

INCIDENTS

AND

ILLUSTRATIONS

OF THE GOSPEL.

BY

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No. 1.

THE REPORT AND ITS RECEPTION.

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INCIDENTS AND ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE GOSPEL.

No. 1.

THE REPORT AND ITS RECEPTION.

A ROYAL PROCLAMATION.

A.D. 1887.

IN the year 1887 the Queen of England and Empress of India sent forth various proclamations in connection with the Jubilee of her reign. One of these held out an offer of pardon for deserters from her army. It ran thus:—

“We do hereby grant our most gracious pardon to all men who, having before the date of this proclamation deserted, or absented themselves without leave from our regular land forces, shall report themselves within two months of the date of this proclamation.”

Now there were three things worthy of note in this offer of pardon.

1. It was only for one special class.
2. It was with one specified condition.
3. It was available during one prescribed period of time.

As to the first, no doubt many a *civilian*, scanning that proclamation, would say like the writer, “Here’s a grand offer for somebody, but it doesn’t refer to me.” Many a

soldier, too, might read it and say the same. One class alone was included in the gracious offer. It was for a *deserter*, and for him only, but it was for *every* deserter—"to all."

In the second place there was only one way of procuring the offered pardon. *He must "report" himself as a deserter.*

Thirdly, there was a limit to his opportunity—"within two months of the date of the proclamation."

How simply the way of royal pardon was opened up for the deserter! How welcome to those who had long wished to return, but dreaded the consequences! Now was the time. Such a chance would never come again. Queen Victoria could promise no more such proclamations. It must therefore be now or never.

Does not this remind my reader of another and far more momentous proclamation—one that proceeds, not from the clemency of any earthly sovereign, but from the very heart of God Himself? How worthy of our consideration therefore! Let us compare the two.

1. TO WHAT CLASS IS GOD'S PROCLAMATION SENT?

"Go ye into *all the world*, and preach the gospel to *every creature*" (Mark xvi. 15).

"*Whosoever believeth* in Him [Christ] shall receive remission of sins" (Acts x. 43).

2. ON WHAT CONDITION IS THE BLESSING RECEIVED?

"God looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light" (Job xxxiii. 27, 28). If Jesus, the Son of God, took the sinner's place on the cross to secure his pardon, surely that guilty one can do not

less than *take the sinner's place* at His feet and confess his need of this pardon. Countless millions have thus come to Him already, and not one has been turned empty away. With one voice they all can say, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. liii. 6).

3. FOR HOW LONG DOES THE OFFER STAND GOOD?

It is here where the Queen's offer and God's so widely differ. "Two months" was the narrow limit of one: eighteen centuries have not seen the end of the other!

Then how much longer can *I* defer the acceptance of God's offer? The answer is serious, and, as you value your soul, mark it well—NOT ANOTHER DAY! "Boast not thyself of to-morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth" (Prov. xxvii. 1). "*To-day* if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts" (Heb. iv. 7). "Behold, NOW is the accepted time; behold, *now* is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. vi. 2).

But this was not the whole of this royal proclamation. It continued thus:—

"We do hereby make further declaration that every offender herein referred to, who shall not avail himself of the pardon we most graciously offer, shall be held amenable to all the pains and penalties provided under the Army Act."

Was there anything hard or unrighteous about this part of the announcement? Nothing. The offender, refusing to avail himself of so gracious an offer, proved himself richly deserving of "all the pains and penalties" due to his offence.

There is one important difference, however, between one who refuses pardon after violating English martial

law and one who aggravates the sin of wilful rebellion against God by the refusal of His divine forgiveness. The former might, perhaps, escape after all; but no possibility of escape for the latter: "*How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?*" (Heb. ii. 3).

"When they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction shall come upon them . . . and *they shall not escape*" (1 Thess. v. 3). "See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, *much more shall not we escape*, if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven" (Heb. xii. 25).

You have no time to waste, unforgiven reader. Pardon deferred to-day may be forfeited for ever; and when judgment at last shall fall upon your guilty head, whom will you find in heaven or earth or hell that will either blame God for your damnation, or pity you in receiving it? Forgive yourself you never will—never! That is certain. If contempt of justice in an English law court does not go unpunished, how will contempt of grace be treated at the bar of God?

It cost Queen Victoria little more than the paper her proclamation was printed on to send *her* offer of pardon; but God must deliver up to the suffering and death of the cross His only begotten Son, ere the news of a righteous pardon can reach your ears and mine. And now that all this has been done on your behalf, can you still refuse so gracious an offer? There is, then, only one dread alternative, "all the pains and penalties" pronounced in God's Holy Word against Christ-rejecters must certainly be yours. Prepare yourself for the worst, for as God is true the worst will be yours: "Behold, ye *despisers*, and WONDER, and PERISH" (Acts xiii. 41). But why will ye die?

WHAT AN OLD SERMON DID.

HOW various the means adopted by the blessed God to reach and win the heart of His rebellious creature man! How refreshing it is to contemplate, not only how and when He does it, but, above all, why He does it! Think of the almightiness of His salvation. Who can withstand Him? When He says, "I am come down to deliver," let the most determined slave-master relinquish his grasp, let the strongest opposer drop his arm. Who could have imagined that within so short a space of time from the utterance of the words just quoted (Exod. iii.) 600,000 slaves would, in the very sight of their former master, march out free, to return to Pharaoh's galling yoke no more? Yet so it was. But every stroke in that deliverance God's own hand effected. How truly was His faithful word verified—"I am come down to deliver"! Well may Israel sing, "He hath done marvellous things: with His own right hand, and with His holy arm, hath He gotten Himself the victory" (Ps. xxviii. 1). And well may His redeemed ones still sing—

"When He makes bare His arm
Who shall His work withstand?"

It is our purpose to record another instance of this sovereign mercy of our God, the particulars of which we have just received in a letter from Victoria.

George H—, until the spring of this year, was a "bushman" of the ordinary type, quite indifferent to anything beyond his daily bread, and hardened enough to be abusive if anything was pressed upon him as to eternal realities or his own soul's deep need. Like most of his class, he was much given to bad language, but otherwise a steady, quiet man. Some years ago he had saved enough

money to take twenty acres of land. Having built his hut upon it, he devoted his time chiefly to onion-growing, and was thereby able to earn a living for himself. By much self-denial he managed, at last, to get a horse and cart. But things did not go smoothly with him. God cared too much for his soul to allow him to settle down comfortably in such spiritual destitution. Adversity overtook him in various shapes, such as the loss of crops, accidents, etc.; but none of these things as yet appeared to move him to care for his soul, or to turn to God in any way. Even an accident which dislocated both his wrists, and rendered him helpless for months, left him as hard as ever. He still turned to "his own way," forgetting God and, as he would have said himself at that time, "by God forgot," as though in that secluded spot he was entirely beyond God's notice.

But oh, the untiring patience of a Saviour-God! Truly He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?" (Ezek. xviii. 23). In verses 31, 32 He answers His own gracious question, saying, "Why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God."

Some few months ago another so-called misfortune overtook him, which, while bringing out more distinctly than ever the wickedness of his heart, was through God's grace but another link in the chain that drew him nearer to everlasting blessing. His horse one day suddenly dropped down dead. This more than astonished him, for he had always treated the poor animal well, and there was no apparent cause for this sudden occurrence. He was greatly concerned at its loss, but evidently said little about it to others.

Had it come into his mind that one day *he* might

suddenly fall down dead? Had the inquiry been thrust upon him—If I should die thus, what next? The death of a horse is not of much consequence beyond the loss to his master. Not so the death of a sinner. Who can weigh all that hangs upon a sinner's death? Who can measure the sinner's loss? *A soul lost.* Infinity, eternity are of necessity two factors in the calculation, without measure, without end. Who can make the reckoning? Who fully gauge all that is involved in that word *lost*—**ETERNALLY LOST?**

We know not in which direction G. H——'s thought turned at this time, but he seems to have brooded a great deal over the loss of his horse, whatever he might have thought of the loss of his soul.

One day when in the bush all alone he fell to blaspheming about it, in the senseless way such men sometimes let loose their rage, calling upon God to damn both him and it.

Suddenly, as though a voice spoke, he heard the words, "HE WILL, HE WILL!" (Indeed, he says he actually *did* hear a voice.)

He was instantly both silenced and alarmed. How to account for the voice which he thought he heard is impossible, but of the effect of it there can be no question. Most probably it was God's voice in his conscience.

In a little while the first alarm wore off, and he thought little more about it till evening, when in his hut alone preparing his tea. Then the conviction fastened itself upon him that GOD had spoken to him, and the thought of his blasphemy greatly troubled him. The remembrance of his past life, his enmity to God, his hatred of the Scriptures, all came before him and troubled him exceedingly. The more he dwelt upon it the more certain he felt that he would be "damned," for he was sure he richly deserved it.

He knew of no one close at hand to speak to of these solemn matters, and had nothing in his hut to give him the smallest crumb of comfort or render him the least possible help. A friend had once given him a Bible, but this he had burnt, and as for tracts, he had long made a practice of throwing into the fire all that came to his hand. Indeed, every scrap of printed matter that spoke to him of eternal things he had treated in the same way. How gladly, *now*, would he have turned to something of the kind, and he had nobody but himself to blame that such was not in his possession.

He was now getting into years, and seemed to have lost nearly all remembrance of the Scripture he had listened to in earlier years. His father was a churchwarden, but one that only made merchandise of religion. Such empty formality was therefore not likely to impress his son very favourably with the reality of divine things. All the poor bushman could now do, therefore, was to go on in soul-darkness and bitter agony, not knowing where to turn for light and relief. He would willingly have travelled some miles to see a certain Christian he knew who kept a store, but the fear that he would think that he was only *pretending* to be religious for the sake of some personal advantage deterred him from going. So he went on, all alone as he was, crying to God for the mercy he so much needed.

One night things took a new turn. He went to a neighbour's house for some "dripping." His neighbour gave him the fat wrapped in a piece of paper. When he reached home he unfolded the packet, and noticed, in doing so, that the paper was the outside leaf of *The Leader* newspaper. It so happened that upon this sheet it was usual to print a weekly sermon. This one was by the late C. H. Spurgeon, and entitled "A Simple Sermon for Seeking Souls," on the text "Whosoever shall call

upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom. x. 13). In the close of this sermon the preacher says, "I know that what the Saviour did He *did*, and if He did redeem He *did* redeem, and those redeemed by Him are positively redeemed from death and hell and wrath. I can never bring my mind to the unrighteous idea that Christ was punished for a man, and that such a man will be punished again. I never could see how Christ could stand in a man's stead and be punished for him, and yet that man be punished again. No; inasmuch as thou callest on God's name there is proof that Christ is thy ransom. Come, rejoice. If He was punished God's justice cannot demand double [payment], 'first at the bleeding Surety's hands, and then again at thine.' . . . Are you feeling your sins? Do you shed tears in secret on account of them? Do you lament your iniquities? Oh, take His promise—'Whosoever' (sweet 'whosoever'!), 'whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.' The devil says it is no use for you to call; you have been a drunkard. Tell him it says, 'whosoever.' 'Nay,' says the evil spirit, 'you have never been to hear a sermon these last ten years.' Tell him it says 'whosoever' . . . Tell him that—

"If all the sins that men have done,
 In thought, or word, or deed,
 Since worlds were made or time begun
 Could meet on one poor head,
The blood of Jesus Christ alone
For all this guilt could well atone.'

"Oh, lay this to thine heart! May God's Spirit do it! Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

This was just what he had been doing in his distress and loneliness, and here was the unexpected but God-sent answer! God had not answered his angry cry in the

bush when he asked Him to damn him, but now that he had begun to cry to Him to save him, the answer of peace He would surely convey to his troubled heart. He who sent Philip to the desert to help the seeking eunuch could arrange that this poor lonely "bushman" should get a message also. What a God!

Well, he sat down at once and eagerly read it through, and thankfully receiving the glad tidings, he entered into peace there and then.

A few weeks later he went to see the Christian storekeeper just alluded to. He was very shy about it, but his thirst for the Word of God overcame his reserve and timidity. The storekeeper noticed that the old man seemed considerably agitated, but as he usually had *some* trouble to talk about when he went to the store, he did not pay particular attention, not even when the "bushman" asked him if he could have a little talk with him, until he added, hesitatingly, "about *Christianity*."

"Certainly," said the Christian at once, although thinking he had just got some "fit of religion" not uncommon with those lonely bushmen. "At the same time," he said, "I really felt desirous of helping him, and bade him come in at once, remarking, 'I am always ready to speak of divine things.'"

He went into the dining-room, and at once began to relate the foregoing occurrences. There could be no doubt of the change in his relationship with God. He said, "I have never been so happy in my life." He said also, that all his old love of fiction and of the newspaper had gone: that he now longed for the Word of God. On asking the storekeeper to get him a Bible, he proposed to lend him his own dear mother's, with the many passages which she had marked, and specially directed him to the tenth chapter of John's Gospel. The old man wept as he read it, and, as the storekeeper puts it, "He nearly had

me weeping too." His delight and joy in the Word seemed so real.

Two things were exercising him, he said. He had heard or read that "confession," that is, a public confession of faith, followed salvation. How and to whom was he expected to confess? The storekeeper tried to help him on this matter, and was pleased to find that he had already been telling his old friend, a lonely bachelor bushman like himself, of the great grace which God had been showing him. The other matter was the question of baptism.

On leaving, the storekeeper lent him a book called *Grace and Truth*, and marked in the Bible such passages as he thought would help him to a better understanding of God's grace to him. He asked also for some gospel tracts, as he wished to give them to some he knew, and then left peaceful and happy.

Our correspondent said he did not speak of his own doings, nor did he *promise* to do anything. His whole bearing was that of one eager to show his gratitude to God for His boundless grace to him.

One word with *you*, dear reader. Has the grace of God yet shown you what you are, and brought you to the feet of a risen Saviour? Listen to one of His last invitations recorded in Scripture, "I will give to him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." Faith, as she listens to such an utterance, can boldly say, "If He *says* He will, then 'HE WILL, HE WILL.'"

Put Him to the proof, reader. Come to Him at once!

“AM I RIGHT?”

“AM I right?” said an uncertain railway traveller to a passing guard. “Show your ticket” was the smart response, and a decided “All right, it is a through carriage,” when he had scanned it to his satisfaction.

“Am I right?” said a sea captain to himself, one cloudy afternoon, as he noticed the distance record of his automatic log, and once more scanned the horizon. “No land to be seen! How is this?”

His vessel, the *Queen*, was being navigated to the Shetland Islands, and the first prominent headland should, by this time, be full in view. The self-recording log showed the captain that the actual *distance* had already been more than covered. Yet no land! Something was wrong.

As no one on board knew his exact whereabouts any better than himself, the only thing to be done was to look for help *outside*. So the anxious captain hailed a fishing smack, and with his hoarse yet powerful voice shouted, “Where’s *Sumborough Head*?” But the smacksmen did not seem to understand the question, and in another minute their well-filled sails carried them beyond earshot. Perhaps they thought, “Surely the well-known captain of the *Queen*, born in the Shetlands, and brought up on her stormy coasts, has not lost his course! *He* knows his way about in these waters.” As far as we could gather, they inquired what he said, but evidently the captain’s repeated question never reached them, so they continued their own way.

Then he altered his course a little, so as to come within speaking distance of another small craft, and once more his question was hoarsely roared out, “Where’s

Sumborough Head?" No reply. Then a repeat with all his might, till the longed-for answer came, "Sou'-sou'-west!" Then he saw that adverse currents had carried his vessel too far to the eastward, and that he must reshape his course accordingly.

"*Am I right after all?*" says some Christian to himself.

Perhaps, like the captain of the *Queen*, he has so long been professedly on the right way that no one who knows him imagines that such a question is being so solemnly turned over in *his* mind. But there it is all the same: "*Am I right*, or has my profession been a stupendous blunder?"

Perhaps the reader of these pages finds himself in this sorry plight. Like the captain of the Shetland steamboat, you are looking for certain spiritual indications to reassure your questioning mind, and you cannot find them. To use our figure, you cannot make your vessel's present position satisfactorily fit in with the testimony of the "log." You cannot reconcile your present spiritual state with what the Scriptures seem to point out as the proper experience of the true Christian. Perhaps, too, any little query you have ventured to put to some more established Christian has been wrongly interpreted, or been met with, "You *ought* to know," and this you have taken as a well-deserved snub for asking such a foolish, or at least such an elementary question.

Let us, then, make a little further use of our captain's dilemma by way of seeking to help you.

When he first started from port, what was the point he aimed for? It was Sumborough Head. What point had he kept in his mind's eye as he directed the man at the wheel all the way afterwards? Sumborough Head. When at last he had good reason to believe that he had missed the point he aimed at, what was the substance

of his anxious inquiry? Why, just this, "Where's Sumborough Head?"

Now let us seek to apply this. When we first started our Christian course, whither did we turn for rest and satisfaction? We looked to Jesus, and we looked to Him in the place where He now is. But how did that give us the rest we longed for? We knew that He had reached that place by way of the cross. We knew that our only ground of exemption from the judgment which our sins deserved was the fact that He had borne its full weight upon the tree; that He had drained the cup of wrath to its very last drop; that He had received the last stroke of the smiting we had earned. We saw, too, that this marvellous transaction could all be traced to the very bosom of the God we had sinned against. Jesus was the Sent One of the Father, and He could say, "I have finished the work which *Thou* gavest *Me* to do" (John xvii. 4).

It would be a gross slander, a daring insult to the Son, to say that He was God-forsaken on the cross on His own personal account. It was only because He was absolutely "spotless" and "without blemish" that He was eligible to be "the Lamb of God."

What, then, brought Him into that place of abandonment and judgment? There is only one answer. It was *our* sins. "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree" (1 Peter ii. 24).

But *Where is He now?* The same inspired writer tells us, "Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him" (1 Peter iii. 22).

What! A sin-bearer in the place of power and glory and honour? No, no. To admit that would be to heap wanton insult upon the majesty of God Himself, who occupies that throne. The portion of one upon whom

sin is found must necessarily be darkness, and curse, and judgment; but of Him it is written prophetically, “Thou hast given Him His heart’s desire. Thou hast made Him most blessed for ever: Thou hast made Him exceeding glad with Thy countenance” (Ps. xxi. 2, 6).

Sin can never find an entrance into that scene of glory. It was sin that barred man’s way to the glory of God, as it is written, “All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. iii. 23).

But is not Jesus there now? And is it not the “same Jesus,” and Jesus still clothed with the very body in which He bore our sins? Yes, the very same. Then, surely, our looking to Jesus now should as thoroughly assure our hearts that our sins have been put away from before the eye of God as the first look assured us.

Sumborough Head was the same Sumborough Head at the end of the voyage as it was at the beginning. The *Queen* might drift out of her course, and her captain fail in his nautical calculations, but Sumborough Head was Sumborough Head still. Its exact whereabouts was the prime consideration at the beginning of the course, and how the vessel stood in relation to it was the steersman’s paramount consideration when approaching the end.

So with my spiritual course. When I started upon it everything depended on Him. *Where is He* who came down to earth to undertake my liabilities as a ruined, guilty sinner? What is the answer? My Saviour is in glory. And, though I have since drifted into dismal doubt and dark misgiving, “*Where is He?*” is still the all-important question. Has *He* changed, since the voyage commenced, either in character or position? No, He is the “same Jesus”—“Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever” (Heb. xiii. 8). He has “for ever sat down at the right hand of God” (Heb. x. 12).

Ah! says one, I know *He* is all right, but my fears are respecting *myself*. Did I ever properly start at all?

Well, what do you mean by starting?

I mean, was I ever converted?

