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The future tenses of the blessed life

Frederick
Brotherton Meyer

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THE FUTURE TENSES OF THE BLESSED LIFE.

*Frederick
Bromfield*
F. B. MEYER, B. A. 1847--

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PREFACE.

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THE eye gets strained with peering into the unknown. We cannot penetrate the veil which the Father hangs over coming days, as the light gauze of mist over the gaunt hills, or the smiling pasture-lands.

It is better not to know. The joy hidden in the years would unfit us for common tasks; whilst the dread, apart from the sight of His all-sufficient grace, that awaits to succor us, would paralyze. It is His mercy that puts its hand over our eyes.

But if, by the constitution of our minds, we must anticipate the future, then let us believe that it is radiant with His presence, filling each moment to its outermost rim. No day, whatever it takes, can deprive us of Him. Each day will utter to the next some speech of His love. All the days linked together, and entwined with His present grace, will make a golden chain of holy and blessed living.

F. B. MEYER.

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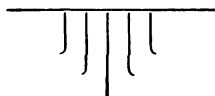
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THE FUTURE TENSES OF THE BLESSED LIFE.

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I.

A Cluster of Grapes.

“The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in his love; He will joy over thee with singing.”

ZEPH. iii. 17

THESE words sparkle as the rim of the ocean does when, though clouds brood dense overhead, the sun shines far out at sea. They were primarily addressed to the daughter of Zion, to Israel the chosen people; and they undoubtedly foreshadow blessings which are yet to be realized. Ten times over in this chapter God assures His people of what He will

most certainly do on their behalf.

But a much wider circle than the chosen race may appropriate the blessed comfort of these words. They who are of the faith of Abraham are reckoned children of Abraham, and are therefore justified in claiming their share in the blessings promised to all the seed; "not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of faith." If you believe on Him "who quickeneth the dead, and calleth these things which be not as though they were," then draw near and drink deep draughts of rest and grace from these wells of sacred promise.

Twice over in this paragraph we are told that the Lord, the King of Israel, is in the midst of His people. This is an indisputable fact. He is in the midst of His church, so that it shall not be moved; though the waves around roar and be troubled, beating themselves into yeasty foam and

clouds of spray. But He is also in the midst of our individual being. We have been so strengthened by the spirit in the inner man, that Christ dwells in our hearts by faith. At the moment of regeneration God becomes, in the person of His Son, and through the work of the Holy Ghost, resident in those who believe. Thenceforward they are His holy temples and those ever-memorable words are realized in their experience, "We will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

Well would it be if each Christian were to devote some portion, however brief, in each day, to meditation upon this marvellous fact. "The mighty God, the King, is in the midst of me. I am God-tenanted, God-possessed. The High and Holy One who inhabiteth eternity has taken up His abode in my heart." And this marvellous indwelling—more wonderful than if

an angel were to indwell an emmet or humming-bird—is not dependent on frames or feelings or aught in us; but endures through all our changes and fluctuations unto the eternal ages.

But if the mighty God is indeed in us, why is there so much weakness and failure in our lives? why have we so little to show for this marvellous possession? Alas! the answer is not far to seek—we have limited the Holy One of Israel. He has been in the midst of us as a man astounded, and as a mighty man that cannot save; because our backslidings have been many, and we have sinned against Him (Jer. xiv.:7-8.)

In olden days, amid the Roman forum, there was a little brooklet, called the Girls' Fountain, which sang merrily as it broke into the light, and passed on its way toward the yellow Tiber. For centuries, however, it was lost sight of; not that it had ceased

to exist, but that it had become covered and almost choked by tons of rubbish, accumulated thickly on the spot, as the proud city was subjected to repeated and ruthless violence at the hands of many spoilers. But when in recent years the *debris* was removed, that fountain, so long choked and hindered, freed from all restraints, again took up her song and recommenced her useful ministry. Is not that a type of the work of the Mighty One within us? He has not left us; but His gracious power, which would have been put forth in us and for us, has been rendered almost inoperative and dead. What now shall hinder us ridding ourselves of all which has hindered Him from doing His mighty works so that He may do that which He so much loves, and which we so much need?

Then we may expect Him to accomplish the four blessed "I wills" of this precious verse.

"He will save."—As God took the side of His people against their foes, and will do so again in the final struggle, when His feet shall stand upon the Mount of Olives, so will He take our side against our sins. He has saved us from the penalty of sin; He will also save us from its power. As we look back on a finished salvation, accomplished for us on the cross, so we may confidently look forward to a sufficient salvation along the entire course of our future life, till we enter the City whose walls are salvation and its gates praise.

Your foes may be numerous as the devils in hell, strong and wily; but *He will save*. Your temperament may be as susceptible to temptation as an aspen-leaf is to the wind; but He will save. Your past years, by repeated acts of indulgence, may have formed habits strong as iron bands; but *He will save*. Your circumstances

and companions may be most unfavorable to a life of victory; but *He will save*. Difficulties are nought to Him; the darkness shineth as the day. It were rank blasphemy to suppose that our Creator could have given us a body which He could not keep; or have placed us in circumstance in which He could not restrain. Is it not written, without a single hint at limitation or reserve?—"He shall save His people from their sins." And shall He not do so?

If there be, therefore, perpetual failure in your life, it cannot arise from any weakness or impotence in the Mighty God; but from some failure on your part. That failure may probably be discovered in one of three hiding places—imperfect surrender; deficient faith; or neglected communion. But when the intention of the soul is right with God, without doubt **HE WILL SAVE.**

"He will rejoice over thee with joy."

—The great evangelic prophet gives the key to understand this promise when he says, "As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shalt thy God rejoice over thee." It is very wonderful that the Holy Spirit should choose metaphor. Plato held that love is the attraction to each other of twin souls, made each for the other, and moving towards each other; until each finds in the other the completement and supply of the needs of its own nature. As we need God, so does God need us. There is something in us which satisfies Him, and without which His nature would not be perfectly content.

Here is a marvel, at the brink of which the first-born sons of light stand bewildered! How then can *we* fathom it? We can understand better how He came to create, redeem, regenerate, and pity us; but that He should

need us as the bridegroom needs the bride—who shall understand this? We should have thought that our sin would alienate Him from us for ever. But His yearning for us is greater than His hatred of our sin. And He will expend infinite pains to rid us of the evil that clings to us, that He may have us for Himself forever.

And when the long suspense is over and the weary years of waiting have passed by, and He presents us to Himself, as a bride adorned for her husband, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, amid the over-whelming gladness of that hour for us, there will be realized on His part "the joy that was set before Him;" for which He endured the cross and despised the shame; and He will be abundantly satisfied. He will rejoice over us with joy.

He will Rest in His Love—The margin suggests an exquisite alter-

native, "He will be silent in His love." Of old the Psalmist said that his soul was silent in its calm expectancy for God's salvation. Here we are told that God is silent in His brooding tenderness.

All the deepest emotion is silent. That which is superficial can easily find words in which to express itself; but whatever touches the depths of our being is inexpressible. Deep waters run still. Hence it is that the apostle speaks of joy unspeakable; of peace that passeth all understanding; of things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived. When we are told, then, that God's love will be a silent one, we know that it is too intense, too deep, too infinite to find expression.

Such love is ours now, and will be ours forever. "The Father Himself loveth you." "He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I

will love him." All earthly love may ebb away from us, subsiding as a tide down the beach; all that is lovable and attractive in our outward estate may perish; life may seem drear, and desolate, and silent; but over all the love of God will arch as the blue sky over earth. It is a mistake to be ever asking for expressions from love like this. Be content to know and believe it; to rest in it; to lie back on those everlasting arms; to look up in that tender face. It will break silence presently; but in the meanwhile be still, and know that God is love. There is exquisite grace and meaning in the words of the spouse, "I charge you, O! ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awaken my love, till he please."

He will Joy over thee with Singing.

—It is much to hear a lark sing, as if its throat must be torn by the torrent

of melody; more to hear a child sing as it comes down a woodland path in spring, chequered with sunlight falling on blue hyacinths and yellow primroses; more still to hear an angel sing, as the lone messenger of God breaks into melody to cheer himself on some distant journey from the Home of Song; more still to have heard our Saviour sing in the days of His earthly ministry, when He joined His disciples in the Jewish Hallel; but what will it not be when the great God Himself breaks into song, to celebrate an accomplished work, an emancipated world, a redeemed race, a Bride won for His Son!

Ah! there are great times coming—even now they are being prepared! Creation is yet to witness scenes of which her fairest pageants are but fading symbols! She shall yet become an orchestra from which songs shall arise throughout all ages. The new song is

"He will joy over thee." 19

being rehearsed but ere long it shall
be rendered by ten thousand times ten
thousand blessed rejoicing spirits; and
amid all, leading all, pervading all,
bearing all upwards and forwards,
will be heard the voice of the Eternal,
as He rejoices over us with singing!
Hallelujah!

II.

Kept and Watered.

“I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.”

ISA. xxvii. 17

WHEN God fences a soul out of the world in order to till it, and make it bear fruit to Himself, He does not leave it to go back into a waste. *He keeps it.*

A vineyard will engross the whole of a man's time—perhaps the time of many men. The nourishing of the soil, the pruning of the branches, the syringing of the leaves, the thinning of the grapes, the support of the heavy clusters—all demand constant and assiduous care. There is a tend-

ency in all cultivated things to go back to their original type.

However it may be made to agree with the modern ideas of development and evolution, it is nevertheless a fact that the fairest results of human skill are not in themselves permanent; but tend ever backward to the rudest and simplest forms of their species—the apple tree to the crab, the vine of Sorek to the wild vine of the hills. Therefore the keeper of the vineyard is ever engaged in going to and fro on the narrow paths, fighting every tendency towards deterioration with unwavering patience. He *keeps* his vineyard. And when the harvest of the fruit is near, he is more than ever watchful against the little foxes on the one hand, and the pillaging Bedouin on the other.

With similar care, but much more watchful tenderness, our God is ever watching over us. With eager eyes

He marks the slightest sign of deterioration—a hardening conscience; a deadening spirituality; a waning love. Any symptom of this sort fills Him with—if I may use the words—keen anxiety; and His gentle but skilful hand is at once at work to arrest the evil, restore the soul and force it onward to new accessions of that Divine life which is our only true bliss and rest.

Let us not carry the responsibility of our nurture. It is too much for us. Better far is it to devolve the care of our keeping on our faithful Creator, who has made, and who will bear and keep; who is more eager for our sanctification than we can be; and who, with unslumbering care, keeps His purchased possession.

But notice, the verse says, “I will keep it night and day.” How priceless is that assurance! The present tense is sweet, but sweeter still the

future. By night, ill dreams may hover near, with their befouling touch, like vampire bats with their silent wing but deadly bite; but—"I will keep." By day, evil spirits may haunt the steps, determined, if possible, to entangle in wiles, or bear down by force; but—"I will keep." Without, there may be incessant persecution and opposition; but—"I will keep." Within, there may be the constant tendency to deteriorate; but—"I will keep." Under dark skies and bright ones; in all times of prosperity and adversity, of weal or woe; in the hour of death and in the day of judgment—"I WILL KEEP."

Many of God's saints are troubled with the dread of failing away, and of never reaching the Golden city on which they have set their hearts. They forget that He has promised to keep; to preserve from all evil; to environ with His protection; to escort

to glory; to bring them safe home! Did they only realize the full meaning of these precious words, they would take their harps from the willows, and sing some such psalm as that which the pilgrims sang amid the dangers of their ascent to the holy city and temple, of the keeping power of God (Psa. cxxi.); and they would burst out with that glorious assurance of the great Apostle, who had put God to the test as few men have had the opportunity of doing; "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day" (2 Tim.i:1).

He is able to keep, therefore He will keep. You may have inherited a nature whose whole bent is toward evil; but He is able to keep, and He will keep! It is impossible to believe for one moment that He would entrust to any of us a disposition which could not be

tamed and trained by Him. You may have encouraged your evil tendencies by repeated indulgence, so that the track is well-trodden towards sin; but He is able to keep, and He will keep! He can make the Niagara leap backward; the unbroken flow of the river cease; and the ocean-waves congeal and cleave. You may have, in the clear call of duty, to spend your days in a place where everything is against godliness and righteousness of life, and the air is tainted with impurity and blasphemy; but even there He is able to keep, and He will keep! No fortifications, however weak; no panic-stricken heart, however fearful; no misgivings, however weary—can invalidate the power of Him who patrols the words to keep His property, lest any hurt it night or day.

