

The Fifth Horseman

AND OTHER SERMONS

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*To my Friends and Parishioners in
the Churches which I have had the
Privilege of Serving; whose Loyalty
and Encouragement have been an in-
creasing Wonder and Delight to me,
these Sermons are Dedicated.*

Foreword

HOW different the sermons of today from the formal religious discourses of a century ago! Then there was the prolix prelude, the clearly defined divisions and subdivisions, the exordium with its expected and impartial appeal to saints and to sinners. It is not so today. Something must be doing from the moment the text is announced. The modern preacher "must leap like a man from a moving train and touch the ground on the dead run. He must instantly throw a challenge to man's brain." Probably the difference can be expressed by saying that then the preacher "delivered a discourse," whereas now he "gives a message." Dr. Burton in his Yale lectures indicated the change that was taking place when he said, "If I had been more interested in men and less interested in subjects my preaching would have been more vital than it has been." Has the pulpit been strengthened or weakened by this new style of preaching? Can a speaker make a deeper and more permanent impression by discarding the ordered arrangement of his

points and depending on the more or less spontaneous expression of his ideas?

An able and sympathetic critic of the pulpit insists that one of the outstanding weaknesses of the preaching of today is an inability to organize materials. Probably no preacher of the last generation did more to bring the formal religious discourse in disrepute than Phillips Brooks. Yet this prince of preachers did not hesitate to appreciate the virtues of the old pulpit method. His testimony is most suggestive: "The statement of the subject, the division into heads, the recapitulation at the end, all the scaffolding and anatomy of the sermon is out of favor, and there are many good jests about it. I can only say that I have come to fear it less and less. The escape from it must be not negative but positive. The true way to get rid of the boniness of a sermon is not by getting rid of the skeleton but clothing it with flesh." The preachers of today will do well to heed this caution.

The sermons of Dr. Morris in this volume are good examples of modern preaching at its best. Everyone of them has its skeleton erect and properly balanced, but they are well covered with flesh. The material is abundant and collected from many sources. The interpreta-

tions of the texts are deft, and the applications impressive. These sermons admirably illustrate the wise counsel of the godly Tholuck who said that a sermon ought to have the earth for its mother and heaven for its father. They are Christian messages that fully meet the requirements of the late Principal Forsythe, who declared that he cannot conceive a Christianity to hold the future without words like grace, sin, judgment, repentance, incarnation, atonement, redemption, sacrifice, faith, eternal life. The ideas connoted by such great words as these are found on every page, from cover to cover, set forth with winsome clearness and fidelity.

EDGAR P. HILL.

New York, N. Y.

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I

THE FIFTH HORSEMAN

“ And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True; and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.”—REVELATION XIX.II.

THE portentous figures of The Four Horsemen have ridden themselves into the imaginations of men since the day John sent forth his great book of the Revelation. Painters, ancient and modern, have attempted to portray these meaningful and ominous riders of the paths of doom. Seizing upon them as they were charging unchecked over mankind and devastating all the earth, Blasco Ibanez compelled them to point a moral and adorn his tale of love and hate, of life and death. Dazed with the actual horrors of world war, men shuddered even more violently when, under the spell of Ibanez's imagination, they saw and felt these grim and ghastly monsters thundering along their destroying way.

It is somewhat surprising that, in a popular way at least, so little has been said of another Horseman pictured by that same John whose

graphic pen limned the Fearful Four. Yet this Fifth Horseman is described at greater length than the others and John's prophecy shows him triumphing over all preceding conquerors.

He is called "Faithful and True." He, too, "doth judge and make war," but it is "in righteousness." His eyes flame with victorious and purifying fire. His brow is decked with many crowns. Armies follow him. We seem to see unnumbered battalions all clothed in clean, fine, white linen, and all mounted upon white horses.

Prophecy rises to exalted strains of poetry in which this mightiest captain of the white company is described as unsheathing a sword from his lips and with it smiting rebellious nations. We see him as he breaketh the sword, cutteth the spear in sunder, and burneth the chariots of earth's proud warriors in the fire. There is a terrible majesty and glory in the apostle's marshaled words, which themselves sound the thunders of charging, victorious hosts: "He treadeth the wine press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." (xix. 15) The culminating indication of his majesty and glory is that on him is written the name: "King of Kings and Lord of Lords."

The triumphing glory and power of this true

world-conqueror is made more concrete and vivid when he is contrasted with those grisly Four Horsemen of whom we read in the sixth chapter of the Apocalypse. Let us stand aside for a few moments while these riders dash by in their might and glory, and let us follow them as, for a time, they triumph. Let us then observe how this other Rider, with his white legions, destroys them one by one.

1. "Behold, a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering and to conquer." (vi.2) While no one individual can be said to embody this horseman, it is interesting to note how many conquerors like Cæsar, Ghengis Khan, and Napoleon, have affected white steeds.

Some have thought this first horseman to be the symbol of earthly victory and glory. Others have seen in him the embodiment of godless but none the less glorious civilization such as that of Egypt, Greece, or Rome. Still others have thought of this rider as picturing the outward beauty and glory and conquering power of the Roman Catholic Church.

Because this rider is mounted upon a white horse, just as is the true Captain General of men's souls mounted upon a white horse; be-

cause unto him is given a bow and a crown; because like the greater Counterpart who is to overwhelm him, he is crowned as a conqueror. Let us summarize his significance by saying that this is a figure for anti-Christ. This is true whether anti-Christ were, is, or is to be incarnated in one single individual, or whether anti-Christ is but the spirit which usurps the prerogatives of Christ in his sway over the imagination, the affections, the achievements,—in a word, over the lives and destinies of men.

Perhaps we may make clear our point of view if we suggest that this first horseman, this anti-Christ, is indeed a figure for godless civilization. Those mighty empires which sprang up, flowered, bore evil fruit, rotted, and were broken off without hope of recovery—what were they, what are they, other than that very spirit of anti-Christ?

Probably we have no such thing as Christian civilization. At least, it is startling to note how practically every school of thought agrees with the assertion that we have no such thing as a Christian America or a Christian Great Britain. The religious scoffer says that it is not Christian and he laughs at the idea that it ever can be made Christian. The conservative Christian individual bemoans the fact that we are not

“Christian America.” The progressive, not to say radical, elements of the Christian Church agree on this one thing at least, that conditions morally and spiritually are far from ideal. One group of us is hopeless over the conditions, and sadly but with emphasis asserts that we shall never be Christian until Christ arrives in person to destroy all wickedness and drive out all evil men. Another group says that we shall never be Christian until men have become so saturated with the spirit of Christ and the ideals of Christ that they themselves will cleanse and purify and thus redeem the world. Whatever point of view we may have and however we may differ in our interpretation of how He is to come, we, with all Christians of every land and every name, agree on this: that no civilization in which Christ and His divine principles are not followed, can stand the test of time. In the figure of the Apocalypse, the glory, the beauty, the gorgeous apparel, the glittering crown, the gleaming white horse, the conqueror’s bow, and all that is suggested and shadowed-forth by this first horseman, must be and will be destroyed forever by the great, true Conqueror who alone has the right to sit upon the white horse of purity and lead the white company to eternal victory.

2. "And there went out another horse, that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword." (vi.4) The instrument of warfare in the hand of this second rider is one which brings him into personal collision with his enemy. Men may sit upon thrones of glory and, in an impersonal way, make war. This is pictured for us by the bow held by the rider of the white horse. He may maintain position and power, so long as he does maintain it at all, without any personal animosity, without any actual bitterness and hatred. But men who strike each other with the sword are in no calm mood. They are in a frenzy of speed and of hate. The one who strikes first is the one who conquers. The one who does not strike is the one who dies. This is the philosophy of war! The late German Empire was not the only nation which, acting upon this perfectly logical principle, made war and met its doom.

It seems impossible for great nations to catch a glimpse of the divine philosophy of Christ who proclaimed that they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Well named is this second horseman. The word

Saint John used to describe him was the word "pyrrhos." The ancient Roman world which surrounded Saint John was a world which had been taught to feel terror at the very name of Pyrrhus, a great general of many centuries before. His name, itself signifying fire, had become a figure, a faded metaphor, for that which glowed with the colours of blood and fire.

Let no man deceive himself. War rides over the earth on just such a steed; fire and sword eternally accompany him. War seems to have taken its toll, from the earliest record to this present moment. Not only the "thousand wars of old" which Tennyson so beautifully describes as being rung out by the Christmas bells which ring Christ in, but also these modern wars, so terrible in their size, monstrosity, and destructiveness that they more than equal the thousand wars of old;—all these are but outward forms and expressions of that which is here figured by this rider upon the horse of fire and blood. My friend, let us not deceive ourselves. We may fancy that wars will cease through the progress of civilization; we may dream that men, in sheer fright of the awful consequence of war, will desist from making war. Mr. Will Irwin's book, "The Next

War," pictures for us what we may expect when the world breaks loose in the mad frenzy of war again. It is well that such books should be written and widely read. Sermons should be preached, not only from the pulpit, but from the lips of every peace-loving and God-fearing man and woman, denouncing the spirit of war. But again let me say that we need not hoodwink ourselves and fatuously believe that this awful scourge of mankind will leave of its own accord. Certainly he will not be driven away by a godless, Christless civilization, by the spirit of anti-Christ.

The destruction of this baleful and sinister rider will never come to pass until he is driven away forever by the Fifth Horseman and his strong cohorts. Let us not misunderstand one another here either. Christ alone can save the world from future wars, whether we think of Him as returning in a visible, tangible, and personal way, or whether we think of Him as coming only in the hearts and lives of men. It is not a theological doctrine upon which we are intent, but the point we emphasize is that if there be no Christ in the affairs of men, war shall succeed war; fiery rider shall be followed by riders more fiery still, until world-wide destruction settles down over men like night

and the thunders of bellowing cannon sound "taps" over the grave of civilization.

Is the picture too gloomy? Not one of those soldiers who suffered in the trenches of Belgium and France, not one of those seamen on the decks of vessels which sailed dangerous, mine-strewn, submarine-infested seas, will say that the picture is overdrawn.

3. "And I beheld and lo a black horse: and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand." (vi.5) As the red horse was a "pyrrhos," so this horse is a "melas," a melancholy figure; not the glowing, rich color of fire, but the dark, sad pall of unrelieved suffering; the flat, stale, and commonplace color of dull, dun days and agonizing, starless nights.

The word for which "black" is the translation is "melas," which everyone will recognize as being a part of such words as "melancholy." This is famine. A decade ago it would have seemed impossible to believe that within ten years as many millions of our fellow-beings would perish from hunger and exposure, as had been killed with the instruments of war in the preceding five hundred years. Yet startling as such a statement is, a writer in one of our magazines of high repute recently gave as his computation that since July, 1914, the number

of men, women and children who have died of hunger was equal to the number that had been killed in war in the half millennium preceding that date. And the end is not yet.

I fancy I hear someone say, "Surely no Fifth Horseman is necessary in order to drive famine from the earth." We have said a few moments ago that in a strict sense neither America nor Great Britain can be called Christian countries; but let it be noted that these two peoples which are most nearly Christian, which approximately obey the laws of Christ, are the peoples and the only peoples amongst whom famine is unknown. It is only by the spirit of Him who multiplied the loaves and fishes that the hungry multitude might not go unfed,—it is only where His spirit rules that there is abundance and to spare.

The Psalmist cries, that God openeth His hand and all His creatures are fed. In perhaps a different sense from that which the Psalmist intended, let me paraphrase this by saying that "He openeth His hand, Jesus Christ, and through Him all who believe on Him are fed." I am quite well aware that many of the wickedest of earth are also the wealthiest; and that monsters who should be condemned to starvation, sit themselves down to wasteful banquets

every day. But the exception does not disprove the rule. It was the Psalmist also who long ago saw this and cried, "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."

4. "And I looked and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him." (vi.8) The fourth rider is mounted upon the most lugubrious steed of them all. The "lean, abhorred monster" that bestrides the pale horse is Death. The horse is described as "pale," but the word means livid-green, cadaverous, the colour of a corpse many days dead. The imagination shrinks in horror from the contemplation of this grisly rider and his death-coloured beast. One need not enlarge upon the progress or the power, upon the swiftness or the certainty, with which Death overwhelms everything before him. More merciless than an angry tiger, more blighting than untimely frosts, more resistless than ocean tides, snatching as his victim the speechless babe and the gray-haired man, the fool and the philosopher, who shall stand before him and to say to him, "Thus far shall thou come, and no further"?

Yet he too is doomed. "The last enemy to be destroyed is Death." There are those who

know nothing of the story of One who triumphed over death and the grave, and there are those also, who, though they know the story, refuse to believe it. But let me remind you today, that there is not even a promise of a triumph over this terrible rider, save as it is made in the person and teachings of Christ. We are not unmindful of the shadowy intimations of immortality which the ancients had,—their “pale realms of shade,” their “lands of the dead”; nor do we forget the Nirvana of Buddha or the Paradise of Mahommet. Still we assert that the only serious claim of One who hath abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel, is the claim of Christ and His apostles.

The Four Horsemen still ride, apparently unchecked in their course of destruction. But yonder at the head of His White Company, this Fifth Horseman awaits God's eternal zero hour.

Do we believe in Him, do we accept Him as the one hope of mankind for the destruction of these other merciless riders? Do we realize that all these things have their origin, as well as their counterpart, in the individual human heart and that when we open the gates of the soul so that the Fifth Horseman may ride in,

in conquering power, our little individual anti-Christ, our self, our pride of accomplishment, must go; that the enmity and bitterness of our hearts, whence come wars and fighting, will be driven out; that the famine of the soul suggested by our Saviour's words, "Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God"—that this famine shall be broken; and that we who are dead in trespasses and sin shall find that death itself hears the voice of the Son of God, and that they who are in their spiritual graves come forth and live?

OH, Christ, thou great Captain of the white hosts of God, thou who art the Conqueror and to conquer, thou who art King of Kings and Lord of Lords, drive out from these hearts of ours all haughtiness, pride, and self-elevation; conquer in these hearts of ours all hates, and wars, and give us peace and love; break unto us the bread of heaven that our souls may not starve; and give us that resurrection from sin and death that will mean for us entrance into an inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away. Amen!

II

“MY GARDEN AND THE SPICES THEREOF”

*“Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south;
blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may
flow out.”—SONG OF SOLOMON IV.16.*

A MAN'S religion should show itself in the fruits of his life. Jesus stated this fact in an axiomatic manner, “By their fruits ye shall know them.”

If my beloved is to come into his garden,—if Christ is in my heart,—my beloved should eat his pleasant fruits.

The garden of the soul may be likened to the gardens which men plant and from which they expect to gather flowers and fruit. No garden will yield its best bloom and fruitage if it is uncared for. Wild things, nauseous weeds, loathsome insects, a thousand and one enemies, seen and unseen, seem to conspire against the plantings of man's hand. Every amateur gardener, even on the smallest scale, can testify that malignant forces seem to have determined that he shall not reap the results of his labours. He is in a position, even after one brief sum-

mer's efforts in the garden, to appreciate the feeling of a certain husbandman who sowed good seed but whose servants came soon to report that tares had sprung up among the wheat. He can feel for that husbandman when in bitterness of spirit he says, “ An enemy hath done this.”

It is not otherwise in the garden of the soul. Forces seen and unseen sow tares amongst the good seeds. Thorns and thistles seem to spring spontaneously from the earth. All the favoured soul-plants are in danger of being devoured, starved, choked by enemies.

We might follow in detail the analogy and show that the unseen spores of rot and microscopic disease germs work as much havoc, destroy as much fruit, blight and blast as much bloom, as the larger and more patent enemies, the aphides, the rose beetles, the caterpillar, the grub and cut-worm, rank grasses and usurping weeds. The garden of the soul must be carefully watched. It is necessary, but not sufficient, that good seeds and healthy trees should be planted. There must be the sunshine and the rain, and also there must be this eternal vigilance against the destructive hordes, which like a biblical army of hungry locusts, seem waiting watchfully to pounce upon and destroy

the soul's tenderest, sweetest, and most delicate plants.

Unremitting labour, and patience to a degree that will qualify us for membership in the arcanum of patient sufferers like Job, are necessary if good things are to be grown,—if our beloved is to come into his garden and eat the pleasant fruits thereof.

The garden is ours, that we may dedicate it to our beloved. The garden is ours that we may plant and nurture and guard. The garden is ours that we may bestow upon it ceaseless toil, loving labours. We are not to forget, however, that there are forces and powers which are beyond our control, and that these are essential to true development, to full growth, to blossoming and fruit bearing. Among these powers and forces which lie beyond our power to direct and control are the winds of heaven.

That the winds play an important part has been known to gardeners for many centuries. It has remained for modern times to discover some of the mystery, the eerie plant-magic, in which the winds are the wings of the fairies. Now, just some such apprehension of the part the North wind and the South wind must play, if his beloved is to eat the fruits of the garden,

must have been in the mind of the inspired singer of this ancient poem. His invocation of the winds may or may not have been chosen with a thought of their antipodal origin and their opposite tendencies, but he could not have chosen a more correct statement, a more fitting figure.