Well, no one on earth can really answer this but yourself. It is not a matter to be settled by any subtle religious argument, it is one of the *heart*. God looks at the heart, and conversion is a turning of the heart to God with the sense that one's guilty conscience can find relief nowhere else; that unless He forgive I am undone for ever. Other hopes are given up, and God alone is sought. The captain of the *Queen* knew well enough that Shetland would never be reached by any improvement of his vessel while still moored in Aberdeen harbour. And just as he cried to the man who stood by the mooring cable, "*Let go!*" and turned his vessel's head to the port he desired to reach, so I give up all hopes of self-amendment as a means of reaching the desired blessing, and look only to Christ.

If, therefore, you have any doubt about the start you made, the simple way of settling it is this, Which way, for refuge and blessing, am I turning *now*? Is it to *myself* I am looking or is it to *God*, as He has revealed Himself in Christ? True faith can say—

"Other refuge have I none;
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee."

Nor would any other refuge, if offered, get anything but an indignant refusal.

One word more. Perhaps it is the poor *progress* you have made in your Christian course that casts you down. Then the deeper your exercise the better. Only bear this in mind: you will not make any better progress in the future by a mournful occupation with your failures in the past. Turn both from bad progress and good

progress. TURN TO CHRIST. Let your heart delight itself in HIM.

“Yet, gracious Lord, when we reflect
How oft we’ve turned the eye from Thee,
How treated Thee with proud neglect,
And listened to the enemy,
And yet to find Thee still the same,
’Tis this that humbles us with shame.”

Am I right? Yes; if *Christ* is right in having commanded that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, and I, in self-condemnation, have thankfully accepted the gracious message (Luke xxiv. 47).

Am I right? Yes; if the “faithful saying” which, in my conscious need of a Saviour, I have gladly accepted is as “worthy” as the *Holy Spirit* represents it to be (1 Tim. i. 15).

Am I right? Yes; if *God the Father* was right in exalting and glorifying the One who made Himself answerable for my sins on the tree. God’s acceptance of that settlement on my account, and my rest of conscience about it, live or die together (John xiii. 32).

REFLECTING TOO LATE.

A CHRISTIAN who was recently employed in superintending the pulling down of the old Clerkenwell House of Correction, London, came across the following inscription scratched upon the inside of one of the old prison doors:—

“Jack. Fooled for a mere song. Bah!

“*Ten years!* Ten long, weary, weary years! Oh, my God, will it ever come to an end?

“No wife to comfort and cheer me; and my poor children! No more will I hear them prattling at my knees.

“Friends! I have none.

“TEN YEARS. All gone. Oh, fool that I was!”

It is not difficult to picture that remorseful face, as with something sharp, perhaps a nail from his boot, he expressed, in scratchings upon his prison door, something of the keen anguish that gnawed within. Alone, with plenty of time to think, he could look backward and see himself “fooled for a mere song”; and forward, and say with bitterness, “Oh, my God, will it ever come to an end?” Ten years away from wife and children and home and liberty, looked crushingly dreary.

But who shall picture the woe of a soul lost for eternity? Who estimate the bitterness of anguish that will pierce and wring the heart of the one who has sold an eternity of heavenly joy for a few days of unsatisfying pleasures in a world of sin?

Look at poor Esau; he sacrificed the future for the present. A little present gratification, a mess of pottage, was more to him than the inheritance. “Who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright” (Heb. xii. 16), is what the Holy Ghost says about his folly.

Then came the “afterward” of remorse. The birthright was “despised,” and the blessing, though sought “carefully, with tears,” was sought in vain. “*He cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry,*” but he cried too late. Despising the birthright, he missed the blessing too, and the bitterest weeping was of no avail to bring it back.

Oh, unsaved friend, ere it be too late with you, see that you are not fooled for eternity, as the poor prisoner was fooled for time—fooled for a mere song! Think of

the bitterness of a soul within the prison-house of hell! He looks back upon a wasted life. Friends (so-called) have gone, pleasures of sin gone, opportunities—gospel opportunities—gone too; all gone, and his only outlook “the wrath to come,” in the loneliness and misery of the “blackness of darkness for ever.” Does he ask, like the prisoner, “WILL IT EVER COME TO AN END?” The only answer that comes is from a gnawing conscience within: Never, *Never*, NEVER! Not in ten years, nor ten millions. NEVER, NEVER!

Oh, my dear reader, that *you* may never taste the bitterness of such a cup, we earnestly and lovingly entreat you to flee to the Saviour’s welcoming arms, assuring you if you do, that, “though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

But we warn you, with the Word of God before us, that “if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it” (Isa. i. 18, 20).

“THIS YEAR ALSO.”

“**L**ORD, *let it alone this year also,*” expressed the merciful wish of the vine-dresser in the parable (Luke xiii.). The fig tree in question had proved itself hitherto to be only a fruitless cumberer of the ground, well earning the owner’s just sentence—“*cut it down.*” But a pleading voice is heard, “Give it another year’s trial; grant increased opportunities; heap round it fresh privileges; and if it bear fruit, well; and if not, then *after that* thou shalt cut it down.” Pleading should cease; the worst must come. This was a picture, no doubt, of man in the flesh as under God’s careful culture; of man as put to the test under law.

To say the least, man *thought* he could produce acceptable fruit for God, and God is therefore seen in this parable as coming to him, and asking him for it. Year after year, however, the demand was made in vain; the search was fruitless. "They *say*, but *do not*." He "sought fruit," and "found none."

This term of patient trial came to a close at the end of the Lord's earthly ministry, *i.e.* at the cross; and the attention of the disciples was drawn to this fact by the cursing of the barren fig tree only six days before His betrayal.

As to any hope of finding goodness in man, "the end of all flesh" had now come before God (Gen. vi. 13), and Christ is "the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth." "They that are in the flesh cannot please God," is the Spirit's solemn verdict (Rom. viii. 8).

What, then, it may be asked, is God's *present* attitude towards man? He is not now demanding righteousness *from* man (for *there is none righteous*), but is bestowing unmerited favours *upon* man. This we shall find illustrated in the two following chapters of this gospel (Luke xiv., xv.), where He is seen coming forth as the generous *Provider*, the free-handed *Giver*. He feasts the poorest (chap. xiv.) and welcomes the worst (chap. xv.). When the starving prodigal was in the far country "no man gave to him"; when he returned no man demanded from him.

Man's present responsibility is therefore to take the place of the hopelessly destitute waster, and receive God's provided blessing *free, gratis, for nothing*; it is to draw near as a guilty offender and receive the kiss of forgiveness which God is waiting to bestow. "*Justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*," expresses both the manner and the means of the sinner's blessing under grace. If, therefore, man

is now mercifully spared year after year, it is not in order that he may find some goodness in himself to bring to God, but that he may come confessing his badness, and freely receive blessing from God.

Permit, therefore, a friendly question, dear reader. Have you yet done this? Face the matter honestly. Do not imagine that you are gliding down the stream of time either unnoticed or uncared for. As sure as your eye is upon this paper, *God's eye is upon you*. He knows how many years of gracious privilege have already been granted you, and how many golden opportunities you have heedlessly thrown away.

What would you think of a certain debtor who had sent to him, every Monday morning, by a wealthy friend, a letter of introduction to his own banker, with instructions that, upon presenting the same, the banker should write out a draft for the immediate settlement of the whole of his liabilities, and all at his friend's expense? What would you think, we ask, if you knew that, in proud independence, he indignantly put all such letters into the fire, or threw them aside through sheer indifference, not regarding them worth even a formal acknowledgment? Why, you would have no hesitation in calling such a man either a rash fool or a pitiable madman; and nobody would disagree with your judgment.

But then, what of yourself? Are you forgetting that a most exact reckoning has been kept of all the opportunities afforded you from early years, when your heart was tender, even until now? What, then, have you done with them all? Are you prepared for the day that will bring all to broad daylight? And oh, have you considered that there will certainly be an *end* to God's patient long-suffering? that there is such a thing in the mind of God as *your last New Year's Day on earth*? And who knows but you may have already reached or

even passed it? In God's name, and for your own sake, we ask, therefore, Why are you carelessly trifling? Oh, will nothing arouse you?

Listen to the solemn story of

A TRIFLER'S END.

A youth on board the *Harbinger*, during her last outward voyage to Melbourne, was asked to come to hear the gospel preached on board by a servant of Christ, to which he made this light and trifling reply, "Heaven is not for sailors, it is only for landsmen," and refused to come and listen to the joyful tidings. Now, it happened that this very man had in his possession a small penny Testament. Many precious verses were marked in it by some unknown hand, and among others Acts xiii. 38, 39, "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him *all that believe* are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."

Had he read those verses? If he had, what a flat denial they should have furnished to his own rash statement, "Heaven is not for sailors," since God has said, "*All that believe are justified.*" Alas! for such hardened mockery.

And if he had seen these verses, had he noticed the two that follow them, "Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the Prophets; Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you"?

DESPISE to-day, and you may

WONDER at your own madness to-morrow, and

PERISH for ever.

But listen to the solemn sequel. On the 25th of July

he had climbed up to the foreroyal-yard (*i.e.* to reach the topmost sail but one), when suddenly he lost his hold, and fell with a heavy crash upon the ship's rail, and thence into the water. The man at the wheel saw the accident, and as he floated astern the vessel threw a life-buoy close to him, but to all appearance he was dead; for as he floated past his head was under water. And what use, therefore, was all the help in the world to a dead man?

Who can tell what may have passed through his mind on the way between that foreroyal-yard and the ship's bulwarks? There the curtain must fall. But has it not a solemn voice to every soul that breathes, be he sailor or landsman, who reads these pages? Do not trifle, but be wise in time. The limits of your little history are in God's hands, and for aught you know the solemn word may have already gone forth, "Let it alone *this year also*, if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down." "He that, being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy" (Prov. xxix. 1).

BEWARE THEREFORE!

DECEIVED BY TAKING IT FOR GRANTED.

HOW mortified that man of business looks as he reaches the railway station, only to find that his train has just gone!

"Ah!" he mutters to himself, as he compares his watch with railway time, and sinks down weary and disappointed on the platform seat, "my *watch* has deceived me; my morning is thrown away."

"How did it happen?" inquired the doctor of a poor

old woman, just restored to consciousness after a serious fall into the water.

“I didn’t think the river was so near,” she replies; “my *eyes* deceived me.”

Captain —, of that splendid clipper ship the *Dunbar*, thought he was all right, no doubt, as he steered his vessel towards Sydney harbour. But, alas! he mistook the North Head light for the South Head light, and his gallant ship was speedily reduced to a pitiable wreck.

Now, no one, that I am aware of, questioned that captain’s *sincerity*; yet his ship was lost; his *judgment* deceived him.

But what is the loss of a ship, though she were freighted with all this world counts precious, compared with the loss of one soul!

“What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” asks the blessed Son of God Himself (Mark viii. 36). And who knows the soul’s true value as He who came to save it?

Is it possible, reader, that you are steering your vessel by a false light? May God in rich mercy step in and graciously rescue your soul from eternal shipwreck!

This is a world of deceit. Satan, the prince of it, is the “father of lies”; and man’s heart has been pronounced by Him who is alone able to search it, as “*deceitful above all things*” (Jer. xvii. 9). But of all manner of deceptions, *self-deception*, and especially *religious self-deception*, seems the saddest and the worst.

Do you start at the expression, *religious self-deception*? Well, depend upon it, whether it shocks you or not, there is nothing *so* deceptive as a decent religious life without the knowledge of Christ in the heart.

Men and women, who have never been born again, settle down comfortably with this state of things from week to week, until, sooner or later, they find that they

have clad themselves in the "*filthy rags*" of their own righteousness (see Isa. lxiv. 6), instead of the "*wedding garment*" of God's providing; and that they have walked in the "sparks of their own kindling" (Isa. l. 11), instead of receiving the inshining of that "light" which comes from the face of Jesus Christ the Saviour in glory (2 Cor. iv. 6).

In the quiet rectory of a little village in Northamptonshire lived a person of the above type. She was a decent, respectable woman, and, withal, *religious* too. But, sad to say, her soul was a stranger to Christ as *her own personal Saviour*.

For several years she had lived with the aged rector in the capacity of housekeeper. But now the end had come. She was dying. Let us allow those dying lips to tell their own sad story.

Addressing her aged master, who had just been summoned by her special request to her bedside, she said—

"I have now been under your roof, sir, for about twenty years."

"You have," replied the minister, "and a faithful servant you have been."

"I have regularly attended your ministry for the whole of that period," she continued. "I have taken the Sacrament from your hand every month, and heard family prayers from your lips every day."

To all this the clergyman fully assented.

"But," she added, with some measure of bitterness, "*you have never once asked me, 'Is your soul saved?'*"

"Oh, *I took that for granted!*" said he.

"Yes, sir, you *may* have taken it for granted that I was saved; but I am dying, AND MY SOUL IS LOST!"

What an appalling discovery was this to make on the very verge of eternity! and that, remember, after years and years of outward religiousness.

The fact was, that with her, as with thousands more in the present day, Sacrament-taking, prayer-saying, sermon-hearing had been relied on instead of Christ; and now her remorse was unbearable, as she found her false hopes crumbling into dust, and swept away before her dying eyes.

My dear reader, to what are *you* trusting for salvation? Perhaps, like the poor soul just alluded to, your life has been fairly good; *i.e.* compared with many others. You have always conducted yourself with due propriety, and sought to live honestly. You have diligently attended to your (so-called) religious duties; you have your family pew at church, or your hired sitting in the chapel, and, moreover, you have supported the "cause" with no niggard hand, and that for many years. Perhaps even your minister or your class-leader, with many others of your fellow-professors, have long "*taken it for granted*" that *you* are on the right road.

But pause now, and answer, in the presence of God, *Has all this fitted you for heaven?*

Ah! you cannot, you dare not say that it has; but still you fondly hope that, *if you still go on in this way*, Christ's merits will be added to yours to make up any deficiency in the end. And besides, you trust, by increased pious efforts, still further to *improve your title for heaven*, before being called to die.

If this is your condition before God, dear friend, depend upon it you are building your house upon the sand; you are deceiving yourself by "a fair show in the flesh," and be assured that all will come to the ground some day.

The very fact of your trying to *improve your title for heaven* proves clearly that, instead of being saved, you are only deceiving your own soul by a false hope.

But let us turn a moment to God's Word. Read carefully Acts iv. 12: "Neither is there salvation in any

other: for *there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved*" (i.e. the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom God raised from the dead).

Now, if Christ alone is the sinner's *only* title to heaven; if faith in His precious blood is the *only* ground of true peace and forgiveness; then you must admit that it would be nothing short of foul blasphemy to talk of *improving* such a title!

Add merit to HIS peerless person! Improve the value of HIS atoning sacrifice! *Away with such a thought.*

The fact is, dear friend, *your refuge is a false one*, and the sooner you face that solemn fact in the presence of God the better.

You prove that it is *self* you are really trusting, and not Christ at all. *You are trying to be good enough for God to accept you.* Conscience tells you that you are still far from God's standard of holiness, and that is why you think of *improving your title.*

A "*good self*" is the Pharisee's only trust; a *worthy Christ* is the true believer's only refuge.

"*Lo, these many years do I serve thee,*" said the elder son, in the parable, "*neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends.*"

His best doings had not earned the smallest blessing. But the poor prodigal was welcomed and blessed, not upon the ground of *his* goodness to the father (for he owned that he had none; he had "*sinned,*" and was *unworthy*), but upon the ground of the father's goodness and love to him.

Oh, false professor! cast off from thee, as thou wouldst a deadly serpent, every rag of thine own righteousness; and while *distrusting self in every shape*, look into the

face of that blessed Worthy One in heavenly glory ("once for guilty sinners slain"), and trust alone in Him.

Then, instead of being *deceived* by thy treacherous heart, thou shalt have the assurance of His precious Word that *salvation* is thine.

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts xvi. 31).

Thou shalt then be able to go on thy way rejoicing, singing thy grateful song of praise to Him who alone is worthy.

Then the language of thy heart shall ever be—

"Other refuge have I none;
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee."

AFRAID TO THINK.

DR. JOHNSON once said, when he had seen certain grand houses with their splendid surroundings and delightful places of amusement, "Alas, these are only *struggles for happiness*. As Xerxes wept when he considered that not one out of his immense army would be alive one hundred years afterwards, so it went to my heart to consider that there was not one in that brilliant circle that was not *afraid to go home and think*."

Here stands a solemn indictment. But is it true? Is man, at best, a coward when God and the realities of eternity have to be faced? Yea, verily. Divine testimony fully bears this out. "If one know them, they are in the terrors of the shadow of death" (Job xxiv. 17). "Oh that they *would* consider their latter end," is the language of divine compassion.

But no; rather than this, they would fain come to Job's conclusion and say, "I will *forget* my complaint." Not

that such turning away from the inevitable improves matters. How could it?

Is that lady, after being told by her physician that she has a malignant tumour, any better off because, instead of submitting to a timely operation, she repairs nightly to the opera house and does her best to forget the deadly growth?

Are the affairs of a bankrupt improved by his joining in the excitement of a football match, or resorting regularly to the billiard table, and forgetting how he stands with his creditors?

There can be but one answer to these questions. But let us come a little closer and consider our own case. Another year in your little history will soon have flown by. Almost imperceptibly did the hours of last year steal away. By rapid leaps and bounds the end was reached; we know how we stand in relation to time. What sudden surprises *this* year may yet bring us! Yea, the greatest surprise we ever had may overtake us before next December. Is it not well to look such things calmly in the face?

The writer was once conducted by a friend, many years ago, to the top of a high hill. On one side—the one we ascended—the summit could be reached by climbing a fairly gradual slope. On the other side it dropped almost perpendicularly to the plain beneath. When we had nearly reached the top, my guide suddenly stopped. "Just give me your hand, and close your eyes," he said; "let me lead you the rest of the road with your eyes shut." After doing as I was told, he gently led me a few paces higher up. Then he stopped and said, "Open." Suddenly a sight met my view that greatly surprised me. Many feet below lay the little town, through whose streets I had been passing and repassing some days previous. *Then* I could only see one street at a time,

now I could see them all at a glance. From end to end there it lay, and the sight of it had burst upon my gaze the instant I opened my eyes.

Now, whether you are "*afraid to think*" of it or not, my reader, *such* a surprise may be close at hand.

Beyond a certain spot on that hilltop we could not take a single forward step. But we could see plainly enough the place from whence we had come and the paths we had only just before trodden.

So it is with every man. Beyond a certain moment he may not, he cannot go. "Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with Thee, Thou hast appointed his bounds that he *cannot pass*" (Job xiv. 5).

How will the sudden review of your own path suit you, my reader, in the light of meeting the God who has seen your every step? Is there anything in the past to give you solid comfort? Can you look back to the day when *your* repentance caused "joy in heaven"; when your own heart was filled with joy that a repentant sinner's sins were all forgiven? that you were able to sing with myriads gone before—

"O happy day that fixed my choice
On Thee, my Saviour and my God"?

If you cannot, then you have great occasion to look ahead with alarm. For you are speeding on to eternity with a lifetime of sin at your heels. Listen to the prophet of old: "Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope" (Isa. v. 18).

Oh! whither are you dragging the whole weight of your iniquity but to the great day of reckoning? And this while the news of God's proclamation of pardon is ringing in your ears. Think, oh think, for once! Are

you quite certain that *this year* will not find you beyond the reach of repentance? If it should, *whom will you blame?* We cannot arrest your onward course; we cannot subdue your persistent will; we cannot change your rebellious heart. But two or three things we can do. We can earnestly remind you of your danger; we can tell you that, if there is not joy in heaven about your repentance, there will be wrath from heaven on your ungodliness (Rom. i. 18). Moreover, we can tell you that the door of repentance is still open, that forgiveness in the name of the risen Saviour is still proclaimed to every creature under heaven. But more. We can pray (and we *do* pray) that you may yet bow before the waiting Saviour, bow in self-condemnation; and looking into His face with the confidence which He ever begets in the hearts of those who thus approach Him, that you may be able to tell Him that you are so sinful and helpless you cannot do without Him.

