt the pressure put against you to prevent your spiritual advancement. Some of you may have been checked and stunted in your growth by such rubbish as the opera, the dance, the theater; others by mammon weights; others by the mere chaff of fashion drifting across you; and not having the life of Christ hid deep in your hearts, and doubting away the proffered helps of the Spirit, you are about to be overgrown by the rank weeds of the world and buried in the darks of forgottenness forever. O, be brave! If an inanimate palm tree, amid the tanglings of the forest, pushes aside the material weights that would interrupt its rise into the free sunshine above deciduous leaves, if it outgrows the trees that would hide its

royal diadem, be *you* brave in the strength of Jesus Christ, O immortal men and women, and rise by faith and love through all temptations and troubles to a range high over the shadows of sense and passion, into the light which never darkens, and receive the crown that never fades away!

“ How are we living?

Like herbs in a garden that stand in a row,  
And have nothing to do but to stand there and grow?

Our powers of perceiving

So dull and so dead,

They simply extend to the objects about us,—

The moth, having all his dark pleasure without us,—

The worm in his bed!

“ If thus we are living,

And fading, and falling, and rotting, alas!—

Like the grass, or the flowers that grow in the grass,—

Is life worth our having?

The insect a-humming,—

The wild bird is better, that sings as it flies,—

The ox, that turns up his great face to the skies,

When the thunder is coming.

“ Where are we living?

In passion, and pain, and remorse do we dwell,—

Creating, yet terribly hating, our hell?

No triumph achieving?

No grossness refining?

The palm tree does more; for his coat of rough barks

He trims with green mosses, and checks with the marks

Of the long summer shining.

“We’re dying, not living :  
Our senses shut up, and our hearts faint and cold ;  
Upholding old things just because they are old ;  
Our good spirits grieving,  
We suffer our springs  
Of promise to pass without sowing the land,  
And hungry and sad in the harvest-time stand  
Expecting good things !”\*

St. Paul, in referring to Christian training, says that “tribulation worketh patience ; and patience, experience, and experience, hope ;” “for,” he adds, “I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”

Another lesson is here : As the palm tree, (unlike the banyan which turns its boughs to the ground again, and grows downward and spreads and fastens itself by a hundred ties to the earth,) puts out no lateral branch below its crownly top, but uses all its sap to roundly develop that into foliage and fruit,—so is the true Christian’s life-energy single and concentrate. There is no compromise with sin. There is no bending to the world. There is no connivance at hypocrisy. There is no branching out as a mere fashionist, or sectarian, or politician—no wasting of substance

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\* Alice Cary.

in vain speculations. There is a definite object in view—the attainment of holiness and heaven; and every thought strikes up in that direction; and every prompting of the Spirit being for the accomplishment of that exalted purpose, every word is sincere, and every action honest. There is an uprightness in the Christian character which no words so well express as *yea* and *amen*!

The church to-day suffers in symmetry, and is deficient in power, because so many of her professed members are undecided in life. There are doubting disciples, as distorted and unsightly in character, as a palm tree would be with the monstrosity of irregular lateral branches drooping to the earth and dragging in the dust. And whenever these world-hearted people stand in the church, growing sidewise and crooked and knotted by the unwholesome stimulants of passion and pride,—no wonder that they should be as sickly in soul as they are dwarfed in stature. For all of love that the world draws aside and perverts, is utterly lost from the heart; and even should these alien growths be trimmed away at last, the scars will remain to mar the form, and to excite sad memories always.

The wax palm of the Andes, encrusted with a

singular substance which it exhales through the bark, has a lofty and even trunk, straight and white as a column of marble. Its top is star-like in form, coronated with bright, unfading green ; while the under surfaces of its leaves are tinted in silvery beauty. It is seen from a great distance, and, as the sunbeams glitter upon its snow-white form and its diadem of emerald, it is a marvel of grandeur and brilliance.

What an emblem of the true Christian, standing on the mountains of sin, clothed in the white robe of the Saviour's righteousness, crowned with fadeless royalty, unshaken by persecutions, a faithful witness of the truth, with the heavenly sunshine dazzling in glory from his brow, seen from afar, and known and honored by angels and men !

To spring upward, bearing the greatest beauty of foliage, the richest burden of fruit, and the amplest breadth of power toward the skies, is the one aim of the palm tree's life—the only impulse of its being. And so does the Christian—the purest, comeliest, kingliest creature beneath the sun —spring upward toward heaven, white and radiant in the spotless robe of Jesus ; with a heart full of praise and honor and blessing and power, all to

be cast at the blessed Redeemer's feet in the crown-land of heaven!

Who would not forego the sinful pleasures of the world and the ephemeral praises of men, and use all events of life, joyful and grievous, as helps in rising to the high, full, magnificent stature of men and women in Christ Jesus? "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree"—quietly, patiently, constantly, triumphantly! The Christian rises higher in grace and glory as the summers and winters are added to his life, improving the changes of time and circumstance, like the palm tree, which, with the circling of the seasons, adds rings of wooded growth to its trunk, becoming more firm and fruitful with age. Worldly men may rise more rapidly to distinction in the sphere of commerce, politics, literature, art, or science; but the Christian grows and gains character for eternity. The blessed experiences of his life of faith on earth shall be part of his immortality in heaven.

There is a fable of a gourd which climbed the tall stem of the palm tree, and having reached the summit, mockingly questioned the royal tree:—

"How long have you been in reaching this height?"

“A hundred years,” replied the palm.

“What think you then of me?” said the gourd;  
“in a few days I have reached the same height  
which you have required so many years to attain?”

“I think nothing of that,” responded the palm,  
“for every year of my life, I have seen a gourd  
wind itself about my trunk, as proud and as self-  
confident as thou art, and as short-lived as thou  
wilt be.”

You can not bend the Eastern palm;—  
    With binding force unriven,  
It springs, elastic, from the ground,  
    In the pure air of Heaven.  
It lifts its undishonored brow,  
    With fadeless verdure crested;  
It will not cleave unto the dust,  
    Where once its shade had rested.  
And Eastern sons their towering palms,  
    A living wealth inherit!  
Our fathers left us one, alone,—  
    The Palm Tree of the Spirit!

The innate freedom of the soul,  
    Above Earth's elinquant praises,  
Above its low, polluting fears,  
    Its lordly brow upraises.  
It will not stoop to prospered wrong;  
    It will not yield to sorrow;  
It will not bend the low applause  
    Of sordid minds to borrow.  
The world may smile on painted Fraud,  
    And Honor laugh at Merit,  
But adverse Fate can never bow  
    The Palm Tree of the Spirit!

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It springs beside the northern pine,  
Amid the southern roses,  
And where the shadow of the clouds  
On prairie grass reposes.  
Wherever, bright and undefiled,  
The fount of truth is flowing,  
Wherever beats an honest heart,  
You find it proudly growing!  
Let Fortune's sons Fame's laurel wreath,  
Earth's glittering wealth inherit;  
The humblest soul is rich, that owns  
The Palm Tree of the Spirit!\*

2. *The Palm Tree is Abundantly Fruitful.* It has not only a stately trunk and crownly foliage of evergreen; but it supplies ample food to the inhabitants of the countries where it flourishes. It begins to yield fruit when four or five years old, and continues to bear richly for more than a century. This is a conspicuous property of all varieties of palms. Twelve thousand blossoms have been counted on a single spathe of the date palm. The Hindoo tala, a species of palm tree, is the chief support of millions of people. The sago palms, or moluccas, of Polynesia, furnish the staff of life to the countless multitudes of souls on that island-world of the distant sea. In South America, the palm is equally prolific, the greater part of the

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\* Marian Douglass, in *Our Schoolday Visitor*, vol. xii. p. 320.

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population of the wild interiors of that continent depending on its varied products for sustenance and comfort. There is no other tree which yields such a profusion of fruit, and such a diversity of essentials to the human family.

The Christian is known by his fruits. It is not enough to have the name written on the church register, and a symmetry of formal service; to pronounce the phrases of orthodoxy, to sing, to pray, and to contribute to the support of the gospel in a general way. There is something better than stateliness and respectability in the Christian character. And that *something better* is just what the world needs, and waits to see and taste. There must be the fruits of the Spirit; and of these even the thoughts of childhood are buds and blossoms, for they form and grow and ripen early, like the fruit of the palm tree; and, as the maturer years enlarge the faculties and affections of life, the wealth of fruitage increases more and more; and no Christian ever becomes too old to bear fruit to the honor and glory of God.

The fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. The Saviour himself says, that,

“every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he (the Divine Husbandman), taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit. Herein is my Father glorified, *that ye bear much fruit.*”

Paul, addressing the Colossians, and speaking of the gospel heard and believed, says that it “bringeth forth fruit.”

From the teaching of the Saviour and his apostles, we see that unless there be these fruits of the Spirit clustered to prominence, and ripening daily in the disciple's life, there is no attachment to Christ. And when there is no attachment to Him, the branches must wither, and be gathered, and burnt. King David compares the righteous to the fruitful palm tree; and King David's greater Son teaches that the prosperity of a disciple shall be measured, not by the mere foliage of promise, or symmetry of doctrine; but by the bearing of spiritual fruit.

Every professor must be a performer. Every believer must be a talker and a worker, that faith may have wholesome exercise and grow. There

are good works to be done so outwardly and so commonly that sinners may see them without microscopes or money,—and seeing, shall comprehend them from motive out to result—from blossom to sweet maturity—as sound, legitimate productions of Christian life, and be so led to glorify God. No work should be done to elicit self-praise or sect-eulogy ; but only and always to bring glory to God. No denominational statistics should for a moment prompt an effort to increase the figures for figures' sake. No individual church should take credit for soul-saving, because of its peculiar forms or superior methods ; for “ not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.” No minister should indulge the imagination that he is commissioned with any papal or lordly power in the heritage of saints, or assume the prerogative of monopolizing territory, and commanding laborers to work by line and letter in winning men. The world reads no sign more readily than the “ We, Us and Company” of clerical Christendom ! All these assumptions and presumptions, both in individual disciples and in organized societies, are superfluous leaves, absorbing vitality which God intended to go into fruits, such as meekness,

charity, forbearance, and brotherly kindness. Unless a Christian prune these tendencies away from his heart by prayer—unless a church engage the vigilance of *all* its pious people, ordained and unordained, it will speedily cover itself with rankling, rustling leaves in glorification of self, and have no place for a single specimen of fruit which hungering souls may see, and seeing, taste, and tasting, be led to glorify their Father and our Father who is in heaven.

How many Christians there are, like the barren fig tree, producing nothing but leaves! They stand and spread a magnificent show of foliage in the form of promising words, summer-shine devotions, and all that; but when the Saviour comes along hungry for fruit, and expectant, he finds not a taste on all the leafy boughs. And if he cursed a fruitless wayside *tree* to perpetual barrenness, will he excuse the cultured *disciple*, claiming his name, professing his grace, and standing in his church, if there be no fruits of the Spirit in all such rustling life? Like the palm tree which draws blossoms out of frost, and sweetness out of desert dust, and gathers strength to bear its burdens by wrestling with the storm, the Christian draws hope

from disappointments, grace from worldly work, and acquires strength as a constant and abundant bearer of fruit by grappling with oppositions.

There is a wild species of this tree, in some countries called the "toddy-palm;" and many of the people where it grows are said to be sad drunkards, for the draughts from this aerial cellar are stealthily procured. The toddy-drinker climbs the tree to the soft fronds, which have been tied together to prevent the development of blossoms, and makes a notch in the trunk, close under the tufted leaves. The juice issuing from the puncture is conducted by means of a small funnel made of palm leaf, to a vessel suspended below to receive it. The liquid soon ferments, and the ingenious tipplers of the forest become intoxicated. Of course the operation of toddy-drawing spoils the fruit, and destroys the tree. The palm trunk is made zig-zag, scarred, and crooked from the practice of annually tapping the alternate sides for toddy.

No wonder that such mischievous conduct should ruin the upright stature of the tree. Striking analogy, here! for indulgence in drunkenness always leads to the loss of the upright stature and dignity of the man. You smile at the habit of the barbarian

toddy-climber. It is far less ludicrous than the distilling processes of Christendom, where enlightened men take God's wheat and corn, which grow for bread, and make them rotten by method and machinery, turning all their purity and sweetness into poisonous stimulants to destroy the bodies and souls of the people. Such business becomes too awfully serious in its tendencies to pass unrebuked. Oh, the zig-zag, crooked, broken-bodied men and women, the result of this unrighteous traffic! May the day speedily dawn when all the ransomed church shall bear, not only abundant, but mature and perfect fruit, unembittered by tears and unspotted by blood—the precious fruit of good will and good works to men, and glory and honor and thanksgiving to God!

3. *The Palm Branch is an Emblem of Victory.* The Romans, after conquering Judea, chose the figure of a captive woman seated under a palm tree as the device for their coins and banners. They were unaware of the deep significance of the design.\* But throughout the heathen, as well as the Christian world, for ages immemorial, the

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\* Judges iv. 5, 6.

palm branch has been the acknowledged emblem of victory.

As the dove, a-wing with an olive branch in its mouth, is the universal token of peace,—and the weeping willow is the type of sorrow wherever graves are known ; so the palm branch is here, and shall be hereafter, for the conqueror's hand. From the day the pilgrims to Canaan, with waving palms, rejoiced in the delivering power of God,—through the conflicts and triumphs of all lands and ages till time shall end,—and on the Heavenly Canaan-ground pressed by the feet of redeemed immortals, the palm has been, and shall be forever more, the victor's pledge of a power that overcometh.

When the Saviour rides into Jerusalem from Olivet, the people hail him with hosannas, strew their garments at his feet, and wave palms of applauding welcome along his path. But this uplifted homage, transient as it is sudden, only marks the way to the uplifted cross. He is greeted as King of Israel ; but not as King of kings. His triumph is great, but not complete. These shouts of popular tribute shall cease with the hour ; the morrow's sun shall find these gay palm branches wilting in the dust. For Jesus passes on through

all this turbulent adoration to sad Gethsemane,—on to the judgment seat of Pilate,—on over the scattered garments of the people's praise, to wear the cast-off purple robe and crown of thorns; on to Calvary and the cross. The rejected Saviour is nailed to the wood, and groans, and bleeds, and dies. The earth is dark at noon. The vail of the temple is rent in twain from top to bottom by a descending power which cleaves the rocks asunder and opens the graves of the dead!

The Crucified is taken down from the cross. The inscription on the wood—the letters all stained with blood—remains legible in the strange twilight, "JESUS OF NAZARETH, KING OF THE JEWS." The Hebrew, Greek, and Latin words *all* spotted with blood! The world is still. The new sepulcher receives the body of the Lord. The hopes of the disciples seem buried with Jesus. The bewildered friends go down to their homes, silent, forlorn, and desolate. The Master is dead. Oh, why did the noisy people wave palm branches in the street, and so soon drive nails and thrust spears on the hill! Has the world the victory at last, because the palm branches have fallen and faded away?

Two strangely tedious days pass by. The

trampled grass on Calvary begins to rise from the pressure of unhallowed feet. The fresh ground at the foot of the cross is yet moist and purple with the life-blood of Jesus. But he lies cold in Joseph's tomb. Oh, why did palm branches wave him King of Israel, when so soon the King of Terrors should hold dominion over him!

Brethren, that was not Roman power, but Omnipotent power, displayed on Calvary, that day! It was not Roman justice, but Divine justice that was satisfied!

For, the third day, the Redeemer rose triumphant from the grave, and all heaven echoed with hallelujahs of victory! He *was* King, and *is* King forever—King of Life; for he conquered the last Enemy down in his own dark dominion, and arose a Victor for all who sleep in the grave. Hosanna! Blessed be the King of Israel, *and of all Gentile nations also*, who cometh in the name of the Lord!

Now the scattered disciples assemble again, timid and afraid no longer; but bold and irrepensible, they preach Jesus and the resurrection. Now they comprehend the meaning of the Master's words, when he said, "It is expedient that I should go away, and send another Comforter." In the

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flesh Jesus was a weary itinerant of Palestine; but the promised Comforter is omnipresent. *Our Lord's visible form did not give his disciples the courage to watch with him one hour; BUT HIS COMFORTING SPIRIT HAS MADE MANY A CHRISTIAN WELCOME THE MARTYR'S STAKE, AND SING HOSANNAS IN THE FLAMES IN HONOR OF HIS NAME!*

Dear friends, it is better to live to-day, and to have the influence of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, than to have walked hand-in-hand with Christ along the vales of Galilee, or to have waved a palm, and shouted a hosanna as he entered the old Jerusalem long ago; for now is he the risen Victor over death, hell and the grave, and the prevailing Intercessor with the Father; and now is the day of the free Spirit of salvation to every believer, wherever he may be, and whatever his condition, or nation, or nature, or name.

Let the palm branches wave again and again in the hands of all pilgrims below, and forever and ever in the hands of the white-robed millions above! Henceforth the way to heaven is a King's highway of holiness. "The unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there,

nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon; but the redeemed shall walk there: And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

O dear ones departed, though we can not see your faces now, nor hear your voices, we love you still. Never mind our trials and tears. Wave your palms. Strike your harps. We are coming. Your heaven is our home. We are rising through tribulations gladly, for the sake of the white robes. We are bearing our crosses patiently, for the sake of the crowns. We are willing to be lonely in the world a little longer, for the sake of your celestial company by-and-by and forever. Wave, O wave your fadeless palms in victory for us; though "it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He who redeemed us shall appear, we shall be like Him; FOR WE SHALL SEE HIM AS HE IS!"

“Palms of glory, raiment white,  
Crowns which never fade away,  
Gird and deck the saints in light;  
Priests, and kings, and conquerors they.

Yet the conquerors bring their palms  
To the Lamb amidst the throne,  
And proclaim in joyful psalms,  
Victory through his cross alone!"

# Pulpit Opinions on Common Things.



## I.

### THE RAIN.

*For as the rain cometh down from heaven and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater.*

*So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. ISAIAH IV. 10, 11.*



THE ocean, boundless and unfailing, is the fountain of all rains. Salt, stormy and treacherous, yet it is of vaster value to men than if its channels were filled with ingots of gold. Foaming and restless forever, yet it is a far more faithful friend and benefactor than any of the solid materialities of the earth. It is the inexhaustible storehouse of man's nourishment. It regulates the temperature of all lands. It rolls its billows day and night to cool, to warm, to purify and fructify the dusty ground on which we dwell. Our bread comes up out of the sea. Our clothes

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come up out of the sea. Our fruits grow and ripen from a power sent up out of the sea. God's commissioned minister to man it is, anticipating and meeting the wants of a living world.

What an interesting study is the formation of a rain-cloud ! Without any visible pillars of support, it rests in grandeur across the sky, dense and heavy with a reservoir of water lifted from the sea. In due time, the wisdom of God broadcasts the showers so gently and refreshingly as to receive a welcome from the tenderest grass and tiniest flower far below. There is never an accident in the economy of nature that tears a cloud asunder, and empties its fullness down in cataracts to drown and to destroy.

O, the blessed water ! It smiles in its mountain sources ; it chatters and prattles in the little brooks ; it laughs out loud and heartily in river rapids ; it sings its diapasons in the sea. Thence it ascends the heavens again, purified and glorified, to accept new errands of blessing to the ever-craving earth. This self-regulating process of evaporation and condensation has existed from the creation of the world. The earth's life, unlike that of animals, is continued by aerial instead of arterial circulation.

The vital currents are without. The sun exhales the vapor from the earth; the atmosphere receives and sustains it; the clouds become the sailing vessels of transportation, and it is distributed by them in a manner exactly suited to the irrigation of the soil and the nurturing of vegetation. Thus the whole earth is perpetually refreshed, and enabled to sustain its myriad growths. The fountains are fed out of heaven; the brooks and rivers are replenished; and the ground of all continents is made ready for the hand of the farmer. By this simple process of making rain, and sending it free and widecast over the earth, God performs a work which underlies all possibilities for bread and drink and very life. He provides the seed for the sower, prepares the ground upon which it rests and takes root, and prepares the agencies by which it swells, and springs, and grows, and blossoms, and matures, and whitens into bread. Unless the Omnipotent Hand were opened day and night, and all the year, the methods of men would be useless and vain.