It is beyond all question that He will not suffer Himself to be deprived of the results of His blood-shedding.

He has expended too much on us to be defrauded now., He is too deeply involved to dare to seek to extricate Himself. He is like some millionaire, largely implicated in some financial speculation, which is not perfectly safe; and who is therefore compelled to go on putting in more and more capital, until the corner is turned, and the whole investment placed beyond the risk of loss. For His honor's sake, for His blood's sake, for His Son's sake, He is bound to keep.

But His keeping power is not exercised apart from us, or in spite of us. It is coincident with our faith. The Bible is full of promises, which in many cases are evidently unfulfilled, not because of any failure on God's part, but because we will not turn the golden key of Faith in the wards of Promise. Christ Himself, however willing, cannot do mighty works where

there is unbelief. It is not even enough to pray for God's keeping power; we must claim it. I was much helped the other day by a young man saying. “I used to pray to God to keep me, and I was not kept; I now claim His keeping each morning, and thank Him for it, and I have learned the secret of victory.”

Yes, it is a true distinction. There may be much prayer without the faith that claims. But where there is the presence of such faith, small as a grain of mustard-seed, slight as the trace of ozone in the air, it carries with it an *open sesame* to all God's treasures, and notably to all the tenderness and sufficiency of His keeping power.

Let us bind his promise on our hearts as we descend each day into the arena of life, dreading the onset of men as wild beasts, and despairing of remaining steadfast or unmoved. Let us do more, and claim that God,

by His Holy Spirit, should do as He has said. Let us march to victory with a veritable battle-shout, "*Jesus Saves!*" Let us anticipate every battle with the chant of thanksgiving on our lips (2 Chron. xx:21.) "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn."

We shall not be kept *from* temptation, but *in* it. We shall not be delivered from the presence of evil tendencies within, but we shall be rendered dead to them. We shall still need to confess ourselves sinners requiring daily intercession and cleansing; but we shall be kept from conscious sin up to the limit of our light; we shall be kept in ever deeper avenues and departments of our nature; we who were once kept from the outward act shall be kept from the inward disposition and intention; we shall be kept from the uprising of

desire as well as from its manifestation in fact.

But there is one promise more—"I *will water it every moment.*" In the scorching Oriental heat the vineyard needs incessant watering, else the vines fail. And our spirits are equally dependent on the refreshment which only God's tender love can afford. The heat of temptation and of sore discipline is so oppressive, that we must faint beneath either one or the other, expect for the alleviating succor which our faithful God is constantly administering.

Every moment—literally, every time the eye twinkles—God is watering us. We have become so accustomed to it, that we hardly realize how much we owe to it. Sometimes by the gentle distillation of dew, that gathers almost imperceptibly on our spirits, and we hardly know whence or how it has

come. Sometimes by the touch of a moistening sponge, applied by the very hand of God. Sometimes by a shower of grace. By a text suggested to our memory; a holy thought; the look, or act, or word of some companion; a paragraph in a paper; a sentence in a book—God waters us, and we become fresh and green, where the leaf showed signs of becoming shriveled and sere.

How blessed is life like this! In such hands—watched and guarded by such care—nurtured with such tenderness! May the result in each of us be—not the disappointment of wild grapes, but—the abundant clusters that will make glad the great Husbandman of our souls.

We are *safe* because of His invisible protection; as in our childhood's days the penny was safe at the bottom of the basin, the water of which was charged with electricity, an unseen

influence that was mighty to resist all approach. We are *refreshed* by a tenderness which does not use a cataract when a summer shower will suffice for the tender grass on the mown lawns. "Thy gentleness has made me great."

III.

For Easter Morning.

"I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death; O death, I will be thy plagues, O grave, I will be thy destruction."

HOSEA xiii. 14

FOR long ages it must have almost seemed as if God had forgotten His challenge. "Death reigned from Adam to Moses," from Moses to David, who "died and was buried;" and from David to Christ. One of the earliest chapters of the Bible (Gen. v.) is a cemetery of the old world through which we walk, remarking the inscriptions that record the names and ages of the world's grey fathers; and in the case of each the monotonous announcement follows, "and he died."

The generations of mankind spring smiling and beautiful on mother earth, like the clover crops of successive years as if to defy, or with their charms, to fascinate the tyrant-reaper. But all to no avail. Xerxes sits upon his throne on the shores of the Hellespont, whilst the myriads of his army pass before him in battle array; and he weeps in the presence of the inevitable certainty that in a hundred years not one of them shall be left. "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass; he withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away."

There were only two exceptions to the dread monotony of death—the rapture of Enoch, and the ascension of Elijah; they were like the early crocus or aconite, which announces the coming of the spring. All the rest died. At last *He* came in human form who had been fore-announced as

Death's death, the destined fulfiller of the promise of Paradise. At least He will not succumb. He will not see death! Or if they meet, before one glance of His eyes, "which are as a flame of fire," surely death will wane as the moon when smitten by sunlight! But contrary to all that we might have thought, it was not so. He, too, the Prince of Life, the One who had spoken of Himself as invested with the power of resurrection, who Himself was the Fountain of Life, having entered the lists with the fell tyrant, allowed Himself to be led as a lamb to the slaughter and after hours of human anguish, closed His eyes, yielded up His spirit, and hung a corpse upon the tree. And it might have seemed therefore that none, not even God, could break the thrall of death.

Such was the appearance; but not the fact. We are reminded of the old Greek story that when the city of

Athens was doomed to supply each year a tribute of youths and maidens to the monster of Crete, the hero Theseus embarked with the crew, and accompanied the victims that he might beard the dreadful ogre in his den, and slaying him, forever free his native city, from the burden under which it groaned. So Christ through death abolished death, and "destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil, and delivered those who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage." Here was fulfilled the divine announcement, "O! death, I will be thy plagues."

Nor is this all. In the last vision vouching to man of the ascended Christ, the keys of death are said to hang at His girdle, and He has the power to shut so that no one can open, and to open so that no one can shut.

Nor is even this all. The day is not far distant when all His saints

“that are in their graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth;” then shall be fulfilled the saying that is written, “Death is swallowed up in victory;” and then shall it be manifest that God has ransomed His people from the power of the grave; so that not a hoof shall be left behind, nor a single fragment of the mystical body of Christ separated from all the rest.

Nor is even this all. The world of men is to participate in the resurrection power of death’s victor. When God enters into conflict with His foes, He shows them no quarter; He yields to no feelings of compunction, “repentance is hid from His eyes.” There is not a single unit of the human race, who has passed through death in connection with the first Adam, who shall not share in the resurrection power of the second. “As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” They shall come from the ages before

the flood; from the foot of the pyramids, where the slaves of the Pharaohs mingled their dust with the bricks they made; from the earliest scenes of life, and from the latest; from the most enlightened races of mankind, and the most degraded; from the most warlike and the most peaceful tribes; cathedral vaults shall spilt and give up their contents; Marathon, Austerlitz, and Waterloo, shall add their contributions; the sea shall give return of the harvest sown through the centuries. Babylon, Nineveh, London, New York, shall spring to their feet, and march before the irresistible decree of Him who died in weakness, but who shall then despoil death of its prey, and compel him to disgorge.

Nor is this all. All enemies are to be put beneath His feet. The last enemy to be destroyed by Emmanuel shall be death itself. In what its destruction shall consist we do not

know; except that in that world which the King who sits upon the throne shall create, we are told, "There shall be no more death." No funeral *cortege* shall wind its way over the golden pavement; no cypress tree shall grow beside the river of life; no sob of mourner shall mingle with the songs of the redeemed; not a flower shall fade; not a leaf shrivel; not a babe languish—for ever and for ever and all the spiritual constituents of death, which have accompanied the dissolution of the body, shall in the case of those who have accepted eternal life by faith in Jesus, be forever obliterated, or made the channels through which rivers of unending bliss shall eternally flow.

How gloriously then will God realize the words that glisten before our eyes this Easter morning! Already in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead we see that the empire

of Death is doomed. Panic, dating from the first Easter morning, has reigned through all its realm, as some weak nation trembles before the steady and inevitable advance of an irresistible foe. And that panic shall be justified by the result. #

But in the meanwhile, is there no comfort for us who are compelled to live in the valley shadowed by Death? There is, because He goes beside us; and the psalmist, who had spoken of Him in the third person, addresses Him in the second as that shadow comes nearer: “*He* restoreth my soul; *Thou* art with me.” And if that blessed experience is to be ours of which the apostle spoke, that we should be alive and remain till the coming of the Lord, then there awaits us a still more blessed participation in the victory of which we have been thinking, for we which are alive and remain till His coming shall be caught up

to meet Him in the clouds, this corruption putting on incorruption, this mortal putting on immortality, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. Not ours the pangs of dissolution then; but the bright swift translation! This earthly house transmuted into the heavenly, flesh and blood unto ethereal element; the body dropped from the opening glories of the spiritual, as the chrysalis case from the butterfly! Oh, who can wonder at the eager desire of the apostle that this might become his lot! (2 Cor. v.)

And if this should not be the case, and we were doomed to go down, each alone, to die, yet even then we need not be without solace. Death is abolished! The wasp struck its sting into the cross of the dying Lord, and lost it there, and is now stingless forever. The poison fang of the viper has been extracted, Goliath beheaded by his own sword. The teeth of the lion have

been drawn. And for this reason the apostles always speak of a believer's death as being but a sleep. Death is not to be more dreaded than sleep, its twin.

In all likelihood we shall be quite surprised when we have passed through the dark portal, that was so slight and easy an experience. We dread it now, because we do not really believe that Christ's death has made it all so different. If we believed this, it would give us great confidence. But whether we believed or not, we shall find it so. A step; a moment; a passage across the Bridge of Sighs; a transition from darkness to light; a birth—that is all. Absent from the body, present with the Lord. No moment of unconsciousness or oblivion! The veil rent, the shell broken, the iron gateway passed whilst the light and air of the eternal morning break on the emancipated spirit!

IV.

“Waiting.”

“The Lord will wait... Wait for Him.”—ISA. xxx, 18.

WE are all familiar with the waiting hours of life, when the stream hardly seems to move, or the air to stir; when the heart grows sick with deferred hope, and begins to question whether its way may not be hidden from the Lord, and its judgment passed over from its God. There are hours on languid summer days when all nature seems to have become stagnant—the aspen-leaf does not quiver; the fish does not rise in the pool; the hum of the bee becomes less frequent and more drowsy; and the shadow hardly moves on the dial – and these hours in nature find their counterpart in the

monotony of life's common round, the common-place routine of its daily task.

Such waiting times were wearily passing over the godly at Jerusalem while the invader was drawing his coils ever nearer to the doomed city, and the ambassadors were being cajoled in Egypt by false hopes; and ceaseless prayers to God were apparently bringing no response. To such the prophet addressed these words, encouraging them to believe that God was not unmindful of their case, but was waiting that He might act more graciously toward them than He could by answering them at once; and that He would finally be very gracious in responding to the voice of their cry.

We, too, have sometimes been inclined to stagger at God's delays. When we have prayed for immediate deliverance from some pressing sorrow; for the conversion of some beloved relative; for our own growth in

grace and victory over sin—it has seemed as if the prayer had lost its way, or had become relegated to some corner of the Divine mind, where it was in danger of being over-looked. And we have begun to question the usefulness of prayer, and to wonder if our cries and tears were achieving any result. As a reply to such surmising, how comforting the assurance of the text—God waits that He may be gracious; i.e., He waits until there is such a combination of circumstances, and such a refining of character, that He can do ever so much better than if He had interposed in the first moments of our agonized appeal.

He does not delay because of any caprice. We must not think that heaven has favorites, who are always served first. There is no partiality or favoritism with our Father. He chastens those whom He loves. The first come last. Each is dealt with

according to his own merits, and on the ground of the peculiar necessities of his case.

He does not delay because of any neglect. A woman may forget her sucking child, but our Saviour cannot forget us. We are graven as with a point of the rugged nail on the palms of his hand. We are his babes, needing hourly attention; the members of His body, fed by His constant life; the constituent parts of His Bride, whom He nourishes and cherishes as Himself. Sooner might His right hand forget its cunning than he not count us above His chief joy.