How truly was it once written, "We spend our years as a tale that is told. The days of our years are three-score years and ten" (Ps. xc. 9, 10). And a "tale" of seventy pages is soon run through. Many a novel reader has been known to leave the earlier pages of his tale of fiction and peer into its later pages to see how the author's fabrication would end. Who, then, could blame you for looking to the end of life's short story and saying, "Where shall its end find *me?*"

You may be *afraid to think* now; you will be *compelled to think* one day. But such reflection may come too late. We wish you joy, much joy, and the only thing that can bring it is the knowledge of Christ as your Saviour and Friend. Everything else is, as Dr. Johnson so aptly expressed it, only a *struggle for happiness*, which leaves men "*afraid to go home and think.*"

GOING WHERE?

IT is related of a dying infidel watchmaker in the Midlands that, during his last twenty-four hours, he repeated over and over again these words, "I'm going, I don't know where!"

The language of his lifetime had been, "I'm going, I don't care where." But now that the weight of death's icy hand was upon him all his hardened carelessness and bravery forsook him; and had you investigated what was wrapped up in that dying cry, "I'm going, I don't know where," there is little doubt you would have found that it meant this, "I'm going, utterly overwhelmed with the question, WHERE?"

Who has not heard the excited cry of some angry foot-passenger as he but narrowly escaped the wheels of a passing conveyance, "*Why don't you look where you are going?*" or the sharp retort of the ruffled driver, "*Why don't you look where you are going?*" One meaning, "Why be so careless as to do me an injury?" and the other, "Why be so reckless as to run the risk?"

One ship, we will suppose, is passing another on the high seas. They are sufficiently near to exchange greetings.

"Whither bound?" inquires the officer in charge of one of the vessels.

"*Don't know,*" is signalled back from the captain of the other ship.

"He doesn't understand the question. Ask again—'Whither bound?'"

"*Don't know,*" is again the answer returned.

"But is she not an English vessel of such a Line?"

"Yes."

“Then inquire once more—‘Whither bound?’”

And then, as before, is signalled the same unaccountable answer, “*Don't know*”; only this time he adds, “NOBODY CAN KNOW!”

Who would not judge such a man to be more fit for a madhouse than for the command of a first-class British trader? or else that one so utterly reckless deserved to have his certificate cancelled the next port he called at?

But stay, my unconverted reader, What are all the fine ships in the world, with their costly cargoes into the bargain, in comparison with the value of *your one soul*? Yet if we cried “Whither bound?” would your answer be more satisfactory than this captain's. Consider.

We are reminded, as one year follows upon the heels of another, how rapidly we are approaching the end of life's little voyage. The end? Yes, *think of it*—THE END!

No one on earth can assure you of even one more New Year's Day in this world; and with this in view we cannot forbear raising the passenger's cry in your ears, and ask, “Why don't you *look* where you are going?” We do not raise the cry angrily, but we could not help raising it anxiously. The issues are so tremendous, the consequences of neglect so serious, that with all the earnestness we possess we would not only ask, “Why don't you *look* where you are going?” but, “Why don't you *know*? for you *may* know.”

“I do not feel disposed to face such questions,” you may possibly answer. Permit the writer, then, to face them for you, and in the light of God's Word to make bare the root of the matter. The secret of the mischief is simply summed up in two words—*fear* and *unbelief*. To explain. Are you not conscious of the fact that to *look* where you are going would effectually spoil all your present enjoyment—the pleasures of sin? You shut

your eyes, therefore, to what lies before you, and, willingly ignorant, go blindly sinning on. You are *afraid* to look. Again, if you *believed* the truth of Scripture about your God-forgetting worldly course, you would know well enough where you are going. In proof of this, carefully note the following statements:—

“When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth DEATH” (James i. 15). “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of DEATH” (Prov. xvi. 25). “Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but *know* thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into JUDGMENT” (Eccles. xi. 9).

What a ring of reality there is about these statements. What certain evidence that *death* and *judgment* are the inevitable results of a course of sin. But, alas! you close your eyes for fear of being made uncomfortable; you harden your heart in unbelief, and persistently sin on. Be honest with your own soul: is this not the truth? Are you not both *fearful* and *unbelieving*? And are not these the two great reasons why you are not a Christian to-day?

Some there are, believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, who know that their names are written in heaven—written in the *book of life*. Yours is written also—written in the *book of truth*. Nor is this any secret, for if you had the courage to look for yourself you could easily find it. It is in Revelation xxi. 8, in the verse which begins with

“The FEARFUL and UNBELIEVING,”

and ends with

“THE SECOND DEATH.”

Is it not high time to awake, think you? Oh that God would bring you to repentance ere you lay this message aside. That "*going I don't care where*" kind of spirit won't do for a dying hour, depend upon it, and remember—

"There are no pardons in the tomb,
And brief is mercy's day."

HOW FAR AHEAD DARE YOU LOOK?

EVERY rational being in this world looks into the future. Some look further than others, but all look ahead. The sailor lad, as he paces the deck in the lonely night-watch and turns his eye in the direction of the vessel's course, looks forward to the time when he will once more be welcomed home, and, further still, to the time when he will be able to bid adieu to the tossings and toils of a seafaring life, and end his days more restfully on shore.

"*End his days!*" What significant words! Yes—*end his days* in this world. And what then? How much further can he look with anything like solid comfort? Just ask him, and if his soul is a stranger to Christ he will at once betray signs of uneasiness. "There is," he knows, "a time to die," and because of that which lies beyond he dreads the thought of it.

"We have got a very nice little place here," said a Leicestershire farmer, speaking of his snug, thrifty-looking farmstead. "My son and I could do very well indeed here if it were not for that—*dying*." Beyond his fruitful fields he could see the village graveyard, and the sight was anything but gratifying.

Now, how far, without the heart being disturbed, can *your* eye look into the future, dear friend? Let us take this onward look together—take it in different stages.

The first shall be a short one, say, to *next midsummer day*.

“Oh yes, that will soon be here now. Indeed, I have already made arrangements for my holidays. That doesn't disturb me.”

To the first of January ten years hence?

“Well, yes. I have promised my parents that as long as they live I will spend all my New Year's Days with them.”

To your own dying hour?

“Oh, don't make me gloomy.”

What! Have you begun to hang back already? Brace yourself up a little, for we have much further to travel yet.

How do you feel about your *first five minutes in eternity?*

“Oh, such a subject only makes me wretched. I don't care to think about it.”

Let us leave it, then, for a moment and hasten on to the next. Just tell us what you think about *the day of judgment*, that is, of the time when that grave of yours will give forth its occupant, when you will stand before God—stand face to face with every event of your earthly history. No buried secrets there! The books will be “*open*,” and will tell your life's story to the letter.

“Oh, I always try to drown such thoughts, or drive them away as fast as they come up.”

“*Drown*” them! Not so. You may perhaps *hide* them for a while, hide them from yourself in the muddy stream of this world's pleasures, but “*drown*” them? Never! Have you forgotten that your stream will shortly dry up, its “*season*” soon be a thing of the past? Know you not that the realities of eternity and the certain consequences of a God-forgetting history will be laid as bare then as the hand of God can lay them both?

Only think, for an instant, what a vain show you are walking in. The very things you most dread are *sure* to come, while the only things in the future that you care to think about *may never come* at all! What a fool's paradise! Oh, take it to heart, for there *is* "a time to die." While your "agreeable" associates are in the midst of next New Year's festivities the cold winds of winter may be blowing over your grave, and some chiselled headstone left standing there to tell the tale that you have been nearly six months in eternity! "Let thine eyes look right on."

But look on the other side. If *you* cannot see far before you, God can. "I am God," He says, "and there is none like Me, declaring *the end from the beginning*" (Isa. xlv. 9, 10). He sees the end of a pathway of sin, and has distinctly pronounced His sentence upon it. "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb. ix. 27). He asks you a question, and answers it for you. "What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is DEATH" (Rom. vi. 21). Again He says, "When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth DEATH" (James i. 15). Death and judgment are at the end of man's course naturally, but through the death and merits of His own beloved Son, God is holding out a brighter end than that. By His grace Christ has "tasted death for every man." "He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification," and the joyful news of what God has thus effected through Christ is being spread abroad in the gospel. It is being declared to repentant sinners, wherever found, that "by Him all that believe are justified from all things" (Acts xiii. 39), and that those whom God *justifies* He also *glorifies* (Rom. viii. 30). They know that the heart of God is toward

them, for they know that his love is the secret of that wondrous transaction at Calvary. They know that God's righteousness is now as much in their favour, through the cross, as the love that gave His beloved Son to die there. They know that *righteousness* has been satisfied in the judgment of their sin, His great *love* gratified in clearing them as sinners. Both are alike friendly. "Mercy and truth have met together ; righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Ps. lxxxv. 10).

" When nought beside could ease us,
Or set our souls at large,
Thy holy work, Lord Jesus,
Secured a full discharge."

As surely as believing souls can look back and see the great work of redemption finished, they can look forward with joy to meet a living and glorified Redeemer at His coming again. Instead of dreading the judgment of God, they rejoice that all that pertains to them as guilty sinners has been left behind at the cross—left behind by Him who is now their risen life. They rejoice that they are called to God's eternal kingdom and glory, and that sin's penalty is a thing of the past. They can now sing—

" Death and judgment are behind us,
Grace and glory are before ;
All the billows rolled o'er Jesus,
There they spent their utmost power."

What brilliant expectations are those of the true Christian ! " I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you *an expected end*" (Jer. xxix. 11). Oh, what a destiny is this ! to share the unmixed enjoyment of God's eternal love with the myriads of His redeemed ones.

But what will it be to *miss* all this ? What, to look back to the time when such blessings were within your

reach? What, to look on with undying remorse to an eternity of darkness and doom? Blessed be God, you are not yet too late; you may still be brought to repentance, still find forgiveness through the blood. Is it not high time to shake off your sleepy indifference and to "let your eyes look right on"?

HOME, NEVER!

"NEVER *reach home!* But I have important business. Certain matters urgently demand my presence there without delay." No one questions it. But you may never reach home, and the business may have to be settled without you, or not settled at all.

"NEVER *reach home!* But loved ones are expecting me, and what would they say if they never saw me alive again? How deep would be their distress!" That may be true also. But they may never more hear your foot-fall, or listen to your voice.

What! does even the *mention* of it startle you? Consider well, then, what the solemn reality itself would be. HOME, NEVER!

Now don't throw this warning away, and TRY TO FORGET IT. That will not improve matters. Besides, we have something important to say to you on this subject.

There is another "home," and if the earthly one be never reached again, that other home *may* be.

A servant of Christ telegraphed to a fellow-labourer, "Home to-morrow." That very night the train in which he travelled was smashed, and took fire, and this servant of Christ truly reached home on the morrow—the heavenly home. "Absent from the body, present with

the Lord." For him instead of *home never*, it was HOME FOR EVER.

Two worldly young ladies had been spending a holiday amid the gaities of Paris. Their luggage was packed up, and labelled ready for starting home. But they changed their minds, and "one night more in Paris" was their ultimate decision. "Let us see the play at the *Théâtre Comique* just once more. To the play they went. But that night the playhouse took fire, and next morning they were found suffocated, with many others, in the refreshment-room attached to the theatre. They never reached home! But who can say that they did not reach hell?

Men may substitute many a place for home in this world; but in the next it will be *home or hell!*

Without Christ you will *never* reach home. God's Word for that.

"YE SHALL DIE IN YOUR SINS:

whither I go, ye cannot come" (John viii. 21).

Would you know the blessed Saviour here, and have the sure prospect of His bright presence there? Then come to Him as a guilty, lost one NOW. He has died for sinners, and since His ascension to the right hand of God a blessed report has been brought down from heaven by the Holy Ghost. Here it is, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim. i. 15). Take your place before Him as a *sinner*.

Your good deeds can no more commend you to the Saviour of sinners than a costly ball-dress of the latest fashion would commend a vagrant for a night's lodging in a workhouse. The workhouse is provided for needy paupers; the Saviour died for needy sinners. No other way of salvation can be found than trusting to Christ's

work, and no surer way of damnation than trusting to your own.

Those who trust the Saviour's precious blood can sing—

“This world's wild wintry blast
 Soon will be over past ;
*We shall reach home at last ;
 Heaven is our home.*”

For all the rest it will be HOME, NEVER! HELL FOR EVER! What are *your* prospects, my reader?

DECISION FOR CHRIST.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

THE thought of many minds seems to be that deciding for Christ only means making a firm resolution to be on His side. No doubt there is this in it, but there is much more than this. There is an inwrought conviction that, as to myself, my case is utterly hopeless, and that He only is worthy to be trusted as my Saviour. I decide, in the light of what God is in His holiness and what I am in my sinfulness, that, as a Deliverer, *Christ, and Christ alone, is worthy of my confidence, and He is on my side.*

I see that *His welcoming “Come”* is my only title to go to Him; *His precious blood* my only shelter from the sin's just judgment; *His holy Name* my only passport to glory, and *His matchless merits* my only fitness when I get there.

Have you been brought to such a decision, my reader? Then nothing can ever transpire, within you or around you, to alter that decision; no discovery of inward corruptions; no lamented fall in the hour of temptation, no subtle argument even of the arch-deceiver himself can

do it. Had you decided that *you* were personally worthy, your ways worthy of God, your feelings satisfactory to yourself, it would be different. But the fact is, that before anyone can really decide *for Christ* as a Saviour he must decide *against himself* as a sinner.

The *prodigal* did (Luke xv.). He said, "I have sinned against Heaven, and in Thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son."

The *publican* did (Luke xviii.). Hear his self-condemning cry, as, smiting upon his breast, he prays, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

The dying thief did (Luke xxiii.), when he uttered his confession, "We indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds." He decided against himself. But when he turned to the Lord and expressed the desire of his heart to be remembered by Him when He came into His kingdom, he had manifestly decided for Christ.

Even *the Apostle Peter* was no exception. "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord," was his cry. Though he felt unfit to stay, he could not run away.

Every discovery of myself can only cause me to decide more absolutely against myself as to any claim to merit God's blessing; while every day's increase of acquaintance with Christ, every fresh apprehension of His worthiness, only the more confirms me in my decision for Christ.

Do not imagine that there is any merit on your part in deciding for Christ, for in so doing, I repeat, you only arrive at the conclusion that Christ is trustworthy and you are not.

Suppose that you lived on some distant island in the Atlantic, and that you desired to sail to Melbourne. Suppose, further, that only two vessels were available on the island, one a large ocean liner calling at the island

weekly; the other a tiny shrimp boat of your own manufacture. Between these two vessels you would have to decide. Which of them can I really rely on to carry me safely to the desired destination? would be the absorbing question. *Both* you could *not* choose, and you could not decide on the Australian liner without deciding against your own frail cobbler. Nor would you sit down and *look at your faith* in these vessels to see which you could safely trust. Would you not rather, when the big liner came in, walk down to the harbour and make every possible inquiry about her seaworthiness, and moreover, have a good look at her yourself? This done, probably a mere glance at your own small vessel would be enough to send you home, saying, "The ocean liner is the ship for me."

Now let me ask you a question, "Would any later discovery of the unseaworthiness of your own boat be likely to change your decision as to the liner?" No; on the contrary, it would the more confirm you in it.

And so is it with our decision for Christ. Self is set aside with distrust and condemnation, and, while the blessed Saviour is presented before our souls by the Holy Spirit as the object of our heart's truest confidence, we are led thankfully and joyfully to say, "*Christ for me!*"
CHRIST FOR ME!"

"In self there is nothing in which I can glory;
In Christ I'll rejoice to the end of the story."

"What think ye of Christ?" my reader. God sees this moment where your choice lies between self and Christ. Let others know it.

WHAT AWOKE THEM?

A GENTLEMAN in the West of England had business engagements which occasionally called him to a certain small iron-working town in South Wales.

When business is brisk at such places, and work plentiful, men in turn are kept employed night and day. Nasmyth's steam-hammers, some of them several tons in weight, are constantly kept working, beating out the huge masses of molten iron, and thereby causing the very ground to shake beneath their heavy and oft-repeated falls.

With this constant noise the inhabitants of that little town had, by custom, grown quite familiar; so that in spite of the heavy thuds of the ponderous hammers, men, women, and children could sleep quite soundly through the night without the least disturbance.

Not so, however, with the man of business above referred to. The din of this heavy hammering drove all sleep from his eyes, so that, eventually, he was compelled to give up all hope of getting an occasional night's rest in the town. Whenever, therefore, he was called into that locality, he always arranged for sleeping accommodation somewhere outside, and beyond ear-shot of those noisy "Nasmyths."

One night, however, from some breakdown in the machinery, these steam-hammers suddenly stopped working; and the consequence was that nearly the whole of this town woke up.

Now, what awoke them? Not the oft-repeated stroke of the heavy hammers, but their sudden cessation.

Yes, they could sleep soundly enough when the hammers were at constant work, but when these stopped they instantly woke up.

How this reminds one of the state of multitudes of precious souls in the present day. While the gospel-hammer is kept at work—and “is not My word a hammer? saith the Lord”—thousands within sound of it are fast asleep. Let the “hammer” come down ever so heavily, they slumber on.

But the time will come when the true workmen shall all be summoned away. “Call the labourers home” shall be heard from their Master’s lips. The hammer of the gospel of God’s grace and glory shall suddenly cease, and never give another stroke. Then shall there be a great waking up of gospel-hardened slumberers; and then, throughout the length and breadth of Christendom, shall the bitter cry be heard, “Lord, Lord, open unto us.” Alas! for that day.

Though, in his sleep, the Christless sinner may have *dreamt* that he was all right, yet, in the language of the ancient prophet, “he awaketh, and his soul is empty” (Isa. xxix. 8). Then shall there indeed be a famine, “not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord . . . they shall run to and fro to *seek the word of the Lord*, and shall not find it” (Amos viii. 11, 12).

Not that this alarm will be of very long continuance. Such fears will soon be hushed, and men be brought to say, “Peace, peace,” where no peace is.

A “strong delusion” will quickly follow. Men who would not have the truth shall be entangled in Satan’s masterpiece of deceit, and shall “*believe a lie*, that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness,” “*because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved*” (2 Thess. ii. 10–12).

How solemn all this is! It is a matter of *prophecy* to-day; yet, reader, before your earthly sun is set, it

may become a matter of history, it may all have taken place; nay, the present gospel testimony might close before you have time to finish reading this paper. Scripture reveals nothing to the contrary. Beware, therefore, "lest coming suddenly He finds *you* sleeping" (Mark xiii. 36).

Remember, the waking-up day *will* come. If you never wake before, you will certainly wake up in the day of judgment. Yes, you will be thoroughly awake then—awake to your eternal destiny; you will descend from the throne of judgment to the torments of the lake of fire. You will there have time to think of every blow dealt by the gospel-hammer upon your rebellious heart, of every gracious message sent to you in the day of God's long-suffering. Oh, friend, wake up now! While the Father's arms are still open to welcome, while the Spirit is still here to strive, while the Saviour still waits to bless, do come! May the deep sense of your need and danger bring you to His feet to-day.

"Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness fondly dream,
All the fitness He requireth
Is to feel your need of Him."

"IS THAT YOU?"

IN a very secluded spot at the foot of a range of mountains in the North-eastern Province of Cape Colony there is a happy little company of native believers—Kaffirs of different tribes.

It has been well said that "a man is rich, not in the abundance of his possessions, but in the fewness of his wants." And on this score, but on no other as to this world, could these coloured Christians be counted well-to-do.

Yet, in another sense, how rich! For they are “rich toward God.”

Do you wish to know the secret? They had made the acquaintance of the giving God. Or, as a woman of their own company expressed it to the writer, they had become possessed of “*God’s great big gift.*”

This woman could read her Bible, and was bubbling over with joy as she spoke of the early chapters of John and what she found in them, the *greatness* of the gift and the *necessity* of the gift. She considered that the *greatness* of the gift mentioned in John iii. 16 could be clearly seen in the first chapter, where the only begotten Son is spoken of as the *Creator*. “All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made” (v. 3). Beside this, He was the only begotten Son in the bosom of the Father declaring the Father—the “*Word made flesh*”; while His title, “*Lamb of God,*” proved the *necessity* of the gift.

