

GLIMPSES

THROUGH LIFE'S WINDOWS

SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS

unlike
unlike OF
J. R. MILLER, D.D.

AUTHOR OF "SILENT TIMES," "MAKING THE MOST OF LIFE,"
"THE EVERY DAY OF LIFE," ETC.

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Faithfully Yours,
J. R. Miller.

THIS book claims only to give "glimpses." In these hurried days many people have time to read only paragraphs. Ofttimes it happens, too, that merely in a few well-chosen sentences, a lesson is taught or an inspiration given which helps and blesses a life for many days.

Many of the paragraphs here gathered contain incidents or illustrations through and by which the truth is presented. Every one knows the value of good illustrations. They help to make the teaching clear, and they help to fix the lesson in the memory.

In these days of young people's societies, — Christian Endeavor and others with like object, — there is a desire for books with short paragraphs suitable for reading by members at the meetings. For this purpose, among others, it is hoped that these "glimpses" may prove of value.

The book is sent out in the loving hope that its words may stimulate many to a truer, better, richer, holier life. In this earthly state, with its hindrances and weights, we need to be reminded continually that —

"he most lives

Who thinks most, feels the noblest, acts the best."

E. I. F.

GLIMPSES THROUGH LIFE'S WINDOWS.



ONCE I went up the winding staircase of Bunker Hill monument. Its great walls shut in the view on all sides. I could see only the bit of dusty floor at my feet and the cheerless walls that surrounded me. But as I climbed up the staircase there were windows here and there, and through these I looked out and caught glimpses of a very beautiful world outside,—green fields, rich gardens, picturesque landscapes, streams flashing like silver in the sunshine, the sea yonder, and far away, on the other hand, the shadowy forms of great mountains. How little, how dark and gloomy, seemed the close, narrow limits of the staircase as I looked out upon the illimitable view that stretched from the windows!

This earthly life, hemmed in as it is by its limitations and its narrow horizons, is like that tower — a little patch of dusty floor, with cheerless walls

around it. But while we climb heavily and wearily up its steep, dark stairway, there lies outside the thick walls a glorious world, reaching away into eternity, filled with the rarest things of God's love. And through the windows of revelation we get glimpses of the infinite sweep and stretch of life beyond this hampered, broken, fragmentary existence of earth. Beyond earth comes heaven.



The Nest in the Crag.

Two little birds went out one lovely spring morning to build their nests. One found a tree and built her nest in its branches. It was a very pleasant place. Blossoms filled the air with fragrance. A river murmured beneath, its waters rippling and sparkling in the sunlight, and at night reflecting the silver stars in the blue sky overhead. But one night there was a great storm, and floods rolled through the river's channel, overflowing its banks. In the morning the tree was gone, and the bird's home had vanished. She had built too low. She had planned only for the soft, sunny days and the quiet, starry nights.

The other bird soared up among the crags and built her nest in a cleft of one of the old rocks. By and by the nest was full of bird-life. The

storm that swept through the valley below swept about the old crag, but could not shake it. In the morning the sunshine streamed forth again, and the birds' home was safe.

Are you building your soul's home among the green boughs of mere human friendship, in life's beautiful vales, close by the river of earth's pleasures, where the sweet perfumes breathe? Or are you building up amid the crags, in the Rock of Ages? Are you building merely for sunny days, or for floods and storms as well?



Post-Mortem Kindnesses.

Do not keep the alabaster boxes of your affection sealed and laid away until your friends are dead. Fill their days with tenderness. Speak your words of commendation while their ears can hear them. The things you mean to say when they are gone, say before they go. The flowers you mean to send for their coffins, send beforehand to brighten and sweeten their homes ere they go out of them. I have often said — and I know I speak for thousands of other weary, plodding toilers — that if my friends have vases laid away, filled with the perfumes of sympathy and affection, which they intend to break over my

dead body, I would far rather they would bring them out along my toilsome days and open them, when I can enjoy them and be refreshed by them.

“What use that the spurring pæan roll
 When the runner is safe beyond the goal?
 What worth is eulogy’s blandest breath
 When whispered in ears that are hushed in death?
 No, no; if you have a word of cheer
 Speak it while I am alive to hear.”

Post-mortem kindnesses do not cheer the burdened spirit. Tears falling on the icy brow of death make poor and too tardy atonement for coldness, neglect, and cruel selfishness in life’s long, struggling years. Appreciation when the heart is stilled has no inspiration for the spirit. Justice comes too late when it is pronounced only in funeral eulogium. Flowers piled on the coffin cast no fragrance backward over weary days.



Life Out of Death.

THE valley of Chambra, in India, is rich in its fertility and beauty. The cause of all this fertility is a wonderful spring of water which flows from a hillside, and furnishes water for the irrigation of the whole valley, and for the use of the people who live there.

Once, says the legend, the valley was without water, and there was desolation everywhere. The plants and trees were all withering, and the people were dying of thirst. The princess of the place took the sorrows of her subjects much to heart. She consulted the oracle to learn how the constant curse of drought could be removed. The oracle said that if the princess of the land would die for the people, abundant water would be given. She hastened to give her life. Her grave was made, and she was buried alive. Then forth from her tomb came a river which flowed down into the valley, restoring all languishing life in field and garden, and sending water to every door for the famishing people to drink. Ever since, the streams have continued to flow from the wonderful spring, carrying their precious benediction to every home.

This old heathen legend beautifully illustrates what Christ did. The world was perishing for want of the water of life; Jesus died and was buried, and from his cross and broken grave poured out the river of the water of life for the quenching of the world's thirst. Its streams run everywhere, and wherever they flow the wilderness has been made to blossom like a garden of roses. Beauty blooms wherever they run. All the world's joy comes from the grave of our risen Lord.

A Picture of Peace.

IN the Pitti Palace at Florence hangs a picture which represents a stormy sea, with wild waves and black clouds and fierce lightnings flashing across the sky. Wrecks float on the angry waters, and here and there a human face is seen. Out of the midst of the waves a rock rises, against which the waters dash in vain. It towers high above the crest of the waves. In a cleft of the rock are some tufts of grass and green herbage, with sweet flowers blooming, and amid these a dove is seen, sitting on her nest, quiet and undisturbed by the wild fury of the storm, or the mad dashing of the waves below her.

The picture fitly represents the peace of the Christian amid the sorrows and trials of the world. He is hidden in the cleft of the Rock of Ages, and nestles securely in the bosom of God's unchanging love.



In the Rugged Hills.

THE law of compensation runs through all God's distribution of gifts. In the animal world there is a wonderful harmony, often noted, between the creatures and the circumstances and

conditions amid which they are placed. The same law rules in the providence of human life. One man's farm is hilly and hard to till, but deep down beneath its ruggedness, buried away in its rocks, are rich minerals. One person's lot in life is hard, with peculiar obstacles, difficulties, and trials, but hidden in it there are compensations of some kind. One young man is reared in affluence and luxury. He never experiences want or self-denial, never has to struggle with obstacles or adverse circumstances. Another is reared in poverty and has to suffer toil and privation. The latter seems to have scarcely an equal chance in life. But we all know where the compensation lies in this case. It is in such circumstances that noble manhood is grown, while, too often, the petted, pampered sons of luxury come to nothing. In the rugged hills of toil and hardship life's finest gold is found.



Unconscious Ministry.

It is said that when Thorwaldsen, the Danish sculptor, returned to his native land with those wonderful works of art which have made his name immortal, chiselled in Italy with patient toil and glowing inspiration, the servants who un-

packed the marbles scattered upon the ground the straw which was wrapped around them. The next summer flowers from the gardens of Rome were blooming in the streets of Copenhagen, from the seeds thus borne and planted by accident. While pursuing his glorious purpose, and leaving magnificent results in breathing marble, the artist was, at the same time, and unconsciously, scattering other beautiful things in his path to give cheer and gladness.

So Christ's lowly workers unconsciously bless the world. They come out every morning from the presence of God and go to their work, intent upon their daily tasks. All day long as they toil, they drop gentle words from their lips, and scatter little seeds of kindness about them; and tomorrow flowers from the garden of God spring up in the dusty streets of earth and along the hard paths of toil on which their feet tread. The Lord knows them among all others to be his by the beauty and usefulness of their lives.



Under the Master's Hand.

A STRANGE instrument hung on an old castle wall — so the legend runs. No one knew its use. Its strings were broken and covered with dust.

Those who saw it wondered what it was and how it had been used. Then one day a stranger came to the castle gate and entered the hall. His eye saw the dark object on the wall, and, taking it down, he reverently brushed the dust from its sides and tenderly reset its broken strings; then chords long silent woke beneath his touch, and all hearts were strangely thrilled as he played. It was the master, long absent, who had come back again to his castle.

It is but a legend, yet the meaning is plain. In every human soul there hangs a marvellous harp, dust-covered, with strings broken, while yet the Master's hand has not found it. Is there no joy in your heart? Is your soul-harp hanging silent on the wall? Have you learned the secret of glad, happy days?

“Oh! could the tender Christ but brush away,
And o'er the slumbering tones his fingers sweep,
A world would pause to catch the echoing chord
Of music wakened 'neath the touch of God.”

Open your heart every morning to Christ. Let him enter and repair the strings that sin has broken, and sweep them with his skillful fingers, and you will go out to sing through all the day. Only when the song of God's love is singing in our heart are we ready for the day.

The Fragrance of Prayer.

IN Saint John's vision of heaven the redeemed are represented as having in their hands "golden vials, full of odors, which are the prayers of saints." The meaning is not that the saints in glory offer up prayers to God. Rather, the thought seems to be that earth's supplications rise up to heaven as sweet incense—that while humble believers in this world are engaged in offering up prayers and supplications, holy odors are wafted up before God. There is an exquisite beauty in this thought that true prayer is fragrance to God. The pleadings and supplications of his people on the earth rise from lowly homes, from sick-rooms, from darkened chambers of grief where loved ones kneel beside their dead, from humble sanctuaries, from stately cathedrals, and are wafted up before God, as the breath of flowers is wafted to us in summer days from sweet fields and fragrant gardens. And God "smells a sweet savor." Prayer is perfume to him.



Keeping the Life White.

A WRITER tells of going with a party down into a coal mine. On the side of the gangway grew a plant which was perfectly white. The visitors

were astonished, that there, where the coal dust was continually flying, this little plant should be so pure and white. A miner, who was with them, took a handful of coal-black dust and threw it upon the plant, but not a particle adhered. Every atom of the dust rolled off. The visitors themselves repeated the experiment, but the coal-dust would not cling. There was a wonderful enamel on the folds of the white plant to which no finest speck could adhere. Living there amid clouds of black dust, nothing could stain its snowy whiteness.

This is a picture of what every young Christian life should be. This is an evil world. We go among the ungodly continually in our daily walk and work. Unholy influences breathe about us; but it is our mission to be pure amid all this vileness, undefiled, unspotted from the world. If God can make a little plant so that no dust can stain its whiteness, can he not by his grace so transform your heart and life that no sin can cling to you? If God can keep a little flower stainless, white as snow, amid clouds of black dust, can he not keep hearts in like purity in this world of sin?



Each in His Own Way.

THE bird praises God by singing ; the flower pays its tribute in fragrant incense as its censer swings in the breeze ; the tree shakes down fruit from its bending boughs ; the stars pour out their silver beams to gladden the earth ; the clouds give their blessing in gentle rain ; yet all with equal faithfulness fulfil their mission. So among Christ's redeemed servants, one serves by incessant toil in the home, caring for a large family ; another, by silent example as a sufferer, patient and uncomplaining ; another, with the pen, sending forth words that inspire, help, cheer, and bless ; another, by the living voice, whose eloquence moves men, and starts impulses to better, grander living ; another, by the ministry of sweet song ; another, by sitting in quiet peace at Jesus' feet, drinking in his spirit, and then shining as a gentle and silent light, or pouring out the fragrance of love like a lowly and unconscious flower ; yet each and all of these may be serving Christ acceptably, hearing at the close of each day the whispered word, " Well done."



On the Cathedral Rafter.

IN one of the old cathedrals in Europe the guide bids the visitor watch a certain spot, until the light from a window falls upon it. There he sees, carved on a rafter, a face of such marvellous beauty that it is the very gem of the great building. The legend is, that, when the architect and masters were planning the adornment of the cathedral, an old man came in and begged leave to do some work. They felt that his tottering steps and trembling hands unfitted him for any great service ; so they sent him up to the roof, and gave him permission to carve upon one of the rafters. He went his way, and day by day he wrought there in the darkness. One day he was not seen to come down, and going up they found him lying lifeless on the scaffolding, with his sightless eyes turned upward. And there they saw a face carved on the rafter, a face of such exceeding beauty, that architects and great men bared their heads as they looked upon it, and recognized the master in him who lay there still in death.

In the church of the living God we are all set to carve the beauty of the face of Christ, not on the rafters or walls of any cathedral, but on our own heart and life. Be it ours to do this work with such care and skill, that when our eyes are closed

in death, men may look with reverence upon the beauty of the face our hands have fashioned. Some of us may feel ourselves too feeble, or too unskilled, to do any great work in this world for Christ ; but none are too feeble or too unskilled to carve the beauty of Christ on our life. And it may be that in the time of great revealing, it shall appear that some trembling disciple among us, timid and shrinking, whose voice is not heard in our meetings, whose work is in some quiet corner, out of sight, has wrought the beauty of Christ-likeness in an exquisiteness which shall outshine all that any even of the greatest of us have done.



Finding the Imprisoned King.

THERE was once an old English king who was taken captive, and thrown into an unknown dungeon. No one knew where he was, but a favorite minstrel determined to find him, and went from castle to castle among the mountain forests, playing before the bars of every dungeon some old melody that his king knew. At last, the weary king, sitting hopeless and despairing in his cell, heard one day a strain which roused in him all the memories of the past, and carried him back

in thought to his home. The life, long slumbering in the sleep of despair, sprung up again. The old king answered back, and was found and restored to his throne.

So our conscience may sleep shut up in a dark dungeon, chained behind iron gates and stone walls, while its throne is empty. But some day there comes a voice thrilling through the bars, which arouses the long silent king of the soul. It may be the voice of song, an old familiar cradle hymn or household psalm which a sainted mother used to sing in childhood's pure, sweet days. It may be some text of God's word flying like an arrow from heaven. It may be the death of some friend, or some terrible calamity like the crushing of an avalanche upon the soul. It may be some lightning flash of conviction, whose lurid glare reveals the awful blackness of eternity, and startles the slumbering soul to life. Well shall it be if this arousing occurs this side of death's dark waters, where the cross stands with its bleeding sacrifice, where the voice of mercy calls, where the angel of love may yet lead the guilty one back through the gate of penitence to pardon and life.



Good Men Wanted.

WOMEN'S tears are precious as they are poured out on the paths of human suffering. Women's hands are soft and gentle as they minister in the sick room, in the hospital, in the home of poverty. Women's words are mighty as they come welling up from the bottom of loving hearts, in pleading with lost ones. Women's works are beautiful as they are wrought over all the world, in the name of Jesus. Women's power is well-nigh omnipotent when anointed by the Holy Ghost. Women's influence is most blessed in home and school and church. Yet, blessed and beautiful and mighty as is the service which the women are rendering to their Lord, the cause of Christ needs men as well.

Men of courage are wanted to stand in the front ranks of truth, to resist and hurl back the assaults of the enemy. Men with keen intellect are wanted to meet the sophistries of error and the subtle attacks of infidelity and skepticism. Men with fine business abilities are wanted to carry on the secular affairs of God's house. Men with wealth are wanted to lay money gifts upon the altar to forward the interests of Christ's kingdom. Holy men are wanted to witness for Christ in the face of his enemies. Men with eloquent tongues

and burning hearts are wanted to go into all the dark places of the cities, into the purlieus of vice, into the homes of sin, to tell the story of the love of God and of the cross of the Redeemer. Men of tender heart and loving sympathy and gentle touch are wanted to give comfort to the world's sorrow, to help other tempted men in their battles, to rescue the perishing out of their bondage.



Light on the Billow's Crest.

THERE is a story of a shipwreck which tells how the crew and passengers had to leave the broken vessel and take to the boats. The sea was rough, and great care in rowing and steering was necessary, in order to guard the heavily-laden boats, not from the ordinary waves, which they rode over easily, but from the great cross-seas. Night was approaching, and the hearts of all sank as they asked what they should do in the darkness when they would no longer be able to see these terrible waves. To their great joy, however, when it grew dark, they discovered that they were in phosphorescent waters, and that each dangerous wave rolled up crested with light which made it as clearly visible as if it were mid-day.

So it is that life's dreaded experiences when we

meet them carry in themselves the light which takes away the peril and the terror. The night of sorrow comes with its own lamp of comfort. The hour of weakness brings its secret of strength. By the brink of the bitter fountain grows the tree whose branch will heal the waters. The wilderness, with its hunger and no harvest, has daily manna. In dark Gethsemane where the load is more than mortal heart can bear an angel appears ministering strength. When we come to the hard, rough, steep path we find iron for shoes.



Led by a Lamb.

THE herbage of the field was nipped off close, and the shepherd wanted to get his sheep up to a higher place where there was good pasture. The way led over a steep bluff, however, and the poor things did not want to go over it. Then the shepherd seized a lamb and carried it in his arms up the nipped way to the higher ground. The little thing ran to the edge and looked down, bleating and calling for the older sheep. In a few moments the mother had gone up, and all the flock had followed her.

We are like sheep, and are slow to follow our Shepherd up the steep way towards the heavenly

life. Then the Shepherd has to use loving urgency. Sometimes he takes a child to heaven to lead thither the mother or the father. Or he takes away a man's riches to save the man's soul. Or he lays us on a sick-bed and shuts us away in the darkness to compel us to think of spiritual things. Or he sends trouble in some form to get us to walk in holy paths. If we can be saved in no other way, it is better that we lose out of our life all the flowers and the sunshine, and walk amid thorns and in darkness, reaching home at last.



Buried Souls.

THERE is a story of an Italian nobleman, who took this terrible revenge on one whom he hated. He set him alive in a niche in the palace he was building, and piled row upon row of bricks and stones about him, until the wall closed over his head, and shut him in his dark and awful living tomb.

Horrible as this story is, it is just what many men are doing with their souls. They are piling bricks and stones about them, walling them in, and leaving them there to die. In the very core of many a great fortune which men have gathered ; in the inner chamber of many a beautiful palace

which men have builded ; in the deepest shrine of many a temple of honor which men have reared in their own praise ; hidden away out of sight is a grave over which God's angels weep — the grave of a soul. Many a man has buried his manhood in his business. Many a poor slave has dug a deep grave for his soul with the wine-cup for a spade. Fashion has woven the shroud and pall for many a poor girl's soul. In many a garden of beauty and pleasure, hidden among the flowers, is a grave where innocence, faith, purity, virtue, honor, and truth lie buried.



Until He Find It.

A PLEASANT incident is recorded of General Garibaldi. One evening he met a Sardinian shepherd, who had lost a lamb out of his flock, and was in great distress because he could not find it. Garibaldi became deeply interested in the man, and proposed to his staff that they should scour the mountains, and help to find the lost lamb. A search was organized, lanterns were brought, and these old soldiers started off full of eager earnestness to look for the fugitive. The quest was in vain, however, and by and by all the soldiers returned to their quarters. Next

morning Garibaldi's attendant found the general in bed and fast asleep long after his usual hour for rising. The servant aroused him at length, and the general rubbed his eyes and then took from under his bed coverings the lost lamb, bidding the attendant carry it to the shepherd. Garibaldi had kept up the quest through the night until he had found the lamb.

This illustration helps us to understand how Jesus Christ seeks lost souls in this world of sin, continuing the search long after others have given it up, seeking until he finds.



The Shadow of the Mountain.

WHEN the morning sun casts the shadow of the sleeping volcano Etna across the fair plains of Sicily, over beautiful fields and smiling gardens and lovely landscapes, the people forbid you to speak of that which casts the shadow. It suggests the awful terrors that slumber in the mountain, and that any hour may burst out in fearful destruction. So the people will not speak of the ominous terrors. They go on making their gardens, building their houses, tilling their fields, singing their songs, trying to forget the phantom woe that sleeps in the air above their heads, in the tower-

ing cone. But does forgetfulness of it shelter them from the awful peril that hides away in the quiet volcano?

There are many who try to keep peace in their hearts in the same way. Everywhere in this world, over sweetest joy and tenderest beauty and rarest hope, hangs the shadow of divine wrath. The consciousness of guilt casts a deep line of darkness on every life. But many refuse to think of it or to speak of it. They try to have peace by forgetting the curse that slumbers above them, the wrath of God that abides upon them. But this is not the peace that Christ gives. It is no shelter to the soul. It removes no peril. The woe is still there. No peace will do for a human soul which can ever be broken.



The Wrecker's Lights.

IN days not very long gone by wreckers used sometimes to set up false lights on the shore, or perhaps fasten a lantern on a horse and let him move along the beach, and thus deceive vessels and lure them on the rocks to be wrecked, so that they might plunder them. There is a story of an old man whose son was at sea, and had not been home for years. The old man was a wrecker,

and one dark night he had lured a vessel on the rocks by false lights. When the vessel struck and broke to pieces, he went down to the shore to gather up the booty that might be washed up by the waves. Soon a body was cast on the sands at his feet. He held his lantern to the face, when, oh horrors ! it was his own son.

I fear it will be so with the fathers and mothers who are not living right, who are not guiding their children aright. You are setting up false lights for them, and when you come to gather up the wreckage and booty of your lives, washed up on the eternal shores, your dim, lurid lights will reveal to you the upturned faces of your own children — lost. Oh, beware how you lead one of God's little ones astray !



Meet for the Master's Use.

WHEN one is thirsty it matters little whether the water is offered in a common earthen cup or in a golden pitcher. When one is very hungry and you carry him bread, he does not care whether you take it on a silver plate or on a wooden tray. So the grace of Christ may be carried just as well in the heart of a plain fisherman as in that of a learned rabbi ; but the vessel

must be clean. Christ will not send the blessing of eternal life to lost men through unholy lives. He will not honor us by putting us in trust with the gospel if our own hearts are unclean and impure.

He who would be a winner of souls must know what it is to repent of sin and put it away at whatever cost or sacrifice. He must have turned his own feet away from evil paths before he can convert others from the error of their ways. He must have begun to walk in godly ways before he can turn others to righteousness. Only holy lives can win the unholy to holiness and heavenliness. The hands that are given to Christ must not do sinful things after engaging in his holy work. The lips that speak his name must not speak wrong words. The feet that run his errands to-day must not walk in the paths of evil to-morrow. The heart that throbs with love at his table must not afterward be thrilled with feelings of passion and hate. If we would be vessels meet for the Master's use we must have clean hands and pure hearts.



Guided by Love's Songs.