The winds which blow over the garden of the soul are many. They come from every point of the compass. They seem to spring up from beneath our feet. They swoop down on us from the hills. But of all these winds, from the gentlest zephyr to the most raking tornado, none can furnish a more fitting symbol of certain experiences which help to mellow the soil and make fallow our garden plot than that of the North wind.

The apostrophe to the unseen, but powerful forces of the air, is addressed first to the North wind. Every student of poetry in any language is interested in the words the poet uses. It will interest us to know that when this ancient Hebrew poet called upon the North wind to blow over his garden, the word which he used is one which has in it the fierce, hungry roar of the North. For where he cries, “Awake, oh, north wind,” we may substitute the sounds of his Hebrew imperative and read

it, "A-o-o-r, O North wind." The word itself is a roar. He does not beseech the wind to soften itself; he invites its coldest, sharpest, most stinging blasts.

It is essential in the development of the best character, in the ripening of the best fruits of the soul, that there be that in our experience which corresponds to the stinging cold of the breath of the north. It is trite and commonplace, but none the less true, that this is one of the explanations why those men and women, for conscience sake, came to New England shores in the early days of the seventeenth century. Not alone the inhospitable climate, the more inhospitable melancholy forests, and the still more inhospitable red men, who inhabited that forest,—not alone these things, in their nature partaking of the North wind's blasts; but also to these physical discomforts, hardships, and dangers, add the pangs of separation from friends and native land, and the vague fears and apprehensions of an unknown life with untried experiences before them, and you have in part the explanation of the development of that character which has become proverbial for the strength, for the ruggedness, for the honesty, for the thrift, for the devotion to duty which to this minute

are characteristic of the descendants of the Pilgrims.

Mr. Luther Burbank has experimented with apple trees, protecting all except one branch from the winds of winter, by covering with a tent and keeping the air inside at a temperature above freezing. The unprotected branch was bitten by the frosts, washed by the rains and snows, and wildly shaken by the snarling North wind. In the spring, all the coverings were removed and the tree allowed to bloom and bear fruit. The most abundant and beautiful blooms, the largest and most perfect apples for colour, shape, and soundness, were on that limb which was exposed.

A rose grower told me a short time ago that some of his finest hybrid-teas were failures when shipped to Florida or Southern California, but that in a climate where the sting of genuine winter was felt, these delicate roses were the greatest success. It seems surprising to think that the land of roses itself is not ideal for full development of colour, form, and fragrance of the hybrid-teas in the garden of the soul. Yet, who does not know from his own experience that much that is best and sweetest in his life has been in some part at least due to bitter experiences?

I love to repeat the story they tell of Robert Louis Stevenson. Exiled from his native Scotland to Samoa because of tubercular trouble, in his new home in the Pacific seas, "Louis the well beloved" suffered other ills. The story goes that at one time he was confined to his bed because of sciatica, and his room was darkened and his eyes bandaged because of an affection of the eye. His right hand was tied to his side, lest a sudden and unexpected movement should break loose the delicate and diseased cells of his right lung and cause a hemorrhage while in this condition. In this darkened room and propped in his bed, almost helpless, writing with his left hand, in great sprawling letters, on a child's slate, he produced that little volume which has gladdened the hearts of unnumbered children, "A Child's Garden of Verse."

Rejoice, my friend, if the great and good gardener, the Lord of winds, has invoked the North to roar over your garden.

The North wind plays its part and is indispensable in developing the finest, rarest, and most fragrant flowers of the soul. But the North wind must not blow always. The poet is very suggestive in his order in invoking the winds. The winter snows and frosts, its biting winds, prepare the way for the coming of

Spring. But if there is to be any pulsation of life, any flowing and driving of the sap, any swelling of the buds, any unfurling of the green banners of the trees, any scented blossoms, any heavy-fruited bowers, the South wind too must blow.

“ Which is the wind that brings the heat?
The South wind, Bessie, soft and low;
And peaches will ripen for you to eat,
When the South begins to blow.”

The God of things as they are, has beautifully blended for usefulness the contrasting and apparently hostile forces of nature. He has promised that “ Seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night ” shall join their contradictory efforts and work out His glory and man’s well being. He sends no bitter experiences without some compensating cup of joy. “ Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh with the morning.”

Every Pastor knows with what happy astonishment he has observed the effect of the warm south wind of God’s sweet love, in the frost-bitten lives of some of his parishioners. I have in mind now an elderly saint of God, an officer in the Church. Humanly speaking his life presents a series of tragedies. In a happy and

beautiful home, his devoted and brilliant children grew up. Just at the full glory of young womanhood, a daughter suddenly died. A few years later another, an unnameable sorrow came into his life. Still a few years later a second daughter,—gifted, charming, and beloved by all who knew her,—was taken away. In recent months, the wife and companion of a long life time went "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." Bereft, the house of life beaten by storm after storm, out of the icy north of sorrow and death, I have been enthrallingly surprised to hear his wonderful testimony of the South wind which God had sent into his life; for he said, "After all, the Lord has been very gracious and kind to me."

Surely it is not merely some blind, impersonal law of averages; surely it is not alone some general principle of compensation; surely it is the sweet breath of the South in the garden of the soul which enables true Christians to bear whatever is laid upon them. Our Heavenly Father who is not only wiser but also tenderer and kinder than we are, breathes over us with the airs of Eden, and under those genial zephyrs the garden bursts into bloom and is rich with fruits for our beloved.

Because this is His way of dealing with us,

we may learn lessons to govern our actions and attitudes towards those whom God has placed in our charge and keeping. Thus the children in the home; the servants; the employees; the pupils in Sunday school or day school; these each and all require for their spiritual development the word of encouragement, the sympathetic understanding, the tender touch. If only such things are in their lives and experiences, if only the South wind doth blow, they will be at best hot-house plants unable to stand any of the rigours of the winters of life. But, on the other hand, if nothing but heavy tasks, severe requirements, harsh commands, stern repressions, and all other North-wind things of life are unrelieved by that which corresponds to the breath of the South, there can never be the greatest, fullest, most beautiful, most fragrant, most fruitful development.

Climbing Mount Washington recently, I observed that just at the edge of the timber line, the stunted, gnarled shrubbery was so wind-swept and frost-bitten on the north side that there were no branches. A few stunted green arms stretched themselves appealingly to the south. Deep in the valley below and on the lower slopes of the hills, it was another story, for the North wind and the South wind had

both contributed to the hardening, to the full development, to the symmetry and the glorious beauty of great umbrageous trees. North and South had blown about them. The noblest men and women too have known both.

Should it not be a comfort to us, this knowledge that it is in mercy and love that God sends the North wind and the South? Instead of murmuring or fainting under this rod, shall we not cry with the ancient poet, "Awake, O North wind; and come, thou South; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out"?

O, Thou giver of every good and perfect gift, Thou who didst not spare Thine only Son in the days of His flesh, Thou who hast in all generations permitted the north wind to blow on the gardens of the soul, and Thou who hast ever alternated these cold winds with the warm breath of Thy love, breathe upon us Thy spirit, giving to us the powers of endurance and causing our lives to be full of bloom and fruitage, so that "Our Beloved may come into His garden, and eat His pleasant fruits." Amen.

III

“NOT DREAMT OF IN OUR PHILOSOPHY”

“But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”

“But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.”—I CORINTHIANS II.9, 10.

THE apostle is writing to a highly cultured people. The ancient Greek saw very clearly, he heard most acutely, his thinking was both profound and accurate. Even yet we delight in the beauty of form which he saw in his world and has handed down to us in his sculptured marbles. Even yet we are charmed by the cadences of his majestic poetry, sung to ears which in those far off days could hear and repeat sublimest music; sung by a Homer, an Æschylos, a Sappho. Even yet we stand in admiration and wonder before the profound and wide-reaching minds of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle.

The apostle, in writing to this people of taste, refinement, and thought, reminds them that there is a sphere of realities which is be-

yond the ken of the natural man ; which his unaided faculties are powerless to conceive, much less his senses to see or to hear.

Paul first approached the Corinthians with a simple gospel. He reminds them that it was not with eloquence and wisdom that he had at first sought to win them. He had come predetermined not to know anything save Jesus Christ and Him Crucified until the evangel had been proclaimed and men had turned unto the Saviour. But lest a people who were proverbial lovers of wisdom should feel that, after the first principles had been accepted and learned, there was nothing further for them in the message Paul had to deliver, the astute apostle claims that he has a higher wisdom to impart than any they have yet known. “ Howbeit,” he says, “ we speak wisdom among them that are perfect.” That is, to those who already have mastered their earlier lessons, he has later and fuller and higher mysteries to reveal. Paul, like the wise modern preacher, must have recognized a two-fold claim upon himself : as a preacher of the Word he must be an evangelist to those who are ignorant of Christ or have never yielded allegiance to Him, and he must also carry the converts further along the sublime path of religious truth : in a word, “ sinners must be converted and saints edified.”

So that no one might confuse the body of his wisdom or doctrine with the wisdom of his Hellenic readers and hearers, Paul then hastens to add that his is not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world: his is the wisdom of God: wisdom, older than their oldest books; than their race itself; yea, older than the world in which they live.

The people of Athens, we read elsewhere, greatly loved to hear some new thing. The Corinthian Christians, who were probably not different in this respect from their Athenian brothers, are told they may hear a wisdom so new that none of their wisest men has even known it and so old that it had been ordained before the foundations of the world,—a wisdom that could never be acquired by the ordinary channels of knowledge. It could not enter the heart of man through seeing or hearing, nor could it be devised by the imaginings of the heart.

This is another and highly vivid way of saying that the profound truths of our great faith,—the philosophy of our religion, if you please,—is something which must come as a revelation by the spirit of God in the spirit of man. For we have further record that “God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.” And

it is no less true for us than it was true for the Corinthian Christian of the first century, that we need more than unaided natural powers to perceive the meaning of life and to understand the dealings of our Father-God with us.

The eloquent words of our text have often been used as if they referred to the glories of the blessed life which shall be hereafter. The glories of our Father's house, in which there are many mansions, are so unspeakably beautiful that the eye of man hath not seen anything like unto them; and the heavenly harmonies so exquisite, so enthralling, that the ear hath never heard the like. All that blessed estate prepared for the sons of God is so glorious that our wildest imagination can not picture it. All this is absolutely true; but if the apostle had this in his mind at all, it was secondary in his thinking. He is speaking primarily, as the whole context shows, of the incarnation of Christ as the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world and yet as the Lord of Glory, whom wicked men slew. And the great "wisdom" of his message is an explanation of the counsels of God, of His great love wherewith He loved us; of all the might and glory and beauty of the life which is hid with God in Christ. In a fuller sense Paul, like Milton on

a later day, would “ justify the ways of God to man.” His quotation, taken freely from Isaiah, is true of the entire content and body of our sublime faith; for we do not see God with our physical eyes,—we do not hear His message with our physical ears, and we cannot grasp the meaning of spiritual things with our human intellects. In other words, spiritual things are spiritually perceived. The natural man with his natural channels does not receive spiritual things because they are in a different order,—just as a ship could not be driven over the seas by a poem describing a storm, or just as a tree could not pluck itself up by the roots and walk away. Such things do not happen because they cannot happen. That, I take it, is the apostle’s argument.

What! The eye cannot see? Think, will you, of what the eye, unaided and alone, can and does see? Then recall Emerson’s illuminating suggestion as to what might happen if we went on opening one eye after another until we looked out upon our universe with an infinite number of eyes. But these two small orbs of ours look out upon a world of glorious beauty around us,—flowers, exquisite in form and colouring; green fields; glorious, umbrageous trees; graceful valleys watered by shining streams; sweetly curved hills; ragged mountain

pinnacles ; the azure sunlit ocean ; the delicately penciled clouds in the deep cerulean sky ; and, poured round and over all, the golden sunlight ! What glories we see by day ! And then, the velvet darkness of the night ; the sleeping meadows ; the dark, mysterious waters ; the great, arching vault of heaven, scintillating with thousands of stars and perchance a fairy ship of a new moon riding down into the west ; the world-old sight which bent above our cradles and will canopy our graves ! What beauties we see at night ! Then magnifying our power of vision more than a thousand-fold, we look through the microscope upon the fungi growing from a dead tree and see there fairy worlds, coral-coloured forests, gold and amber pavements, and the exquisite shape and delicate tint of that miniature cosmos. Or we turn our greatly magnified vision into the one hundredth part of a drop of water where again are revealed to us beautiful beings that have their habitat in this tiny ocean, and where little creatures move with a dignity that reminds us of Tennyson's stately ships which “ sail on to their haven under the hill.” Or we look into our giant telescopes and find that what had seemed to be a faint, white dust on the floor of heaven, is a thousand stars, each one a distant

sun, probably the center of systems of worlds and satellites far grander than our own solar system. Aye, me! What marvels the eye hath seen! Yet it is literally true that we have not seen with this eye spiritual things. The natural eye beholdeth nature's glories as a polar seal, rising from his icy home, might look into the zenith and see a point of light: but, what to him would be the northern star, that star “ that hath no fellow in all the firmament,” that star by which the hunter guides his feet in the trackless forests and the sailor steers his ship on the moving floods? What spiritual vision we have of the majesty and beauty and glory of God behind His universe, and in it, and shining through it, we may be sure are revelations of His spirit. It took a spiritually-minded psalmist to cry, “ The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth his handiwork.” The natural eye of man sees in Jesus only the son of Joseph and Mary: the spiritual eye sees a Saviour and Lord. God give to each of us spiritual vision, that upon Him we may look and live.

It is astonishing how often in the Scriptures men are urged to hear. The refrain of the Old Testament books, “ Hear, O Israel,” has its echo and counterpart in the New Testament in

such phrases as, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." We have been speaking of things which are revealed to the natural eye in order to emphasize the necessity of the spiritual eye. Likewise we can draw the contrast between that which is audible to our physical ears and that which no device of man will ever gather from the outer air and register upon the tympanum of our ears. Wonderful, however, are the things which we do hear. Is it to be marvelled at that when the ancient Norseman heard the heavy rolling of thunder, he pictured mighty but invisible gods, hidden behind the black curtains of clouds, rumbling along in celestial chariots, or hurling heavy hammers, or "drinking delight of battle" on the plains of heaven? One can well lament the loss of wonder and awe that has accompanied the disillusionment which scientific knowledge has brought to us. But even yet perhaps, the very fewest of us are totally unmoved by the roar and crash of thunder, by the deep bass of the storm, by the liquid notes of waterfall or breakers or plashing rain; the voices of nature around us have awed, alarmed, fascinated, soothed, or inspired us from time immemorial. Add to these the mellifluous notes of the birds, the ringing voices of children, the perfect pitch and sweet

tones of the singer, the eloquence of the orator, and you have some faint conception of the marvelous gamut of sound which finds its way through the small auricle of the ear to our brain. Just as there are rays of light deeper than red or higher than violet which our eyes do not register, so too there are sounds which do not reach us either because they are below the range of our hearing or because they are far above.

We have devised instruments to increase the power of hearing and in these latter days we have gone beyond the magic pictured in the “Arabian Nights,” and with radio apparatus we “listen in” on all the music and eloquence of men, on the call of the ship in distress at sea, on anything or everything which is flying hither and there as if upon the wings of the wind, but ten thousand times faster than wind ever moved. We reach out into the apparent silence of night and bring these sounds into our ears. Yet unspeakably marvellous as is the ear it is after all a physical organism, and it hears but physical sounds. Spiritual messages are sometimes couched in physical form, but the physical ear hears them not. It must be a spiritually attuned ear to hear also the message intended for the soul. Of the thousands who

heard Jesus speak in the days of His flesh, comparatively a very small number heard Him with their souls. You, my friend, how is it with you? You hear the music of the choir, you hear the words of the sermon, you are pleased or displeased, or left cold and indifferent! Do you hear the spiritual message underneath? Are you trying with the physical organism to hear spiritual things? The apostle says it cannot be done. The eye cannot see and the ear cannot hear, but God gives us spiritual ears and if we will but open them, we may hear what He has to say to us.

Now, the things that have entered the mind of man, the things his heart has conceived, surpass what he can see and hear, what he has seen and heard. His castles in Spain, his fair visions of ideal conditions, but bespeak the sublime fact that the mind of man can and does conceive marvelously. Those things which he has dreamed out and caused to be erected emphasize the majesty of his mind. All the monuments of earth, the Pyramid and the Sphinx keeping tireless watch at the foot of the desert over the land of the Nile; the Taj Mahal, exquisite in its finish as a polished pearl, memorializing a husband's love for his lost wife; the mighty shaft which pierces the blue, Southern

sky in our nation's capital, fit symbol of the lofty and enduring but unadorned character of our great first President,—what are these but silent witnesses of the glorious things the mind can conceive? Have you walked under the high arches in the naves of the world's great cathedrals? Have you not drunk the beauty of their priceless windows, and felt a satisfaction which nothing else can give while looking upon their flying buttresses, their lofty pinnacles, their mighty towers? The mind of man conceived these cathedrals before they took concrete form in stone. Think too of man's poetic creations,—an Iliad in which seas are crossed, cities are stormed, battles are fought on windswept plains, and mighty heroes live and love and suffer and die. Think of the imaginations of a Dante which were given permanent form in his great “Inferno”: the gloomy caverns of hell, the stormy blasts, the pitiless fires, the endless tortures, may not appeal to our modern sense of the dealings of God with man in the hereafter, but they move us to admiration when we think of them as the conceptions of the human mind. So too with a “Paradise Lost,” a “Lear,” a “Hamlet,” an “In Memoriam.” When we have thought through these things and a thousand other things wherein the rich,

incalculable glories of man's inner life have expressed themselves outwardly, we come again to the expression of the apostle, “It hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive.”