How bountiful and yet how precious is the water! Think of the weary soldier—your brother—crossing plains, climbing mountains, beneath a sweltering sun, until fatigue fevers his blood, and

dries his flesh, marching on to meet a battle, and to bear his part in the fearful carnage, until, at last, unable to stand, he falls down beside what was always a cool meadow brook, but is now a crimson stream, red with human gore, and there in his greedy thirst to drink and drink of that! How would the famishing soldier seize a cup of cold water, bright, sparkling water, such as he has often dreamed of, poor fellow—*only* dreamed of—gurgling from the orchard-spring at home!

Were you ever in the country in a time of drought, when wells were empty and springs were dry; when the heavens seemed as brass; when the blades and leaves were curled and crisped in the sun; when the soil was scorched to a crust of ashes; when the cattle went down instinctively to the valleys and pawed among the hot pebbles for drink; when every plant and shrub, with bowed head, seemed pleading and waiting for rain? And did you watch the distant cloud arise, the size of a man's hand? Did you see it spreading and enlarging and darkening and coming at God's command, until it shadowed the whole half circle of your horizon; and did you listen to the solo-prelude of the music singing in the leaves, and then dash-

ing in full glad chorus all around? How the crystal currents cooled the air! What a clapping of hands for very joy among the trees! What a rich baptism from the rainbowed fountains of the Lord! The upturned cups of the garden flowers were filled to bubbling over. The pebbly-bottomed bowl of the brooks was surged with swimming water. The drooping plants lifted up their heads, for in bowing they had received each one a jeweled crown, and rejoiced and waved their shining spears in homage to the rain. The orchards and fields revived and smiled as the balmy incense of heaven was shed in fragrance and freshness through all the summer air. Blessed rain-drops, lifted by the hand of Omnipotence from the sea, borne landward by his breath, held hovering over the dusty soil for an hour, and diffused in health-giving, wealth-giving showers, and sent cleansing away down the earth! Even the little birds,—Sons and Daughters of Temperance are they!—clad in heavenly regalia of red, white and blue, caroling new pass-words every morning—even the little birds that sip water from the pendent leaf-cups of the woods, turn up their tiny throats toward God with every delicious swallow, as if they knew the Giver of Mercies!

Then why should not we, immortal beings, see our Father in his gifts, and be ever grateful for the unending benedictions that fall upon us out of his broad and high, though sometimes clouded, firmament of Good ?

Out in the natural world we have seen a wise adaptation of agencies to produce beneficial results, as already shown in the laws of the dew and the light. The same instruction is drawn from the Rain, and, as we shall see, in many other processes of nature. The material universe is full of agents, co-operative, each, in its own proper sphere, with every other, in fulfilling the infinite desigus.

The sun's beams animate the earth, quicken its vegetation, and invite upward and outward, in the influence of prevailing winds, a power which distills the rain, and brings it in due seasons and proportions. The sun lifts the water as vapor from the ocean's broad basin, distributes it through the infinite ranges of the atmosphere, collects it in clouds, and moves it by winds to regions most remote, up to elevations of temperature where it chills and condenses into drops, and thence it is scattered by the law of gravitation as rain upon the earth.

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Now, these illustrations of the Father's goodness and care we should recognize about us in nature's world. They are legitimate themes of study. They are vivid texts for sermons. Be not hesitant to talk of them and profit by them and enjoy them, merely because some conservative Christian may, in his blindness, pronounce them sensational subjects. All the works of God are worthy of our attention. To investigate the common things of creation that crowd around us will lead us to better thoughts of God and greater reliance upon his protection. In these studies we may learn to read many special Providences; and from the lessons of Nature and Providence, we are persuaded that in the moral world, God is equally the source of all good influences—that his Word is the avenue through which his mercies flow free and pure and plenteous to all mankind. "For as the rain cometh down from heaven, \* \* \* so shall my word be," saith the Lord by the lips of the prophet, "it shall not return unto me void; but it shall accomplish that which I please, and prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

The truth proclaimed by the prophet concerning Messiah's advent is above and beyond the methods,

monarchies and monopolies of men—as are the preparation and distribution of the rain. This truth comes from a fountain so vast and deep, that the whole ocean, in comparison, is but as a drop, an iota of invisible mist. The grand facts of a Christ, his birth, his life, his suffering, his death, his resurrection, his ascension, his intercession, and the consequent universal extension of his kingdom, and the dissemination of all the essential doctrines of salvation,—these great facts are all associated with the word that cometh down from Heaven. These are the central truths which permeate the whole system of revelation, binding together all history, all literature, all science, and all art in beautiful proportions. The Gospel of Jesus Christ comes to earth as glad tidings of great joy to all people. It comes with a purpose and a power, as the rain comes. It comes free and impartial and broadcast, as the rain comes. It comes to cheer and nurture and bless, as the rain comes. It comes to swell the buds, to open the flowers, to brighten the foliage, to ripen the harvests, and to sweeten the fruits in humanity's great garden, as the rain comes. And like the rain, with the resistless law of gravitation behind it, so the

word of truth comes with the Omnipotent, "shall accomplish" behind it, when it reaches the ears and hearts of the people.

The farmer does not order ten thousand buckets added to his list of agricultural implements, so that water may be carried from adjacent wells and rivers to moisten his planted fields. He depends on the invisible agencies of the natural world to lift the water from the distant ocean, to transport it in vapors, and to scatter the gladdening drops upon his furrowed corn and harrowed wheat. No man can cultivate his farm without faith in the higher power. And so it is with the man who cultivates his own heart. He feels that he must grow in grace and in knowledge. But he can not comfort himself with the ten thousand shallow compliments dipped out of the wells and currents of society, however bright and sparkling. Such refreshings are artificial and easily dried away. The heart intuitively expects something out of the pure regions above. It looks beyond rituals, creeds and ceremonies; beyond all sect-patented philosophies and confessions; beyond all systems of moral policy and bodily performance—up to the heavens of ampler revelation—up to the infinite sources of

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all growth and glory. The heart has faith that the eternal power which created, can renew and redeem; but it trusts in nothing less. It looks up beseechingly to the Will Divine, and expects that all its thirstings for the gracious rain shall and must be supplied. It meets the heavenly word with an amen and a welcome, and opens its inmost recesses to the reviving power. In such a heart, as in the heart of a tender flower withering for rain, the blessed word falls to restore and glorify; and as the greeted rain brings odor from the reviving flower-heart, so a soul that receives the word of truth is made to offer its incense of praise for the mercy.

Now, this word, which is compared to the rain, is contained in the Sacred Scriptures. The promises of the Bible are the seasonably falling rains upon thirsty souls. When rain-drops have fallen, the clouds that held them are vanished and gone. So when the spirit of God's word thrills in refreshing baptism to the heart, the page of lettered forms is unseen. The eye meets the printed words and reads them; but the soul, the keener scholar, recognizes their intensive meaning, and drinks that in revivingly, as a flower drinks in the

descending drops that fall out of shadows, until shadows are rainbowed over and shined away!

God's communications have been divinely given to men. There has been a direct and personal interview, and a mutual understanding exists between worlds on this subject. Of this Sinai's mountain still stands an unburied witness. Heaven's law, as adapted to fallen man, was written on two tables of stone, and revealed to this world through Moses. That cloud, awful, dark and thunderous, which gathered about the summit of the Asiatic mountain thousands of years ago, was surcharged with benedictions in disguise, such as the perishing world most needed then, and ever more thirsts to receive. God inspired holy men of old with clear perceptions of his truth, and they have written his Thoughts and Will, and to us they come as the words of eternal authority. The Psalmist, referring to the source of all instruction, guidance, counsel, admonition, joy and hope, says, "Give me understanding according to thy word." "Order my steps in thy word." "By the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer." "Quicken me according to thy word." "I hope in thy word."

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This word is reaching the wide world by varied methods of communication. The power that diffuses it among the nations is the same that distills the dew, flashes the light, and forms and distributes the rain. The very elements, fire, air, and water, are taught to manufacture Bibles; and the vegetable, animal and mineral kingdoms are made contributory to the promulgation of the word, until it shall fall, ere long, upon all nations, copious and welcome as the rain. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit unite in proclaiming full and free salvation to the world; and the language of inspiration shall accomplish the Divine pleasure, and prosper in the people's complete restoration to holiness and heaven. God's word shall not return unto him void. Its agencies are omni-operative and distinct. Its influences on the moral world resemble those of the dew, the light and the rain in the world of nature.

The press disseminates the truth. By this instrumentality, God's word is indefinitely multiplied. The rags gathered from the streets to-day, may, to-morrow, in Bible pages, be as clouds of white-winged messengers, bearing the glad news afar! For as the bitter sea-billows and murky

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pools contribute to the fertility of the earth by evaporation—sending to needy growths the rains of summer,—so do the worn-out clothes, and husks, and chimney soots of the world, by the economy and skill of Christianized science, changed into Bibles, go abroad as comely itinerants ordained of God, publishing joy to the people.

This very pulpit Bible before us to-night, showing us the text, is itself a literal convert from rags and waste and ruin: and it teaches, by its material as well as by its spirit, that every sinner, ragged, wretched and ruined—a mere wreck and shred of a better creation—may be himself converted by divine grace into a “living epistle read and known of all men”—a proclaimer by soul, body and spirit, of the glad news to others ever more.

The word of salvation reaches the people and accomplishes its purpose through various appointed agencies. By home instruction the little children of Christendom receive their first impression of religion: by Sabbath school influences and associations, thousands are brought to a knowledge of the Saviour’s love and led to confess their allegiance to heaven; by casual conversation in business, in travel, and in social communion, the word of God

is made to touch the human heart by its magical meaning; and tearful prayers and joyful expectations blend in sweetest accord to convey the gospel to the soul.

Christian example is an effectual means of communicating the word to sinners. No language is so eloquent as a consistent life. In this the spirit of the word, behind its letter, beams through and abroad, penetrating the shadowy regions of unbelief, and piercing the inner heart with a power which verbal arguments never achieved. The mightiest logic in the Bible is the unworded example of Jesus. There is an irresistible appeal in the silences between the sermons and the miracles of our Lord. O, the overcoming consistency of his sinless life! Who can withstand it? So, in lesser degree, but in the same manner, does the quiet, unswerving, patient and persevering Christian radiate, in characters of living light, the gospel of the Son of God. By that unlanguage influence which lies back of words and actions, back in the calm interiors of conscience and motive, the true disciple diffuses the truth and love of God, as a flower, baptized in rain, diffuses fragrance all around.

“ The pauses here in life below  
Are gates for God’s own entering ;  
The hushings that the weary know,  
Shall angel music soonest bring ;  
Its voiceful sounds leave all untold  
The silent wonders of the heart ;  
Whose priesthood pure no worship hold  
Till restless feet may all depart.

“ O, blessed hymns too strong for speech ;  
From silent depths within the soul,  
In solemn joy the tidings preach,  
That waves unknown beyond us roll ;  
That God and angels whisper low,  
To nearer draw the listening ear ;  
Life’s chorus hath a silent flow,  
Because the heav’nlier song is near.

“ Then let the heart bid tears away,  
And deeper joy, not wailing, bring,  
For silent prayers, too full to pray,  
For silent songs, too sweet to sing !  
For hymn and prayer to stillness grow  
Before they dare to reach the throne,  
And quiet death must come and go,  
Before the fuller life is known.”

But the preaching of the word is an especial agency for its distribution in communities of men. The Master commands his disciples to “go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” Just as the clouds are commissioned with their burdens of blessing to haste and hover over the distant wilderness and the remote mountain

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ravine, and to scatter the rain-drops upon the most insignificant specimen of vegetation that ever ventured to rise superior to a clod ; so the word of the Lord, embodied in sermons and songs, is to be disseminated to every portion of the earth, and to the lowliest and obscurest beings of the human race. The gospel that recognizes, nurtures and develops the white man, must meet and help and culture the colored man, as well. No race, or class, or complexion of people are to be so roofed over by political platforms, as to be excluded from this Heavenly rain except as it drips on them through the crevices of caste ; for all created intelligences have, in the gospel economy, an inherent privilege of growing up toward God ever more ! And wherever the Almighty permits men to be born, there he meets them with culturing agencies, and they are as native to the soil and air as are the palms and palmettos of the South or the oaks and cedars of the North which wave their proud branches toward the smiling skies.

There was a drought in our dear Columbia land ; and oh ! how poor hearts thirsted for the word of truth and the liberty it always bears ! But at length a cloud arose in the horizon the size

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of a man's hand. The Sun of Righteousness, which had shone into true souls here and there, exhaled as incense of prayer the vapors of brotherly love, and they curled toward the heavens to enlarge the gathering cloud. It darkened all the land at last. There was silence beneath the portentous shade. Political conspirators and salaried officials in high places, miserable monopolists of gospel favors, now, with pale countenances, gazed at each other in inexpressible alarm. But the weary workingman upon whose upturned and dusky face the shadow fell, heard a voice out of the cloud, as if standing side by side with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration, and smiled gratefully to God, "who maketh the clouds His chariot; who walketh upon the wings of the wind; who maketh His angels spirits, His ministers a flaming fire." It was the word of the Lord God Almighty coming with power from on high, down to a disbelieving and suffering nation—and coming with best blessings for that nation's poor. The lightnings blazed athwart the gloom, and all the people stood appalled. The thunders rolled from sea to sea, as if to proclaim their accumulated benedictions, ready to descend in due time upon Christ's poor, as the

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unhindered rain upon the grass. Soon the big drops dashed down thick and free and fast, on mammon fields and heart plantations, until in sweeping showers the whole land was refreshed, and the bowed people lifted their heads, crowned with liberty, and rejoiced. The truth had made them free. The word accomplished that whereto it was sent. And to-day they are in masses not only hearing but reading the word for which they prayed, and which, in answer, has been broadcast on them as the rain. The cloud is lifting away and the sunshine is falling through, and the land is glowing in its light. Bless God! His word does not return to heaven void. It accomplishes that which he pleases and prospers in the thing whereto it is sent!

“The clouds, which rise with thunder, slake  
Our thirsty souls with rain;  
The blow most dreaded falls to break  
From off our limbs a chain;  
And wrongs of man to man but make  
The love of God more plain.  
As through the shadowy lens of even  
The eye looks farthest into heaven  
On gleams of star and depth of blue  
The glaring sunshine never knew.”

But this word has a mission to every individual.

Yonder is a sinner. Look at him there. It has been sunshine so long with him that his heart is parched and hard. It burns within him like a little hell. The affections have ceased to grow and bloom long since, and are all withering and wasting away. He can not love his nearest friends. A singeing pain thrills his soul at the remembrance of neglected duties and broken vows. As he realizes his own weakness and wretchedness and want, the dense clouds between him and heaven seem to move. Their strange convolutions intensify the darkness, *but because they move*, he looks and believes there is a power that controls the elements. Beneath the black vault of his sky, closing down over him like a grave, he feels lone and lost and forsaken. He trusts no longer in himself. But he gazes in the direction where once the sunlight of nature greeted his eyes. Alas! there is no light now, save the lurid flashings that blaze across the ever deepening clouds of his guilt. The thunderful threatenings awake and alarm him in his despair. His own conscience condemns him. Prostrate in repentance he cries for mercy, and his prayer pierces the cloud, and reaches the God who rules the storm. He confesses his sins and pleads the

merit of the long-rejected Jesus. He remembers the words once spoken into his childhood's innocent soul, by the lips of a mother or a pastor—neglected at the hour—"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." "The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost." These words, heard but unheeded in other days, once sent to that sinner on an errand of salvation, did not return to heaven void. Oh, no! They hovered as vapor over his head, ready, in God's time, to form as the rain and drop upon the despondent heart, parched all over by crime, *and to accomplish that whereto they had been sent.* And now, see! The words of grace and invitation fall fresh and balmy as ever a sad soul welcomed in time of need. O, thank God! As they fall he drinks, and as he drinks, he is refreshed, and as he is refreshed, a new light breaks through the parted clouds. It is the reconciled countenance of his Father. The blackness passes by; and lo, on the frown of the departing cloud, a rainbow arches into view, beaming and glowing with the merciful record of his pardon. "*Thy sins which were many are all forgiven.*"

This word sounds in your ears this hour, ye waiting people. Hark ye! Ponder it well. Your

hearts are hard and dry in their need of it, this moment. God sends it to you, just now, just where and as you are, to accomplish, if you will your present and your eternal salvation. Either out of the accumulating cloud, the one or the other—the *vengeance* or the *mercy*—you must receive in your bosom soon, and bear it as your unchanging portion forever.

## II.

# T H E S N O W .

*Praise the Lord, snow and vapors, fulfilling his word.* PSALM cxlviii. 7, 8.

*Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.* PSALM li. 7.



DOUBLE text of praise and prayer! There is scarcely any thing in this wide world, so light, pale and powerless as a snow-flake. When first formed, it is finished. It develops no more. Indeed, it is most mature in its infancy; for its birth is its beauty and perfection.

But we must not think of it as animate, because it has no organization. "It is not a positive thing at all; but a negative, formed by the withdrawal of heat from the atmosphere where the vapor has risen in response to the upward calls. The snowflake is made in silence, away in the obscurity of the radiant ether; and appears quavering down toward the earth in uncertain motion, half attracted, and half let alone." It rests upon a dry leaf in such timidity, or touches your window-sill

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with such a delicate step, that, looking out from the comfortable side of the pane, you must pity its utter helplessness and embarrassment. How tender the young snow? "And if you raise the window, and put forth your hand to help the virgin stranger, your finger touch destroys it."\* If you will go out and train your hand to hardness and to cold, while your heart is thereby made the more soft and warm, the snow-flake will nestle a moment in your palm; but it will die there, and disappear in a moment as something that was not. And yet, even the filmy, unsubstantial snow-flake, unit of a mystic and equal brotherhood, when multiplied, becomes a mighty power. When marshaled in companies of millions, and sent marching in white uniform and with shining spears across the sky, the very sun seems to retreat, the eyes of strong men ache and weep, and bravest beasts are sent shivering and crouching before the conquering host! The "white-plumed light infantry of the clouds," as some one calls the snow, without a bugle-sound, takes continents, as armies of men take fields; and sends nations of builders and boasters chattering and blinded to their refuges, as a vic-

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\* Snowflakes.

torious army sends its captured legions to prisons and to hospitals. What cares the snow for your old landmarks, your unfinished plans, your ungathered corn? It comes without an apology or an explanation, to accomplish, like the rain, that whereunto it was sent; and it is ours to study the lessons it teaches, and remember the meaning of him who "giveth snow like wool."

Then who will complain at the pinching frosts, and the whirling snows? Our mother earth must have her rest. Her summer toil and autumn burdens have all been borne that we might be fed and clothed. Let the Infinite Father spread over the sleeper a covering of celestial purity and unbroken comfort, for the angels wove it well; and let us all be quiet while our weary mother sleeps on and takes her needed rest.

The snow, as well as the dew and the rain, is a benefactor, and, like them, performs a special work in the economy of Nature. By infinite avenues, by unseen agencies, by well-appointed methods, even while all may seem confusion and gloom to us, the earth receives supplies from the Bountiful Hand although gloved in a storm-cloud, which shall spring up from under the snow in bloom and bounty by and by, and become very bread and very life to you

and me. Then, O beautiful as fields of fragrant clover opening their sweet treasures to the bees, is the beautiful snow, dancing through the air, whitening the ground, robing the hemlocks! Beautiful ice, crystalizing the pools and rivers, sheeting the lakes, shining as a diamond cornice along the eaves of mansion and cabin alike, and pictured on window panes by the magical artists of the night. "Every thing is beautiful in his time;" all creation praises God; "snow and vapor, fulfilling his word" How expressively the poet sings:—

"All this uniform uncolored scene  
 Shall be dismantled of its fleecy load,  
 And flush into variety again.  
 From dearth to plenty, and from death to life,  
 Is Nature's progress when she lectures man  
 In heavenly truth; evincing, as she makes  
 The grand transition, that there lives and works  
 A soul in all things, and that soul is God.  
 The beauties of the wilderness are his,  
 That make so gay the solitary place  
 Where no eye sees them; and the fairer forms  
 That cultivation glories in are his.  
 He sets the bright procession on its way,  
 And marshals all the order of the year:  
 He marks the bounds which Winter may not pass,  
 And blunts its pointed fury; in its case,  
 Russet and rude, folds up the tender germ,  
 Uninjured, with inimitable art;  
 And, ere one flowering season fades and dies  
 Designs the blooming wonder of the next."