I HAVE read of the fishermen, on some of the lonely coasts, this pleasant fact. The men go

out in their boats to fish, while the women stay at home. Then sometimes, while the boats are out, fogs and vapors gather, hiding sun or stars, so that the men do not know which way to pull their boats to get homeward. At such times the women and the children come down close to the shore and sing their household songs. Far away on the waters, bewildered and perplexed, not knowing which way to turn to find their home, the husbands, fathers, and brothers hear the music as it floats out to the sea. All their bewilderment instantly vanishes. They know now where home is, and taking up their oars they ply them with vigor, answering back meanwhile in songs of their own, which tell their loved ones on the shore that they are coming.

Is not something like this true of many lives on earth? They are perplexed and sorely tried in this world of sin and sorrow. They do not know which way to go. But they have loved ones at home in glory; and these seem to speak out of the silences and to sing their songs on heaven's coasts, while their friends on earth move in the mists. They would help guide you in safety home. Oh, you fathers and mothers of children in heaven; you children of parents in heaven; all who have loved ones there, listen, and you will hear voices calling you to glory.

The Work that Lasts.

HE who works on material things leaves results that will perish. The noblest buildings crumble. The finest pictures the artist puts on canvas fade out. Nothing done in matter is immortal, for matter is perishable. But he who works on the unseen, the spiritual, leaves impressions that shall endure forever. The touch of beauty you put upon a life yesterday by the earnest word you spoke, by the new impulse you started in the heart of your friend, by the vision of heavenly purity you gave in your own life to one who was with you, will be bright, when sun and stars shall have burned out to blackness. What we do on immortal lives is immortal work. Then of all work on human lives, the saving of souls is the most blessed. He who adds the least touch of beauty to a saved life does more than he who paints a masterpiece ; but he who brings a lost soul to the Saviour, who seeks and finds a wandering sheep and bears it back to the fold, does the noblest, greatest work possible on this earth. To work, therefore, for eternity, we must work on human lives, not merely on wood or stone.



Your Own Cross the Best.

THERE is a poem called "The Changed Cross." It represents a weary one who thought that her cross was surely heavier than those of others whom she saw about her, and wished that she might choose another instead of her own. She slept, and in her dream she was led to a place where many crosses lay, crosses of divers shapes and sizes. There was a little one most beauteous to behold, set in jewels and gold. "Ah, this I can wear with comfort," she said. So she took it up, but her weak form shook beneath it. The jewels and the gold were beautiful, but they were far too heavy for her. Next she saw a lovely cross with fair flowers entwined around its sculptured form. Surely that was the one for her. She lifted it, but beneath the flowers were piercing thorns which tore her flesh. At last, as she went on, she came to a plain cross, without jewels, without carving, with only a few words of love inscribed upon it. This she took up and it proved the best of all, the easiest to be borne. And as she looked upon it, bathed in the radiance that fell from heaven, she recognized her own old cross. She had found it again, and it was the best of all and lightest for her.

God knows best what cross we need to bear.

We do not know how heavy other people's crosses are. We envy some one who is rich; his is a golden cross set with jewels. But we do not know how heavy it is. Here is another whose life seems very lovely. She bears a cross twined with flowers. But we do not know what sharp thorns are hidden beneath the flowers. If we could try all the other crosses that we think lighter than ours, we should at last find that not one of them suited us so well as our own.



The Human Touch.

A VISITOR to a glass manufactory saw a man moulding clay into the great pots which were to be used in shaping the glass. Noticing that all the moulding was done by hand, he said to the workman, "Why do you not use a tool to aid you in shaping the clay?" The workman replied, "There is no tool that can do this work. We have tried different ones, but somehow it needs the human touch."

There is much of the Lord's work that likewise needs the "human touch." The divine hand would have been too glorious, too dazzling, too bright, if it had been reached out of heaven to help, and lift up, and save, to wipe away tears, to

heal heart-wounds, to be laid in benediction on the children's heads; and therefore God took a human form, that with a human hand he might touch the sinful and the sorrowing. And now that Christ has gone away again into heaven he does not reach out of the skies that glorified hand, which burns with splendor, to do his work of love in this world, but uses our common hands, yours and mine, sending us to do in his name the gentle things he would have done for his little ones.



Self in Love's Fire.

THERE is a story of Pousa, the Chinese potter, who received from the emperor a command to make a rare set of porcelain ware for the royal table. With greatest pains he began his work, desiring to make it the finest achievement of his life. Again and again, however, when the pieces were put into the furnace they were marred. At length another set was ready for the burning, and the potter hoped that this one would be successful. He had wrought it with the greatest care. But as he watched it in the furnace he saw that this too would be a failure. In his despair he threw himself into the fire, and his body was consumed. But when the pieces were taken out

they were found to be so wondrously beautiful that nothing like them had ever before been seen. Not until the potter gave himself, sacrificing his own life in the doing of it, was his work successful.

This old heathen legend has its lesson for Christian life. Our work never reaches the highest beauty, is never fit for our King, until love's self-sacrifice is brought into it. Things we do ourselves, to win honor for our own name, to make profit for our own enrichment, are never the things that are most beautiful.



The Soldier at Prayer.

GENERAL GORDON, whose name shines so brightly in the records of England's noble soldiers, was as loyal to Christ as he was to his country. Indeed, noble as he was as a soldier, he was nobler still as a Christian. Each morning, during his journey in the Soudan, there was one half-hour when there lay outside General Gordon's tent a handkerchief, and the whole camp knew the meaning of that small token, and most religiously was it respected by all, whatever their creed, color, or business. No foot dared to enter the tent while this handkerchief lay there. No

force of sentinels could better have guarded the tent door. No message, however pressing, was ever sent in; whatever it was, of life or death, it had to wait until the guardian signal was lifted and removed. Every one knew that God and Gordon were alone there together; that the servant prayed and communed, and that the Master heard and answered. Into the heart so opened, the presence and the life of God came down. Into the life so laid upon the altar, the strength of God was poured. No wonder that when that man came out of his tent the glory of God seemed to shine on his face and the fragrance of heaven to cling to his very garments, and that he had such sublime peace and such calm, majestic power.

We all need to get more of such half-hours into our lives, when God's very angels will pause in reverent silence at our doors, while within we commune with the blessed Trinity. Then we shall be strong for service, and our influence shall be hallowed by the very touch of Christ.



Let Him Have All.

SUPPOSE a mother gave her child a beautiful flower-plant in bloom, and told her to carry it

to a sick friend. The child takes it away, and when she reaches the friend's door she plucks off one leaf and gives it to her, keeping the plant herself. Has she obeyed her mother's command? Then afterwards, once a day, she plucks off another leaf, or a bud, or a flower, and takes it to the friend, still retaining the plant. Did she obey the command of her mother? Nothing but the giving of the whole plant could fulfil the mother's direction.

Now is that not a simple illustration of what we give to Christ? He commands us to love him with all our heart and with all our being, and we pluck off a little leaf of love now and then, a little bud or flower of affection, or one cluster of fruit from the bending branches, and give to him, and we call that obeying.



He That is Faithful.

REAL worth always finds its true place at length. There are some people who think they never get into the place they are fitted to fill; but usually something in the men themselves is the secret of their failure. It is not some happy chance that lifts men to places of honor and responsibility, nor is it piety alone. Brains are necessary for

great duties as well as honesty and prayerfulness. God does not put a man into a high position merely because he is a good man. The man must have abilities; and if he has and is a true man the world will want him sometime. Let young men make themselves ready for positions of trust, and they will be called to the positions at the right time. God's clock is never too slow.



Heaven Helping the Weary.

THERE is a pleasant legend of Michael Angelo. He was engaged on a painting, but grew weary and discouraged while his work was yet incomplete, and fell asleep. Then while he slept an angel came, and seizing the brush that had dropped from the tired artist's fingers, finished the picture. Angelo awoke at length, affrighted that he had slept, and foregone his task in self-indulgence, but, looking at his canvas, his heart was thrilled with joy, and his soul uplifted beyond measure, for he saw that while he had slept his picture had been finished, and that it had been

“ painted fairer
Far than any picture of his making
In the past, with tint and touch diviner,
And a light of God above it breaking.”

So it is with all who truly long and strive after the heavenly likeness. Faint and discouraged, they think they are making no progress, no growth toward the divine image, but in the very time of their faintness and disheartenment, "when human hands are weary folded," God's Spirit comes and silently fashions the beauty in their souls. When they awake they shall see the work finished, and shall be satisfied in Christ's likeness. There is great comfort in this for many of the Father's weary children who earnestly long to become like the Master.



The Fragrance of a Gentle Life.

ONCE in crossing a meadow I came to a spot that was filled with fragrance. Yet I could see no flowers, and I wondered whence the fragrance came. At last I found, low down, close to the ground, hidden by the tall grass, innumerable little flowers. It was from these that the fragrance came.

I enter some homes. There is a rich perfume of love that pervades all the place. It may be a home of wealth and luxury, or it may be plain and bare. No matter; it is not the house, nor the furniture, nor the adornment that makes this

air of sweetness. I look closely. It is a gentle woman, mother or daughter, quiet, hiding self away, from whose life the fragrance flows. There is a wondrous charm in a gentle spirit. The gentle girl in a home may not be beautiful, may not be well-educated, may not be musical or an artist or "clever" in any way; but wherever she moves, she leaves a benediction. Her sweet patience is never disturbed by the sharp words that fall about her. The children love her because she never tires of them. She helps them with their lessons, listens to their frets and worries, mends their broken toys, makes dolls' dresses, straightens out the tangles and settles their little quarrels, and finds time to play with them. When there is sickness in the home, she is the angel of comfort. Her face is always bright with the outshining of love. Her voice has music in it as it falls in cheerful tenderness on the sufferer's ear. Her hands are wondrously gentle as their soothing touch rests on the aching head, or as they minister in countless ways about the bed of pain.

"The lives that make the world so sweet
Are shy, and hide like the humble flowers.
We pass them by with our careless feet,
Nor dream 'tis their fragrance fills the bower,
And cheers and comforts us, hour by hour."

Misinterpretation.

ONE Christmas some one sent Mr. Whittier a gentian flower pressed between two panes of glass. Seen from one side it appeared only a blurred mass of something without beauty. But seen from the other side the exquisite beauty of the flower appeared, in all its delicate loveliness. Whether the gift was lovely or not to the view depended on the side from which one looked at it. The poet hung the gift on the window pane, putting the blurred side out and the lovely flower side toward his room. Those who passed by, without, looking up, marked only a "gray disk of clouded glass," seeing no beauty, but the poet, sitting within, looked at the token, and saw outlined against the winter sky all the exquisite loveliness of the flower.

"They cannot from their outlook see
The perfect grace it hath for me;
For there the flower, whose fringes through
The frosty breath of autumn blew,
Turns from without its face of bloom
To the warm tropic of my room,
As fair as when beside its brook
The hue of bending skies it took.

"But deeper meanings come to me,
My half-immortal flower, from thee:

Man judges from a partial view,
None ever yet his brother knew;
The Eternal Eye that sees the whole
May better read the darkened soul,
And find, to outward sense denied,
The flower upon its inmost side."

Too often we look upon the blurred side of actions — yes, of people too. We do not see the loveliness that there is on the other side. We are all continually misinterpreting others. There is a flower side in many an act which we condemn because we see only the blurred side. Let us train ourselves to believe the best always of people and of actions, and find some beauty in everything.



For the Master's Eye.

THERE is an old story of a Grecian sculptor, who, charged with adorning a lofty temple, was chided by his employers because he fashioned the upper surface of the capitals which surrounded his pillars with the same exquisite workmanship and elaborate care which he bestowed on the carving within reach of every visitor who might stand on the pavement. They said to him, "Why do you waste your skill where no human eye can ever behold it? Only the birds

of the air can rest in such a place." The sculptor raised his eyes, lifted for a moment his chisel from the stone, and replied, "The gods will see it," and resumed his task.

We should learn a lesson from the old heathen artist. We should do our work just as honestly where it will be covered up and never seen by human eyes, as where it is to be open to the scrutiny of the world, for God will see it. We should live just as purely and beautifully in secret as in the glare of the world's noon. There really is no such thing as secrecy in this world. We fancy that no eye is looking when we are not in the presence of men; but really we always have spectators, — we are living all our life in the presence of angels and of God himself. We should train ourselves, therefore, to work for the divine eye in all that we do, that our work may stand the divine inspection, and that we may have the approval and commendation of God.



Friendship's Perfect Trust.

It is often given as a wonderful proof of confidence in a friend, that once when the great Grecian emperor, Alexander, was ill, it was told to him in a letter that his physician intended to give him

poison, under the form of medicine. The emperor put the note under his pillow. The physician came, poured out the potion, and gave it to him. He looked his friend full in the face, drank the contents of the goblet, then handed him the letter. It was a beautiful trust.

Like confidence are we to have in the will of Christ. We are never to doubt his love nor his wisdom. Whatever he gives we are to accept with childlike trust, though it be something that we think may even slay us. There is no other full proof of unquestioning friendship.

Stored Joy Gladding Sorrow.

DID you ever sit on a winter's evening before an old-fashioned open fireplace, with its andirons, and its blazing log of wood? As you sit there and watch the fire playing about the log, you begin to hear a soft sound, a clear musical note, perhaps, or a tender, quavering strain, plaintive and sad. It takes every tone as it sings on. Sometimes it is like a whole chorus of bird-songs; then again it dies away into a faint murmur. What is it? Are there birds hidden in the chimney, that give out these strange notes? Are there invisible spirits hovering about the room, that breathe out

these plaintive strains? No; the music comes from the log in the fire. The flames bring it out. A poet would say that long ago in the forest the birds sat on the branches of the tree from which this back log was taken, and sang there, and the songs hid away in the wood, where they have remained ever since. Or, he would say that the winds sighed and murmured through the branches in gentle summer breezes, or swept through them in furious storms, and that the music of the breezes and storms has been imprisoned in the heart of the tree all these many years. And now the heat brings out this long-slumbering music.

These are only poetic fancies, so far as the weird music of the log on the hearth is concerned; but it is no mere fancy that the sweetest, fullest music of the hour is not drawn out until in the heat of trial. The bird notes of joy that warble about our ears in the sunny days of childhood and youth, sink into the heart and hide there. The lessons, the influences, the gladness, the peace of quiet, prosperous days seem to have been lost. The life does not appear to yield its true measure of joyfulness. Then the fires of trial come and kindle about it, and in the flames the long-gathered and imprisoned music is set free and flows out. Many a rejoicing Christian never learned to sing till the flames kindled upon him.

For the Lord's Treasury.

MORE than seventy years ago the king of Prussia, Frederick William III., found himself in great trouble. He was carrying on expensive wars, he was trying to strengthen his country and make a great nation of the Prussian people, and he had not money enough to accomplish his plans. What should he do? If he stopped where he was the country would be overrun by the enemy, and that would mean terrible distress for everybody. He therefore asked the women of Prussia, as many of them as wanted to help their king, to bring their jewelry of gold and silver, to be melted down into money for the use of their country. Many women brought all the jewelry they had, and for each ornament of gold or silver, they received in exchange an ornament of bronze or iron, precisely like the gold or silver ones, as a token of the king's gratitude. These iron and bronze ornaments all bore the inscription: "I gave gold for iron, 1813." These ornaments became more highly prized than the gold or silver ones had been, for they were a proof that the women had given up something for their king. It became very unfashionable to wear any jewelry. So the Order of the Iron Cross grew up, whose members wear no ornament except a

cross of iron on the breast, and give all their superfluous money to the service of their fellow-men.

Is there not a suggestion here for many of us? If all the girls and women who love and own the Lord Jesus as their King, and want to help him in the war against sin and ignorance and suffering which he is carrying on — if all these Christian girls and women were to give up their jewelry for his cause, how full the Lord's treasury would be!



"In Whatso We Share."

WE are all familiar with the story of the Holy Grail, which so many poets have wrought into verse. The Holy Grail was the cup from which Jesus drank with his disciples at the last supper. According to the legend this cup was lost, and it was a favorite enterprise of the knights of Arthur's court to go in quest of it. One of the prettiest of these stories tells of Sir Launfal's search for the Holy Grail. Far away over cold mountains and through fierce storms and over deserts, rode the brave young knight, till youth turned to age and his hair was gray. At last, after a vain search, he turned homeward, an old man, bent, worn out and frail, with garments thin and bare. As he

drew on there lay a leper, lank and wan, cowering before him. "For Christ's sweet sake I beg an alms," the leper said. Sir Launfal saw in the beggar an image of him who died on the tree.

"He parted in twain his single crust,
He broke the ice on the streamlet's brink,
And gave the leper to eat and drink."

Suddenly a light shone about the place :

"The leper no longer crouched at his side,
But stood before him glorified,
Shining, and tall, and fair, and straight
As the pillar that stood by the Beautiful Gate."

Sweetly now he spoke as the knight listened :

"In many climes, without avail,
Thou hast spent thy life for the Holy Grail;
Behold, it is here — this cup which thou
Didst fill at the streamlet for me but now;
This crust is my body broken for thee;
This water his blood that died on the tree;
The Holy Supper is kept, indeed,
In whatso we share with another's need;
Not what we give, but what we share,
For the gift without the giver is bare;
Who gives himself with his alms feeds three, —
Himself, his hungering neighbor, and me."

The path of glory for a life lies not away among the cold mountains of earthly honor, not in any

paths of fame where worldly ambition climbs, but close beside us, in the lowly ways of Christ-like ministry. He who stoops to serve the poor and the suffering, in Christ's name, will find at length that he has served Christ himself. "I was a hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink."



The Calmness of Peace.

THE people in all lines of duty who do the most work are the calmest, most unhurried people in the community. Duties never wildly chase each other in their lives. One task never crowds another out, nor ever compels hurried, and therefore imperfect, doing. The calm spirit works methodically, doing one thing at a time, and doing it well, and it therefore works swiftly, though never appearing to be in haste.

We need the peace of God in our heart just as really for the doing well of the little things of our secular life as for the doing of the greatest duties of Christ's kingdom. Our face ought to shine, and our spirit ought to be tranquil, and our eye ought to be clear, and our nerves ought to be steady, as we press through the tasks of our commonest day. Then we shall do them all well,

slurring nothing, marring nothing. We want heart-peace before we begin any day's duties, and we should wait at Christ's feet ere we go forth.



Helping While We May.

A CAPTAIN of an ocean vessel, one day as his ship was speeding through the waters, saw a signal of distress some distance off. A glass was turned to the spot, and it was seen that there was only one man on a piece of wreck. To go to his rescue, the ship would have to be stopped and turned back in her course, losing much time.

“No,” said the captain; “some other vessel will pick him up.” He speeded on and was in port in good time, and was commended for his swift passage. But he could not get out of his mind the memory of that signal of distress out there on the wild seas, and the sight through the glass of that one man on the piece of wreck left there to perish. By day and night that picture haunted him.

As we are hurrying on these busy days, do we see no signals of distress on life's broad sea? Do we hear no cries, no bitter wails from souls that are out on the angry waves? Do we heed

the signals and hearken to the cries? Do we turn away from our business, our pleasure, our ease, our money getting, our petty ambitions, to carry rescue to those souls that are perishing, or that are in sorrow? Or do we hurry on and say we have no time for these things, no time to save our brothers, no time to lift up fallen ones, no time to wipe away a tear? If we do not turn aside to help or save, may not our deepest sorrow in eternity be the memory of cries of distress unheeded? May not the visions of the perishing ones who called to us for help and got no answer, whom we have left unhelped out on the wild waves, haunt us forever?



Earth's Broken Music.

DURING the battle of Gettysburg, while a thousand cannon shook the hills and the air quivered with the rapid concussions, there came a lull for a moment. Not a gun was heard far or near. In that pause a soldier heard a little bird singing sweetly in a tree that grew close by. When the crash began again the bird was silent. It sang only in the momentary pauses of conflict.

So it is with this world's joy. Now and then there is a note of peace heard, as if an angel

were singing in the man's life ; in the brief pauses of discontent and care and struggle it is heard. But soon the strife begins again, and the bird-note of peace is hushed. When the waves of sorrow break its voice is drowned. But one who rejoices in God has a joy that sings on through all the roar of this world's battle, through all the darkness of the night.



How We Make Crosses.

YOU remember the way a father pictured a cross to his child. A cross is composed of two pieces of wood. The shorter piece represents your will, and the longer, God's will. Lay the two pieces side by side, and there is no cross ; but lay the shorter piece across the longer, and you have a cross. Whenever our will falls across God's there is a cross in our life. We make a cross for ourselves every time we do not accept Christ's way, every time we murmur at anything he sends, every time we will not do what he commands. But when we quietly accept what he gives, when we yield in sweet acquiescence to his will though it shatters our fairest hopes, when we let our will lie alongside his, there are no crosses in our life, and we have found the peace of Christ.

A Vision of Faithfulness.

A YOUNG soldier, scarce a month from his peaceful home, standing now in the excitement of the field, asked in a tense whisper, with white, quivering lip, "Do you think there will be a battle?" Almost as he spoke there leaped from a wooded crest near by flashing tongues of flame that brought death to hundreds. Later, in a terrible struggle, this brave boy was still at his post. The weakened line was wavering, however, and the lad's brother, an old veteran, saw it, and rushed for an instant from his post of duty, and sought along the trembling line for the boy he loved as his own soul. As his eye fell upon him, faithful still, he laid his hand upon the lad's shoulder, and said: "Be a man, John." The tide of battle ebbed and flowed, and when the moon rose after that tumultuous day, its pale beams shone on John's face, white and cold, lying where he had stood, his feet the very foremost in the pallid ranks toward the foe.

We are all in a battle that will not end for us until in our turn the moon's beams shine down upon each one of our faces, when we sleep on the field. We must be faithful. Then at the end we must stand before our king, and make report to him of what we have done. Will he then say to

us, "Thou hast been faithful?" I would rather have that at the close of my life — "Thou hast been faithful" — than wear earth's brightest crown and be unfaithful.



From Torch to Torch.

I HAVE 'heard of the lighting of the torches in the holy sepulchre at Easter time. The building is very dark in the early morning. The patriarch comes. Through the darkness he passes within a curtain, and is in the place where they say the body of Jesus lay. Not a word, not a sound breaks the silence in the great building. At last there is a movement — the patriarch comes out bearing one burning torch. Instantly a dark torch touches this lighted one and blazes out, and then another and another, and soon a thousand torches are blazing, all lighted from the one torch that came out from the empty tomb of Christ. Out into the streets of the city they are borne, and along the highways everywhere other torches are lighted from these, until the whole land glows with fire that came from Christ's grave.

What an illustration this is of the spreading forth of that fire of Pentecost! From the cross of Christ and from his emptied grave comes the

fire of the Holy Ghost. Your life and mine are like candles unlighted, or, at the best, burning very dimly. But if we will hold them up to this one flame that blazes before us, they will be lighted too ; we shall become burning lights. Then as we go out into the world, other lives will touch ours, and they will burn too, and light others, also, until thousands of burning hearts shall glow in earth's darkness.



Weights and Wings.

