shame and extremity of need.

17—20.]  
*His penitence.* And here we have a weighty  
difference between the permitted rational  
free will of man, and the stupid wandering  
on of the sheep, or the inanimate coin lying  
till it is picked up,—both these being however   
true in the case of man, *did not God  
seek and save the sinner:* ‘the grace of God  
by Christ preventing us, that we may have  
a good will and working with us when we  
have that will.’ Article X. of the  
Church of England.

**17. when he came  
to himself**] See 1 Kings viii. 47. Before  
this, he was *beside himself.* The most  
dreadful torment of the lost, in fact that  
which constitutes their state of torment,  
will be this *coming to themselves,* when too  
late for repentance.

He now recalls  
the peace and plenty of *his Father's house.*

**hired servants**] For he now was a  
*hireling,* but in how different a case!

**18.**] **I will arise,** see ver. 24, *was dead, and*  
**is alive again;** it was truly a resurrection  
from the dead. This resolution is a further  
step than his last reflection. In it be  
*nowhere gives up his sonship: this,* and  
the word **Father,** lie at the root of his  
penitence:—it is the thought of having  
sinned against (in the parable *itself,* Heaven   
and) Thee, which works now in him.  
And accordingly he does not resolve to ask  
to he made *one of the hired servants*, but  
**as** one of them:—still a *son,* but *as* an  
hireling. “And what is it that gives the  
sinner now a sure ground of confidence,  
that returning to God he shall not be repelled,   
nor cast out? The adoption of  
sonship which he received in Christ Jesus  
at his baptism, and his faith that the gifts  
and calling of God are *without repentance*  
or recall.” Trench.

**20.**] What he  
has resolved, he does: a figure not of the  
*usual,* but of the *proper* course of such  
a state of mind.

**when he was yet  
a great way off**] Who can say whether  
*this itself was not a seeking?* whether his  
courage would have held out to the meeting?

On what follows, see especially  
Jer. iii. 12; James iv. 8; Gen. xlvi. 29;  
2 Sam. xiv. 33.

**21.**] The intended  
close of his confession is not uttered:—  
there is no abatement of his penitence,  
for all his Father’s touching and reassuring   
kindness,— but his filial confidence  
sufficiently awakened to prevent the request   
*that he might be as an hired servant.*

**22.**] All these gifts belong to his reception,   
not as a servant, but as a son: the  
*first robe,* for him who came in rags,—Isa.  
lxi. 10; Rev. iii. 18:—but *first* must not  
be understood as meaning *the robe which  
he used to wear—his robe*—this  
would not be consistent with the former  
part of the parable, in which he was not  
turned out with any disgrace, but left *as  
a son* and *of his own accord:* but *best,* as  
in the A.V.:—**a robe, (yea) the first and  
goodliest.**

**The ring,**—a token of a