Oh, it was good, my reader, to see this poor woman, sitting on the hard mud floor of her tiny hut, rocking herself to and fro, as if in deep thought, her dark face radiant with joy, as her overflowing soul entered by the Spirit into these precious things. Things too deep, far, far too deep for the reasonings of the human mind, yet blessedly within reach of the feeblest heart that loves His holy name; things hidden from the “wise and prudent,” but revealed by the Father unto “babes”—that is, to the “nobodies” of this world.

But there was something else about this Spirit-taught Kaffir woman that is worthy of notice. She did not believe in keeping all these precious things to herself, nor did she wait until the spiritually needy came to her. Oh, the soul-withering delusion of thinking that such work is beneath the notice of the spiritually advanced Christian! God save us from such delusions!

She had listened to an address at the natives' meeting-room on the Lord's Day, and had heard an announcement of another address by the same speaker on the Wednesday following. Gathering up the threads of the first discourse, she visited many of the native dwellings during the days that intervened, and, according to a figurative style common amongst Kaffirs, she addressed them thus:—

"I was at a post office on Sunday, and saw three letters. I want to know if one of them is for you ?

"The first was for *a Christian who is happy*. IS THAT YOU ?

"The second was for *a Christian who is not happy*. Is *that* you ?

"The third was for one who has *never been converted at all*. Is *that* you ?"

When she got their answer, she added, "Then you are wanted at the 'office'" (as she had figuratively styled their place of meeting) "next Wednesday night at half-past seven."

Now, my reader, here is one question for you.

If she had called at *your* dwelling and asked the same simple questions, what reply could you honestly have given to her thrice-repeated inquiry, "*Is that you ?*"

You may boast of your surroundings. You may have earthly comforts she never dreamed of. You may be highly religious. You may be well up in theological matters: minute distinctions in Scripture may be a hobby with you: you may be well furnished with biblical knowledge, and highly thought of by all your religious acquaintances into the bargain. But have you got what that poor Kaffir woman had—a heart so full of the enjoyment of God's love in Christ that you cannot possibly keep the secret of your joy to yourself ?

Have you not noticed that neither those in the first chapter of John whose eyes were opened to the attrac-

tions of Christ, nor the woman of Samaria in the fourth chapter who also discovered His blessedness, could help going to others, saying, "Come and see"?

But there is something more refreshing still. Our gracious Lord Himself is the first in that chapter of soul-seekers (John i.) to say, "*Come and see*" (v. 39). Nor has He changed in any way since then. See at the very close of the Revelation how He presents Himself to us with the same blessed word "Come" upon His lips! "Let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. xxii. 17). Oh, what countless myriads have responded to that invitation! But have *you*?

SOON THERE.

"**M**ANY a true word is spoken in jest" is a common enough saying.

An old schoolmaster on the borders, who had been accustomed to get young men together at his house for card-playing and the like, found that one of those whom he had been doing his best to lead astray, a publican's son, had been converted.

One evening, shortly after this, the schoolmaster with others sat drinking in this publican's house. The young man above referred to passed through the room at the time, and as he did so the old schoolmaster said, intending it, no doubt, as a taunt for the young convert, "I'M GOING TO HELL"! Had he known it, he might truthfully have added two words more—"TO-NIGHT."

That evening he went home as usual, and while in the act of putting off his coat fell down dead at his bedside!

Unsaved reader, just pause a moment here; then read aloud to yourself the following verse:—

“Only this frail and fleeting breath
Preserves me from the jaws of death;
Soon as it fails at once I'm gone,
And 'plunged into a world unknown.'”

When you have read this, just pause once more—pause and consider, and (if you *dare*) ask yourself audibly this question—

“WHERE SHALL I SPEND ETERNITY?”

To this you may safely add, “As sure as I am living without Christ and reading these lines in an unrepentant state, I, too, can say,

“I'M GOING TO HELL”;

and, sadder than all, going there past the outstretched hand of the blessed Saviour-God. But, bless His name! He is on pleading, beseeching terms with you still.

Put out your empty hand and accept His heavenly offer.

It is said that one of the Earls of Rochester, who held at one time the office of “king's jester,” was converted through his own question. Driving one day with four-in-hand on a country road, he pulled up his horses and said, “Lad, which is the way to hell?” Possibly the boy mistook the question. At all events he replied, “*Go straight on, sir, you will soon be there!*”

But to you, reader, we would cry with all the earnestness we possess, “Stop! Stop at once, that you never may be there!”

A GREAT DIFFERENCE AND NO DIFFERENCE.

THERE is a vast difference between God's desires for man's blessing and Satan's devices for his ruin; and between those who receive the truth of God and those who, listening to the lie of the wicked one, are content to continue his willing dupes, his active agents.

The very first writer of the Old Testament draws attention to this difference, and the contrast is carried right through its entire pages. "*The Lord doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel,*" said Moses (Exod. xi. 7). "*Ye shall discern between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not,*" said Malachi, the last writer (chap. iii. 18).

In the New Testament, also, the first writer and the last alike portray the same striking difference. In Matthew's Gospel the great contrast is between the *counterfeit* and the *real*, between the folly of being satisfied with an empty sham and the wisdom of becoming possessed of what is genuinely real. We have, for example, a man who relies upon shifting sand for a sure foundation and one who builds his house upon the solid rock; we see a man who presents himself at the royal feast without the "wedding garment," while side by side with him are guests who are arrayed according to the king's requirements; we have five virgins detected with the folly of carrying lamps without the necessary oil, and five wise ones, with burning lamps and the replenishing oil, ready to go in to the marriage when the bridegroom came.

Then in the book of Revelation we have the greatest contrast of all. Chapter xx. presents saved ones living

and reigning with the One who saved them, while the unsaved—"the dead, small and great"—are seen standing before the great white throne awaiting the execution of their final sentence—"cast into the lake of fire." Truly God "*doth put a difference.*"

But we have not to wait for the final judgment to see this difference. We can see it now. Take an example. Two men were living in the same town—Pietermaritzburg, in South Africa—one a Christian, the other an avowed infidel.

As to outward circumstances, perhaps, there was not very much to choose between them. If anything the Christian had the worst of it. Both were dwelling under the same roof, and each suffering from a fatal disease. But those who came near them could not help being struck with the difference in their states of mind. Of this the reader himself shall judge. The evidence is furnished by witnesses, well known to the writer, who constantly saw them both; some of this is in the handwriting of the Christian himself, for toward the end of his days the painful character of his malady precluded the possibility of his speaking. He had cancer on the tongue, and all communication, after a certain stage of the disease, had necessarily to be made in writing. We will take his (W. S. W.'s) evidence under three heads.

1. *Before his affliction.* "I told my wife the other day what I never told anyone before, that, so long ago as the time I was working at W——s, I was so full of joy and praise some mornings that when I repeated to myself the first three verses of Psalm ciii. the tears of joy *would* come, so that I had to turn from the other men lest they should see, and think I was crying." Did the reader ever hear of an infidel shedding tears of joy at his work? *Such* tears? Never.

2. *When his case was pronounced hopeless and recovery*

impossible. "When the doctor told me of the *fatal* nature of my disease, *I did not seem to have to make a great alteration in my course.* For instance, the books which I had been reading, and intended reading next, were just such as I should have been ready to have found in my hands if I had died that day. If I had been reading novels they would have had to be dropped, and the Bible, etc., got out, and the whole course of my reading and life suddenly changed.

"The secret of this composure, when brought face to face with death, was that I had had transactions with the Lord before *that day.*"

3. *Testimony during his illness.* On receiving a letter from a relative in England, who had spoken of their recognising one another in heaven, he remarked, "Heaven will not be a place for *family* cliques. We shall all enjoy the same relationship with the one Father." Someone remarked, "We shall know then *why* we had these different trials, such as cancers," etc.

"Ah," he replied, "there will be greater *whys* than that! One of the first will be—

"What was it, blessed God,
Led Thee to give Thy Son?"

and then—

"What led Thy Son, O God,
To leave Thy throne on high,
To shed His precious blood,
To suffer, and to die?"

As he seemed to have no more power left to finish the last verse of the hymn, his Christian visitor did so for him. When she came to the lines—

"Our hearts may well o'erflow
In everlasting praise"—

he said, "Ah, there will be no time then to talk about ourselves."

Did the reader ever know an infidel to be in such happiness and composure at the end of his earthly course? *Beyond* the end of his earthly history he professes there *is* nothing, so that he can, to his own showing, know nothing whatever "of the rejoicing of hope."

After the subject of our narrative had entirely lost the use of his own tongue, Acts xxii. 14 seemed to be a great comfort to him: "That thou shouldest know His will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of His mouth."

"That was such a good remark of Mr. E.'s," he said one day, "that God is going to have an 'exhibition,' and we shall be the subjects exhibited, to show the 'exceeding riches of His grace'" (Eph. ii. 7).

"God wanted to get a people who should owe EVERYTHING to Him, and the only way to attain that was by the sacrifice of His Son to meet their need."

Let us next look at the INFIDEL LODGER. Even he could not help noticing the calmness and the joy of him who was dying in the next room; but instead of being softened by it he only made the would-be-brave boast that he should have just the same fortitude when *he* came to die, and that, in fact, there was no more in W. S. W. than in himself!

It so happened, however, that the real value of such a boast was, in more ways than one, to be put to the test.

One evening a couple of Christian friends called to see W. S. W. A younger Christian, who went with them as far as the house, preferred waiting on the verandah outside until their visit was over. The dying Christian's

room was next to the infidel's, only further inside, while the infidel's room was next to where the young woman was sitting on the verandah. The infidel, it seems, could hear what the Christians inside were talking about. Their topic of conversation on this occasion was the believer's victory over death; and while it was proceeding the young woman heard the infidel say, in a sort of undertone, "*Shut up about death!*"

Probably he did not think there was anyone on the dark verandah. But if so he was mistaken. How graphically that one little sentence told its own tale, illustrating the words of Job, "If *one knew them*, they are in the terrors of the shadow of death" (Job xxiv. 17).

Later on the infidel had to be taken to the hospital, and now it was his turn to be drawing near to death. He could not shut *Death* up, or shut him out either, although he would have liked either to "shut up" those believers as they rejoiced together over their risen Saviour's victory, or to shut out their conversation. The end was now fast approaching, and he sent for the widow of the Christian just referred to. When she got to his bedside he was just able to whisper in her ears, as she bent over him, "*It is going hard with me!*"

Poor fellow! There the curtain must drop. There is grace enough in the blessed God to save even a dying infidel, repenting of his sin and unbelief and turning to Him. But be assured of this, dear reader, that it must "go hard" with every man who hardens his heart against God, and deliberately refuses the testimony of His precious grace through Christ. And we would add one word more. If it will "go hard" with a Christ-rejecter in the day of death, how will it go with him in the day of judgment? Oh, beware of *getting hard*, lest it end with *going hard*, and the bitter regrets of a dying hour be followed by a bitter remorse of a lost eternity.

“To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts” (Heb. iii. 7, 8).

Naturally, as to man’s moral condition, there is no difference between one man and another, for “all have sinned” (Rom. iii. 22, 23), and “all the world” is declared “subject to the judgment of God” (Rom. iii. 19, margin). But “the grace of God that bringeth salvation” makes no difference either. It “hath appeared to *all men*” (Titus ii. 11). “There is no difference . . . the same Lord over all is rich unto *all that call upon Him*” (Rom. x. 12). It is the *refusal* of this heavenly boon that will turn your day of golden opportunity into a night of endless gloom. See, then, that ye “refuse not Him that speaketh.” Be in earnest. Be earnest just now.

WHOM WILL YOU BLAME?

“**A**LL aboard!” briskly shouted the conductor of one of the New York overhead railway trains. The writer had just taken his seat when he noticed that a woman came hurriedly to the entrance of the car and lifted a little girl on to the outside platform of the same. Then she returned to the spot where she had placed various packages, intending, no doubt, to deposit them in the train also. But no sooner had she left the step than the signal to start was given. The conductor smartly closed his platform gate, the train moved on, and the mother was left behind!

If loud crying and woe-begone looks could have stopped the train, she would certainly have stopped it forthwith. But they availed nothing.

To all appearance the little girl was not more than three or four years of age, and she had instantly many sympathisers in her sorrowful separation from her mother.

But all these things put together were not enough to stop the locomotive. Every minute the poor distracted mother was left further and further behind.

One lady seemed very indignant with the conductor for not *waiting longer*, and took down his number with a view of reporting him.

But was he *really* to blame? That was the question. The poor woman had been to the very step of the carriage, and for some purpose, which possibly only she herself at the moment knew, had turned her back upon it again. On the other hand, the conductor had given the signal for starting; the train was already in motion before he saw that she also intended to be "aboard," as he called it; and more than all, the train did not leave before it was "*due away*."

Now, my reader, we are not asked to find a correct answer to the question raised by the unpleasant occurrence I have referred to; we have not to decide "*who was to blame*." But the same question may one day come nearer home to you if you continue in sin and unbelief. Are you not aware that things are not always going to "*continue as they are*" in this world, though scoffers may try to keep their restless hearts and consciences quiet by boldly saying that they are? (2 Peter iii. 3, 4).

There are two great items in the world's history in the past that will bear unmistakably on its history in the future. The first is in connection with one particular nation, the second in connection with one particular Man. The nation is the nation of Israel, the Man is the Man Christ Jesus. The former brought their tenure of the Land of Promise to a close by the wilful rejection and murder of their promised Messiah. They "fell" upon the "Stone," and were "broken"; and being broken to pieces, they were scattered to the four corners of the earth—"wanderers among the nations" (Hos. ix. 17).

“For,” says the prophet, “the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice. . . . Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days” (Hos. iii. 4, 5).

Mark this well. As surely as the first part of this quotation is fulfilled before our eyes to-day, the latter shall also be fulfilled in a day not far off.

Now the blessed Lord Jesus made use of their crowning act of rejection by becoming at that very moment a voluntary sacrifice for sins—theirs and ours. “Thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins” (Matt. i. 21).

Do not forget that all this had been placed on record many, many years before it actually happened. David had written of it, and had recorded God’s answer to it. “The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou on My right hand, until I make Thy foes Thy footstool.” “Therefore,” said Peter, “let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts ii. 34–6). “Whom the heaven *must* receive *until* the times of restitution of all things, which *God hath spoken* by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began” (Acts iii. 21).

Yes, my reader, Israel will again be gathered, and David’s Son will be her welcomed King.

“Then Zion’s hill, with glory crowned,
Shall lift her head with joy once more;
And Zion’s King, once scorned, disowned,
Extend His rule from shore to shore.

“Sing, for the land her Lord regains!
Sing, for the Son of David reigns!
While living streams o’erflow her plains;
Thus shall it be when her King comes.”

But we have more to tell you. When at last He does return to reign He will not come alone. One of the oldest prophecies of Holy Writ thus sets it forth: "Behold, the Lord cometh *with ten thousands of His saints*, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him."

Now before He brings them with *Him* He must necessarily come for *them*. "If I go away," He said to His disciples, "I will come again and receive you unto Myself." And the apostle Paul, writing to the Thessalonians, describes how this promise of the Lord's will be kept: "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent" (or go before) "them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to *meet the Lord in the air*; and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. iv. 15-17).

Then shall be fulfilled those solemn words, "They that were ready went in with Him to the marriage: and *the door was shut*" (Matt. xxv. 10).

Are you aware, my reader, that that event may take place any moment? Are *you* ready? Your remorse will be no less bitter and unbearable because, like that woman in New York, you were so near to the gate, if when the heavenly train shall have started you are found shut out. Will you let me ask you one question? If that summons should arrive while this small volume is in your hand, and you are found unprepared for the great, long-

promised event, whom will you blame? Nay, let me answer the question for you. YOU WILL BLAME NO ONE BUT YOURSELF.

But why not, while the door is still open, come to Him, confessing your sinfulness, and blaming yourself for not coming before? He will receive and bless you. He will do it this moment. Make His acquaintance. Why delay?

LOOK AT BOTH.

IT is related in the history of Russia, that at the death of the reigning monarch there was likely to be more than one claimant for the crown. It was a very critical juncture. The one who had perhaps the best title was Princess Elizabeth. But she was altogether too diffident, and long hesitated to put in her claim. This tried her friends greatly.

At last a certain nobleman, Count Lessock, hit upon a plan for putting the seriousness of the position before her. He employed a painter to make two pictures. In one picture the princess was portrayed ascending the throne, in the other she was being conducted from the torture to the scaffold. Earnestly did he press upon her to make haste and decide on accepting the crown. "If you do not, it will mean the death of the scaffold; if you do, the occupation of the throne."

Will you allow me to put two pictures before you, my reader. Both have been portrayed by the Holy Spirit of God, and therefore claim your most earnest consideration. Let me beg of you to specially note how far-reaching they both are.

Look first at

THE DARK PICTURE.

It presents to us the solemn, searching scrutiny of coming

judgment? God is seen taking account of things just as they are. Not the smallest detail is left out.

EVERY WORK, HOWEVER SECRET, will be brought into evidence. "God shall bring *every work* into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Eccles. xii. 14), "in the day when God shall judge the *secrets of men* by Jesus Christ" (Rom. ii. 16).

EVERY IDLE WORD. "But I say unto you, *That every idle word* that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment" (Matt. xii. 36).

EVERY HARD SPEECH AND UNGODLY DEED. "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon *all*, and to convince *all* that are ungodly among them of *all their ungodly deeds* which they have ungodly committed, and of *all their hard speeches* which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him" (Jude 14, 15).

THE PURPOSES OF THE HEART. He "will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts" (1 Cor. iv. 5).

EVERY MAN OUT OF CHRIST will be included. "They were judged *every man* according to their works. The dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works" (Rev. xx. 12, 13). "*Every eye* shall see Him" (Rev. i. 7). "As I live, saith the Lord, *every knee* shall bow to Me, and *every tongue* shall confess to God. So then *every one of us* shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. xiv. 11, 12).

THE BRIGHT SIDE.

If you have seriously considered your own personal and unavoidable responsibility to the God who has thus declared His solemn intentions, as to unforgiven sin, you will be glad to hear the other side. Hear how

EVERY SIN CAN BE WIPED OUT. "The blood of Jesus

Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all (*every*) sin" (1 John i. 7).

God once spoke to His people in types and shadows. On the great day of atonement, when the blood was sprinkled before and on the mercy-seat, God said, "On that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, that ye may be *clean from all your sins before the Lord.*" But how could this be? It was because those sins had been laid upon the head of another. As it is written, "Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him *all the iniquities* of the children of Israel, and *all their transgressions in all their sins*, putting them upon the head of the goat . . . and the goat shall bear upon him *all their iniquities* unto a land not inhabited" (Lev. xvi. 21, 22, 30).

EVERY SINNER WELCOME TO THE SAVIOUR. "I am the door: by Me if *any man* enter in, he shall be saved" (John x. 9). "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out" (John vi. 37).

"Ho, *every one that thirsteth*, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price" (Isa. lv. 1). "The same Lord over all is rich *unto all that call upon Him.* For *whosoever* shall call upon the Lord shall be saved" (Rom. x. 12, 13).

NOT AN OFFENCE UNFORGIVEN. "When they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both" (Luke vii. 42).

NOT A CHARGE LEFT. "By Him all that believe are *justified from all things*" (Acts xiii. 38, 39). "The iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found" (Jer. l. 20). "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb. x. 17).

NOT A FEAR LEFT. "Herein is love with us made

perfect, that we may have *boldness in the day of judgment*: because as He is, so are we in this world. There is *no fear* in love; but *perfect love casteth out fear*" (1 John iv. 17, 18).

Now the writer of this short paper has used his own words as sparingly as possible, but two pictures, drawn by Another, he has held before the reader, and in the light of eternity he would earnestly say, Decide at once. One of them *must* be yours. For your soul's sake, WHICH?