THERE is a myth or fable about the way the birds got their wings at the beginning. They were made first without wings. Then God made the wings and put them down before the wingless birds, and said to them, "Come, take up these burdens and bear them." The birds had lovely plumage and sweet voices ; they could sing, and their feathers gleamed in the sunshine, but they could not soar into the air. They hesitated at first when bidden to take up the burdens that lay at their feet, but soon they obeyed, and taking up the wings in their beaks, laid them on their shoulders to carry them. For a little while the load seemed heavy and hard to bear. But presently, as they went on carrying the burdens, fold-

ing them over their hearts, the wings grew fast to their little bodies, and soon they discovered how to use them, and were lifted by them up into the air. The weights became wings.

It is a parable. We are the wingless birds, and our duties and tasks are the pinions God has made to lift us up and carry us heavenward. We look at our burdens and heavy loads and shrink from them. But as we lift them and bind them about our hearts they become wings, and on them we rise and soar toward God. There is no burden, which if we lift it cheerfully, and bear it with love in our heart, will not become a blessing to us. God means our tasks to be our helpers heavenward. To shrink from a duty, or to refuse to bend our shoulders to receive a load is to decline a new opportunity for growth.



For the Love that is in It.

A POOR Arab, travelling in the desert, came to a spring of pure water, and filled his leather cup to carry it to the caliph. A long way he had to go before he could present it to his sovereign. The caliph received the gift with pleasure, and pouring some of the water into a cup drank it,

thanking the Arab and rewarding him. The courtiers around pressed forward, eager to taste of the wonderful water, but the caliph strangely forbade them to touch a single drop. When the poor Arab had departed with a joyful heart, the caliph told his courtiers why he had forbidden them to taste the water. In the long journey it had become impure and distasteful in the leathern bottle. But it was an offering of love, and as such the caliph had received it with pleasure. But he knew that if any other should taste the water he would have shown his disgust, and thus the poor man's feelings would have been wounded.

Does not this beautifully illustrate the spirit with which Christ receives the gifts and services of those who love him? The gifts may be worthless, and the services may avail nothing; but for the love that prompts them, he accepts them with real gladness, and richly rewards them.



Preaching as We Walk.

WE must preach as we walk. Many of the best sermons are sermons without words. Francis of Assisi one day stepped down into the cloisters

of his monastery, and said to a young monk : “ Brother, let us go down into the town to-day and preach.” So they went forth, the venerable father and the young man, conversing as they went. Along the principal streets, around the lowly alleys, to the outskirts of the town, and to the village beyond, they wound their way, returning at length to the monastery gate. Then spoke the young monk, “ Father, when shall we begin to preach ? ” “ My child ! ” said Francis, looking down kindly upon the young man, “ we have been preaching ; we were preaching while we were walking. We have been seen — looked at ; our behavior has been remarked ; and so we have delivered a morning sermon. Ah ! my son,” continued the saintly man, “ it is of no use that we walk anywhere to preach, unless we preach as we walk.”

In this way we may all be preachers ; in this way we all must preach, if we would win souls. We must preach as we walk. St. Paul said : “ For me to live is Christ.” Wherever he went, men saw Christ mirrored in his character, his disposition, his conduct, his temper. We must be Christ to those we would win for Christ.



That a Child May See.

WE should live so that those who know us shall recognize in us the unmistakable lineaments of Christ. Retzsch, a German sculptor, made a wonderful statue of the Redeemer. For eight years it was his dream by night and his thought by day. He first made a clay model, and set it before a child five or six years old. There were about the figure none of the usual emblematical marks designating the Saviour — no cross, no crown of thorns, nothing by which to identify it. Yet when the child saw it, and was asked who it was, he said, "Suffer little children and forbid them not to come unto me."

This was a wonderful triumph of art, this putting so much divinity into the face of the model that even a little child recognized the artist's thought. We should exhibit in our life and character such a reproduction of the holiness and beauty of Christ that every one who looks upon us and sees our life may instinctively recognize the features of the Master, and say, "Behold the image of the Redeemer!" There is no other way of magnifying the Lord that so impresses the world.



What Grace Can Do.

GOD can take the most soiled soul and give to it radiant beauty. A piece of black carbon set in the electric current blazes with dazzling light. Queen Victoria stopped one day at a paper-mill near Windsor Castle, and was shown through it by the foreman; he did not know who she was, as she was alone, save one attendant, and was plainly dressed. The queen was intensely interested in every process of the paper-maker's art. She was conducted at last to a place where a number of rag-pickers were emptying out the dirty rags which they had gathered from the gutters and alleys of the great city. There was a large pile of these filthy, blackened rags, which looked as if they never could be made clean. The queen asked the foreman what he could do with these. To her amazement he told her that he would make them into the finest, whitest paper. When the queen had gone, the foreman learned who she was. Some days after there was received at the palace a package of the purest, most delicate paper, having the queen's likeness stamped upon it, with a note from the foreman of the mill telling her that this paper was made from the very rags she had seen on the occasion of her visit.

So it is that the Holy Ghost takes human lives, ruined and blackened by sin, makes them whiter than snow, and stamps upon them the seal of God, the divine likeness. No life is hopeless in its ruin that will submit itself to the renewing, transforming grace of Christ.



The Revealing of Experience.

IF you are outside a beautiful church building, with its fine stained-glass windows, the figures on the windows look dim, dull, and obscure, mere blotches of vague colors. You cannot see the artistic designs, the noble representations, the delicate shading. But if you go inside the building, the windows reveal themselves to you in all their exquisite loveliness. There is no more haziness about them. The figures appear in clear outline, in all their artistic beauty. The scenes, for example, in our Lord's life, are pictured so distinctly that they seem almost like life. From without all is vague and dim and shadowy; from within all is clear, plain, shining in rich beauty.

This illustrates the story of many people's experience of Christian truth. When they think of it from without, having yet no experience of it, it seems misty and vague. They cannot understand

it. They cannot see any beauty in it. Then they pass within the sacred temple. They become followers of Christ, children of God. They yield their hearts to the Holy Spirit and begin to do the will of their Father. Then all the vagueness passes away from the teachings. They have willed to do the will of God, and they know of the doctrine.



Easy to Hurt Others.

WE are so related to each other that we are continually leaving impressions on those we touch. It is easier to do harm than good to other lives. There is a quality in the human soul which makes it take more readily and retain more permanently touches of sin than touches of holiness. Among the ruins of some old temple there was found a slab which bore very faintly and dimly the image of the king, and in deep and clear indentations the print of a dog's foot. The king's beauty was less clear than the marks of the animal's tread. So human lives are apt to take less readily and deeply, to retain less indelibly the touches of spiritual beauty, and more clearly and permanently the marks and impressions of evil. It needs, therefore, in us, infinite carefulness and watchful-

ness, as we walk ever amid other lives, lest by some word or look or act or influence of ours we hurt them irreparably.



Life's Sorest Loss.

A STORY is told, in a little poem by Francis Browne, of a pilgrim band, sitting by the shore of the sea and recounting their losses, while the evening waned away from cliff and bay, and the strong tides went out with weary moan. One spoke with quivering lips of a ship that went down into the deep, with all his household, another of a still wilder woe for a fair young face lost long before in the darker depths of a great town. Some mourned the sweet memories of a lost youth. One looked away to the west, with eyes that would not rest, for far-off hills, where all his joys had been. Some talked of vanished gold, some told of proud honors gone, some of friends proved faithless, and one of a green grave beside a foreign wave, that made him sit lonely on the shore.

“ But when their tales were done,
There spake among them one,

A stranger seeming from all sorrow free :
 'Sad losses have ye met,
 But mine is heavier yet,
For a believing heart hath gone from me.'

 " 'Alas !' these pilgrims said,
 ' For the living and the dead,
For fortune's cruelty, for love's sore cross,
 ' For the wrecks of land and sea ;
 But, howe'er it came to thee,
Thine, stranger, is life's last and heaviest loss.' "

We stand in tearful pity beside those who have lost money or friends, or have suffered from life's other adversities ; but there are none whom we should pity like those who have put away from them the precious faith of their early years ; who believe no more in a personal, loving God. The loss of a believing heart is life's sorest loss.



The Cost of Life's Best.

THERE must be the death of self always before a life can be Christlike. In Japan they have a beautiful legend of the making of a wonderful bell. Long, long ago, the emperor wrote to the maker of bells, commanding him to cast a bell larger and more beautiful than any ever made

before. He bade him put in it gold and silver and brass, that the tones might be so sweet and clear, that when hung in the palace tower, its sounds might be heard for a hundred miles. The maker of bells put gold and silver and brass in his great melting pot, but the metals would not mingle and the bell was a failure. Again and again he tried, but in vain. Then the emperor was angry and sent, saying that if the bell was not made at the next trial the bell-maker must die.

The bell-maker had a lovely daughter. She was greatly distressed for her father. Wrapping her mantle about her she went by night to the oracle and asked how she could save him. He told her that gold and brass would not mingle until the blood of a virgin was mixed with them in their fusion. Again the old maker of bells prepared to cast the bell. The daughter stood by and at the moment of casting she threw herself into the midst of the molten metal. The bell was made and was found to be more wonderful and perfect than any other ever made. It hangs in the great palace tower, and its sweet tones are heard for a hundred miles. The blood of sacrifice, mingling with the gold and silver, gave to the bell its matchless sweetness.

It is only a legend from a heathen land, but its lesson is true. Our lives make no music until self

dies, and our blood mingles with our offering in the altar fires of love. It is only when we lose our life for Christ that we get it back, saved and glorious.



Out of the Spoiled Stone.

MICHAEL ANGELO was one day passing along one of the streets of Florence, when he saw a piece of marble which had been wrought upon by some unskilful workman, hacked and cut and spoiled, and then abandoned, — thrown away as worthless. The stone lay now among the waste and rubbish. It was of finest Carrara marble. No doubt many an artist had looked at it, struck by the fineness of its quality, but it was ruined and nothing could now be made of it. So it lay there, rejected, spoiled, useless, until Michael Angelo saw it. At once his eye perceived the possible beauty in it. Now, if you visit Florence, one of the noblest works of art you will see there will be Angelo's magnificent representation of the young David. Life is in every feature. The statue is one of the most wonderful works of art in all Italy. When first unveiled it caused an almost unparalleled sensation. Yet that wondrous statue, so like life, so fine a piece of art, was cut from

that spoiled, rejected, abandoned, blackened stone.

Is not this story an illustration of what happens in many human lives? They contain noble material for manhood, but they have been spoiled, marred, and are thrown aside. No one thinks of anything good ever coming out of them. Then Jesus passes by and his eye sees the possibilities of beauty, the elements of noble life and manhood in them, and he takes the soiled lives out of the dust and lifts them up until they shine in radiant splendor, fashioned into the beauty of his own image.



The Blessing of a Sunbeam.

DEEP in a dungeon an ivy grew. No rain fell upon it and no dew moistened it. Its pale leaves drank in only the foul dampness of the cell. But as the summer advanced, a sunbeam fell through the grating, streamed down into the dungeon, pouring its light and warmth for an hour every day upon the pallid plant. Life began to stir in the ivy's roots. It lifted its head and grew up toward the sunbeam. It climbed slowly up the wall, and at last pushed itself through the bars where it could have the sunshine all day upon it

with all its brightness and warmth. It grew and grew, until it covered all the outer wall and was the admiration of all who passed by.

So it is when the light of divine love falls upon a perishing soul, even in the darkest dungeon of sinful degradation. It feels instantly a thrill of life. It begins to grow, and as it drinks in the blessed sunshine it rises out of its old state of death. At last it is a branch of glorious beauty, covered with fruits of holiness. Human philosophy may be very wise, but it cannot cause one stir or flutter of life in a dead soul. Science is doing marvels these days. It throws bridges over wide rivers; it tunnels under great mountains; it cuts canals between seas; it binds the earth into one close clasp by its telegraph wires and cables; it weighs the stars; it does wonders. But science, with all its skill, has never yet been able to put life into any dead thing. Much less can science give spiritual life to a dead soul. Christ alone can do this, and whosoever believeth on him hath everlasting life.



The Legend of the Handkerchief.

THE old legend says that when Jesus passed on his way to Golgotha a pious woman took off her

handkerchief and gave it to him, that with it he might wipe the blood and sweat from his face. When he gave back the cloth to her his features had been impressed upon it, a perfect portrait. The handkerchief has been lost, and artists attempt now to paint our Lord's picture from their own imagination.

But really Christ's picture never has been lost. It never was impressed on the napkin — that is but a legend. It is impressed, however, on the life of every one of his true followers, where he appears in every deed of beauty and virtue and in every forgetting of self. You go to the artists for the likeness of Christ; go rather to lowly Christian lives, which in love, gentleness, unselfishness, and kindly ministry reflect his beauty.



The True Problem.

A SHIP is made to go in the water, and no matter how deep the sea, nor how wild the tempest, all goes well so long as the water does not get into the ship. The problem of managing a ship is, not to keep the ship out of the water, but to keep the water out of the ship. The problem of true Christian living is, not to keep ourselves

out of cares and trials and temptations, but to keep the cares and temptations from getting into our souls. Some people let all their frets at once into their hearts, and they soon work out in their lives in sourness, irritability, discontent. They become thus miserable themselves, and they make all about them miserable. They cast, not cooling, healthful, refreshing shade on others, but sombre, darkening, chilling shadows. Learn to keep your cares in your hands and out of your hearts. Nothing in this world is more beautiful than a Christian life, with many trials and cares, yet remaining ever peaceful and joyous amid them all. This is the real problem of the noblest Christian living.



The Building of the Minster.

IN an old city, long ago, some zealous men determined to build a minster for their Master. The building was to be reared with great magnificence, and they brought costly wood and marble from distant lands, and employed the best artists to make the elegant figures for them. When all was ready, they met together to plan where they should build it.

“We will not have it here,” they said, “in

these narrow streets, where the smoke and dust of traffic would defile the pure whiteness of the marble."

"No," said another, "we will put it on yonder green hill whose summit can be seen from all the surrounding country. There we will build our minster; the world about us shall see it and know what we have done."

So they chose the summit of the hill, and there with willing hands they labored all the summer long. The grain was just planted when they began, and it was waving like gold when they came together once more to talk about it. They had labored for months; yet the towers of that minster never rose, and its walls never grew. The people said that what the men did in the daytime a band of angels undid at night.

"It is the hand of God," an aged man said to them; "he will not have the minster builded there for the whole world to see. You should have wrought for his glory, not for your own."

Meekly the builders bowed their heads. They saw the hand of God in the failure of their work, and looking deep into their own hearts they saw there what they could not see before — that they had been working for their own glory, not for God's. So they took up their work again. This time they chose a site in the midst of the city's

traffic, where the poor, the lame, the old, the women and children, could go, fair days or foul, to worship. As they labored, a strange Workman came and helped them. He was clad in pure white garments whose brightness dazzled their eyes. Like magic the walls arose, till they grew to be a wondrous pile. As the men wrought day by day, no one heard the sound of strife, for they knew that their strange Fellow-workman was Jesus Christ, the Lord.

This old legend contains a lesson for us. It is not an easy one to learn, for we all want to erect our pile to God on the summit of the hill, where it will be seen by all the world. We easily forget that sometimes the greatest work we can perform for him is to do quietly and sweetly the little things he gives us to do. He stands by us as a fellow-workman when we labor thus for him.



On the Wings of His Song.

THE last song Mozart sang was his sweetest. He had spent weeks upon it, and after giving the last touches he fell asleep. His daughter entered at length, and her footsteps awoke him.

“Come here, my Emilie,” he said, “my task is done. The requiem, my requiem, is finished.”

“Say not so, my father,” answered the gentle girl. “You must soon be better. Even now your cheek has a glow upon it.”

“Do not deceive yourself, my child,” said the dying father. “This wasted form can never be restored. Take these notes, my last notes, sit down by my piano, and sing them. Let me hear once more those tones which have been so long my solace and my joy.”

Emilie did as her father requested, and sang, in a voice enriched with tenderest emotion, the sweet requiem he had composed. Turning from the piano, she looked into her father’s face for his approving smile. Instead of this she saw the still passionless smile which the rapt and joyous spirit had left, with the seal of death upon the loved features. He had soared away to the eternal world, on the wings of his own last sweet song.

We should so live, bravely, truly, obediently, unselfishly, diligently, in faith and love and prayer, that the ending of our life may be a tender, immortal song, fit to bear away our spirit on its wings to the gates of blessedness.



Sweet Out of Bitter.

PROSPERITY has never enriched the world as adversity has done. The best thoughts, the richest lessons, the sweetest songs that have come down to us from the past have not come from the minds and hearts of those who have known no privation, no suffering, no adversity, but are the fruit of pain, of weakness, of trial. Men have cried out for emancipation from the bondage of hardship, of sickness, of infirmity, of self-denying necessity, not knowing that the thing which seemed to be hindering them in their career was the very making of whatever was noble, beautiful, and blessed in their life. The cost of all truly helpful life is pain. We must not forget that redemption and heaven come to be ours only through the cross of the Son of God. In all life, the sweetest comforts and the richest blessings come to us at the cost of suffering and tears in those who went before us. The fruit of earth's "thorns" seems bitter to the taste, but it is the wholesome food of human souls.



Reaching Home at Last.

ST. PIERRE in one of his books tells of a French ship which had been beating about for months amid storms in the southern seas. One morning land was cried from the mast-head. Passengers and crew gathered on deck, awaiting in suspense the unveiling of the coming shore. Vague outlines only were seen, so vague that the uncertainty almost broke the hearts of the watchers. Was it land? If so, what land? Could it be France? Was it indeed France? Or was it some strange country? Nearer and nearer they came. Clearer and more distinct became the outlines. After some hours, hours that seemed days, the lookout cried, "France! France! It is France!" The joy of the ship's company knew no bounds. They were indeed home after all their wanderings and all their dangers and fears.

So will it be with us, when, through the mists of that sea which we call death, we approach the shores of eternal life. After the dimness of dying, our eyes shall open to behold the banks of the celestial land. Then the shout will be, not "France! It is France!" but "Heaven! Heaven! It is Heaven!" The storms will all

be past. We shall be in glory. Then we shall have life in all its fulness. Then we shall be at home.



What Christian Dying Is.

THERE is a story of a chamois hunter in the Mer de Glace who fell far down into a deep crevasse in the ice. After creeping along for a great distance, following a stream, he came apparently to the end of the passage. There seemed no opening further. The waters seethed and gurgled, and he knew there must be an outlet beneath the surface. He thought it might possibly lead out to some open place. He knew that to stay where he was would be swift death. So he plunged into the waters to be carried by them in their current. For a moment there was darkness — he was swept on in a wild rapid torrent. In a little time he was through the chasm and out in the bright sunshine. He had been borne out into the lovely vale of Chamouni, into the midst of its wondrous beauty, with flowers and bird songs all about him.

Here is a parable of the Christian's dying. There is a moment's darkness and mystery as the spirit enters the valley, and then — heaven, the

face of Jesus, glory, eternal life. There is no long experience of darkness. There is no painful struggle, no groping amid sepulchral shadows, no struggle with hideous enemies. "Absent from the body, at home with the Lord" is the inspired statement of the fact of Christian dying. One moment the believer closes his eyes on earth's friends, next moment he opens them in Heaven, on the face of Christ.



Worth Living For.

ARCHITECTS make their names immortal by rearing some noble building, some great cathedral, some gorgeous palace, which stands for ages to their honor. Artists carve in marble or paint on canvas or in fresco the splendid creations of their genius, and for centuries the world pays them homage. The poet writes in classic verse the fancies of his brain or the deeper thoughts of his soul and is crowned. These are noble achievements. But it is nobler far when a young man takes his life from God, with reverence and faith and love, and builds a beautiful, holy manhood, for men, angels, and God to look upon through eternal years. That is the mission to which every young man is called. Surely it is noble enough

to call out the best energies of the soul. A living character is infinitely greater than a cold, lifeless statue.



The Well by the Sea.

A TOURIST writes of a spring as sweet as any that ever gushed from sunny hillside, which one day he found by the sea, when the tides had ebbed away. Taking his cup he tasted the water and it was sweet. Soon the sea came again and poured its bitter surf over the little spring, hiding it out of sight.

“ Like a fair star, thick buried in a cloud,
Or life in the grave’s gloom,
The well, enwrapped in a deep watery shroud,
Sank to its tomb.”

When the tide ebbed away again, the tourist stood once more by the spring to see if the brackish waves had left their bitterness in its waters ; but they were sweet as ever.

“ While waves of bitterness rolled o’er its head,
Its heart had folded deep
Within itself, and quiet fancies led,
As in a sleep;
Till, when the ocean loosed his heavy chain
And gave it back to-day,
Calmly it turned to its own life again,
And gentle way.”

This is a picture of the peace in the heart of the Christian, when floods of bitter sorrow and trial roll over his life. From secret wells the sweet waters flow, crystal and fresh as ever. We know where these secret wells are, where these pure fountains rise. They have their source in the heart of God. It is Christ's own peace that he gives to us. He gives us his own life. It is divine life in the soul that makes peace for us in the time of earthly distress.



Conquering to Save.

THERE is a story of a young knight, brave, manly, strong, who was victorious over every foe. In every combat he was successful, until he grew proud and self-confident. One day he went forth and stood before the gate of a great castle, and uttered his challenge. There came out a knight in armor, and after a brief combat defeated him. When the victor removed the armor he had worn, lo! it was a woman, clad in spotless white. From henceforth she became the guide of the young man's life, leading him to nobleness and glory.

The story is an allegory. The white castle is the castle of truth. The white garment is the

symbol of purity. Truth and purity are the qualities that give strength and victory and blessing. We never can make anything truly worthy and noble of our life until we meet Christ and are defeated by him, brought to acknowledge him as our King and Master. He does not then show himself, however, as our enemy, but as our friend. Beneath the conqueror's armor we find the heart of love. He subdues us that he may save us. When we yield to him he becomes the guide of our life, leading us on to nobleness and glory.



The Splendor of Lowly Duty.

IN one of Murillo's pictures in the Louvre, as described by a writer, one sees the interior of a convent kitchen; but doing the work there, are, not mortals in odd dresses, but beautiful white-winged angels. One serenely puts the kettle on the fire to boil, and one is lifting up a pail of water with heavenly grace, and one is at the dresser reaching up for plates, and there is a little cherub running about and getting in the way, trying to help. All are so busy, and working with such a will, and so refining is the work as they do it, that somehow you forget that pans are pans

and pots pots, and only think of the angels and how very natural and beautiful kitchen work is — just what the angels would do, of course, if called upon to do it.

The picture is very suggestive. It shows us, for one thing, the dignity of all duty, even of the humblest drudgery. The angels are not ashamed to be seen doing it. It is the motive and the aim that alone can consecrate anything we do, and the doing of God's will is always splendid work, though it be but washing dishes or cleaning a street. "The smallest roadside pool has its water from heaven and its gleam from the sun, and can hold the stars in its bosom, as well as the great ocean." So the humblest duty is a bit of God's will, and shines with heavenly radiance. This ought to be an inspiration to those who live in lowly places and can do only common task-work. Do it all well and as God's will, and no great man's brilliant deeds will shine more brightly than your little things in God's sight.