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Obedience to law is apparent in all the works of Nature. However varied the structure, or complicate the movements, or multiform the aspects of God's inanimate creations, there is a unifold design running through all of them,—a key to harmonize their diversities, and to show the beauty and benevolence of every scheme in the material universe. Dew, light, and rain; hail, rainbow, snow, and vapor, as we see, are all the servants of his Will, praising' his Name, revealing his Wisdom, and fulfilling his Word.

Every snow-flake, whatever be the model of its structure, is complete, regular and exquisitely beautiful. Every angle of frame-work, or cross-line, is according to a definite rule in mathematics, not a degree less or more. The number of parts is uniform. There is never a snow-star with five rays or seven. The architecture of the everlasting heavens is no more precise or symmetrical than that of the snow-flake which falls trembling from their ample dome. And every one is perfect. There are no distorted, irregular portions of God's workmanship shoved off to obscure corners of creation. The tiniest flake that falls away in the vast polar solitudes where no human eye will ever see it, or sinks

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to instant burial in the sea, is fashioned with as much care and delicacy as if it were a diamond to sparkle for all ages in earth's richest diadem. The laws of beauty and order are universal throughout the broad domains of the Almighty.

And among the infinite varieties of snow-crystals, this law of unity is never reversed or set aside by an accident. In the formation of the crystal, its sides and lines are always arranged at the angle of sixty degrees, or some multiple of that number. This is one sixth of the complete circle; hence the hexiform, or six-sided configuration of its prisms and plates. Let the congealing vapor assume, in the cold heights and tossing winds, what fantastic shapes it will,—let it riot in the profusion of its flirtations; yet it can never escape the control of that central law of unity which binds its particles into form, and makes it beautiful.

Indeed, in this do we discover the secret of the name, *flakes*, that is, *flocks*, the fleecy crystals, like playful little animals gamboling wantonly over the broad fields of the air; yet each one of them is retained within a common ownership and belongs to the single fold. Not a single one among all the mixing millions, but what answers to the will of its

Maker, and fulfills in its every form, feature and movement, his infinite word.

Something like this is that mystic but mighty unity in God's great law of love in his spiritual domain. God is love; and love is pure, well-ordered, lawful, beautiful, benevolent, and controls the movements of all the shining ranks of heaven. So among all true Christians on earth. However diverse and apparently confused the goings and doings of God's children,—however different their names or individual their beliefs; yet, in heart they answer to the unfold and universal law of love, whose center is God, and whose power is omnipotent. And in the numberless worlds which fill immensity, out through all the ranges of sentient being and capacity, it needs but the fulfillment of this law, as we dimly see it illustrated in snow and vapor fulfilling his word, to secure universal and everlasting joy. Love is the one principle which binds all individuals and all nations to one another, and each to his throne forever.

God is not only Love; but he is Beauty. Both are scattered broadcast over his dominions, reaching and illuminating a new world rolling in its orbit, or gemming a tiny snow-flake sent floating to

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its death in an alien atmosphere. For the whole universe is full of conscious intelligence, and marvelous adaptations, all teaching men to lift up their voices in worshipful accord with creation's grander harmonies, singing, "Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, snow and vapors, fulfilling his word."

Here is a lesson, too, of obedience. God tells the snow-flake to assume such a form, and go to such a place, and the forming and the going are beauteous, for it departs without murmuring or reluctance. So by his divine law, he says to each one of you, take thought for the image you bear, and the work you do. And as the whiteness of the snow is owing to the reflection of light from the minute faces of its crystals, which are as small mirrors, so reflect, in your daily duties, the likeness of Jesus, who is your light; be pure, be true, and go hither and thither, and as you obey you will be arrayed in beauty, and will bless the world wherever you touch it; and though your bodily form should sink and be lost in rough contact with sin, yet the sacred element within, the *soul*, the secret of your real life, will be exhaled by God's resurrection power into higher heavens again, gloriously re-em-

bodied, clothed in raiment whiter than snow, and crowned with immortality.

Do a little good at a time, and all the time, as God appoints and helps. A great life is an aggregate of littles, each little being significant, well-ordered, and complete. Every little thought and word and act of a human life, is associated with a moment of conscious, responsible will; and the individual thoughts controlled, programmed, and executed, one after another, will make a life of accelerating influence and power.

The garment of open-textured summer green which clad the Allegheny Mountain in the pleasant days, has faded, and, leaf by leaf, as torn and tattered apparel, has fallen to the ground. But the God of Love has ordered from his infinite storehouse a new robe for the great Allegheny Mountain, needy of care as the poorest little orphan that ever cried in the midnight cold for shelter. How shall the Mountain receive his dress? Will a seamless vestment, ready made to fit his rugged shoulders and fall in graceful folds about his naked feet, drop from heaven and encircle that mighty form outstanding in the cold? No, not so. Millions of tiny maids of industry will come tripping down

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the silent stairways of the air, and each one with some little thread to weave in the gorgeous robe. Every one will do a little—a very little—for the Mountain disrobed of his summer mantle, but waiting for a benevolent heaven to reclothe him in his time of desolation; and in a little while, soon as a baby's cloak could be made, the everlasting giant will stand arrayed in his celestial garment! Flake by flake the great white robe was formed and fashioned to its wearer in beautiful and becoming proportions, shielding the Mountain and all his life from the penetrating frosts of winter.

So all good is done. Word by word you impress your friend—a poor sinner—unclad and unclean, wretched, and shivering in his want of something the world has not to give,—something that must come from above; and one by one your thoughts touch him, Holy Spirit comfortings are they, and you the agent of their utterance and application,—until, see! he stands mantled in the seamless robe of a Saviour's righteousness.

You may be a Sabbath school teacher. Be patient and persevering day by day. Remember: it is word by word, look by look, prayer by prayer, lesson by lesson,—and your teachings, like the deli-

cate and beautiful snow-flakes, will form a protection for character by and by. Keep on, and on, and on. That is the way the naked Allegheny gets his winter robe. No flake is useless. No good is lost. So, stop never to count your words or acts but repeat and re-repeat, and go on beyond the seven times in forbearance, and the seventy times seven, ever and ever more; scatter abroad as God does when he snows, little by little, without noise, or parade, or promise. Father, mother, teacher, every worker for Jesus, trying to comfort and whiten this dark-hearted world, keep on and on forever.

“ Nothing is lost,—  
 No snow nor frost  
 That comes to enrich the earth again.  
 We thank them when the ripening grain  
 Is waving over the hill and plain,  
 And the pleasant rain springs from earth again  
 All ends in good,  
 Water and food.  
 “ Never despair;  
 Disappointment bear;  
 Though hope seem vain, be patient still;  
 Thy good intent God will fulfill;  
 Thy hand is weak; his powerful will  
 Is finishing thy life-work still.  
 The good endeavor  
 Is lost—ah! never.”

But this individualizing brings us more directly

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to the prayer-portion of the text; "Wash *me*, and I shall be whiter than snow."

The snow so white comes out of a black cloud, not from a clear sky. It does not come from those pale and fleecy clouds you sometimes see floating and basking in the winter sun. It is when the heavens are dark, and it is out of the murky bosom of the blackest cloud above you that the beautiful white snow comes down. Not lightning, nor thunder, nor hail, in the winter gloom; no, nothing but the pure, soft, innocent, noiseless snow!

David was black enough—blacker than a cloud, blacker than any slave, and, what was worse, his blackness was blackest within. His *soul* was polluted. The soots and filths of an adulterous city had settled all over his heart. Yet he prays to be washed, and knows that if God will wash him, he shall be clean,—whiter than snow! Corrupt as he is, he tells a blessed secret—that God can not be asked too much. He is not too low to pray; no man ever is. And he individualizes, wash *me*; not *us*, not my *family*, not my *friends*, not my *comrades in guilt*,—not the *world*; wash *me*. Ah, yes! Here is the pollution on my own heart. I know what I have done; I feel the consequent remorse. I

can not deceive, or escape, or excuse myself,—wash *me*. I need the cleansing, and shall die in my sins unless I cry, and am heard and helped of Him who made the heavens and the earth. Wash *me*!

And David, although so sinful, because he confessed, repented, and prayed, was washed and made clean; and now his name shines on the Bible page; and now, *whiter* than snow, he shines in his kingly robes at Jesus' feet! Even on earth, he called upon all within him to praise the Lord. He felt that what God promises he does, both in the natural and in the spiritual worlds; that his word is yea and amen, spoken and fulfilled to the minutest letter.

See, now, in heaven! Who are these in white robes, and whence came they? These are they who came out of great tribulation—out of the world's dark dens of sin and death. Some were thieves. Some were robbers. Some were murderers. Some were adulterers. Some were both, as David was. Manasseh, who reddened the streets of Jerusalem with innocent blood, forgiven and glorified, is there. Mary Magdalena, whose heart was the banqueting place of seven devils, but from which they were driven out to make room for the

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Holy One, is there; and millions more, once vile as they. But they repented, believed, and were washed in the blood of the Lamb; and now yonder they stand in white raiment, praising the Lord. There is not a stain on their garments, nor the shadow of a sorrow on their hearts. They, once so sinful, are safe in heaven now, every trouble forgotten, and every tear wiped away.

David knew the heinousness of sin. He confessed it. He knew what God could do for him as an individual; and he prays for washing with a faith that pictures the beauty and purity of a pardoned soul—a whiteness intenser than whiteness of snow!

Paul calls himself the chief of sinners, and yet magnifies the blessed gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It becomes the power of God unto salvation, not only to him, but to every one that believeth. *All* is a broad word in the gospel; but *every* comes straight home to one's heart. Jesus Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for *every* man. Ho, *every* one that thirsts, come to the waters! The invitation is emphasized to individuals. "Son, daughter, give me *thy* heart."

Now, sinner, respond for yourself, open your own heart heavenward, and however black its corruption, pray and beseech, "Wash me, *me*, and I shall be whiter than snow." God alone, who hears your prayer, alone can cleanse your soul. No priest can do it. The pardon you need is not printed in a creed. You can not find it in any service, or form, or ordinance, however closely you search. What you require can be adapted to no other, and no other's pardon or prayer can be adapted to you. Send up your own petition at once: "Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned. O Thou Cleanser from all sin, wash me, *wash me*, and I shall be whiter than snow."

Now, truly, there is not a sinner in any community, but who, by asking, however dark the record of his sins, may go out to his work and home to his friends, with a heart washed and whiter than snow. All your accumulated transgressions can not block up that fountain opened in the city of David for sin and uncleanness.

The devil would have you believe that your sin, somehow, is an exception; and that others are invited, and others may be saved. There are no exceptions to the gospel offer and the gospel

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power. The very man who imagines his own case to be so peculiar and hopeless, shows strongest evidence that his is the case which God will accept. For it is sinners, lost and ruined, whom Jesus comes to seek and save. The whole need not a physician, but they who are sick.

Nothing but Christ's blood can cleanse you. Had there been any thing else, David would have found it. The priesthood of his kingdom was eminent and powerful. He had all the world could afford. But feeling his want, and looking beyond his wealth and social surroundings, he calls all the way up from his own soul to Almighty God for cleansing. King David must come to the same blood which was shed for the poor, for all, for every one, for you, and for me.

God himself would have substituted something else, if there had been, in all the universe, any other way to redeem the sinner. For it was "last of all" that he sent his Son. No other means could be found. It was laid on One who is mighty to save. No other hand could help. No other eye could pity. So God interposed, and sent his Son, saying, "They will reverence my Son." All other remedies had been tried and failed. But now

there is a Way. O sinner, come here, come now, come just as you are, come, wash and be clean!

Here the blackest may be made whiter than snow. You may feel that you are beyond the reach of salvation. Your sin may seem greater than your brother's—greater than a blasphemer's,—greater than any prisoned criminal's; but is not greater than the power of Christ's blood. Few sins could be more awful than the combined iniquities of David. Take them all. Count the aggregate. See how ungrateful he was!—how willful in his crime—how he ruined a husband and then put him to death! How like a heathen he lived! Barbarians have been cruel. Superstition has been wanton and horrible in its deed. But this man had known the grace and beheld the glory of the Lord. And yet *he* sinned, and sinned so shamefully. But he cried for mercy. He prayed for cleansing. “Wash me—even *me*—and I shall be whiter than snow.”

Sinner, the harvest is past, the summer is ended and you are not saved. The winter days are coming. The first snow has already fallen. The next is floating in the clouds. Let not the crystal purities whiten the ground at your feet, until you send

heavenward a plea for salvation, and beseech God, for Christ's sake, to cleanse you from all sin. Reverse the texts. Take first the prayer, "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow," and repeat it until your forgiven spirit exultingly leaps out in a song to the other; "Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, snow and vapors, fulfilling his word."

"Praise the Lord, O my soul;  
And all that is within me,  
Bless his Holy Name!"

### III.

## THE HAIL.

*The hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies.*

ISAIAH xxviii. 17.



YOU may recollect a phenomenon which occurred one clear, starry October night, in the year 1848. There was observed to stream upward from the horizon, north, east, south and west, simultaneously, flashes of electric light—long pendulous curtains, in dissevered but parallel belts, lifted up and up, higher and higher, as if mighty angels, striking a tent for the world, were drawing and fastening the brilliant folds together at a lofty center in the zenith. There the royal drapery was secured, and thence its grand, white, quivering breadths swept down in beauty to the earth; while beneath its ample dome, that night, thousands of people stood and wondered in solemn joy.

So is the light of Truth rising all around us these latter days, out of history, out of science, out of art, out of commerce, out of politics, out of literature, out of all things in Nature as well as out of

all impulses and promptings in Grace—rising as reflected light from God's own broad firmament of Revelation; and beneath the magnificent pavilion thoughtful men stand and contemplate the wondrous scene. The truths of the gospel are breaking irresistibly forth from the low obscurities of sect and party, ceremony and service, and beaming in timely recognition of the Divine Mind and Will, even from the world's dim and dumb materialities, and rising to a heavenly center of radiation beyond the stars. The spreading folds of the new tabernacle, beneath which all men may stand and worship, shall be radiant with the light of science blended with the light of revelation, the beautiful of this world mingling with the beautiful of the celestial world, and all suspended protectingly over us from the throne of our risen Christ. Then let us look for truth in all creations around us, and in all phenomena above us, and expect it to open before us, and radiate about us from its exalted center forever more. Such a pavilion is the church. Under its high and spreading folds are safety and satisfaction. The free and unsectarianized church of Jesus Christ uses all the good, the beautiful, the true of this world, and weaves them in with the

graces and glories which fall from Heaven; and beneath these merciful surroundings, the heavenly *sustaining* the earthly, the souls of men are inspired with hope and prompted to work as well as worship. This is the eternal refuge of Truth. The gates of hell shall not prevail against it. It shall stand illuminated forever. Its light shall increase; its glory shall intensify; its folds shall enlarge. Nothing shall shadow its beauty or disturb its security while immortality endures. Within its sacred enclosure there is room for all the human race, and the way is open day and night, and a thousand welcomes await every soul that enters.

“The Church of Christ that He hath hallowed here  
To be His house, is scattered far and near,  
In North, and South, and East, and West abroad,  
And yet in earth and heaven, through Christ her Lord,  
The Church is one.”

But there are innumerable false refuges all around in the dark distances which lie outside the pavilion of the church. Beyond the horizons of Heaven's revealed light, and also within its range, but sheltered in mammon masques, are millions of immortal souls, deceived and begloomed in error and sin. With our thoughts upon these imperiled ones, dear rela-

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tives and friends, many of them, let us consider their condition and the meaning of the prophet's words.

Your attention has been directed to the culturing agencies in nature, such as the rain and the snow. Now we come to contemplate an influence, formed by similar phenomena of evaporation and condensation, which is known only as a destroyer—the Hail. Where hail is mentioned in the Bible, it is to indicate confusion and calamity.

God has the power to disarrange, reverse and destroy, as well as to nurture, advance and protect. You have noticed, in reading the Scriptures, another fact: the hail is associated with fire—a touching of extremes among the elements—showing that the formation of the icy drops is intimately connected with electricity. Then the deeper lesson here again, is, that God's judgments are intimately connected with his love,—that the one attribute is complemented by the other,—that it is a God of Justice who exercises Mercy, and that the one is as essential to the Divine character as the other. Now, as thousands of years ago, the laws of science are corroborated by the statements of Scripture, their one common Author being “the same yesterday, and to-day and forever.” Wherever the test

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of scientific truth is applied to the Sacred Writings, their record is fully sustained down to the minutest particulars. "The hammer of the geologist shall never be able to break in pieces the Rock of Ages, nor the telescope of the scientist to detect a spot on the Sun of Righteousness." And in all the infinite ranges of Revelation and Providence between the Word which was in the Beginning and the Word made Flesh, there is not an object or an incident which does not evidence, when studied and interpreted, the truthfulness of the Bible and its exact adaptations to the wants of men. The laws which form the dew,\* rain, and snow, are the same that govern the hail—evaporation, condensation, and gravitation. The only difference is in the fact that the humidity of the atmosphere in the formation of hail is elevated to higher, swifter currents of opposing winds, in a temperature where it condenses into compacter particles than those, which, in calmer regions, compose the snow, or, in still milder, the rain, or, in the mildest of all, the dew.

A traveler, in describing a hail-storm at Constantinople, represents the ice-drops as being the size

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\* For perusal, on the laws and lessons of the Dew, see article in *Our Schoolday Visitor*, vol. xii., page 102.

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of apples, and their descent as accompanied by a sound like rumbling thunder, or like the noise of innumerable carriages rolling furiously over a pavement.

Balls of ice weighing more than a pound rattled like grape-shot among the shipping, and stripped the trees of foliage and limbs, leaving them almost bare in their desolation. The spectacle is said to have been awful, beyond description. "The roofs were crushed in; windows were riddled like tissue paper; vineyards were cut to pieces; oars were shivered to splinters in the boatmen's hands; animals were beaten to death in the fields; men were killed and wounded in the streets. It was as if the heavens had suddenly frozen over, and as suddenly been broken to pieces by the tramp of heaven's artillery into irregular fragments of ice and precipitated to the earth."\* Such occurrences in oriental lands are frequent as they are fearful, and give peculiar significance to the words of the prophet.

The most tremendous hail mentioned in the Bible is that alluded to in the book of Revelation, "Every stone was about the weight of a talent." In comparison with this, all other sizes and weights

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\* Commodore Porter's Letters from Constantinople, vol. i., p. 44.

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of hail-stones are diminished almost to noiseless dew. A talent among the Greeks was a weight equivalent to fifty-seven pounds avoirdupois, and among the Hebrews, to about ninety pounds. What an appalling representation of power and devastation! But all these references have a meaning, and to discover something of their significance is more directly our present object. We have seen, that, upon the responsive bosom of the earth, vegetation is refreshed and increased by the dew which distills in quiet hours and cloudless nights; and have learned, by this illustration, how the Holy Spirit descends to nurture expectant hearts. We have seen how the rain, which revives the earth and promotes its myriad growths, falls from clouds and out of darkness in due seasons and proportions; and have learned how God's mercy issues out of sorrowful surroundings and incalculable circumstances to bless the waiting and willing soul. But we see that hail has its origin at a higher elevation, above the level of rain-clouds, and in the region of fierce currents and cold; that it forms and falls in accordance with a law which regulates the general temperature and purity of the whole earth's atmosphere.