A WORLDLING'S PLEASURES.

A WORLDLING'S pleasures are only like the laughter of a child that is tickled. It is not for any *substantial* joy he is laughing. He must be tickled again. "I said in mine heart," wrote Solomon, "Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also is vanity. I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it?" (Eccles. ii. 1, 2). "Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful; and the end of that mirth is heaviness" (Prov. xiv. 13), "For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool" (Eccles. vii. 6). To a man who has an excessive desire to be scratched, it is, no doubt, pleasurable enough for the moment. But it is his disease that makes him desire, and a wise man would prefer the absence of the desire to the presence of the pleasure.

Would he be considered wise who recklessly parted with a vast estate for the pleasure of being tickled every day for a few years, and end his days in a workhouse after all? No, he would be looked upon as more fit for the madhouse than the workhouse. What, then, shall we say of him, who, Esau-like, throws away his chance

of eternal joy in the atmosphere of perfect love for the fleeting joys of this world, that can never, never satisfy? Of Moses it is written, "Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season" (Heb. xi. 25). May his choice be yours.

"Let worldly men indulge their boast,
How much they gain or spend ;
Their joys must soon give up the ghost,
But mine shall never end."

THE THREE GOLD-DIGGERS.

IN the history of God's dealings with souls in the Acts of the Apostles, two things are brought prominently before us by the Holy Ghost. One is the way a careless or rebellious sinner is arrested, the other the way a seeking soul is brought into divine blessing. The three thousand at Pentecost in the second chapter, Saul of Tarsus in the ninth chapter, and the jailer in the sixteenth chapter, are instances of the former; while the eunuch in the eighth chapter and Cornelius in the tenth chapter are instances of the latter. Since then, tens of thousands of such tales of grace have been recorded, and still, to the praise of the blessed God and the blessing of precious souls, the record is being swelled. Who would care to hush the story and close down the record while still the work goes on?

We give the following, as nearly as possible as it was related by one of the parties concerned a few days since.

Six working men shared in one "claim" at the "gold-diggings." All for some time were utterly careless as to the things of eternity. However, the wife of one of the gang at last got converted, and soon began to speak to

her husband of the blessing she had found and of how she had found it. Like many others, she may have thought, now she was saved herself, that it would not take much to bring others into the same blessing. But she had to learn that the work is of God entirely. However, she could not help telling her husband, not only what she already possessed, but what she expected to be brought into at the Lord's coming; nor did she hide from him the consequences of his being found without the "oil" when the Bridegroom came. But nothing seemed to disturb his slumber or shake off his indifference till God Himself stepped in to answer the earnest cry of his praying partner.

At work this man's heart was set upon finding sufficient gold to make him wealthy in this world, while at home the great enemy found something else to occupy his attention. Poultry-keeping was his chief hobby, and he pursued it right earnestly. One night he even dreamt about it. He had been taking more than usual interest just then in a brood of newly hatched ducklings, and seeing that they were exposed to the violence of a heavy thunderstorm that, as he thought, had suddenly burst upon them, he asked his wife to help him to get them under shelter. This she did; but while in the act of driving them in, there came, he thought, a very vivid flash of lightning which greatly startled him. When he had recovered himself from the sudden shock, he turned round to see how it had affected his wife. But, lo, she was gone. In an instant she had been snatched from his side, and he was left to face the storm all alone.

Hearing him groan heavily, his wife touched him and said, "What is the matter?"

"Oh, are you there?" he said with great relief. "Thank God you are still here. I dreamt you had gone." This was the means of bringing him face to face with the

solemn realities of eternity, and the need of his sin-defiled soul in view thereof. Nor did he rest again until he had found refuge in Jesus as his own Saviour.

Now, reader, be it not thought that the coming of the Lord will be accompanied by any great natural sign, such as an alarming thunderstorm. There is nothing in Scripture to bear out such a thought. But that it will take place with the *suddenness* of a lightning flash is true enough. "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" (1 Cor. xv. 52), is the way the Spirit of God describes it. That there will be a storm of judgment to follow this sudden event is equally true—such a state of things that "men shall seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them" (Rev. ix. 6). Would you therefore escape from such crushing judgments, you must come to the Saviour while you may. For "when once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door," no cry of "Lord, Lord, open unto us" will avail for the entrance of even one soul more. You will be called by your right name then, "Worker of iniquity," and be told to "depart." Read Luke xiii. 24–30, and be in earnest while the door stands open. "*Strive to enter in.*"

The expression, "Gates ajar," popular as it may be, is a foolish and mischievous perversion of the truth. When *God* opens the door it is set as widely open as His own large heart and your deep need could possibly desire to have it opened. And when the solemn moment arrives for that door to be closed, it will be as thoroughly *shut* as His own mighty hand and man's determined unbelief can shut it. There are no *half* measures with God. He makes no compromise, neither in meeting a repentant sinner's need nor in dealing with the unbelief that rejects His grace. Make no mistake on this point.

Well, to return to our story. When this gold-digger

had found Christ he soon began to speak to the rest of the men about it. And why should he *not*? If he had come across a valuable nugget in the "claim," would they have liked him to have kept the discovery to himself? Would they not rather have felt themselves wronged if he had done so? for they might have claimed a share in it. Yet here was "a find" sure enough, "a find" more precious than all the gold and diamond mines in South Africa put together. And, moreover, it was open to them to share in the untold wealth that was in it; yet they only laughed and scoffed when they heard of it. One of them (a Roman Catholic) said that there was nothing about the "new birth" in the Bible. A man named M—— was appealed to as to this. He replied, "Well, I don't know *where* it is, but I feel sure the new birth is spoken of somewhere in the Bible. I quite recollect reading about it when I was a boy in England."

When he got home that night this man felt determined to find out the place. He began at the first chapter of Matthew, and read on, as he had opportunity, until he came to the thirteenth chapter of Luke. He had not yet reached the verse he wanted to find, but in the third verse of that chapter he found the verse that reached him: "*Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*"

Blessed be God, he *was* brought to repentance, and received the remission of his sins, and is now rejoicing in the Lord and testifying to others of the grace that so unexpectedly met him. How richly various are the ways of God in meeting sinners and securing them for His eternal glory!

But what a saddening spectacle is presented in the unbelief of the very creature He seeks to bless. It is solemn to relate the case of the third "digger." While there was only *one* witness for Christ on the "claim," and

the others laughing at him, this man could tolerate it; but when a second witness opened his mouth to tell what he had found and to boldly testify for Christ, it was more than he could bear. He daily became more exasperated, till one day he swore a terrible oath, and said there was "*nothing but the Holy Ghost*" in the diggings now, and that he should sell his own share of the claim and clear out!

Well, it is a solemn thing to harden the heart and wilfully try to escape the gracious work of the Spirit of God. So this poor fellow found it. With the money realised by the sale of his share he bought one in another "claim." Ten days afterwards, while in the "working," and in the act of taking material away from the roof by an uplifted crowbar, the roof suddenly gave way and forced the crowbar through his body. *He had done with the Holy Ghost for ever!*

Here, then, is another solemn example of the truth that "he that being often reprovèd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy" (Prov. xxix. 1).

Reader, this is recorded for *your* benefit. "To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your heart" (Heb. iii. 15); and to this the Spirit of God adds, "And to whom sware He, that they should not enter into His rest, but to them that *believed not*? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief" (Heb. iii. 18, 19). Unbelief is the deliberate refusal of the heart of man to receive the revelation which God has made of Himself in grace. "See that *ye* refuse not Him that speaketh."

THREE LOOKS AT THE WICKED.

THE FIRST LOOK IS DAVID'S.—“I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found” (Ps. xxxvii. 35, 36).

THE SECOND LOOK IS SOLOMON'S.—“I saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone from the place of the holy, and they were forgotten in the city where they had so done” (Eccles. viii. 10).

THE THIRD LOOK IS JOHN'S.—“I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works” (Rev. xx. 12).

There is no question that each sight as it is brought before us becomes more intensely solemn.

To *live* in your wickedness is bad.

To *die* in your wickedness is for you still worse.

But to *stand before God* in your wickedness is past everything.

It is bad enough to see an unconverted sinner *buried*, but it must be an awful sight to see him *rise again*, to see him stand before God in judgment. Did you ever think *who* it is that will pass sentence on a sinner? It is Jesus! I don't think, from cover to cover, that there is a more solemn thought than that in the whole of Scripture; that He who pleaded on the cross, “Father, forgive them, they know not what they do”; that He who wept over Jerusalem and said, “How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth

her brood under her wing, and ye would not," that *that* One will pass sentence on your soul if you die unconverted! Oh, what a thought! I can conceive of nothing more appalling than that.

Yet you are, perhaps, on your way to it this very moment! And, if still unforgiven, you certainly are. Make no mistake on that point. There is no question that of all solemn sights, next to Calvary, John saw the most solemn.

May you never rest until you are fully assured that you no longer belong to that ghastly company. But beware of trifling. "The man that wandereth out of the way of understanding *shall remain in the congregation of the dead*" (Prov. xxi. 16). "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My words, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment; but *is passed from death unto life*" (John v. 24).

Just travel in thought over those sights once more, and may the Spirit of God constrain you to believe the message of God's amazing love in Christ. Receiving it into your heart, you will have joy and peace in believing on this side of the grave, a bright, bright hope beyond it, and "boldness in the day of judgment."

Far spent thy day, oh why delay
 To enter mercy's door?
 'Twill soon be night, then lost thy light,
 Yea, lost for evermore!

What bitter grief, without relief,
 Will then thy portion be!
 No love, no light, no glory bright,
 FOR ALL ETERNITY!

WHAT PROFIT?

THE great commercial question of the day is, "What profit?" When everything has been satisfactorily totalled up, what will this or that transaction yield? When a final settlement has been made, when prime costs and "general expenses" have been accurately gauged, and when all these have been put over against my gross gains, what margin will then be left for my own benefit? By how much shall I *actually* have been the gainer? *What profit?*

Life's big transaction, with its various details, will have to be reckoned up some day, my reader. Actual gains will have to be accurately calculated, total losses computed, and the balance struck for final settlement. Then the all-engrossing question will once more be asked, "What profit?"

When men and women have reached the end of all things here, what heart-sinking calculations, before now, have had to be made! When some of the wealthiest have viewed their golden gains in view of their eternal losses, what blank dismay have they betrayed, what fearfulness, what shrinking back!

Only last year an American millionaire said on a bed of sickness, "The poorest man I know is the man who has nothing but money." He was only agreeing with the language of another, who said, "Though a man *without* money is poor, the man with *nothing but* money is poorer still! Worldly possessions cannot bear up the spirits from fainting and shrinking when trial and troubles come, any more than headache can be cured by a golden crown or toothache with a chain of pearls." Saint Augustine once remarked that "earthly riches are full of poverty"; and this is certainly far nearer the mark than

is the world's notion of riches, which is just about this—that a man who has £10,000 must be twice as happy as the man who has £5,000. Never was a bigger mistake made than this, yet how commonly is it believed.

It is far more correct to say that "*money is a universal provider for everything but happiness, and a universal passport to every place but heaven.*"

The word commonly used for "riches" in the Old Testament is frequently translated by the word "heavy." Abraham was said to be very *rich* (Gen. xiii. 2). Eli was an old man, and "*heavy*" (1 Sam. iv. 18). Absalom's hair was said to be "*heavy* on him" (2 Sam. xiv. 26). "Thy hand was *heavy* upon me," said David (Ps. xxxii. 4). In these scriptures "rich" and "heavy" are translations of the same Hebrew word. This is very significant, for the one who possesses abundant riches best knows what burdens such possessions bring. Another has said, "There is a burden of care in getting them, of fear in keeping them, of temptation in using them, of guilt in abusing them, of sorrow in leaving them, and the burden of accounts to be given up at last concerning them."

Nor does *position* among men, though so commonly craved for, stand for much when, without the consolations of the gospel, without the blessings of "the world to come," this world is consciously slipping from your grasp.

Take just one instance from history—the last hours of Queen Elizabeth. The historian says: "In her last illness, after a season of protracted and profound despondency, during which it seemed as though her inflexible will and indomitable pride refused to yield, and whilst she kept silence, like David, her 'bones waxed old through her roaring all the day long,' at length she made signs for the Archbishop of Canterbury and her chaplain to come near to her. Whereupon, we

are told, the primate said to her, 'Madame, you ought to hope much in the mercy of God. Your piety, your zeal, and the admirable work of the Reformation, which you have happily established, afford great grounds of consolation for you.'

"'My lord,' replied the queen, 'the crown which I have borne so long has given enough of vanity in my time. I beseech you not to augment it in this hour, when I am so near my death!'"

Here was one who had rejoiced in holding one of the most exalted positions in Europe, who had, no doubt, been surrounded by flatterers innumerable, both civil and religious, yet in view of another world she saw it all as emptiness and vanity.

Take another, who had a similar testimony to render as to emptiness of this world's royal best, although she stands as a striking contrast to the queen first referred to. It is found in Queen Adelaide's directions for her funeral: "I die in all humility, knowing well that we are *alike* before the throne of God; and request, therefore, that my mortal remains be conveyed to the grave without any pomp or state. I die in peace, and wish to be carried to the tomb in peace, and free from the vanities and pomp of this world."

She had evidently seen, like a greater and wiser before her, that there is nothing that can give real satisfaction in this world, nothing in it but vanity and vexation of spirit—"no profit under the sun." But it is also evident that she had found consolation and satisfaction in Him who sits higher than the heavens—the blessed Son of God. There can be no doubt but she had learned that He who left the brightness of the glory of God for the darkness and shame and judgment of the cross had secured for her an eternity of blessedness "*above the sun.*" She knew the reality of what is expressed in those

THE REPORT AND ITS RECEPTION.

words: "I cause those that love Me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures" (Prov. viii. 21). She knew the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for her sake became poor, that she through His poverty might be made rich. And in the light of *His* riches and glories she saw this world's best portion exposed as mere dross and tinsel.

What about your final reckoning, my reader? Do you really apprehend how matters stand with you? If not, sit down quickly and audit your affairs. Make haste to take exact account of your actual possessions and liabilities, and at the head of your balance-sheet be sure and write down that all-absorbing question: "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark viii. 36). You cannot prepare a satisfactory "balance-sheet" and leave *that* out. One word more. "What thou doest, do quickly," or you may find your affairs in other hands. "Behold, now is the day of salvation."

"Now I esteem their mirth and wine
Too dear to purchase with my blood;
Lord, 'tis enough if Thou art mine—
My life, my Saviour, and my God."

WHY NOT?

A QUESTION FOR THE UNCONVERTED.

LET us come to close dealing at once. If you have any satisfactory reason why you should not repent of your sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ to-day, say plainly WHY NOT.

"God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent" (Acts xvii. 30). "*Despisest thou the riches of His good-*

ness and forbearance and long-suffering ; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance ?” (Rom. ii. 4).

What have you found in Him that you should *not* believe on Him? Repent to-day. WHY NOT?

If you have any reason why you should, at the great white throne, escape the full weight of your sin's eternal judgment, say what that reason is, and consider seriously whether such reason will be sufficient to satisfy the God you have sinned against.

“Who will render to every man according to his deeds” (Rom. ii. 6). *“In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ”* (v. 16).

“We are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them that commit such things. And thinkest thou this, O man . . . that thou shouldest escape the judgment of God?” (Rom. ii. 2, 3).

“What wilt thou say when He shall punish thee? . . . Shall not sorrow take thee as a woman in travail?” (Jer. xiii. 21).

Why should not a holy, righteous God judge the sin He hates? WHY NOT? Speak out. Are you dumb before the question? Beware, then, lest you are dumb before the Judge! You may turn from the question with a faint smile now: you will turn to it with a pale shudder presently.

If you have one single reason why you should not be cut off for your sins to-day and excluded from God's presence for ever, speak out, and *let God hear it*; for the woodman's axe may be very near to “the root of the tree” this moment, and its keen edge felt before another sunset.

“He that being often reproveth hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy” (Prov.

xxix. 1). “*God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee*” (Luke xii. 20).

AND WHY NOT THINE?

If you think you have any reason why the Lord Jesus Christ should not “shut to the door” this instant, yea, before you can take your eye off this paper, state plainly what that reason is.

Are you sure it is a safe one?

Where did you find it?

What is it worth?

Hear the word of the Lord:—

“*Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the Master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping*” (Mark xiii. 35, 36).

If it is all too true that you are not ready for His coming, oh, “seek ye the Lord while He may be found.” WHY NOT NOW?

A QUESTION FOR THE ANXIOUS. If you think you have any worthy reason why the very weakest believer in the Lord Jesus Christ should not know that his sins are forgiven, bring it to the light, and look at it a little more closely.

Do you ask, what light?

We answer, to the light of the truth of God.

Turn to Acts x. 43, and read what the inspired apostle Peter said to the kinsmen and friends of Cornelius.

“*To HIM [the risen Christ] give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins*” (Acts x. 43).

Next read what the apostle Paul preached to his audience in Antioch.

“He, whom God raised again, saw no corruption. Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him all that believe are justified from all things” (Acts xiii. 37-39).

Calmly and carefully consider these words. How could you place your own thoughts beside them? *“My thoughts,”* God says, *“are not YOUR thoughts”* (Isa. lv. 8). You cannot retain *both*. Oh, drop your own at once, and let your heart fully embrace His. WHY NOT?

A QUESTION FOR THE WOULD-BE SECRET DISCIPLE. If you really do believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, how is it that you have never openly confessed Him? Know you not that He loves you, that He has drained to its last drop your cup of curse and condemnation? Have you forgotten that He lives in glory, with His eye ever upon you and His heart ever open to you, and that nothing could ever induce Him to give you up or to relax, for one moment, the hand that keeps you from the cruel grip of the “destroyer”? Have you never heard that He is shortly coming again, and that if you are really His He will then place you in a position of honour never yet occupied either by angel or archangel? Has it never been made known to you that His love will continue “to the end” of your history here, and be the same throughout eternity? (John xiii. 1). That such is His affection for you, that no suffering was too great to bear for you in the past, and no blessing too rich to bestow upon you in the future?

And if this is all true, is it not high time that you confessed His blessed name in a world that hates Him? Is it not high time that you boldly declared, He is *my*

Saviour, *my friend, my Lord?* Will you not do so this very hour?

WHY NOT?

“*I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth*” (Rom. i. 16). “*Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed*” (Rom. x. 10).

GRACE WITHOUT A CONDITION.

MARVELLOUS indeed is the story of the grace of God. Necessarily must it stand alone, and stand alone it will, “unto the ages of the ages.” There has been nothing like it, and there will be nothing like it for all eternity.

It is noteworthy that of all the tens of thousands of altars among men, civilised or uncivilised, no altar to *grace*, no altar suggesting even the *idea* of grace was ever erected. It is outside all the natural thoughts of men. The grace that reigns through righteousness is entirely outside his reckoning. Yes, the wondrous grace of God must stand alone, and even the *knowledge* of it is as entirely of Him as the grace itself.

There are many historical records of the exercise of grace (so called) on the part of man, but *they* rarely go beyond the thought of mercy. How transcendently the story of *God's* grace towers above and reaches beyond them all! Let us look at one of the most interesting of these on the page of English history.

“An attendant of Mary Queen of Scots, named Margaret Lambrun, a French lady, bent on avenging her late royal mistress' death, armed herself with two loaded pistols and, disguised in male attire, made an attempt to assassinate Queen Elizabeth. She was, however, detected

and arrested in the presence of Her Majesty, who at once said she 'would examine the prisoner herself.'

"On examination, Margaret avowed both her sex and design. The queen listened to her story with perfect composure, and calmly asked her to say what she conceived to be her (Elizabeth's) duty in such a case. Margaret simply asked in reply whether she put the question as a queen or as a judge. Elizabeth answered, 'As a queen.' Then said Margaret, 'You should grant me a pardon.'