The Meaning of Time.

OUR days are like beautiful summer fields, as God gives them to us. The minutes are lovely

blooming flowers and silvery grassblades, and stalks of wheat with their germs of golden foliage, or vines with their blossoms — prophecies of coming purple clusters. Oh, the fair possibilities of the days and hours and minutes as they come to us from God's hands ! But what did you do with yesterday? How does the little acre of that one day look to you now? Is it waving with beauty? Are there no waste spots in it? What did you do with the seven days of last week? How does that seven-acre field appear to you as you view it from the hilltop of the holy Sabbath? Are there no wasted minutes, no squandered hours?



"It is Only Pearls."

AN Arab once lost his way in the desert. His provisions were soon exhausted. For two days and two nights he had not a morsel to eat. He began to fear that he should die of hunger. He looked eagerly, but in vain, along the level sand for some caravan of travellers from whom he might beg some bread. At last he came to a place where there was a little water in a well, and around the well the marks of an encampment. Some people had lately pitched their tents there,

and gathered them up and gone away again. The starving Arab looked around in the hope of finding some food that the travellers might have left behind. After searching awhile he came upon a little bag tied at the mouth, and full of something that felt hard and round. He opened the bag with great joy, thinking it contained either dates or nuts, and expecting that with them he should be able to satisfy his hunger. But as soon as he saw what the sack contained he threw it on the ground in bitter disappointment, and cried out in despair, "It is only pearls!" falling down in the desert to die.

In the great crises of life this world's most prized things are only mockeries. If we cannot have bread, the bread of life, we shall perish.



Power of Habit.

A CALIFORNIA stage driver had held the lines for many years; and when he began to grow old, his hands were crooked into hooks and his fingers were stiffened in that shape so that they could not be straightened out.

There is a similar process that goes on in men's souls when they continue to do the same things

over and over. If you are trained, and train yourself, from childhood, to be gentle and patient, to control your temper, to resist wrong, your life will grow into beauty, and the peacefulness of your heart will at length shine upon your very face. On the other hand, if you give way from childhood to all ugly tempers, resentful feelings, all bitterness and anger, your life will grow into permanent disfigurement.

One who accustoms himself to think of pure and holy things, who sets his affections on things above, and strives to reach whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are lovely, will grow upward toward the things he loves and thinks upon. But one who lets his mind turn habitually to debasing things, things unholy, unclean, sensual, will find his whole soul bending downward and growing toward the earth.



Love's Answer to Men's Hate.

THERE was an infidel soldier of the Middle Ages who hated the Bible and all sacred things. He grew so fierce and mad in his defiance that he determined to test the power of the Christians' God. So he went out into a field, armed as if

for battle. He threw his glove down on the ground as a challenge. Then he looked up into the heavens and angrily cried: "God, if there be a God, I defy thee here and now to mortal combat. If thou indeed art, put forth thy power of which thy pretended priests make such boast." As he spoke he saw a piece of paper fluttering in the air just above his head. It fell at his feet. He took it up, and on it read these words: "God is love." Overcome by this strange response to his mad challenge, he broke his sword in token of surrender, and kneeling upon the fragments, gave his life thenceforth to the service of that God whom he had just before defied.

So it was that this world hated God and defied him; and so it was that the answer came from heaven to all this defiance and rebellion, "God is love."

This was the message that came wafted down on the still air, in the angels' song, that night when Christ was born. Cold was the world. Shut were men's hearts against God. The infidel knight hurling his wild defiance in the face of heaven is scarcely too awful a picture to use to illustrate the attitude of the chosen people toward the God who had so blessed them. Yet, to all this disobedience, this rejection, this defiance, the answer was, not judgment, swift and terrible, but

the wonderful gift whose coming the angels sang. The response was, "On earth peace, good-will to men." And it is the same to-day. To all men's hate and rejection the message ever comes, "God is love."



Not Ours to See and Know.

AWAY down in the darkness, in the heart of the great steamer, the engineer stands. He never sees how the vessel moves. He does not know where she is going. It is not his duty to know. It is his only to answer every signal, to start his engine, to quicken or slow its motion, to reverse it, just as he is directed by the one whose part it is to see. He has nothing whatever to do with the vessel's course. He sees not an inch of the sea.

It is not our part to guide our life in this world, amid its tangled affairs. It is ours just to do our duty, our Master's bidding. Christ's hand is on the helm. He sees all the future. He pilots us. Let us learn to thank God that we cannot know the future, that we need not know it. Christ knows it, and it is better to go on in the dark with him, letting him lead, than to go alone in the light, and choose our own path.

A Story of Consecration.

FEW names in modern missionary days shine with more splendor than that of Harriet Newell. It broods over those who read the simple story like the image of a crowned and glorified saint. When eighteen years of age she was asked to go to a foreign, heathen land as the wife of a missionary. It was not so easy then to go as it is now ; but she accepted the call and was soon on her way to India. She and her husband arrived at length on the heathen coast, only to remain a few weeks and to be sent away. With heavy hearts they put to sea again. The young wife was stricken with fever, and in the autumn days, at the early age of nineteen, she joyfully surrendered her life to her Saviour.

Thus in one short year the Christian woman became missionary, wife, mother, and saint. She seemed to accomplish nothing. She merely sailed away over the sea with a great love in her heart, to be exiled, to die, and to find a grave amid strangers. She taught no heathen woman ; she told the story of redemption to no benighted soul. But was that lovely young life wasted ? No ; all this century her name has been one of the strongest inspirations to missionary work.

The story of her consecration has kindled in many other women's hearts along the years the flames of love, sending them to carry Christ to dark lands. God broke the alabaster casket which held her life that the fragrance might flow out over the world.

We must get the same spirit in us, if we would become in any large and true sense a blessing to the world. We must be willing to lose our life — to sacrifice self, to give up our own way, our own ease, our own comfort, if we would be truly helpful to the world.



"Thou Knowest not Now."

THERE was a widow who had a noble daughter. The mother had had many trials. This daughter, however, had grown to be a wonderful comfort to her mother. The mother had lived for her child all the years. By dint of much toil and sacrifice she had helped her through a long and splendid course of education. She had been graduated with high honor from one of the finest colleges in the land. Then she had taught two or three years, earning a little money, and had gone abroad, spending a year in study in Paris. Returning she had resumed teaching, and was earning a

good salary. At the Christmas time the daughter was full of plans for her mother's comfort as old age was creeping on for her. She hoped in a little time to take her away from toil and care, and to reward her, in some way, for all her sacrifices and self-denials.

Then sudden death came to this noble child. The mother who had been living for her through the bright years, and who was now beginning to realize the reward of all her labors and the fruit of all her self-denial, was called at midnight to go a hundred miles to look at the child of her sweet hopes sleeping in voiceless death. Could she see the goodness of God in that strange experience? It is in such experiences as these that faith saves us. We cannot see, but we believe that the love of God never fails. Hence we can bow our head in silence, knowing that all is well.



Let Your Light Shine.

DID you ever stand at the foot of a great lighthouse at night? Through brilliant lenses splendid floods of light were poured out to sea; but not one tiny little gleam of radiance did that great lamp pour on the bit of sand close around the

base of its tower. Do not be like light-houses in this regard. Wherever else, far away or near, you pour the beams of your Christian life, be sure you brighten the space close about you in your own home. Let the light of gentleness, forbearance, kindness, unselfishness, and thoughtful ministry fall on the life next to yours, on your weary mother, your burdened father, your tempted brother; upon the children in your family, on the guests who drop in, on servants who help in domestic duties. Carry Christ home and serve him best there.



Lobe Blossoming too Late.

THERE is a great host of weary men and women, toiling on through life, toward the grave, who most sorely need, just now, the cheering words and helpful ministries which we can give. The incense is gathering to scatter about their coffins; but why should it not be scattered in the hard paths on which their feet to-day are treading? The kind words are lying in men's hearts unexpressed, trembling on their tongues unvoiced, which will be spoken by and by, when these weary ones are sleeping; but why should they not be spoken now, when they are needed so much, and

when their accents would give such cheer and hope? The flowers are growing to strew on their graves; but why not cut them now to brighten dreary lives and dark paths.

Many a good man goes through life, plain, plodding, living obscurely yet living a true, Christian life, doing many a quiet kindness to his neighbors and friends, yet seldom hearing a word of commendation or praise. The vases, filled with the incense of affection, are kept sealed. The flowers are not cut from the stems. One day you stand by his coffin, and there are enough kind things said to have brightened every hour of his life, if only they had been said at the right time. There are enough flowers piled upon his casket to have kept his chamber filled with fragrance all through his years, if only they had been sent day by day. How his heavy heart would have thanked God, if, in the midst of his toils, burdens, and struggles, he could have heard a few of the words of affection and approval that are now wasted on ears that hear them not! How much happier he would have been in his weary days if he had known how many generous friends he had! But, poor man! he had to die before the appreciation could express itself. Then the gentle words spoken over his cold form he could not hear. The love blossomed out too late,

Sure Relief at Last.

IN one of the campaigns in India, during the great insurrection, the English army were shut in Lucknow, besieged, almost at the point of starvation. Hope was wellnigh dead in their breasts. They had looked long for rescue, but none came. One day a Scotch lassie thought she heard the shrill sound of the bagpipe afar off. Then others heard it. It came nearer and nearer. Then the music of a full military band was heard; and soon, from out the forest that long-besieged garrison saw the relief army advancing with banners and spears. The siege was broken and the besieged garrison was delivered.

So it will be with those whom God calls to stand and wait in his service. They are shut in, besieged, weary, disheartened. Sometimes despair wellnigh breaks down their hope. They are ready to give up. I say to such people, Never give up. There is plenty of blue sky behind the clouds. "Having done all, stand!" God's hours are long; he works for eternity, "in whose wide sweeps there is space enough for all crooked paths to grow straight, and for the slowest harvest to ripen." Wait for God. Stand

where he has placed you. It is yours to serve, if not by grand achievements, and sublime activities, yet by fidelity in standing for God.



Recognition in Heaven.

AN old drummer entered a town in the West a number of years ago, and began to drum to the crowd that gathered. Among others came an old man with his fife. They proposed to play together. The old fifer began, but in a moment the drummer dropped his sticks, looked at the fifer, lifted the wolf-skin cap he wore, and gazed intently into the old man's face. "John, didn't you play that at Lundy's Lane that day, as the sun was going down?" And the fife dropped with the drum sticks, and the two old soldiers were in each other's arms. Time had scarred them from head to foot. At first they did not recognize each other, but the music revealed the one to the other. That martial air they had played together in the storm of battle, and it unlocked the chamber of memory.

May it not be so in heaven? In the changes produced by long separation, one in heaven and the other on earth, two friends may not at first

know each other. But some word spoken, or some song sung, or some touching of the keys of memory, will cause all the sweet past to live once more, and they will clasp again in all the old love's warmth.



Christ's Errand First.

A BEAUTIFUL story is told of Lady Augusta Stanley. One day when she was dressed for a reception at the queen's palace, a messenger came in great haste from one of the hospitals. A poor woman, whom Lady Stanley had often visited and comforted, was about to undergo a painful surgical operation. When the surgeons came to perform the operation and told her of it, she begged that Lady Augusta should be sent for. "If she will hold my hand," said the woman, "I can endure it." Lady Stanley was just leaving to attend upon the queen, but, throwing a cloak over her rich dress, she hastened to the hospital instead. She sat down by the poor sufferer, spoke to her a few brave, cheerful words, and then held her hand until the operation was finished.

This incident illustrates the way we should respond always to Christ's calls for ministry to any of his little ones. No matter how busy we are,

when a sufferer needs us, all must be dropped, that we may go quickly on love's errand. We may be trying to get needed rest, hoping nothing will disturb us, but if human sorrow or pain needs us, we must give up our rest. The Master's errands to his little ones are always first duties. We dare not neglect them, nor can we postpone them, for they cannot wait our leisure.



Immortality of Influence.

THE things we do on earth do not cease to have influence after our death. If you speak a word into the air, or sing a song, the reverberations will quiver around and around the world and through space, forever ; if you drop a pebble into the sea, its splash will start ripples which will tremble through the water, on and on, until they have broken on every shore of the ocean. So it is true that every good word spoken in this world, every sweet song sung, every holy thought or impulse of blessing started, shall go on and on, until the end of all things. In this sense our works shall follow us. The things we do for Christ here, the inspirations we put into immortal lives, the lessons we teach, the influences of good we start, shall not die with us.

One plants a tree, and, long after he is dead, weary ones rest at noonday beneath its shade, and pluck its fruits to feed their hunger. David has been dead nearly three thousand years, and yet his words are following him in all Christian lands, as his songs are sung, their influence breathing through millions of hearts. Paul has been dead many centuries, but his works are following him wherever his words are read. The humblest believer who lives and sets in motion even one gentle word, or one helpful impulse, has started works which shall follow him until the end of time. Our life does not die out of this world when we leave it.



The Print of the Nails.

THERE is a strange legend of old St. Martin. He sat one day in his monastery cell, busily engaged in his sacred studies, when there came a knock at the door. "Enter," said the monk. The door opened and there appeared a stranger of lordly look, in princely attire. "Who art thou?" asked St. Martin. "I am Christ," was the answer. The confident bearing, and the commanding tone of the visitor, would have overawed a less wise man. But the monk simply gave his

visitor one deep, searching glance, and then quietly asked, "Where is the print of the nails?" He had noticed that this one indubitable mark of Christ's person was wanting. There were no nail-scars upon those jeweled hands. And the kingly mien and the brilliant dress of the pretender were not enough to prove his claim while the print of the nails was wanting. Confused by this searching test-question, and his base deception exposed, the prince of evil — for he it was — quickly fled from the sacred cell.

This is only a legend, but it suggests the one infallible test that should be applied to all truth and to all life. There is much in these days that claims to be of Christ. There be those who would have us lay aside the old faiths, and accept new beliefs and new interpretations. How shall we know whether or not to receive them? The only true test is that with which Saint Martin exposed the false pretensions of his visitor: "Where is the print of the nails?" Nothing is truly of Christ which does not bear this mark upon it. A gospel without a wounded, dying Christ is not a gospel. The atonement lies at the heart of Christianity. The cross is the luminous centre, from which streams all the light of joy, peace, and hope. That which does not bear the marks of the Lord Jesus cannot be of him.

Call no Duty Small.

ONE day, in our Revolutionary War times, a lame boy, a blacksmith's boy, was very disconsolate because he could not go to fight the Hessians, as many of his companions had done. Some soldiers rode up to the shop in great haste, and wanted to know if there was any one there who could shoe a horse. Luke replied, "I think I can." When the horse was shod one of the men said, "Boy, no ten men who have left you to-day have served your country as you have."

When you read in the history about Colonel Warner riding up just in time to save the battle of Bennington, remember that if Luke Varnum, the lame boy, had not been in the blacksmith's shop that day Colonel Warner's horse could not have carried him to the battle. We do not know when on our smallest acts destinies may turn. The greatest thing you can do any day is your duty, no matter how small it may be in itself. The will of God takes in all the tasks of the common days, the matters of business, of household work, of school, of play. To fail in little things is to fail in doing God's will, and that mars the completeness of the life-work.

Unrecognized Angels.

THERE is a picture called "The Angel of Consolation." A woman sits on the low rocks, looking out upon the sea. Desolation is all about her — not a flower, not a tree on the shore ; only sand, rocks, and breaking waves. Down into the waters her heart's treasures have gone. Her face is stony in its despairing grief. Almost touching her shoulder, hovering over her bowed form, is an angel, white-robed, softly striking the strings of a harp. Does the mourner know how near to her the angel is? Does she hear the celestial music? No ; she sits in dumb unconsciousness, sad and lonely, while God's minister of comfort waits so close, and while the notes of sweet music fall unheeded on her ear.

Is not the picture true of many sorrowing ones? Is it not true, too, of many hungry lives, starving for other blessings? They do not take the gifts that the common days bring. Angels come to them unaware, in homely or unattractive disguise, walk with them, talk with them, and then only become known to them when their places are empty. We do not begin to recognize the worth of even our nearest human friends. With a wealth of precious love, and almost infinite helpfulness,

they move beside us along the years ; but their garb is plain, and we do not see the splendor that is in them. It would be well were we to pray to have our eyes opened that we might see the common angels God sends to bless our lives.



Saved by the Lamb.

ON a little church in Germany stands a stone lamb which has an interesting history. When some workmen were engaged on the roof of the building, one of them fell to the ground. His companions hastened down expecting to find him killed. They were amazed, however, to see him unhurt. A lamb had been grazing just where he struck the ground, and falling upon it, the little creature was crushed to death, while the man himself escaped injury. He was so grateful for this wonderful deliverance, that he had an image of the lamb carved in stone and placed on the building as a memorial. The lamb saved his life by dying in his place.

Every saved soul of the human family can point to the Lamb of God, and say, "I am saved because Jesus died in my stead." "Christ, our passover, is sacrificed for us." What memorial have we set up to witness to our gratitude and love?

The Sunbeam and the Foul Drop.

IN the foul gutter, in the city street, a drop of water lay, soiled, stagnant, polluted. Far up in the depths of the sky, a gentle sunbeam saw it and pitied it in its vileness, all its crystal beauty gone. The beam flew down to the dark gutter, kissed the foul drop, and thrilled it with new, strange hope. Soon it felt itself quietly lifted upward by an impulse it could not resist — higher and higher through the air, and then wafted on, mile after mile. At last it lay on a mountain-top, pure, glorified — a snow-flake white as the holy beauty of heaven.

You understand the parable. Thus human souls lie in earth's sins. Thus Christ's love and grace stream down and touch them in their baseness. New desires spring up, longings for holiness, hungerings and thirstings after God. They lift up their eyes unto the hills. The divine Spirit draws them upward. At last they enter the life of Christ, then into heavenly blessedness, and sit down with Christ in glory — washed in the Lamb's blood and made whiter than snow.



Undeveloped Beauty.

A LADY who is always watching for beautiful things, brought from the mountain side, one autumn day, a sod of moss. She put it in her parlor, and soon in the genial warmth there sprung out from the bosom of the moss a multitude of sweet, delicate spring flowers. No eye had seen them before in the moss. The seeds had lain there all the summer waiting for the warmth to bring out their lovely possibilities.

There are many lives just like that bit of moss. Living in the chill, loveless atmosphere of the world's hard toil, its selfishness, its sorrow, unblest by true affection, the best things in them are never brought out. Yet they need only to be touched by the warmth of tender sympathy, and beauties and graces, hitherto unsuspected, will blossom forth in them.

The world needs nothing so much to-day as the life and love of Christ poured through human hearts and hands upon lives that are bleak and bare. It is not more churches that we need, more societies, more money gifts, but more living Christians, with the mind of Christ, who will go about among men and repeat the lowly blessed ministry of Christ himself, giving themselves in personal, self-forgetful service.

For the Asking.

IF God announced that he would give gold to every one that should ask him, how many would remain poor? Would not the gates of heaven be thronged perpetually with seekers for the dazzling gift? If crowns and honors and earthly prizes were promised for the asking, who would not ask for them?

Now all the glorious things of divine love and grace are to be had, simply for the asking. Does it seem possible that any one should fail then to ask? Is it because it is a spiritual good that so few ask for it? Or do men really know, as they go on in their mad rush for money and power, that God himself may be had for the asking? They toil and sacrifice and wear out their lives and lose their souls, to gain riches that perish, while by falling on their knees, and turning their eyes toward God, and putting up an earnest cry to him, they would receive eternal possessions, imperishable crowns and treasures.

“ Bubbles we buy with a whole soul’s tasking;
’Tis heaven alone that is given away,
’Tis only God may be had for the asking.”



The Gate of Life.

THERE is a little poem which describes death in a very beautiful way. It tells of an ancient pilgrim, old, worn and spent, who crept down a shadowed vale, with bleak mountains on either side and a dark sky overhead. The pilgrim trod wearily and feebly, with bare feet, along the rugged path. The valley ended at length where a naked rock rose sheer from earth to heaven, as if to bar his way. At length, however, he saw a brazen door in the rock, and tottering toward it, read above its portal, "The Gate of Death."

"He could not stay his feet that led thereto;
It yielded to his touch, and, passing through,
He came into a world all bright and fair;
Blue were the heavens, and balmy was the air;
And lo! the blood of youth was in his veins,
And he was clad in robes that held no stains
Of his long pilgrimage. Amazed, he turned:
Behold, a golden door behind him burned
In that fair sunlight, and his wondering eyes,
Now lustreful and clear as those new skies,
Free from the mists of age, of care, of strife,
Above the portals read "The Gate of Life."

What on one side was the gate of death, on the other side was the gate of life,

That is the true interpretation of death to one who believes in Christ. It is not loss but gain. It is not into darkness, but into marvellous light. It is not into silence and stillness, but into life far more real and active.



Out of Life's Silences.

THE gems of the world's literature, the marvellous inventions of science and art, grand thoughts and words which live age after age, are the fruit of long pondering in silence. From the silent studio of a Raphael comes at length the work of art, before which the world pauses in rapt enthusiasm. The poet broods long in silence and then gives to the world his immortal song and it sings on for ages in the hearts of men. The inventor knits his brow and bends over his models with intent, absorbing interest, in the hush of many a midnight, and by and by you see his perfected machine—a boon to the toiling race. The orator shuts his doors and in secret evolves great thoughts and writes grand sentences and polishes majestic periods; and thousands are moved and swayed by his burning eloquence when he comes forth to speak; and tyranny, oppression, and wrong are swept away. The Christian lingers

long in the solemn hush of prayer and meditation, and when he reappears his face glows, his voice is fired with an inspiration born of heaven, and his arm is strong to do valiant deeds for his Lord.



Breaking Down the Fences.

A GENTLEMAN who went up in a balloon said that as he arose the fences that divided the country into fields and farms faded out, until soon he saw only one great, wide, beautiful landscape of meadow and field and forest, with river and stream shining in rich loveliness beneath the pure skies.

So it is as we rise nearer to God in love and faith and Christian experience. The fences that divide God's great church into ecclesiastical fields and farms fade out, until at last they vanish altogether and we see only one wide, holy, Christly Church. We are all one—thank God for that. The accidents of denominationalism are but of small account in comparison with the love of Christ, the cross, the Bible, the sacraments, which we all have in common. Let us learn to love one another as Christians. Love soon breaks down the fences. Let us help one another and comfort one another.

One Step Enough for Me.

ONE who carries a lantern on a country road at night sees only one step before him. If he takes that one step, he carries the lantern forward and thus makes another step plain. At length he reaches his destination in safety, without once going into darkness. The whole has been made light for him, though only a single step of it at a time.