It would be a great thing if men truly could believe and did believe this; for, alas, too many men seem to think that “an honest God is the noblest work of man,” and that the riches of moral truth, the glories of divine revelation, the inspired utterances of prophet and apostle,—that these are but other forms of the imaginations of men. But it is not so, my friend. The heart of man might conceive a character like Ulysses, like Æneus, like Hamlet, but what mind would ever dream-out a Jesus of Nazareth, springing out of a sordid and mercenary people to startle his own and every after age with moral and spiritual truth? I say to you, it is unthinkable. And if the character, the personal traits and intellectual equipment of Jesus, transcend men's imaginative powers, how much more does this great work, His sacrificial life and death!

If we today are depending upon our natural resources and powers, we are not appraising these spiritual messages correctly; and if we do not, with our enlightenment, our centuries of

inherited interpretation, how can we think that a handful of ignorant and unimaginative men, fishermen and tax-gatherers, could have conceived such a character and given him to the world? It remains true, dear friends, that the eye cannot see, the ear cannot hear, and the heart cannot conceive the things which God from all eternity has had in store for us. These things have been shown to our spiritual eyes, if they see, and have been spoken in our spiritual ears, if they are open. God has moved upon our hearts to grasp something of the meaning of the fullness and glory of life as it was lived and taught by Jesus of Nazareth. May His spirit enable us today to hear a message from above, to see and accept the “ Saviour which is Christ the Lord,” and to feast spiritually upon the things which God hath prepared for them who love Him.

WE thank Thee, our eternal Father, for Thy gifts to us; for a world of beauty in colour and in form; for a world of inspiration in music and voice; for rich intellectual and spiritual feasts. Give us, we pray Thee, the power to see, the power to hear, and the power to know Him “ whom to know aright is life eternal.” Amen.

IV

HOW TO RAISE THE DEAD

“*And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands; and he stretched himself upon the child, and the flesh of the child waxed warm.*”—II KINGS IV.34.

SIR W. ROBERTSON NICOLL, the distinguished editor of the *British Weekly*, relates certain events in the life of Massillon, the great French preacher of the eighteenth century. He had been appointed, in the earlier years of his ministry, to preach for the benefit of the young king, then nine years old. This was so successfully and so beautifully done that the next year Massillon was received into the Academy, and the Abbé Fleury publicly commended him, saying that like Elisha he had accommodated himself to the dimensions of the Shunammite's son.

We unhesitatingly affirm that this power of accommodation, backed up by true faith, and used by the Spirit of God, is the secret of raising those who are dead in trespasses and sins, in indifference and coldness, to spiritual warmth and life. The parent in the home, the

teacher in the school, the Pastor in his Church, and the Church in the community, and even the statesman and executive in the nation, may find in this apparently naïve action of the ancient prophet the profoundest suggestion and example for their dealing with their respective charges and constituencies. Children differ among themselves even in the same family. There are children who seem to have been born spiritually in early infancy if not coincidentally with physical birth. Doctor Harper, my predecessor in the old North Broad Street Church, Philadelphia, used to say of his son-in-law, who was one of the saintliest of men, that he believed "Harry" was "born regenerated." Admitting that many children early begin to manifest spiritual traits and perceptions, we may on the whole assume that the normal child requires a spiritual resurrection, and some such process as this which Elisha used in raising the dead boy is recommended. In the home, in the Bible School, in the day school, wherever children are dealt with, it is essential that we accommodate ourselves to the dimensions of childhood, that we lay the warmth of our spiritual natures upon their spiritual beings, that we become the channels through which God shall breathe into them spiritual breath.

In following this line of thought today, let us keep in mind primarily this relationship of the older generation to the younger. Because however, you, my hearers and friends, are placed in different positions of responsibility and because all of you collectively, represent the Church, we shall illustrate our general theme by reference to any one of the parallel themes which we have suggested. It may not be good homiletics for the preacher to jump from one theme to another; but at least a sermon so constructed has this advantage, that each hearer can take that phase of the subject which is most germane to his life-problems and keep that line of thought uppermost in his mind. In this sense we shall be having three or four sermons in one: the parent and teacher will be thinking of the child in the home or the school, the minister will be thinking of his congregation, the church will be thinking of its relationship to the community, the statesman will be thinking of his relationship to the people and problems of his nation.

The wise prophet secluded himself with the object, the lifeless form, upon which he wished to bring influence and exert power. There were no distractions from the praise or the blame of the by-standers. Alone with God and

the dead body of the child, he gives himself over wholly to his sublime undertaking. A large part of our failure in affecting the cold, lifeless spirits of the individuals and the community upon whom and with whom we would exert wholesome and life-giving influences, is just here. We are divided in our concentration upon, not to say consecration to, our great task. An occasional word of reproof, rebuke, exhortation, entreaty, encouragement, praise—a brief blessing before the meal, a few pious platitudes with reference to religion and church duties,—is about all that many parents, even in church homes, find time to bestow upon their children. Patient and thorough instruction, line upon line and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little, shutting out the world and its voices of praise and blame—thus and only thus, can parents expect results in their efforts to raise children to spiritual life. Likewise a church divided in its devotion, trimming its sails to every popular wind, or church members who “Renegé, affirm, and turn their halcyon beaks with every gale,” how can such a church, such a people, impress, challenge, lead,—in a word, raise from spiritual death to spiritual life,—the individual, the community, the nation?

There is a fuller and further suggestion in

each point of contact established between the living body of Elisha and the dead body of the Shunammite's child. The prophet lay upon the child and put his warm lips upon the cold mouth of the child. This was a natural and necessary point of contact. He would expand the lungs, blowing his own breath into the respiratory organs of the child. He would imitate that divine example recorded in Genesis where it is said that God breathed into man the breath of life. This simple and natural effort is highly suggestive. It means that our children, our churches, our nation, must receive instruction. The power of good example has often been dwelt upon. It would be the height of folly to underrate the value of example. It is necessary, however, to emphasize the fact that a good example alone is insufficient.

Some years ago at a Father-Son Banquet, a sixteen-year-old orator told his audience, half of whom were fathers, "Fathers, we boys do what we see you do, not what you tell us to do." As one of the later speakers, I took occasion to say that in rearing my own children, I had found that it was essential to SAY what they should do as well as TO DO what I would have them do. I reminded them that the average boy under fourteen years of age would view with

great complacency the process of seeing his father use soap and water on his hands and face three, four, half a dozen times a day, and would not be very likely to follow that example. That in the case of my own boys, at least, it had been necessary, literally hundreds of times, to say, "Son, you must wash your face and hands."

We are too prone to think that if we are truthful, our children will be truthful, whether or not we teach them the sin, shame, and danger of lying; that if we live lives of purity of thought and action, that no impure thought will ever overwhelm them; that if we love and serve the Lord, our children will naturally follow us into the church. Again let me say that in no sense do we underrate the high value, the essential necessity, of the good example; but we do emphasize the fact that the precept must go with the example. We parents often neglect to give counsel to our children on the greatest and most imminent problems of life, physical and spiritual.

Let us not forget either that our preceptorial utterances must be in the language which childhood speaks. We must bring our message in a way that is at once clear and forceful, and at the same time perfectly understandable.

It has been a sin of the church, in dealing with its children of tender and also of mature years, from early days, that it has too often failed to recognize this fact. Jerome's "Vulgate" was an effort to correct the tendency of the church to deliver its message in a language which no one understood. In due course of time, the language of the "Vulgate" had been outgrown. Outworn forms of expression which meant something to former generations but mean none to the present, block the way to the hearing of truths.

I am persuaded that children resent "being talked-down to," and am likewise persuaded that a congregation is insulted, and rightly so, if they feel that the speaker or preacher thinks them incapable of understanding any message except one reeking with slang and vulgarity. At the same time, I am even more firmly convinced that we err in our efforts to instruct our children and our communities because as parents and as churches we insist on ancient shibboleths, outworn phrases, dead language, and even dead dogmas. You may or may not approve of Mr. William A. Sunday; his theology may seem to you crass, his methods crude, and his language, at times, exceedingly vulgar. You cannot but have noticed, however, that

“Billy” reaches the crowd. Men know exactly what he is talking about; whereas, the church too often deals in subjects that are foreign to the thought of the general community, and expresses itself in a kind of sacred but long since stereotyped form of speech which has lost all meaning to the average “man of the street.” No preacher who has a message, and who speaks that message in the language of his day and generation need be without a sympathetic, understanding audience. No parent or teacher whose words of wisdom are spoken in living, picturesque language, and based upon things already known in the experience of children, need fear he is failing to inspire them with his message.

Much of the misunderstanding and consequent unhappiness and misfortune of mankind is due to difference in point of view. When we know life from our neighbor’s angle of vision, it is a safe venture that we will in large measure sympathize with our neighbor. If we place our eyes upon the eyes of our child, our community, we see what they all see, in some measure at least, as they see it; and so can better understand. This is just another way of saying what a distinguished Southern orator, Senator L. Q. C. Lamar, said to his own people

in reconstruction days: "My countrymen, let us know each other better and we shall love each other better." Former President Wilson once told a small group of ministers a little story concerning Charles Lamb. Lamb, who stuttered, said to a friend, concerning a third person, "I ha-ha-hate that man." "Why," said his friend in astonishment, "I did not know you had ever met him, or knew him at all." "I do-do-don't," replied Lamb, "I ca-ca-can't ha-hate a man I know." And what constitutes knowing a man, if it is not seeing as he sees? I do not know the man who passes my door every day, but whose home life, whose business, whose pleasures, whose hopes and aims are totally hidden from me. Far better do I know a man whom I have not seen with my physical eyes but who has revealed himself to me in books, poems, sonatas. Thus we may, if we have read their writings or studied their music, say that we know Hugo, Longfellow, Beethoven, far more truly than we know many a person whom we pass on the streets daily.

A little story is told involving Marie Antoinette, the ill-fated Queen of French Revolution days. A mob had stormed the palace in which the Queen and attendants were temporarily dwelling. In the fore part of the mob as

they rushed up the broad stairs and swept, like an angry tide in a narrow cove down a long hallway, was a young and beautiful but frantic and hate-filled woman. The surges of the mob caught up and drove with crushing force the frail body of this young creature against the doors of the very apartment in which the Queen sought sanctuary. By and by the doors were forced, and the poor, fainting girl fell unconscious, almost lifeless, at the feet of soldiers, who dragged her into the room and fought back the remainder of the mob. After the angry insurgents had been driven out, the unfortunate girl awakened from her unconscious condition to find herself being tenderly nursed by a delicate and beautiful woman. As full consciousness returned, she recognized her nurse as none other than Marie Antoinette. "Oh," she sobbed, "I didn't know the Queen was like this." And, my friends, we do not know what fair visions, what tender hopes, what high ideals, what true manliness, is in that noisy boy, that rough and tumble young barbarian, whom we look upon as the pest and torment of the class-room or the community, until we come eye to eye with him. The teacher who cannot or who will not view the problems of her charges from the same angle of vision with

those charges, finds herself daily further and further away from any real influence she might hope to have. The parents who through obstinacy, selfishness, indifference, or absorption in other things, do not and will not make efforts to view child problems from the children's angle of vision, will find the home constantly stirred with discord and marred with misunderstandings.

It is not otherwise when the Church would reach with its message, and mould and shape into something finer and nobler, the life of the community in which it is placed. That stern, severe, and repressive morality which is beyond all question correct in the abstract, but which is not understandable to the poor, broken, sinful humanity around it, would fail in its mission. Near the heart of one of our greatest cities is a beautiful churchly edifice which bears an honoured name. In a former generation, it was erected to house worshippers of the wealthy and cultured groups of the community. Under changing conditions, most of these have either died or moved to the suburbs. Outside the walls of this beautiful and costly edifice surge the great tides of a mighty city. The flotsam and jetsam are washed up even upon the stone steps of this temple of Christ. Yet on the Sab-

bath day a bare handful of the remnants of a once large and highly cultured congregation find a place of worship. Why is this true? Is it not because the message, the thought life, the whole point of view of the Church is conceived, delivered, lived from a different angle of vision from that of the people around it? On the other hand, scores of churches in our great cities have readjusted their program, have got down, eye to eye, with their communities, have endeavoured to solve the problems of the people around them, and are, therefore, warming back into life many that were cold and dead.

It is not enough that we should speak our message and view life's problems in a way that will be understandable and helpful to our charges. It requires also that there should be the touch of the hand, that there should be gentle and yet firm, leadership. "His hands upon his hands."

We train the younger generation for material tasks by teaching them to use their hands. From the making of shoe pegs to the perfection of radio-phones; from the sweeping of floors, to the writing of sonatas and symphonies, the hand is used,—ever guided and directed, of course, by the brain. It is that marvelous instrument, the human hand, which has piled the

pyramids, chiseled the columns of temples, painted the madonnas of art, launched Leviathans on which men go down to the seas, and constructed all the palaces and workshops of the nation. We must not, therefore, forget the immense potentiality there is in taking the hand of the child to train it to useful service, to generous gifts, and to guide and direct in the ways in which they should go, these leaders of future years.

In the last quarter of a century, systematic giving in all of our churches and to all benevolent and eleemosynary institutions, has increased many hundreds and thousands percent. This increase has been more notable in the past decade than formerly. The effort on the part of church leaders and organized workers to place envelopes in the hands of every child of a given group, and to train that child, with his own hand, at stated intervals, to put his offering where it will do the most good—this method has brought up for us a generation of men and women who know how to give; and the vast benevolent and missionary programs of our day are made possible by this training of the hand. Of course, it is not the hand alone that is trained; it is the mind and heart trained to direct the hand; but the figure of our

text is subtly suggestive of the mighty power over individual, communal, and even national destinies when a child's hand is placed in ours.

A little fellow has just arrived in the home. A little dimpled, pink hand is closed round with the warm, strong, brown fingers of the father. It is a symbol of the fact that God has laced those delicate fingers of the baby through the sinuous man-fingers of the father, that the father should lead that child in the way in which it should go. It is a divine commission, and it works both ways; for human experience bears out the testimony of the Scriptures, that "a little child shall lead them."

Some of us will remember that inspiring address the late Bishop John H. Vincent, of the Methodist Church, used to deliver so effectively and which he called "That Boy." Surely no one who heard the eloquent and gifted Bishop will ever forget the picture he drew of the father on a Sabbath morning taking his little son by the hand and leading him to the sanctuary. The symbolic conversation was as follows:

THE BOY—"Father, what a large building!"

THE FATHER—"Yes, my son, it is God's house."

They enter the church.

THE BOY—"Father, look at all the people."

THE FATHER—"Yes, my son, they are God's people."

THE BOY—"Look, father, what a big book there is on the little table."

THE FATHER—"Yes, my son, it is God's book and the man standing behind the little table is God's man who will read God's word to us and tell us of God's love."

There are in each and every community a goodly number of God-fearing men who thus take their children by the hand and lead them to the house of prayer. There is little need to fear for that community and nation which has enough men of that kind in it, for they will lead future lawyers, future doctors, preachers, bankers, artists, artisans, merchants, teachers, in the way in which they should go. It is a wonderful thing to be able to put our hands upon the hands of our children.

I suppose, so far as a logical conclusion is concerned, our sermon is ended. I cannot bring my remarks to a close, however, without reminding you that all this is exactly what our Lord Jesus Christ Himself did for man. He came and assumed our form; He accommodated Himself to our dimensions. He spoke our human speech. He saw and felt our needs from our point of view. He takes us by the hand and leads us through all the tortuous and

perilous ways into the eternal city, into the house of God, not made with hands eternal in the heaven.

OH, Master, in Thine infinite mercy, Thou dost still tabernacle with us, for Thou hast promised to be with us always, even unto the end of the world. Thou knowest our needs, even better than we know them. Thou understandest our thoughts afar off. We pray thee to grant unto us wisdom to be led of Thee, and to lead others as Thou dost lead us; and having led us in this earthly pilgrimage, bring us, we pray Thee, our hands clasped in Thine, to that eternal and blessed estate where there is fulness of expression and ever enlarging opportunities of service and of development. Amen.

V

“ THE CURE FOR THE TROUBLED HEART ”

“ Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.”—JOHN XIV.I.

WE have the power to banish trouble and worry from our hearts. Jesus calmly commands us to do so. He would not issue a foolish command, and such a command certainly would be foolish if it were impossible to execute it. Such a command may have sounded impossible to the disciples; it seems absurd to some modern troubled hearts. “ How,” they asked, “ how can one control his fears, his sorrows, his troubles? ”

There have been and still are widely varying conceptions of the person of Jesus. But I dare assert that no one has ever seriously questioned His knowledge of the workings of the human mind and heart. The profound statement of John, “ He knew what was in man,” has been ratified by the testimony and the experience of men of all succeeding centuries. It is well for us to begin with this concession, therefore—

that when Jesus commands us to control our fears, to banish our troubles, He is issuing a command which we are competent to obey. No need for us to say, “But I can no more help worrying than I can help breathing.” Jesus calmly assumes that our emotions are under our control. He forbids anger, He commands us to love, He plainly states that our thoughts must be pure, and He exhorts us to expel greed and envy. Not only our outward acts, but even our broodings, our moods, our very outlook upon life, all are controllable.