The seeming calamities which result from the fall of the hail are really evidences that the Supreme Creator regards the welfare of the universe, and maintains it, oftentimes, by disarranging the local and isolated affairs of this world. In order that the infinite purposes of God may be accomplished, he frequently destroys the inefficient to accommodate the essential agents of his will; or, rather, he makes room for the new by removing the old, as an architect who clears a place of its rubbish and ruin, that the substantial and beautiful building may be reared. For there never was a city built until thousands of cumbering trees had been felled, and millions of blades of unneeded grass trodden underfoot. The *debris* accumulating in unsightly masses along Fifth Street, these latter days, obstructing travel and business, is patiently endured, because it shows a power at work with pick and spade, opening and enlarging ways to cleanse the city for time to come; and the miniature rocky mountain range stretching in front of our own church edifice, is a substantial argument that rough places shall be made smooth,—that the irony week day noises of our streets shall be subdued, and that Sabbath worshipers by and by shall be

undisturbed by clanging hoofs and wheels along the pavement.\* So the Maker and Builder of all things uses his own material throughout the wide domain of his universe in his own way, forever enlarging and glorifying his creation, although sometimes tearing our hindering fabrics to pieces, and apparently confusing and destroying even what his own hands have permitted; but all with a benevolent object in view which shall be realized only in the light of eternity. Now, as the rain falls from the clouds to refresh and beautify the thirsty earth, so mercy descends to comfort and cheer the responsive heart. *But above the rain-clouds are the hail-clouds.* So above God's mercy is his justice. It was to *satisfy* justice that the Son of God suffered for sin. God is love; but divine love is always pure and true and just. Mercy is purchased and proffered to the world, by the blood of Jesus Christ, the Just, atoning for man, the unjust! Although mercy is full and free and impartial as the rain that falls upon the grass; yet, above the blessed clouds from which mercy rains on willing souls, there is the eternal, immutable justice of Jehovah, which,

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\* Spoken at a time when the work of substituting the Nicholson, for the common pebble pavements, was under way.

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in an appointed way and time, will meet the impenitent.

For God will overcome all error and wrong, and over the ruins of conquered obstinacy, he will broaden his Kingdom of Truth. He builds in only the good, shaping and fitting it to his plans; and he removes and destroys the bad, regardless of its appearance. He recognizes in every man his free agency, and permits him to believe and live, or disbelieve and die, as he will. God's will is that no one should perish. Man's own will is the wrong will—the will that makes confusion and trouble—the only will in the universe that chooses death rather than life, for the fallen angels have no Jesus to die and live again for them. And because God's mercy is rejected, his justice, which caused his dear Son to suffer, is mocked; and upon this willful disobedience and persistent contempt, his righteous displeasure falls to show the integrity of his throne, and his regard for the welfare of *all* worlds, even if *this* world should, in belts of its surface, be scourged as beneath the dashing of the hail. But, notice the wording and take the meaning of the Scripture words: "The hail shall sweep away the *refuge* of lies." The driving forces of God's justice

are not directed against lying *individuals* so much as against the *associations* which make them lie; not against sinners so much as sin; not against souls so much as the systems of error which enwrap and enrapture them; not against people so much as policy, party, sect, and all other mammon-made refuges which receive and ruin both the souls and bodies of men.

But *some refuge is required*. In every unseared conscience there is a lurking sense of guilt. To deny it will not stifle its whispers. Light words dancing on the lips will not divert the deep sorrow from sinking in the heart. The sinner carries a weight upon his soul, as a culprit a chain in his cell. There is no moving without hearing its dreadful, discordant noise. He has read the law, and stands condemned. He has dishonored himself and rejected the Saviour, and now remorse sickens his soul. He knows that God is angry with the wicked every day; and he longs to be freed from his forebodings and fears. Indulgence in crime, no matter when, or by whom, or under what circumstances, brings a guilty sting, and in solemn midnights startles the sinner from his dreams, to remind him of a settlement coming

due, and a penalty to be paid. Then, under the burden of his condemnation, afraid to die, and ashamed to live, he thinks of reconciliation. In trembling and in tears, alone, in the sweep of the tempest, homeless, helpless, and forsaken, born with capacity for heaven, but exposed every moment to hell,—seeing the avenger, and pleading to escape, he sighs, and cries, and starts, and struggles for a refuge.

Yonder is a man overtaken by calamity. In an hour his home is swept away. His business is ruined. His credit is lost. Sicknes, ready prowler after secular misfortune, enters his family. A loved one pales and dies. The hearse rumbles away with the dear form, and the grave receives it out of sight, and opens again and again, like a ravenous mouth, greedy for more, until child after child is swallowed away. Every hope blasted, his poor heart, pierced through and through, is beating and breaking with sorrow. He suffers on alone for awhile; but strength fails, the soul becomes restless, alarmed, and craves and wrestles for a refuge.

Standing here to-night in God's name, with many young men before me,\* prosperous and well, yet

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\* Addressed to the Young Men's Christian Association of Pittsburgh.

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sad-hearted, it may be, tempted, uncared for, unfriended, in a city of crowding strangers, exposed to delusion and death, I would here, now, preach Jesus Christ to every unsettled soul, a "hiding place from the wind, a covert from the tempest, the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." Yes, the heart needs a refuge, and in the church of the living God, broad, free, and inviting, with its canopy of glory, and its associations of joy and peace, the burdened soul may find sweet rest forever more.

But beware of mistaken shelters. Young men in masses, seeking the truth, are being decoyed into refuges of lies! Let me warn you of some of the most dangerous of them. There is,

1. *Reformatism*. This is a place of compromise with the enemy of souls. He argues that a man may abandon the grosser vices, such as licentiousness, drunkenness, blasphemy, and fraud. He will recommendingly say at the entrance of this false refuge, "Give up the great sins, and you are safe." And then the arch Deceiver will chuckle to himself, "I'll damn that man by inches; I'll keep him busy with his small sins; I'll belittle him to his eternal ruin; I'll tempt and trap him into so many petty

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meannesses that he will never dream of the fearful aggregate; and when he wakes, the heavenly doors will be shut."

Self-reformer, be advised in time. Your mistake is a fatal one. Sin is a disease which brings death. The amputation of a single limb will not save you. You must be cleansed in Christ's blood from *all* unrighteousness, and cleansed at once. If you imagine that your sins are little sins and easily forgotten, and that your condition is as favorable as that of a score of your associates, who, like yourself, are sinners in small ways, let me tell you that you have crept into a refuge of lies. Every sin must be utterly abandoned. The heart must be changed, and the whole life not merely reformed, but transformed and conformed to the will of Christ. You must respond to His love, and be ready to do all things in honor of His name.

2. *Moralism.* This is another fashionable and false refuge. How the young men are crowding into it! Does a moralist wish a refuge? You claim to be an upright, downright dealer. You are educated, respected and honored. You answer promptly all demands on your patriotism, sympathy

and benevolence. You appreciate the institutions of your country—your home, your family, your party. You are neighborly, kind, generous, gentle-hearted and merciful. Your language is pure, chaste and elegant, your manners amiable, and your reputation untarnished.

But, after all, you govern your conduct by the outward regulations of society, and depend on your own power to resist temptation and wrong. You aim by words and works of charity to merit heaven—to rise thither by your own aspirations. *You are trying to be your own Christ.* You forget that in Adam all men are dead in trespass and sin, and that only in Jesus can any man be made alive. You forget that there is but one name given under heaven and among men whereby you can be saved. Your own name is nothing. Every thing in you and about you is nothing. Your good works are but a foundation of sand. In the one thing lacking are included all things needful for your salvation. Your sins must not only be put away, but forgiven. Your heart must be changed, so that self will yield to Christ, and that his righteousness may be in you, the all in all forever. Your wrappage of noble deeds is of frail and ~~fl~~ding texture. You

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must be converted, and become as a little child, willing to attribute all honor to Christ who died for you, and to be led into all duty by the Spirit. You have a long record of unpardoned sins—unpardoned because unbrought to the Saviour—and you must acknowledge the account, and ask your Surety to relieve you from the obligation. Your unforgiven sins will all appear before you in the judgment day, although you may think them forgotten long ago. Heaven's bills presented, put off, repudiated, are never outlawed by lapse of time. No page or item is ever lost from that book of accounts. You are in danger now. Answer this question, although it cut you to the quick, though it prove you to be wrong, although every syllable fall on your heart like chilling hail—*Are you converted?* You are in arrears on Heaven's ledger for innumerable omissions of duty; and that record is as distinctly marked as the record of any violent transgression, and can be canceled only by the same hand that was pierced. Take Jesus with you now, and go to God, and settle. Staying concealed in your mistaken shelter will never release you from the debt you owe. Better a thousand times to find yourself a bankrupt, hand-in-

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hand with Christ, than to live on in uncertainty through the world's most brilliant circles, share its brightest honors and revel in its greatest luxury and wealth—with a fearful looking for of judgment to come. Moralist, my immortal brother, purchase of the Redeemer's blood, object of his intercession this hour, rise and escape for your life, from your refuge of lies!

3. *Formalism.* The formalist is the modern Pharisee, the man who will pray by the hour if any body will look at him, but never think of such a performance in his closet! Pathways to false refuges cross and recross our church aisles, and are paved to our very family altars. Lip-service for sight-and-sound sake, and from habit! There are religionists to whom the Destroyer has administered the chloroform of creed and caste, making them mumbling dreamers in the church.

You may be punctual at the sanctuary, and observant of all the ordinances. You may contribute to the support of the gospel. You may say "Our church." You may pray in purest rhetoric and from loudest lungs. You may rub your hands and respond lustily to the prayers of others. You may wear a serious countenance and pronounce the

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most orthodox of phrases in the solemnest of tones. You may be zealous in your opposition to infidelity. You may catechise your children until they are surfeited with theology, and sick of stale platitudes which they were never born to digest. You may criticise your preacher's sermons and life with unceasing vigilance. You may go heresy-hunting among your brethren, and catch something every day. You may be walled in at home with a library of the profoundest commentaries that were ever bound.

And yet, after all, that I-am-holier-than-thou pretension shows through every crevice of your creed. The world sees a stiffness in you which it dreads as the touch of a corpse. Now, unless your religion change you from a mummy to a man, make you honest in business, pious behind counters, temperate at dinner tables, loyal to your country, affectionate to your family, neighborly at the ballot-box, patient in affliction, humble, cheerful and hopeful everywhere and always; unless it link you in brotherhood to the poorest of God's children; unless it lead you on errands of mercy to hovels and hospitals and prisons, as well as to cushioned pews and sacramental boards; unless you live Christ on week

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days as well as worship him on Sabbath days,—then your religion is spurious, hypocritical, and abhorrent—a refuge of lies! Its sounding brass and tinkling cymbal entice but the giddy-hearted, and warn the wise to beware.

See, above you, in the eternal light, the ponderous scales! Ah! God is just. You vainly imagined that your name was safe written in the Lamb's Book of Life. But *that* is not a book. Scales! See! read:  “*Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin,—* Thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting—wanting!”

The book of gracious offers is closing. Jesus speaks sweeter words to the outside sinner than to you. The poor publican he blesses, but the formalist he leaves to change his course without a pity or a tear. There is no tender word for you in all the messages of Christ. He performs no miracle to heal the Pharisee. Unless you awake by the sound of a Saviour's anathemas, you will perish forever in your refuge of lies!

4. *Spiritualism*. What a dreary refuge! People in obscure rooms, in silence, in darkness, listening for-sounds out of another world! Sometimes messages seem to be uttered; but from which world—above,

or below? Would a saint in life desire to communicate by the tipping of a wooden table? On earth, among sinners, there is a more dignified and rational method of communication than this. Even the deaf, dumb, and blind have an intelligent and reliable mode of interchanging their thoughts. Has an inhabitant of Heaven gone so far back toward babyhood as to blunder among table-lids and tilt contemptible stands in darkened and desolate rooms, in order to be recognized! Shall the heavenly linguists forget their own mother tongue?

And yet many intellectual persons, good, honest, noble-hearted friends, are tempted into this most ghostly and gloomy of all hiding places. There are promises given of direct communications from Heaven. But the messages are often known to be false. And the spirits from Satan intrude, and blaspheme, and lie. Are they not all lying spirits, as the Scripture says? If not lying spirits, are there not peculiar laws and forces in science—in magnetism and electricity—which we have not yet discovered? For there are sounds in the clouds and in the wind which we might as reasonably translate into words from departed spirits.

Spiritualist, be urged, now, abandon all such

hollow systems, and accept the plain teaching of Jesus. He is the one Mediator—the only one, the all-sufficient one—between God and man—the Man, Christ Jesus. He speaks to you all you need know from the spirit-world. He prepares a place for you, where you may see him as he is, and be immortal by his side. Here is a message out of Heaven,—it comes from your blessed Saviour this moment, “Come unto Me, and I will give you rest.” “Where I am, there you may be also.” Only be patient concerning the glories and associations of the heavenly world, and in due time you shall see as you are seen, and know as you are known. But for your soul’s sake, which you imperil, and for your Saviour’s sake, whom you dishonor by believing the false spirits, retreat at once from your refuge of lies.

5. *Sectarianism.* There are as many church registers as there are church houses in this city. But there is only one Lamb’s Book of Life for all the ransomed sinners of the world. That is the place for your name. It is not Methodism, nor Presbyterianism, nor Lutheranism, nor any other *ism* of men; but it is the life and power of the Son of God, we preach. The different denominations are but symmetrical and convenient apartments in the one great

sanctuary of the Lord. These distinct organizations are harmonious counterparts. Yet men separate themselves into sects, and magnify their consistent differences into conflicting doctrines. They build theological walls around themselves, the closer the safer, as they vainly imagine; and they begin, in their stifled atmosphere and necessary shade, to doubt the orthodoxy of their neighbors. They put colored glass in intervening windows, draw down the blinds, bolt the doors, and nestle together, as though all outside Christendom were turning infidel, and as if they, secluded company alone of all the earth, held fast the faith once delivered to the saints. Such a faith, so monkishly bound, needs a new deliverance!

Now, when you find yourself up in arms in defence of your creed, pause a moment, and consider whether in all your life you have ever been so brave in defending the Bible. You become excited when you hear your Luther, or your Calvin, or your Wesley, or your Campbell, criticised; but you will stand silent and unmoved when the name of your Jesus is blasphemed! Unless you can recognize prosperity in other churches as heartily as in your own, and rejoice at the conversion of sinners under anybody's preaching and under any church's roof,

you may write "sectarian" as a fit suffix to your name. You have been tempted through self and sect to enter a refuge of lies. 'Ist and 'ism are warp and woof of the enemy's tent-covers, and you have been deceived. You are attracted by the sound of your church-name more than by all the cries of Calvary! Verily you have your warning, and must bear the awful consequences of trimming your Christianity to a Discipline, or Confession, or Catechism, and of wounding your Lord in the house of his friends.

7. *Broad-churchism*. This is one of the most open-doored and dangerous of all false refuges. It has numerous creeds and various names. It makes room for Rationalism, Unitarianism, Mormonism, Latitudinarianism, and all the wild heresies of the world. And yet it claims to be the church! It has its periodicals, teeming with transcendental theories, boasting of free thought, geologizing on the Bible, humanizing Jesus Christ, popularizing Mammon, compromising with sin, and trying in a thousand ways to make salvation a matter of course, regardless of the name of Jesus and the influences of the Holy Spirit. It sneers at the evangelical efforts of Young Men's Christian Associations, ridicules re-

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vivals, depreciates the Sabbath, minifies the sacred ordinances, and indulges in sublime contempt for the "priests" and "priesthood" of the evangelical churches. Much more might be said of Broad-churchism, yet time will not permit, and by this brief description it may be known.

Broad-churchman, you may glory in your liberality, but it is a license which broadens into outright infidelity at last. You are in a refuge of lies; and your science and reason, "falsely so-called," will fail you in the trial hour. You must forsake your schoolish errors, and come to Christ, who is the way, the truth and the life, and learn of him who is meek and lowly in heart, and there find rest to your soul.

*But all these and other false refuges will be swept away.*

When your body is paling and cooling for the coffin; when your life-strings are snapping asunder; when your mental vision becomes the more vivid and acute in the glimmering of the eternal light; when your moral sensibilities become the most keen and candid; when the honesty of your soul shakes off its last gaudy vail;—then you will realize what a poor protection is your Reformatism, your Moral-

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ism, your Formalism, your Spiritualism, your Sectarianism, and your Broad-churchism, at the dreadful hour when you are summoned to the judgment. Will you anticipate that awful day and take refuge in Christ?

When the lightning of conviction flashes upon your mind, and the thundering dirges of guilt roll and re-echo through all the chambers of your soul; when the dashing hail of God's justice cuts through your last false and flimsy sheltering, and chills you trembling from your miserable refuge, then you will *feel* what you have often heard and sung—

“Rock of Ages, cleft for me,  
Let me hide myself in Thee;”

but the feeling may have no saving faith beneath it, and the words, unsung, unprayed, unbelieved, only felt, will be of no avail.

Wealth is nothing, honor is nothing, reputation is nothing, everything is nothing to the awakened sinner. Philosophy stands off with arms folded, a cold-hearted stranger now. Theology has no balm for the sick and dying heart. The very Bible is dim; and prayer itself is dumb. Hymns are but wailing sound. Tears freeze and fall as ice. All—all—unless Jesus be present—all are as a refuge of

lies. The pitiless hail sweeps in and cuts the last, last refuge to fragments. The ice-balls beat and bound and rebound in horrible sound upon its ruined foundations, and there is no salvation!

But let Jesus appear. Let the sinner but touch the hem of his garment, and the storm lulls; the hail of justice melts into drops of merciful rain; the dark clouds fade away; the sun paints rainbows over the departing gloom; the heavens are clear and calm; all the air is redolent with fragrance from the trees that grow and bloom forever by the River of Life. Every sorrow is smiled into glory, and every trouble thrills out in a song, for the weary soul has found a safe refuge at last.

## IV

# THE DRESS.

*"Bring forth the best robe and put it on him."*  
LUKE XV. 22.

 MORE than three hundred millions of dollars are spent in this country every year for dry goods, to be wrought into clothing according to the fashion. And yet the people are ever hoping for changes which require new cuts and colors, and increased expenditures of the money which *somebody* earns, before the fabrics already worn show any signs of decay. Not many garments are worn out, except by the patient poor, and those unfortunate persons who are glad to take as charity the cast-off apparel of their more fastidious neighbors.

As in the matter of food, extra millions of money are squandered for that which is not bread—for the luxuries of Epicurean tables—brain-softening and body-enervating delicacies and poisons; and, as in the matter of drink, millions more are worse than

wasted for that which satisfieth not, but giveth its color in the cup, and leaveth its leprous ugliness on the face ; so again, in the matter of clothing, the tyrant Fashion, next in cruelty to Appetite, robs the American people of one half their money, two thirds of their common sense, and three fourths of their virtue, leaving but fractional humanity to be worked into the commercial, scientific, literary, and religious advances of the times. Owing to these illegitimate draughts on income, reason and health, the Lord Jesus Christ, in his saving approaches toward men and women, seems as a picture or phantom rather than the real Brother and Redeemer that he is.

Our blessed Master-and-Servant when he walked among the people as one of them, talking and sympathizing with all, regardless of condition or circumstance, comprehending the tendencies and temptations of all, asked three questions which cover the thoughts of every individual who has grown into maturity in the ages before and since. "What shall we eat? What shall we drink? Where-withal shall we be clothed?" Now, these questions all pertain to necessary things ; and Jesus himself grants that they do. For true religion always has

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reference to the body as well as the soul ; to temporal as well as to spiritual concerns. Christianity can never be reduced to a mere sounding-shell of words and tones for Sunday, and then left hollow and silent as ether six days out of seven. There is, therefore, great meaning in the Saviour's words, "Your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things." And that is the very best reason why *we* should not be over anxious about them. If God care for a sparrow, will he not care for a man? If he clothe the grass and the lily, will he not provide raiment for his children?