This illustrates the usual method of God's guidance. His word is represented as a lamp unto the feet. It is a lamp — not a blazing sun, not even a lighthouse, but a plain common lamp or lantern which one can carry about in the hand. It is a lamp "unto the feet," not throwing its beams afar, not illumining a hemisphere, but shining only on the one little bit of dusty road on which the pilgrim's feet are walking. The duty for the moment is always clear and that is as far as we need concern ourselves; for when we do the little that is clear we will carry the light on, and it will shine upon the next moment's step.

"Keep thou my feet; I do not ask to see
The distant scene; one step enough for me."



Fainting at the Door.

THERE is a story of a prodigal who came back from the far country and could not find his father's house. He wandered on and on, and at last in the gathering night, sank down, heart-sick and faint, on the steps of a little cottage. Without knowing it he was on his own father's doorstep. Inside sat the aged father and mother, their hearts hungering for their long-lost boy. Outside, bowed and crushed and longing for love and for home, lay the weary, homesick son — on the very threshold of home, but not knowing it.

So near to the gates of heaven is every human soul that is penitent, weary of sin, longing for divine mercy and love. There are many who are not yet in Christ's kingdom, but who have at least some desire for heaven's peace. They do not know where to find what they seek. But close by them is one of heaven's gates and they have but to arise in their penitence and enter into the Father's house.



A Ministry without Words.

IF Christian service were all talking and praying in meetings, and visiting the sick, it would be dis-

couraging to some talentless people. But are our tongues the only faculties we can use for Christ? There are ways in which even silent people can do service for God and be a blessing in the world. A star does not talk, but its calm, steady beam shines down continually out of the sky, and is a benediction to many. A flower cannot sing bird-songs, but its sweet beauty and gentle fragrance make it a blessing wherever it is seen. Be like a star in your peaceful shining, and many will thank God for your life. Be like a flower in your pure beauty and in the influence of your unselfish spirit, and you may do more to bless the world than many who talk incessantly. The living sacrifice does not always mean active work. It may mean the patient endurance of a wrong, the quiet bearing of a pain, cheerful acquiescence in a disappointment.

“Noble deeds are held in honor;
 But the wide world sadly needs
 Hearts of patience to unravel
 The words of common deeds.”



The Story of a Potted Rose.

IN a sick-room there was a little rose-bush in a pot in the window. There was only one rose on

the bush, and its face was turned full toward the light. This fact was noticed and spoken of, when one said that the rose would look no other way save toward the light. Experiments had been made with it; it had been turned away from the window, its face toward the gloom of the interior, but in a little time it would resume its old position. With wonderful persistence it refused to keep its face toward the darkness and insisted on ever looking toward the light.

The rose has its lesson for us. We should never allow ourselves to face toward life's gloom; we should never sit down in the shadows of any sorrow and let the night darken over us into the gloom of despair; we should turn our faces away toward the light and quicken every energy for braver duty, and truer, holier service. Grief should always make us better and give us new skill and power; it should make our hearts softer, our spirits kindlier, our touch more gentle; it should teach us its holy lessons, and we should learn them, and then go on with sorrow's sacred ordination upon us to new love and better service.



The Master's Name.

THE celebrated statue of Minerva which stood in the Acropolis at Athens was renowned for its graceful beauty and its exquisite sculpture, but there was in it another feature which no close observer failed to notice. Deeply engraven in the buckler on the statue was the image of Phidias, the sculptor; it was so deftly impressed that it could be effaced only by destroying the work of art itself.

In like manner, in the life of every true Christian is the name of Christ; it is so inwrought in the character, in the disposition, in the whole being that it cannot be destroyed. It is toward the filling out of the meaning of this name that all Christian culture aims. All our lessons are lessons in growing Christ-like. To get the beauty of Christ out of the Christian's life, the life itself must be utterly destroyed.



Storing Away Beauty.

A TOUCHING story is told of a young man who was rapidly and surely losing his eyesight. The physicians told him that he would not be able to see but for a few months. At once, accompanied

by a sister, he set out to travel over Europe, taking a last look at the beautiful things of this world, before his eyes should be closed forever. He wished to have his memory stored with lovely pictures of mountains, lakes, and waterfalls, of fine buildings and works of art, so that, when he should no longer be able to see, he might have these beautiful visions in his soul to lighten his gloom.

To-day we are in life's rich sunshine, with beauty all around us. But darkness will come to us sometime, days when the light will fade away, the vision grow dim and the shadow thicken about us. We should prepare now, while we can see, against the coming of these dark days. We should walk in the light while we have the light. We should gather while we may into our heart all the love, joy, gladness, that we can store there. Then when the night settles down about us we shall have light shining within.



Christ's Wonderful Love.

NINETY million miles come the sunbeams through space before they touch the roots and grasses and the flowers in the spring days, warming and quickening them into life and beauty.

Through thousands and thousands of years out of the great past, comes the love of Christ that to-day touches our hearts and blesses them with its divine tenderness. Christ loved his church; he loved us from eternity. This dear love of his is not a sudden warmth, a recent affection, a thing of yesterday, an emotion kindled by our love for him; he loved us when he hung on his cross; he loved us before he left heaven and came to earth, drawn by love of us, to save us; he loved us in the eternal ages and planned to redeem us. Then his love will be forever unchanging, everlasting. "Loved once" was never written or spoken of him. Oh love of Christ that passeth knowledge!



We Cannot Hide from God.

MANY years ago there lived a German countess, who violently disbelieved in a future life. She died at thirty years of age, and gave orders that her grave should be covered with a solid slab of granite, that around it should be placed square blocks of stone, and that the corners should be fastened to each other and to the granite slab by heavy iron clamps. It was done, and on the stone was cut: "This burial-place, purchased to

all eternity, must never be opened." Thus even in her grave she defied the Almighty. But, strange to say, a little seed sprouted under the covering, and its tiny shoot found its way between the stones, and grew there, slowly yet surely and steadily forcing itself, until the iron clamps were torn asunder, and the immense granite slab was lifted up by the growing roots. Now a great tree stands over the grave, and the stones lie against it.

No wonder the people of Hanover regard it with almost superstitious feeling, as God's answer to the terrible defiance of the young countess. Certain it is, that her grave will prove no refuge to her in the day of God's wrath. Certain it is, too, that each one of us must stand before Christ's judgment seat. And in that dread day the only refuge will be Christ himself. The judge will be the Lamb, the Lamb that in all his glory appears as a Lamb that has been slain. The only refuge from Christ will be in Christ.



Music in the Storm.

A GERMAN knight wished to make a great Æolian harp, and drew wires from tower to tower

of his castle. Then he listened for the music. But while it was calm and peaceful in the air no sound came from his harp. By and by the breezes began to blow softly and gently, and he heard very faint strains, like the murmuring of sweet voices far away. At length a storm arose and swept over his castle in all its fury, and then rich and grand music came from the wires; and the louder the tempest and the fiercer, the more majestic was the music of his harp.

So it should be in the Christian heart. The storm of trial, instead of hushing the melody, should add to its richness. The greater our troubles, the sorer our sorrows, the more should we rejoice, the louder and sweeter should be our songs.



The Wafted Leaf.

A PILGRIM was wandering, thirsty, almost famished in the desert. He had lost his bearings. He had a compass in his hand, but knew not whether its needle pointed toward a place of rest and refreshment, or to a spot on which he must lie down to die. He was utterly in despair. Turn which way he would, he seemed to be wandering farther and farther away from hope.

He had sunk down in the sand, resolved to meet his fate, when a little green leaf came wafted by a passing breeze, and fell at his feet. He picked it up, and a new hope took possession of his heart. The leaf could not have come far, for it was still fresh. Where it came from there was water, with shade and food. He knew the direction, too, for the breeze had borne it to his feet. So, with the little leaf in his feverish hand, he arose and hurried away toward the spot whence it had come. Soon he was resting in the shelter of wide-spreading branches, and quenching his thirst at the spring which flowed at the tree's roots.

There are times when our hearts are in spiritual unrest, their joy all gone. We are almost in despair, not knowing whither to turn, or what to do, to find rest. Then a little leaf flutters down to us from the Word of God. It is green and fresh. The dews of life are on it. It has not come far, and it tells of life, rest, and joy where it grew. We have but to rise out of our weariness and faintness, and hasten a little way to find a glad resting-place, and a shelter in the bosom of God's love.



Dead, with the Form of Life.

SOMEWHERE in the Arctic ice-fields a ship was caught and held fast, and the men all died in the terrible cold. Years afterward a search-party found the little vessel, and as they drew near, it seemed as if the men were yet alive and at their post. The captain sat at a table, with his pen in his hand, writing his log. Others were found in their places—some at the ropes, one at the lookout, one at the helm; but when the rescuers came closer they saw that the men were all dead. They had been dead for years, though having in their frozen state all the semblance of life.

It would be a sad thing if the angels, as they fly over this earth on their rounds for God, ever see such a sight. God pity us if we are dead, any of us, in our Christian profession. The Church should not have in it one dead member. It should be alive from the minister to the least disciple.



A Brand from the Fire.

A SKILFUL gardener passing along a street saw a root which had been thrown out of a garden. It seemed worthless. It had even been in the fire

and was blackened and burnt. But the gardener thought there might yet be a little life in it, and he saw a vision of the beautiful vine which might yet spring from this brand plucked from the burning. So he bore it with him and planted it and it grew; then he tended it with gentle care, and in due time a majestic vine, covered in the autumn with purple grapes, wreathed its festoons about the doors and windows of his house.

So it is that the Lord in his gentleness deals with sinners. There may seem not a spark of life remaining in them, not a possibility of anything beautiful or good; but he takes them up and pours his love upon them, and they grow into celestial beauty, and at length appear in heaven among the glorified. No human life is hopelessly lost while the love of God seeks the unsaved.



In the Bright Days.

WE need Christ just as much in our bright, prosperous, exalted hours as in the days of darkness, adversity, and depression. We are quite in danger of thinking that religion is only for sick-rooms and funerals, and for times of great sorrow and trial — a lamp to shine at night, a staff to

help when the road is rough, a friendly hand to hold us up when we are stumbling. This is not true. Jesus went to the marriage feast as well as to the home of sorrow. His religion is just as much for our hours of joy as for our days of grief. There are just as many stars in the sky at noon as at midnight, although we cannot see them in the sun's glare. And there are just as many comforts, promises, divine encouragements, and blessings above us when we are in the noons of our human gladness and earthly success, as when we are in our nights of pain and shadow. We may not see them in the brightness about us, but they are there, and their benedictions fall upon us as perpetually, in a gentle rain of grace.



Be Faithful and Wait.

A GOOD many years ago there was a boy growing up in a home of poverty, with no advantages. He was long and lank and awkward, a most ungainly boy. He would lie on the earthen floor at night, when the day's work was done, reading by the dim firelight. There seemed little hope that the boy would ever be a man of power. But the years pass, and we see him President of the

United States. One day we see him taking a pen and signing a paper which sets free three millions of slaves, and writes the name of Lincoln among the immortal names.

Just go on with your daily tasks, doing the best you can in your circumstances, and wait for God's time. It takes months for the apple to grow mellow and sweet on the tree. If you are a disciple of Christ, God is going to make something very beautiful, very noble out of your life, when his work on it is finished. You will not always be struggling with faults, fainting under infirmities, bowing beneath burdens, striving in vain against difficulties. It doth not yet appear what you will be ; but there is glory in reserve for you, if only you are faithful.



The Best yet in Store.

THE ancient passover was but a prophecy of something better — that which we have now — Christ our passover sacrificed for us. So the Lord's Supper is but the picture of something which will be infinitely better, being with Christ himself. Look forward, then, ever to the heavenly blessedness. After the night's toil of the disciples

on the sea, our Lord had a meal ready for them on the shore. So he gives us these precious meals along the way, feeding us with love. How sweet it is when we are weary with toil, or with sorrow, or with struggle, or with disappointment, to find a fire of coals burning, and fish laid thereon, and bread all made ready for us, by a Saviour's thoughtful love.

But that is not the best. When the long night of painful, weary toil is over, and we come near the shore, and the morning begins to break, we shall see the blessed form of Jesus standing on the heavenly side, watching us, waiting to receive us. And when we reach the shore we shall find there ready for us a feast of heavenly gladness. Earth's communions, sweet as they are, are not the best that we shall have. We shall sit down at the "marriage supper of the Lamb" by and by, and that will be best; for it will be eternal blessedness. We shall go no more out forever.



How a Wrong Heart Mars.

A LADY lost a little daughter, her only child. Her sorrow was very great, and to keep her hands busied in something about the child she

took a photograph of her that she had, and with rare skill painted it till the sweet face seemed to live before her eyes. When the work was completed she laid the picture away in a drawer. In a few days she looked at it again, and it was covered with ugly blotches. The eyes and the features were sadly marred. Again, with loving patience, she went over the photograph with her brush until it was as beautiful as before, with all the witchery of life. Then she laid it away again, but when she went to it she found it a second time covered with marring spots. It was altogether ruined. There was something wrong with the paper. Some chemical ingredient in it, mingling with the paint, produced the spots. No matter how beautiful the picture was made on its surface, up ever out of the heart of the paper would come the ooze of decay, spoiling it all.

So it is with human lives. While the heart is wrong it is no use to try to make the character right. Evermore up out of the evil heart comes the pollution of sin, and spots and blotches everything. The only way to have a pure and noble life is by having a clean, good heart.



The Image on the Soiled Napkin.

THERE is a story of an artist in the olden days, who was falsely charged with crime and cast into prison. He was given his paints and brushes, but not a thing on which he might paint. One day a man came to his cell door and said to the artist, "I wish you would paint me a picture." — "I would," he replied, "if I had anything on which to paint it." The visitor looked about him, and on the floor of the prison corridor he found an old soiled napkin. "Paint it on this," he said, as he passed it into the cell. The artist began at once, and continued his work until the picture was finished. It was a picture of the Christ, a marvellously beautiful one, which afterward found a place in one of the old cathedrals. Thus the artist redeemed the napkin from destruction and dishonor and consecrated it to highest honor and sacredness.

There is no human life so soiled, so debased, but on it the image of Christ can be put by the Spirit of God. You may be the artist through whose hands God may choose to work in thus redeeming a life from ruin to its true and holy use.



Heroic Faithfulness.

IN 1869 there was a fever in the house of the keeper of the Ellis Bay light-house, and at the same time the machinery broke down. This light revolves and flashes every minute and a half. If it should stop revolving and flash no more, passing vessels would mistake it for some other light, and would be misled by it and possibly wrecked. The heroic light-house-keeper determined, when the machinery broke down, to work the light and keep it revolving by hand. For twelve long hours every night he sat there in the turret, with his watch beside him, and turned the light at the right moment. Vessels away out at sea saw the flashes at the proper intervals and went safely on their course. It was nearly a year before the government vessel came to the dreary spot with new supplies. During all that time there was sickness in the keeper's family. His children lay ill unto death, and all day long he watched and nursed them; then as night fell on the iron-bound coast, he hastened to his place in the turret, to turn the light by hand till morning.

This incident illustrates true faithfulness—firm, unyielding, loyal to every duty to God and humanity, true even unto death; and yet, note

how gentle and tender it is. Wrought into the heroic integrity and devotion to duty was the affectionateness of true fatherhood. In every worthy life we find both these qualities. Beneath the armor of steel beats ever the gentle heart.



The Noble Life.

THERE is an Oriental story of two brothers, Ahmed and Omar. Each wished to perform a deed whose memory should not fail, but which, as the years rolled on, might sound his name and praise far abroad. Omar, with wedge and rope, lifted a great obelisk on its base, carving its form in beautiful devices, and sculpturing many a strange inscription on its sides. He left it to stand in the hot desert to cope with its gales—his life's monument. But Ahmed, with deeper wisdom, and truer though sadder heart, dug a well to cheer the sandy waste, and planted about it tall date-palms to make cool shade for the thirsty pilgrim, and to shake down fruit for his hunger.

These two deeds illustrate two different ways in which we may live. We may think of self and worldly success and fame, living to gather a fort-

une or to make a name splendid. Or we may make our life like a well in the desert, with cool shade about it, to give drink to the thirsty, and shelter and refreshment to the weary and faint.



"The Word is Nigh Thee."

THE throne of Russia was once occupied by two boy princes. They sat side by side and gave their decisions on the gravest questions ; and their judgments were so wise and just, that men marvelled that princes so young and inexperienced could know so much of statecraft, or speak with such discretion on questions so difficult. But the secret was that close behind the throne where they sat, hidden by a thin veil, was the Princess Sophia. She heard the cases that were brought to them, and she gave the decisions which they delivered. They referred every question to her, and waited until she had whispered to them the wise answer which they gave out.

So the word of Christ should dwell in our heart. It is unseen, but only a thin curtain conceals it. We are to refer every matter to the divine Spirit and wait for his decision. Then what he bids us do we are to do. Thus Christ

will rule every thought, every feeling and affection. He will settle every point of duty. He will mould our business methods. He will sit as infallible umpire in all questions of pleasure, of profit, of ambition. "The word is nigh thee."



The Quiet Volcano.

THE volcano is quiet and silent for years. No fires and lava pour forth from its crater. Meanwhile people venture up its slopes, and lay out their gardens, and build their villas, and plant their vineyards; and flowers bloom, and fruits hang in purple clusters, and beauty covers the once fire-swept, lava-furrowed mountain-slopes. But has the volcano really been tamed? Have its fires been put out? Is all permanently peaceful in the mountain's heart?

Is it otherwise in the breast of him who has merely trained himself into good moral and ethical habits? What the best mere self-culture can do for a life is no more than the planting of flowers and vineyards on the volcano's sides while all its fires still burn within, ready to break forth again any day in all their old fury. Good manners are not religion. The heart must be

changed. The heart of stone must be made a heart of flesh. The heart that hates God, and goodness and holiness and purity, must become a heart that loves God, and loves his way and his will.



At the Door.

IN Holman Hunt's great picture called "The Light of the World," we see One with patient, gentle face, standing at a door which is ivy-covered, as if long closed. He is girt with the priestly breastplate. He bears in his hand the lamp of truth. He stands and knocks. There is no answer and he still stands and knocks. His eye tells of love; his face beams with yearning. You look closely and you perceive that there is no knob or latch on the outside of the door. It can be opened only from within.

Do you not see the meaning? The Spirit of God comes to your heart's door and knocks. He stands there while storms gather and break upon his unsheltered head, while the sun declines, and night comes on with its chills and its heavy dews. He waits and knocks, but you must open the door yourself. The only latch is inside.

Petted but not Changed.

A STORY is told of a man who took a young tiger and resolved to make a pet of it. It moved about his house like a kitten, and grew up fond and gentle. For a long time its savage, blood-thirsty nature seemed changed, and it was quiet and harmless. But one day the master was playing with his pet, when by accident his hand was scratched and the beast tasted blood. That taste aroused all the tiger nature, and the ferocious animal flew on his master to tear him to pieces.

So it is with the passions and sins and lusts of our old natures, that are only petted and tamed, and allowed to stay in the heart. They still crouch at the door in treacherous lurking, and in some unguarded hour they rise up in all their old ferocity. It is never safe to make pets of young tigers. It is never safe to make pets of little sins.



A Lesson from Two Birds.

THERE are two ways of meeting hard conditions of life, or experiences of trial and pain. Here is a lesson from two birds. One bird put into a cage tries in every way to escape. It flies against

the wires and struggles and beats its prison walls ; but it only hurts itself, bruises its breast and batters its wings until they bleed. It accomplishes nothing by all its struggles. But a canary bird when put into a cage perches quietly on the bar and sings. It accepts its condition and makes the best of it.

These two birds show two ways of meeting hindrances or limitations of any kind. Some people resist and struggle against everything that shuts them in, however useless and hopeless resistance and struggle are ; but they only hurt themselves and do not break down the walls. Others accept whatever is inevitable as the will of God for them, and sweetly and quietly submit to it, singing with gladness in their heart. Which is wiser ?



The Master's Touch.

It is said that once Mendelssohn came to see the great Freiburg organ. The old custodian refused him permission to play upon the instrument, not knowing who he was. At length, however, he reluctantly granted him leave to play a few notes. Mendelssohn took his seat and soon the most wonderful music was breaking forth from the

organ. The custodian was spell-bound. He came up beside the great musician and asked his name. Learning it, he stood humiliated, self-condemned, saying, "And I refused you permission to play upon my organ!"

There comes One to us and desires to take our lives and play upon them. But we withhold ourselves from him, and refuse him permission, when, if we would yield ourselves to him, he would bring from our souls heavenly music.

"We are but organs mute, till a master touches the keys —
 Verily vessels of earth into which God poureth the wine;
 Harps are we, silent harps that have hung in the willow
 trees,
 Dumb till our heart-strings swell and break with a pulse
 divine."



Failing of God's Intent.

THERE was at Baalbek ages since, a magnificent Temple of the Sun, some of whose pillars are yet standing. Near by is the quarry from which came the stones for the wonderful temple. In this quarry, almost detached from its rock, dressed and ready for its place in the temple, is an immense column, seventy feet in length. A vacant place in the temple is waiting for it, and for four thousand years this column has lain there

in the quarry. It has never occupied the place for which it was designed.

There are many men like that useless monolith. Made for a noble destiny, with grand possibilities, they have missed it all for want of a lofty purpose and a worthy energy. They folded their talents away in the napkins of supposed humility, of self-distrust, or of indolence and disobedience, and buried them in the earth. They will lie forever among the wastes and ruins of life, pale ghosts of glorious "might have beens," while the places in God's temple which they were meant to fill remain vacant. It is a glorious thought that each of our little lives is a plan of God, that God made us for something definite and particular. Let our highest aim be to become what he made us to be. Let us never shrink from any task or duty to which he calls us. Let us train ourselves to obey every call of God, lest, in our hesitancy or disobedience, we fail of the mission for which we were made, and meet the doom of the useless in God's universe.



The Place of Peace.

KAULBACH'S picture of the Destruction of Jerusalem shows in most vivid delineation the awful work of devastation going on — carnage and con-

flagration ; then off in the distance we see a little company of Christians quietly and peacefully moving away. The children play along the roadside, and the beasts nip the grass as they leisurely move on. Overhead are seen shadowy forms of guardian angels watching unseen over these pilgrims.

The picture is true in its representation. In the times of greatest peril those who are Christ's are cared for by him, and are as secure as if they sat in sweet home shelters. There is only one thing for us to do — to be simply faithful in the midst of dangers and trials. We must ever do our duty. We must quietly endure whatever suffering or loss may come to us, doing what our Master bids, and leaving in his hands the whole matter of our protection and security. No harm can come to the least of the little ones who believe in Christ, and are faithful and true to him. At the centre of the wild cyclone, which bears devastation and ruin in its awful sweep, there is a spot which is so quiet that a leaf is scarcely stirred, where a little child might sleep undisturbed. So in the heart of this world's most terrific storms and convulsions there is a place of perfect security. It is the place of duty and trust. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee."