A famous schism in these modern days is based upon just this very power and the neglect of most professing Christians to use the power; for in its ultimate analysis, what is the minor premise of Christian Science other than that we can control the mind and through it control the functions, physiological and pathological, of our body. So far as I have been able to understand the Christian Scientists, they have no great concern for the kingdom of God as we conceive it, no great passion for social righteousness, and no desire to snatch men as brands from the burning; but rather do they dwell upon an individual and personal triumph over all ills that may, can, and do affect us, body, mind, or spirit, here or hereafter. Why

should Christians who are more orthodox along other lines be less orthodox along this line?

A gloomy Christian is a contradiction of terms, and the proverbial long-faced church member, in so far as that individual now exists, is a standing proclamation of doubt on the part of the believer of the power vested in him to rise superior to the ordinary troubles of life. On the other hand, you and I have met so many genuine Christians who have triumphed over their troubles that we have visible and concrete evidence of the fact that we too can triumph and should triumph and, if we use our God-given powers and privileges aright, we shall triumph over all such things.

I suppose this is what some of our friends mean by the "Victorious Life." Certainly if we are living by faith and walking daily in the light of His countenance, inspired and strengthened by His Holy Spirit, our lives should be "victorious"; or as the old hymn says:

"If our love were but more simple,
We should take him at his word,
And our lives would be all sunshine,
In the sweetness of the Lord."

Jesus, however, in issuing this command fol-

lows it with another command; or it may be, as in the old version, not a command but a declaration that we believe in God. It is immaterial to our thought just here whether we translate this second clause as indicative or imperative mode. We may see clearly that Jesus is giving His disciples, and through them is giving us, an insight into the workings of faith in the heart of man, so that he may know how to banish trouble. It is as if He said, “You must not let your heart be troubled: I know it is very difficult for you to control your emotions and to master your moods, so I will remind you that you are to do this through a knowledge of and a reliance upon the fact that ye believe in God.”

Just consider what it would mean if we truly believed in God. Not in Mr. Brittling's de-natured-God, not in the limited divinity who desires good for His children before He is able to banish ills from them; but in a genuine God. The true God is omniscient and omnipotent, and He “doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?” Yet with all this wisdom and might and power the God in Whom we are to believe if our hearts are to be

free from trouble is long-suffering and merciful and loving and of tender compassion.

I am persuaded that few thoughtful people today would desire to be set down as atheists. There was a statement in one of our better-class magazines a few years ago to the effect that any cadet at our National Military Academy who upon matriculating declared himself to be an atheist, was excused from all Chapel exercises. The writer went on to say that it was a rare thing for any of these fine young men, with their already highly trained minds, to declare that they were atheists. There have been times when men were theoretically atheists, but it is not theoretical and philosophical atheism which blights men today. It is a far subtler and therefore more dangerous practical atheism; namely, the atheism which leaves the law and love of God out of account in all the motives and movements of one's life and of the large movements of history. It is as if one should say, "Oh, yes, I believe in God as a being who has made possible this stage of life upon which we are playing our parts, but He is only mildly interested in the show, and will neither applaud nor blame whether our part is comedy or tragedy, whether we play ill or well." Such a conception of God as this could

not be held by those who observe the teachings of history. Moreover in the world of nature even a savage could see the might and power of deity. There has something irreplaceable gone out of the life and soul of the man who no longer feels awe when he contemplates the might and power which are generated in the divine dynamos and which from some source across the unwired abysses of space, hold the worlds and flaming suns as if in the fingers of a deft magician.

In simpler times, men felt the awe and majesty, the power and glory of God in the lightning flash, in the rolling clouds, in the storm winds, in the thunder that reverberated and “seemed to shake the spheres,” in the wild lashings of the wintry seas. We of these modern days observe the workings of power on a far vaster scale. Earth with her satellite and her sister planets swinging in majestic ellipses around our sun; that sun with its titan brood swimming through infinite space around some great central orb or groups of orbs; while flitting in and out like humming birds visiting flowers, the eerie comets come and go. The astro-physicists bring us the result of their intricate calculations, of their spectrum-analyses, of their measuring and weighing and chemical

assorting of stars and suns. They announce to us that a Betelgeuse or a Canopus are so vast in their dimensions that were either a hollow sphere and our sun placed at its center, the earth could still revolve in an orbit its present size and not exceed the limits of the surface of that inconceivable mass of molten matter and flaming gas. The mind falls back upon itself and we find it saying, "If there is a Power which has created all this, if there is a Being who guides and controls it, then, at least in a physical sense, He is the Almighty." His power is absolutely infinite.

We are, I think, therefore, in no frame of mind to deny the power of God in the material world. But whether we would be so willing to admit that power in the affairs of men, in the rise and fall of nations, in battles, and in ethnic transmigrations, is perhaps another question. Yet when our Saviour tells His disciples that they are to banish trouble because they believe in God, He would be giving them, in His use of the name of deity, the conception of God known to their fathers and proclaimed by their prophets. This conception of deity would be one of intimate association with His people. He would be a God who makes promises of endless mercies through His bow set in the

heavens and pointed out to Noah as token of a covenant. He would be the God who led Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees. He would be the God who protected Joseph when sold into slavery in Egypt, and who brought him through all the dangers and set him near the throne of Pharaoh. He would be the God who spoke to Moses and revealed to him the divine law. He would be the God of whom David sang and upon whose laws he meditated in the night season. He would be the God who for the sacred city's continued hardness of heart brought Nebuchadnezzar and swept Jerusalem, as some chess-man from a giant chess board, into his hand. He would be the God of Isaiah's commission, of Ezekiel's glorious visions, of Daniel's high triumphs. Not one of Jesus' immediate hearers would doubt for an instant that God ruled among men, as well as exercised His power in nature. Their philosophy of history could probably be summed up in the words of Joseph, “Ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life,” and that God so overrules even the weaknesses and wickedness of men that these too work out a far more abundant and exceeding weight of glory. They would be in a position to accept, when stated to them, as Paul at a later time did state that, “All

things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

While the power and the wisdom of God could be discovered in nature, there would be little proof in natural theology of a God of love and mercy. Jesus, therefore, connects himself with this exhortation of faith. It would not be difficult for the disciples to believe in Jesus as a good man, kind-hearted, long-suffering, merciful. In fact, they would have many demonstrations of this. They would remember how Jesus took little children in His arms and caressed and blessed them. They could recall His interest in the hungry multitudes, whom He would not send away until they were fed. They would not have forgotten the way in which He responded to the appeals of the blind beggar, of the ruler whose daughter lay so ill, of the leper who came wailing, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." They would remember, too, how on one occasion meeting a funeral procession, the Lord's heart had been touched by the sorrows of the poor widow of Nain; and again how at the home of the two sisters in Bethany, He had wept with them in their sorrow over the death of Lazarus. They would remember the beautiful stories He had

told of lost sheep and of straying sons. If then they could connect up the infinite power and majesty of God with this infinite tenderness and love of that friend and teacher, they would be in a position to say to their troubled hearts, “Be at rest: for the One who is gentler and sweeter and far more merciful than we have ever been, is also the One who is in unbroken touch with the source of all power. Because the Almighty is also the All-loving, we can surely trust Him to care for us, to bring us through all our dangers, to enable us to triumph over all our foes, and to banish even the fear of separation and death.

This is one of the ends desired by the Saviour when in breaking to them the news that He soon must leave them, He reminds them that they need not fear for, just as they believe in Him as a friend, so they must believe in the eternal and invisible God as a friend.

This message of comfort is undoubtedly needed by you and me. There is a haunting fear, a sense of impending doom that is common to the race, when unsustained by faith. Shakespeare’s “Juliet” expressed a universal sentiment when she exclaimed, “O God, I have an ill-divining heart.” But here our religion can help and should help: when problems that

we are unable to solve face us, when steep and rugged roads are to be traveled, when burdens are very heavy, when sorrows threaten to submerge us, when long partings are about to take place, the words of Jesus should speak comfort to us. "Let not your heart be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in Me." We should be able to rise in response thereto and joyfully exclaim, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

" We know not where his islands lift
 Their fronded palms in air.
 We only know we cannot drift
 Beyond his love and care."

O, Thou who art our Friend, we rejoice that Thy hand is able to save and that Thy heart yearns for our salvation in our need, in our sin, in our sorrow, in any and every condition of life. We turn unto Thee for we know that Thou wilt protect us and bring us unto Thyself. Amen.

VI

THE HILLS OF HELP

"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help."—PSALM CXXI.I.

THE singer of this beautiful hymn of hope may have lived in Judea's happiest days. He may have been one of a band of pilgrims who were going up to Jerusalem to worship. He would have travelled weary miles along dusty roads, hungry and thirsty and faint. He would have reached the highest place in the road which wound over the hills that surround Jerusalem and for the first time his eyes would be enraptured by beholding the glorious city so dear to every child of his race. Instructed in the history of his people and the geography of his native soil, he would remember a sacred hill upon which long, long ago Abraham had in spirit offered up Isaac. He would see crowned with the temple that eminence which had been so important a stage in the religious life of the children of Abraham. He would associate with some great event in the national and spiritual life of his people, each

and every part of the sacred city. He would reflect that from this hill or that one, God had undoubtedly spoken to his people. His eyes beheld the very hills whence help visibly had come. He would reflect that his help was not in these things, in these hallowed localities, but his help was in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth.

It may be that the singer lived in "less happier" days; in times when armies were marching against his land; in hours of battle, siege, and storm. The army of some heathen king may be encamped upon those hills which had so delighted the sweet singer who had cried, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together."

Those in the besieged city could hardly expect friendly help to come breaking through the camps of the beleaguering hosts. There were probably no friendly nations to help them, and even if there were how could such nations break through the cordon of steel and come to the rescue? Again the patriot must look within. Finding garrisons barely large enough to withstand assault and with no reserve forces with which to make sallies and drive the enemy

away, he is forced again to see his only help coming as in other times, from the Lord, who made heaven and earth, and whose presence with His people is typified by the temple-crowned summit of the sacred hill, or by the summits of the other eminences, each one eloquent of what God had done for His people and of what He yet could and would do. In the triumphant burst of faith under these conditions he cried, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills."

Far away from Judeah on the banks of the Euphrates in Babylonia, a captive poet may have lifted his eyes filled with longing in the direction from whence his people had come. No blue, beautiful hills made graceful curves or gnarled outlines against his horizon. As far as he could see stretched the level plains of Mesopotamia. Yet in his vision he saw the sacred city of his people, set round about with inviolable hills, itself nursing the noblest mounts and the most sacred spots of all the world. Suddenly the soul miraged against the horizon the vision of this city, the promise that had been made to it and to his people, the pleasant ways of Zion, and the temple-crowned hills. Gone for the moment was the feeling of depression; gone, the sense of slavery; gone the

captive's chains, and he could cry, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help."

Hills have ever been the sources of inspiration to men of poetic minds. The ancient Greek saw a cloud-capped Olympus outlining its graceful slopes against the azure sky. To his mind the summit was the abode of the immortal gods. The Norseman saw his misty hills not as gloomy and forbidding but as beautiful and alluring. There Odin held his court whence flowed the streams of poesy which earthly poets drank. There Thor forged his thunderbolts and hurled his battle hammer as the friend and champion of men. From these poetic conceptions to our scientific knowledge of the ozone-laden cooling airs which flow down the sides of our own beloved forest-clad mountains, men have felt helped, uplifted, strengthened by looking up unto the hills. All which things, dear friends, are an allegory for us. We may be living in happy days, in a pleasant land: it should be our great privilege and joy to go up to the places of worship, the houses where men today "praise God from whom all blessings flow." They are to us as truly the hill of Zion as was the temple-crowned hill in old Jerusalem. Upon our lips, bubbling

from the deepest places of our hearts, should be the joy of song: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills."

In another figure, we may be feeling the siege of these times of stress and storm. Conscious of our oneness in Christ's Church, we are also conscious of the evil hosts which camp round about us day and night and which would destroy us and our sacred Jerusalem if they could. Vain is it for us to look for help from human re-enforcements. Vain is it for us to scan the distant horizon or the dust clouds which bespeak oncoming battalions which shall rout our enemies and free us from their threat. Our help, as with the psalmist, is from within. Nay, it is from above, through those who are within; from above to be manifested by those who are upon the hills of our city of God. We too must be able to shout the note of victory, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help."

Some of us may be like unto the captive Judean in far-off lands. God turn the spiritual eyes of all such in the direction of His eternal city! God mirror by spiritual processes, upon the skies of the soul, the glories of Jerusalem the Golden, the city of the Great King. God cause all such captives, with yearning and eag-

erness, to turn their faces in the direction of that city, and to cry, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help."

Within the sacred precincts of the city of our divine religion, great hills of help still rise. Some of these may suggest themselves to us in the names and through the functions which far-famed mountains have occupied in the spiritual history that is our common possession.

Will you permit me to alter my theme, and bring a fuller application of the thought of help which we get from the hills by mentioning some mountains which loom high in Bible lore? These are not all geographically in the capital city of Judah; but they are all within the city of God, as well as upon the map of His world. They are not mere mounds of rock and earth; they also, from sacred associations, are spiritual hills.

High lifts itself into the Arabian desert skies, where

"Earth's highest yearns to meet a star,"

the rocky crags, the mist-covered pinnacles, the cloud-enshrined glories of Sinai. There God gave the moral law; and everyone of us who looks unto the hills for help, looks unto this Mount of the Law. Let us not accustom our-

selves to thinking that this is a mount which means limitation, which lays burdens upon us, which causes us to be "cabin'd, crib'd, confin'd, bound in." The law binds no shackles upon the soul other than the golden fetters that hold us to God. The law tells us how He who made us would have us to live. Because He knows us and loves us He has given us the way in which, so living, we may have the fullest expression of life, the completest joy of existence, the noblest expression for time and for eternity of all those marvellous benefits and powers which He has bestowed upon us. Perhaps there is a spiritual desert "some'ers east of Suez, where there ain't no 'Ten Commandments." Perhaps there is a moral desert in this noble land of ours, vast, parched, arid, deadly, where green and beautiful things are never seen; where bleaching skeletons and drifting sand dunes reveal themselves as the cemeteries of the soul. It is to no such place as this that the soul may look for help. It is rather to the thunder-shaken slopes of Sinai that we look. Yea, rather, it is to that other Mount upon which Jesus sat when He "opened His mouth and taught" His disciples; where He re-echoed and re-enforced and revived and respiritualized the statutes and commandments which

God had given through Moses ; where He cried, " You have heard it said by them of old-time, but I say unto you " ; where He spoke in a voice that reached further than the noisiest storm on Mount Hor ; where the winds caught up His words and took them, and is still bearing them to forest glades, to dark valleys, to teeming cities, to islands of the seas ! Oh, my brethren, let us lift up our eyes unto the Hill of the Law and the Hill of Jesus Sermon Mount, whence cometh our help.

Another hill of help within our spiritual Jerusalem, is the one suggested to us by that Olivet where we read that Jesus spent His nights after arduous days of teaching in the temple. For we may be sure Olivet in those nights was a shrine of prayer. Men have vied with one another in proclaiming the value, in extolling the beauty and the glory, of prayer. Familiar as they are, perhaps no one has ever more splendidly expressed the Christian's belief in prayer than is found in those oft-quoted lines of Tennyson :

" More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore let thy
voice
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
For what are men better than sheep or goats,
That nourish a blind life within the brain,

If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
Both for themselves and those who call them
friend?"

But now, alas, many voices tell us that prayer at best has but a reflex value; that any objective value it may have is due to its power, if it is oral, of producing in the minds of the hearers a state of devotion; but, so far as any approach it may have to the ear of God, it may as well not be spoken. To such the heavens are as brass. To such there are no "sweet heavens" whence mercies fall like life-giving showers. To such the universe is in the drifting tides of chance and change without a guiding Mind or Hand:

Flower and cloud and sun and star.
Beast and bird and conquering man,
All but chemic compounds are,
Mixed by chance since time began.

To such we dwell for a few hectic days in a "charnel house, full of specters and dead men's bones." Ah! as one has most sagely said:

"What is man
If his chief good and market of his time
Be but to sleep and feed? a beast; no more."

But as we lift our eyes to the hill of prayer our belief is that God's ear is ever open to hear and His heart ever tender to grant our petitions

in accordance with His own great wisdom. Not only within the walls of the city itself, but scattered over the land of Palestine, were places made forever sacred because there men of God had wrestled in prayer with the angels, as did Jacob at Bethel and as did Jesus on Olivet. Let us not fail, my friends, to turn our thoughts to those places whence the horizons of the soul arise, and let us cry in the language of this ancient litany, "I will lift up mine eyes to the hills."

In the words of a stately old hymn we sometimes sing,

"There is a green hill far away without a
city wall,
Where the dear Lord was crucified, Who
died to save us all."