Yet how we worry ourselves and others about what we shall wear! How many vain and envious thoughts circle about intrusively on this subject! Indeed, it would seem that Fashion herself, alarmed at the extravagance of her devotees, has reduced all her measures, shortening, contracting, curtailing, compressing, and belittleing every article of apparel, just to see how many infinitesimal specimens of humanity she can carry on her thumb! But all her garments are fading in texture, and changeful in style. The elegant dress of to-day has more than half a chance to be thrown aside as a ridiculous rag to-morrow. The lack of cloth in a coat

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for November, would be accredited to a lack of brains in its wearer in the equal temperature of the succeeding March. The regiments of buttons drawn up in parade on the cloak of a fashionist in autumn, might readily be mistaken for the idle beadwork of Choctaw Indians the very next winter. You see and you know that the demands of this idol of Fashion, even in the centers of our Christendom, are obeyed as slavishly and almost as sufferingly as the edicts of the Hindoo Juggernaut who tramps his hideous heels on the bodies of his worshipers.

All this world's mantles, beyond those of mere good comfort and good taste, are but flimsy fancies at best. For it is not enough that the body should be clothed. The soul must have a covering. Better that the body should shiver in the cold, or bronze in the heat, for want of raiment, than that the soul should stalk through this world naked, the pity of angels and God.

But where is there a dress for the soul? Let us open one of the world's wardrobes, look through a few of its apartments and see what they contain. To be sure: Here are a half dozen robes already

in view. Let us examine them. A glance at each one will suffice for the present.

This one is Moralism; but it has been cut from a remnant, and would not fit an infant and can not be stretched to cover an adult sinner. It is worthless.

Here is Sectarianism; but it is a narrow head band only, with just enough fringe to drop over the eyes of the wearer, and appear as beams in the eyes of a brother. It can not be woven into any thing that will cover the body. Let it drop, and let the moths eat it, for they do God service in devouring its every shred.

Another is Formalism; but it is a patched and spotted robe, like Joseph's coat of many colors. To even touch it will stain the hands with blood; and to wear it, is worse than to wear grave-clothes alive!

And here is a strange-looking one—Unitarianism; but it is woof of a web that has no warp, and would fall to pieces in the wearing, like loose, hard-twisted threads wrapped crosswise round a shivering form.

And still another—Universalism; but it is over large in its pattern, for being cut for all, it sets

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gracefully upon none. It is like an old tent canvas washed up by the flood, to be drawn over a man and fastened with cables!

That is all in this wardrobe. Let us close the door. No: there is something else here, exquisitely filmy and fine. We can scarcely see it. It seems to be but the shadow of a robe, for it can not be felt, and would be no better than a spider's web in a tempest. This is Spiritualism; we had better leave it among the ghosts!

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But what shall the soul put on? What will hide its nakedness, and shield it from the heat of youthful passion, and from the frost of declining years? Outward adornment may bring reputation to the body; but the soul must have something more enduring than reputation. It must have character. Character is not a fashionable commodity. It is not issued from any social or ecclesiastical metropolis; it is not cut out of broadcloth or silk, nor surpliced with ribbons, as a dress for the sake of effect on *others* than the wearer thereof! Reputation, the body's garniture, is the product of tailors' and milliners' skill; but they can not measure nor fit an immortal soul! Silk, linen, worsted, cotton,

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bones, brass, dust, straw, hair, and paper—these are the elements of reputation; and for these, in their several combinations, the people struggle as if for very life.

But character is composed of principle, thought, feeling, desire, emotion, ambition, and purpose; and these are threaded and blended day by day to the Christly model which shall adorn the soul forever. Every good man's character is a pure and beautiful dress. It is a seamless robe. It is not lapped and whipped together by any sect-patented sewing machine, but woven—*woven* by every pulse-beat of life out of such things as love, patience, meekness, gentleness and hope; and smiles and tears are wrought into wondrous and beautiful adornment through every part. It is not a fashionable garment, because it is not a mere imitation of any thing. Every thing fashionable must necessarily be shaped and textured like something else, unoriginal, unsatisfying, and imperfect. Fashionists are like young pupils in school, writing lines of leaning letters across the pages of a copy-book: "Many men of many minds; many birds of many kinds;"—but not a man or a bird of the many ever interests the mind of a writer of such copies!

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The soul-garment is gracefully adapted to its wearer, and is always appropriate, chaste and becoming. Clothed in this, apologies and embarrassments are covered thenceforth; and its possessor needs never to say, "Please excuse me this morning; I didn't expect to be caught in such a dress." The soul-dress does for working before breakfast, just as well as for entertaining company after tea. It is as appropriate in the kitchen as in the parlor; for Marthas as well as Marys may wear it and be beloved sisters still. It is the same in the pew as in the pulpit, and at a wedding as at a funeral. It never trails in the mud, at a father's expense, to trip strangers in the streets. It is always neat and clean, and everywhere radiant in its every thread, needless of artificial ornaments which are but acknowledged envies, as often as admirations, of the beauties they burlesque.

Away back in the olden time (see Exodus xxxv. 25), "All the women that were wise-hearted did spin with their hands, and brought that which they had spun, both of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen." Now, in these days of modern invention and facility for handiwork, if men and women, by their dress, did but indicate something

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of their own individual industry and taste, then there might be some excuse for display; but as it is, all of us, less or more, are but the walking advertisements of somebody's goods, and somebody's genius.

But not so with the raiment of the soul. Every true Christian reflects the character with which heaven has mantled him. He has put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and the adaptation and adornment are complete. Like the woman whom John saw in Revelation, clothed with the sun, "The moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of stars," so every true disciple of Christ is clothed in light and glory.

The moon to-night glows in the same silvery white raiment which she has worn in her walks across the firmament since the first song of the morning stars. And yet the moon of herself is but a body of dark material, cold and desolate, without an atmosphere. But she moves in the light of the sun which shines on her bosom, though at the time the sun is hidden from us. The moon has put on the sun for a garment, and, for beauty and majesty, she is crowned Queen of the Night. Her royal vesture is fadeless forever, and her pathway is henceforth

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paved with glittering diamonds. And so, too, every twinkling star is robed in equal radiance by the beams of light. The investiture is infinite. There is a enough for all. Each one of the numberless host has put on the best robe in all the sunlit universe of God. So, again, this hard old earth of ours puts on the sun. In spring-time, a robe of emerald, jeweled with brilliant flowers, snowy blossoms, and gleaming waters; and in winter-time, a shroud of burial white, to be lifted away before the power and glory of vernal resurrection. All this wondrous beauty comes out of the one source, and is put on the moon, the stars, and the earth, as Heaven's best robe for the circling years.

And so Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness, comes to every believer, wherever he moves and has his being, however rough and hard and dark his nature, and clothes him with his own light, and gives him, through faith and patience and prayer, a character pure and fadeless as his own. *This is the best robe in our Heavenly Father's House.* It strengthens and beautifies by age. It is broidered by the touch of the Holy Spirit. It is ever new, and offered free as sunlight to all. Every soul may have this beautiful raiment, wear it as ample pro-

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tection through this pitiless world, and stand glorified in it at last in the kingdom above.

Adam and Eve, driven out of Eden where they sinned, tried to make a dress of fig-leaves; but God, whom they had disobeyed, like a Father, clothed them himself with the skins of the animals which they had offered in sacrifice for their sin. The coverings came from the slain animals. You see, in this, an emblem of the slain Christ, showing in the very beginning of sin, and in the putting on of the very first dress, that human works could not procure pardon. And to this day, all that man can do of himself are but fig-leaf excuses. Nothing less than the perfect righteousness which comes by the death of Jesus, our Lord, can cover the soul. This is the best robe for the sinner.

Our Saviour, in the parable from which the text is selected, most impressively illustrates this thought.

There was a young man who became dissatisfied with his father's house and company, demanded his portion of the estate, and, receiving it, hastened away to spend it in riotous living among strangers and harlots. He wasted his money, ruined his health, and soon became such a beggar and beast

that he herded with the swine and coveted their husks. But in his utter wretchedness he came to his senses; he thought of his neglected and insulted father, his comfortable home, his innocent childhood; and with a penitent resolve he said, "I will arise and go to my father." First the thought, then the word, now the act—he starts. He trudges on in his rags, poor fellow, miserable, forlorn, humiliated! But he feels that the whole universe has no such sacred retreat as the dear old home of his youth. O! if those doors are but open yet; if the father still lives and loves; if his own failing strength will but bear him so far,—all shall be well. He presses on. He nears the familiar spot. But long before he sees his father, his father sees him! O *how* a father pitieth his child! He did not wait for the son to come all the way in uncertainty; he ran out to meet him; he threw his arms about the neck of the poor mistaken boy, and kissed him! He brings him into the house, and seeing the torn and tattered garments of the wanderer, and his bruised and languid body suffering for raiment, he commands his servants, "Bring forth the best robe and put it on *him*." These badges of poverty must give place, not only for something better, such as

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servants, or even unfallen sons may wear, but for the first robe—the best robe—the richest robe in the father's house,—full assurance of re-instatement to original position and privilege at home.

Imagine the scene. Says the father, "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry: For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." How the gloom of the old mansion breaks away? Music and dancing make the chambers ring and re-echo with joy. Why! it is as if a King's son had come home with his bride, instead of a poor prodigal alone. But a penitent is better than a prince.

The lost is found. The dead is alive. "Look at my son," says the father, "see his mother—long missing from the family circle, sainted in glory—see her back now in spirit; she smiles and weeps in the features of my boy. He *is* my son. He is part of my soul. I have prayed for this; and behold what an answer! He is robed in my best robe. On his finger is the seal of his pardon. On his feet, shoes, that he may walk unlame whithersoever he will henceforth. His hunger is satisfied

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with plenty. He is safe and welcome at home again; and the great mistake of his life shall be forgotten forever. Let the music ring out to the fields, and the ecstasy increase and abound!"

Yonder is a poor, wandering sinner. See him! He is wasting his money and his manhood in intemperance, dissipation and crime. He is sinking from cherished social attachments down toward the herds of the vicious and the vulgar. His garments are ragged, unsightly and defiled. He can not mingle in the company which once greeted him and caressed him till his money was gone, and his clothes became threadbare and soiled. He has followed his own wild will until it has led him from home, from friends, and from business, down to the dens of infamy, vileness and death. In his heart he feels that he has already gone down to a level with the beasts that perish, and shall sink infinitely below them unless his steps be quickly retraced. Listen to his resolve sobbing up from the depths of his trouble, just now, "I will arise, I *will* arise and go to my Father."

Yes, although he may have no companions, no friends, no counselors—nothing but the dumb devourers of husks and grovelers in filth about

him ; yet, after all, he has a Father—a *Father!* “I will arise and go.” He starts, there, now! See him: His own strength is nothing but blundering weakness. His raiment is nothing but rags. He does n’t look like anybody’s human son—he is so utterly impoverished. But no matter, if on all the returning journey not a being may recognize him or care for him ; he has a Father, and a pitying eye will see him afar off, and he need not go trembling and knocking at the dear home door. He will be met just *because* he has no friend ; he will be welcomed with a kiss just *because* nobody else cares for him ; and he will be led into the house just *because* he is an outcast ; and just *because* he is ragged and unsightly, the command will ring through every chamber of the heavenly mansion, until all the angels hear the rich music tones of a Father’s voice : “Bring forth the best robe and put it on *him.*” And with the robe the harps will be brought forth, and there will be more rejoicing in Heaven over “one sinner who repenteth, than over ninety and nine who went not astray.”

The dear Saviour, who once stood condemned, but innocent, clad in a robe of cast-off purple at Pilate’s bar, has, by his death, prepared a robe

of righteousness, spotless and white, for every guilty soul that will come and accept it. Sinner, rise, confess, come home to God, by the door of his church—put on the Lord Jesus Christ; and just because you are nobody to the world, and nothing to yourself, the Father of spirits will own you as his child, and array you in the seamless robe of Christ's righteousness this very hour. You have worn the tatters of a prodigal long enough. Come, and be clothed upon with apparel which indicates an accepted son. Come, and be admitted to the joyous feast.

Backslider, come home. You have forfeited your beautiful estate; your mantle of acceptance in Jesus has been wantonly cast aside at the beckoning of Mammon and Fashion; you have sacrificed character to gain reputation; you may be friendless, homeless, and herded with the vulgar throng, feeding on husks and shivering in wintry rains; but if you repent, return, and do your first works over again, your Father will meet you on the way, command a feast and sweet music, and mantle you once more with the first robe—the best robe—the more than royal robe of the righteousness of Christ.

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O, I see you coming home, weary brother—coming home ; and I hear already, in far, far richer than organ music, the voice of a Father's welcome, "Bring forth the best robe." The Forgiving One waits to clothe you with the character of Christ the moment you are willing that your ragged reputation should be cast away. Prepared and at hand for you is the beautiful raiment, pure and white as the untossed snow. When Christ is clothed upon you, your words and actions will be as ornaments of gold on your spotless robe. Truth will be your girdle, making you strong and ready in doing good ; and obedience will put wings to your feet, as a preparation of the gospel of peace.

The Israelites had garments which faded not nor waxed old for forty years. But this best robe will never decay. "You will no more weary of it than a cloud wearies of its rainbow, or the moon and stars of their sun." This robe, wrought from eternal Truth and Love before the world was, and yet for ever new, put on in your moment of sorrow for sin, is the same which shall royally adorn you in the presence of God and his holy angels in heaven.

You who have already returned from your wan-

derings in sin and are now wearing the righteousness of Jesus Christ, O, keep your robe unspotted by the world. If you wear it to the theater, the ball-room, or the opera, it will be tarnished. If you are found as a patron or a guest in Satan's company, and touch fraternal hands with Sin, however gloved and gentle it may be, your robe will be stained, and you will be as pitiable going about the street as if you wore garments dyed in a brother's blood. But you may wear it on errands of mercy to cellars, to garrets, to mines, and to prisons, and to destitute homes among the orphans and widows, and its glorious white shall shine all the more.

Yonder, in the heights of heaven,—see! Who are those arrayed in white, that stand before the throne, singing and waving their palms? They who were once sinful, lost, ruined; wasted in life, ragged in body, frozen in heart. But now,

“Upon the sea of glass they stand  
In shining robes of light:  
The harps of God are in their hand—  
They praise him day and night.

They climbed the steep ascents of heaven,  
Through peril, toil, and pain;  
O, God! to us may grace be given  
To follow in their train.”

## V.

# EVERY-DAY GLORY.

*“Whether, therefore, ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” 1 COR. X. 31.*



THE most uncommon thing in this world is common sense. Most people are so given over to affectation in social and religious life, that even discipleship in Jesus is made to be embarrassing by unauthorized forms, exactions and restraints.

The gospel gives liberty in the reception of its truths, and gladness in the performance of its duties; but creeded religions cramp the heart and confuse the whole life by unscriptural professionalities in outward things. Confessions and Disciplines are thrust in between the individual and the Bible, saying all over their uninspired pages, do this just so, and go just yonder, or stay just here or there, and copy the tone and pronounce the phrase of this man or that man, wear this or that garment, and be a Christian according to a human model. Be as much like somebody else as possible,

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so that your orthodoxy may measure up to the fixed standard, not of Christ and the gospel, but of some Council and its creed.

Now, no man can be religious by letter. Christianity is not a material that can be wrought into cloaks, cut and made up and worn according to the fashion of this sect or that sect. It is rather an impulse of heart, an impression of spirit, a constant vigilance of conscience, a high range of light and love and liberty which *controls* all conditions and adapts itself to all possible circumstances of the outward life, infusing itself afresh into every new duty, just as the days come new and open their opportunities for doing good. The thoughts and words and actions of yesterday will not meet the peculiar demands of to-day; nor will the duties of to-day be duplicated to-morrow. No trial of the present hour can be adjourned to a probable temptation of the next hour. Instead of fore-calculated conformity to the rules and regulations of theology, the Christian may better express a happy and useful life by giving heed to such words as these: "Whether, therefore, ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

We eat and drink to sustain and strengthen the

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body. And any kind of eating or drinking that fails to benefit the body is inglorious. A neglect to eat sufficient food or to drink sufficient beverage, as well as over-eating and over-drinking, is intemperance; or, to partake of proper quantities at improper times, is injurious. Eating and drinking are not merely to gratify appetite, but to build and beautify the body, with men's good and God's glory ever in view.

But the body, to be healthy and beautiful, must have other aids besides eating and drinking. It must have exercise. The plants are fed from the soil and nurtured by rains and dews; but they would not grow strong unless they were tossed and toughened by the agitating winds. They laugh and wave about and bow and bend, gaining strength and beauty every hour. Exercise is a necessity for the growth of their stalks, and for the budding and blooming of their branches.

Animals not only eat and drink, but skip and hop, and run, and leap, and take physical exercise. Nature requires it, and all creation responds. The clouds, the rivers, the oceans, all play, and sweep, and roll in living, self-perpetuating power.

So human beings, to be healthy and complete,

are not only to eat proper food—the simpler the better, and to drink wholesome beverage—the nearer pure water the better;—but they are to take proper and sufficient bodily exercise—the more free and easy the better. It will not do for thin-faced, stoop-shouldered, tight-laced, dyspeptic Christians to whine their melancholy objections to physical education. The “whatsoever ye do” of the text indicates that there are human attentions and actions besides eating and drinking. And here common sense insists on a wholesome system of recreations and amusements for the human body, as well as a perception of accountability and obedience for the human soul. You know we are to glorify God, not merely by our *spirits*, but by our *bodies*, which are his. And any occupation which disciplines and develops the physical man, thus strengthens and beautifies the temple where the Holy Spirit deigns to dwell. No wholesale denunciation of amusements is consistent with the requirements and charities of the gospel. Because some men sometimes run races for money, shall all men resolve to *walk* henceforth! Because some men have been known to gamble by the chances of ball, shall everybody else relinquish that manly

amusement, and promise never to eat apples or study the stars again, because they are round, like balls! Or, suppose some men should walk for a wager, shall all the Christian people in the world get down on their hands and knees and crawl on every errand evermore!

To be sure, Paul says "If meat make my brother to offend I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." But he did not risk requisite *bread* on his brother. Paul would not have starved his body to conciliate the prejudice of any disciple. He would have held on to his loaf, and let an over-sensitive sectarian go.

Paul never married. But because he preferred single life, shall every other man remain unmarried? He but expresses that individuality on non-essentials which the gospel recognizes in every believer. He stands firm on the *central* principles, and squares his conduct by the *distinctive* doctrines of Christianity; for these very central obligations are made grand and glorious because they insure the right of private judgment, and invite the exercise of common sense, on all points of conscience.

Paul's frequent reference to the athletic sports

and exercises of the Greeks by way of illustration of spiritual advances, without a word of disapproval or regret, would indicate, that, in his day, it was not considered heterodox to have a sound and healthy body? The idea that a sanctified soul can dwell only in an effeminate frame, look only out of hollow eyes, and utter itself only in sepulchral tones, belongs to some other age and system than those of the gospel. The glad tidings of great joy, heralded by angels over Bethlehem in loud, exultant tones, were never designed to sound from the minor keys of human lamentation. The angels' song should never become the people's complaint. It is joy to all—fullness of joy forevermore, and sings into every true believer's soul an impulse to do any thing and every thing for the glory of God.

Christ's religion comes to men with adaptations to the minutest details of daily life. It takes such possession of the whole man, body, soul and spirit, as to make the most of him here, elevate him to immortality hereafter, and prompt him upward in heaven eternally.

The only way of gaining the kingdom, is to accept the gracious invitation, walking thitherward by faith in the perfect and proffered righteousness of

Christ—doing his blessed will in all things—reaching out welcoming arms to all, and speaking good cheer to every heart. The glad tidings of salvation are to sound in every ear, ringing to saddest souls the music of peace, and love, and joy, and good will, until all the daily doings of the people shall redound in glory to God. In social life, every friendship; in business, every bargain; in politics, every ballot; in art, every picture and song; in science, every discovery and triumph; in manufactures, every invention and implement; in literature, every letter and voice; in religion—which is the one great name for all the impulses, methods, and movements of every human life—in religion, every thought, and word, and action, should be for the good of men, which is always the glory of God.