He does not delay because He denies. Our heart sometimes so interpretes His dealings; but they do not really mean what our timorous faith reads into them. The remittance is not sent as asked; yet that does not prove that it is not there in our name, but only that it is being kept at interest, accum-

ulating till it reach a higher figure and be more of service, because coming at a time of greater need. No! His delays are the children of his love. He waits that He may be gracious, He dams up the current, that by holding it back it may become a swifter, fuller stream. And what results are served by this prolonged delay?

The energy of the flesh dies down. There is nothing which so tames and subdues us as waiting. So long as we are able to do something, the flesh-life is kept vigorous and strong; but it is speedily worn out by waiting—as the life of the criminal would be worn out by the slow process of death on the cross. And there is no kinder thing that God can do for us than to destroy the egotism, the self-assertiveness of our life, and to bring its pride to the dust. Waiting with mountains on either side, the sea in front, and the foe behind, is enough to empty the

stoutest heart of its self-confidence, and to make it cry out to the strong for aid.

We often cease to want the very things on which we had set our hearts.

Thus it has happened, as the years have passed, that we have seen reason to admire and adore the wise love which withheld that on which we had set our hearts with passionate intensity. We have discerned God's reasons for withholding, and we have had our own thankfulness.

Our character also becomes riper by waiting. It is better for the young man to accumulate his fortune slowly, because he learns to value his money rightly, and to spend it well. Better for the student to acquire knowledge by degrees, because he gains habits of industry which are simply invaluable. Better for the saint to grow to goodness by long and insensible progress, that he may be able to sympathize with those who are beginning to take the

upward path. The tree must grow, ere it can carry its full weight of fruit. The eye needs strength, ere it can gaze upon the sun. The apostles must tarry at Jerusalem, that they may become mature and Spirit-taught, before they can bear without injury the tears and prayers of three thousand souls at Pentecost.

Moreover, we secure larger results by waiting. If the Egyptian farmer is too impatient, and sows his seeds before the Nile has reached its full flood, they will not be carried to the furthest limit of his ground, and his harvest will suffer. So often there is a result which may be gained by patient waiting which would defy us if we snatched at it. What folly to let out the molten metal from the cistern till the mould is perfectly ready to receive it!

For all these reasons will the lord wait, that He may be gracious. And when patience has had its perfect work,

and there is no further reason for delay, He will be very gracious at the voice of our cry.

Abraham waited for twenty-five years; and we can never gauge the agony of that long suspense for a man who had no Bible, no experience of other men, no long record of the past. But in the end he became the father, not of Isaac only, but of all who believe. God waited that He might be gracious.

Job waited through slow-moving arguments, that may have consumed weeks or months. Unable to enter God's presence-chamber to plead his cause, he was compelled to await its slow unfolding in the hands of his great Advocate and God; but at last he obtained a further revelation than he had been capable of in the earlier stages of that great controversy. God waited that He might be gracious.

David waited from early boyhood to mature manhood, ere the throne of

the whole nation became his. But it came at last. The fruit was ripe, and it fell into his hands. And it was better far that his adversaries should be put out of the way, apart from his own agency, than that he should appear in any way to snatch at what was not legitimately his. All Israel was finally prepared, and in God's time, to own and accept his supremacy. God waited that He might be gracious.

Elijah, over-tired with the conflict on Carmel, and the eager speed with which he fled from Jezebel, lay on the desert floor, and asked to die. But instead of death's gaunt form, angels ministered to him food and sleep; and he lived long enough to see the solemn pomp of Horeb's theophany, and to receive the distinguished honor of translation in chariot and horses of flame. God waited that he might be gracious.

The two sisters gently reproached

the blessed Lord, that He had not hurried to them at the first appeal they made to Him. "When he heard, therefore, that he was sick, he abode four days still in the same place where He was." But they learned that the delay was intended to make a greater miracle possible, and to reveal the Lord Jesus as the Resurrection and the Life, after a sublimer fashion than had been possible had He only raised His friend from his malady in its earlier stages. He waited that He might be gracious.

Dare, then, to trust your Heavenly Father at any cost; and when heart and flesh fail, still bid your soul to hope in God, and buoy it up with the assurance that it shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance. God is good when He gives; but better when He keeps in order to give an accumulated blessing, heaped up, pressed down, and running over, into the bosom of His

child in whom patience has had her perfect work.

"He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry"(ver. 19). It passes tongue or pen to tell all that is contained in that word *very*. Suffice it to say that motherhood and fatherhood meet in Him; and that all which delicacy, and tact, and thoughtfulness can do, will be done for the soul that waiteth for Him. And during the long delay, little acts of tenderness will keep coming into the soul, making it aware that He is near; as when in a time of suspense, and a beloved one is anticipating an operation, love is always busy providing little alleviations of the pain, small diversions from the one absorbing thought, and delicate assurances of sympathy.

But we must wait. This as all we can do safely. Many will bid us go here or there, and do this or the other. Our heart often prompts us to repeat

Saul's great mistake, and to offer the sacrifice, though Samuel has not arrived, but if we obey either of these promptings, we become involved in endless sorrow, and weave webs in which we become hopelessly entangled. For your own safety's sake, stand still; wait and see the salvation of God.

But whilst we wait, there should be the expectant outlook. We must not cower in the dark closet, but climb to our watch-tower and scan the horizon. We must look out for God's carrier-pigeons; lest they come to the cote with messages under their wings which we may miss. We must go down to the quay; or God's heavily freighted ships may touch there, and go away without discharging their cargoes. We must imitate the shipwrecked sailor, who keeps the fire lit by night, and is incessantly on the outlook for passing ships; else a search expedition may

come near his poor islet and miss him.

Those who wait thus cannot be ashamed. It is impossible that God should disappoint the hope which he has instilled and nourished in the heart of His child. That hope is the shadow of coming blessing; to have the one is to be sure of the other in his own good time. "We are saved by hope." "And hope maketh not ashamed." "Lord," sayeth the Psalmist, "let none that wait on Thee be ashamed." "My people," is the reiterated Divine response, "shall never be ashamed." They that wait for a providence, says the old proverb, shall never be without a providence to wait for. What a blessedness is here!

And as the face is ever turned in one direction, it becomes assimilated to the image of that visage on which the eye is so persistently fixed. "Beholding it we are changed."

There is not much difference between

the two Hebrew words for *waiting* and *singing*. And it is certain that the one soon passes into the other. Hence it is that many of the Psalms, which begin with the plaintive expressions of waiting, climb up into joyful outburst of gladness and thanksgiving. Take heart, O troubled child of God! He waits that He may be gracious. He can make no mistakes. He has His eye on the dial His finger on your pulse; He notices the coming and going of the tremulous life. He will not be a moment before His time, nor a moment after.

“Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan His work in vain;
God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain.”

V.

“Guidance and Glory.”

“Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.”—PSA. lxxiii.24.

IN this Psalm troubled men find help when they need help. It is like the balustrade which leads up from the dark cellar to the upper world, with its air of light and beauty; let us lean hard on it, or rather on Him, who is just beneath the surface of its words.

There are some troubles which strong men may account themselves equal to bear in the energy of their own strength; but there are others so crushing, so terrible, that the heart utterly fails. The pruning-knife is so sharp, the cleansing fire so keen, the cup so bitter.

The psalmist here specifies the cause of one of these bitter troubles, as he tells us how perplexed he was with the mysteries of God's providence. The inequalities of life; the prosperity of the wicked; and the sorrows of the saints; why the ungodly prosper, while the waters of a full cup are wrung out to God's people—these things have always been amongst the things hard to be understood; and in the case of the good Asaph, as he sought to know and understand them, his feet had almost gone, his steps had well-nigh slipped.

And there are other sorrows which come to men—when the love cools which had once lit up their lives; when the prop on which they leaned is removed; when the hand that was tightly grasped in theirs relaxes its grip; when some evil thing that had entwined itself with the strong limbs of service has to be deliberately plucked away; when the face has to be resolutely turned back

from some door into bliss to take a lonely and desert path, and the smile of the summer garden is exchanged for the cold grey of the limestone rock. To bear all this with the anointed head and washed face! Not filling the air with complainings, or seeking to attract the pity of others; but suffering alone, and dumb with silence. Ah, how little do we know of what is passing beneath the surface-lives of those we meet continually! We are like houses, through the windows of which now and again a face looks out; but the most of all that happens within is hidden.

But how shall we meet these troubles?

There is no better way than to go into the sanctuary of God. (17). There earthly voices are hushed, and even the voice of passion is stilled. The glare of earth is replaced by those quiet neutral tints which rest the brain. The soul is able to see things from the

standpoint of God and eternity, and so weigh them in the balances of the other world. We cannot judge of things as they really are whilst we are living in the busy stir of the world, and amid the hum of human voices. There is no such place for meditation as the shrine of worship, though it may be a quiet walk amid trees and meadows, beside tranquil lakes, or within the sound of the ocean wave breaking on the beach. And sorrow is almost a blessing if it drives us here. "Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house; they will still be praising Thee."

Next we may well look on to the end of things (17). Amid the agony of Job's trial, he might well have been strong could he have seen the end of the Lord, how very pityful He is, and of what tender mercy. The way is dark, and the stones cut the tender feet; but the Shepherd knows that the green pastures and waters of rest, to

which He leads, will more than recompense. Oh, trust Him, my brother! You cannot see the goal; but He does, and He has been there to prepare it for you. Wait for Him and be still. He may seem to sleep; but the boat is making progress through the storm, and when He awakes, the keel will stand at the very point where you would fain be. "Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory."

And then, best of all, we must be careful to maintain the Blessed life. When in winter the short daylight fades off the world, we gather to our lamps and fires, and the glow steals through the curtains on the passers-by. So, when all our life is wrapped in gloom, we must betake ourselves more vigorously to the cultivation of the Blessed Life. The sap which was making leaves must now go into fruit.

And what is the Blessed Life? It is

well described in the exquisite strophe with which the Psalm closes (23-28). To be continually with God, cultivating the momentary sense of His presence. To feel that heaven is heaven because He is there; and that earth need not be so lonesome if He is left. "Thou remainest." To count on Him more and more as the strength of the heart, and the Divine portion of the soul; to draw near unto him in thought, and musing, and desire, in the study of His Word and prayer; to trust in Him, and declare His works to others. These are some of the phases of the Blessed Life.

Its essence consists, not in the emotions, but in the will; in the attitude assumed, perhaps almost unconsciously at the moment of conversion, at some subsequent time. When the will is in this attitude, adjusted, subjugated, surrendered, the nature of man comes to rest, as a boat anchored at stem and

stern on the bosom of a tranquil sea; which only moves quietly as the gentle undulations, the exhausted movement of some long-spent storm, pass beneath the keel, or the wavelets break musically against its sides. There may be tremendous force, abounding activity, the incessant demands of varied interests; but the fret and chafe are gone, for the nature has found the true law and aim and ambition of its existence in becoming an organ through which the will of God is done, even as it is done in heaven. When the God of peace adjusts us to do His will in every good work, then we have the peace of God as a sentinel keeping the heart and garrisoning the mind.

The nature which is in harmony with the will of God is at one with all the holy beings in heaven and on earth—with the stars and their courses; with the inner spirit of nature; with the underlying principles of true blessedness;

and, above all, with the nature of Jesus, in whom the Divine and human blend perfectly; and so we come to know Him after an intimate and blessed sort. Remember how He said, "Whosoever shall do the will of My Father, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother." He knows us, and we know Him; He loves; and we love; He lives and we live also. There is generated thus a Divine companionship. All happy things, and all sad ones; all work in the world He loves so well; all travail for souls; all the lights and shades of life are shared with Him, our Kinsman, Brother, Lord; and into His resources we dip our hands constantly, unstintingly, knowing that we are ever with Him, and that love likes the loved to share its stores.

This is the ideal life; but not an ideal alone, thank God, in ten thousand instances. For many of us who

read these words know it by glad enjoyment; if not through all the year, at least in bright parentheses, set in brackets of gold amid the darker letterpress of ordinary experience.

But why are these experiences not more permanent? We read that "Daniel continued." Oh to be steadfast and unmovable! In order to do this, let us remember the following principles.