Though Golgotha was not within the hallowed limits of the city of David, it is certainly within the holy walls of the spiritual city of the Church of Christ. It is superlatively the hill from whence cometh our help. There is no human explanation why this is true; yet, even as the dying thief turned with renewal of hope in the last moments of his sorrowful and sin-stained earthly life to his dying Companion on the cross, so men everywhere have looked upon that tragic figure and have felt a new hope.

The man with the ripest training of University routine; the unlettered man in the darkened corners of the world; the mother who with breaking heart and tear-suffused eyes bids her soldier son "Good-by"; and the aged wreck of humanity who looks back over an ill-spent life;—in short, all classes and conditions of men looking up from all circumstances and environments of life, and every quarter of the world, have felt a thrill of new life, of pulsating hope as of the dawning of a new and better day, when their eyes have rested on cross-crowned Calvary.

This is the hill of help: this is where God, stooping down, touched man's deepest sorrows, sweetened his bitterest cup, assuaged his sharpest pains. I point you to this hill today and beg of you that you look up unto the hill from whence cometh your help.

"Who love Thee most, at Thy dear Cross
Will truest, Lord, abide;
Make Thou that cross our only hope
O Jesus Crucified."

BLESSED be Thy name, O Thou, spirit of mercy, love and truth, that Thou hast given us spiritual eyes with which we may perceive those spiritual summits which shine with

Thine undying light. May everyone of us to-day lift up his eyes unto the hill where Thy moral law has been proclaimed; where he may approach Thee in prayer; where One suffers for him and suffers not in vain. In His name, Amen!

VII

THE GOSPEL MESSAGE IN A WORLD OF SPIRITUAL DRY BONES

“Again he said to me, Prophesy upon these bones and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord.”—EZEKIEL XXXVII.4.

EZEKIEL has been called the first dogmatic theologian. Behind his vision there is a constructive doctrine which is arranged in logical order. There are times when it is almost true that he says, “firstly, secondly,” and so on. The Reverend John Skinner in the Expositor’s Bible, says of him, “In so far as it is the business of a theologian to exhibit the logical connection of the ideas which express man’s relation to God, Ezekiel more than any other prophet may claim the title.” Again he says, “What is specially remarkable is the manner in which the doctrines are bound together in the unity of a system.” We find that there is this logical and systematic arrangement of thought underneath his description of his vision “of the valley which was full of bones.”

In their benighted and hopeless condition, the

children of Judah were in despair. Their captivity in a strange land, the deserted streets and temple at Jerusalem, and their hopeless prospect, overwhelmed them. They cried with the poignancy of the Psalmist, "Our bones are dried and our hope is lost." Such a condition of mind, such a lack of faith, need cause no wonder, when we remember the might of their great conqueror Nebuchadnezzar, and their impotence to raise even a riot much less a successful rebellion. When we call to mind how far Babylon lay from Jerusalem, we can easily understand why the melancholy threnody of the ancient psalmist rose to their minds: "Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth, as when one cutteth and cleaveth wood upon the earth."

Such then is the condition of his people when Ezekiel undertakes to comfort and inspire them. From long brooding upon their hard condition, and with the somber refrain of David ringing in his mind, he is in condition to cast his thought in the picturesque form of this vision.

There would be to Ezekiel and to his hearers, the historical and national explanation of the vision. Such an explanation would be first and paramount. It might indeed exclude other and

deeper interpretations from the minds of the first hearers and readers. It is safe to assume that such exclusion of wider and deeper aims was not true in regard to Ezekiel. Matthew Henry reminds us that this vision not only prophesies the reassembling of the chosen people and their re-establishment in their Holy Land, but also that it prophesies the resurrection of souls from the death of sin, the resurrection of the body at the last day, and also the resurrection of the Gospel Church. Today, my theme is something in the nature of a foot-note to the third thought just mentioned, for herein lies in orderly arrangement the conditions which surround the gospel preacher and the divinely ordered process by which he is to do his work.

You recall outlines of the vision. The Lord takes the prophet out and sets him in the midst of the valley full of bones. He lays emphasis upon the fact that they are not only dead but long since dry and scattered. He asks the prophet if these bones can live, and the prophet replies, "O Lord God, Thou knowest." He then commands Ezekiel to prophesy upon the bones, and when Ezekiel obeyed "there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone." Then flesh and

skin covered the bones, but the bodies remained lifeless. Again the divine command came and in obedience Ezekiel prophesied unto the winds and these breathed upon the bodies "and breath came into them and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army."

The analogy between a valley full of dead bones and the world in which the gospel message was first proclaimed is not far fetched. Likewise the analogy between such a valley and the world in which the gospel message is preached and lived today is very clear. Humanly speaking, the unevangelized portion of humanity seem to be about as responsive to the gospel message as those bones might have seemed to Ezekiel; and yet God sends us out, as He sent this older prophet, to proclaim our message regardless of the fact that it does seem a hopeless task. Moreover, the passage makes it clear that the prophet, the preacher, the individual Christian whose life is a prophecy of the gospel,—all these are made to acknowledge that the condition does seem hopeless. God did more than set Ezekiel down in the midst of the valley of dry bones. He took him and made him walk about amongst those mournful remains of what once were men. He compelled Ezekiel to acknowledge that there is no power

or ingenuity in man which can revive them. He asks him the question, "Can the bones live?" The answer is the safe one for us to make when God sends us, as individuals or as a Church, to preach His gospel in the desiccated death-valleys of the world. He does not answer, "The dead bones cannot live"; nor does he presume to say that the dead bones can live. He puts the matter wholly into the Almighty hands:—"O Lord God, Thou knowest."

When this attitude of mind is ours we are in a position to hear, as Ezekiel heard, this command, "Prophesy upon these bones and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord." "Prophesy" means "preach, speak out, proclaim so that they can hear it." Disregard the fact that there are no ears to hear, no brain to receive, no heart to feel; preach the word; insist that the bones must hear the word of the Lord. Such, brethren and friends, is our mission. Dr. Patten, of Princeton, used to say, "The Church exists for propaganda," which, I take it, means that the Church has as its *raison d'être* the proclamation of good news, the preaching of the gospel.

We call those men who have been educated in theology and ordained to the gospel ministry, "ambassadors of Christ,"—"preachers of

the word." But every believer is a preacher of the gospel, every church is an evangelist. Some of us may not be very busily engaged in the King's Business; but such is our mission, our duty, nonetheless. Each of us should proclaim the message to the deaf, dry world around us by the actions of our lives, by the words of our mouths. Never mind how improbable or impossible may appear any results: never mind how ridiculous it may seem to us to prophesy over dead bones; the divine command comes, "Preach the gospel to every creature." Ezekiel might have stopped to argue with the Lord. He might, for instance, have remonstrated against being asked to do a foolish thing. It does look simple and silly, as worldly wisdom would use these terms, for a man, no matter how eloquent his speech, to walk into a lonely valley, gruesome with the stark bones that lie here and there, and to lift up his voice in an appeal for them to hear the word of the Lord.

"Can storied urn or animated bust
Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?
Can honor's voice provoke the silent dust,
Or flattery soothe the dull, cold ear of
death?"

It looks equally as foolish for men to preach the message of salvation to cannibals in the

New Hebrides, to squalid black races on the west coast of Africa, to self-satisfied and complacent Chinese on the shore of the Yellow Sea, or to "Bowery Toughs," or thugs, or fallen women on the streets of New York or Chicago. For that matter the evangelistic message may seem foolish and useless in our most Christian communities and in the churches where practically everyone is a professing Christian. But John G. Paton did not argue that God was asking a foolish thing when God sent him to preach to the dry bones in those islands of the Pacific. Nor did Livingstone and his successors feel that way when they heard the command to proclaim the message "somewhere in" the dark continent. Scores and even hundreds of modern Ezekiels, prophet and prophetess, have lifted their voices in complacent China; in shrewd, pagan Japan; in Water Street and Pacific Garden Missions; nor should the pastor or officers or members of the most devout and consecrated group of worshippers feel that it is no longer needful to preach the old gospel in their church. Wherever it is preached are always results. Let me emphasize especially the necessity of heart-searching preaching, both from the pulpit and from the pew, in our supposedly highly religious com-

munities. For an evangelist to visit a well-regulated parish, with a faithful pastor, may seem a work of supererogation. Yet, some years ago I knew such an evangelist to be moved to describe certain conditions which might be obtaining in the lives of some of his hearers. The message "found" four young men, all of whom had been for years nominal members of the Church but who were at that time living in a hell of debauchery and licentiousness; who were in fact just plotting and planning for a crime which would have sent them all to the penitentiary. Thank God that the message found them in time! Thank God that we have still the Ezekiel spirit which does not quarrel with God's command, "Prophecy unto these dry bones."

The result of this prophesying was immediate and startling. "Bones came together, bone to his bone. And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but there was no breath in them." Here was everything about a human being except life and breath, except a soul. The stark bodies scattered about the valley were after all nothing but bodies. There was no spirit in them. We are reminded of the Ancient Mariner:

“The many men so beautiful
And they all dead did lie;
And a thousand thousand slimy things
Lived on and so did I.”

The prophet had obeyed the command that had been given him and his obedience had borne fruit. But something else must be done. Hence, the command: “Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.” The Old Testament word for “wind” and for “spirit” are the same. The prophet is commanded to invoke the airs of heaven, or, we may say, the spirit of God. It is only when God has breathed into man the breath of life that he becomes a living soul. It was only when, at the appeal of the prophet, winds came and breathed upon these men, that life returned to them. It was only when the prophetic utterances of men of God were followed by the believing prayers of other faithful men that ancient Judah lived again and had the power to return and rebuild Jerusalem.

It is not sufficient that the minister deliver his message, that the Church utter its gospel, that the individual believer proclaim by his life

the divine story of grace. These must be followed by prevailing prayer. We deliver our message by word and deed, and that message is sure to show some results. God has testified, "My word shall not return unto Me void but it shall accomplish that for which it is sent." And that for which it is sent is to arrest the attention, persuade the mind, convict the heart, touch and move the will. But all these things can happen and one still remain spiritually a dead body. They are a necessary preface or prologue to that which is to come. They are a part of the plan of salvation. They must never be underrated, much less over-looked. It is as impossible for the work of grace to take place in the heart which has not been touched, the mind which is not convinced and the will which is not moved, as it was for the winds of heaven to animate the bones in the valley, before these had joined themselves to their fellow and had been covered with sinews and flesh and skin.

These things are not to be forgotten when we undertake our heaven-ordered task of converting the ungodly to the religion of Christ. Neither must we forget that when we have done our all there will be no life unless God's spirit breathes upon the sinner. Paraphrasing the ancient cry, "To your tents, O Israel," the

message today is, "To your knees, O Church of God." In believing prayer, in fervent intercession at the throne of grace, in prophesying or appealing to the spirit of God to come and breathe upon the beautiful bodies which the first prophesy has laid before us—here are our greatest needs today. I am persuaded that there is no weakness in the pulpit as compared with the so-called "giants" of former times. I have read extensively the sermonic literature from the earliest times to our present day. I believe there was never a time when a genuine message was more persistently preached and more consistently lived than today. Why then do we not make greater progress? Why in our denomination at large was there added to our rolls during the past year on a Profession of Faith, an average of about one new member for something like twenty who were already members? With our elaborate evangelical and educational machinery, why do we make such slow progress? Is it not because intercessory prayer is almost a lost art? Who can think without being deeply moved of Moses praying that God will cut him off and blot his name out of the book of remembrance, if only he will spare Israel? With the spirit of prayer therefore upon us, prophesying with our petitions that God's

spirit will come upon the boys and girls, the youth and maidens, the unevangelized men and women in our community, in our state and nation, we shall certainly live to see marvelous results.

As Ezekiel obeyed God's command both that he preach and that he pray, and obeying these commands saw in his vision the dead bodies become animated and rise and fill the valley, a great army of men; so shall the Church of Christ obeying His command to preach the gospel to every creature and obeying the other command to pray without ceasing, to be instant in prayer, to be fervent in spirit,—so shall the Church see the lifeless but beautiful bodies stand spiritually upon their feet, a mighty throng to be added to the armies of God.

O GOD, we thank Thee for the gospel message. We thank Thee that it reached us. We pray Thee that through us it may reach many others. We thank Thee for the coming and indwelling of Thy Holy Spirit. We thank Thee that Thou hast breathed into us the breath of life. We pray that we may be more earnest in our intercession in behalf of all those for whom Christ died. Amen.

VIII

“THE GREAT DE-SOCIALIZING DISEASE”

“And Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a several house.”—II CHRONICLES XXVI.21.

A DISTINGUISHED essayist, Brander Matthews, has recently written an able defense of the utterer of platitudes. I for one am very grateful to the Columbia University professor. He gives me renewed courage to go on with a life-long habit of dealing in platitudinous but eternally essential truths.

The first platitude which I desire to emphasize is that man is incurably a social being. There are some “hermit souls that dwell apart,” but such are the exception. Saint Anthony for religious reasons, Timon of Athens for very irreligious reasons, and others for varying reasons, have cut themselves off from their fellows. Thousands who have read and greatly enjoyed Thoreau’s “Walden,” and were moved by its idyllic pages, have moaned with Byron:

“ Oh, for a lodge in some vast wilderness,
With one fair spirit for my minister,
That I might all forget the human race,
And, hating no one, love but only her.”

Yet we may confidently assert that extremely few would enjoy the absolute solitude pictured by Thoreau and would, even in a short time, grow weary of the one fair ministering spirit of whom Byron sings. The proverbial old lady who preferred living in the crowded back streets of the city to being on a lonely farm, and justified her preference with the incontrovertible assertion that “ people are more interesting than stumps,” is a type of us all. We are interested in our fellows, and we want to be with our fellows. If proof of this were necessary, it could be found in the fact that the vast territory of the United States has not prevented the working of deep-rooted social laws from drawing men into congested communities, so that our last national census shows the urban population to have reached and passed that of the rural districts.

A second platitude which I wish to emphasize today is that the disease of the soul which we call “ sin ” is the great separating force. If love is the tie that binds, then sin is the blade which cuts the tie. It is more than a blade—it

is a gradually widening wedge incessantly pushing further and further apart, elements which should stand in closest intimacy,—in actual unity even.

For our purpose, at this moment, it is not essential that we accept any Biblical or ecclesiastical conception or definition of sin. Even the word itself may be set aside, if you prefer, and some other word used. It is, however, a short, convenient, and well-understood term. That much maligned and also much be-praised document, the Shorter Catechism, defines sin as “ any want of conformity unto or transgression of the law of God.” You may broaden the definition; you may narrow it; you may change it to suit your way of thinking, your scheme of things as you think they are; but at least we can agree on this; namely, that all through human history, in all lands, amongst all peoples, and in the lives of practically all individuals, there is ever present a disease of the soul which drives that soul from its best fellows, and consorts it with greed, envy, malice, hatred, impurity, murder, and I know not what other of hell’s black brood. This thing, this impetus in the wrong direction, this sickness of the mind and soul, this leprosy of sin, has always been and ever will be a de-socializing power. This is not

the only charge which can be made against it, not the only way in which it can be convicted of treason against humanity. It is, however, the form or guise under which we view it today.

Uzziah was a man of glorious accomplishments. We read in the twenty-sixth chapter of II Chronicles how he succeeded to the throne when but sixteen years of age, and how for the better part of fifty-two years his power was felt by all neighbouring nations. He fortified the city of Jerusalem and made it exceedingly strong. He enlarged the army, gave it better weapons of warfare, trained and led it to success. As the ancient chronicler says, "his name spread far abroad; for he was marvelously helped, till he was strong."

It was just at this point, we read, that "his heart was lifted up to his destruction." We speak of the "times that try men's souls"; the times which truly try the soul are not the times of hardship, of battling against apparently overwhelming enemies—they are rather the times of prosperity. Many a man has lived nobly and worked with high ideals, until success has come. Then, in the intoxication of praise or of money or of power, the heart has been lifted up to the man's destruction. Prob-

ably God keeps most of us poor, and in inconspicuous positions, and devoid of much power, because most of us could not stand the test of great success. Uzziah was like the most of us then, in that he became over-presumptuous. He forgot to pray as the Psalmist prayed, “keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me.” He sinned by presuming that he might usurp the place of the priest when God had set him to be the king. He was informed by courteously deferential but faithful and sincere men of God that this was not his office, that God had assigned these high tasks to the sons of Aaron. Uzziah was very angry and we read that even while he was swinging the censer in his hand, presumably in the holy places of the temple, leprosy rose to his forehead, “And he hastened to go out, because the Lord had smitten him.” His sin was the sin of pride and presumption, of overweening self-esteem. He was compelled, as if he were a beggar, to go out from the face of man. He was isolated. He could no longer live in his palace and commune with princes and lords. He must dwell alone. His house was a separate, shunned pest house, where the flattering courtier dared not go.

Your sin and mine may take a very different

form. But it is, in the degree and proportion of its heinousness, marking us with the leprosy which drives us out from actual and spiritual contact with our fellows.

That is certainly one of the great charges which can be brought against sin. It drives a cutting and an ever-widening wedge between us and our brother. It not only separated Cain from Abel but it separated Cain from all other mankind. Wherever the spirit of Cain gets mastery of our spirits it drives us out as it drove Cain. Listen to his cry: "Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me."