"'But,' said Elizabeth, 'what assurances can you give me that you will not abuse my mercy and attempt the like on some future occasion?'

"'Madame,' said Margaret, 'a grace so fettered by precaution is NO GRACE AT ALL.'

"The queen's council strongly urged Elizabeth to make an example of her would-be assassin; but she insisted upon granting her an unconditional pardon, and went so far as, at the woman's own request, to have her safely and honourably conveyed to her own country."

This was truly noble and praiseworthy; but Margaret Lambrun only went back to the land of her birth *a forgiven culprit*, while her pardon cost the sovereign nothing. As far as it went it was highly admirable, and at least suggests one important truth, viz. that God's pure grace can admit of no fetters, no restrictions, no conditions on our part. It meets man with the blessed declaration of what God Himself is, as revealed in the death of His own beloved Son, and this in the face of the utter ungodliness and determined rebelliousness of man.

The gospel of God's grace brings the news of salvation to all. It offers *pardon to the repentant*, but far more. It tells not only of exemption from the consequences of our misdeeds and of deliverance from the galling power of the enemy, but holds out the sharing of an eternity of

joy in the presence of the great Deliverer Himself. And if it were only that such miserable ones as ourselves were to be made *happy for ever*, it would be a marvellous thing; but it is His *glory*—His *own* glory—we are to share. “He called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of *the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (2 Thess. ii. 14). “The God of all grace, . . . hath called us unto *His eternal glory* by Christ Jesus” (1 Peter v. 10).

It has been well said that “THE GOSPEL IS THE REVELATION OF GOD TO THE HEART OF MAN SO THAT THE HEART OF MAN CAN TRUST HIM.” It holds before the eye of the sinner not only that, by the grace of God, Christ hath “tasted death for every man” (Heb. ii. 9), but that nothing will satisfy the heart of the blessed God but having all those who are saved by His grace in “the presence of His glory” for ever, and made to drink of the river of *His* pleasures. Do you say, *Wherefore* all this? Hear, then, the answer of the Holy Ghost, “That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus” (Eph. ii. 7).

The mercy shown to Margaret Lambrun was according to *her own thoughts* of what would be worthy of a sovereign. Not so the grace shown to us. Who could have suggested to the God we had sinned against that He should meet our desperate case at the personal cost, and by the sacrifice and suffering of His own beloved Son? Into what heart, save His own, could the thought of such manner of love have entered?

“Not sinful man’s endeavour,
Nor any mortal’s care,
Could draw Thy sovereign favour
To sinners in despair.

“Uncalled Thou cam’st with gladness,
 Us from the fall to raise,
 And change our grief and sadness
 To songs of joy and praise.”

“For *of* Him, and *through* Him, and *to* Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever and ever” (Rom. xi. 36).

“’Tis free grace alone, from the first to the last,
 That wins the affections and binds the soul fast.”

IN GREAT EARNEST ON THE WRONG ROAD.

TWO officers (one of them personally known to the writer) stood talking earnestly together one day in the public street at S——. Both their wives had been ill, and as they stood they were congratulating each other on the satisfactory progress toward the complete recovery of their beloved ones. One of them, Major H——, said with much feeling, “If Mrs. H—— had died I really think I should have gone mad!”

They had not stood there long when a servant from Major H——’s house came in great haste down the street looking for her master. When she reached him he could not fail to see by her countenance that there was something serious the matter, especially when she said, “Will you please, sir, come home at once? Mistress is very ill!”

Instantly he guessed the worst.

“Is she dead?”

“Oh, please, sir, don’t wait, come at once!”

“Is she *dead*?”

"Yes, sir, she is." And the crushing truth was all out.

Frantically he rushed home and found it, alas! all too true.

What a stunning blow! She, on whom his affections had doted so fondly, so summarily summoned away. Only a few minutes before he had promised not to be long from her side. Nor was he; but, alas! he returned too late to hear her voice again on earth.

Where had she gone?

Ah, that was the question!

Oh, to heaven, of course! At least, such was *his* thought. But at this time he was himself only a godless, worldly man, and had no idea of what true fitness for heaven consisted in.

"My only chance of seeing her again is to go to heaven myself," he thought, and accordingly he at once set himself to work to secure an entrance there. He had previously been the very life of gay, fashionable circles, but he would give up all this kind of thing now and prepare himself for heaven. His own sister, herself converted afterwards, told the writer that she thought the way he so thoroughly "cut them" all was "quite cruel of him."

After a time he began to consider that he was making pretty satisfactory progress in the right direction, and determined to speak to others about what he now regarded as the all-important matter. But what could he *say*? And that settled, with whom could he have a bit of religious talk?

There was a young soldier in the barracks, his own groom, who was, he considered, leading a good life. With him therefore, he thought, he might venture to have a little talk about "going to heaven."

His servant listened for some time to what he had to

say, and then very quietly and respectfully said something to this effect, "*I am going to heaven, sir, but we are not both going the same way.*"

"What do you mean?"

"The only way *I* know of reaching heaven is through the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ, and you seem to be trying to get there through your own."

Upon this the good officer quite lost his self-possession, and saying quite angrily, "*You mind your horses and let me mind my soul,*" he walked away. But, thank God, not to rest; he *could* not rest. What did this fellow mean by talking to him in that way, he thought. If *I* am not on the right way to heaven, who is?

It now occurred to him to go to some clergyman and tell him of the audacity of his servant in speaking to him as he had. It so happened in the mercy of God that he made choice of one who was himself taught of God, and had found refuge in Christ. This godly pastor thoughtfully listened to all he had to say, and then remarked, "It seems to me, Major H——, that the young soldier is right, and you are wrong. God has only one way of taking us to heaven, and that is through the precious blood of Christ."

In self-despair he said, "What *must* I do, then?"

"You must come to Christ; He will receive you. He has promised, 'Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.'"

This was enough. He hastened home, and casting himself before God rested all his hope of blessing on the merits of Christ.

How truly he could now say—

"I came to Jesus as I was,
Weary, and worn, and sad;
I found in Him a resting-place,
And He has made me glad."

He had discovered what everyone of Adam's race must one day discover, namely; that *sincerity*, however much fired with religious earnestness, is not of itself sufficient to secure a title for glory; and he discovered it in time to get his mistake corrected and his soul blessed.

But something more followed. An open confession of the precious saving name of Jesus must now be made, and he felt it right that the faithful servant who had been used of God to open his eyes should be one of the first to listen to his confession. Accordingly he went down to the barracks, and not only thanked him for his faithfulness, but with loving, brotherly gratitude actually embraced his servant.

Now there may be as little question about my reader's earnestness as there was of this officer's; but, mark it well, *sincerity is not enough*. Take that fact to heart at once. There is no question at all as to your finding out your mistake some day; the only question is, When? It has been well said that *hell is the truth discovered too late!*

Sincerity for the future can no more atone for the sins of the past than the calm weather of to-day can repair the effects of the storm of yesterday. A whole century of calm could not repair the havoc of one single hour of storm. Nor could a whole lifetime of sincerity and good behaviour by any possibility atone for one single sin of the past.

“Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears for ever flow,
Nought for sin could ere atone
But THY BLOOD, and Thine alone.”

Put your AMEN to this, and be thankful that you are still on earth to do it.

YOUR ENTIRE HISTORY, AND ITS END.

IN chapter v. of the First Epistle to Timothy we are told that "some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment" (v. 24). Like a long procession of witnesses, they are seen on their way, and we are told *where* they are going, and what their business in the end will be there. Each will have a serious tale to tell at the great tribunal. Let us consider the text: "*Some men's sins are open beforehand.*" The sin of that drunkard, for example, is of this character, who staggers past your door at the midnight hour, and causes the patient wife to groan for sorrow, and his children to cry for very terror as soon as he has crossed the threshold of his house. "Vile wretch!" you say. Yes, you are right; he is. But the very fact that *you know* this only proves that his sins are "open beforehand." Oh, what numberless witnesses are ready to stand up against him: and every day he lives only adds to the dark list!

A young woman in the town of D—— forged her father's name on a cheque for £200, and was sent back to the town where she had been respectably brought up in charge of a detective, publicly disgraced for life. Another instance of sin being "open beforehand."

But *you*, my reader, may be very different from either of these—amiable, respectable, and outwardly irreproachable. Will you, then, permit me to ask just one question? If you knew that the book which a friend held in his hand contained a most minute record of *your own entire history*, an exact, unvarnished statement of all that you have ever done or said or thought, would you, as you saw him carefully scanning its pages, be particularly comfortable? Would you not wish to get possession

of the book, and that for the very purpose of immediately destroying it?

Now, what does this prove? It proves just this, that, despite your *outward* reputation, there are in your heart's memory deeply buried secrets which you would not care to bring to light even before your most confidential friend. But the fact that your sins have not been "open beforehand" will be very little comfort to you in the day of judgment, for they will all meet you there just the same—your *entire* history.

Yes, they will all come out, *must* come out. God has pledged Himself to bring them out. They "cannot be hid" (v. 25).

But, oh! remember this. The very One who will bring every unforgiven sin to light in that day is proposing, to put them all away in this! Public sins, however popular or however shocking; private sins, however loathsome or refined—yea, *all* your sins—He wants to forgive. What news to listen to! The appointed Judge offering dying sinners present and eternal forgiveness! Does it not make your poor heart long to have it?

But there is more to tell. God can and does make you this offer *righteously*, for His blessed Son has borne sin's judgment on the cross. And if He righteously offers forgiveness, how graciously also! Know you not that He has even kept you from the jaws of death all these years that you might receive this blessing at His hand after all? Oh, what grace that He has waited as He has! Long, long since you might have been cut off in your sins and sent to hell, and if you had, you could have blamed no one but yourself. May God deliver you from such a doom, and give you to realise all that He desires to convey to a penitent sinner in that one golden sentence, "Their sins and iniquities I will remember no more."

Happy the people in such a case—the guilt of the past all blotted out, a glorious eternity secured, and the comfort of His blessed Spirit enjoyed in the heart even now!

God grant that, instead of your sins bringing you to judgment in the day of wrath, they may bring you to the feet of Jesus in the day of grace.

“Bold shall we stand in that great day,
For who aught to our charge shall lay?
While by His blood absolved we are
From sin’s tremendous guilt and power.”

THE END REACHED.

HISTORY repeats itself. Two thousand years ago the world had its times of war and its times of peace. One nation could be seen rising to power and prominence, another sinking into ignominious decay. It is the same to-day. What was found in the first century you will find in the twentieth. Men of master-minds, who could sway their fellows, and by their means carry out their own ambitious ends, could be found then, and such men are in existence still. At the beginning of the first century men could be found who were mainly conspicuous for their zeal in outward religious performances, while practically ignoring the fact that God desired “truth in the *inward* parts” (Ps. li. 6); and the sect of the Pharisees, under a more modern name, continues and thrives to this day.

Religious infidelity boldly showed its face in the year one, and this Sadducean generation is all too prominent after nineteen centuries have passed away.

In the first century the religious leader in Judea, the high priest, was himself a Sadducee (Acts v. 17), and,

alas! many of the leaders of religious thought are doing in this day what Sadducees did in that day, namely, paring down the Scriptures to what suits their own opinion, and ignoring the necessity of the regenerating power of God the Holy Ghost. What Jesus said of such then He says of such to-day, "Ye do err, not knowing the *Scriptures*, nor the *power of God*" (Matt. xxii. 29). Yes; true enough, history does repeat itself.

But there is *one* history, a short one, which will never be repeated, at least never for *you*, my reader. We refer to your own. Care and toil, pleasure and pain, gratification and disappointment, with death at the end, is the common lot of "all the earth-born race." But when the end has once been reached your natural life here will never be repeated. Beyond your history one great reality will face you—*God*. As it is written, "The spirit shall return *unto God* who gave it" (Eccles. xii. 7). "As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself *to God*" (Rom. xiv. 11, 12).

Yes. Beyond a God-forgetting history every sinner will find himself face to face with the God he has tried to ignore.

Since the beginning of this year how many who once refused to think of this have, in reality, found it out. They entered the year, perhaps, with brightest aspirations, and little dreamt that the opening of the next would find them beyond the New Year's wishes of their many friends.

"Fixed in an eternal state,
They have done with all below;
We a little longer wait,
Yet how little none can know."

Since that "little" may wear itself out before this

year shall pass into history, like the thousands before, one momentous question stands in bold relief before us—

WHAT ABOUT MEETING GOD?

During the recent siege of Kimberley Mr. L——, the engineer who directed the manufacture of a large cannon known in the beleaguered town as the “Long Cecil,” was one day amusing some little children in their play. After a time, discovering that the usual hour for dinner was approaching, he suddenly broke in upon their game by saying, “I must now get washed and dressed, and ready for dinner.” The children pleaded with him to continue the fun. “Oh, but I *must* get ready,” he replied, “for if I didn’t look nice *mother* wouldn’t like it, would she?”

He could only just have reached his room when a large shell entered and exploded. How sad the sequel! For in a few minutes he who had just before gone gaily bounding upstairs, had to be carried down again in a blanket in shockingly mangled fragments!

Whether he was as particular about how he would appear in the presence of *God* as he was about his outward appearance before his friends at dinner, we cannot say. What we are at the moment specially concerned about is, how *you* will appear there, dear reader. If the message sent to Hananiah, “*This year thou shalt die*” (Jer. xxviii. 16), should again be repeated, and repeated for *you*, how would you stand affected by it? Would you not say, like the engineer, “*I must get ready*”? Bold indeed would he be who thought he could set such a message at defiance, and say, “*This year I will not die.*” Such boldness would be madness. All must give way before such a decree.

Is such an event so far beneath your consideration that you can be more careless about how you would appear in

His presence than was the colonial engineer about how he should meet the eye of a lady at dinner? "Mother wouldn't like it" was a powerful argument with the children. And what *God* would like might well be a weighty consideration with you. Would *He* like it, think you, if, making light of both His righteous requirements and gracious provisions, you appeared in His presence all unprepared? Would it be any pleasure to Him that you had neither repented of your sinful course nor bowed to His righteous way of delivering you from its eternal consequences? Listen to His own answer to the question: "*As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?*" (Ezek. xxxiii. 11).

Since the days of the prophet Ezekiel God has spoken to us in another way. The Son of the Father's bosom has been a visitor to this earth, and from His lips we have heard most marvellous utterances.

Oh, listen, though you have heard them so often before. Take them in, though, with supreme indifference, you have hitherto turned from them. "I *say* unto you," said the heavenly Stranger, "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke xv. 10). Do not fail to grasp the pledge He holds out in those four words—

"I SAY UNTO YOU,"

nor suffer the blessedness of the words that follow to reach your ears in vain.

How He enlarges upon His blessed theme! With what gracious energy He enforces the truth of it as He proceeds to make known to publicans, and sinners,

and Pharisees alike, that all heaven is called to witness God's pleasure in the return of one repentant sinner, and that no objector is allowed to interfere with the full flow of His own heart's merry-making on such an occasion!

Take this to heart, my reader, and take it to heart *in time*. The consequences of neglect are serious; they stretch into eternity. He who portrays for us the joyful festivity in heaven over "one sinner that repenteth" delineates with equal minuteness the fixed condition of the one who dies in his sins (see Luke xvi.). There are three things about this man while on earth which are well worth our serious consideration.

1. *His outward connection with God's favoured people*, as witnessed by his own words, "Father Abraham."

2. *The temporal mercies* which God's providence had lavished upon him: "Thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things."

3. *God's written testimony*: "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." He could not, by any professed anxiety for the welfare of his five brothers, excuse his own ignorance of God's righteous requirement as to sin. Out of his own mouth he was condemned; he could not call Abraham his "father" without completely divesting himself of every plea of ignorance. Let Scripture speak. "What advantage, then, hath the Jew? or what profit is there in circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because unto them were committed the oracles of God. Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid. Yea, let God be true, and every man a liar; as it is written, [That Thou shouldst be justified in Thy words, and overcome when Thou art in judgment"] (Rom. iii. 1-4, N.T.).

So that as surely as you may write

HEAVEN WITHOUT A MERIT

over the fifteenth chapter of Luke, you may write

HELL WITHOUT AN EXCUSE

over the sixteenth chapter.

And be sure of this. Whether you reach the one or reach the other, you will find it so. If the grace of God our Saviour do not win your rebel heart here, the remembrance of your privileged associations and gospel opportunities, the thought of all the kindness and mercy lavished upon you by a faithful Creator, and above all, memory's recall of the faithful testimony of God's Holy Word, will seal your lips in excuseless silence there, and keep them closed for ever.

Take it to heart then at once, and make ready. Your summons may possibly be a hasty one. Thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.

Far off as the twentieth century may once have appeared, it has at last been reached, and just as surely, though more imperceptibly, will your end be reached also. Once more, *Are you prepared for the event?*

Let God hear your answer, and He will show you that through the death of His Son the very penalty of your sin has been made the pledge and proof of His love (Rom. v. 8; vi. 23). What a thought! Take it in.

DETERMINED.

IT is refreshing to see how persistent a person becomes under a real sense of need, and the Scriptures furnish us with many and varied illustrations of it. When the need is great and there is a keen sense of it, the most towering difficulties are ultimately overcome.

For example, see that poor, weak woman (Mark v. 25-34) who had spent her "all" in seeking health and healing for her body. The price she had already paid to obtain the longed-for boon was some indication of how highly she estimated the blessing. But she could not secure it even at this price, for the spending of her "all" had left her "worse" than ever.

But fresh news now reaches her. "*She heard of Jesus.*" She loses no time in making up her mind what to do.

Without a fee in her hand or a friend at her side, without anyone to introduce her to Jesus, and without the slightest personal claim upon the Great Benefactor's notice, she commences her journey.

If she could only reach Him, and touch even the garment He wore, all would be well. But here comes a difficulty, and for her a great one. A multitude of people throng around Him. What will she do now? Will she give it up and return home? Look at her. Her case is too desperate for giving it up like that. She knows she has a need that no physician in the land could meet, save Jesus the "Great Physician." But in Him she believes there is the power, and reach Him she *must*. Weak as she is, she struggles on, pushing past the more indifferent and less needy, pressing one aside here, another aside there, and gaining fresh courage every advanced step she takes. Now she is even near enough to hear His

blessed voice, but no one seems to know her all-important errand. Another step, and another, and she is bending to touch the border of His garment. Oh, happy result! Instantly she experiences the healing power of her gracious Deliverer. *She knew it. He knew it too.* It is true she trembles still, but all she needs now is what numbers of other trembling souls need—*His word of assurance.* This is added also, for He will not let her go away as if by stealth, “trembling.” His comforting word assures her heart, and she goes away in peace.

Take one example more (Mark x. 46-52). A blind beggar sits outside the city of Jericho. The hum of distant voices and the tramp of many footsteps are the sure indications of an approaching crowd. Naturally enough he asks someone what it means, and is told that “Jesus of Nazareth passeth by.” He had probably heard the name before, and heard it associated with all kinds of blessed wonders. He had never heard of even the most needy being turned away, or the worst that sought His blessing being repelled. This, then, was *his* opportunity, and he would not for a trifle miss it. If he can't *see* he can hear, and if the only response to his cry of need be the demand from an unsympathising crowd that he should hold his peace, he will shout all the louder. What praiseworthy determination is here! He could not see the face of Jesus, he could not read there how this cry of need affected *Him*, but he had not yet heard from *His* lips the refusal of his cry; so again he trumpets forth his heartfelt request, “Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.”

Then came to his ear a welcome message: “Be of good comfort; rise, He calleth thee.” As though the Saviour had said, “If you want Me, here I am at your disposal. Here I am at leisure to consider your case and give you all you need. If *you* call, I will call also.” What? Was

“the Son of David” going to give this blind beggar the honour of a personal introduction? Yes. His own confession of need was his introduction. “What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?” What is your need, that *I* am so necessary to you? “Lord, that I might receive my sight,” he says. And immediately he got what he wanted—“he received his sight.” How refreshing!