(1) We must always distinguish between our emotions, and our attitude. The one may die off our lives like the sunset glory from the ridges of the Alps, that seem so grey and cold when it is gone; but the other should resemble the changeless perpetuity of the everlasting hills, unaltered by the transitions of the ages, or the alternations of day and night. You may not always feel as happy, but you can always say "Yes" to the will of God, and realize your attitude in the risen, ascended, loving Jesus, amongst the thousand

thousands that minister to Him. In moments of depression, be sure to live in your will and His will.

(2) We must be careful to maintain this attitude of the will unaltered. God is constantly putting into our lives little or greater occasions of testing. He presents us with His will hidden in a choice, which may be a stepping-stone or a stumbling-block. It is necessary, therefore, to be keenly on the alert for these occasions; lest almost unconsciously our will start back from the attitude it was led to assume, instead of riveting more firmly than ever the blessed yoke of allegiance. Unless we are watchful in applying to each new point the principle of surrender, which we have assumed, we may drift from full face, to three-quarter, and half-face before we are aware.

(3) We must exercise ourselves to have the "conscience void of offense toward God and toward men." It is

a great secret to maintain, not a scrupulous, but a sensitive conscience; and whensoever the clear surface of the mirror is blotted or blurred by the slightest mist, to search out the cause, and at all costs rectify it. Conscience and the Holy Ghost are expressly allied by the apostle—the crystal stone ever bathed in the translucent glory of heaven.

(4) We must ever keep our heart open to the Holy Spirit. It is His province and prerogative to nurture the inner life, and to fill it with the realized presence of the Lord. Sometimes it is wise definitely to seek by faith to receive an infilling of His Presence, and to believe that the faith which can claim, most certainly receives. At other times, or ever we are aware, through an open casement in our heart there is wafted the breath of heaven, laden with spicery and balm. We often take the word out of His hands,

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pulling up our flowers by the roots to see if they are growing; or worrying because we think we are not learning our lessons quickly enough. We forget that the Father is the Husbandman; and that if only we are receptive enough and willing, He will fulfill in us the good pleasure of His goodness, and the work of faith with power. The responsibility of realizing in us all that our nature is capable of must lie yonder on His shoulders; the receptivity of His Holy impulses, and compliance with the least of them, is all that rests on us.

(5) We must be very careful to maintain unbroken the habits of the devout life. Too many are like the slip-carriage, which runs for a little from the impulse received from the engine, but then slackens till it comes to a stand; instead of resembling that which keeps its connection with the speed and strength of the locomotive.

tive. Even when we had lost our immediate taste for devotional exercises, let us still pursue them; some of our gladdest hours have been those in which we have made a conscious effort to break through the lethargy and sluggishness of the soul.

I have found these things helpful.
(a) Not to read newspaper or light literature in the early morning; nor then or at any other time to dissipate the energies of the soul on that which does not profit.

(b) Relaxation and recreation of mind and body are, of course, needful and right. They must be attended to, or even our spiritual life will become impaired. It is wisdom on the part of the fisherman to cease net-casting, that he may set himself to net-mending.

(c) To have always in reading some spiritual or devotional book, that touches specially on the inner life in its deepest aspect, and to devote some

part of the morning hour to its perusal.

(*d*) To Feed on Christ in His Word, and in the frequent observance of His holy supper, which is always a great means of grace and nourishment to my soul.

(*e*) To cultivate the habit of converse with Christ, whilst walking in the streets, and especially in the country, or whilst engaged in any occupation. There is always time to look up to Him for His smile.

(*f*) To engage much in Christian converse with those who are deeply versed in these things, and have had close dealings with the Lord. It is when brethren talk together and reason that the Lord draws near to go with them, and their hearts catch fire and burn.

In a laundry, the other day, I saw two kinds of irons. One, the usual sort, needing to be put on a heated furnace at frequent intervals to fit them for their work. The other, in which the

iron was attached by a flexible gutta-percha tube to the gas-pipe, so that it was easy to use it, and inside the iron a jet of flame, fed by the gas, which maintained it at regular temperature, and counteracted the chilling effects of its work. Is it not this that we want? Not depending on the outside stimulus of a convention, a mission, or a sermon; but receiving straight from God Himself that inward fire of the Holy Ghost, to give and perpetuate which is the dearest passion of the hearer of Jesus.

All this will cost us something; the daily dying to self; saying "No" to the flesh; the cutting of hand and foot; the dropping down into the earth to die: but these sufferings are not worthy to be compared with the growing glory of our life, or its blessedness, or its fruitfulness.

And so it shall be that, as we nourish the Blessed life, in all its beauty,

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till it become the habit of our being, there will come to us a great sense of rest amid trouble, of sweet singing, amid the earthquake that causes the prison-house to rock. God permits the pain, that we may be driven in to Himself in the very desperation of our souls.

VI

A Door of Hope.

“I will give her ... a door of hope.”—HOSEA ii, 5.

THIS chapter is full of God's *I wills*.

It is easy to enumerate between twenty and thirty. And as we read them over, we are lost in wonder at all that God is prepared to do for us, who wandered from Him, choosing our own willful ways. It is only another illustration of the truth that God's love is inexhaustible, and that He will not fail nor be discouraged till He has executed His purpose in each of those whom He has taken to be His own. It may be a long process delayed and checked by our repeated backslidings; but through all our wan-

derings and sins, He will pursue the purpose of His all-conquering love, till we are betrothed unto Him forever.

Let us imagine a narrow, rocky defile. A mountain torrent, rapid and muddy, hurries downward beside the path, strewn with rough slate and jagged stones, which climbs up to the head of the pass. On either side walls of rock rear themselves, steamy with moisture, and covered with festoons of hanging plants and ferns; above, a narrow chink of blue shows itself where the walls of rock almost meet; all is wild and lonely, and terrible. And there, with bleeding feet, clothed in scanty rags, a female figure crouches in brokenness of heart and desperate straits. Such is the valley of Achor, or *Trouble*; and that is Israel in the hour of her extreme distress. God has allured her from paths of vice and sin into the wilderness. Her way as been

so hedged up that she could not find her paths. Corn and wine have failed; wool and flax have been withdrawn; ear-rings and jewels have been stripped off.

Yet, as she is on the point of abandoning herself to the uttermost abyss of despair, the air seems to quiver with angel-wings, and to thrill with the repeated declarations of the Divine purposes of grace. And beneath their impulse the sinner is heard to say, "I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now." Ah, blessed resolve! No sooner has it passed her lips than down the pass a fair form is seen approaching, in robes of dazzling beauty, which make day amid the gloom. It is the angel of Hope; and when she reaches the place where the penitent kneels, she touches with her wand the adjoining rock, and, lo! it swings backward, and opens a way straight into a smil-

ing landscape of luxuriant beauty, where the corn waves, and the juice reddens in the clustered grapes. It is the door of hope in the valley of Achor, through which the penitent passes from the wilderness into the garden of Paradise, where the sun ever shines, and the breeze is heavy with perfume.

Something like this happens still. At sometime or other we shall have to pass through the valley of Achor. The road to our home lies that way. A chariot of fire carries some beloved soul from our side, and we have taken alone a path which a little before we trod in blessed companionship. Or we are called upon to face opposition, slander, and misinterpretation on the part of those whom we had counted friends. Or our schemes miscarry, our cherished hopes are blighted, and, we are driven back discomfited from some position which seemed to be within our easy reach. At such times

we tread the valley of Achor, desolately and painfully.

We cannot forget the incidents which first gave its name to the valley of Achor, and which will throw light on one of the frequent causes of our coming thither. Flushed with their successful capture of Jericho, the tribes of Israel chose out a handful of their number to capture the little town of Ai, which stood at the top of the defile leading from the Jordan plain into the heart of the country. The work seemed altogether inconsiderable, and any great effort needless. Ah! how little they expected that ere the night fell that little band of warriors would be fleeing in hot haste down the pass, pursued almost to the gates of the camp by the foe!—not because they were wanting in prowess, but because the forbidden thing was concealed in one of their tents, standing in apparent innocence amongst the rest, which

glistened as lign-aloes beside the rivers.

There are troubles which God sends us directly from His Fatherly chastening hand; these are not so hard to bear, because, if with one hand He uses the scourge, with the other He binds and heals, and applies the leaves of the tree of life. There are other troubles which come to us from men, these, too are bearable, because we can turn to Him for vindication, and count on Him for sympathy and fellowship. But there are other troubles for which we are ourselves accountable, because we have taken of the forbidden thing, and have hidden it in our hearts, smoothing over the earth that it appears not to men. But all the time we are conscious of the guilty secret, and it is always naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. These troubles are the hardest to bear; and there is no relief from them until we have dis-

covered and dragged the accursed thing to light, and put it away, stoning it with stones, and burning it with fire.

It may be that some who read these words will find here a photograph of themselves, of the inner reason why their lives have been so full of defeat and failure. They are met in every direction by shut gates. The way is hedged up by thorns. Angels with drawn swords stand in narrow ways, walled on either side, and forbid their further progress. Bitterly they refuse to be called "Naomi," because the hand of the Lord seems to have gone out against them. The very ships in which they sail are doomed to go down with crew and freight because they have taken passage in them. Like Joshua, they rend their clothes, and fall on their faces before the Lord, and put dust on their heads. But as to him, so to them, the Lord says, "Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy

face? . . . There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Isarel. Thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you" (Josh. vii. 10-13).

Deliverance from the valley of Achor is impossible until a solemn convocation has been held in the heart, to which all the motives, and purposes and intentions of the inner life have been summoned. The lot must be solemnly cast. Is it the inner life or the outer? And if the inner, is it soul or spirit? And if the soul, is it the past, present, or future; retrospective or prospective; memory or hope? And if it be neither of these, but some permitted evil in the present, is it in the emotions or the will? Thus we winnow away one possible cause of failure after the other, until we are led by the Holy Spirit to discover, so to speak, "Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the

tribe of Judah," as the cause of all disaster and defeat. And when once he is indicated, we must show him no mercy. The cause of our defeat and failure must perish, that we may ourselves be saved. Maiming is, after all, not too dear a price to pay, if only we may enter into life.

And if we be too tender-hearted to deal strongly and vigorously with the Achan who has caused us defeat and loss, let us go to our merciful and faithful High Priest, who carries in His hand the sharp, two-edged sword, which pierces to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit; and let us implore Him to do for us what we cannot, or dare not, do for ourselves. He will not fail us in our extremity. He will do the work as tenderly and as thoroughly as the case requires. And when the work is done in the valley of Achor, there will be opened to us "a door of hope."

I may here be permitted to quote from a letter which has come into my hands while writing this article:—"Last June I asked your advice about continuing an engagement with a young man who was not a Christian; and at that time I fully determined—I fear too much in my own strength—to give it up. But a short time ago, in a moment of weakness, it was again re-opened. Since that time I have experienced nothing but defeat and failure, until a few Sundays ago your sermon about Achan showed me plainly how wrong I was; and in God's strength I gave over the whole of my life into His hands, after a sharp struggle. I am very happy now, fully trusting that this is not His will for me. Oh, if people would let God live through them, how much happier they would be!" In this case, in the valley of Achor, there has been opened "a door of hope."

How often our great adversary tries to arrest us in doing some necessary deed of self-denial, by presenting to our view all the suffering and pain to which we shall be exposed if we dare to persevere! But he cannot, and will not, tell us, on the other hand, how much blessing will stream into our life, if we dare to be true to the promptings of the spirit of God. Only let us believe that in every valley of Achor there is a door of hope, if we will but dare to stone Achan to death. And when the cairn of stones beneath which he lies is reared in the valley, we shall ascend the long pass to victory. As sure as God is true, there is a way out of every trouble into assured and glorious victory, if only in the trouble we will do God's will on Achan.

Time would fail to tell of all the advantages to which that door will lead. Some of them are enumerated here.

"She shall sing" (15). There shall be a return of joy, which had fled from the heart. "Thou shalt call me Ishi" (16). There shall be a deeper knowledge of God, so that He shall be rather the Husband than the Master. "I will make a covenant" (18). There shall be realized a blessed unity with all creation. "I will hear" (21). There shall be new power in prayer, and answers shall tread in each other's footsteps, as they hasten into the soul.