"If a Little Child Comes."

AN interesting incident is recorded of Francis Xavier, the great Jesuit missionary. Once, on some field of labor where hundreds came with their needs, their questions, and their heart-hungers, he was worn almost to utter exhaustion by days and nights of serving. At last he said to his attendant, "I must sleep! I must sleep! If I do not I shall die. If any one comes— whoever comes— waken me not. I must sleep." He then retired into his tent, and his faithful servant began his watch. It was not long, however, till a pallid face appeared at the door. Xavier beckoned eagerly to the watcher and said in a solemn tone, "I made a mistake. I made a mistake. If a little child comes, waken me."

There is something in this wondrously like the Master, who was never so weary but the coming of a little child awoke all his love. Once indeed his disciples, perhaps in thoughtfulness for him, would have kept away the little ones; but Jesus rebuked them with words ever memorable and dear to the children: "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not."



The Most Precious Thing.

THOSE who are familiar with the beautiful story of Paradise and the Peri in "Lalla Rookh" will remember how the banished Peri sought to gain admittance at the closed gate of Paradise. The angel told the nymph that there was one hope — that the Peri might yet be forgiven who would bring to the eternal gate the gift that was most dear to heaven. The Peri wandered everywhere, sweeping all lands with her swift wings, searching for some rare and precious thing to carry up to the barred gate. Amid scenes of carnage she found a hero dying for liberty, and

"Swiftly descending on a ray
Of morning light, she caught the last,
Last glorious drop his heart had shed."

With this she flew up to the gate ; but, precious as was the boon, the crystal bar moved not. Next in her quest the Peri came upon a dying lover, over whom his betrothed hung, and stealing the farewell sigh of that vanishing soul, again she sought the gate of bliss ; but even to this precious boon the bar swung not. Again she wandered far, and came at last upon a wretched criminal, stained by countless deeds of shame and blood,

but now weeping in bitter penitence. The Peri with joy caught up the holy tear of contrition as it fell, and swiftly bore it away to heaven; and the door flew open admitting her to blessedness within.

This beautiful Oriental legend is not untrue to heavenly fact. The Bible tells us the same thing. No offerings we can bring are so precious in the sight of heaven as contrite tears. No song on earth rings with such music up in heaven as the penitential cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner."



Things we can Never get Over.

DISPLACE the dew as it has fallen on the blushing fruit, and no skill can replace it. Press the rose-leaf and wound it, and none can give back the perfection of its tints. So it is with human character. When youth has once lost its innocence, when sin has once blasted the soul, when the first freshness of a God-given life is gone, no after repentance, reformation, or devotion to God, will ever make it the same. Memory is polluted, the imagination is assailed by impurities, habits of virtue are weakened, and the force of vice is strengthened. The wound may be healed, but

the scar remains. God may forgive the sin and man may forget it; but it is never altogether beyond the vision of him who committed it. We never can be the same after transgression as if we had not transgressed. Some things God gives twice; some many times; but innocence no soul can ever get a second time.



Flowers of Prayer.

THE old Talmudic legend of Sandalphon, the angel of prayer, suggests a wonderful transformation as taking place in the human petitions that go up from earth's lowly places and from unholy lips to heaven's gate. Longfellow has wrought the beautiful legend into verse, telling of Sandalphon, the angel of prayer, waiting at the outermost gates of the City Celestial.

“ And he gathers the prayers as he stands,
And they change into flowers in his hands —
 Into garlands of purple and red;
And beneath the great arch of the portal,
Through the streets of the City Immortal,
 Is wafted the fragrance they shed.”

This old rabbinical legend, though but a legend, surely does not exaggerate the truth about the

acceptableness of prayer. Earth's sighs of faith and love and heart-hunger, though without beauty, sweetness, or worthiness in themselves, float upward and are caught by the listening Intercessor, and in his holy, radiant hands are transformed into lovely and fragrant flowers, and pour their perfume throughout all heaven's glorious mansions.



Night Shows the Stars.

THERE is an ancient picture of the Christ-child in the stable. The child lies upon the straw, the mother is bending over him, the wondering shepherds are near, and in the background are the cattle. It is night, and there is only one feeble lantern in the place ; but from the infant child a radiance streams which lights up all the rude scene.

So it is in sorrow-darkened hearts when Christ truly dwells within. The light streaming from him who is the Light of the world, in whom is no darkness, illumines all the gloom of grief. Indeed, when Christ dwells in the heart, sorrow is a blessing, because it reveals beauties and joys which could not have been seen in the earthly light. It is one of the blessings of night, that with-

out it we could never see the stars. It is one of the blessings of trial, that without it we could never see the precious comforts of God.

“ Were there no night, we could not read the stars;
 The heavens would turn into a blinding glare;
 Freedom is best seen through prison-bars,
 And rough seas make the haven passing fair;
 We cannot measure joys but by their loss;
 When blessings fade away, we see them then;
 Our richest clusters grow around the cross,
 And in the night-time angels sing to men.”



His Blessing Multiplies.

DURING the retreat of Alfred the Great at Athelney, at Somersetshire, after the defeat of his forces by the Danes, the following circumstance happened, which, while it convinces us of the extremities to which that great man was reduced, gives us also a striking proof of his pious, benevolent disposition. A beggar came to his little castle there and requested alms, when his queen informed him, “ that they had only one small loaf remaining, which was insufficient for themselves and their friends, who were gone in quest of food, though with little hope of success.” The king replied, “ Give the poor Christian one-half of the

loaf. He that could feed five thousand men with five loaves and two fishes, can certainly make that half loaf suffice for more than our necessity.” Accordingly the poor man was relieved, and this noble act of charity was soon recompensed by a providential store of fresh provisions, with which his people returned.

Let us learn to take what we have and use it to bless others, and we shall be amazed at the results of blessing which will follow. The smallest gifts when Christ has breathed upon them and given them back to us, become an incalculable power for good.



“One of the Least of These.”

ONE of the most beautiful of the German legends tells how one Christmas-eve a poor man, coming homeward through the forest, heard a cry and found a little child, cold and hungry. The good man stopped, sought the little one in the wood, and took him with him to his house. His children gladly welcomed the stranger and shared their evening meal with him. Then while he sat there at the table, suddenly a change came over the child's appearance, and lo ! it was the Christ-child whom, unconsciously, the family had received in this needy, suffering little one.

It is only a legend, but its lesson is true. Christ is ever coming to our doors in the person of some poor or suffering one, and the reception we give the one he sends he regards as given to him. This ought to make us careful how we treat those who need sympathy and help, lest some time we slam the door in the face of Jesus. Let us rather receive the lowliest of his little ones as if it were Christ himself, with the beauty shining in his face. Then we shall always get the blessing.



Living Sweetly amid Trials.

MANY of us find life hard and full of pain. The world uses us rudely and roughly. We suffer wrongs and injuries. Other people's clumsy feet tread upon our tender spirits. We must endure misfortunes, trials, disappointments. We cannot avoid these things, but we should not allow the harsh experiences to deaden our sensibilities, or make us stoical or sour. The true problem of living is to keep our hearts sweet and gentle in the hardest conditions and experiences.

If you remove the snow from the hillside in the late winter, you will find sweet flowers growing there, beneath the cold drifts, unhurt by

the storm and by the snowy blankets that have covered them. So should we keep our hearts tender and sensitive beneath life's fiercest winter-blasts, and through the longest years of suffering and even of injustice and wrong treatment. That is true, victorious living.



Love Giving Life.

IN a terrible winter many years ago, an army was flying from Moscow. In the army were a young German prince and some German soldiers. Many of the soldiers fell down and perished in the dreadful cold. One evening only a handful remained with the prince. They came to a ruined shed which had been built for cattle. There they sought shelter for the night. Hungry, cold, and weary, they lay down to sleep. The men were rough and stern, yet, when they saw their prince, used to comforts, spent, heart and body, sleeping now in the fearful night, they were moved to pity. They took off their own cloaks and laid them gently on him as he slept. Then they lay down themselves to sleep uncovered. Morning came, and the prince awoke, warm and refreshed. He raised his head. All was

silent about him save the wild wind. Where were his men? He saw their forms covered with snow. He called — no answer. One glance and he saw all. Their cloaks were all piled upon him, and they were dead — dead through love for him.

You turn your eyes toward the cross, and there is Jesus dead, while in your soul are the warm throbbings of life. You have peace, joy, hope, comfort, while about him the winter winds of woe beat, and the snows of sorrow fall, — dead, that you might live. “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for a friend.”



Life's Tragicalness.

THERE is a picture which represents ambition. A young man is riding a swift and powerful steed. His mantle is flying behind him in the wind. His face is aglow with eager desire and anticipation. His eyes flash. He is consumed with eagerness as he seeks to grasp the prize. Before him rolls a ball of gold, on a narrow way. It is this that the young man is pursuing. On either side of the narrow path is a precipice, into which a stumble or a misstep may

plunge horse and rider. Beneath the feet of the flying steed lies the prostrate form of virtue, over which the youth has ridden in his mad chase. Behind, his bony hand extended toward the rider, is the shadowy skeleton form of death, coming in swift pursuit. The goal of ambition ahead, death in pursuit, virtue trampled underfoot, danger on either hand,—these are the elements of the picture.

Is not the picture true in its delineation of the life of many men? You say it is too tragic? Nothing that art can do could overstate the real tragicalness of thousands of lives in this world. Made for endlessness, for immortality, men live as though death ended all, as though the grave's darkness were the close. Tragic? What are you living for? What are your central aims? Where is your goal? Where is your eye fixed? What place has the endless hereafter in your hopes and plans or as a force in your life? Are you living only for time? Is there nothing tragical in your life as it appears to the angels, who, with loving eagerness, watch us mortals in this world?



Back unto its Nest Again.

ONE day President Lincoln and a friend were walking together in a field, when they found a little bird fluttering in the grass. It had fallen out of its nest in the bushes and could not get back again. The great gentle-hearted man stopped in his walk, stooped down, and picked up the little thing, and put it back into its place.

If it is a noble deed for a great man to lift a fluttering bird back into its place ; if even helping one fainting robin unto his nest again is enough to redeem a life from uselessness, what work of high honor is it to help a fainting human soul back into its nest of faith and love in the bosom of God ! That is the work Christ is doing continually. That is what he wants us to do when we find a soul that has fallen out of its place of trust and peace. And there are many of them. They need a human hand to come and take them up and lift them into faith's confidence.



The Unfastened Door.

THERE is a story of a widowed mother in the Highlands of Scotland, whose daughter, her only

child, left her home and went away into a sinful life. The mother could only pray for her wandering one, but she never ceased to plead with God for her. At last, one dark night, at midnight, the lost child came home. Creeping up to the cottage door she found it unfastened. Entering, she was welcomed by her mother with great joy. When the greeting was over, the girl said, "Mother, why was the door unfastened to-night at midnight?" The mother replied, "Never, my child, since you went away, has the cottage door been locked by day or night. I prayed God to bring you home, and I left the door always unfastened, that whenever you might come you might know you were welcome, and might enter at once."

So it is with Christ, the "door" of God's love. This is a door that is easily opened; it is never locked. Christ loves to admit lost ones to his Father's blessedness. No one who creeps up, however timidly, out of whatsoever sin, will be thrust away. When the dove, after all her restless flight, returned to the ark, it is a gentle touch in the story which says that Noah reached out his hand and drew the weary bird inside. That is the way Christ does when a soul, weary and faint, flies to the window of his love. With a hand infinitely gentle, he draws it in.

"He Died for Me."

A TOUCHING story was told after our war, of a man who had travelled hundreds of miles, to one of our battle-fields, to stand beside the grave of a soldier who had fallen on that field. He was seen kneeling at the grave, the tears streaming down his cheeks. The stone he had just erected told the story. On it was the name of the dead, and underneath, "He died for me." The man who knelt there had been drafted. He had a sick wife and helpless little children, and this neighbor came and said, "You stay at home and I will go to the war for you." He fought bravely and fell, and slept now in this grave. This long journey, this costly stone, these streaming tears told of the love and gratitude of the man for whom this neighbor had died.

That visitor at the grave lived because the soldier had died for him. We live and have hope, and are heirs of heaven and glory, because Jesus died for us. There is a wondrous motive for consecrated life in the realizing of the truth that we are Christ's — redeemed by the giving of his life for us.



This is Not the End.

THERE are streams among the mountains which, after flowing a little way on the surface in a current, broken, vexed, and tossing, amid rocks, over cascades, through dark chasms, sink away out of sight and seem to be lost. You see their flashing crystal no more. But far down the mountain, amid the sweet valley scenes, they emerge again, these same streams, and flow away, no longer tossed and restless, but quiet and peaceful as they move on toward the sea.

So our restless, perplexed lives roll in rocky channels a little way on the earth, and then pass out of sight, and it seems the end ; but it is not the end. Leaping through the dark cavern of the grave, they will reappear, fuller, deeper, grander, on the other side, vexed and broken no longer, but realizing all the peace, joy, and beauty of Christ ; and thus they will flow on forever.



"The Legend Beautiful."

THERE is a legend of a monk who was at his devotions, to whom was granted a blessed vision of the Master ; —

"Then amid his exaltation,
 Loud the convent bell appalling,
 From its belfry calling, calling,
 Rang through court and corridor
 With persistent iteration
 He had never heard before."

It was the hour when the blind and halt and lame, and all the beggars of the street, came to receive their dole of food, and this monk, now on his knees before the vision, was almoner that day. Should he go, or should he stay? Then a voice came, —

"Do thy duty; that is best;
 Leave unto thy Lord the rest."

So he arose and hastened away, did his service among the poor, and came again to find the vision standing where he had left it.

"Through the long hour intervening
 It had waited his return,
 And he felt his bosom burn,
 Comprehending all the meaning,
 When the Blessed Vision said,
 'Hadst thou stayed I must have fled.'"

There is a lesson in this "Legend Beautiful" for us. The ecstasy of communion must never detain us from life's common task-work. We cannot keep the rapture of devotion if we neglect the duty of service. Worship is meant to fit us for better work, never to make us less ready for any tasks.

The Power of Unselfishness.

WHEN Alexander the Great was storming one of the cities of Malli, in India, having forced the gate, he made his way at the head of one of his columns to the citadel whither the besieged force had retreated. Impatient that the work of scaling the citadel's wall did not progress as fast as he desired, he seized a ladder, planted it himself, and was the first to ascend. Seeing the king alone, and in great danger, the soldiers made such a rush to the rescue that the scaling ladders broke beneath the over-weight, and Alexander was left in the midst of his enemies with only three soldiers, who had gotten up before the ladders broke. Nothing daunted, the great soldier leaped inside the wall, and stood like a tiger at bay, until he fell exhausted by the loss of blood. One of his comrades had been killed outright, but the other two locked their shields together over their king's prostrate body, and though dripping from many a wound, whirled their swords fiercely in their other hands, keeping off their enemies. Meanwhile, the Macedonians forced an entrance, and enraged beyond control at the supposed death of their king, they literally wiped the town from the face of the earth.

Turn back the story's page, and you will find the reason for this devotion to their leader. During the pursuit of Darius, after marching four hundred miles in eleven days, when but sixty of his men could keep up with him, and all were dying, it seemed, of thirst, a helmetful of water was handed to Alexander. He declined to drink one drop because there was not enough for all. This was the secret of the king's marvellous influence over his soldiers. There is no power of wealth or genius or position or fame, so strong as the power of unselfishness.



Through Mists to Sunlight.

A PREACHER tells of a day in the Alps. The morning was cold, foggy, and threatening, and the people told him as he set out, that Rigi would not unveil her glory in such a day, and that he had better not climb the mountain. Yet he went on, through mist and rain. He met tourists coming down disappointed because they had seen nothing. They urged him to turn back, but he would not do it. Up and up he still climbed, and at last the fog suddenly cleared, and the whole system of glorious mountains revealed themselves.

That is the story of all Christian life's mysteries — rain, fog, darkness, for a time, and then light and blue sky, and splendor of revelation. "What I do," said the Master, "thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." Perfect, unquestioning trust is the way to peace. Do not wait to see — do not ask to see — but believe in God and be at peace.



The Glorifying of Life.

OUR Lord calls his people always to be helpers in blessing this world. We cannot do much. The best we can bring is a little of the common water of earth; but if we bring that to him he can change it into the rich wine of heaven, which will bless weary and fainting ones. If we take simply what we have and use it as he commands, it will do good. Moses had only a rod in his hand, but with this he wrought great wonders. The disciples had only five barley-loaves, but these, touched by Christ's hand, made a feast for thousands. The common water carried by the servants, under the Master's benediction, became wine for the wedding.

Christ passes the gifts of his love and grace through human hands to others. The redemp-

tion is divine, wrought by Christ alone, but the priesthood that mediates it is human; human hands must distribute the blessings. Then we have the assurance that our most prosaic work leaves heavenly results. No labor is in vain which is wrought in the name of the Lord. Our commonest work amid life's trivialities, in business, in the household, which seems but like the carrying of water to be emptied out again, is transformed into radiant service like angel ministry, and leaves glorious results behind. The simplest things we do at Christ's bidding may become immortal blessings to other souls, or to our own.



Finding its Wings.

A GENTLEMAN had an eagle which had been caught when young, and brought up like a domestic fowl. At length the owner was going away over the sea, and decided to give the eagle its freedom. So he brought it out of the enclosed place, and it walked about, but seemed to have no thought whatever of flying away. The gentleman was disappointed. At length he lifted the great bird to the garden wall. It stood there a few moments, and then looked up toward the sun.

It seemed suddenly to remember that it was an eagle, whose home was amid the crags and the cliffs. A moment more and it lifted one wing, then the other, and was gone — soaring away into the blue of the sky.

Are not some of us like that eagle, shut up in the pen, using only its feet, not knowing it had wings, and that its true home was in the heavens? Let us lift up our eyes to the hills, — there is our home. We were made for God. Let us try our soul's wings; we were made to fly. It is a desecration of life to live amid the dust when we were created for flights in the blue heavens.



Love's Greatest Gift.

THAT was a touching story of sick-room ministration which Mr. Gladstone gave in Parliament, when announcing the death of the Princess Alice. Her little boy was ill with diphtheria, and the mother had been cautioned not to inhale the poisoned breath. The child was tossing in the delirium of fever. The Princess stood beside him and laid her hand on his brow to caress him. The touch cooled the fevered brain, and brought back the wandering soul from its wild delirium. He

nestled a moment in his mother's lap; then, throwing his arms around her neck, he whispered, "Mamma, kiss me." The instinct of mother-love was stronger than all the injunctions of physicians, and she pressed her lips to the child's. The result was death.

You say she was foolish. Yet where is the mother who would not have done the same? There may be peril in the sick-room for those who minister there for Christ; but love stops at no peril, no sacrifice. There was peril in Christ's own mission to this world. In his marvellous love for us he put his lips to the poison of our sin — and died.



How a Day May Be Lost.

ALL work is for God, in a certain sense. We do our business for him. We keep house for him. We drive the team, or run the engine, or keep the books, or sell the goods, or carry the mail, or sew the seams, or build the house, for him. Hence we must do honest and good work always, whatever our occupation. It is all for God's eye. Yet it is true that besides what we call our week-day work, all of us have special

work to do for God, our "Father's business." We are in this world for Christ.

Part of our duty, in addition to our secular affairs, is to do good in the ways that our divine Master may indicate, to perform the tasks of love and service that he may allot to us. All of our busy days, for example, we are to be gentle, kindly, patient, Christly, to every one whose life touches ours. In the heaviest pressure of our task-work we must never fail to do the kindness that we are called to do. We must never be too much occupied in this world's affairs to do the part of the good Samaritan, if by our path we find a wounded brother. We must get into every one of our days some work for Christ. We all remember the story of the king who counted that day lost in which some other life had not been made happier. That day is lost in a Christian's life which has no record of blessing to the world and glory to God.



Seeing Not the Danger.

THERE is a picture of an artist sitting on an ocean rock which had been left bare by the retreating waves. There he sat, sketching on his canvas the beautiful things that filled his vision,—

sky, earth, and sea,—all unconscious that the tide had turned, and was rising, and had cut him off already from the shore, and was rapidly covering the rock on which he sat. He was utterly oblivious of the tempest, the waves, the rising sea, so absorbed was he in his picture. Even the cries of his friends, as they shouted to him from the shore, were unheard.

So men grow absorbed in this world, and perceive not the tides of judgment on-rolling, nor hear the calls of friends warning them of their peril. They are aware of no danger. They hear not the rushing of the angry waters. They see not the tokens of death's approach. They sit in unconsciousness of peril until the peril has swallowed them up. We are very foolish if we lose all that is worthy in life in the intensity of our quest after anything that is not abiding.



A Sermon to the Birds.

THERE is a beautiful legend of St. Francis which says that once as he was journeying he lifted his eyes and saw a multitude of birds. He said to his companions, "Wait for me here while I preach to my little sisters, the birds." The

birds gathered around him while he spoke to them words like these: "My little sisters, the birds, you owe much to God, your Creator, and ought to sing his praise at all times, and in all places, because he has given you liberty and the air to fly about in; and though you neither spin nor sew, he has given you a covering for your bodies. He feeds you, though you neither sow nor reap. He has given you fountains and rivers in which to quench your thirst, and trees in which to build your nests. Beware, my little sisters, of the sin of ingratitude, and study always to praise the Lord."

As he preached to them, the birds opened their beaks, stretched out their necks, flapped their wings, and bowed their heads to the earth. When the sermon was over, they flew up into the air, singing sweetly their song of praise, and dispersed toward the four quarters of the world, as if to carry everywhere the words they had heard.

Are we not better than the birds? Have we not more to be thankful for than they have? God is not the birds' Father; he is our Father. Christ did not die for the birds; he did die for us. Let us, too, beware of the sin of ingratitude, and live to praise God.



Power of the Sweeter Song.

WE can fight the world's evil best, not by trying to shut it out of our life, or ward it off, but by having our heart so full of good that the power of the evil will be more than counterbalanced. In the old legend the sirens sang so sweetly that all who sailed near their home in the sea, were fascinated, and drawn to their shore only to be destroyed. Some tried to get safely past the enchanted spot by putting wax in their ears, so that they should not hear the luring, bewitching strains. But Orpheus, when he came, found a better way. He made music on his own ship which surpassed in sweetness that of the sirens, and thus their strains had no power over his men.

The best way to break the charm of this world's alluring voices is not to try to shut out the music by stopping our ears, but to have our heart so filled with the sweeter music of the joy of Christ. Then temptation will not have power over us, because there is a mightier power within us. A deep love for Christ is the best antidote against the debasing influences of sin. Being filled with Christ is the best protection against evil.



So Loved that He Gave.