Here notice the difference between this man’s case and the young ruler’s in the same chapter, verses 17 to 22. “What shall *I do?*” was the ruler’s inquiry of the Lord, but when the crisis came he allowed his “great possessions” to stand in the way of his blessing. On the other hand, it is the Saviour saying, “What shall *I do?*” and this to one who would allow nothing to stand in the way of his blessing, not even his garment.

What a striking contrast is here, then, between law and grace as a principle of blessing; that is, between man’s futile proposal to do something *for* God in order to secure blessing from God, and God’s proposal to do all that is necessary for man—to do for man, without any bargaining, what man could not possibly do for himself.

Note the result. One of these went away sorrowful because he could not meet the law’s demand; the other got the blessing he craved for, and “glorifying God,” followed Jesus in the way.

One word, my reader. Do *you* know what it is to be in such need that nothing but a personal introduction to Christ will suffice you, and nothing but His finished work meet your need? If not you have every reason to be alarmed. “Want” will *one* day come upon you like “an armed man.” Beware lest you wake up only too late to avail yourself of the grace and blessing of the Great Deliverer. Be in earnest. Be determined. Your case is desperate. The end is near, but He still waits to bless you.

But the gospel narrative presents this subject in another aspect. We have presented to us not only the needy sinner's determination to be blessed, but

THE DETERMINATION OF DIVINE LOVE

to bestow the blessing. In Luke xv., for example, it is not so much the persistency of lost sinners that comes before us as the persistency of divine persons to reach and bless and save them. The Shepherd is seen setting forth in search of a lost sheep. It is not the sheep's bleat of misery that we hear. It is not the sheep crying after the Shepherd, and spending all its strength in seeking Him. It is the Shepherd spending His own strength, looking here, searching there, sparing Himself no pains "until He find it," and counting the joy of being able to carry the wanderer safely home as an ample recompense for the labour of seeking it. What news was this for the little band of hearers that listened to the Lord that day—the publicans and sinners that came together to hear His words!

Then follows another picture. A certain woman is brought before us, and we see every mark of earnestness about her. She, too, is a seeker, and it is evident that *dark* places have to be searched, for "she lights a candle." Then she sets to work and "sweeps the house diligently." It is only *one* lost piece of silver she is after, but what earnestness she manifests! She would brush away everything that would hinder the light from shining upon that lost silver piece. At last she finds it—for she will not stop till she does—and with it gets a joy too great to keep to herself. And all this a divinely chosen figure of the joy of heaven when one sinner of the earth is brought to repentance.

Oh, what a mercy for us who are saved that God did not take our oft-repeated, stubborn "No!" for the final

answer to His gracious offer! What grace it was that went patiently on, warning and pleading and attracting, till at last we were brought to true repentance, brought to cry aloud for the blessing He longed to bestow!

Reader, is not the story of such goodness enough to bring *you* to repentance? God grant that it may.

“YOUR CONSCIENCE.”

(FROM A GOSPEL ADDRESS.)

IF the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Heb. ix. 13, 14.)

I have read the whole of these verses for the sake of showing the connection of two words which I specially wish to draw attention to—“your conscience.”

One possession at least is common to us all. We each have a conscience. Not only do I desire, by the Spirit, to speak to your conscience, but that your conscience, awakened by the same Spirit, may speak to you. It is only by a truly exercised conscience that you will rightly appreciate the gospel.

The gospel does not begin with you. It comes to you, but it begins with God. It meets you just where you are, but it is not *about* you: it is about God's Son. Romans i. tells us that “the gospel of God” is “concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.” It does not begin with a sinner in his sins, but with God in all His grace and lovingkindness. It comes to the sinner in the foulest gutter, comes to him in all his misery. It comes to the drunkard in his besotted wretchedness, to the

profligate in his uncleanness, to the respectable deceiver in all his dishonesty and untruthfulness, and announces repentance and remission of sins to each and all, in His name who died for sinners. No matter what his state, when conscience is awakened by the Spirit of God and he is brought to repentance, the gospel of God just suits him.

The testimony is concerning Christ—Christ in the value of His atoning sacrifice, in the grace of His holy Person, in His delightful willingness to receive and bless the vilest. This is the theme of the gospel, and it not only suits him, but suits him just as he is—a sinner confessed. Oh, my friends, a draught of spring water never better suited a man dying of thirst, than does the grace of God in the gospel suit a sin-stricken heart; and many of us have proved it.

If, therefore, you are longing to find a Saviour, I have good news for you, for in the gospel the Saviour proclaims that He is seeking you. Though you feel that your hearts are as hard as the seats you are sitting upon, and as miserable as your many sins can make you, yet I have good news for you. The door of repentance is still open; the grace of the gospel still held out. God's gospel can turn your "mourning" into "dancing," yea, your mourning in the land of famine into the music and "dancing" of the Father's house. It can turn your sackcloth of sorrow into a garment of praise and rejoicing.

But let us consider our two words—"your conscience"; and in doing so it is important to note two others which are necessarily linked with them—*your history*.

This is peculiarly an infidel day, a day when man proudly questions, or daringly denies, most things, especially if in any way they touch his conscience. But we may here boldly state that there are two things entirely beyond the denial of any man.

First, *Man has a history.*

Second, *There will be an end to it.*

Yes, every man, woman, and child has a history, and this history has two sides.

People judge of your character by what they hear of you and what they see in you, the books you read, the company you keep, and by all the rest that goes to make up your little history publicly. Whether you like it or not, people will form their own judgment of you, and, what is more, speak of it to others. Just as you discuss others, they will, behind your back, freely discuss you and express their opinion about you, and perhaps not very flatteringly either, if you could hear it.

True, they may judge falsely or they may judge rightly; but, dear friend, there is an *inner* history as well as an outer one, and of this they can form no judgment at all.

There is not a single person here to-night, careless or convicted, but that person has an unseen history, a history that no human eye ever looked into. You know well what I mean. You know that there are secrets in your history that no mortal ever guessed. Perhaps here or there some guilty accomplice may know a little more than the rest, but who knows all? People, who only *think* they know us, may appear to be very well pleased with us when we meet them, but if our whole history were written upon our clothes, who would not be ashamed to walk down the street in broad daylight?

It is then with our *actual* history, not a supposed one, that conscience has to do, and God with both. Solemnly and earnestly would I say it, dear friend, that you will have no rest until you know God for yourself, until personally repentant you have had to do with Him. He has seen your history, seen it all the way through. From Him nothing has been hidden. You will not, you *cannot*, have rest until you know that in Christ's death He has,

for you, settled and closed up the sin question for ever, and that He can now say of you as of every believer, "*Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more*" (Heb. x. 17).

Do not let me go over your heads. I wish your hearts to be reached. I may be speaking to one who is coming to the end of all such meetings as this, who has gone far into his last year on earth!

Those who so smilingly wished you "a happy new year" as you commenced it, little knew, and perhaps some of them little cared, where and how you would end it. It may, to your feelings, seem far enough from you at this moment—physically so healthy, no warning pangs in your body, and no dire forebodings on your mind; but the end of this year may find you gone, notwithstanding.

Consider your position for a moment. You have stifled convictions, you have put away from you the importunities of grace, you have heard and refused the gospel of God's salvation. Oh, let me tell you plainly, that if you enter eternity in this state you will as surely get the hell you deserve as you will deserve the hell you get. Notwithstanding that judgment is His "strange work," and that one soul brought to repentance fills all heaven with joy, *the eternal damnation of the unbeliever* is as clearly expressed on the pages of Holy Scripture as the eternal salvation of the believer. Oh, what will awaken you? Nothing, yea, nothing, if the Spirit of grace is resisted.

How repeatedly and patiently has He striven with you, and as often been refused. When your friend was suddenly snatched away, when your own life was hanging in the balance and well-nigh despaired of, He spoke to you. At many a gospel preaching has He tenderly warned and fervently entreated, but all in vain. What wonder,

then, that you should tremble if called to meet God to-night? for *conscience* tells you that there is a sinful history to be reckoned with, and that you have hardened your heart against His proclamation of forgiveness. *You* may try to forget it, but does God? You may even try to forget that your old companion died as he lived, but that companion does not forget it, nor does he forget you. If only, this moment, he could make his voice heard in your ears from that place of despair, could he not charge you thus, You had *your* part in sending me here; you tempted me; you participated in my sin; you helped me to forget God?

Once the enemy whispered in his ears: “If you want to enjoy the pleasures of this life, do not let death or judgment, or God or eternity, come into your mind. Be sure you forget them. Let no one remind you of these unpalatable things, or good-bye to your enjoyment. Keep them with scrupulous care entirely out of your thoughts.” Now he whispers the same in your ears. But will the man who falls from a ship’s rigging into the sea mend matters by closing his eyes to the deep waters beneath, or his ears to their angry roar? And if eternal death and doom are approaching, will anything be gained by forgetting it? Nothing, nothing. Time will hurry you on, death will some day hurry you off, and hell certainly open her gates to receive you.

But perhaps you say, “I do not, I *cannot* forget these things. I want deliverance from the enemy’s power; I long for the forgiveness of my sins; I have often wished to be a Christian, but I am ashamed to tell anyone that I am anxious about these things. What would they say if they knew that I stayed to be prayed for at an inquiry meeting? I know well enough that the next day they would laugh at me.”

Is that it? Then look out! Take care you are not

laughed into hell. God waits. He longs to bless you. But take care, or you will for ever miss His blessing.

What can meet the conscience? Only that which can satisfy the claims of God. God's claims must be met and my need satisfied before the conscience can have rest.

How can God's claims be met? Without shedding of blood is no remission. Someone must bear the penalty for my sins. If I bear it, I must be lost for ever. But God gave His Son. He bore my sins in His own body on the tree. He offered Himself without spot to God. His blood was shed.

I used to wonder, years ago, how I could appropriate, how I could claim an interest in that work. But He did not offer Himself *to* me, though it was *for* me.

My dear friends, the first thing is to see that He offered Himself without spot *to God*, and the next question, *Is God satisfied* with that wonderful transaction?

An old man once said, "I lived to be sixty-five years of age without Christ. One day a thought burst upon me thus, 'I am sixty-five!—next door to seventy, and the days of our life are threescore years and ten. I am not ready to die. What shall I do?' I thought I would try to make a settlement with God. I would try to win His favour. I would do good works—pray and read my Bible." "And did you make the settlement?" "No, but I tried hard and long to do it. I struggled and prayed, as I lay in bed perspiring through fear. Then I would get up and tell Him what I would do. But it was of no use. I could never satisfy myself that I had made a settlement." "But you seem very happy, and yet you tell me you were not able to settle matters with God. How is that?" "No, I could not settle it; but I found that there was One who had—One who had met God

and settled it for me. Jesus upon the cross said, 'It is finished.' The moment I saw that, I got peace. He did all the work. 'Without shedding of blood is no remission.' But 'we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.'"

It is only when we see that the God-glorifying work of Christ has, by His precious blood, settled the sin question for God, that the conscience can find rest and peace. How is it with YOUR CONSCIENCE?

LOOKING BACKWARD AND FORWARD.

EARLY one morning, in a remote part of the county of Norfolk, a poacher, fatally wounded, was carried to a little rustic cottage by a terrified comrade. It appears that they had both been roaming through the woods, during the night, in search of game. Towards daybreak there had arisen a little dispute between them. The man who was carrying the gun thought it prudent to return home, while the other seemed equally determined to pursue the poaching still longer. It ended in a struggle for the possession of the gun, and in the struggle the loaded firearm exploded, shooting one poor fellow through the body.

But let us return to the cottage where the dying man is laid. What a saddening spectacle it is! Not that I would occupy you with the *natural* side of things that presented themselves there. Distressing beyond description must they have been to all present; but especially to the wounded poacher himself. All his earthly hopes, and plans, and prospects had been rudely dashed to the ground in an instant. A few more beats of his enfeebled

heart, and all will be over with him for this world. But it was neither bodily suffering nor earthly disappointments that occupied the poor man's mind in that solemn hour.

Two great and weighty realities stare him full in the face, filling his soul with horror and dismay. Beside them everything else seems to fade into insignificance and pass out of sight.

Not only do these ponderous realities occupy his *mind*, but the very walls of the cottage are made to re-echo with the expression of them, as, in anguish unutterable, he cries aloud, "*My sins, my sins, and the judgment-day!*"

A woman, standing by, partly in kindness to the poor sufferer, and partly perhaps with the desire of getting him to cease this oft-repeated and heart-piercing cry, offered him a drink of water. This, however, only seemed to intensify his bitter anguish, and he exclaimed, in tones never to be forgotten by those who heard him, "*Water can never quench my thirst! MY SINS, MY SINS, AND THE JUDGMENT-DAY!*" And thus he passed away—passed into eternity. What an end to life's short journey!

Now, reader, notice; this man looked in two directions. Backward, he saw his *sins*; forward, the *judgment-day*. Well might he then make those cottage walls ring with his shouts of soul-agony. But has it ever struck you that everyone must sooner or later face those two realities? and *you*, reader, no exception to the rule.

The true Christian has already looked them full in the face, and that in the presence of God. Neither his sins nor the judgment they deserve cause him one moment of anxious fear. What dread, think you, has a poor debtor, either of his debts, or of the county court, if he knows

that some friend has already paid those debts, and *that friend the county court judge himself?*

And why need the believer tremble when he thinks of his many sins and their just judgment? Christ bore his sins upon the cross, and suffered the penalty due to them (1 Peter ii. 24; iii. 18). The work of redemption has been finished. God declares Himself satisfied, for Christ is risen from the dead, and the glory of God has welcomed Him back. And beside all this, the Son of Man, appointed by God to execute judgment (John v. 27), is the same Son of Man who was "lifted up," and who bare our sins on Calvary's tree (John iii. 14).

Now listen to the words of this same Jesus while here below: "Verily, verily, *I say* unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and *shall not come into judgment*; but is passed from death unto life" (John v. 24). What precious words they are!

But again I turn to *you*, unsaved friend, and once more assure you that *you* will give these two looks some day. Think, for a moment, of standing at the great white throne, with all your lifetime of guilt in the books against you, and feeling deeply conscious that the eye of God is upon you! It is true your sins may not have been drunkenness and poaching; but you have your *own peculiar sins*, nevertheless, and quite as hateful to God, though perhaps more hidden from the eye of man. *For those sins you will surely be judged, if you go on in unbelief.* Yes, "*Be sure thy sin will find thee out.*" What Abner once said to Joab, I now say to thee, "Knowest thou not that it will be *bitterness in the latter end?*" (2 Sam. ii. 26). Oh, what bitterness!

Is it not high time to awake, then? God still speaks. You *may* persist in turning a deaf ear to that voice of love and mercy; but depend upon it there will be no

escaping His call to judgment. Every day's neglect of His great salvation is, in itself, a glaring insult to Him; yet how long, how patiently, He has waited, and still He waits! But, "remember Lot's wife." An angel took her by the hand to hasten her footsteps away from the doomed city; but there *was* a moment when that angel withdrew his hand, and she was left to her own desires. Sodom she loved; it was in her heart; she looked back and became a monument of judgment—nigh to the refuge, *but lost*.

Consider it soberly, dear friend. The long-suffering of God has taken you by the hand, and walked beside you for many a day. But you may be very near to the last entreaty—very near to parting company with it for ever.

Then *you* will be *left*, left to face your sins, left to bear their judgment; forsaken of God and man, to think in hell for ever of your shameful treatment of all His kindness and the rejection of His blessed Son; left alone to wish, and wish, and wish for ever *that you had never been born*. I think it was the dying, despairing infidel Altamont who said that "the severest part of hell would be the thought of heaven." But I would rather say that *the thought of that God-man (Jesus the Saviour)*, whose praises will fill heaven with Alleluias, will be the severest part of hell. From such a hell may God deliver you, dear friend.

If you are really anxious about your soul's salvation, and longing to find rest for your troubled conscience, let me entreat you to look away from self to the living Saviour on the Father's throne; go at once to *Him*. Tell Him your sad case. You are the very person He is longing after and looking for. Oh, how worthy He is of your trust! It is said of the virtuous woman in the book of Proverbs that "the heart of her husband

doth *safely trust in her*" (xxxii. 11); and then follows a list of her varied virtues. But who shall tell all that *could* be told of the work and worth of God's beloved Son? Write them down, and the big world itself would be a library too small to contain all that should be written.

But after all that *has* been told of His grace and love; of the merit of His perfect sacrifice and precious blood; of His holy, spotless manhood and His eternal Godhead, what less, think you, could be rightly said of Him than this, that "*your heart MAY safely trust Him*"? And I ask you, in His presence, what less can you say than, "*My heart does trust Him, trust Him just now, trust Him because of who He is, and not because of who or what I am*"? Is it so? Then look from this paper to *Himself* on the throne, this moment, and tell Him so. It will gladden His heart to hear you. Take the assurance from His own unerring word, that forgiveness is yours *now*, and thank Him for that also. "*Who-soever believeth on Him shall receive remission of sins*" (Acts x. 43). You will then be able to sing that sweet and simple verse—

"Adore Him! adore Him! His glorious work is done;
 God surely will not punish me, 'twas laid upon His Son.
 "'Tis finished,' cried His suffering soul, and I my title see;
 I was a guilty sinner, but *Jesus died for me.*"

May God in mercy grant it.

TWO GREAT WONDERS.

(FROM A GOSPEL ADDRESS)

I DESIRE this evening to press upon my hearers the deep importance of one word, the word "OPPORTUNITY." It occurs in a verse in Galatians vi. : "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." It is addressed, you will observe, to Christians, to those who are left in this world to represent Him of whom it is written, "He went about doing good, for God was with Him." Hence they also are exhorted to "do good to all men."

We may well remember, dear friends, that there is no time for doing this like the present. We shall not always have the chance of comforting the distressed or succouring the needy. Let us do it, then, with heart and energy, and do it at once if we would do it at all.

But to-night I wish to speak to another class, and to draw their special attention to this same word, "*opportunity*." I refer to you who are, alas! still unconverted.

First, I would with all earnestness remind you that there is a time coming when the only thing you will have to do with that word is to bitterly mourn its loss. Oh, how soon will every gracious opportunity be behind your back for ever! You cannot count upon the past; the future is absolutely veiled from you; the present only is yours.

Now if you cast your eye backward for a moment, you will see that there have been certain very distinct features in your history. For example, you have had a school-day history; perhaps, too, a business history; and, interwoven with all the rest, you have had a gospel-hearing history.

Standing out in bold relief, I can see in the latter *two great wonders*. As I look into your faces to-night, especially the faces of those who have for years been under the sound of gospel preaching, I cannot help feeling amazed that when the word of salvation came to you for the first time you did not at once accept it. In that lies *the first wonder*, and perhaps you yourself may be led so to regard it if you consider that when God gave you that opportunity He never promised you another. Mark this well, I pray you. There is no such thing in Scripture as the *promise* of a gospel opportunity to any man. Of promises there are many—promises to Israel, promises to the Church, promises to individuals, promises “exceeding great and precious”; but as to *promised opportunities*, there are none. No promise is needed for to-day’s opportunity; for to-morrow’s no promise is given. In a deceived heart the devil may succeed in depositing a few counterfeits, but in the pages of God’s holy Word not one is to be found. Would it not be wise of you, therefore, to take this to heart at once?

You may remember the parable which speaks of “a certain man” who “made a great supper” (Luke xiv. 16). You may remember that when the guests refused to come, he bade his servant go and invite others, that his house might be filled, adding, “*None of those men that were bidden shall taste of my supper*” (v. 24).

Oh, the solemn import of those words! God gives no guarantee of another chance to any man. Whenever you hear the gospel, therefore, as far as any assurance on *God’s* part is concerned, it is *your last invitation!* So that, as far as you knew, your first opportunity was your last. And the miracle is, when you heard of this wondrous love of God in giving His Son, when you heard of the death of Jesus for sinners at Calvary, that you did not instantly close in with the proclamation of a blood-sealed pardon,

that you did not fall down then and there, and with a broken heart bless Him for it.