Some persons act toward the claims of religion as though it were a fine thing for ministers and deacons, for Sabbath days, baptisms, marriages, sick beds and funerals. But they imagine that it might jumble things considerably on week days; in the banks and counting-rooms; in oil speculations; in railroad and mining stocks; in trading, marketing, and the ordinary affairs of daily life. It is feared that a close application of this rule in

common things might spoil a good bargain, take a story off a handsome mansion, take a second or two off the speed of a fancy horse, reduce the texture of one's garments, clear away a few luxuries from the table, increase the tax bill on certain commodities, and that it would be rather awkward, in the public street, or in the middle of an office speculation, to stop and ask, "Am I trading, building, driving, eating, or doing this or that, for the glory of God, or for my own convenience?" And yet, withal, the principle of the text is eminently practical. Honor worked up toward God and out toward our fellow-men from the regularly recurring duties, and the new ones of every day, would bring benedictions on all.

In a building, the outer superstructure attracts the eye; the foundation is hidden. A tree's leaf makes more noise than its trunk; and its roots are all concealed beneath the ground. Yet the tree shakes off its leaves each autumn. But it holds its roots forever; and it even bares itself of foliage when winter comes, in order that the roots may be covered and nurtured below, and so glorify its Maker and itself in the future spring.

So in society. It is not the apparently great

men, doing public things, who bless the world. Not many succeed in attracting attention and winning applause. Men do not all run to leaf, merely to get up to that green thinness which rustles for a summer, and then crisps and falls to the ground as a mere nurturer of the strong but modest roots below, that live and grow through all the years.

It is no evidence of real greatness to get into high elevations, to work on to public platforms, into legislatures, into pulpits, or even to the Presidential chair. God's universal plan is to keep the individual humble that he may be useful and happy. Each one is made for all. Yet every soul is a greater creation than a sun. You are appointed here, I yonder, somebody else between, or beyond, and each one of us must bear his own accountability, living and working according to our chances, doing every thing for a purpose—man's general good, and God's especial glory. Every individual in the race is a free agent, and in religion as well as in all other relations, should be recognized as a unit, equal in will and right, to every other. There is a Methodism in Christianity that votes, and works with a purpose, not to glorify men by

making them "lords over God's heritage," but rather to honor their individuality, and to prompt them to discharge every duty as it defines itself, to God's glory and not to man's.

O, it is standing in his place, however lowly, even unseen and unheard, and working for God's glory just there, that makes a man happy and surrounds him with ministering spirits! Go up to the Cathedral spire, across the way, and look down from its iron cross, and you shall not be able to distinguish who are tall and who are short men walking the street, or who wear fine and who coarse-textured garments. So when any Christian stands by the true cross of Jesus, and looks down upon the world,—all social, political and ecclesiastical elevations sink to a level, and men are judged more by the outward circlings of loving hands, and to and fro walkings, as they go about doing good. These are the movements the angels see—not your imaginary shelvings in the bureaus of society; but your real goings and workings among your fellow-men out in the world. Getting up on mere man-made scaffoldings, is getting up to tumble down again. The brick tower and its iron cross are to be taken down from the Cathedral—

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they already threaten to fall. There is a better, grander elevation ; it is that of being attracted by the power of Him who was once lifted up to draw all men unto Himself. Waiting for this influence, using it as it appeals to the heart, responding to all its requirements, we shall do all things—whether we eat, or drink, or whatsoever we do—for God’s glory, and yet be glorified ourselves.

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The Gospel was never designed to be un-Bibled and made into lettered catalogues of *musts* and *must-nots*. “The letter killeth ; the spirit giveth life.” “The restraints of religion do not lie along the Christian’s pathway as so many roseless thorns to pierce and pain us at every step.” Christianity does not require us to be forever looking after the faults and failures of others, in order that we may know exactly what things *not* to do. It is not a list of uneasy negatives. It is not a system arranged to push or drive by rearward forces. No man, since grace and truth were revealed in Jesus Christ, was ever scolded or scared any nearer heaven. The thunder of Sinai threatened and made men tremble ; but there is another Mount, though not so high and dark and awful, whose

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summit held a cross, and He who was lifted up thereon *draws* all men unto him! The blood of Calvary is greater than the lightning of Sinai. Henceforth, love is mightier than precept. Henceforth religious life is not so much a form as a service—a service which is the highest liberty because it is emancipation in Christ Jesus, who makes his followers free indeed.

We are not obliged to pass on in our discipleship with book in hand, or mortal confessor in sight, reading a ceremony, or listening to a sound, or ruminating on the published sins of other people, else we should commit new ones ourselves so rapidly and unexpectedly that the most orthodox creed-arranger would become bewildered in the attempt to classify them. The religion of Christ does not annoy us with mere formal technicalities. It says, "*Whatsoever ye do, do all for God's glory.*" There are no chronometer-gauged exactions to goad us to duty as a miserly creditor's constables dun a poor debtor for dues. No books of faith and service outside the Bible are worthy the permanence of stereotype plates to be printed from. No true man who recognizes his own individual accountability for *deeds done in the body* (not for

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words pronounced or unpronounced from the creed)—no true man can live in these grand republican years with any ecclesiasticism ahold of him, drilling and driving him as a machine. The Scriptures of Divine Truth do not require that my soul's worship shall be a strict duplicate of the worship of somebody else's soul. Neither is my work to be estimated by the number of chips and shavings at the bench of the robust brother who has double the muscle that God has given to me.\*

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\* The hidden power of Jesus Christ in a soul, or in any association of souls, will turn and overturn, fuse, change, expand, refine, and elevate all the elements of thought, and character, and growth. The quickening Spirit will pervade the entire life of a man, or a church community of men, and impress the image of God on every heart, and produce a moral change as great as a new creation. This is the genius of the Christian religion. It regenerates the world, as leaven operates upon the meal, by the law of silent, outcircling influence.

Christianity is not a thing of forms, lettered in books, imaged in pictures, sounded from pulpits or organs; it is not a list of affirmatives and negatives, to be studied by the eye and the ear; it is not a certain area of liberties, with an invisible dead-line drawn around it, beyond which no prisoner of faith must wander or blunder on the peril of his soul; it is not an empty mold, into which a man must submit to be melted and poured as so much liquid, and left to cool into a definite shape, with the name of his sect cast into him and hardened on to him in the process! Christianity, or, in other words, the kingdom of heaven, is "like unto leaven which a woman took

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Christianity gets deeper into a man than his clothes or his skin. It does a nobler thing to a man than to bow and bend and halt and turn and shove him hither and thither in the crooked grooves of some blunderer who lived in the dim ages long before the wood of the cross began to grow. It has a grander mission than merely to take charge of the *seen* and *heard* of a man; it lodges deep in his inmost soul, and works out from that center, until the world not only sees and hears, but knows and feels that he "has been with Jesus and learned of him."

I may subscribe to a system of rules, and may be as exact in my observance of them as a clock is in ticking its swinging monotonies all day long and all night through, and, just like the clock, be only running down all the while. The gospel is a marvel in its freedom from all non-essential sectarianisms which any mimic of a man might observe to the very shadow of a letter without being a spark the brighter or a degree the better for his trouble. It is time the church had grown

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and *hid* in three measures of meal till the whole was leavened." It is a heavenly spirit, inwardly planted, *working out*, and not a world-made frame work, *clamping in*!

out of the childhood ages of the world; time that she waked up in the new morning this side the long night of ritualistic shades and symbols, to the light and liberty of the Saviour come and risen. The Christian system, simple but sublime, infused by the impulses of the promised Spirit of all truth, lifts men out of the deep-worn channels, and places them on elevations of light and glory from whence vast and beautiful horizons sweep around, beaming and glowing with living workers for God and man. There are growths from minority to manhood in the gospel, and equal suffrage for all and forever. And in this liberated manhood, as free agents, all disciples are enjoined to *do* something; and with freemen, all duties, opportunities and privileges are girdled by the broad term "*whatsoever.*" This brings men face to face with the questions of the times in which they live, and appeals to common sense, that first essential to a vigorous, useful, and happy Christian experience.

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Every-day religion is what the churches need, and what individuals should more emphatically express. For the Saviour himself came to men by way of their calling and condition; he went out

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among the people, and found a pulpit anywhere and everywhere—by the wayside, in a boat, at a well-curb, on the mount, at a wedding, at a grave, on the street, in the temple, in the field—wherever he met sinners, there did he open his lips and speak “as never man spake.” In our more modern and convenient customs, religion is calendared by our programmes of business, and the sweet spirit of Christ’s life is shut away from the avenues of trade and work and daily thought. The object of prayer and social meetings should be that business men and all people may receive and radiate the gospel light in all its impartial bounty and beauty, until every believer may feel that his ordinary duties are Divine ordinances, and be as happy in work as in worship, and be as eminently Christian in week-day business as in Sabbath profession.

There are those ready to object to these “extraordinary efforts” as sensational. They should not be thought *extra*-ordinary, and all the more shame upon us if daily attention to the heart-wants of men is *more* than ordinary! Religion should claim more thought and more zeal until “extraordinary” efforts between Sabbaths become so common and spontaneous as to be “ordinary.” It

is an easy matter for persons to be too hoity to look after the poor sinner on Sabbath, and too busy to look after him on any other day, so that *between* profession and practice among the churches, thousands of unvisited and uninvited souls are slipping every day to perdition.

The devil fishes for men. Why should not the church? Does Christ not say to every disciple, "Henceforth you shall catch men?" Then if we have been toiling all through these weary nights, with our narrow creeds, our fastidious forms, our dainty devices, all so nice, so consistent, so easy, so fashionable, and have caught nothing, *let us cast the net on the other side of the ship.* Let us reverse our plans. Let us learn that it will not do to work for self all the week and then go fishing on Sunday! We must cast the net among the fishes, and not wait for the fishes to cast themselves into the net.

The devil fishes with a hook. He baits and wounds. All along our streets, his hooks are set, the barbs concealed by enticing baits. His line extends from the low dark depths of the drinking saloon to the surface shine and shimmer of the opera. And young men and young ladies are swarming around the hidden danger, like silly

minnows around the bait that conceals the hook. You may see well-dressed, happy looking people, any day, along our streets, nibbling at the devil's hooks. And, any to-morrow, you may see these same nibblers wounded, caught, and perishing in the alien atmosphere. With all these dangers tempting and thinning out the people, is it too sensational to work, and, with united effort, daily to stretch out the long, wide gospel net, and cast it into the sea, and seek to save men whole and speedily? Oh, sinning people! by which means will ye be caught—for be caught ye must—by the gospel net, that wounds not but saves your soul and body, or by the devil's deceitful hook, that first entices, then lacerates and leaves you dying but never dead? May the efforts of the Christian church, in all its walks and works, in all its prayers and exhortations, in all its alms and sympathies, be abundantly blest of the Lord!

At least two-thirds of the population of our cities and towns do not frequently attend any place of public worship. And this proportion is rather increasing than diminishing. Now is it not the duty of ministers and all church members to devise some means to reach the masses of the

people with the sound and spirit of the gospel? If there are empty pews in the churches, and unused blessings in the Word, and people by thousands, without, perishing in their sins, would it be presumption for the churches to awake to the common courtesy of recommending good to their neighbors? What is the meaning of the Scripture, "Go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in?" Alas, even when some attempts are made in this direction—when an invitation is given in good faith, and chances to be overheard by certain professing Christians, there is sometimes a chill criticism thrown upon the motive of him who makes the effort. "Nobody else does that." "That is for effect." "That is too sensational." Well, if "nobody else does that," so much greater the necessity that it should be done. Yes, it *should* be done, too, "for *effect*." O, for more *effect*! "Sensational?" To be sure: the gospel has always been sensational. Who shall be ashamed of it for that? Sensationalism is what the sleeping, sinning millions need, rather than the fastidious custom and cant that are forcing them to reject the Redeemer.

If men are to be attracted by the gospel and

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saved, church services must be made more interesting; the exercises must be helpful to all that hear and see; and every professor of Christianity must become a worker together with Christ in the elevation of all men to the light and love and liberty of the children of God.

In most churches there is one great want; it is a want of sociality among the members. It may arise, in part, from the fact that there is so little opportunity for them to become acquainted with one another. If so, then systems of worship should be so modified or supplemented as to afford such opportunities. This finger-tip, if touch-at-all kind of Christianity, is too squeamish and formal a thing to win the hearts of the people. The religion that triangles itself on the face like slices of persimmon pie, peak downwards, is not the thing that human beings who truly hunger after *righteousness* shall ever learn to relish. There should be more naturalness, even if human nature *is* depraved. Better have it depraved than not to have it at all. It is something that can be worked up by the grace of Jesus Christ into the higher, the better, the divine. Every worshiper should permit his ordinary week-day countenance to accompany him to the sanctuary

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on Sabbath; for when he puts on the solemn but one day out of every seven, and wears it into his pew, the fit is awkward. In it he makes such a ludicrous picture that it causes an observing preacher a gratuity of amusement that he does n't need in the pulpit.

There are Christians who commune at the Lord's table statedly for years, and yet never learn the names, the sentiments, the characters, the tendencies, much less the sympathies and spiritual conditions of their brethren. They call themselves a family of God's children; and yet draw maunmon lines and levels, pass one another in the street unrecognized, save as the world suggests. They have never learnt any heart-manners in church, and go about as much in abeyance to the world's fashions as possible. Outside society arranges their companionships, after all.

It is hardly possible or proper, perhaps, for church members to cultivate personal acquaintanceships on days of worship. The public service of the sanctuary, either in its preliminaries or its closings, affords no appropriate opportunity for any thing more than a single word or an occasional hand-grasp; yet these have a magic power. Neither

does the prayer-meeting or the Sabbath-school provide sufficient facilities for this important part of Christian duty and influence. How, then, shall the members of a church become more familiar with one another? Would it not be an excellent plan for the minister to announce from the pulpit, once in every month, that, on a certain week-day evening, the church would be opened and lighted, the choir present, and that all were invited to come, bringing such of their friends as may be occasional worshipers with them, to have a pleasant, social time together, talking freely and promiscuously as in a home parlor? By such an announcement, the Marthas of the congregation would be apt to think of an additional attraction for all—viz., a supper in the lecture-room. There is no place where timidity and unacquaintedness may be so completely overcome, as at a well-ordered, social supper-table. Then, truly, there would be an opportunity to eat and drink to the glory of God!

Something like this would at once interest all the friends of any church, and afford the privilege of consulting together on the interests of the membership; would win friends from the world, and attach them to a cause that shows its heart and

hand; and might be the means of increasing and operating, in a wonderful manner, the other appliances of the gospel. And as a part of the "whatsoever," the children, also, might be present, and add to the enjoyment of the occasion by singing their favorite songs.

An evening each month, thus employed, would bring the members and friends of a church face to face, and excite a mutual interest and sympathy, such as the ordinary religious services might never achieve. And what an advantage to the minister to see his people all together as social friends, to hear their voices, and learn their habits of thought and life, in company, as well as from pastoral calls at their places of abode! How such a mingling of soul would bind a church-membership, young and old, rich and poor, into oneness of aim and work, as well as into oneness of name and worship!

After supper, a short speech might be in order, a familiar hymn, a brief exhortation, a prayer, or any exercise that any loving heart might suggest to other loving hearts around. The more freedom from form, the better. Then at the close of the interview, the doxology, the benediction, shake of hands, and happy "good-nights." Would not such an

arrangement be orthodox enough for the most fastidious congregation in Christendom?

Bees find the flowers, not because they are symmetrical and beautiful, but because they have honey in them. If sinners are ever attracted to the churches, it will not be by the observance of stated and stately forms, or by the display of gaudy paraphernalia, but because there is honey in them.

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NOTE.—Copious extracts from this lecture were correctly reported in the *Pittsburgh Commercial* at the time of its delivery; and a portion of the report has since appeared anonymously in various periodicals. It is, therefore, due the author to make this statement as some of his readers may have already perused certain of these paragraphs.

THE PUBLISHERS.

VI.  
ONCE AND FOREVER.\*

*Eternity.*—ISAIAH lvii. 15.

**T**HIS solemn word occurs but once in the Bible. Its measureless meaning can not be grasped by angels or men. But great and awful as it is, we, to-day, are intimately and inseparably connected with it; and we may be summoned to face its realities in a moment.

The Godhead alone is eternal. Eternity reaches back, before all beginnings; and forward, beyond all endings. Angels and men shall know an eternal future, but God only, the infinite past as well. Immortality has a first breath. Eternity may be likened to a ring, which has neither beginning nor ending.

There is a certain number of grains of sand on the sea shore. There is a certain number of water-

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\* Spoken on Sabbath morning succeeding the great explosion at the Rees, Graff & Dull's Iron-Mills, in the Ninth ward, Pittsburgh, November 8, 1867.

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drops in the ocean. There is a certain number of blades of grass on the ground—leaves in the forest—stars in the sky. All these myriads have a far-off limit which figures could be trained to reach, and, one by one, to exhaust. Now, suppose these vast multitudes could be counted, sand by sand, drop by drop, blade by blade, leaf by leaf, star by star; counted slowly—very slowly, with a million years between one and two; ten millions of years between two and three; a hundred millions of years between three and four; a thousand millions of years between four and five; and on in this tedious ratio of geometrical progression—still, all the sands, and drops, and blades, and leaves, and stars, might be numbered; and the time taken to do it would not be missed from eternity as much as the tick of a second from a lifetime. It is so great that absolutely nothing can be added. Eternity needs no chronometer, for it never draws any nearer its termination. Forever and forevermore! From everlasting to everlasting—world without end.

We shall each one exist forever.

The human soul is a part of God's own breath, and can not die. This body of flesh and bones and blood, like all corruptible things, may be crushed

in a moment; it *must* wear out in a few years—must die and turn cold, and mix with clay. You have almost shuddered in crossing the Allegheny Mountain, when the swift car, held to the iron rail by a finger-width flange, hurled you along the edge of a precipice, or over the deep gulf, where, in a moment, should a rail be an inch from its place, you might be dashed into eternity. You are timid and watchful when you visit the rooms where ponderous engines are heated and hurried to short, heavy breaths in rolling the red metals. You think of hourly exposure to treacherous fire and steam; and the very noise of machinery is to you a succession of emphatic warnings to be careful. But the workmen become accustomed to sounds of confusion, forgetting the perils of the place in the quiet contemplations of their own busy minds. They seldom think that the strong white arm which breaks a prison of iron in a flash, may snatch them into the everlasting prisonage of eternity; or that the bursting of a hot boiler should be but the swinging open of a heavenly door.

And yet the elements of air we breathe are adjusted to each other with such critical accuracy, that a very slight disarrangement of their proper-

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tions would cause the whole earth to burst into devouring flames. An intrusive touch tampering with God's order in the atmosphere would stop the breath of every living creature with instant suffocation.

This vast world of ours hangs upon nothing—in empty space, sweeping around the sun a thousand times more swiftly than any railroad express. It leans upon the plane of its orbit, as a race-horse leans upon his pathway while he runs. And if it should incline a little more or a little less, or if it should wildly leap over its unfenced race-course, every city would be wrecked as utterly by the plunge, as the iron-mill on Friday last by the explosion. In a single draught of water that refreshes a thirsty workman's throat, there slumbers an electrical energy, which, if only aroused, would darken the firmament with storms, and shake the hills with thunders!

But God's merciful hand hides from our eyes the mysterious powers which are perpetually acting all around us. He would have us trust in a wisdom and providence we may not comprehend. He would teach us, by our very ignorance, to hold ourselves in readiness for any emergency locked up in

the future. The taper of human life burns so feebly that a breath can extinguish it. A single misstep,\* a trifling mistake, the neglect of a moment, may launch an immortal soul from time to eternity.

But in the shock and change of death, our identity shall be preserved. No matter how horribly the body may be mangled, its dissolution does not imply the destruction of the living agent within. The thinking power is single, indivisible, independent, immortal. There is a monarch of spirit, to whose bidding the body is subject.