Thus through trouble we shall pass into blessedness; through the grave into life; through the iron gate into freedom. And, at last, when we pass through the valley of the shadow of death—to so many a valley of Achor indeed—we shall find a door of hope suddenly opened even there, by which we shall pass into the radiant, dazzling light of our Father's palace, and the land of perpetual day.

VII.

"He will do it."

(Thess. v. 24.)

WHAT is it that He will do? There is a tone of confidence in these words which bespeaks the unwavering faith of the apostle in the willingness and power of God to do for these Thessalonian Christians that which indeed is needed by all of us for life and godliness: first, that they should be sanctified wholly; and secondly, that they should be preserved without blame, until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We can hardly realize how much this meant to men and women reared amid the excesses and abominations of those days, when religion was an-

other name for unbridled indulgence in every kind of sin. Blamelessness of life, the stainless habit of the soul, self-restraint were the attributes of the few whose natures seemed cast in a special mold; while they mocked ordinary people, much as Alpine summits do emaciated invalids or disabled cripples. And yet the apostle was a practical man, not likely to ask that which lay outside the limits of possibility for man to realize, or for God to give. And the fact of his having prayed for these things was clear evidence that believers might seek for, and attain, that condition of soul which his words implied.

We must distinguish carefully between “blamelessness” and “faultlessness.”—The latter can only be ours when we have passed the gate of pearl, and been presented faultless in the presence of His glory, with ex-

ceeding joy; the former alone is possible to us here and now—but, thank God, it is possible, because He has said that "He will do it."

Every one admits that there is a difference between these two words. Take an instance from common life. A working woman comes home weary from her day's toil, and having provided the evening meal, and put her little ones to bed, she sits down to work for her babe. Presently the little frock falls upon her knee, and she leans back in a snatch of unconsciousness, such as only the most tired know. Her eldest little girl, noticing the collapse of her mother's efforts, steals to her side, takes her work gently out of the tired fingers, and creeping back to her chair by the fire, essays to finish the uncompleted hem. "Mary," says the mother, suddenly awaking, "what are you doing?" "Helping you, mother," replies a

voice with a touch of scaredness in it. "Let me see what you have done; bring it here, child." And as the quick woman's eyes look down at the tortuous stitches, she sees at a glance that every one of them will have to be unpicked and done again. But she says never a word to the little maiden of blame or fault-finding. The work is not faultless, by a long way; but the child is blameless. Had the cobbled seam been due to slovenliness or neglect, the work had been blameworthy as well as faulty; but inasmuch as it has been done to the very best of the child's ability, she stands without blame in her mother's presence. Of course, the analogy is not perfect, because other conditions connected with our Saviour's work have to be introduced before we can stand in the presence of God, blameless and faultless. Yet the illustration will show how it is possible for

those whose every moment is full of fault to be nevertheless blameless and harmless, the sons of God without reproach; because they have not wilfully ignored any known command, or failed in any service to which they were called, but have lived in the current of the precious blood, and within the charmed circle of the will of God. Oh to live that blameless life, the life hid with Christ in God!

The agent of this condition of stainless purity and beauty is God himself.— He is often spoken of as "the God of Peace." None less than He could accomplish so marvelous a result. Consider the greatness of the contrast! There is no true heart illumined by the Spirit of God which will hesitate to adopt the confession of the patriarch, "Behold, I am vile!" It were difficult to find words to set forth with sufficient emphasis our natural undone

and sinful state in the sight of God. Pure snow trampled into mud by the passers-by! The refuse of gas-retorts which, till recently, was deemed too filthy for use! Ink, jet black, and apt to leave a deep permanent stain! And to think that such can be made blameless, not only yonder, but here and now—this is a marvel which the finger of God alone can effect. “*He will do it.*”

But he will do it as the God of Peace.—

The mightiest forces in the universe are the stillest. Destruction ever crashes on its way, like the express which tears through the little wayside station. The roar of the autumn sea! The vehemence of the hurricane hurling through the forests! The crackling of the devouring fire! The thunder, the earthquake, the volcano! But who can hear the day break?—or de-

tect the footfall of the spring, stepping through the woods, scattering flowers? Who thinks of listening for the pulse of the law of gravitation, or the thud of the forces that redden the grape, golden the corn, and cover the peaches with their delicate bloom?

Stand on an eminence and watch the effect of a long summer day on an English landscape. There is no sound but the far away bleat of the sheep, the low of the cattle, or the lazy murmur of the bee, by which the effect of the silence is rendered yet more intense. Nature seems asleep beneath some drowsy spell of slumber. The hours move slowly, as if loath to leave their merry dance in the woodland glade. But all the while, as you lie in a delightful reverie, you are aware that mighty chemical processes are at work, by which the juices of the earth and the elements in the air, the dew and the sunshine, are being elabo-

rated for the sustenance of man.

So God works in the hearts He loves. He does not strive, nor cry, nor cause His voice to be heard in the streets of the inner city. It is sometimes difficult to detect His working, and impossible to say, Lo, here! or Lo, there! His touch is so gentle; His voice so still and small; His breath so zephyr-like. When He is most at work within we think that we are making no progress, and even that we are going back. Comparing the experiences of some others with our own, we are inclined to imagine that we have not been the subjects of the spirit's work; or that His operations have come to a standstill because there is nothing sensible to record. At such times we should remember that we have to do with the God of Peace. He works most energetically and mightily, when to any of the senses of the soul there is no evidence that He is there at all.

The presence of ozone in the air can only be detected by the most delicate tests, a faint color on a piece of litmus paper—that is all. And the presence of God in the soul is only apprehended when the bloom of perfect health becomes apparent as its result.

The method of His work is from within, outwards.—This text is often quoted, and generally mis-quoted. Men often speak of body, soul, and spirit—and, indeed, that is generally their method; but it is not God's. Man begins from without and works inwards; God begins from within and works outwards—from the spirit to the soul, and from the soul to the body.

There is a beautiful analogy suggested by the Lord Himself between our nature and the temple, in whose precincts He stood when He spake of "the temple of His Body." It is also accentuated by the Holy Ghost through

the apostle Paul. As God is a Trinity in Unity, so was the temple; and so is man. The *spirit* corresponds to the most Holy Place; the *soul*, by which we reason, imagine, hope, and love, to the Holy Place, where white-stoled priests went to and fro on their sacred duties; the *body*, to the outer Court. In the case of the unregenerate, the most holy or inner shrine is either destitute of light or tenanted by the spirit of evil. But in the nature which has been truly regenerated by the Holy Ghost, a marvelous addition has been made by the entrance of the true Shekinah light, the nature of God. This is the distinction between the unsaved and the saved. The former are like a deserted castle; the latter like that castle when the royal pennon tells that the sovereign has come to reside within.

Before the act of consecration it would seem as if a heavy curtain hung

between the spirit and the soul, shutting out the glow of the Shekinah glory; but when the will has been entirely resigned and yielded, that veil is torn from the top to the bottom, and the soul also becomes pervaded with the blessed light and power of God. Nor can it be confined there; but as in the dedication of Solomon's Temple there was an overflow of light in cascades of glory, driving the priests before it by excess of splendor, so the body of the believer comes under the gracious influence of the indwelling spirit, and is transfigured, refined, purified, and saved.

This is Sanctification. There are many definitions of the word *sanctify*; but there is none so entirely satisfactory as that which affirms that it is the result wrought on character by the indwelling and presence of God. Wherever God is, there, as the necessary result, are the essential forces

which sanctify—whether it be the seventh day, or the sacred ground on which the burning bush stood, or the tabernacle in whose inner shrine the Shekinah shone, or the heart of man where God has taken up His abode. Art thou wholly sanctified? Hast thou opened thine entire being in every department to His indwelling? Does that Divine presence fill thee, which makes heaven what it is? If not, then never rest until through the open casements of thy being His presence is wafted, never to go out again, but to occupy and possess thee in every part. Then thou shalt be sanctified. Thou wilt carry with thee everywhere the sign of the Divine Presence which will be the true antidote against sin. He who dreads the influenza saturates his garments with Eucalyptus oil; and he who fears to sin must steep his nature in the Presence of God. Then when he is wholly sanctified he is

wholly kept and preserved blameless in spirit, soul, and body.

The certainty that God will do this.
—"He *will* do it." Old habits are strong, but He is stronger; temptations masterful, but He can quell them; circumstances unfavorable, but He is above them; the difficulty of securing in us a blameless life almost insuperable—but "He *will* do it." What can He not do, who hath made the heavens and the earth, the stars and the seas, the soaring Alps and the dainty shells that lie along the coast? He can do these greater miracles in the moral sphere; and He will do them because He has instilled the appetite and desire for them, and has trained us to yearn for them, and surely cannot disappoint the instinctive cravings which He has Himself imparted. He is faithful. He does not teach babes to cry for milk which is not stored in

their mother's breasts. He does not create instincts without providing satisfaction for their demands. He does not teach us to long almost to agony for a blameless life, and then dash our hopes with disappointment on the ground. No; He is faithful to His Son, to His covenant, and to the yearnings which He has implanted for a blameless life; and He will do it of His spirit and grace, far more exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.

VIII.

"Morning Help."

"God shall help . . . right early" ("when the morning appeareth," *Margin*).—PSA. xlv. 5.

THIS Psalm dates from later days than those of David's, though it has much of his heroic courage and splendid diction. It belongs to the days of Hezekiah, and may even have been composed by that splendid inspired genius, Isaiah, whose hymns and odes were almost as priceless a heritage to his people as his great evangelic prophecies have been to the church.

It was a dark time indeed.—The holy city was without an ally; destitute of the fortifications and equip-

ment which were the boast of the mightier cities of the great world; notably deficient in the possession of a river, which should engirdle it with its broad streams, intercepting the invader, or providing a never-ending supply of water for the imprisoned citizens; and ever nearer drew the terrible Assyrian, who boasted that "he had gathered the riches of all the earth, and there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped." Then the inspired uttered those clarion notes which told that God was their refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble; and declared that those who dwelt beneath His protection must not fear. "God will help."

He will help because He is bound by His covenant.—He has entered into covenant with our Surety, Jesus, that He will succor to the uttermost

of omnipotence every soul of man who becomes one with Him by a living faith. Inasmuch as the Father does to one of the least of His, He does it to His Son. And if God were to fail to help one of those who belong to Christ, though he were the weakest or meanest of His members, the failure would be to the Son Himself. But this, of course is unthinkable; and so by the very ties of the Divine love and unity, God is bound to help all that claim His succor in the name of Jesus.

He will help, because He is bound by considerations of his own honor.
—What mirth it would make in the place prepared for the devil and his angels, if it were known that the Almighty could not, help one of those who fled to him for deliverance! David bitterly complained once that there was danger of his foes saying,

"There is no help for him in God;" and used this as an argument why God should make no tarrying. And if the servant cares so much for the honor of the King, surely there are state reasons why it should not be tarnished by even an appearance of neglect. That was a true answer of a dying saint, when one suggested that perhaps, after all, God might desert her, and she replied, "He can if He will; but in that case He will lose more than I shall. For His own name's sake He is bound to help."

He will help because He is bound by his own promise—How often does the page of scripture testify to His willingness to help, as it glistens with His promises: "Fear not, thou worm Jacob, I will help thee!" "Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee: yea, I will

uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness." "He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." "So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper; I will not fear what man shall do unto me." If only we are reconciled to God, and are living in His purpose, to do His will; then, though we are confronted with unlooked-for opposition, with mountains of obstruction whilst in the prosecution of His plans, we may unhesitatingly count on Divine help, and reckon on God's faithfulness. We need not look to the hills for help; but beyond them, to the God of Jacob. "Our help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth."

Is there a soul to whom these words may come who does not need help? The body is weakened by disease—you need help to be patient; the nerves are so weary and so overstrung—you need help to be gentle; the heart is so

sick with waiting for one who does not come—and you need help just to exist from moment to moment; the anxieties of providing for the innocent nestlings who so implicitly trust you are so urgent, that you need help not to take advantage of some unholy suggestion constantly pressed on you; help for resisting temptation, for bearing faithful witness to the truth, for being always sweet and strong and good, for prosecuting the path which dips down into the valley of shadow, for laying the darling Isaac on the altar, for taking up the cross and following the Crucified. We all need help like this—"Grace to help in time of need." But we cannot be disappointed of obtaining it: "God shall help." The very straitness of circumstances hedging thee round like the gathering hosts of Senacherib around Jerusalem; the absolute failure of all human succor; the mysterious silence of God—all

these things have been contrived to lead thee to give Him His right place, and to take up thine own; and then to utter the one intense cry, which carries the promise of the answer at its heart, "Lord, help me!" And He will ride on the heavens to thy help, and draw thee out of the deep waters by His outstretched arm: "God shall help thee."