No apter illustration of this separating power may be found than is afforded by the divorce records of today. Social economists and Christian workers not only deplore but are appalled at the shocking increase in divorce. Be it said that the disregard of the seventh Commandment is not the only form of sin which is "dividing asunder" those whom God hath joined together; or those who should have been joined by God. The sin of selfishness, the sin of laziness, the sin of sheer indifference,—these

things may be the power that drives you out from home and fireside, from brother and sister, from wife or husband. The shocking disruption of so many modern homes; the alienation of those who should live in wedded self-helpfulness; the turning out innocent children as what we may inelegantly call “grass orphans”—all this is due to the desocializing power of sin over the heart.

A gentleman spoke to me recently in confidence, concerning his domestic troubles. He built his wife a beautiful home, furnished it according to her tastes, and lavished upon her anything and everything within reason which she asked. Now this gentleman laments that even the duties of directing the home, in which there are no children, have become so distasteful to his wife that she refuses longer to keep the house for him. Fine clothes, fine hotels, association with people of more or less “sporty” tendencies, the theatre, the moving-picture place, the glamour and glare of the great department stores, nightly indulgence in modern dances,—these things have so absorbed her interests that she has no time or taste for the plain, home-like virtues which should be in any good wife. The scoffing cynic might dismiss such a case with the question: What can

you expect of a woman with a fourth reader intellect and the soul of a jay-bird? As for the intellect, it could have been better had there been less vanity in it; and pride and selfishness have contributed to the distorting and dwarfing of her soul to the proportion and propensities in that highly decorated but also highly detestable thief and murderer of the feathered race, the blue-jay.

Whether it is among friends in the community, individuals in the same family, or groups in the same state or nation; or whether it is as between one race or people and other people or race; when this separation,—and consequent bitterness, hatred, and antagonism,—comes, we may be sure "sin lieth at the door,"—nay, that sin has risen as a leprosy to the forehead. When there was Civil War in this country, the sin of slavery was the power that drove the sections apart. When the world broke out in its most deadly war, it was the sin of race hatred, together with the sin of greed, which was the disrupting power breaking up the family of nations. So it has been, so it ever will be, until that time foreseen by John has arrived, and it is literally true that "there is no more sin."

The dividing asunder of a man from his fellows is due in some measure to the fact that sin

has blinded his eyes to his own limitations. The Uzziah who presumptuously essayed to enter the sanctuary and who theatrically swayed the censer and doubtless intoned the ritual of worship, was a far less clear-thoughted man than the Uzziah of earlier days. In a parallel record, in the second book of Kings, Uzziah, who is there called Azariah, is given the endorsement, “And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father Amaziah had done; save that the high places were not removed: the people sacrificed and burnt incense still in the high places.” Here is an insight into the inward character of Uzziah. He was not absolutely and wholly devoted to the Lord. If there were no actual outward alliances with heathenism, there was an inward complacency toward them. In these earliest times the blade of sin had not cut far, the wedge of sin had not been driven home, and Uzziah’s outward life was still consonant with his own best self—with his own ideal self.

Herein lie warnings for every one of us. Perhaps most of us have been somewhat shocked at those words of the Psalmist, “Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee?—I hate them with perfect hatred.” Yet it would have been better for Uzziah if he had hated

those who hated the Lord, and it would be better for us if there was that in our hearts which rose in righteous wrath against all workers of iniquity, against every insidious allurements of the world, the flesh, and the devil. It is not easy for us as Christians to break away entirely from the love of the world and the things in the world. Worldly people will call us narrow-minded and bigoted; they will say we at best are shutting our eyes to half the show. We may be half persuaded and half shamed into a toleration of practices which we know are either sinful in themselves or open the way to lives of worldliness and sin. We may not indulge for our own part in these things, but may just tolerate them and by silence give assent to their propagation. Better far for us to strike no truce with the enemy for he may wrap himself in a white flag to persuade us of the purity of his motives; but underneath this white exterior he bears weapons of death and is but waiting an opportunity to use them.

A Philadelphia clergyman who recently left a banquet at which he had been invited to deliver an address, is to be highly commended. The good Doctor showed good sense, good patriotism, and a high degree of courage when he left that dinner because intoxicating liquors were

being served. Weaker men, men with less discernment of the dangerous possibilities, men with less devotion to the laws of their native land, might have sat through the dinner, have delivered their address, have even possibly and good-naturedly taken the diners to task for their flagrant contempt of the fundamental law of the land, and have salved their consciences by saying that they had not themselves partaken of the cup that does inebriate. Not so this stalwart man of God. There is no “ save that ” possible in the attitude of the man who would keep his life unsullied by the world. If we are making mental reservations; if we are trimming and hedging here and there! if we are shrugging our shoulders over things we know to be wrong, and which we might at least indignantly denounce; if we are tolerating in our own lives or the lives of our children those habits of thought as well as those practices and pleasures which correspond to the “ high places ” which Uzziah did not remove, we need to take fair warning that the wedge of sin is being driven in, that the leprosy of sin is taking hold of us, and separating us, further and further from that ideal self God purposed for us to be.

As we glance backward today over the course

of life we have run, what is our own calm and deliberate judgment concerning ourselves? Must we any one of us sing the unhappy lines of the old hymn—

"Where is the blessedness I knew,
When first I saw the Lord?"

Do we look with regret upon wide chasms which separate the man or the woman we are today from the high-minded boy or the pure-souled girl we were in former years. Readers, of a former generation found great pleasure in Thomas Moore's poem, "The Peri." It will be recalled that this fair spirit belonging to a race which had been banished from Paradise, was told that she could re-enter the Realms of the Blest, if at the gates of Heaven she presented the most precious thing in the world. Inspired with a desire once more to enjoy the glorious life of Eden, the Peri presented first one precious thing and then another, but the gates did not open for her. One evening she saw a hardened, wicked, murderous robber as he stopped his horse near the cool waters of a fountain and paused in a kind of horrified admiration to look upon this man of plunder, blood, and death. The robber, as I remember the story, was just stooping to drink from the spring when, clear

on the air of evening, from some distant minaret, came the call to prayer. What did he see as he gazed into the polished surface of the mirroring fountain? Certainly he saw there the scowling forehead, the hard glittering distrusting eyes, the foul mouth from which so often had come words of blasphemy, of obscenity, and of hate. Perhaps also, mirrored by the side of this grim-visaged thing which he knew to picture himself, he saw the peaceful face, the tender eyes, the delicate mouth, the wistful expression of the sweet and innocent child which once he was. How widely separate were the two. Further than the East is from the West had sin thrust him from the child he was, from the man he might have been. Overcome with remorse and repentance, the flinty heart was melted, and from his eyes fell tears of genuine sorrow and regret. The Peri caught the first of these tears and when she presented them at the Golden Gate, the portals swung wide for her to enter, for the most precious thing in the sight of heaven was the tear of a repentant sinner.

This is not contrary to the word of Jesus who said, “ Likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no re-

pentance." We are separated from our fellows because we are separated from our best self. We are separated from our best selves because of the disease of the soul we call "Sin." The cure for that disease is repentance, confession, and faith. If my words today reach one who knows himself to be thus alienated from the best there is in human society, to be estranged from his own better nature, will he not in godly sorrow for his sins and a yearning after new obedience, turn to Him who alone can heal the sickness of the soul? "And when he came to himself——."

The visible reason why Uzziah was compelled to dwell in a separate house and was excluded from the house of the Lord, was that he was a leper: but the cause behind this visible reason lay deeper than the discoloured skin and the diseased tissues. The cause was in the heart and soul of Uzziah. After all, it was alienation from God. He dwelt in a separate house from his fellows and was a different being from what he should have been because he was estranged from God. Because only as men live in God are they their best selves. The possibility for largest growth, for completest development, for fullest and highest enjoyment, is in living with God. "If I live with God," says Emerson,

“ my voice should be as sweet as the murmur of brooks and the rustle of corn.” If I live with God, my fellows should find in the words of my mouth, in the labours of my hands, in the symmetry and proportions of my personality, that which appeals, fascinates, uplifts. The man who lives with God brings with him “ airs from heaven.” It is the man who is separated from God whose life withers and blights fair and beautiful things, who seems to bring “ blasts from hell.”

My friend, if you are living conscientiously in any known sin, you are alienating yourself from God. If you are living in complacent acceptance of sin in the home, in the Church, in the community, in the nation, in the world, the seeds of the disease of death are already within you. You may not break out with some moral leprosy in a sudden and dramatic moment, as did Uzziah; but you are driving yourself inevitably away from God, away from Him in whom alone life can find its fullest expression, its greatest usefulness, its highest glory.

“ We are sinners all.” The apostle reminds us that all we have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God; but we are also reminded that when we sin we have an advocate with the father, even Jesus Christ the righteous. Do we

dwell in a several house, shut off from spiritual communion with God? There is forgiveness with Him, and if in repentance we cry as did the lepers who came to Jesus in old Judean days: "If thou wilt thou canst make me clean," His answer always is, "I will. Be thou clean."

O, THOU great Physician! O, Thou who art the balm of Gilead! Cleanse Thou us from all unrighteousness; heal in us the leprosy of sin; remove from us every vestige of that terrible disease; bring us back to spiritual fellowship with Thy people, to a full expression of manhood and womanhood as it is in Christ Jesus; to joyous union with Thee in whose presence is fullness of joy for evermore. Amen.

IX

“FEASTING AND PRAYING ON MOUNT CARMEL”

“So Ahab went up to eat and to drink: and Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees.”—I KINGS XVIII.42.

ELIJAH, prophet of God, and Ahab, wicked and selfish king, are by nature antipathetic. Their faces look in different directions. Their words and acts are inspired by different motives. Whatever they may have in common, in outward form and semblance, discloses itself as anything but identical when one looks into their hearts.

This contrast begins in the position of the men. The one a proud, domineering, irreligious tyrant; the other a lowly, meek, but nonetheless firm and pure-minded prophet. The one clothed in purple and fine linen and dwelling in his palace, surrounded by obsequious courtiers and trembling slaves. The other, gaunt, austere, in the garb of a child of the wilderness, without permanent shelter for his head, and surrounded by a small circle of very devoted

and very faithful friends. This contrast runs far deeper than any external appearance or outward condition. It is in the soul of the men, for Elijah almost literally brings with him "airs from heaven" and Ahab surely suggests the mephitic "blasts of hell."

This contrast in their character is illustrated by the motives which have brought them to Mount Carmel. Ahab, who has met Elijah with the impolite, insulting query, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" has gone to Carmel to witness the discomfiture and disgrace of the one whom he hates. Elijah, who met the king's unfriendly inquiry with the firm answer, "I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord," has gone to Carmel to be the human agent through whom God shall discomfit the prophets of Baal. Ahab, in other words, is there for purposes that are selfish, revengeful, and in every way opposed to true religion. Elijah is there defending the religion of the one true God as his first mission and duty, and defending himself as a prophet of that God only in an incidental way; for he too could have cried with one of much later times, "I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh."

When the great test has been made and the prophets of Baal have been shown up for the frauds and hypocrites which they were; when Elijah has shown in a way that even the dull-spirited and stiff-necked Ahab could not doubt that Jehovah, the God of Israel, was the only living and true God, we find a further disclosure of the diametric difference in character between the prophet and the king. Had Ahab witnessed a triumph of Baal worship, we may be sure he would have insulted Elijah, or even have thrust him into prison and ordered his execution. But when Elijah witnesses the overthrow of the prophets of Baal, his treatment of the king is of a very different nature. In fact, he lives up to the spirit of the New Testament injunction, "If thine enemy hunger, feed him, if he thirst, give him drink." For we read that Elijah said unto Ahab, "Get thee up, eat and drink, for there is sound of abundance of rain." Whereupon, as the words of our text inform us, Ahab went up to eat and to drink and Elijah went up to the top of Carmel and bowed himself in prayer and supplication. The man of God illustrates the injunction which was to be given in later times and by the greatest of Authorities, "Watch and pray."

In this text there is shown, as in a perfect

mirror, the character of the two men. The whole land of Israel is suffering from long-continued drought. Flocks and herds have died in the parched and dusty fields. The brooks long-since have become dry. The rivers themselves are arid, rock-strewn gulches, without water and without life. In consequence the entire land is suffering from famine, and Elijah is praying that the drought be broken, that the rains shall come, that the famine shall end. And while he labours in spirit Ahab must be feasted at improvised tables out on the hillsides. In fact, this text presents us with some such theme as this, "Praying and feasting on Mount Carmel."

Ahab and Elijah have at least this much in common: each one wishes well for the land of Israel for each desires to see the rains return, the water-courses filled; the hillsides and valleys green and browsed by happy, healthy flocks and herds. Each one desires that there shall be abundance throughout the land. The great difference is in the reason why they so desire. Ahab, on the one hand, wishes the country to be successful, prosperous, because from the land which has nothing, nothing can be got. The king's revenue is involved: heavily taxed peoples cannot pay their taxes when their seed-corn

falls into powdered dust and the hungry fowls dig it up and devour it; when their cattle and sheep die for lack of food. There must be something in the land before it can come to the king, and Ahab's desire for Israel was that they might plant and grow and reap and gather into barns, so that they might have wherewithal to keep him in luxurious estate. In a word, his motive, his selfish attitude, his thoroughly worldly point of view is pictured by the fact that he sits down to eat and drink. Elijah, on the other hand, is interested in Israel, not for something which he can get out of it, but because Israel is God's people, because souls are perishing as well as bodies, because physical drought and famine are outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual starvation. No revenue will come to Elijah because of renewed prosperity. His motives are altruistic and spiritual. His "heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved."

This ancient and wicked king brought thus into contrast with the noble spirit of the prophet presents for us not only a picture in historic contrasts but also in the contrasts between the selfish and the unselfish, between the carnally-minded and the spiritually-minded, between the wicked and the godly in this our own modern

world. Thus a few years ago, there was, and for that matter there still is, great concern in this country as to whether the very foundations of society as now constituted, are not about to be destroyed. There is genuine and not altogether unfounded fear that Bolshevism may sweep western Europe, cross the Atlantic, and overwhelm America. Men of every shade of political creed have a hearing and get more or less of a following. Thoughtful men, therefore, who believe in the value of permanent institutions and of American democracy are genuinely alarmed. From the mart of trade, from the office of the banker, from the manufacturer, from big business in general, there comes a chorus which says in effect, "If our institutions are to survive—if America is to continue to be the land of opportunity—if our stocks and bonds are to have any value,—if there is any security for us and our children, any promise that we or they may enjoy the fruits of our labours and the results of our thrift, we must support the Church." Now, do not misunderstand me. I rejoice as much as another one in this attitude of mind and am as thankful as anyone can be that Mr. Roger W. Babson has arisen from the very midst of the money-changers of the world and has lifted up the voice of the

prophet. I thank God for Mr. Babson! But let me emphasize this truth, that too often it seems that if not Mr. Babson certainly others who echo his words and warnings are moved by the motives of Ahab, rather than by those of Elijah. That is to say, their prayer to God for America is that America shall be kept safe for stocks and bonds. Their interest does not seem to be in the spiritual institutions of America, save as these spiritual institutions form the bulwark for their banks and big business.

It took a great crisis to show us that material successes could be swept away by the mighty tides of revolution, and too many of us, alas, see only the danger that threatens our material possessions. There are, however, among us those who see further and deeper, and who join their hearts and their voices with those of Elijah, and who cry out that our only salvation lies in communion with God, in obedience to His eternal law. Praise be to God that the Elijah spirits are amongst us, and that in the hours of our great peril, when the prophets of Baal as personified in the militarists of Europe, had been discomfited and the Ahab spirits were sitting down to eat and drink,—thank God for the Elijahs who climbed to the summit of Carmel and bowed their faces between their knees and

prayed for the salvation of America, of the world.

The contrasting spirits of the two men is seen today in a thousand other ways. It is especially notable in that some have, this very morning, climbed to the Carmels of their communities, and in God's houses of prayer, have confessed their own sins and prayed for the peace and progress of mankind and the advancement of the kingdom of Christ. But, alas, while you, my brethren and friends, and men and women with faith like unto yours, are at your morning devotion on the Sabbath day, how many thousands, even millions, of our fellow creatures, like Ahab, sit down to eat and to drink and rise up to play! They disport themselves on the seashore, they roam the hills, they dash at the risk of their own lives and the life and property of others in speeding motor cars along every roadway, they lounge in clubs, they lazily and aimlessly lie abed at home, they read the latest scandals in the Sunday newspapers, they even sit in stupid idleness all unheedful of the long spiritual drought and of the consequent need and famine of the world. The spirit of Ahab is theirs and they are interested only in what will minister to the senses or give them ease and physical pleasure. In that terrible phrase

of the Apostle Paul, "Their god is their belly."