An individual removes from an old tumble-down hut, rejoicing at the change. A man is not local

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\* Just three months after the delivery of this discourse, a highly esteemed and noble young man, a member of the First Methodist Church, Pittsburgh, Mr. George Rinehart, by the manner of his departure from this world, literally illustrated the truth of the Scripture words "There is but a step between me and death." He had endured the horrors of Andersonville prison for eighteen months during the war; but was spared to return to his home and friends, to engage in business, to wed the object of his affections, and to settle in a quiet home in the suburbs of the city. Life seemed all providence and promise to him. But how transient and uncertain are earthly hopes! One evening at twilight, while passing up a hill-side, in company with a few friends, from the railroad depot to his residence, he slipped on the icy path on the verge of a precipice and fell from the very hand of his wife, to the frozen ground below, and expired in a few hours. The shadow of that wintry twilight will never be entirely lifted away from *some* loving hearts until the rising sun and answering recognitions of eternity shall shine and satisfy.

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and fixed, and can not be built into the walls of his own dwelling. He was not made for that. The falling down of the hut is not the destruction of the man who lived in it. But when he removes, the old tenement is silent; its doors are closed; the light of the windows is blinded and gone. The dweller has departed. The dust accumulates. The tooth of time gnaws down the fabric, and soon it is all dust to dust. But the man who once lived there, now elsewhere continues to live.

So when the soul leaves this tabernacle of dissolving clay, there is silence; darkness settles within where lately there was light. The body crumbles away. Those unburied corpses in the Ninth ward, to-day, bruised, cindered, and distorted, two days ago were strong-armed men. But those bodies, like ours, were made for time. Their souls, like ours, were breathed into consciousness for eternity. Their souls are entered for judgment, even before their bodies are covered in the grave. When their wives and children were waiting for them to come home to dinner, they had appeared before God and his holy angels in eternity. They live on and shall be homed in better mansions, or roam orphaned and outcast forever, according to the deeds done in the body.

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You have seen, in the war, how men may lose their limbs, or their organs of sense, and how very much of one's body may be cut away, and yet the living, responsible agent remain the same. To amputate a right arm takes no right away from the soul. These bodies of ours were once very small; and then a great portion of that small body might have been detached, and yet the identity would not have been obscured. There may be fractional bodies; but there can be no fractional souls. There may be dissolving bodies; but there can be no dissolving souls. There may be bodily annihilation, as in an explosion and fire; but no accident or burning will ever annihilate a soul.

The mind is the man. Our bodily senses are but the instruments of a probationary life. The body is but a chest of tools; and the soul uses them in its apprenticeship for the better world and its celestial occupations. A hand may as well decay and turn to dust, as the pencil, the plane, the hammer, or the chisel it holds, when its appointed task is done. You can live without your pen, or trowel,—you can live without your finger, without your hand, without your arm, without your whole body; for there is another sphere of action and

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intenser vitality, ever continuous, ever conscious, ever progressive, and ever the same in identity and purpose.

Food sustains and replenishes the body. Its particles form blood and bone and flesh. But the mind feeds on ideas. What the spirit of man hungers after and obtains, can not be lodged in the material body. So let death dissolve the body, the mental treasures are untouched, imperishable. It is dust to dust; spirit to spirit—the soul to Him who gave it. In building a house, rough scaffolding is used. But when the house is finished, the scaffolding is knocked away. So in building an immortal life. The body with its senses and appetites is used as the beams, levers and planks of an outer building—a kind of work-shop to the real one—where wisdom may be gathered in tangible results and shaped and set into the enduring edifice; then, in due time, the scaffolding is taken down, leaving the new house all the more distinct and beautiful without it. It is not necessary that any of the timber of a scaffold be durable. Any soft wood answers the purpose. Now, “there is a building of God, a house not made with hands, *eternal* in the heavens.” It is not necessary that

this body be solid as granite; it may be of the earth, earthy. It answers the Builder's purposes when by it, in time, ideas, principles, and purposes, may be the better brought and built into the temple where the Gracious Spirit may dwell and commune with our own henceforth. O! it is well that a soul such as yours and mine, and a body like this, should enter upon but a limited partnership. The body may die suddenly, to-day; but the thinking goes on forever. Fierce disease may warp and wrench the body, and reduce it to a skeleton; but the soul sings triumph over all things corruptible. Though the flesh of a man may dry on his bones, his reason and imagination may expand and vivify always the more! I have seen men spiritually strong and exultant while their bodies were inhaling the breath for the last death-gasp. The final moment is frequently one of intensest mental enjoyment—the hour of happy release; and the clearest perceptions are spoken down to the instant when the sunken eye glasses, and the jaw drops cold in death.

From such considerations we conclude that the soul exists never, never to die; that it can have a being independent of the body and that the soul

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is conscious while the body lies shrouded in the coffin, or mouldering in the grave.

And Eternity shall find us, the moment Time releases us, just as we are, and fix our destiny in accordance with our actions, down to the last record of our doings in the world. Here in the body we have all the aids of reason, sense and association to comprehend Christ, who was himself made flesh that we might know him and love him as a brother while trusting him as a God. And the salvation he offers at so much cost—for *his* body was bruised and mangled, too, O ye poor mothers, weeping because your sons and husbands were not even permitted to die at your homes—the salvation purchased by the out-door death of Jesus is not for a bodily life-time only, but for the eternity of every believing soul.

But living union with Christ is possible only before the death of the body. The Christian, as a branch, is by faith grafted into the Vine, and his life can never be interrupted while the Vine lives, and its life sources flow. Because Jesus lives, we, if we choose him and love him, shall live also; and live as long as He lives, parallel with vast, eternal ages.

Eternity! We are almost there. Its doors fly

open at our feet. We walk nearer its massive portals to-day than ever before. A few steps more, and then—*Eternity!* We may not know how very soon. When they left their homes on Friday morning, how little those stalwart men, or their beloved, thought of the opening door of eternity! They fondly expected to enter their familiar home doors at noon, to meet their wives and sisters from the kitchen, and their darling children from the school; and to partake gratefully of the accustomed meal, circled lovingly around the table, eating the bread—sweetest in all the world!—the bread of hard and honest toil. But just before the usual signal for noon-day rest and refreshment, the strong men heard the sudden springing of a bolt from the ponderous door that opened to the judgment; and they were summoned to the realities beyond, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. Doubtless some of them prayed, that morning, at home; but they rose from their knees, as we too often do, expecting surely to pray again, and with some heart-cares uncommitted to the Burden-bearer. They may have deferred some special pleading for self, or wife, or child, unto another day—one of those vague to-morrows which never come. But there

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was no time for prayer when the bolt was sprung—when the awful door rolled open wide, and ushered them all, just as they were, into the presence of God! Yet such men, humble, honest, hard-working, uninfluenced by the fashions and follies of the day, if they professed the religion of Jesus, who himself consecrated manual labor by his own hands' toil,—such men were less liable to confusion of face before God than any similar number as suddenly called from the more brilliant walks of society.

Yet why were we all so startled by the news of the calamity of Friday! If one should look closely over this congregation, could there not be found somebody bearing plain marks of being in the first stages of consumption, or some other creeping and deceptive, but fatal malady? And yet there is no alarm in that countenance! Its wearer vainly imagines that he has a secure lease here on God's footstool as a dwelling place, so long as it shall last; and he looks up here to-day as unconcerned as if nothing but the destruction of earth's everlasting hills could ever hoist him out of it! Now, if I were to tell you in such a way that you should believe it, that the world would be consumed in a

week, or a month, or a year, or even ten years hence, you would wake up, as if for the first time, from the dream of your earthly immortality. What is it to you, O dying sinner, *when* the world comes to an end, so you but realize that you, *yourself*, are rapidly coming to an end? How many in this congregation, this morning, will have passed into eternity in one year, in two years, in five? To all such the world will have come to an end as absolutely as if its materials had been consumed. The hand of the destroying angel is already upon you. I see the breath-touch of his coming in your whitening hair, your sallow cheek, your tottering walk, your fading eye, your weakening pulse. *You* need not go searching prophecy for the time of the end of the world; for you will find your own dissolution more distinctly traced and greatly nearer than any of the times and half-times of Daniel. This old earth is as perfect now, and un-death-looking as when it rolled new-made from the palm of the Omnipotent hand. But you bear in your body the marks of speedy destruction.

To sailors, washed overboard in the midst of a turbulent sea, it is all the same whether the ship outride the storm or sink with all her crew in the

surges of the deep. It is *all* over with him who is *swept* over! So when disease and accident are sweeping our neighbors from the world's broad deck into the ocean of eternity, it is the same to all of us who feel the last rope slipping—slipping from our hands—all the same, as if the whole world had been wrecked and swallowed with us. Eternity storms round us to-day. The skies are blackening; the tempest is rising; the lightnings are blazing; the thunders are roaring. Our frail bark shall be broken to pieces, and engulfed in the sea. What shall we do to be saved? We are adrift. Time's shores are receding. The wind and tide are sweeping us away and away, and there is no return. Since we must drift on, and since these trembling barks must go under, *what shall we do to be saved?* Ah, that is the cry which penetrates the clouds and reaches the ear of One who rules the wind and wave! Behold! yonder comes the life-boat of salvation; and her pilot is Jesus. No waves can beat her down. No blasts can drive her back. He who guides the helm can hush a raging sea to peace; and he holds the winds in his fists. Ho! the life-boat! To-day, the life-boat! This moment, the life-boat!

Sinner, your condition is as perilous as though Gabriel's trumpet had already announced a sinking world for to-day, and the judgment throne for to-morrow! The end is at hand, in so far as you have any relation to it. You know not what a day or an hour may bring forth. Salvation is offered to-day To-morrow the books shall be opened. Oh! it is no baseless, unmeaning alarm which sounds from the lips of the Apostle, and re-echoes in the wailings of widows and orphans in our own city, to-day. "The end of all things is at hand; be *ye* therefore sober, and watch unto prayer." It was no mere accident which shocked our city two days ago. God sends a meaning in it. The lesson has a flaming significance, did we but rightly read it, and ponder it in our hearts.

" He of the lion-voice, the rainbow-crown'd,  
Shall stand upon the mountains and the sea,  
And swear by earth, by Heaven's throne, by Him  
Who sitteth on the throne, there shall be Time  
No more—no more! Then veiled Eternity  
Shall quick unvail her awful countenance  
Unto the reeling world, and take the place  
Of seasons, years, and ages."

But, my brother, my sister, you shall never die; you can not die; you *must* live forever. Now, seeing your destiny and your danger, how will you

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treat the Lord Jesus Christ when he stands at your heart-door and knocks? Before you Jesus stands knocking, knocking now. O rise and let him in! And then, when at heaven's door you stand a pleader, he will arise and admit you into his blessed home and make it yours forevermore.

Death, the monster Monarch, rules this world. He rides forth on his pale horse, and lest his tramping be heard, he alights, presses his way into the quiet upper chamber where an infant is sleeping, and steals it away from the arms of an unsuspecting mother; and he dashes, mounted, along the floors of the great iron-mill, among strong men working, and strikes a score from their anvils and forges, and tramps them mangled under his fiery feet. "He lets loose the dogs of war," and hunts down the bravest men of the nation by thousands. Famine and pestilence are his servants, traversing continents, making graves on the plain as the wind makes billows on the sea. The ocean obeys his commands, and ingulfs ships in its depths. The railroad train does his bidding, and dashes unthinking hundreds to blackness of darkness. He opens the earthquake caverns and swallows cities in a moment. Oh! the swift and relent-

less Angel of Death! He sweeps through the air. He screams in the blast. The earth trembles at his tread, and is covered with his tracks. To-day, it is Time; to-morrow, Eternity! Now, while it is yet to-day, believe and live. Give your heart, as it is, to the Saviour; and give it just now. Then, henceforth and forever, eternity, of all words ever spoken or heard, will be the sublimest to your soul.

And, as a disciple of Jesus, you need not be told to remember the widow and the fatherless. Pure and undefiled religion is to visit them in their affliction; to shed the sympathizing tear; to offer the helping hand; to pray, and leave an amen that can be eaten or worn. You, that have a plenty and to spare, whose homes have not been made desolate by disaster, will take from your cellars and pantries something more practical than phrases and tracts; for example, those delicacies you sealed up for Christmas; you will make up packages and go with them, not send them, but you will go with them in the name of a disciple. You will go as a father, as a mother, as a brother, as a sister, and radiate your own home-cheer among the hearts of the bereaved; and when you return it will seem as if you had done it to the Son of God, and you will

find your own fireside brighter, and your own soul happier, and your own body stronger, for the errand. And so living in time, when eternity shall open upon you, gently or suddenly, in-doors or out, at home or abroad, you will be found ready for your robe and your crown.

“ While all dispute on points of *doctrine*, none  
Doubt what Religion teaches to be *done*,  
Bear sorrow here, and look to Heaven for bliss,  
This thy theology, thy practice this ;  
Believe God’s promises, his precepts keep,  
Joy with the joyful, with the mourner weep ;  
Exalt Love’s banner, evermore unfurled,  
And keep thyself unspotted from the world.”

## VII.

# TWO WORLDS MADE ONE \*

*"Who hath divided a watercourse or a way for the lightning."—JOB xxxviii. 25.*

*"Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased."—DANIEL xii. 4.*

*"There is no political news of real importance to-day."—YESTERDAY'S TELEGRAM FROM LONDON.*

HESE ancient Scriptures, which I have quoted, are being fulfilled in our ears and before our eyes. Many messengers are running to and fro, over the mountains, across the plains, under the seas, and knowledge is increasing. Intellect, by its agents of discovery and invention, commissions new heralds, and heralds proclaim advancing knowledge every day. Lightning flashes, in vivid capitals, the headlines and the outlines of passing events, over all the land, each morning; and steam fills in the local particulars, with comments and lessons, every evening.

We live in an age of results outwrought from centuries of experiment. From our stand-point in time, we might change the tense of Daniel's pro-

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\* Spoken at Union Chapel Independent Methodist Church, Cincinnati, Ohio, Sabbath morning, August 5, 1866.

phcey, and mark it down as accomplished history. Many *have run* to and fro, and knowlege *has been* increased.

Adam, with but a fig-leaf beginning at fashion, led Eve on foot from Paradise. The great green world was before him ; but how little did he know of its resources, or of his own inherent powers ! What a different world the angels behold, down-looking from the heavens to-day, from that whose Eden-gate was guarded by the cherubim !

Man, when he began to travel, was a plodding pedestrian. Then he subdued animals. That was about the first invention. Horses, camels, and mules carried all the passengers and commodities of the early ages. "The first roads were along the water-courses ; next, a little up the slopes of hills ; next, across the passes between ; next, from one river to another, beyond the deserts, and around the inland seas. The interior of Asia was the childhood home of the human race ; the Arminian highlands the occasional points of visitation ; the Euphrates valley their native country ; the nameless sea the boundary of all, and the end of the earth."\*

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\* Rev. W. A. Scott, D.D., San Francisco, Cal., 1858.

In the progress of time and development of talent, men learned to migrate by caravans ; then, by ships, to venture from one promontory to another in sight, thus coasting about the Edges of Things, until, finally, they discovered means and guides to sail from shore to shore across broad gulfs and bays ; and Columbus, measuring the vast Atlantic, found a new world in the West. Then came the necessity for larger and better vessels ; next, the application of steam to drive them ; and, at length, the same wondrous power to draw railroad trains over pathways of iron throughout the rapidly populating interiors of civilization.

And now come the lightning lines to and fro over land and river, under inlet and bay, and, at last, beneath the broad Atlantic Ocean ! There is to-day a *nervo-vital* cord of feeling and thought, thrilling with one pulsing life the great commercial centers of Christendom. This rolling globe, from its Asia garden where man's foot first pressed its dewy grass, around with the sun to the farthest western shore toward Asia again, to-day is girdled with a wire along which light and love may run to and fro, increasing knowledge, intensifying civilization, promulgating Christianity, until all the na-

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tions shall be one in life, in liberty, in worship, and in work.

Man has mastered the ocean's storm and roar, and its deep chambers have become the whispering galleries along whose corridors his free thought leaps onward, echoing from continent to continent. Now can we tell to our foreign friends beyond the sunrise sea, the quiet words of home, the busy calculations of commerce, the daily promises of agriculture, the inspiring thoughts of science, the ever-elevating conceptions of art, the sweet music-language of the coming kingdom of Christ; and receive responses dating backward on the dials of our chronometers. What a beautiful dedication to the cable—how it merits the meaning of Heart's Content—that the first message from the East should be an intimation of Peace! It is like that which comes to us from the Farther East—the morning land of Immanuel—when the angels telegraphed a heart's content message to the shepherds of Bethlehem, at midnight,—Peace!

Blessed thought! We can send the glad word Eastward—Peace in America! We hail the whisper out-heralding steam and sun, speaking out of the sea, Peace in Europe! It chimes with the

tidings from heaven—"Peace on earth, good will to men!" O! thou Guide of the sun, thou Kindler of the lightning, thou impressional Spirit of all truth, speak Peace, thrill Peace to *every* nation, Peace to *every* heart, and tinge into purpling dawn the day when the Prince of Peace shall come to reign!

The ancients filled the vaulted chambers of the sea with their gods; but it is now the highway for Christian thought. Surely, if a man can send his communications into the deep ocean, and *through* it, God himself is able to send the summons, in due time, that shall cause its sepulchral depths to give up their dead. The Lord Almighty hath divided a watercourse—a way for his lightnings to flash, unextinguished, through deep waters. They run to and fro as couriers between ocean-sundered nations, carrying our thoughts and greetings from shore to distant shore, and knowledge shall be yet more and more increased.

"How strange that the thoughts we think up here on the earth's surface—away here in the interiors of the continent—these thoughts about the markets, the exchanges, the seasons, the crops, the elections, the wars, the treaties, and all other fond nothings

of daily life," as Everett has said, "how very strange that they should clothe themselves with elemental sparks, and dart with electric velocity, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, from hemisphere to hemisphere, far down among the uncouth monsters that wallow in the nether seas, along the floors of mystic rock and wreck, through the dungeon glooms and caverns of the rayless deep! How strange that intelligence of harvested wheat, and tasseling corn, and mellowing fruit of this glowing summer over us, should be touched into leaping language every new day, and speed as good news to the hungry of old Europe beyond the sea; and that these thrilling words of cheer should go flashing along the slimy decks and bones of sunken galleons which have been rotting for ages! How strange that messages of heart-beating love between husband and wife, parents and children, should flash and burn on to the distant sun-lit shore right through the damps and colds of the old, green skeletons of shipwrecked men and women, whose hearts, once warm, and young, and glad, burst at the surge of the tempest, and were buried as the eternal gulfs yawned and roared over them long centuries ago!"

You remember the jubilant congratulations of the people when, in 1858, the Atlantic Cable spoke but a single word. But that word, fully interpreted, was this: POSSIBILITY. Cyrus W Field is a thousand-fold rewarded, to-day, for all the disappointments, anxieties, and discouragements of these silent eight years. When the cable ceased to talk, right in the midst of the people's noisy compliments, at once the language of congratulation changed to that of unkind criticism. The failure called out from the same mouths and newspapers more emphatic "I-told-you-sos," than the flush of success had elicited words of praise. How easy it is for "many to run to and fro," publishing tales of misfortune! How glibly the tongue tilts over the syllables of uncharitable censure! So was Columbus, so was Galileo, so was Fulton, each in his turn, the subject of ridicule and persecution, just at the time when cheer and counsel, however desirable, might have been worse for him. Flatteries are not half so culturing as oppositions.

The ladder Jacob saw was let down from Heaven; that was for angels. But the ladder of thought by which men climb up into the angel-loves and levels, is raised from the earth. Newton,

Franklin, and Morse, have built their own ladders, round by round, and are still building at the upper ends of them, and rising forward into God's eternity.

The telescope, microscope, photography, telegraphy, are but combinations of God's laws. "The laws of nature and the properties of matter become, to us, the expressions of his will." These are the gifts. Ours, and here, and now, is the use.

The same omnipotent hand "that hung the rainbow over the ruins of the flood," making a dark sky only the back-ground to set forth the vivid beauty of a mercy-sign, now guides the lightnings of heaven under the waves of the sea. To Him whose way is in the deep, and who doeth his will in the armies of Heaven, "who maketh the clouds his chariot, who walketh upon the wings of the wind, who maketh his angels spirits, his ministers a flaming fire"—to Him be all the praise for this grandest achievement of the century!