A STORY is told of a child in Luther's time who had been taught to think of God only with dread, as of a terrible judge. In her stern home the name of God had been mentioned only to terrify and frighten her. But one day, in her father's printing-office, she picked up a scrap of paper, and found on it the first words of this verse, "God so loved the world that he gave" — The remaining words were torn off; but even in this mere fragment there was a new revelation to her. It told her that God loved the world, loved it well enough to give something. What he gave she did not know; but it was a great deal for her to know that he loved the world enough to give anything to it. The new thought brought great joy to her heart. It changed all her conception of God. She learned to think of him as one who loved her, as her friend, ready to give her rich gifts and all good, and this brightened and transformed her life.

We have the whole wonderful verse. We know what God gave, — the most costly and precious gift in all the universe, — and the full revelation should fill us with unutterable gladness and joy.

The Only True Living.

WE cannot live a Christian life that will please Christ without sore cost to ourselves. It never can be an easy thing to be such a disciple as Christ wants you to be. An easy, self-indulgent life can never be a Christ-like life. It was not easy for Christ to redeem the world. From beginning to end of his earthly ministry he poured out his own precious life. The people thronged about him with their sins, their sorrows, and their needs, and virtue went out of him continually to heal them, to comfort them, to feed their heart-hunger. He utterly forgot himself and gave life and love without stint to every one that asked. At last he literally gave himself, emptying out his heart's blood to become life to dead souls. His sufferings were finished when he bowed his head on the cross. But now it is ours to suffer for him. We need never think that we can do anything to redeem this world, otherwise than as he wrought. Nothing but the giving of life will ever save the world. Nothing but love pouring out upon the sad and the sinful will comfort and regenerate them. It is ours, then, to perpetuate the self-sacrifice of Christ on this earth. Only in so far as we do this are we living a life that will please him.

The Unquenchable Joy.

WE ought to have a joy in our heart as God's children which nothing can ever quench. There is a beautiful story of a golden organ in a monastery. Once robbers besieged the monastery to rob it of its treasures. The monks carried the golden organ to a river near by, and sunk it in the water to keep it from the robbers' hands. At certain periods — so the old legend runs — the organ would rise out of the river and give forth such ravishing music as was never elsewhere heard by mortal ears.

Such an instrument is a truly thankful heart, one in which is the joy of the Lord. The floods may go over it, but it ever rises out of them and sings its sweet songs. Nothing can ever check its praise. It sings in the darkest night, its music rolling out into the gloom to cheer the weary pilgrim. A thankful heart always finds something good, even when all things seem evil. A thankful heart finds roses amid its thorns, and rejoices, when the unthankful heart finds thorns amid the roses, and complains.



Heaven is Far Better.

THE old rabbins say that when the famine came on in Egypt, and the storehouses were opened, Joseph threw the chaff of the grain upon the Nile, that it might float down upon the river and show those who lived below that there was an abundance of provision laid up for them, farther up the river.

So the blessings of the divine grace which we enjoy in this world are little more than the husks of the heavenly good things, sent down on the river of divine grace, as revealings and foretastes and intimations of what is in store for us in heaven. The peace we get here is very sweet; but it is only a faint image and prophecy of the peace of heaven. The joy the Christian has on earth is deep and rich; but it is only the beginning of what he shall experience in glory. Heaven's life is infinitely deeper and richer than this world's. The communion of earth is very precious as we turn over the Bible pages and ponder its words, or sit at the Lord's Table; but it is only the shadow of the blessed and perfect fellowship of heaven, when we shall see Jesus as he is and be satisfied.



Blessed are the Hungry.

THORWALDSEN wrought long, and with earnest enthusiasm, upon his statue of the Christ ; but when at last it was completed, a deep sadness settled over him. When asked the reason for this, he replied, "This is the first of my works with which I have ever felt satisfied. Till now my ideal has always been far beyond what I could execute ; but it is no longer so. I shall never have a great idea again." Satisfaction with his work was to him the sure indication that he had reached his best achievement. He would grow no more, because there was now no longing in his soul for anything better. He recognized this, and hence his pain of heart.

In all life this law applies. Hunger is a mark of health, and the want of appetite proclaims disease. The cessation of the desire for knowledge shows that intellectual growth has ended. So, in spiritual life, unsatisfaction is the token of health. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness." Blessed are the unsatisfied. Blessed are they who long for more and more. The mark of healthy spiritual life is an intense thirst for God, a deep, passionate yearning for closer, fuller, richer, more satisfying

communion with God himself. The ideal Christian life is one of insatiable thirst, of quenchless yearning, of divine discontent, wooed ever on by visions of new life, new joy, new attainment. The best thing in us is never what we are, what we have already reached, but the longing for that which is yet higher and better.



The Seriousness of Living.

SOME people seem never to have any serious thought of life. They think only of amusement, and never get beyond the airy surface of things. But to one who thinks deeply, life is not all a round of empty pleasure. A traveller who tarried several days at Antwerp, describes the effect which the bells in the great tower had upon him. Every quarter hour they rang out on the air their sweet notes, in soft melody, which fell like a delicious rain of music dropping from the heavens, as tender and holy as the song of angels. Then at the full hour, amid their shower of liquid notes of silver, there rang out the solemn strokes of the great bell, with iron tongue, deep and heavy; and these heavy tones filled him with a feeling of awe. As he listened, hour after hour, to the chime, the

tender melody of the smaller, sweeter bells reminded him of the mercy and love of God, and the solemn undertones that broke on his ear at the end of each full hour, spoke of the awful themes of justice, judgment, eternity.

So it is that every thoughtful person is impressed in reading the Scriptures. Their usual tone is mercy. Love rings everywhere, like the notes of angels' songs. But here and there, amid the words of divine tenderness, comes some deep note, telling of justice, of wrath against sin, of the awful judgment day. It is the same in life. The flow of the common days is gladness. There is music everywhere. Flowers bloom. Love lights its lamp in our path. Then suddenly there breaks in, amid the merry laughter, a tone deep and solemn, which fills us with awe. Life is not all gayety. Even now its undertone is serious. We should be thoughtful. Eternity lies close to time. The momentous things of judgment are hidden only by a thin veil of mist.



Not Destroyed, but Beautified.

IN a lovely Swiss valley there is a cascade which is caught by the swift winds as it pours over the edge of the rock, and scattered so that the

falling stream is lost for the time, and only a wreath of whirling spray is seen in the air. But farther down the valley the stream gathers itself back again, and pours along in full current, in quiet peace, as if it had never been so rudely smitten by the wind. Even the blast that scatters it for a time, and seems to destroy it altogether, really makes it all the lovelier as it whirls its crystal drops into the air. At no other point in all its course is the stream so beautiful.

There are Christian lives that seem to be utterly destroyed by some great and sore trial; but beyond the sorrow they move on again in calmer, fuller strength, not destroyed, not a particle of their real life wasted. And in the trial itself, through the grace of Christ, their character shines out in richer lustre and rarer splendor than ever in the days when their hearts were fullest of joy and gladness.



Building Beyond the Skies.

IN India they tell the story of the Golden Palace. Sultan Ahmed was a great king. He sent Yakoob, the most skilful of his builders, with vast sums of money, to erect in the mountains of snow the most splendid palace ever seen. Yakoob

went to the place, and found a great famine among the people, and many of them dying. He took all his own money, and the money given him by the king, to build the palace, and gave it to feed the starving people.

Ahmed came at length to see his palace and there was none there. He sent for Yakoob and learned his story, but was very angry and cast him into prison. "To-morrow thou shalt die," he said, "for thou hast robbed the king." But that night Ahmed had a dream. There came to him one who said: "Follow me." Up from the earth they soared, until they were at heaven's gate. They entered, and lo! there stood a palace of pure gold, more brilliant than the sun, and vaster far than any palace of earth.

"What palace is this?" asked Ahmed, and his guide answered: "This is the palace of Merciful Deeds, built for thee by Yakoob the wise. Its glory shall endure when all earth's things have passed away." Then the king understood that Yakoob had done most wisely with his money.

This story has its lesson of truth. The life thrown away on earth for Christ, spent in his cause, wasted in loving service for him, though it seems to leave no monument, though it receives no honor in this world, is laying up treasure, honor, reward, blessedness, in the unseen world.

God Wants Our Best.

CHRIST never asks for anything we cannot do. But let us not forget that he always does expect and require of each of us the best we can do. The faithfulness Christ wants and approves implies the doing of all our work, our business, our trade, our daily toil, as well as we can. Let no one think that religion does not apply to private life. It applies to the way you do your most common work just as really as to your praying and keeping of the commandments. Whatever your duty is, you cannot be altogether faithful to God unless you do your best. To slur any task is to do God's work badly. To neglect it is to rob God. The universe is not quite complete without your work well done, however small that work may be.

The faithfulness which Christ requires must reach also to everything we do. It takes in the way the child gets his lessons and recites them, the way the dressmaker and the tailor sew their seams, the way the blacksmith welds the iron and shoes the horse, the way the plumber puts in his pipes, the way the carpenter builds the house, the way the clerk represents the goods, and measures or weighs them. How soon it would put a stop to all dishonesty, all fraud, all skimping, all false

weights and measures, all shams, all neglects of duty, if this lesson were only learned and practised everywhere !



Man's Two Guardian Angels.

THE Koran says that two angels guard every man on the earth, one watching on each side of him. When at night he sleeps, the angels fly up to heaven with a written report of all his words and actions during the day. The one on his right tells of every good thing he has done, and it is recorded at once and repeated ten times, lest some item may be lost or omitted from the account. But when the angel on his left tells of a sinful thing, the angel on his right says, "Forbear to record that for seven hours : peradventure, as the man wakes and thinks in the quiet hours, he may be sorry for it, and repent and pray and obtain forgiveness."

This is only a fancy, and yet it really is a true representation of the way in which God regards our lives. He is slow to see our sins or to write them down against us. He delights in mercy. The lesson is for us, too, for we are to repeat in our lives as God's children something, at least, of his patience. The song of forgiveness and for-

bearance which he sings into our hearts we ought to echo forth again. We, too, should be quick to note and remember all the good things of others, and slow to mark or record the wrong that we see in them.



From Desert to Garden.

IN travelling to California we passed over hundreds of miles of the dreariest desert. The hot sands glowed and burned under the sun's rays. Rain scarcely ever falls, and nothing grows on the arid wastes save low, straggling sage bush and wild cacti. On and on our train rolled, hour after hour, amid alkali dust and unrelieved desolation. At length, however, we began to pass into the first fringes of luxuriance, and soon we were in the midst of the garden splendors of Southern California, — flowers, fragrance, and fruit, masses of roses and flowers of all kinds, orange groves, clumps of ornamental trees, vineyards, palms. In an hour we had left behind us the desert of the plains, and had entered the richest garden luxuriance of the world.

Is it not so with many a Christian life in leaving this world for heaven? Here are struggles, strifes, trials, bitter tears, disappointments, injus-

tices, wrongs, hardships and cares. Life seems all desert to these toilers. No springs of water burst up in the way to refresh them. Nothing grows in the hot fields to be food for their hunger.

What must heaven be to these weary ones, when they enter it, leaving forever behind them the dreary desolation of this world? In an hour they will pass from the heat, strife, and bitterness of earthly sorrow into the blessedness, the perfect love, the unbroken joy of heaven.



Getting Ready for Dark Paths.

BEFORE conducting them into dark catacombs, or caverns, the guides put lamps into the tourists' hands. The pale beams may seem useless while they walk in the full blaze of noonday; but when they enter the darkness of the cave, the splendor of daylight quickly fades out, and then the lamp's flame begins to shine brightly, and the visitors soon see how valuable their lamps are and how necessary. Without them they would be lost in the thick gloom and in the inextricable mazes.

We are wise if we get into our hearts in the days of brightness the lamps of promise and of comfort. Then when grief or trial comes, and

the sun of earthly joy goes down, these hidden lights will shine like the stars that come out in the sky when the day is over. We are wise if we take whatever lamps of gladness God puts into our hands as we go along through the sunny ways. We may not see their need at the time, but tomorrow these may be the only lights we shall have to guide us in safety through ways of peril or death.



When No One is Watching.

A FLOWER blooms no more sweetly because it is gazed at by an admiring crowd. It would be just as lovely if it grew in the depths of a great forest where no eye ever saw it. The stars look down with as much brilliancy into the desert, where no one looks up at them, as into the streets of the great city where thousands behold them. The sea breaks with as much majesty on an uninhabited shore as where its waves kiss the feet of multitudes. So it is in all true Christian life and work. When one is doing any fine thing, and shows by his air that he is conscious of it, more than half the fineness is gone from the performance. When a man knows that he is living a life that is very beautiful in its service and sacri-

fice, when he is conscious that he is a winsome Christian, much of the glory is gone from his life. We should live just as sweetly and beautifully when no one is looking upon us to see our deed and praise our life, as when all the world is beholding. The eye of God is ever upon us, and it is his approval and commendation that we should always seek to deserve.



Darkening by Our Own Shadow.

It is said of the great sculptor, Michael Angelo, that when at work he wore over his forehead, fastened on his cap, a little lamp, in order that no shadow of himself might fall upon his work. We need to take care that no shadows of ourselves, of our pride, our ambition, our self-seeking, shall fall upon our work for Christ. To seek to win souls that we ourselves may have the glory of success in Christian work, is to dim and darken the beauty of all we do, and also to make ourselves vessels unmeet for the Master's use. We are ready for this most sacred of all ministries only when we are content to be nothing that Christ may be all in all.



Appreciation Too Late.

It is not enough to love others ; we must let them know that we love them. We must do it, too, before it is too late. Some people wait till the need is past, and then come up with their kindness. When the neighbor is well again they call to say how sorry they are he has been sick. When he has gotten through his sore trial, they come with congratulations. But the time to help is when your friend is in the floods, not when he has gotten out to shore and is safe. The time for friendship is in the friend's adversity, when evil tongues malign him, and not when he has gotten vindication and stands honored even by strangers.

Then there are those who wait till death has come before they begin to speak their words of love. There are many who say their first truly generous words of others when the others lie in the coffin. They then bring flowers, although they never gave a flower when their friends were alive. Gentle things that lie in the heart and in the tongue for many years unexpressed, first find utterance in death's sadness. But it is too late then.

“Over the coffin pitiful we stand,
And place a rose within the helpless hand

That yesterday, mayhap, we would not see,
When it was meekly offered. On the heart,
That often ached for an approving word,
We lay forget-me-nots. We turn away,
And find the world is colder for the loss
Of this so faulty and so loving one.

“Think of that moment, ye who reckon close
With love, so much for every gentle thought, —
The moment when love’s richest gifts are naught;
When a pale flower, upon a pulseless breast,
Like your regret, exhales its sweets in vain.”



Reflecting the Divine Beauty.

WE look upon the glory of the Lord, and as we gaze the glory streams upon us, and there is an image of Christ mirrored or reflected in us. Then others, looking upon us, see the image of Christ in our lives. You look into a little pool of still water at night, and see the stars in it, or by day, and see the blue sky and the heavens. So you look upon Christ in loving faith and adoration, and his glory shines down into your soul. Then your neighbors or your friends about you, look at you, see your character, watch your conduct, observe your disposition and temper, and all the play of your life; and, as they behold you, they

perceive the image of Christ in you. You are the mirror, and in you men see the beauty and the glory of the Lord.



The Beauty of God's Will.

GOD'S will is always the best : it is always divine love. A stricken wife, standing beside the coffin of her noble husband, said to a friend : " There lies my husband, my only earthly support, my most faithful human friend, one who has never once failed me ; but I must not forget that there lies also the will of God, and that that will is perfect love."

She was right. It was only by faith that she saw the good and the blessedness in what appeared to her the wreck of all her happiness. But truly the good and the blessedness are in every dark providence which comes into the life of God's child. We need to remember always that our Father never means us harm in anything he does or permits. His assurance is, " I know the thoughts that I think toward you . . . thoughts of peace." His will for us is always love, though it have the form of darkness and pain.



The Emblem of Peace.

A GREAT many tender thoughts cluster around the dove. It was a dove that the very poor were permitted to bring to the altar as an offering, as a substitute for a more costly animal. The appearance of the dove was one of the harbingers, or prophecies, of coming spring. The dove was always remembered by the Jews, in connection with the abatement of the waters of the deluge, when it returned to the ark bearing the olive leaf; and it, as well as the olive branch, has become among all Christian nations an emblem of peace. The dove was also referred to by Christ as a symbol of gentleness and harmlessness.

All these associations made the dove a most fitting emblematic form for the Holy Spirit to assume, when descending upon Christ. For Jesus came to be a sacrifice for all, even the poorest. He came as the spring comes, bringing life to a dead world. He came bringing a message of peace from heaven to every one who will open his heart to him. And he is like the dove in gentleness and harmlessness.

It is this same holy dove that must descend upon us, if the kingdom of heaven is truly to begin in our hearts. Until the Holy Spirit has been

given to us, and received by us, there is no life in our souls, and no power in us for work ; but the divine anointing is promised to all who truly consecrate themselves to Christ, and believe on him. No vision of cloven heavens and descending dove appears to human eyes ; but above every scene of holy devotement to Christ this blessed reality hangs.



The Marks of the Lord Jesus.

AFTER a patriotic war it is not the soldiers that return unhurt, unscarred, who are looked upon with the highest honor, but those who bear the marks of battle. When an army marches back from a victorious field, it is not the bright, clean, untorn flag that is most wildly cheered, but the flag that is pierced, riddled, and torn by the shot and shell of many a battle.

So, in the home-coming in glory, it will not be the man who bears the fewest marks of suffering and struggle, and the fewest scars of wounds received in Christ's service, who will be welcomed with the greatest joy, but the man who carries the marks of the sorest conflicts, and the greatest sufferings for the honor of his Lord and for his kingdom. Old war veterans are not ashamed of their scars ;

they are insignia of honor ; they tell of wounds received in battling for their country. In heaven the soldier of Christ will not be ashamed of the scars he has gotten in his warfare for his Lord on the earth ; his crown will be all the brighter for them. Then we shall see that it has been no misfortune that we have had to fight sore battles on this earth.



He Knows His Own.

THE obscurest Christian, hidden away in the lowliest or most neglected spot, will not be overlooked by the angels when they come to gather in Christ's little ones. Some years ago a ship went down on the British coast, and all on board were lost. None of the bodies of those who had perished were found, save that of an infant, which was washed ashore among the wreckage. The kindly people of the village, who picked it up, buried the body, and having no clue to the baby's name, put on the little stone simply, "God knows." When the angels come, they will know whose body it is, and will not pass it by.

So will they know all Christ's little ones. The place where they sleep is well marked for the heavenly watchers. It will make no difference,

either, that many of them die long before Christ himself comes again. These will miss nothing. They will be called up in time to witness all the glory and share in all the triumph. So Paul tells us that we should not sorrow for the Christian dead, as those who have no hope, for that "them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with him"; and "the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air." There is only one thing that we need to concern ourselves about—that we are indeed of those who have accepted Christ, and have been faithful to him in this life. It will not matter, in that day, whether we have been rich or poor, famous among men, or unknown and overlooked; the only determining element in life will be, whether or not we have belonged to Christ.



The Chimes of St. Nicholas.

A VISITOR to Amsterdam wished to hear the wonderful music of the chimes of St. Nicholas, and went up into the tower of the church to hear it. There he found a man with wooden gloves on his hands, pounding on a keyboard. All he could

hear was the clanging of the keys when struck by the wooden gloves, and the harsh, deafening noise of the bells close over his head. He wondered why people talked of the marvellous chimes of St. Nicholas. To his ear there was no music in them, nothing but terrible clatter and clanging. Yet, all the while, there floated out over and beyond the city the most entrancing music. Men in the fields paused in their work to listen, and were made glad. People in their homes, and travellers on the highway, were thrilled by the marvellous bell-notes that fell from the tower.

There are many lives which to those who dwell close beside them seem to make no music. They pour out their strength in hard toil. They are shut up in narrow spheres. They dwell amid the noise and clatter of common task-work. They think themselves that they are not of any use, that no blessing goes out from their life. They never dream that sweet music is made anywhere in the world by their noisy hammering. But out over the world, where the influence goes from their work and character, human lives are blessed, and weary ones hear, with gladness, sweet, comforting music. Then away off in heaven, where angels listen to earth's melody, entrancing strains are heard.

The Peril of Little Sins.

It does not take a rifle-ball to destroy a life. Men have died of pin-wounds. Some shepherds once saw an eagle soar out from a crag. It flew majestically far up into the sky, but by and by became unsteady in its motions, and began to waver in its flight. At length one wing drooped and then the other, and the poor bird struggled vainly for a moment, and then fell swiftly to the ground. The shepherds sought the fallen bird, and found that a little serpent had fastened itself upon it while it rested on the crag. The eagle did not know that the serpent was there. But the reptile gnawed in through the feathers, and while the proud monarch was sweeping through the air, the serpent's fangs were thrust into its flesh, and the eagle came reeling down into the dust.

This illustrates the story of many a human life. For a time the promise is great ; then suddenly it struggles and falls. Some secret sin has long been eating its way to the heart, and at last the proud life lies soiled and dishonored in the dust. We need to be ever on our watch against these treacherous and insidious perils, these little, secret sins, which, unperceived, work death in the soul.

Till the Sun Goes Down.

A SOLDIER lay wounded on a hard-fought field. The roar of the battle had died away, and he rested in the deathly stillness of its aftermath. Off over the field flickered the lanterns of the survivors, searching for wounded ones who might be carried away and saved. This poor soldier watched, unable to turn or to speak, as the lanterns drew near. Then a light flashed in his face and the surgeon bent over him, shook his head, and was gone. By and by the party came back, and again the kindly surgeon bent over him. "I believe if this poor fellow lives till sundown to-morrow, he will get well." In a moment the surgeon was gone, but he had put a great hope in the soldier's heart. All night the words kept repeating themselves — "If I live till sundown I shall get well." He turned his head to the east to watch for the dawn. At last the stars went out, the east quivered with radiance, and the sun arose. Intently his eye followed the orb of day. He was growing weaker — could he live till sundown? He thought of his home. "If I live till sundown, I shall see it again. I will walk down the shady lane. I will drink again at the old mossy spring."

He thought of his wife who had put her hand

shyly in his, and had brought sweetness to his life. "If I live till sundown, I shall look once more into her deep, loving eyes." He thought of the little children, that clambered on his knees, and tangled their little hands in his heart-strings. "If I live till sundown, they will again find my parched lips with their warm kisses, and their fingers shall run once more over my face."

Then he thought of the old mother who gathered these children about her, and breathed her old heart afresh in their brightness, that she might live till her big boy came home. "If I live till sundown, I shall see her again, and I will rest my head at its old place on her knees, and weep away the memory of this desolate night."

And the Son of God who had died for men, bending down from the stars, put the hand that had been nailed to the cross on the ebbing life, and held on the staunch until the sun went down and the stars came out, and shone down into the brave man's heart, and blurred in his glistening eyes. And the surgeon came again, and he was taken from death to life.