I should not be true to my mission as an expositor of this great passage were I to stop here, for this principle runs further beneath the surface than has been shown thus far. Indeed, within the sacred precincts of the Church itself, the Ahab spirit and the Elijah spirit may be found. The former incarnating itself in the more or less Pharasaic members of the religious community, those whose first interest in religion is a selfish interest, those whose presence amongst the people of God has in all ages been a cause of offense and a block of stumbling, those whose presence in his own parish made Charles Kingsley to cry out against the damnable heresy of being interested only in the saving of one's own miserable little soul! For if we are of that spirit, we can read our wretched story in the pages of the gospel, where it is recorded that when the loaves and fishes ceased to be supplied, and Jesus began to speak of spiritual food of the bread of heaven, the multitudes turned away and said, "It is a hard saying; who can hear it?" We should be interested in our own souls, in our own spiritual nourishment and growth in grace; but if we are interested only in our own welfare, we have not

caught the spirit of Christ which was that of sacrifice for His brethren by the flesh—nor even the spirit of Elijah who climbed to the top of Carmel and unselfishly flung himself into wrestlings of prayer, that the sweet rains of heaven might come.

The thought cuts even deeper than this; for among those who are spiritually-minded, who in some measure do have the passion of Elijah for the souls of men as well as for their bodies, there are some who are at least partly of the Ahab spirit. For their attitude is that they will not give their support to the work of any pastor who does not feed them with that particular form of spiritual pabulum which they most affect. I will be very plain. Some desire that their pastor shall proclaim this, that, or the other emphasis in religion, almost to the exclusion of the great body of religious thought. I care not what it is, my brother, or how essential and necessary to religious faith any one doctrine may be, when we arrive at that frame of mind and spirit where we are dissatisfied and ungracious unless our own taste in that matter is indulged by our church or our minister, we are dangerously near the spirit of Ahab who sat down to eat and to drink while Israel starved below him.

It is, after all, the difference between the spirit of Peter and of Simon Magus, the difference between Paul and Agrippa, the difference between Christ and Pilate—this difference between Ahab and Elijah. And as Elijah prayed and watched, lo! a cloud the size of a man's hand began to appear. This was the herald of the coming rains; and we are led to believe that unless Elijah had been in Israel, yea, unless he had been on the top of Carmel, the blessed rains of heaven had not come to water the thirsty, dying land. Neither will the spiritual showers of the sweet heavens come to water the thirsty dying souls of men, unless we who are the spiritual successors of Elijah, forget our pleasures, our own very lives, and climb the steep summits of our Carmel to plead with God that Israel may be saved.

O GOD, we acknowledge our selfishness and are heartily ashamed thereof. We pray Thee to give us the spirit of Elijah and remove from us the spirit of Ahab. Fill us with the spirit of Christ who came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give His life a ransom. In His Name we ask it. Amen.

X

THE COST OF CALF-WORSHIP

“Up, make us gods which shall go before us. . . . And all the people brake off the golden earrings, and brought them unto Aaron. . . . And he received them at their hands, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf.”—EXODUS XXXII.1, 3, 4.

NO one should deceive himself. Those who forsake the worship of God, who is a spirit and who must be worshipped in spirit and in truth, will pay in many kinds of coin.

Moses, that great and unselfish man who had delivered them from Pharaoh and brought them thus far on their journey toward the land they were to inherit, had disappeared from their midst. The people had seen him climb Mt. Sinai. Some of them had watched until the cloud had swallowed him up. While he communed with the Almighty and was receiving the commandments and statutes for their well-being, they grew restless of his extended absence. With nothing specially to occupy their hands and heads, they “sat down to eat and to drink and rose up to play.”

Aaron had been left in charge of the camps of Israel, but he seems to have been a rather pliant man, unwilling to withstand the pressure of public opinion; so when the people demanded of him, "Up, make us gods which shall go before us," he did not rebuke them sharply as he should have done; he did not apparently even try to reason with them and show them the error of their way. One imagines that he shrugged his shoulders and said within himself, "It is no use either to argue or to command. They are a stiff-necked people, wise in their own conceits, and cannot be turned from their folly by any word of mine. I will let them have their way but they must pay for it." He, therefore, commanded them to surrender their golden earrings. Melting these he molded the gold into the form of a calf, or "ox," as the marginal reading has it, and then finished it off with graving tools. The fickle populace forgot the miracles of deliverance which had been wrought in their behalf, forgot their able and devoted leader, and cried in the presence of the molten calf, "These be thy gods, O Israel." Aaron proclaimed a feast unto the Lord, but it is doubtful if the people had any devotion for the true and living God. Their worship was idol worship and they cried out with a shameless abandon-

ment of their obligations to the God of their fathers, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt."

We are permitted to see what took place on the mount. God revealed to Moses this defection of the people, and threatened His vengeance upon them. Moses prevailed in his intercession in their behalf, but his own anger broke forth when he came down from the mount and saw the disgusting orgies of this wicked and gainsaying people. We are given a glimpse of him as in a mingling of anger, sorrow, and bitterness, he cast the tables out of his hands and broke them. His measure for punishment was swift and terrible. He caused the manufactured gods to be burned in the fire, ground to a powder, and spread upon the water which the children of Israel were compelled to drink. He rebuked Aaron for his complacency and then shouted a challenge to those who were on the Lord's side. To their eternal credit be it said that the sons of Levi gathered themselves to him. Moses commanded them to go throughout the camp and slay their sinful brethren. In this massacre three thousand men were put to death. He then decreed a day of solemn worship to Jehovah and preached them a sermon on sin, calling upon them to repent. He then

returned to the Lord and prayed earnestly in their behalf that the Lord would blot him rather than His people from His book of remembrance. He won his petition and was commissioned by the Almighty to continue to lead the people toward Canaan.

In this sordid story one may easily observe how those who sin by forsaking God, pay for their apostasy in gold. Whenever we forsake our God and turn to worship any other person, place, or thing, we may expect to pay for our defection in gold or its equivalent.

A few years ago one of our metropolitan dailies published an editorial on the "Waste of American money in Foreign Missions." It seems that within one year the American churches had sent some twenty millions of dollars through their mission boards to different parts of the world. The writer of the editorial who probably had contributed little or none of the twenty millions of dollars, cried, like Judas did when the alabaster box was broken for our Lord, "Why this waste?" This writer felt, it seems, that we had pagans at our own door and underfed children and all the other objects for which money can be used, right in America. He said that if the Christian people would spend a little more at home and a little less

abroad, they would show more sense. He also plainly hinted that religion costs too much. He might have answered his own argument out of the news columns of his paper for that very same date. There was a news item which said that a battleship, to cost at least twice as much as all the churches had given to Foreign Missions, had been authorized by Congress. Now, a battleship is not a golden calf, but it certainly is one of the prices a nation pays to protect itself from the greed and murder which wicked men let loose in the world. In other words, no one will claim that a world in which all men fear God and keep His commandments would need a battleship.

Another way of illustrating the cost of apostasy is in enumerating what sin, vice, crime and their consequences cost the American people in taxation, for police courts, law machinery, prisons, and reformatories. But why deal in smaller facts when a monstrous fact is ever in our minds? It has been the style to say that in 1914 Germany ran amuck and, as a lunatic nation, let loose on mankind the horrible destruction of the war. Germany may have been the chief sinner, but I think no one will deny now that there was selfishness, greed, malice, envy, and all those other devils which enter the hu-

man heart when Christ does not reign there, in the hearts of every nation in Europe, and, in greater or less degree, even here in America. Had Germany been true to the religion of Christ and the teachings of her greatest son, Martin Luther; had Austria-Hungary to the last man been Christian like John Hus and Jerome of Prague; had France possessed the spirit of Calvin or Massillon; had Britain been as sincere in her piety as was Wiclif and Ridley and Latimer: in a word, had the heart of Europe been pure with the love of Christ, the great World War would not have been fought. But they forsook God and all the world is paying for sin, in taxes, in the increased cost of living; in a word, in hard cash or gold.

It is not difficult to see as we follow this story how the people of Israel paid in another coin: they paid in the coin of common-sense. Is it not ridiculous, this picture of grown men and women dancing around the molten and graven image of a calf and shouting in frenzied ecstasies, "This is our god"? How had they been able thus to hypnotize themselves, to delude themselves into believing that this thing which yesterday did not exist, but which was made by melting up their golden ornaments—how could they make themselves believe that this thing

was a god? The answer is in a New Testament phrase, that the god of this world had blinded them. They were in point of fact for the time being beside themselves. They had in a vulgar but useful phrase, "gone crazy on religion." Like all who go crazy on religion, however, they were crazy on the wrong kind of religion. They had really gone crazy from religion. They were sane when they worshipped God and followed Moses. On this subject at least they had become insane, when they danced and bowed and cried that a calf was a god. It is ever thus from the mildest form of this insanity to the wildest and deepest horrors of the same.

Men lose their common-sense, their good judgment, or whatever you desire to call it, when they begin any kind of calf-worship. The Christian Scientist who sets up a premise and, to all intents and purposes, calls that his god, has lost common-sense. Of course, not all Christian Scientists go that far, but without any apology of any kind, I beg to state that they are considered by most of their fellow-citizens as unsound in their thinking processes, just in proportion to their devotion to that cult; and its logical consequences may be seen from the fact that more than one mother, whose children were ill, has neglected to get medical as-

sistance and so has permitted the child to suffer, and in some instances to die. I submit that what is wrong here is that they are paying for their apostasy in the coin of good judgment, or just plain common-sense. So does the man pay in this coin also who undertakes to live a double life; for, if his judgment were keen and clear, he would know that the misery and disgrace which entail upon such a life as he is leading, are a thousand-fold more than any pleasure or satisfaction he may think he gets from his duplicity. The thief would know that he runs an awful risk of paying in hard labour and in imprisonment for every dollar's worth of goods he steals; and so on throughout the whole catalogue of sins and sinners. We revert again to our illustration of war, for if men's reason were not unbalanced, if their common-sense were not paid out as a price, surely they would never suffocate each other with deadly gases or blow one another to atoms with high-powered guns.

Another coin with which they paid was the coin of self-respect. The older version says that Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies. The American version says that he had let them loose for a derision among their enemies. It is all the same thing: their self-respect had disappeared and the pic-

ture which the mind draws of their religious festivities is not a pleasant one. Nor is it pleasant to think that we are still paying with a loss of self-respect, for our departure from the laws and the love of God. What else is the meaning of the picture as we see it in our daily papers of some multi-millionaire who beams out from the page with a complacent smile, while underneath his picture are black letters placarding his shame in having been divorced and remarried for the third time, or at his having recently been found guilty of illegal transactions in the business world? How else explain the fact that women often boast of their divorces, and that they display themselves in person and in picture, in postures and dresses, of body and of spirit which would make the more right-minded members of the sex hide their faces in shame? Loss of self-respect—that is the answer. God is dethroned and a calf of pleasure, of frivolousness, of self-gratification, has been set up; and for this calf they are paying in a coin of decency. This price is being paid by tens of thousands of our fellows. We see the fond but foolish mother who pushes forward, over dresses and bedecks with jewels, her young daughter, and practically puts her on the auction block. From such methods of paying in self-respect,

all the way down to the "bum" who reeks with filth of the street and shamelessly protrudes a dirty hands to beg of you money with which to buy drink and drugs to make him lower still; in whatever way we find it manifesting itself, we can see the truth of this statement that those who turn away from God pay for it with a terrible price by the loss of self-respect.

While reading this shameful page from the life of the chosen people our Christian sentiment no doubt revolted at the command of Moses when he told the men of Levi to gird their swords and go out and slay every man his brother and every man his neighbour. Nevertheless this gives us another form of the heavy toll which is laid upon us for our sin. We pay in blood, in human life, for dethroning God and setting up substitutes. We pay it in the criminal waste of child-life. We pay it in the economic waste of man-power, of those who at the height of what should be their usefulness are struck down by drink, by murderer, by murderous and inhuman labours, by war, and by every other thing, tool, weapon, or intrigue of the devil. Israel paid in that day with the blood of three thousand men. More than three million men, not all of whom by any means were the sinners, paid the awful price of sin in this latest

and greatest war. Our theology may be so advanced and humanized that we can no longer accept at face value the first half of the old statement "by man sin entered into the world"; but I dare say that no one objects to the latter part, "and death through sin." For it was certainly not righteousness, not joy and peace in the Holy Spirit, not the heart of the man of Galilee, which brought upon the world the night-mare period of death and destruction through which so recently we have passed.

"The wages of sin," we have often been reminded, "is death." We need also to recall again that the gift of God is eternal life. Israel had shamelessly abandoned the God who had so graciously and bountifully bestowed upon them signal tokens of His favour. They deserved to be paid with the coin of death: as a nation they merited extinction. But through the intercession of Moses this great calamity was averted. Any sinner who hears my voice or reads my words, who has been quickened so that he can perceive how dangerous is his calf-worship, can find forgiveness with that divine father of us all: for a greater than Moses "ever liveth to make intercession for us." If with all our hearts we truly repent and turn away from our wicked ways, we shall live. No matter how much of

the coin of life we have spent in treasures of earth, in common-sense, in self-respect, in blood and tears, if we will, we may avoid paying the last and most precious coin of all—our souls.

There is that young fellow who has acted the fool, has wasted his patrimony, has gone down to feed the swine, has so lost his self-respect that he would fain eat the husks upon which the swine are fed. Something happened to him and he said, "I will arise and go to my father." God grant that every sinner who has been paying in one or more of these coins, may "come to himself" as he hears my words, as he reads this page; and may he too resolve, "I will arise and return unto God for He will have mercy upon me and unto my God for He will abundantly pardon."

O, Thou who ever livest to make intercession for us, we acknowledge before Thee our unworthiness. If any of us have set up false standards in our lives, give us a knowledge of our danger, the will to forsake all and turn unto Thee. Remember not against us our follies of waste of our possessions and powers, nor the sins of our earlier days; but in mercy deliver us from them and from their consequences both now and hereafter. Amen.

XI

THAT HE MAY RUN THAT READETH IT

“And it was written in Hebrew and in Latin and in Greek.”—JOHN XIX.20.

PILATE was following a well established custom when he prepared a tablet or board with an inscription, to set up over the head of Jesus on the cross, for all criminals about to be executed were thus placarded. A “titulus,” or charge on which the condemned was to be executed, was carried in front of him to the place of execution. That was part of his punishment. If his crime were particularly flagrant he would be jeered by the insulting populace, and stones and mud would be flung at him. When actually executed, this placard was fixed above his head so that all might read and know the crime for which he merited death.

We are told that the title Pilate caused to be prepared for the head of Jesus was in three languages. Eidersheim thinks the order of the languages was Latin, Greek, and Aramaic, (or a species of Hebrew). He thinks Matthew has given us the precise phrase of the Latin, “This

is Jesus, King of the Jews." That Mark abbreviates; but that he and Luke alike omit the name of Jesus and give the Greek form, "This man is the King of the Jews." He thinks John translates for us neither the form of the inscription in Latin nor the one in Greek, but gives rather the Aramaic. This last form emphasizes who Jesus was, and therefore since He is executed as a criminal it contains a greater insult to the Jewish people than either of the other forms. It says, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." It not only names Him, but picks out one of their sacred cities as His birthplace.

Of these three languages Westcott has remarked that they "Gather up the result of the religious, the social, the intellectual preparation for Christ, and, in each, witness was given to His office." Thus the Hebrew inscription over the cross represents the long record of spiritual or religious preparation from the call of Abraham down to the death of Christ. The Latin represented the social development of the world for the coming of Jesus, namely, the gathering of smaller nations together one by one, under great world powers which later were to be swallowed up by the vast empire of Rome. The Greek represented the world's intellectual, or we may say its esthetic, preparation. For cul-

ture of the human mind, its discipline, its careful and rigid training to think along philosophical and scientific lines, as well as to blossom out in the plastic arts and in poetry and music, is represented by and flowers in the Greek people and language.

It is recorded that originally "The whole earth was of one language and one speech." This may very well be a literal as well as an interpretative fact. The kinship of languages is a most interesting and instructive department of modern human knowledge. Whether originally there was but one speech, or whether this verse alludes to the known world, as then known, is all to one purpose, for there was and is a confusion of tongues. Men have grown very far apart in speech. But that is not all, for they differ just as greatly in customs, institutions, and laws. Contrast, for instance, the gloomy Danes, said to be the most melancholy and the most prone to commit suicide of any nation in Europe, with the vivacious Italian, where the suicide figures are almost a negligible quantity. Or, contrast France and Scotland. Without intending to reflect on either of these nations, it is not difficult to see that their ideals, their conceptions of life, are almost antipodal. Scotland is theological and France is artistic.

It has become a habit to speak of America as the world's melting pot. I venture to say that a mere change of geographical position does not insure a change in character or disposition. My Hebrew friend will still speak with his mouth, shoulders, hands, and with unnamable shrugs of his head and contortions of his face, just as much in Jersey as he does in Jerusalem. You and I might live in Russia until the earth opened and swallowed us, yet we would not be Russian. Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning lived a large part of their later life in Italy, yet to their last day they remained sturdily British. And the mere bringing of the heart-sick, life-weary, soul-hungry peoples of an older and less fortunate part of the world to our shores by no means guarantees that they have assimilated the American ideas and customs, or become converts to American religious principles.

For after all America speaks with a Puritan accent, and many old-world born do not understand. But when we speak to them in the language of Christ-like self-forgetfulness, it is as though we used their own language. Perhaps that is one of the meanings where it is recorded that men "out of every nation under heaven" were able to hear every man in his own tongue,

wherein he was born. If our message is to reach the heart and bring results, it must be understood, and it is but understood when spoken in one's own mother tongue.

