Matthew, and very important ; as in Mark  
and Luke this first class of hearers are  
without any certain index to denote them.  
The *reason* of this *not understanding* is  
clearly set forth by the parable: the  
heart is hardened, trodden down; the seed  
cannot penetrate.

**the wicked one**  
= “*Satan*” (Mark, who also inserts  
“*immediately*”), = “*the devil*” (Luke).  
The parable itself is here most satisfactory  
as to the *manner* in which the Evil One  
proceeds. By fowls of the air—passing  
thoughts and desires, which seem insignificant and even innocent–does Satan do  
his work, and rob the heart of the precious  
seed. St. Luke adds the purpose of Satan in  
taking away the word: “*lest they should  
believe and be saved.*”

**he that was  
sown by the way side** (not, as A.V. “*he  
that received seed by the way side*”).  
This is not a confusion of similitudes,—no  
‘primary and secondary interpretation ’ of  
*the seed*,—but the deep truth, both of nature and of grace. The seed sown springing up in the earth, *becomes the plant*,  
and bears the fruit, or fails of bearing it;  
it is therefore the representative, when  
sown, of the individuals of whom the discourse is. And though in this first case it  
does not spring up, yet the same form of  
speech is kept up: throughout they are  
*they that were sown*, as, when the question  
of bearing fruit comes, they must be. We  
are said to be “*born again by the word  
of God,*” 1 Pet. i. 23. It takes us up into  
itself, as the seed the earth, and we become a new plant, a *new creation*: cf. also  
below, ver. 38, “*the good seed, are the  
children of the Kingdom.*”

**20, 21.**] {20} In this *second* case, the surface of the  
mind and disposition is easily stirred, soon  
excited: but beneath lies a heart even  
harder than the trodden way. So the  
plant, springing up under the false heat  
of excitement, having no root struck down  
into the depths of the being, is, when the  
real heat from without arises, which is  
intended to strengthen and forward the  
healthy-rooted plant, withered and destroyed. {21} The Greek word signifies not only ‘dureth for a while,’ but also ‘is  
the creature of circumstances,’ changing  
as they change. Both ideas are included.  
St. Luke has, “*in time of temptation fall  
away,*” thus accommodating themselves to  
that *time*.

**22.**] In this *third* sort,  
*all as regards the soil is well*; the seed  
goes deep, the plant springs up; all is  
as in the next case, with but one exception, and that, *the bearing of fruit*—  
**becometh unfruitful** = *bring no fruit to  
perfection* (Luke). And this because the  
seeds or roots of thorns are in, and are  
suffered to spring up in the heart, and to  
overwhelm the plant. There is a divided  
will, a half-service (see on ch. vi. 25) which  
ever ends in the prevalence of evil over  
good. This class is not confined to the  
*rich*: **riches** in Scripture is not riches *absolutely*, as possessed, but riches *relatively*,  
as estimated by the desire and value for  
them. St. Mark adds, *and the lusts of (the)  
other things*, viz. the *other things* which  
shall be added to us if we seek first the  
Kingdom of God and His righteousness.  
The identity of the *seeds sown* with the  
individuals of these classes, as maintained  
above, is strikingly shewn in Luke here:  
*that which fell among, thorns, (these) are  
they* &c. (viii. 14.) We may notice: (I)  
That there is in these three classes a PROGRESS, and that a *threefold* one:—(1) in  
TIME:—the first receives a hindrance *at  
the very outset*: the seed never springs  
up:—the second *after it has sprung up*,  
but *soon* after:—the third *when it has*