There are human hearts that are sorely wounded by sin, and by the rejection of the love of Christ, and the Son of God bends down from the stars, and the hand that was nailed on the cross lifts the latch, and the door of salvation is opened; and

the voice that is so tender sends its invitation to every heart in the darkness outside the door: "Enter, enter now, into blessedness and peace. Come unto me, and I will give you rest."



The Baby in the Flood.

IN one of the great floods in the West, when the river broadened till it spread over the whole valley, and when trees and fences and crops and buildings were swept away, some men in a boat found among the drift and wreckage, in the middle of the wide stream, borne along in the wild torrent, a baby's cradle floating. They made their way to it, and there in the cradle, warmly wrapped up in its blankets, lay the baby, sleeping as sweetly as ever it had slept in the mother's arms.

So in all this world's wild turbulence, amid its enmities, its temptations, its trials and sorrows, its wants and dangers, its strifes and conflicts, every child of God may be kept in perfect peace. Wherever he is, whatever his circumstances, he is really lying on the bosom of Jesus.



Mirroring the Divine Love.

A SINGLE dew-drop, as it quivers on a leaf on a June morning, mirrors and reflects the whole blue sky ; yet what a miniature picture it gives of that vast expanse of heaven ! So human fatherhood is a dew-drop which mirrors the divine fatherhood ; but it is only a picture compressed into minutest size, and with only dim, broken reflection of a glorious love which is infinite in its length and breadth and height and depth.



Unspotted From the World.

You have seen a lily floating in the black, sullied waters of a foul bog in the country. All about it are foulness and impurity ; but amid all the vileness the lily is pure as the white snowflakes that fall from the winter clouds. It floats on the surface of the stained waters, but never takes a stain. It ever holds up its pure face toward God's blue sky, and pours its fragrance all about it, like the incense from the censer of a vestal priestess. So it is possible for a true

woman to live in this sinful world, keeping her soul unsullied, and breathing out the fragrance of love.



For the Master's Sake.

It is said that Leonardi da Vinci, while still a pupil, and before his genius burst into beauty and brilliancy, received a special inspiration and development in the following way: His old and famous master, feeling obliged to suspend his own labors by his increasing infirmities, bade Da Vinci complete for him a picture which he had begun, and to do his best. The young man had such a reverence for his master's skill that he shrank from the task; but to every objection the artist replied simply, "Do your best." At last Da Vinci tremblingly seized the brush, and kneeling before the easel, prayed: "It is for the sake of my beloved master that I implore skill and power for this undertaking." As he proceeded his hand grew steady, his eye awoke with slumbering genius; he forgot himself and was filled with enthusiasm for his work. When all was done, his master was borne into the studio on his couch to pass judgment on the result. It was a triumph of art on

which his eye fell, and, throwing his arms about the young artist, he exclaimed, "My son, I paint no more!"

So should it be with the young teacher who stands in awe of the work to which his Master calls him. Let him kneel reverently before the task assigned to him, and pray "for the beloved Master's sake" for skill and power; and then let him "do his best."



The Choice that Decides Destiny.

PIZARRO, in his earlier attempts to conquer Peru, came to a time when all his followers were about to desert him. Drawing his sword he traced a line with it from east to west. Then turning toward the south, "Friends and comrades," he said, "on that side are toil, hunger, nakedness, the drenching storm, desertion, death; on this side are ease and pleasure. There lies Peru, with all its riches; here Panama with its poverty. Choose, each man, as becomes a brave Castilian. For my part, I go to the south."

So saying, he stepped across the line. One after another, his men followed him. This was the crisis of Pizarro's fate. Christ stands among

us bidding us to choose whether we will follow him, not knowing whither or to what; or whether we will withdraw ourselves from his company and take ease and self. Choose ye whom ye will serve.



The Story of a Lily.

IN the bottom of a lake a slender blade of green pushed its way up through the ooze and mud. By and by it touched the surface. The sunshine warmed it and its leaves spread out on the water. Then came a fair, sweet morning when the bud opened and became a flower and "lay on the lake as white and stainless as a baby's soul, and the breath of it was sweeter than any perfume."

The flower was very glad, but soon it began to sigh: "I am very sweet and beautiful, but why am I out in this lonely place where no one comes to see me and admire me?" Then that very day a poet came and saw the lily, and was inspired by it to write a sweet song which went forth in a book and sang itself into many a heart. Next day an artist came that way, and when he saw the flower he made a sketch of it, and in his studio in the city he painted it, and hundreds saw his

picture and caught a thought of purity from it. The lily was blessing the world, though it lay there in such obscurity.

Still it sighed, "I am of no use here, though I am so lovely. Ugly weeds sometimes heal the sick, but I am doing no good." Then another visitor came that way. He was neither poet nor artist, but in his eyes there was a soft tenderness which told of a loving heart. He bent down and plucked the lily. A shudder ran through it as it felt itself torn up by the root, and lifted out of the water, and it fainted away. By and by it awoke, and now it was in a long, narrow room with rows of beds, and in every bed a sick child. As the flower opened, the children's eyes turned toward it in wonder and its perfume poured out and filled the ward. The lily at last had found its place of usefulness and blessing through sacrifice. It had been torn up by the roots to become a blessing in the children's ward.

You understand my little parable. Many a life grows up in some obscure place and sighs because of the gloom and the hard circumstances. But at length it bursts into beauty, overcoming the hindrances, like the lily on the water. Yet it sighs because no one sees its loveliness. It longs to be of use. Then one catches a glimpse of the fair young life and goes away to live more

purely, more unselfishly. Still rises from the heart the sigh to do some larger work. God hears the sigh, and the lovely life is transplanted — perhaps into some place of service where the beauty will be a benediction to weary ones and where the gentle hands will minister to pain or sorrow ; or perhaps to a place where the alabaster box of love must needs be broken to fill a home or a community with its fragrance. There are many consecrated lives whose sigh and prayer for usefulness have led to missions of self-sacrifice.



Only a Bit of Glass.

ONE of the most wonderful diamonds in the world is the Koh-i-noor, or Mountain of Light. It now belongs to England, but came from India. The gem was put into the hands of Lord John Lawrence for safe keeping. Half unconsciously, Lord John thrust the diamond, which lay in a little box, into his waistcoat pocket. Burdened with many cares, he forgot all about the precious stone. Six months afterward there came a message from the Queen ordering that the great jewel be sent to her at once. Then Lord John remem-

bered that the gem had been given to him — also his carelessness. Summoning his native servant, he asked him if he had found a little parcel some months before in one of his pockets. With great anxiety Lord John awaited the man's answer. "Yes, Sahib, I found it and put it in one of your boxes." Lord John bade him bring it, and the servant brought the little box. Fold after fold of wrappings was removed, and there lay the wondrous diamond shining like the sun.

The old servant was utterly unconscious of the immense treasure he held in his hands. "There is nothing here, Sahib, but a bit of glass," he said. Then Lord John told him of its value and most carefully was the gem guarded until the Queen herself laid it among the jewels of her crown.

There is in the possession of each one of us a far more precious and costly gem than the Koh-i-noor. What are we doing with it? Are we treating it as if it were of no value? Are we, like Lord John, wrapping it up in the folds of neglect and overlooking it altogether, while we are busy with other things? Are we despising the redemption which it cost Christ so much to prepare? Are we neglecting this precious pearl of eternal life?

Into the Marvellous Light.

IN those terrible days when the devastating tread of Napoleon was causing all Europe to tremble, leaving blight and woe and humiliation everywhere, — besides those slain in battle, there were countless noble hearts that broke with shame and sorrow. Among others was the heart of the lovely Queen of King William, of Germany. In the environs of Berlin she sleeps, in a tomb of peculiar construction, built by her husband. It stands alone in a forest. As you enter, the light is dim and sombre; but at the farther end the sunbeams pour in full splendor through transparent windows. The gloom and shadow at the entrance represents the darkness that lies about the opening of death's vale; the radiance of the pure golden sunlight, as you pass through, represents the brightness of the glory of the blessed life into which death ushers the Christian.



The Contracting Walls.

THERE was a mediæval dungeon of singular construction. When the prisoner first entered it,

it seemed very bright and pleasant. It had a cheerful appearance. But in three or four days he saw that the walls, which were of iron, were slowly contracting. On oiled hinges and in silent grooves the metal plates were ever drawing nearer and nearer to each other. By and by he could hardly breathe. Then the place was too small for him to lie down in it. Next day there was only room for him to stand. Now he put his hands frantically against the iron walls to keep them from crushing him. But all in vain. The walls silently and remorselessly closed upon him.

Your years are the walls of just such a prison. They are bright and beautiful to you. But each day the prison is contracting, its walls are narrowing around you. Every hour that passes with its opportunity gives you one chance less to gain eternal life. With every pulse-beat the iron walls draw closer and closer around your soul.

Every voice of mercy, every striving of the Spirit, is an angel at the gate of your narrowing prison, come to open the door that you may escape. The only refuge from this prison is Christ. Without Christ life means nothing but illusion and disappointment, ending in darkness and death. Christ is the door into liberty, into blessedness, into joy, into all that is noble and divine.

Unrecognized Opportunities.

THERE is a legend of an artist who long sought for a piece of sandal wood out of which to carve a Madonna. At last he was about to give up in despair, leaving the vision of his life unrealized, when in a dream he was bidden to shape the figure from a block of oak wood which was destined for the fire. Obeying the command, he produced from the log of common firewood a masterpiece.

In like manner many people wait for great and brilliant opportunities for doing the good things, the beautiful things, of which they dream, while through all the common days the very opportunities they require for such deeds lie close to them, in the simplest and most familiar passing events. They wait to find sandal wood out of which to carve Madonnas, while far more lovely Madonnas than they dream of are hidden in the common logs of oak which they burn in the open fireplace or spurn with their feet in the wood-yard.



The Importance of Little Faithfulnesses.

STORIES are told of a child finding a little leak in the dike that shuts off the sea from Holland, and stopping it with his hand till help could come, staying there all the night, holding back the floods with his little white hand. It was but a tiny, trickling stream that he held back ; yet, if he had not done it, it soon would have become a torrent, and before morning the sea would have swept over the land, submerging fields, homes, and cities. Between the sea and all this devastation there was but a boy's hand. Had the child failed, the floods would have rolled in with their remorseless ruin. We understand how important it was that that boy should be faithful to his duty, since he was the only one God had that night to save Holland.

But do you know that your life may not stand any day, and be all that stands, between some great flood of moral ruin and broad fair fields of beauty ? Do you know that your failure in your lowly place and duty may not let in a sea of disaster which shall sweep away human hopes and joys and human souls ? The humblest of us dare not fail, for our one life is all God has at the point where we stand.

The Old Smith and the Storm.

MEN said the old smith was foolishly careful as he wrought on the great chain he was making in his dingy shop in the heart of the great city. But he heeded not their words, and only wrought with greater painstaking. Link after link he fashioned, and at last the chain was finished and carried away. In time it lay coiled on the deck of a great ship which sped back and forth on the ocean. There seemed no use for it, for the great anchor was never needed, and the chain lay there uncoiled. So years passed. But one night there was a terrible storm, and the ship was in sore peril of being hurled upon the rocks. Anchor after anchor was dropped, but none of them availed. The chains were broken like threads. At last the mighty sheet anchor was cast into the sea, and the old chain was quickly uncoiled and run out until it grew taut. All watched to see if it would bear the awful strain. It sang in the wild storm as the vessel's weight surged upon it. It was a moment of intense anxiety. It was the old smith fighting the storm. The ship, with its cargo of a thousand lives, depended upon this one chain. What now if the old smith had wrought carelessly even on one link of his chain!

But he had put honesty and truth and invincible strength into every part of it, and it stood the test, holding the ship in safety until the storm was over, and the morning came.



Forgetting Does not Settle Debts.

IF you owe a man some money, you may forget the fact, but the debt remains. Forgetting it does not pay it. You may forget your old debts to God. They may cause you no more pain. But they are there yet, unsettled, and some day they will find you out. Some day the remembrance will come back with terrible vividness. "Son, remember," said Abraham, in the Lord's parable to the rich man, and then recalled to him the story of his earthly life. Memory does not perish in the life beyond. It revives. You may write with lemon-juice page after page and no trace is left. The writing sinks away and disappears. But expose the paper to the heat and every letter will come out in bold, clear outline. So we write our life's record. We see no trace, and all seems lost and forgotten. But some day every word and act will flash out. Nothing that

we do fails to be recorded. In the judgment day all will be brought out. Forgetfulness is a false refuge.



The Cost of Life's Blessings.

As I read the ancient story of the love and heroism of David's mighty men, when they hewed their way through the lines of the Philistines, dropped the vessel into the cool well, drew up the sparkling water, and bore it back through the same hostile ranks to their fainting chief in the cave, another picture rises up before me. I see a world of men and women, shut up in the dark dungeons of sin. They bear marks of disaster and defeat. They have been driven away from the home of their childhood, and that home is now in the enemy's hands. Then I see one rise up in his might, his heart touched with pity and stirred with infinite love. Majesty is on his brow. Strength is in his arm. Compassion is in his eye. He goes forth alone, none of the people with him. Warlike hosts gather about the old lost well of life to hold it, but he moves on in calm majesty. I see him pass through the armed lines. There are tens of thousands against one. He is smitten

on this side and on that. His back is torn with the scourge. His hands are pierced with nails. He dies on a cross.

“Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah . . . glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength?” It is the Lord. He has cut his way through the hosts of his enemies. See, his garments are stained with blood. He fought for the old well by the gate, and comes bearing in his hands its cool, sweet water, to give to those that are thirsty. He has reconquered for our race the blessings of which sin had robbed us. He has gotten back for us the old home, with all its joys. He returns, marked with wounds, weary and dust-covered, bearing in his hands water, the water of life, from the old well.

The blessings and hopes of Christian faith, which are so dear to us, are blood bought. By Christ's stripes we are healed. We have joy, because he endured sorrow. We have peace in the midst of storm, because he faced the tempest. We have forgiveness of sin, because the darkness gathered about his soul on the cross. We have life, eternal life, because he died in shame. The grave has no gloom for us, because he lay in it wrapping its glooms about his own soul. Every blessing comes to us baptized with blood,

the blood of the Son of God. The hands that save us are pierced hands, pierced in saving us.



Heroism in Duty.

LUTHER, on his way to Worms, was warned and dissuaded by his friends as he passed by. Close to the town his beloved friend Spalatin sent to beg him not to venture into the dangers which he knew awaited him. "Were there as many devils in Worms as there are tiles on the roofs I would go in," was his immortal reply.

It is not enough for us merely to admire the Reformer in his heroic devotion to duty; we must seek to get the same spirit into our own hearts. We shall have hard duties before us, and friends will throw about us the silken cords of endearment to detain us. Then we must be brave, to go on and do what Christ bids, regardless of love's persuasions and all the terrors of enemies.



The Ever-Watchful Eye.

Go where we may we cannot get away from the calm, clear gaze of the divine Eye. Neither in the blue depths of the heavens, nor in the dark abysses of the grave can one hide away from God. If we could take the morning sunbeams for wings and fly away on them with all the swiftness of light to the remotest bounds of space, we could not get beyond the reach of the divine Eye. If we creep into the darkness, darkness so deep and dense that no human eye can behold us, still God sees us as clearly as if we stood in the bright noon-day sunshine. Darkness hides not from him. Night shines to his eye as brightly as day.

When we know that God loves us, there is infinite comfort in this thought of his unsleeping watchfulness. It is our Father who watches. There ought also to be wondrous incitement and inspiration in this consciousness; while the Eye of divine love is looking upon us we should always do our best.



Lifting up the Bowed Down.

IN the Doré Gallery in London there is a picture, the foreground of which consists of groups of people, rich and poor, young and old, kings and beggars, all turning beseeching looks upon a far-away figure. It is the Saviour, clothed in robes of dazzling whiteness, bearing a cross, with a hand uplifted, beckoning all these broken-hearted ones, captives and sorrow-laden ones, to come to him for rest. That is always a true picture of Christ. He is saying to every soul bowed down, "Thou art loosed." I care not what the bonds are that bind you; I care not how deformed your life is, how bent, how crooked; I care not what it may have been that bowed you down, nor how long you may have bent together — I say to you, there is One who can loose your chains and make you straight. He who by word and touch made a crooked, stiffened body erect and lithe, lifting the face from its downward gazing to look up into the face divine, can do the same for the soul that is bent in the most hideous deformity.



The Ministry of Love.

A LOVELY woman learned of a district in a great city whose people are ruled by the lowest passions. They live in wretchedness and degradation. Moved by a loving pity, she leaves her own happy home, and goes to live in the midst of these debased men and women. She moves in and out among them. She teaches their children. She visits their miserable abodes when they are sick, and ministers to their needs. It is costly serving for her. She suffers terribly in her sensitive soul from their abject wickedness. But she makes no complaint, and continues to live out her sweet, pure life among them. Her goodness touches their vileness and begins to dispel it. Her love blesses their soiled lives.

There she stays, loving, patient, a ministering angel, giving out her life, until that spot of wretchedness has begun to change. The degradation yields to purity. Into the squalor of their homes come bits of beauty, hints of refinement. On the Sabbath you may see this fair angel-woman, with a company of restored lives about her which she has lifted up out of sin and debasement, by the mighty power of her pure, unselfish love. That is Christlike serving.

Religion for Week Days.

RELIGION is living out the principles of Christianity in one's ordinary week-day life. It is getting the Bible and the prayers and the services into thought and act and character. We must not cut our lives in two, and call one part secular, governing it by one set of principles, and then regard the other part as sacred, to be controlled by another set of rules. All life should be made religious in the sense that everything is to be done in such a way as to please God, under the direction of his counsel. We have just as much religion as we get into our week-day life, and not a whit more. Whatsoever we do, even to eating and drinking, we should do in the name of the Lord Jesus.



The Story of the Old Tree.

KRUMMACHER has a pleasant little legend of Zaccheus, who found Christ by getting into a sycamore-tree. Krummacher says that in his old age Zaccheus still dwelt at Jericho, humble and pious before God and man. Every morning at sunrise he would go out to the fields for a walk.

After these walks he always came back with a quiet, happy mind, to begin his day's work. His wife noticed his unvarying habit, and became curious to know where he went and what he did. One day she secretly followed him. He went straight to that tree from which he first saw the Lord. Hiding herself from his view, she watched him. He took a pitcher and poured water upon the roots of the tree, which were getting dry in the sultry heat. Then he pulled up a few weeds he found growing there. After this, he looked up long and lovingly at the branches, where he had sat that blessed day, when he first saw Jesus. At last, with a patient, grateful smile upon his face, he returned to his home.

Is there no suggestion in this for members of the church? Was it not in the church that you first saw Christ? Is not the place sacred to your heart? Should you not do for your church what Zaccheus did for his tree? Should you not daily water its roots by your prayers and tears and toils? Should you not seek to keep the weeds away from about it, at least so far as your own life is concerned? Should you not do all you can in some way to cherish it and make it prosperous, a place of blessing to many more, as it has been to you? Your labor will not be in vain in the Lord.

The Refuge of Mercy.

THERE is a story of a man who dreams he is out in an open field in a fierce, driving storm. He is wildly seeking a refuge. He sees one gate over which "Holiness" is written. There seems to be shelter inside, and he knocks. The door is opened by one in white garments, but none, save the holy, can be admitted; and he is not holy. So he hurries on to seek shelter elsewhere. He sees another gate and tries that, but "Truth" is inscribed above it, and he is not fit to enter. He hastens on to a third, which is the palace of Justice; but armed sentinels keep the door, and only the righteous can be received. At last, when he is almost in despair, he sees a light shining some distance away and hastens toward it. The door stands wide open, and beautiful angels meet him with welcomes of joy. It is the house of Mercy, and he is taken in and finds refuge from the storm, and is hospitably entertained.

None of us can ever find a refuge at any door, save at the door of mercy. But here the vilest sinner can find eternal shelter; and not mere cold shelter only, for God's mercy is tender. We flee for refuge and find it. Strong walls shut out all pursuing enemies, and cover us from all storms.

Then, as we begin to rejoice in our security, we learn that we are inside a sweet home, and not merely in a secure shelter. Our refuge is in the very heart of God ; and no mother's bosom was ever so warm a nest for her own child as is the divine mercy for all who find refuge in it.



How Sin Destroys Beauty.

ONE of the most famous pictures in the world is the Last Supper, by Leonardo da Vinci. Jesus sits at the table with his twelve apostles. It is said that the artist sought long for a model for the Saviour. He wanted a young man of pure, holy look. At length his attention was fixed on a chorister in the Cathedral, named Pietro Bandinelli. This young man had a very noble face and a devout demeanor. Leonardo used him as a model in painting the face of the Master. Soon after this Pietro went to Rome to study music. There he fell among evil companions and was led to drink, and then into all manner of debasing sins. Year after year the painter went on with his great picture.

All the apostles were now painted save one —

Judas, the traitor. Da Vinci went from place to place, looking for some debased man who would be suitable as a model. He was walking one day on the streets of Milan, watching the faces of the evil men he chanced to meet, when his eye fell on one who seemed to have in his features the character he sought. He was a miserable, unclean beggar, wearing rags, with villainous look. This man sat as the artist's model for Judas. After the face was painted, Da Vinci learned that the man who had sat for him was his old friend, Pietro Bandinelli, the same who had sat a few years before as the model for the Master. Wickedness had debased the beautiful life into hideous deformity. Sin distorts, deforms, and destroys the human soul. It drags it down from its erectness until it grovels in the dust.



The Touch of His Hand.

ONE of Wellington's officers, when commanded to go on some perilous duty, lingered a moment as if afraid, and then said, "Let me have one clasp of your all-conquering hand before I go; and then I can do it." Seek the clasp of Christ's

hand before every bit of work, every hard task, every battle, every good deed. Bend your head in the dewy freshness of every morning, ere you go forth to meet the day's duties and perils, and wait for the benediction of Christ, as he lays his hands upon you. They are hands of blessing. Their touch will inspire you for courage and strength and all beautiful and noble living.



• The Touch of Christ.

DURING our Civil War word came to a mother that her boy had been wounded. She found her way to the hospital at the front. The doctor said to her, "Your boy is fast asleep. If you go in and wake him the excitement will kill him. By and by, when he wakes, I will break the news to him gradually." The mother, with her great hungry heart yearning to see her boy, looked into the doctor's face and said, "He may never waken. If you will let me sit by his side I promise not to speak to him." The doctor consented. She crept to the side of the cot and looked into the face of her boy. How she longed to embrace him! She could not resist laying her gentle,

loving hand on his forehead. The moment her fingers touched the boy's brow his lips moved and he whispered, without opening his eyes, "Mother, you have come." Even in his sleep he knew that touch of love.

The human touch on lives that need comfort, healing, and blessing, carries wonderful power. But shall we not bow our heads for the touch of Christ himself? He lays his hand gently and lovingly upon our brow. Some of us may be in sorrow; some are in care; some have their burdens. But do you not recognize that soft touch of Christ's hand, the hand that the nail pierced? May the touch give joy and blessing to every one!

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