Can anything be more suggestive of the divine application of saving truth to dull ears than this tri-lingual inscription over the head of The Man on the Cross? The placards were written in the three languages best known and most widely used. It is safe to say, these three languages covered the entire civilized world; at least that no one who passed the place of crucifixion would be ignorant of all three. If he could read at all, there was at least one language he knew; and if he could not read, he could understand when read in his hearing.

Thus the inscription, in his own speech, said to the devout Greek proselyte to Judasim, "This is YOUR King." It said to the devout Roman, "This is YOUR King." And certainly it said to the devout Hebrew, "This is YOUR King."

That which can take different peoples and center them on one common thought, bringing them into one common relationship, so that they are no longer strangers and enemies one to another, but fellow-citizens and even brothers, is a recognition of the common sovereignty of

Jesus in the three writings on the Cross. This is the world's spiritual alkahest.

How like our own country and our time was the year when Jesus was crucified! Jerusalem was cosmopolitan; no less so proportionately than was the world's capitol, Rome. In the second chapter of Acts we read that there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men out of every nation under heaven. Some of these nations are specified, Parthians, Medes, Elamites, Mesopotamians, Phrygians, Cyrenians, Romans, Arabians, etc. We are told, too, that these men spoke different languages. But of all this vast throng, perhaps there was none who could not in addition to his own tongue, speak one or more of the three languages used in Pilate's inscription. Latin was the official and legal language. Rome, though Grecianized, was still a Latin city. Greek culture was rapidly coming in, but the language in the courts of law and of the decrees of the emperor was the Latin. Tiberius was a monster, but he was not a foreign monster; he was of the great Roman family of Julius. Not yet had the sceptre departed from the house of Cæsar. At the time of which we write the Roman poet Ovid had just shortly died. The Roman historian Livy and the Roman scientist, Pliny, were just

coming into their majority. Seneca, one of the most illustrious men of his age, was still a very young man. These writers, all of whom used the Latin language, show us the tremendous importance still of Latin if Jesus was to appeal to that part of the world.

In another way the Greek language was still more important. Ever since the days of Alexander, Greek had been the language of literature and art and also of polite intercourse among nations. It was the native speech in important provinces of the Roman empire. Even in the capital city, Greek was spoken so extensively that when St. Paul indited his letter to the Romans, he employed the speech, not of Cæsar, but of Socrates.

This third language, in another sense, was more important still. In the world's great ghettos today, in London, New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago, there are fathers and mothers in Israel who do not speak the English language. They know Yiddish, and perhaps can read classical Hebrew, but the tongue of Washington and Lincoln is unintelligible to them. Groups like these were in the Jerusalem of our Lord's day, and if these are to be informed who and what He is who hangs on the Cross, it could have been only by the Hebrew.

These three represent men of widely different training, tastes, and temperaments. The trilingual inscription says to us that He who hangs here is of no one race of mankind, no section of earth. It proclaims the universal nature of the life, labours, and doctrines of Jesus of Nazareth. It says in the concise and business-like speech of the pragmatic Roman: "Here is your King, and the King of all those who, in ages yet unborn, are your spiritual and temperamental children." In the Church of Christ the PRACTICAL moralist has found his place. He has read in the language of his soul: "Here is a religion which WORKS." It is not an impracticable dream, a sublime but impossible ideal. It is the most practicable religion ever known to man. It has power, and that power can be connected with the machinery of life. In the individual it gives initiative and patience, so that noble deeds are both planned and executed. In the community it ministers to those who are "an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison," and lovingly and effectively ministers unto them. In the nation it promotes peace and plenty, and verifies the pious exclamation of the Psalmist, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord."

Are you a practical man, my brother; a prac-

tical woman, my sister? Read the inscription in your own language, and learn that here is One who offers you the noblest opportunities to make your life count for good, and who establishes the work of your hands upon you. Yea; this very Cross itself is the most useful and helpful instrument ever known to men.

Then there are those of esthetic soul. To these, "truth is beauty; beauty, truth." Harmony of sound, gracefulness of form, soft blending of colour,—such things mean so much to them that the lack of harmony, grace and beauty hurts like a blow. To such, even devotion must take the form of beauty. They are "Greeks" in that sense at least. And in whom can we find perfect beauty of life if not in Him over whose "sacred head now wounded" we read in the musical words of Hellas, "This is the King"? Sidney Lanier presents this thought for us most melodiously in "The Crystal."

“ But Thee, O poets’ Poet, Wisdom’s Tongue,
 But Thee, O man’s best Man, O love’s best
 Love,
 O perfect life in perfect labor writ,
 O all men’s Comrade, Servant, King, or
 Priest,—
 What IF or YET, what mole, what flaw, what
 lapse,

What least defect or shadow of defect,
 What rumor, tattled by an enemy,
 Of inference loose, what lack of grace
 Even in torture's grasp, or sleep's, or
 death's,—

Oh, what amiss may I forgive in Thee,
 Jesus, good Paragon, thou Crystal Christ?"

Do you love beauty? The beauty of goodness, the beauty of a perfect life, is possible to you through Him who is the "altogether lovely"—who is the "rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys,"—in whose light the soul shineth as the bright and morning star.

Just as there are those who love the goodness of beauty, so there are those who love the beauty of goodness. To whom else may those who are spiritually-minded look and receive satisfaction? Many devout souls, in all ages, have exclaimed with St. Augustine, "O God, Thou hast made us for Thyself; and our heart is restless within us until it rests in Thee!" Those who hate evil in every form, who long for communion with God as the Psalmist longed when he cried out, "My soul thirsteth for Thee . . . in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is";—those who yearn for moral purity and have often prayed, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in Thy sight,"—those whose hearts turn toward

Him in whom “the worship of the whole world lies”—these find in Jesus the One who is their approach to the eternal God.

Do you, my friend, long for moral purity, for spiritual cleansing? Do you pray for communion with Him? “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God.” Read in the Hebrew of the heart the inscription of yon cross, and behold your king. Through Him we come “unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God,” the gates of which are not shut by day, for there is no night there, “for the Lord God giveth them light, and they shall reign for ever and ever.”

BLESSED Sufferer on the Cross; blessed risen Lamb of God: may we through Thee come into fullness of life and usefulness and joy unspeakable. May we be able to show our Lord to all who long for Him. And may there be usefulness, beauty, and purity in our lives, for evermore. Amen.

XII

REACHING ROME

*“And so we came to Rome.”—ACTS xxviii.14
(Amer. Rev. Ver.)*

THE great traveller has at last arrived. His feet have measured out many a weary mile, “in journeyings oft.” Like Tennyson’s “Ulysses,” many famous cities had he seen. The plains of windy Troy, made famous for all time by Homer’s “Iliad”; Antioch, the glorious Queen of the East; Ephesus, teeming with pleasure-loving thousands; Philippi, where Anthony and Octavius had battled for the mastery of the world; Corinth, commercial city extraordinary, where streams of ships from East and West exchanged their burdens; Athens, famous in song and story and considered the intellectual capital of the world; Jerusalem, rich in sacred history and the ancient capital of His people,—all these the eyes of the apostle have seen. We catch some suggestion of what his ambitions were when we hear him say, “I must also see Rome.” Rome, whose glory fills the world; Rome, whose

power extends from the Euphrates to the pillars of Hercules and from the Libyan desert to those far-northern lands that lie stretched under blankets of everlasting snow: a Rome whose eagles are the sign of her ever-watchful and omnipresent soldiery; Rome, against whom Barbarians had led their hosts in vain; Rome, whose rising glory had dimmed the beauties of Carthage, of Egypt, of Greece. The man with the message feels a divine "urge" to see Rome.

We can feel some of the exhilaration of spirit that must have been his when, in company with certain brethren, he walked from the Forum of Appius and the Three Taverns along that famous roadway which had clattered with the chariots of returning conquerors; and especially when the walls and gates of the city opened to receive him. At last, he had reached Rome.

The stages in his journey are doubtless in the writer's mind when he set down the words of our text. Luke's expression, "and so," may be thought of as referring to the last stage of the voyage and journey. Paul and his companions had spent the winter on the island of Melita. They had set sail in the spring on an Alexandrian ship named "Castor and Pollux." They had touched at Syracuse, remaining there three days; from thence had sailed to Rhegium; and

then, driven by the south wind, had entered the harbor of Puteoli. The rest of the journey was on foot,—the last stage of it at least, over the stones of the Appian way. It would probably be better to think that the historian's "so" carries us further back and covers the entire journey from Jerusalem to Rome. The stirring scenes of Paul's last days when plot and counterplot threatened and saved his life; his dramatic removal to Cesarea; the various trials to which he was subjected; his appearance before Felix, then before Festus, then before Agrippa; his eloquent defense; the decision of Agrippa and Festus that he might have been set at liberty, had he not already appealed unto Cæsar;—these events quite likely have their part in Luke's word, "so." Then the embarkation, the dangerous voyage, the tempestuous winds, the storm-smitten ship flying as if in fright, for fourteen days, before angry winds and upon snarling seas; the ship-wreck, the escape of Paul to the island, and the subsequent events there,—these, too, are a part of the way in which he came to Rome.

A deeper meaning still may be read here, for there is a sense in which every step in Paul's long life had been a step toward Rome. Born in far away Tarsus, in Cilicia, brought in early

life to Jerusalem, educated under the greatest scholars of his day, brought up in the strict discipline and dogma of the Pharisee,—all of these things represent stages in his progress towards the city on the Tiber. His ardent persecution of the Christians; his dramatic conversion while on the road to Damascus; his temporary blindness; his silent years; his early missionary days; his imprisonments; his scourgings; his perils by sea and by land;—all these were essential before Luke, who shared the later events only, could say “And so we came to Rome.”

We may be sure that Paul would be interested in the human life of that quiet city, in its historic scenes, in its history of world-making events and world-leading men. He was no recluse by nature. He who said of himself that he was all things to all men that he might save some, would not fail to enter into the life of the Roman people. But it is because he has a mission to perform, because he has a message to deliver, because he has concern for the souls of the conquerors, because he is an ambassador in bonds; it is mainly for these reasons that he rejoices to be in Rome.

This is not his ultimate destination. Before him lie other roadways and already he at times catches visions of the new Jerusalem. None

the less, having reached Rome, he stands for a time as the type of the Christian who has reached his point of greatest earthly influence, of legitimate and worthy success.

Certain kinds of worldly success are legitimate goals for the Christian. The exhortation, "Love not the world, neither things of the world," gives us the necessary warning. It is possible for us to substitute worldly aims, ambitions, goals, for spiritual and eternal goals, ambitions, aims. It is entirely possible, however, for us to set before ourselves ideals of accomplishment and to use every legitimate means, every lawful endeavour, to reach the desired haven. The boy who throbs with an ambition for an education; the girl who sees in the future a beautiful and happy home of which she is the reigning queen; the man who plans, builds, sacrifices, and even suffers that he may establish a great, reputable, and useful business,—all of these are to be commended.

Long since has the great body of Christian people repudiated the idea and practice of the Franciscan brethren. Our Lord distinctly prayed, not that God would remove His disciples from the world, but rather that He would keep them from being overwhelmed by evil, while they pursued their course in and through

the world. It is only when the education, the home, the business, or any other earthly object or aspiration is looked upon as the ultimate destination, that there is danger. From the severely plain and disillusionizing statements of Jesus concerning the danger of riches, some have felt warranted in asserting that no one who sets out to reach the Rome of financial success can ever enter the Jerusalem of spiritual triumph; but such an interpretation is unwarranted.

Abraham, man of faith, and friend of God, was a man of great wealth. Indeed, we are reminded by one of his servants that "The Lord hath blessed my master greatly; and he is become great: and he hath given him flocks, and herds, and silver, and gold, and men-servants, and maid-servants, and camels, and asses."

Our Lord too said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you." We admire Paul even the more because he did desire to see Rome and to bring his message to the very capital of the world; to be useful in the largest possible way. I for one have little patience with the pietistic humility sometimes taught to the effect that a Christian should have no ambition save the salvation of his own immortal

soul. Such a religion is too one-sided, too self-centered.

Our Creator has inspired our bosoms with a desire to excel, and today it is my high privilege and my manifest duty to urge everyone, especially the younger people, to set before themselves high standards of accomplishment. Those who already are established in business, or the professions, or any line of human endeavour, should set standards of enlarged usefulness,—should desire to see Rome. Those before whom life's untried roadways still lie open, should definitely decide upon some life work. There are calls to positions and places that are useful but not highly ornamental, and if one feels that his life work should be that of the carpenter, or the farmer, let him approach it in a reverent, a determined, a Paul-like way. Let him endeavour to be the best carpenter, the best farmer, it is possible to become.

I urge you young men and young women to choose some life work; and if you are not manifestly unfitted for such high callings, I ask you to consider the opportunity before the Christian physician of tomorrow; the opportunity before the Christian teacher; the opportunity before the Christian statesman; the opportunity before the Christian minister and

missionary. To what Rome of high usefulness is God calling you? Hear His call and determine with Saint Paul, "I must see Rome."

When the determination first came to Paul to visit the city of the Cæsars we do not know; but from that day when he exclaimed, "I must see Rome," to this day when our text pictures him eagerly pressing down the Appian way and entering the gates of the mighty city,—between those dates are crowded all those things which make up the trials, hardships, setbacks, buffetings of life. We, too, who have our Romes before us, must not permit ourselves to be discouraged because we see no progress in the direction we desire to go, or because of storm and stress.

The success of great men in business as we read afterwards what such men have accomplished, may appear an unbroken series of triumphs from beginning to end. Yet, the great merchant princes of our land, as well as the men who have less dramatically succeeded, tell us of their discouragements, of the time when it seemed all but inevitable that they must be pushed to the "wall"; of their long days of labour and nights devoid of ease; of bitter hours when in imagination they could hear the heart-breaking thump of the sheriff's hammer.

Yet, somehow, they tenaciously "held on"; somehow the business did not go to the sheriff; somehow credit was extended; old bills were paid which enabled them to pay their bills; somehow little by little they made progress, and one day had actually reached the forum of their Rome.

The biographies of real Americans, when written in full, tell us stories without end of high-spirited young men who in the furrow of the field, or driving the horses which towed the canal boat, or splitting rails, or making shoes, or setting type in a printing office, or feeding a machine in a roaring factory, have yet determined within themselves upon some Rome which they would reach, and have set out and reached it, after many hardships, many weary days, many sleepless nights.

I have read that former Senator George F. Hoar, of Massachusetts, while a student at Harvard, lived upon a diet of beans which he himself cooked over a smoky oil stove in a little room of the proverbial "third floor back." From such a scene to that of the United States Senate where a gifted, high-minded, and cultured gentleman wears the toga of office, is a long, weary, tedious journey, but it is a journey which with the help of God and with terms

changed to suit the Rome towards which one aims, any American boy or girl may successfully make.

We sometimes feel like saying that hardships, difficulties, dangers, are not merely incidental to great success, but that they are absolutely essential thereto. Certain it is that in the world of Paul's time, it was not possible to reach Rome without some physical hardship at the very best, and as we present his journey to-day, we are warranted in saying that the apostle reached Rome, in the highest and best sense, very largely because of all that he had suffered.

Some years ago, I knew a young woman who possessed great gifts as a singer. She had been given the best training the teachers of this land could offer, and then had been sent abroad. Her life had been a very happy and successful one. She had never known the pinch of poverty, the scowl of enmity, or any of the ordinary unhappinesses of life. With her "life glared"; and as there were no softer tints, no mellow lights in her life, neither was there in her singing. According to the critics, her pitch was perfect and her execution faultless; yet she left her hearers cold; or, if they enthused, they enthused because of her winsome and charming personality. She was keen enough to see that

somehow she had not exactly "arrived." I overheard her pastor, an old man, say to her one day, "My dear young lady, there is but one thing lacking. By and by, somebody will break your heart and then your songs will touch broken-hearted humanity." It was even so. A great, overwhelming sorrow came into her life, and there was a new note in her song. We ought to be able to say, "For we glory in tribulation." We ought to be able to understand that these things work for us a far more exceeding and abundant weight of glory.

Let us here repeat what we have before said, that we have been discussing the nearer goals, the Romes of life rather than the Jerusalems,—the City Celestial. We may be sure, too, that whatever satisfaction there was to Paul in being able to see the world's capital, his chief joy was to carry his message beyond the very doors of Cæsar's palace, to be instrumental in establishing the Church of Christ in the heart of the pagan world. He knew that Rome was not his final destination. Later on we hear him saying to Timothy, "Henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness." While we may, indeed should, desire to reach goals of earthly usefulness and high success, we too must keep in mind that some day we will lay down our

tools, lay aside our laurels, go out of our office or store, or school room, or pulpit, never to return again. It will be because we have taken up another staff than the staff of earthly pilgrimage, and have laid aside the dust-covered sandals that are cut with the stones of our Ap-pian ways;—that we have moved on into that “city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”

DEAR Lord, Thou Who didst inspire the great Apostles to take Thy message to the people at Rome, inspire us to do some great service for Thee with our fellowmen. Thou, Who didst go with him in all the perils of his journey, go Thou, we pray Thee, with us. Thou, Who didst at last receive him unto Thyself, crown us who by faith look unto Thee, one day in the City Celestial. Amen.