The hour when God will help—
"And that right early." This fixes the period of the advent of help. The margin renders it, "When the morning appeareth." There was doubtless a prophetic reference in these words to the fact that the destruction of the beleaguering hosts would take place as night began to yield to the silvery touch of dawn. "When they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses."

But there is surely something fur-

ther, which touches the life of God's people in all ages. The help seems to tarry. The day wears away, and yet the Divine deliverance comes not. The last night has come; to-morrow will witness the final assault of the foe and the destruction of the last fabric of hope. The weary hours pass sadly; and, lo, it is the fourth watch, that in which the grey dawn of the dreaded hour steals up into the sky. Is there no use in prayer? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has He in anger shut up His tender mercies? Is His mercy clean gone forever? No; at that very moment the Divine helper is come.

The delay has been long enough to test faith and hope; but not too long to make interposition useless. See! the legions of ministering spirits speed from their long lines of waiting expectancy, and fill the air with shouts of deliverance. God Himself rides upon

a cherub, and draws nigh to rescue the beloved and much-tired soul. The enemy gives back. The prey is torn from the jaws of the mighty. Another illustration is given of olden words: "There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in His excellency on the sky;" "God shall help, and that right early."

Let it, however, not be forgotten that, as Israel could not detect the Divine protection that engirdled them so it may not be always possible to realize or feel that the Divine help has come. But this should not surprise us; it is God's way to test our faith in Himself. If we have once claimed His all-sufficient succor, we must believe that we have the petitions we have made, and that the help of God has come into our lives. Claim it, and go on living in the faith that you have it; and you will find that it has verily

come, though its footfall has awoke no echo, and its soft wings have startled no wave of vibrating response on the still air.

IX.

Claiming and Reckoning.

‘The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this.’

—ISA. ix. 7

THIS paragraph is so associated with an especial season in our English life that it seems hedged around from common use, and we hardly realize the wealth of meaning which lies within for daily help, making it one of the deepest, sweetest, and most helpful passages in Isaiah's prophecies.

There is an evident rebound from sorrow, from dimness and anguish, conflict and pain; and the resulting joy is compared to three similitudes, in which alone the imagination of the prophet can find adequate expression. It is the harvest-time, and the long patience

of the husbandman has met with its reward; the fields are cleared of their golden burden; the last of the sheaves which had cast long shadows in the setting sun has been carried to the barn; and throughout the homestead there is the joy of finished labors, hopes fulfilled, and plentiful provision for days to come. “*They joy before Thee according to the joy in harvest.*”

The scene is changed and it is the close of the war for freedom in which Gideon led Israel against the hosts of Midian, that like locusts, had devoured their land. Bitter, indeed, had been the long bondage, in which their crops had been swept off, their homes pillaged, their populations enslaved; and therefore the exultation was the more jubilant when the youngest son of Joash, the Abi-ezrite, with his three hundred soldiers, inaugurated a tide of victory, which rose and gathered force until Midian had been driven

across the frontier, suffering a defeat which paralyzed it for a century. Ah, what joy was there throughout all the land of Israel! *And "Thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian."*

Again the scene is changed, and the prophetic vision beholds that blessed hour when war itself shall die, after which the bugle will never again summon embattled hosts to meet in conflict, and the grass will never again be dyed with the rich blood of men, and nations will never again forbear to count the gains of a battle won because of the awful cost in their noblest sons. What a day that will be when museums shall be erected to preserve as curiosities the implements and accoutrements of war, that the children of the new age may study the old barbaric times which shall have passed away as a bad "dream"! Then, from

vale to mountain peak, from river bank to ocean shore, shall ring out a note of joy so high, so piercing, that the very stars shall tremble in their silver spheres—"Hallelujah! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." This shall be the joy when the battle of the warrior, with its confused noise, "and the garments rolled in blood, shall be for burning, for fuel of fire" (R. V.). Nor will the prophet be satisfied with any imagery less than this to depict the joy of which he speaks when the great consummation that fires his soul shall have been realized by the zeal of the Lord of Hosts.

And what is that consummation, which is to break upon men as a great light on those that walk in darkness, and in the land of the shadow of death, thrilling them with joy unspeakable and full of glory? The answer is given in those marvelous words, in which the peace of the sea

of glass is mingled with the fire of manifested Deity: "*Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.*" In other words, God has stored Himself up in Jesus, the Babe of Bethlehem, the Boy of Nazareth, the Son of Man, stooping low enough to be within the reach of the humblest, lowliest child of the human family; so that each of us might be able to claim, and appropriate, and use all the abundant stores of Deity for the exigencies of daily living.

A respectable family becomes very reduced in its circumstances; the mother finds it difficult to make the meagre provision suffice for her hungry little ones; their clothes get more ragged; the father's threadbare coat makes it less and less possible for him

to obtain the situation which his qualifications deserve. But a child is born into that home, quite unlike the rest of the children—beautiful in feature, quick in intelligence, winsome, gifted *spirituelle*. As he grows up, he manifests unusual powers; rapidly distances his compeers; passes from the elementary school to the college, and thence to the university. Presently tidings begin to come back of his success, his growing fame, his prizes, the assured certainty of his becoming a great man; and as they arrive in letter, and rumor, and newspaper, the mother's eye gets brighter; the father no longer evades the associates of earlier days; the home becomes better furnished and the table better spread; the other children are better clothed and educated and put forward in life; and the one glad explanation of it all is found in the words, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given." And

as the years go on, whilst money pours in as a golden tide to the successful student, it will find its way increasingly to the family in the old home; and each member of it will reap the benefit of association with its child and son, all that is needed being to prove a distinct need, and to put in an appropriate claim. What a mine of wealth would be opened up in the counsel, strength, resources, influence, and position, of that beloved and trusted son and brother!

This will illustrate the prophet's thought. As the oppressed Jews, groaning in their brick-kilns, were glad for Moses, given to lead them forth from the house of bondage; as England, travailing under the cruel exactions of the Danes, was glad for our great Alfred; as the Netherlands were glad when William the Silent arose to arrest the blood-thirsty rule of Alva; as Italy was glad when her Victor

Emmanuel overthrew the dark misrule of the Papacy—so may we be glad because God has given Himself to us in Jesus. Why should living men complain? Granted that Adam was our father, the second Adam is the Son of Man. If tears, and toil, and pain, and death have come by the one; glory, and honor, and immortality are ours by the other. And if only we belong to the same family by regeneration and adoption; if we are sons, and therefore younger brothers of the Son; if we have the right to call His Father our Father, we gain from our association with Him more than enough to compensate us for our association with the gardener who stole his Master's fruit in the Garden of Paradise.

Christian people do not enough appreciate this connection, or avail themselves of its benefits. We do not enough distinguish between praying

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and claiming by a simple faith; but there is a wide difference between the two. We may pray for some special grace for years, and still be deficient in it; whereas we may claim it in an instant, and it will be ours. I am so often impressed with this difference in prayer-meetings. The same petitions are being constantly offered for the same things in a half entreating, half-despairing tone. But if the gifts sought from the Father's hands are really such as He can bestow, there should be no need for the incessant repetition of the same requests because they would be claimed and taken from His outstretched hand. A Christian will request prayer that he may receive a certain grace of Christian character; whereas there is not the least reason in the world why he should not take as much of it as he requires, altogether apart from the intercession of others. We ask for

health, or power, or deliverance, or vindication, with the accent of weary uncertainty, which proffers the same request, year after year, regardless of the voice, which is ever crying, "Who-soever will, let him take . . . freely."

Of course there are things with all of us which are not included in God's will, and concerning which we cannot therefore ask with any claiming faith. But there are others, which are presented on the page of scripture, or are indicated by the evident Providence of God, concerning which we have the right to say, "My Father, it is Thy grace which has put this precious thing within my reach; and I take it with a reverent grateful heart." And when we have been led to take up this attitude, we must not suddenly turn round to ascertain through some answering emotion whether we have received the gift we sought. We must reckon that it is ours; we must rest satisfied that

God is faithful, and that He has done as He has said; we must even count Him true and our own emotions liars. If we ask anything according to His will, we know that He hears us; and if we know that He hears us, we know that we have the petition that we desired of Him—not only that it will be ours, but that it is ours, to be used forthwith for His glory, because the zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform it.

Are you in need of counsel? Reverently and thoughtfully claim the wisdom of the Counsellor; reckon that you have it, and act to the best of your judgment, believing that His wisdom is threading it with His unseen direction. And when you have acted, whatever be the results, dare to believe that you were directed to do the best thing, and never look back.

Are you in need of strength? Reverently and believingly claim the power

"Feed on the living Christ." 119

of the Mighty God, and reckon that it is yours; and go forth to any work to which He may call you, believing that you are adequately equipped. You will not know what power you have till you begin to use it.

Are you in need of unchanging love and affection, in a world of incessant disappointment, in which the warmest friendships cool, and the dearest friends die? Reverently and gladly avail yourself of the love of the *Father of the Ages*, the I AM, who is the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Drink deep draughts of His love and know that it is yours, though you may not be conscious at the moment how much is pouring into your soul.

Do you want peace? Reverently and trustfully claim His peace, who is *the Prince of Peace*; and know that it is yours, in the depths of your soul, though the surface of your life be still swept by storms.

We may often fail to receive these gifts from God, because we fail to feed on Christ through His word. Here, too, the same distinction must be made. We are all too prone to judge of our profit in the reading of the Bible by our emotional pleasure. If we have much of this, we think we have gained much; but if little, we ask what profit there is in our Bible study. We must learn to believe that just as food will nourish us even when it is not specially palatable, and though we may not think of it after we have eaten it, so the Word of God will nourish our spirits when we thoughtfully and prayerfully read it, in the absence of much sensible pleasure. Read your Bibles, and so feed on the living Christ; and believe that you are gaining health and strength, even though it be an effort of your faith to reckon that it is so.

These are two great words—*claim*

God's fulness, and *reckon* that whatever you can claim is yours, although no answering emotion assures you that it is. Dare to act in faith, stepping out in the assurance that you have what you have claimed, and doing just as you would do if you *felt* to have it.

But this is only possible when you have put the government—where God the Father has placed it—on the shoulders of Jesus. It is there by right, but it must be also there by choice and acquiescence. And when it is, there is no limit to the freedom with which we may have access to God. All of God lies open to him who will be all for God. Nor is it such a dreadful thing to resign the government of the life to Jesus. Napoleon, standing amid the ambassadors of Europe, reassured the entire continent by the utterance of his New Year's motto, *The empire of peace.*

But with far greater truth may we apply the words to Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, whose rule over the soul is the synonym of peace unspeakable and full of glory. And as His government spreads further and further over the soul, with its growing area there is growing peace, until they shall both become complete to all the heights, and depths, and breadths of blessedness. Of the increase of His government, and of *our* peace, there is no end.

All this may seem shadowy and far away; difficult, if not impossible, to realize in our life. But we may take comfort in the assurance that the zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform what we cannot accomplish. There is grace enough in him, and patience, and strength. He will not fail, nor be discouraged. Hand over the entire matter to Him; leave yourself in his hands; accept what He sends; do what

He bids; and you will drink deep draughts of that joy of which the prophet speaks in these rapturous and glowing words.

X.

Death the Gate of Life.

“In the third day HE will raise us up and we shall live in his sight.—Hos vi, 2.

PART I.

TWO Christians were engaged in deep conversation on a subject which had an absorbing interest for them—how to secure a fuller measure of the life of God in the soul. Theirs was the search for the Golden Grail.

For some weeks previous to the occasion of which I write, they had been led to see, in dim outline at least, the great law, which runs through all the world, that life is through death. The flowers of spring are born from the death of winter. The richest crops are raised on virgin soils, where

for centuries dead leaves had been left to rot and molder. Each generation of living things arises out of the death of that which has preceded it. And is not this in harmony with that law in spiritual things, to which our Lord so constantly referred? "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit"; "Whosoever shall lose his life for My sake, the same shall save it;" It is profitable to be maimed in order to enter into life." And once when Peter sought to persuade Him to spare Himself the cross, He told him he was playing the part of Satan.