God has blest the genius, courage, and perseverance of our fellow Americans, and given them success. The event is worthy of a proclamation for a day of national thanksgiving. If the President should announce such a day it might be more

generally enjoyable than any of his vetoes of human progressions. Great Britain should join the international jubilee, and invite the world to participate in the exercises. The angels of light rejoice at this intellectual triumph. It resembles their own way of proclaiming glad tidings, by swift and silent soul-language, flashing from life to life, and from world to world.

Although both ends of the wire are on British soil, American fingers fastened them there. It is a world's advantage, and belongs to no nation. "Who of us that inhabit the earth admires the sublime grandeur of the Apocalyptic angel any the less because one of his feet stands on the sun, and the other on the moon?" And if the morning and evening stars were the termini of this mystic wire that sweeps through the sea, who would not rejoice the more, if only there were a single point on this footstool, where passing tidings might be caught off, interpreted, and circled out to increase the knowledge of the nations! Political notions are too narrow, and national prejudices too insignificant, to have a place in the contemplation of such a theme. It is the expression of ages of promise and providence to the human race. The Atlantic Telegraph was

not let into the sea as a mere play-line for compliments between aristocrats and rulers. It is designed to subserve the interests of all men, of all classes and places, for all ages to come; and especially to promote the unity and simultaneous workings of the church of Jesus Christ, that the will of the Lord may be done on earth as in heaven—at once, and by all.

But let us learn a practical lesson or two from this subject. In the time of Christ, there was a dispositoin among religionists to strain at gnats and swallow camels. That same spirit still manifests itself in Christendom, even in this country, where there are no camels to swallow. It is well for the camels, but no better for the camel-swallowers!

With such persons there is no individuality, independence, or progress. Their life is a deeply hidden spark within them,—so deep that its light fails to reach the surface and radiate into society; and, therefore, the outward man is whited as a sepulcher, and lettered over in the tombstone phrases of mint, anise, and cummin; and cummin, anise, and mint. In such hearts there is no inspiration to glorify any thing that nobody else has glorified—no feeling to embrace any thing

not definitely specified in the list of traditional orthodoxies vouchsafed to the fathers away back in their pantaletted childhood. The hymns these fossilized professors sing must be the sad minor-keyed ones of martyr times; the sermons they hear must be as mournfully dolorous as those delivered in the days of the plague; their countenances must be as clean-shaven as those of the earliest bare-faced Popes; their language must be as monotonous as that of the chanting Druids. Their experience must not indulge in any of the originals of time, and place, and circumstance, but must tally its every thought with some letter of some creed of some long-dead professor, whose temptations and tendencies were as different as they are distant and unapt to be repeated.

Their fathers sent messages by mule, or courier, or carrier-pigeon—their fathers thought, and said, and did precisely thus and so, and so, *ad infinitum*, do their copying descendants. The preaching their fathers heard and recommended to them, never referred to current events or practical questions at all; it was from firstly to lastly about the doctrinal distinctions, and the abstract, infinitesimal dustinesses of sectarianism—about what God knows

and does n't know; how many should be saved and how many damned; how much water in baptism and how little welfare afterward; whether to stand or bow, book it, or try it blind, in prayer; whether to sing the psalms in rhyme, or Watts' and Wesley's hymns, in worship; how to wash one another's literal feet and tarnish one another's spiritual walk—thus ignoring all subjects that could, in any wise, be applied to the personal, social, and national increase of knowledge.

Now, if such chaffiness, such conservativeness, such other-age-a-tiveness be the gospel, what are we to call the teachings of Christ himself? Are not his discourses drawn from the living people? Did he not illustrate truth by the vivid pictures of daily life around him? Yes, a falling sparrow of the mountain; a swallow darting round the eaves; a lily blushing in the meadow; a vine spreading over its trellis; a mustard seed springing from the ground; a fisherman drawing his seine to the beach; a husbandman harvesting his fields; a wanderer coming home to his father's house; an eagle swooping through the sky; a marriage and its wine; a funeral and its pall; the fig tree; the judge; the ruler; the wind; the rain; the light-

ning; the tempest,—all these were the texts of his sermons. He employed figures and used references such as reached the minds and hearts of the actual people round him. And yet, much as his enemies hated him, they could argue nothing by accusing him as a politician, or as a trifier with the dignities of the law and the prophets. He knew that to speak of the incidents and interests of the people themselves, was the best way to enlighten their minds and impress their hearts. He knew the soul wants of men; and he chose to employ parables and illustrations from nature and from current history, and no wonder at all that the people who sought knowledge heard him gladly.

So the ocean telegraph is an appropriate theme for this or any other day, and for us or any other people. Only let us get the lesson out of it, as out of all nature's tallying evidences of gospel truth. The original term translated "to and fro" signifies making diligent search. How do you acquire, and when do you enjoy, knowledge? Only when you strive for it. It is a deep-sea pearl, and must be dived after. Pearls don't float about like leaves. Some of you run through a book, or library, for instance, glancing at head

lines here and there, and skimming over the deep thought places where the pearls are hidden. You run through business changing houses and hands merely for gain or curiosity. You run through a city or region of country so skippingly that neither impresses you with any specialness, and you would require a guide to retrace the route to-morrow. And you run, hop, step, and jump through religion in the same manner, so that you hardly know what it is. What a miserable burlesque on our holy Christianity to say of a sinner when he is converted, that "He has got through." How often those empty phrases "Got religion," "Got through," are repeated by persons whose knowledge has not been increased—scarcely begun! Truth is not found in nuggets, much less in coined pieces. It is gathered dust by dust, grain by grain; and it must be diligently and continuously sought. *No living man has yet acquired all the gospel he needs.* So, then, this running to and fro of the text is rather a diligent, patient looking into things for truth, and a candid discerning of the signs of the times.

Newton, who carried his plummet, and line, and lamp of discovery to the infinite highways of the

universe, weighing stars, and worlds, and solar systems, "as if they had been pebbles in his palm," increased his knowledge by a laborious pursuit of science. He knew what he was thinking about, and how to teach the generations to come to think for themselves.

So the wise Christian begins his walks in the lowly ways of a little child, and finds the path leading him up to the summit-grandeurs of philosophy and revelation at last. Knowledge shall be increased to him who studies the works of the natural world under the light of the Word of God. We live in days of wonders—when prophecies are being fulfilled. We have brighter lights and more advanced lessons than our fathers had; and God intends that we shall open our eyes to see more, and our minds to comprehend more, and our hearts to enjoy more than any mortals who have lived before us.

I fancy a convention among the fishes, down in the sea, when the mysterious cable-wire drops in among them. Finny citizens of the deep, of every size, and age, and form, from every briny chamber and rocky recess along the line of invasion, assemble in excited groups to discuss the merits

and meaning of the strange creature which settles in their midst. They dart about in reconnoitering attitudes, eyeing the wire from side to side, and cautiously feeling it with their gills, darting to and fro to find its head or tail, but returning more puzzled than ever, shaking their heads, and asking a thousand unanswerable questions. The more they consider the matter, the more they are bewildered. Both the beginning and the end of it are out of the range of their observation. They swarm in long lines of busy, curious spectators, waiting and watching in the water to see whether the wonderful object will show any signs of life.

In the stillness of this contemplation, a committee of investigation is appointed to inquire into the affair of all-absorbing interest. On motion, Salmon, Mullet, and Whiff are unanimously requested to consider the momentous subject at once, and report their views and suggestions for the benefit of the community. The committee retire to a little niche in a fissured rock, over which the mystic wire is stretched, put their heads together, and conclude that it must be a new species of fish come to dwell with them in their watery home.

“It is not a sterlet,” says Whiff, “although it is armed with bony scales, and has no mouth that I can see; nor a sword-fish, although it is destitute of fins, and, in body, is hard, and narrow, and sharp.”

“No, nor a narwhal; and yet that twisted thing we see may be only the long, horny tusk of the monster we dread so much, whose body shall be plainly visible by-and-by,” says Mullet, with a shudder, and a very solemn countenance.

“It must be either a goby or an eel,” remarks Salmon, with a wise turn of his head towards the quiet stranger lying above them; “for only see its snake-like form; and did you not experience a singular sensation as your nose touched his hard scales? I think there is life in it—more life than we imagine; and I prefer getting out of this place immediately.

At this moment a shark comes along, having followed in the wake of the Great Eastern from the Irish shore, watching for plunder in the business, but able to preach a little, nevertheless. Being somewhat shrewder than the Committee of Special Investigation, he asks the privilege to explain the mystery. The committee adjourn, and invite the

fish audience to assemble and listen to the newly arrived itinerant of the sea. The shark proceeds: "That object of your wonder is an instrument by which thinking, marvelous creatures, who dwell in an element above ours, send their thoughts from continent to continent, in the twinkling of an eye! Above us, there is a great world of thoughts, words, and activities—of glories and grandeurs, which we do not comprehend. It is inhabited by beings who enjoy a life so superior to ours, that you would doubt my story if I told you but the beginning of it."

"All nonsense; our facts are all against such an idea," says Mullet-head; "there is no world above our own world of water, and there are no living beings but such as dwell in the sea." "So say I;" "And I say amen to that," exclaim the other members of the committee, and the whole congregation flutter their fins, take a swallow or two of briny water, and deny the truth the shark asserts. They reject the story for want of brains to comprehend it. But the world of human thought, and action, and enjoyment, of which they had heard, is just the same—just as real—as if every finny doubter had believed.

So, above *us*, there is a grand sphere of realities and progressions where immortal beings move and love. A line of communication has been let down among us. It is the gospel telegraph, whose battery is up in another sphere. It starts from a firm shore above, and thrills down through our deep, dark world, as lightning words flash through the sea! And yet some men are as silly as the fishes. They will not believe in a world better than this in which they have a breathing, mortal life. But their rejection of the eternal Fact does not in the least disturb the messages that flash along the wire. There are those who will hear and enjoy its truths. The blessed world *is there*, thank God,—more bright, and permanent, and beautiful than any of these visible things around us!

“High as we may lift our reason up,  
By Faith directed, and confirmed by Hope,  
Yet we are able only to survey  
Dawnings of beams, and promises of day;  
Heaven’s fuller effluence mocks our dazzled sight,  
Too great its swiftness and too strong its light.”

We must study the Bible, the times, and ourselves, with humble diligence, and our knowledge shall be increased. This is the running to and fro that increases our knowledge: it is thought

leaping out in recognition of thought, hither and thither into all events, into all eras, into all relations, into all circumstances of life—the inquiring mind running to and fro gathering facts, comparing principles, social, political, scientific, and religious, and by pulse beats weaving these threaded lines into a vesture of fadeless beauty, in which to greet the coming Lord.

Another practical lesson in our subject is this: That God has a way of concealing certain things until the proper time for bringing them forth. “In nature, the kernel remains guarded in the shell awhile—the seed lies sleeping in its wrappage until its proper season for sprouting comes.” The same principle holds in animal life, when tiny infancy is protected and nurtured for a time by strange and benevolent adaptations, until the strength increases, and maturity may be trusted to care for itself. So with God’s peculiar people. They were cradled and disciplined as children, in Egypt, tried, tired, and toughened by marches through the wilderness, until they acquired the strength to possess the promised land. And so the whole world was educated out of its childhood, and trained up into the grander and maturer age of

comprehending Messiah's advent. In the fullness of time he came. Thus, through all the histories of the past, we find God dealing with men by the rule of adapting his grace to the increase of knowledge. He leads humanity upward to higher elevations, and circles broader horizons around it every day. Christianity unthroned the Cæsars in the fullness of time. It blazed as a beacon through the dark ages in the years best suited to the Reformation. It has excited invention, promoted discovery, and revived letters, giving the world the mariner's compass, the printing-press, gunpowder, steam, the magnetic telegraph, and all the elements by which to conquer the hosts of error and wrong.

And now the world's wide continents are traversed by lines of inter-communication, just in these prophetic years of our Lord, so propitious for the triumph of truth, and the progress of the race into the full, free joys of the gospel of Peace.

Wonderful, rapid, mysterious communion of all nations and islands—all the world over—by the lightning thrill! "There is no speech, nor language where its voice is not heard—its line is gone out through all the earth,—and its words to the end of the world."

Brethren, so have you a mystic but heart-touching and soul-inspiring communion with the upper and better world. Through the deep gulfs, and fathomless seas, and immeasurable spaces between heaven and earth, a communication has been opened up and down through Jesus Christ. Messages on swifter wing than lightning's, now run to and fro, not at the rich man's price of five dollars a word, but free and clear as glad tidings to the poor, and as responses from happy souls.

When the world was dark and desolate in sin, when superstition and idolatry everywhere prevailed, when man had almost sealed his utter destruction, and when, among the millions of an apostate race, but a weary few remembered and trusted the promise of a Messiah—then, in the midnight hour, the Lord made bare his arm for our redemption. The lowly shepherds who lingered in the fields watching their sheep, believed the prophets. They pondered the promises. In the still and silent night, under the beautiful light of the high-hung chandelier of stars, they gazed upward, wonderingly waiting for the Messiah. Late one evening, as a little neighborly company of these Judean shepherds were seated on the ground,

doubtless talking over their hopes and fears ; while the cool dews were falling upon the pastures ; while the flocks were companied in little groups and quietly reposing ; while the winds were still, and stars twinkling as if they would smile the heavenly secret down to earth,—suddenly, over the solitude of Bethlehem hills, a brilliant light shone round ! Lo ! a radiant circle of morning at midnight ! It was the glory of the Lord. How with fear and amazement the poor shepherds looked into each other's faces, and clasped each other's hands, and whispered each other's names, in the marvelous light ! How pale their cheeks ! How bright their eyes ! How tremulous their voices ! How thrilled and throbbing their hearts !

The angel sees their consternation, and says, “Fear not, fear not ; for behold, I bring you *glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people ;* for unto you this day”—how early the news—*this day*—and the angel of this day is earlier than its sun !—THIS DAY, “in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”

That was the first gospel preached to dying men. And it warbled in tones of music from the tongue of an angel. What a rapturous beginning ! The new

gospel of Peace, proclaimed, first of all, to poor men in the fields, at night, by an angel itinerant from heaven!

No wonder the angels rejoiced. The shining ones had been watching and listening from the battlements of the celestial city—looking far down to the dark plains of Bethlehem, and to the astonished shepherds, and to their own sister angel singing the good news into the ears of mortal men; they could restrain their music no longer; they could stay away no longer; they could keep their wings folded no longer,—and instantly a choral multitude of them joined the solo of the herald, and the heavenly host shouted a chorus, praising the Lord, saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”

The angel said that the gospel should be joy to *all* people; and its Divine Author himself says, “Preach the gospel to every creature.” It comes to all. It brings blessings to all. It never discriminates; it never changes; it never ends. It never grows old, and never wearies the ear like the languaged opinions and histories of men. Many generations of its preachers are in their graves; the thousands now living and proclaiming the

glad tidings of salvation, will soon sleep in the dust; and the lips that pronounced it, and the ears that were charmed with its sweet sound, and the eyes that moistened at its deep meaning, and the hearts that bounded at its wonderful love—all shall soon be coffined under ground; but the gospel, O, the *everlasting* gospel!—"Heaven and earth shall pass away, *but my word shall not pass away,*" saith the Lord.

Other systems of religion have changed with the ages, and compromised with the new-fashioned Satanisms of the times. Other systems have been modeled to suit popular opinions, and shaped to fit a warped and crooked policy. But this gospel, eternal and immutable as its Author, "is the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever."

Creeds and Confessions tend to establish sects and hamper professors to narrowness of love; but the Bible sings of angel charities, and breathes them by its Spirit through all the human brotherhood. The Bible is broader than bounds, and stronger than bands, teaching and exemplifying a double affection—an upward, *to God*, and an outward, *to man*, wielding in this Mighty Cross a

power of love which the combined forces of earth and hell can not withstand.

Men have sometimes prayed for more visible manifestations of this gospel power on the earth, but they prayed with hands folded too closely to help, and with eyes shut too closely to see the sufferer, were he standing asking for the Word of Life within finger-touch in prayer-time.

There was a time when men prayed not so especially that the gospel might be sent to the heathen, as that ships be sent abroad and cruel men to catch and bind the heathen, hand and foot, and bring them to the gospel! Those hateful ships had borne better ballast by taking free Bibles abroad, than by bringing captive mortals here. The command was not, "Go ye into *some part* of the world and steal the creature to the gospel," but "Go ye into *all* the world; and preach the gospel to every creature." Bless God! better days are breaking. The time is at hand when Bibles shall be in dusky hands till lately fetter-bound. The Bible has in it the only ties that shall inseparably reunite these politically dissevered States of America. For men have been proud and oppressive. Men in authority in church and

state have attempted to monopolize the blessings of the Bible. Magnificent churches, on fashionable streets, in great cities, have been erected, and gilded, and cushioned, and tinselled, and pew-locked, as refineries, where the Bible might run through a process of creed cramping, and pulpit stuffing to please the ecclesiastical upper orders—the privileges, the honors, the treasury-ships, the feasting, the exaltations, and the crowns, all ingeniously selected and parceled out in glittering packages for the front pews, and for the Brussels-carpeted parlors of Christendom; and the self-denials, the sacrifices, the humilities, the fastings, the prayings, the persecutions, and the crosses, all put up in assorted proportions and sold to the gallery seats, and distributed among the poor. And because religionists have climbed to such presumption, tramping the poor man's Bible underfoot, denying neighbor and brother, doubting the patient Father, it pleases the Almighty to interpose, and he will "magnify his word" in all its broad meanings, and establish justice and truth on the ruins of our broken idols. The great significance of the events passing into history these very days, is a preparation of the nations for a welcome to the Bible.

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Bible principles are progressive, thorough, impartial and triumphant. And with this book in all the people's hands, open and free from cumbrous comment, studied, remembered, believed—lived in daily work, as well as read in Sabbath worship—knowledge shall increase, and grace shall have growth, and the kingdom of Christ shall come.

“Heaven and earth shall pass away,” the Atlantic cable shall be snapped asunder when worlds are wrecked and stars are shaken from the firmament as ripe apples from the tree, “but the Word of the Lord shall not pass away.” This line of inter-communication between God's throne and the sinner's heart shall forever be kept open. The connecting chain of eternal love has no flaw, and is well secured at both extremities. Divinity charges the wire, and humanity is quickened to instant response. The atonement is complete. The one Mediator pleads and prevails. Bless the Lord! the one way, the sure way, the safe way, the quick way, the living way, is open now, and, this moment, whosoever will may put himself in communication with the invisible world. The life-apparatus of a human heart can, by a touch, take off a message anywhere along the wire. Send up a telegram of prayer, and

receive a benediction in response! The spirit of the Lord God flashes in thrills of love along this blessed wire of his Word. Currents of holy sympathy run to and fro, throbbing from the Redeemer's great heart in heaven, and touching penitent sinners' hearts on earth. So swift are the communications, that, were one sinner to read the pardoning message beating its sweet meaning against his heart just now, repent and believe, there would instantly be joy in heaven among the angels of light. Wherever heaven is—however far away—though it should be high over the fields of starry space, beyond the highest sun—though its crystal pavements should overlies the dome of the firmament—wherever it is, there is a line of responsive communication between that bright world and our own, and the moment a poor sinner listens to the "still small voice" of the Spirit speaking the good tidings of joy to his soul, that very moment the angels strike their harps of gold and begin their exultant song, and fly singing and harping from hight to hight, and from sphere to sphere, through all the Beautiful Place, until the host of redeemed ones hear the news, and join the

celestial music in very joy over the salvation of  
that one sinner who repenteth!

“Through the harsh noises of our day  
A low, sweet prelude finds its way :  
Through clouds of doubt and creeds of fear,  
A light is breaking, calm and clear.  
That song of love, now low and far,  
Ere long shall swell from star to star !  
That light, the breaking day, which tips  
The golden-spired Apocalypse !”

THE END.



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