It was beneath the inspiration of such thoughts as these, that my friends clasped each other's hands, and looking steadfastly up to Christ, dared reverently and trustfully to say, "*Lord, we choose death; let us drink of Thy cup, and be baptized with thy baptism, if*

only we may have thy life abundantly." It was a great thing to say—but, after all, is it not what each of us should say to Him, who has passed through the grave to the glory of the Risen Life, leaving us an example that we should follow His steps, and in whom God reckons that we have died already? "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death?" and does not that initial act of our religion accept that position which is ours in God's purpose, and write the sentence of death on all our existence? We must not court death—we must invent ingenious methods of dying. But we are to yield ourselves into the hands of the Living One that became dead, asking Him to lead us as He will, sure that He can make no mistake; and that in proportion to our deep planting together in the dark soil of death will be the wealth and radiance

of color in our common after-life.

Perhaps my friends had hardly counted the cost, any more than the two disciples knew what was involved, when, in answer to their Master's challenge about sharing His baptism and cup, they said, "We are able." Perhaps it is best that we should not know, and that He should lead us down one step at a time. But there are certain well-defined stages in this inward dying, which must probably be appropriated by us all.

We must die to self complacency,—
The first step in the education of some village lad, who gives evidence of the artist's gift, which has already made him the idol of the rustics around, is to introduce him to the masterpieces of human genius, that he may be fit to die of shame, when any shall mention his own rude daubs. And the first step in the education of the spirit is to break down all conceit

in its own goodness. This is the lesson of the Book of Job. At the outset Job accounts himself the perfect man, and stoutly protests his innocence against the accusations of his friends; but at the close, when he has seen the holiness of God, he confesses himself vile. Any kind of self-esteem on account of our superiority to others, of the sensitiveness of our conscience, or of our very humility and modesty, must be denied and offered to death.

We must die to our own method of justification.—We are all anxious to stand right with God's law. We allege excuses why we have sinned as we have done. We blame our parents, our temperament, or our circumstances. We try to compensate by the makeweight of good things we do, or evil things we avoid. Like Cain, we come before God with the fruit of the earth, produced and ripened by our assiduous care. And so long as this

is our case, we are not only in a state of condemnation before God, but we shut ourselves out of that blessed redemption which has been wrought out for us in the Person and Work of Jesus.

We must die to our own method of sanctification.—This, at least, we think we can do. If only we are started right, we surely can keep so. We can at least be good, and pure, and gentle. Resolutions well made, the self-watch well kept, the temper of the soul well maintained by contact with noble ideals—surely these will suffice to maintain our spiritual life on the high level to which, at the outset, the Saviour lifted it. We start out as an army, with banners and banners and bands, and gleaming armor; but we encounter nothing but disappointment and failure, and return at last defeated, disheartened, almost in despair. Ah, we must die to our

good self, arrayed in its Sunday best, as we once died to our bad self, dressed in rags!

We must die to our spiritual joys.
--In the early stages of Christian living, our Father allures us forward with many moments of radiant sunshine and reasons of sacred delight; but alas! we get to cling to these rather than to Himself, and so it befalls that He is obliged to cut them off and to wean us, that we may turn to Himself, to find what we could never find in His gifts.

If a father were always bringing chocolate creams home to his little children, he might begin to wonder whether their welcome day by day was intended for himself, or for what he brought. And so he might one morning clearly announce to them that they must not expect any more for at least a month. But how often would he wonder to himself through-

out that day whether he would be greeted again by the sparkling eyes, and heightened color, and patter of little feet along the passage! And if, when he turned the corner of the street, he saw the window as full as usual of little expectant faces, would he not thankfully realize that his children loved him, not for his sweets, but for himself? So God, our Father, is often obliged to deprive the soul of all emotional delights; and we must be prepared to die to them.

A Christian woman was once asked if she enjoyed religion; and she answered, after a moment's thought, "I enjoy God." There was a great truth taught in that distinction, and one which can only be learnt when we have submitted to the death of which we speak.

We must die to our self-energy in Christian work.—How much there is of this in us all! We are more taken

up in doing things for Christ than with Christ Himself; as if a wife should be so occupied in doing acts of service for her husband, that she neglected communion with him in the twilight, beneath the trellis-work of the porch, or in the glow of the winter fire. How much of natural impetuosity, of ambition, of dependence on our own schemes, of resolve to do as others have done, of yearning for notice and patronage, there is in all our Christian work! To see the result; to know that you are effecting something; to feel that you are exercising an influence in the molding of men—all this is such a temptation, diverting us from the simplicity and unobtrusiveness of the highest form of work.

We must learn to work without these perplexing cross-lights, to persevere undaunted by years of apparent failure; to renounce our boasted schemes and vaunted strength; to be

broken and emptied vessels; each to be an insignificant joint in the great body; content to stand as a pawn on one square of the chessboard, not moved for hours, because set to hold a position on which perhaps the whole game turns. It is only so that we become meet for the Master's use, and capable of the loftiest service.

We must die to excess in what is right.—Of course we must be crucified to all that is strong; but our difficulty will often lie with what is in itself innocent and right. Human affection; the love of wife or child, of parent or friend; the desire to know; the power of conversation; the play of poetry, imagination, and genius. All these things are precious and inestimable gifts, for which we should be always thankful, and for the proper use of which we shall be called to account. We have no right to bury any one of them in the napkin of neglect. We

must rejoice in every good thing which the Lord our God has given. But we must never forget that there is as much danger through excess in a right direction, as through the least trespass in a wrong one. The excessive use of a right thing is its abuse; and is that sin of idolatry against which we are perpetually warned. Nothing will more certainly affect and hinder the work of God in the soul. We must learn self-restraint; to be still; to die to our impetuosity and excess.

*There are times when we are called upon to die to what is natural and right in others, but which we must renounce for some special purpose.—*The right hand, or foot, or eye, may cause us to stumble; and in this case we must be willing to dispense with them. Or we may be specially called on to undertake some mission, which will involve our leaving father and mother, and wife and children, and

lands. But these demands do not come to all; and when they seem to come, we must carefully wait to ascertain beyond a doubt what may be the precise will of God. It is His business to explain His will to the obedient soul; and until we are certain of it, we must keep still, and wait patiently for Him.

The self-life is our greatest trouble. It is so various in its manifestations. Resist it in one place, it will break out in another. When you have overcome it in some hideous form, it will insinuate itself in congratulations for your victory. It will appear as an angel of light, so guileless and innocent, excusing faults as infirmities; anger as highly-strung nervousness; ambition as zeal for God. It will freely vaunt its sinlessness and freedom from the very root of evil. Its heads are as many as the hydra's. It is like the weed which spoils our wa-

ters; or like the velvety moss of the American forests—creeping everywhere, but stifling life from the trees to which it clings. We must die to self if we would taste of the deep, tranquil, satisfying Life of God.

PART II.

Dying is neither easy nor pleasant.

—The Master did not find it so, nor shall we. To learn that your righteousness is as filthy rags; to be reduced to take the gift of forgiveness on the same terms as the meanest and vilest sinner; to find that it is impossible to realize your cherished ideals; to discover that God wants neither your wisdom nor strength, but your helplessness in His work, to be content to lose all the bright manifestations of God's favor; to lay your Isaac upon the altar, your dearest, most cherished, most God-given possession;

to turn aside from some gate standing open before you into a sunlit garden, and at the call of God to take a darker, stonier pathway; to renounce what others hold without rebuke; to go to Gethsemane, and Calvary and the grave, in close companionship with the Man of Sorrows; to be stripped of friends, and wealth, and reputation, and success; flung like a shipwrecked mariner on some lone shore—ah! this is not the lot which we would naturally select. Nay, it is that from which we shrink.

But we are not called upon to experience the whole of this at once.—

Many pass through life knowing comparatively little of it. Others know only the earlier stages. And for such as we are called to drink this cup to its dregs, it is diluted in its preliminary experiences. The less are given first, the greater follow only at intervals, and as the strength of the soul has de-

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veloped into ability to bear them; so that we may be quite sure whatever is given us to do or suffer, there is a certainty of sufficient strength being within our reach, there is no need for either fainting under trial, or despair as to its issue.

Now let us learn how to die.

Let us look, not on the dying side, but on the living side.—Each shadow has its light; each valley its height; each night its dawn; each wound of the oyster-shell its pearl; each kind of death its counterpart of life.

To have the one is to have both. It is, therefore, a mistake to be ever thinking of what you must give up. Think rather of what you must take in. Follow hard after Christ, to be with Him, for Him, like Him. Let your intimacy with Him be like those closely pointed stones in the old buildings of Thebes, between which it is impossible to insert even a sheet of

writing-paper. Obey Him up to the hilt.

So will ever new blessings disclose themselves to you; and as you climb to them you will be insensibly drawn away from things that fascinated and injured you. Reaching out after a fuller measure of life, you will hardly realize the cost by which alone you can enter upon its enjoyment. The wrench of death will be less perceptible amid the joy which sheds its light on your face, and the warm glow into your heart. As the room is filled with the odor of the ointment, you will not grieve so much over the broken alabaster box. Win Him, and you will more easily count all things but dross.

Above all, trust the lead of Jesus.—
“He will revive us; He will raise us up; and we shall live in His sight.”

He knows every step of the way through the dark valley; because, as

the Captain of Salvation, He has been obliged to traverse it with each son whom He has brought to glory. While the heart is breaking, He yearns with tender pity over the bleeding member of His own body. The knife which cuts into our flesh pierces His heart. Lean heavily on His arm. He is with you, feeling for you infinitely, though you cannot see Him. It is impossible for Him to take one false step, or inflict one needless stab of pain.

Out of your suffering He is going to bring glory to Himself and blessedness to you. Fix your eyes on these. In proportion to your pain will be the eternal weight of each. And though heart and flesh fail or faint, take His name, like a perpetual refrain on your lips; and go forward, remembering that "for the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

There is no solace to the troubled soul so sweet as the perpetual mention of the name "Jesus," as the life is laid upon the altar, and surrendered to be all His own. Look up to Him; see the smile on His face, as He sees His own image reflected in the soul which He is burnishing, and hears His own name repeated by the lips which restrain the groans and anguish that press for utterance. Do not be ashamed of your tears; they shall be very grateful to Him, and shall refresh Him like those of old that fell thick and fast on His feet. He sometimes seems to tarry. His stages of redemption are so slow; but His love is dealing more wisely with thee in its delays, impetuous spirit, than it could in haste! It is hard to wait when heart and flesh are failing; but thy God will be the strength of thy life, and thy portion for ever. He sees the eternal weight of glory which must follow on this

thine affliction, which in comparison is light, though it seems so heavy to thy poor soul, "because by thy strength, with none to spare." And He knows the nearest path that will lead thee to it. Trust His hand and purpose running through the circumstances of thy life.

And out of all this will come the more abundant life.—Suffering at first isolates us; but afterwards it links us in the closest bonds with all who are sitting on the hard benches of the school of sorrow. We learn to comfort them with the comfort with which we have ourselves been comforted of God. The water streams from the smitten rock. The flower springs from the dead seed. The crystal river from the melting glacier. The bright gold emerges from the dark mine and the cleansing fires. As the marble wastes beneath the sculptor's chisel, and falls in a shower of splinters to the

floor, the image grows in its fair and perfect beauty.

A simple-hearted Christian girl, who had heard God's call to the mission-field, felt keenly the pain of leaving her lover in one of our great manufacturing centers. She came to her minister and said: "I cannot bear to give up anything for Jesus grudgingly." So she spent a whole night in prayer, that He would help her to make the gift with a smile, and came again to her minister, saying, "I don't love Jack less; but I love the Lord Jesus so much more, that it is easy to go."

When you are sure that Jesus asks aught of you, yield up your will to Him; ask Him to come, and take it and blend it with His own. Be willing to be made willing. Lie low at His feet. Wait for Him. Trust Him. Do not be afraid. He will gently open the door of Life, through which you will pass out of the vale of death into

wider and more abundant blessedness. Lay yourself upon the altar of devotion; and as the burnt-offering begins, the song of the Lord will begin also, never to stay again, but to rise higher and even higher, till it passes on to blend with the high notes of angel minstrelsy

And, in the end, when the lesson is fully mastered, we shall find that His going forth has been prepared as the morning; and He will come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain, unto the earth. Abraham shall take his Isaac from off the altar, and lead him home; Joseph shall weep tears of welcome on his father's neck; Job shall have more prosperity than before his trial; the young confessors shall emerge from their fire without their bonds; flowers shall grow where the black cinders lay; and where the body was buried in the sepulcher amid tears of hopeless sorrow, there shall

be a joyous resurrection. We shall live again, and shall know the Lord as never before.

Wait to see the end of the Lord;
He is very pitiful; He is human in His
tenderness. Though He slay thee,
trust in Him; He knows the thoughts
He thinks towards thee, thoughts of
good, and not of evil, to give thee an
expected end: “He will raise us up,
and we shall live in His sight.”

In agony, O Lord,
To thee I cry;
I cannot tell my grief,
Nor why I sigh.
But thou who sendest me
This bitter pain,
Wilt stand beside me
Soothing this brain;
Calming with tender hand
This breaking heart,
Although the pain is great
And sore the smart.
Teach me Thy lessons soon,
Then wilt Thou, Lord,
Give me my heart's desire,
Keeping thy Word.

XI.

What the Man can be.

“A man shall be as a hiding-place from the wind and a cover from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.”

ISA. xxxii, 2.

WHAT a revelation is here of the wants of men! The very supply indicates the depths and urgency of the need which craves for satisfaction. “Hiding Place!” “Covert!” “Fountains of Water!” “The shadow of a great Rock!” Each of these beautiful images serves to accentuate the impression of urgent and pitiful need. Lighthouses and harbors are always terribly suggestive.

If a hiding-place is provided, it is evident that the bleak moor-land, or

desert-waste is being swept by pitiless blasts, which search the traveller and catch up the sand-atoms in blinding whirlwinds. If there is *a covert*, it is clear the storms must be frequent. If *rivers of water*, then there is every fear of thirst. If *the shadow of a great rock*, then there is likelihood of weariness in the scorching glare of the sun.

And surely all these have their analogies and correspondences in our lives.

Wind.—Once when the Lord and His apostles were sailing together across the lake, there came down a great storm of wind on the water, which became suddenly and ominously ruffled, flecked with white foam, and dashed ever more tumultuously against the sides of the little shell that carried the Hope of the world. It would seem as if the prince of the power of the air, whose empire is in some way mysteriously associated with the ariel

regions, sought to vent his hate on his glorious Antagonist by raising this terrible and dangerous storm around the men who loved Him, and Himself. Surely Satanic agency is more than hinted at when we are told that He *rebuked* the wind and the waves—*re-buke* would hardly avail for a mere element.

But how apt a symbol of our lives is here! Often when all seems fair, when the winds are confined in their chambers, when there is the hush of perfect calm in our lives, whilst we are confident and unsuspecting of alarm—all suddenly a wild storm envelops us in a furious *melee*. A calumnious story is circulated, which is absolutely without foundation; a well-meant act is misconstrued; a love suddenly cools; a dam which had warded off the wild north sea breaks; a life which had been dearer than our own fails; our whole nature is plunged

into a bath of agonizing pain; the mind is cast into a tumult of perplexity; the heart is rent. Ah, then we know bitterly the spiritual side of the words, “a small tempest lay upon us.”

Storm.—Storms sweep the floor of the desert of all the loose sand that may be lying there, and gathering it together hurl it against the traveler or the caravan, stinging, blinding, and threatening to overwhelm. But a covert is an enclosure of canvas, or a nook formed by bowlders of rock leaning together, and against it the storm beats in vain, piling up the dust atoms in hillocks without, whilst the cowering refugees escape. Thus it is with human life. We are exposed not only to great and crushing sorrows, which threaten to suddenly engulf us, as it is said the old seats of human life were engulfed in the midst of the Indian ocean; but we have to suffer from the accumulations of little stinging

irritations, which are like the grit or sand grains of the desert. The rasping temper of some one with whom we have to live; the annoyances and slights which are daily heaped on us; petty innuendoes and insinuations that sting; trifles which we could not put into words, but which hurt us like acid dropped into a sore—it is hard to stand against these.

A Dry Place.—Our lot is sometimes cast, as David's was, in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is. There are few helps in our religious life; we are cast into a worldly family; we are obliged to attend an uncongenial ministry; we are too driven with occupation to have quiet times for fellowship with God, and communion with His saints; or we are so lonely that we long unutterably for some kindred soul, some one to love or to be loved—all these are dry places. The eye ranges day after day over the same

monotonous landscape; no well of water, no living spring, no sign of fresh green verdure. And, indeed, it is remarkable to think how many are daily passing over this arid waste, some unloving, some unloved, some scorched by the fierce quick heat of passion, all feeling the parching thirst, in which the tongue cleaves to the roof of the mouth.

A Weary Land.—The whole expanse of desert lies beneath the glare of the noontide sun. The lizards and beetles revel in it, but every living thing pants in exhaustion, or creeps into the shade; and the traveler paces wearily on, ready to throw himself down under the shadow of the veriest bush and ask for death. Weary people! there are plenty of them. Weary of life, with its poverty from which there is never a moment's respite! Weary of life, with the love of the life unrequited! Weary of life, with the

light of life hidden beneath a bushel!
Weary of life, with its common-place
duties and monotonous routine!
Weary, weary, so weary! The de-
mands are so incessant; the pressure
is so constant; the heartache is so
wearing; the pain is so cruel; the sor-
row that eats out the heart is so bitter.
Ah, me! the eyes weary of looking for
one who never comes! the ears weary
of listening for a step that never greets
them; the hearts weary of waiting for
a love that never comes forth from the
grave, though they call never so loudly.

But all these many-sided needs may
be met and satisfied in "The Man
Christ Jesus." No one man could
perfectly meet even them all. And
He is prepared to meet them all, not
only in the case of one or two of the
children of men, but for every one of
the vast population of our globe; yea,
and abundantly beyond all that any
ask or think.

We can never forget our Lord's essential Deity; the Second Person, in the ever-blessed Trinity; the Fellow of Jehovah; the only-begotten Son of the Father. But we must never magnify His Deity at the expense of His humanity. He emptied Himself of His Divine prerogative when He assumed human nature. God with God, He is also Man with man. And it is of Him in His true humanity that the prophet speaks in these rapturous words. Let men with their indefinable aspirations, and women with their yearnings for love, and sympathy, and strength, and ownership, bring all to that Man, whom God hath ordained, and concerning whom He has given assurance to all men in raising Him from the dead. There is no hunger or thirst in our nature that does not bring a beatitude with it, when it leads us to His royal and glorious nature, to find there both solace and supply.

How manifold is the character of Christ! No one metaphor can set forth all His beauty. Creation has to be ransacked, for metaphors to unfold the mysteries of loveliness and power which lie hid within Him, waiting to be unfurled:—

“The whole creation can afford
But some faint shadows of my lord;
Nature, to make his beauties known,
Must mingle colors not her own.”

In all men there is a fatal incompleteness. One quality seems to have grown rich at the expense of others. The soil of their soul has given all its nutriment to some exquisite flower or fruit of the Christian character but just in proportion as it has poured itself in one direction, it has been drained away in others. Have you not often wished to take the characteristic qualities from the men in whom they are strongest, and put them all together into one nature, making one complete man out of the many broken

bits, one chord of the many single notes, one ray of the many colors? But this that you wish to do is done in Him—in whom the faith of Abraham, the meekness of Moses, the patience of Job, the strength of Daniel, the love of the apostle John, blend in one complete symmetrical whole.

And this is the further thought—that He completes our incompleteness. We are but partial segments of the circumference. He makes up the perfect sweep of the circle. We bring to Him but a tiny scrap of the Christian character; but He sweetly steps in and fills up the deficiency, adding to our few lines a whole Paradise of warm color, so that the picture is perfected in beauty. Whatever, then, be your need, my reader, seek its complement (i. e., its complement) in Him; and as you do so, claim that God your Father should fulfill in you the good pleasure of His goodness, and the

work of faith with power, teaching you what Jesus can be to the soul that comes to Him for all. "My God shall supply all your need, according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." "In Him ye are made full" (R. V.).

Are you driven by the wind, "tossed with the tempest, and not comforted?" Hide in Him! Get into Him, as the bark, strained and leaking, gets within the shelter of the mole or harbor-bar. Look out on the fury of the storm from the protecting environment of His presence. Often we have been hidden from the strife of tongues, or the sharp arrows of cruel and unjust scandal, in the thought of the love of some one for whom we have suffered, and one smile from whom has made us impervious to the assault. And how often have we retired within the strong and tender advice or succor of some noble, and wealthy, and capable friend, making our refuge with him

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until certain calamities have passed by! And why should we not do this with the Man of men, of whom all other men are suggestions and hints, and partial representations? Why should not those words of David fit us more literally, and be more frequently on our lips?—"The Lord is my rock, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation and my high tower."

Are you being blinded by the drift of the tempest, as it drives the sleet of the northern gale, or the dust of the southern sirocco into your face? Jesus will be a covert from it. Standing before you with His face to the pitiless blast, He will screen you: "He shall cover thee with His feathers, and under His wings shalt thou trust; His truth shall be thy shield and buckler." Remember how of old He went forth to meet the bands that entered the

garden, beneath the leadership of the traitor, and said of the disciples cowering behind Him, "if ye seek Me let these go their way:" so will He fight for you, and defend you. The Shepherd shall go before you; and you, as His sheep, shall follow, safe from harm.

Are you in a dry place? The Lord Jesus knows what it is to be athirst. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." The cry with which He expired must have been often on His lips, "I thirst."

Oh, precious human love! of which, in His earthly life, the supreme Lover knew but little; that out of the experiences of His own pilgrimage over the waterless waste, He might be able to supply the thirst of souls. What was meant by that Rock, whose streams followed the pilgrim host, except that Jesus would set forth in parable and type His willingness and ability to

quench all thirst, and appease the fever of desire? Let us cease from the labor of hewing out our own cisterns, which soon get exhausted of the brackish water which they contain; and let us ask of Him to give us to drink of those living springs which are Himself, and of which, if a man drink, he shall never thirst again.

Are you in a weary land? Listen to Him who bids the weary come to Him for rest. Sit beneath His shadow with great delight. He will give rest from the consciousness of unforgiven sin; rest from the inward strife; rest from conflict with men and things around; rest from chafe and fret against the will of God. What a contrast there is between the angry surf that flings itself on the coral reef, and the lagoon of still water; between that strong, insect-built wall, and the frail, palm-shaded islet which lies within. And if the former represent the fret

of outward circumstance, the other is a picture of the calm rest which is experienced by the life hidden with Christ in God. See how the weary caravan hastens to escape from the piercing swords of an almost unbearable sunshine, to throw itself down to rest beneath the blue shade of a great rock, in whose recesses a small frond of green here and there betrays the presence of moisture and comparative cool. So, O weary souls, fling yourselves down at the feet of the Man who is a High Priest touched with the feeling of sorrow, acquainted with grief, strong, tender, true, combining in His glorious person every attribute that can make life blessed, and learn how He can be the shadow of a great Rock. Breathe His name over and over a thousand times a day. Tell Him again and again that you choose and prefer His will, even though as yet you cannot say that you delight in

it. Hand over the whole responsibility of the things that press you to Him, and then by a loving faith claim His rest. You may not experience any rush of emotion, any tidal wave of rapture, any remarkable alternation of feeling; but there will steal into you a sense of rest, of calm, of peace, as when sleep steals over a tired frame, and wraps it insensibly in its tender embrace.

May the Holy Spirit unfold to each soul that reads these lines that sense of the all-sufficiency of Jesus, that blessed satisfaction with Him, that unbroken fellowship of communion, which are the charm of heaven, and which tinge earth's experiences with a heavenly glory; as dull, leaden clouds will gleam in the light of a setting or rising sun!

“Oh, the little birds sang east, the little birds sang
west;
And I said, in under-breath, ‘All our life is mixed
with death!’

And who knoweth which is best?’

Oh, the little birds sang east, the little birds sang west;
And I smiled to think God’s greatness flows around
our incompleteness:

Round our restlessness His rest!”

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