A poor ignorant criminal, who had, possibly, never before heard what has been pressed upon you times without number, was condemned to die. At the hand of the administrators of his country's laws he had no hope of receiving mercy in any form. But to let him tell his own story. He said: "When I heard there was pardon for me from God, *I just grabbed at it!*" That is, he eagerly and instantly grasped what you have so long and so coldly slighted.

Now let us turn to the *second wonder*. It is this: that, after all the neglected opportunities of the past, God should to-night be giving you another! Oh that your eyes were opened to see all that hangs upon an opportunity that comes late if not last, and that, on your face before God to-night, this vital soul-matter may be definitely settled! What is the worth of the whole world in comparison with your precious soul? When you stand before His judgment throne, ready to be bound hand and foot and cast into hell fire, you will have found out your folly too late. But the God who will judge men then gives *you* advice now. Take it; for depend upon it, as surely as it is God's advice it is good advice. If you turn to Isaiah lv. 6, you will find it thus recorded: "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near." And again: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." What gracious pleading is here! But mark the warning that follows: "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it" (Isa. i. 18-20).

A young man went to a gospel preaching where a dear old Christian friend of mine was preaching. This young man, mark you, had that night reached the point which you will one day reach—his last chance. Did he know it? We may take it for granted that he did *not*. Yet from that hour he must bid adieu to gospel opportunities. If you had known that young man, if you had been in this secret concerning him, would you not, after that preaching, have been anxious to learn how he made use of such an august moment? You shall hear, for you could hardly guess if you tried. His father was a Christian, and expected his son to go with the rest of the family to the preaching; but he had no heart for such things. Perhaps some hearer even now may be in a similar state of mind. Had not some anxious friend warmly pressed you, you would not have been here to-night.

Well, this young man, as we have said, had been brought to listen to God's farewell offer of mercy, and this is how he treated it. He picked up a Bible, and between its open pages he placed a novel, so that he might *appear* to be reading the Bible. But God could see through that—nay, even his companion could. The preacher had said during his address, "Perhaps there is someone here that will never listen to my voice again, who will never have another offer of salvation." But on he went with his novel, and even the prayer that followed did not deter him, and he read on to THE END. He "refused and rebelled."

Now for the solemn sequel. That week he went to the baths. He was a vigorous swimmer, an intrepid diver, and from the usual spring-bar he took a "header." A few hours before he had had his last gospel opportunity. Now he was having his last plunge, for this

plunge into the water was a plunge into eternity. He never spoke again.

Now what would that young man give to occupy your place to-night—to sit there and share with you *one more gracious opportunity!* But he had had his last, and, to all appearance, when he had it he fatally trifled with it. How will you treat yours?

As far as you have any authority from God, you are having your last opportunity; and once more I ask, How will you treat it? “Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near.”

God delights in mercy, but sin’s judgment is no less a necessity. Jesus has died; the blessed Saviour is risen; the Holy Ghost has come from heaven, come with *the gospel of free pardon* from the very throne of God. “God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent.” The day of judgment is fixed, but it is future; the day of salvation is present, but it is fast wearing away. *Only one opportunity* can be counted on, and it is the present one. “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”

DELUSIONS ABOUT DEATH-BEDS.

THERE is a superstition in some of the northern counties of England that a person cannot die comfortably if there is a *pigeon’s feather* in his pillow; and many a dying man, ere now, has had his pillow changed by those who have watched his last hours, in hope that they could thereby remove the disturbing thing.

Perhaps you are inclined to smile at the folly of such people, or at least to pity their ignorance or stupidity. But wait a moment. This is not the only popular delusion in connection with the bed of the dying. Here is

another, and one far worse in its effects upon others. Many people consider that if a man dies "peacefully," as it is called—that is, without restless tossings or any outward sign of excruciating pain, such as distortion of countenance and the like—he has certainly gone to heaven. Yet if we take our stand on the truth of Scripture, there is no more ground for one thought than for the other. Both are delusions. Indeed, it is not of the righteous, but of the wicked, not of those who die in the Lord, but of those who die in their sins, that it is said, "They have *no bands* in their death" (Ps. lxxiii. 4).

It is well to remember that there may be two causes of outward uneasiness, one through physical pain, the other through smarting of conscience; one because of the state of a dying body, the other because of the state of an undying soul, and this in view of its entering into the immediate presence of God. "The spirit shall return unto God who gave it" (Eccles. xii. 7).

It is related of Sir Walter Raleigh, that when his executioner gave him the choice of position on the block on which he was to be beheaded, he said, "It matters little in which direction my head falls, if my *heart* is right." When Richard Baxter, the author of those two God-used little books, *Calls to the Unconverted* and *The Saints' Everlasting Rest*, was dying, he said to one who visited him, "I have pain, for there is no arguing against one's senses, but *I have peace, I HAVE PEACE.*" With intense bodily suffering he had the calmest, sweetest rest of heart and conscience, for he had Christ.

And should the writer or reader of these lines be called to die before this week is out, it will matter very little what his body may be passing through, and still less what kind of pillow his head may be placed upon. If Christ be his, through faith in His precious blood,

there will be no stain on his conscience, and, through the knowledge of the God who provided such a Saviour and gave such a gift, no fear in his heart. All, all will be well.

“It is growing dark, mother, growing dark,” said a dying child in Yorkshire, “but Jesus is lighting me through.” Happy home-going!

But what must it be to be without Him at such a moment? If still a stranger to this blessed and (to those who know Him) never-absent Friend, take timely advice, and seek to make His acquaintance at once.

“’Tis Jesus, ’tis Jesus, our Saviour from above,
’Tis Jesus, ’tis Jesus, ’tis Jesus whom we love.”

“Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near.” No other friend can say what He can say, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” And this He *does* say to the one who trusts Him. Blessed Saviour!

In conclusion note this. You may depart with an agonising physical struggle, yet go to be with Christ notwithstanding. You may “die easy,” as men speak, and wake in hell! Nay, if you die without Christ, whether on the lap of luxury or on the hard stones of a public thoroughfare, as God is true, your doom will be as inevitable as it will be unalterable. Oh, what a thorn in your pillow will the thought of unforgiven sins prove to be; but the sharpest thorn of all will be the remembrance of slighted grace. God save my reader from such an end. Fall down before Him at once, and through Christ and His all-availing sacrifice seek His mercy.

“Jesus can make a dying bed
As soft as downy pillows are,
While on His breast I lay my head
And breathe my life out sweetly there.”

THE DEVOTED SERVANT OF AN INSULTED MASTER.

“ God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both LORD and CHRIST.”—ACTS ii. 36.

“ Of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the LORD CHRIST.”—COL. iii. 24.

INVALIDS have often been immensely benefited by being roused from morbid occupation with their real or partially imagined ailments and forced into active service for one they love, whose case was manifestly more serious than their own. And there is little doubt that it would be well for many sickly, self-occupied believers if they could be awakened to the fact that there is much useful and even urgent service for them to do if they had but the heart to do it. Do they forget that the One who loves them has been hated without a cause, apprehended in the night like a common thief, nailed to a gibbet as a malicious malefactor, and then insultingly cast out of this world altogether; and all this in the very act of serving *them*? Do they forget that it is He who desires their service to-day? for He still has interests here even in the place of His rejection. Yet they seem to go aimlessly gliding on, save as they think of their own personal comfort and enjoyment.

Even a worldly man's servant would hardly be able to enjoy an entertainment if he found that, though he had managed to push his own way into the concert-hall, his master had been excluded. But how would he feel if the vain, selfish pleasure-seekers around him had not only crowded out his master, but had, with gross insults, rudely pushed him off the steps of the building? How

would he enjoy the entertainment, think you, when he discovered that some of these very people were amongst the performers at that entertainment? Would he not instantly leave their company, and go forth to seek and serve his master, even if only to express his sympathy, and to ask what he could do for him?

Now listen to the words of the blessed Saviour: "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be: if any man serve Me, him will My Father honour" (John xii. 26). And He said this in the solemn contemplation of His own rejection and death. But be it remembered that true service is not confined to prominent deeds or public speeches.

The writer was once privileged to visit an aged believer who, during her years of bodily strength and daily toil, had been the means of bringing many sinners to the knowledge of the Saviour. She lived in a very humble cottage in the country. Her means were small, and her sufferings great. There she lay, under a little lean-to roof, which was only just high enough on one side to admit the bed. Naturally she might have found plenty to complain of, if she had compared her lot with the mercies enjoyed by others, but not a single murmur escaped her lips. One thing there was, however, which she longed for, and you could not easily guess what that one thing was. But as nearly as the writer can remember her own words, you shall have them. It was no worldly advantage for any member of her large family that she sought, and no special mercy for herself. Christ, her Saviour, and His present position filled her thoughts. "I should like to be a comfort to *Him* while I stay here," she said. "He has been cast out of His kingdom; the world has rejected Him; and I *should* like to be a comfort to Him!"

What real service was this in that secluded bed-chamber! How grateful to the Lord's own heart, and what a treasure to the rejected One in glory, must be every such desire in the bosoms of His saints on earth!

Oh, how happy she looked! And no wonder. For what was the secret of her joy? She was in full accord with the mind of Heaven. Thoughts of self were dropped, and by His Spirit she entered into the feelings of her absent Lord.

Consider His position yourself, my reader. Men cut short His day of unparalleled service here, but having been by the right hand of God exalted, He will serve them from thence—serve them as persistently and unremittingly as ever. He will send His Spirit; He will furnish His servants with suited gifts for the carrying on of His work for man's blessing. He will take them into His confidence; He will tell them His secrets; He will allow them to serve Him in this day of His rejection; allow them to share both in His sufferings here and His glories there.

There is no better cure for self-occupation on the one hand, and worldliness on the other, than the consideration of His present position—how He reached it, and why He has so long remained in it. If man's hatred made Him an exile from this world, His love will still serve man in that world. And more than this. He will reproduce His precious grace in the souls of others, and cause them to serve according to His own work. What a Saviour! What a Friend!

A woman with whom the writer is personally acquainted was, after her conversion, turned out of house and home by her Roman Catholic husband. "How can I best serve Christ under such circumstances?" was her great thought, and she not only maintained herself by

her own hands, but every day, watching her opportunity, she went to the house during his absence, prepared his meals, and left all spread ready for him when he came home from work. The result was that his opposition was broken down, and in the end he also was converted. Oh, what victories grace has won!

Has this grace of the Lord Jesus Christ yet won your heart, my reader, so that it comes out in your daily life? Is there anyone on earth or in heaven who has been a gainer by *your* affection for Him? Or are you content with only a name to live? Are you content, as far as your service is concerned, to go to heaven alone? Has the professed knowledge of His love made no difference in you? Depend upon it, no heart feels a slight so keenly as His; and no heart more truly appreciates even one look of responsive affection.

Outward correctness and even orthodox creeds fall far short of *His* desires. He saw all this in her who had left her first love—the Church at Ephesus (Rev. ii. 1–5). He wants our *hearts*. He died to win them, and he lives to keep the fire burning. “Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity,” said the apostle by the Spirit (Eph. vi. 24).

Just one word of caution here. No self-effort, and not even the conviction of what we *ought* to be, can produce the affection He desires. Love alone can beget love. It is the mighty winning power of the love of God in Christ Jesus that is filling heaven. The countless multitudes of those who will sing His praises for ever will gladly confess the blessed truth with one accord, “We love Him because He first loved us.”

“O ye who walk in darkness,
Ever mourning for your sin,
Open the windows of your soul,
Let the warm sunshine in ;

Every ray was purchased for you
 By the matchless love of One,
 Who has suffered in the shadow
 That you might see the sun."

If this suffering love has won our hearts, let us not forget that the world still hates Him. Daily may we remember how soon our time of service for Him here will come to an end. "The night cometh, when no man can work." Thrice blessed will it be to get His heart-filling "Well done," and then to rest in His presence for ever.

"Our Lord is now rejected,
 And by the world disowned ;
 By the many still neglected,
 And by the few enthroned ;
 But soon He'll come in glory—
 The hour is drawing nigh ;
 For the crowning day is coming
 By-and-by."

SURE ANCHORING GROUND.

EXTRACT FROM A LETTER.

" I AM sorry to hear from your niece that you are still tossed about with doubts and fears. . . . Did you ever see a ship riding at anchor? Waves roll, and winds blow, and tides change, but the vessel is not carried away by any of them, nor by all put together.

Now, if I may speak of myself, my soul has found a sure anchoring ground. This ground is not to be found in my own merits, neither in good self, nor in an improved self. It is not even found in the fact that I am saved. It is in a real living Person that my heart can safely trust. It is in CHRIST HIMSELF; in Him who died for me and rose again.

Now calmly consider this :

MY FAITH

and

HIS FAITHFULNESS

are so united that they cannot be divorced and my faith still live. If His faithfulness could be weakened, my faith would at once sicken with it. Could His faithfulness die, my faith would instantly die also.

Just ask yourself, then, Where does *my* faith seek rest? To whom or to what is *it* united?

Is it to Christ, or something in myself or of myself? Which?

What the apostles testified in their day was 'repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ' (Acts xx. 21). That is, they preached the complete condemnation of self, with implicit confidence in the only One really to be trusted.

Should doubts and fears still arise, let me advise you to ask yourself two or three simple questions:—

Whom is it that I cannot trust?

Who is it that has so thoroughly forfeited my heart's confidence?

Whom is it that I have found to be so unworthy that, though I should like to trust Him, I cannot?

Is it Christ? Impossible! You are looking at *yourself* instead of looking away from self to HIM.

May the gracious Spirit lead your troubled heart to Him, and set your soul at perfect rest before Him."

CHRIST'S DEATH THE PROOF OF GOD'S LOVE.

I ONCE thought that when Scripture spoke of Christ as a MEDIATOR it meant that He came between me and a hard and *angry* God to take up my cause and appease His wrath. But the very opposite is the truth. He came between me and a *loving, giving* God. He came as the GIFT of God, to express His love toward me by dying in my place, and by His death to sweep away for ever every hindrance to my eternal blessing. GOD IS LOVE.

TOO PROUD TO CONFESS; TOO LATE TO POSSESS.

BY way of illustration let us suppose a case. Business for the day is well-nigh over, when a stranger enters the door of a manufacturer's office. He has called on "confidential" business, and seeks, therefore, a *personal* interview with the merchant himself. He is soon face to face with the one he seeks, in the private office of that said gentleman.

"I have called," he says, "in compliance with the special wish of my master, Mr. —, the well-known City merchant, to verify a report that has reached him concerning your affairs. I come, be assured, in the most friendly way—not for the sake of prying into your business, but entirely because of my master's deep personal interest in your welfare. I may tell you that he is one of the most kind and beneficent men I ever met. I trust, therefore, that you will meet his inquiry with perfect candour. Nothing will satisfy him, he says,

but a personal statement from your own lips. To come to the point at once, he has heard that you are practically insolvent."

"Oh *dear*, no!" is the too ready rejoinder. "Not so bad as that. I am by no means in despair yet."

"But, my dear sir, my master considers that he has had information of a very reliable character, and to the effect that, though you are considered by many to be even tolerably well off, yet, if your affairs were wound up to-day, you would be proved bankrupt."

"It is," he responded, "quite true that I have made several foolish and ill-advised speculations; that I have suffered much from being involved in the failures of others; but, notwithstanding all this, I have no doubt whatever that, with harder work and better management, I shall in the long run be able to make my business a thorough success. Bankrupt? No, no! I hope not."

"But pardon me, dear sir, if I make just one suggestion, unpalatable as it may be for the moment. If you will consent to have the real truth of the matter satisfactorily investigated, my master will pay the expense of a special auditor for you, or even send down, free of any cost to yourself, his own skilful accountant to report on your books."

"I thank both you and your master very much, but must respectfully decline this gratuitous offer. The fact is, I don't care for anybody and everybody looking into *my* business matters. I have struggled on so far and kept my own affairs in my own hand, and this I mean to do still. Besides, I can only repeat what I have already stated—that, perplexing as things have been for a long time, I have every hope of pulling through; and, at any rate, I will consent to no outside interference for the present. I intend to be lord of my own castle."

After a few more earnest remarks the kindly visitor sadly departs, and the manufacturer is left to close his office and return home.

Not many days after this interview, the manufacturer meets another business man living in the same town. The latter appears to be exultant to a degree. He soon tells his story, for he is full of it. "I had," he says, "a visit from a stranger last Wednesday morning, and such a gentle, kind man he was. He called, he said, at the request of Mr. —, a London merchant, to make a few pointed inquiries into my affairs. I felt ashamed to tell him the real truth at first. But in the most kindly way possible he pressed me to be candid with him, and at last I made a clean breast of it, and told him honestly, right out, that I was in daily fear of being brought to a dead stand; that it was not at all a question of whether or not *I could meet* the claims of my creditors, but of the length of their forbearance before pressing them.

"To my utmost astonishment, the gentleman then said, that with my consent he was authorised by his master to say that he would send his own accountant to make minute investigation of how I actually *did* stand; for that his master intended to meet, to the last penny, every one of my liabilities, and still more, to put to my credit at the bank a sum fully adequate to the future requirements of my business. Not only so, but this gentleman assured me it would give his master great pleasure if, in future, I would always consider him a true personal friend; that he would be delighted, any time I wanted advice, to give me the benefit of his matured business experience, and to give it as freely as if he were the most interested of partners."

"Why, this very gentleman appeared at my own office a little later the same day! And, would you believe it?

instead of honestly owning the true state of things I actually tried to put the best face on my affairs that I possibly could, and at last gave him a point-blank refusal to have my affairs taken out of my own hands, even though, free of cost, he offered *me* an auditor also. Oh, that I had *known* what his intentions were!"

"What a pity! I was actually rejoicing in the thought of *your* good fortune as well as mine; for he told me he was going to call upon you, and that if he found that you were totally bankrupt and honest enough to own it he would make you the same offer he had made me. You surely never mean to tell me that you let him go without opening your mind to him and letting him know the worst?"

"Yes, alas! I did."

"But perhaps he will come again to make you the offer, and then——"

"Ah no; for he said, calmly and positively enough, that he had many others to call upon, and that, as I had no *need* of what he had to propose, he should not call on me again!"

Now, who would not blame this man for missing so gracious a deliverance, just for the lack of a little common uprightness?

Yet he could say truthfully, "I was not told what this merchant's intentions were. Had I *known* it, I would quickly enough have put my books into his accountant's hands, and left the matter with him."

But can any unforgiven reader of these pages honestly say that he knows nothing of *God's* intentions in asking him to confess his sins and own his inability to meet his Great Creditor's requirements? Has the reader never heard that "God looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; He will deliver his soul from going into

the pit, and his life shall see the light" (Job xxxiii. 27, 28)?

Has he never heard that a whole company of "publicans and sinners" were once assured by the most blessed of all Messengers, yea, by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself—that the one who honestly confessed his sin and unworthiness not only got the kiss of forgiveness, but the very best that God Himself could bestow? Read Luke xv.

Is the reader not aware that "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke xv. 10); and that the forgiveness of sins is now accompanied with the gift of eternal life, and followed by an eternity of bliss in "the Father's house on high"?

Does he not know that the same Holy Spirit, who, like the auditor in our illustration, opens up to us our true moral state before God, also unfolds to us the unsearchable riches of Christ, and assures those who believe that all He possesses as the exalted Man is theirs; that, as to the inheritance, God has made them co-heirs with Him; that His glories, His riches, His place before the Father, His own unchanging affections, His joy, His peace, is theirs; yea, that all, all is theirs, for *He* is theirs?

Can the reader who refuses to confess his utterly lost condition, his complete moral bankruptcy, claim as an excuse that he is ignorant of these facts? Has he not heard that along with God's command to repent comes His call to believe the gospel? Does he not know that the gospel clearly proclaims that "God is love," and that this is not a mere naked assumption, for "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. v. 8)?

Who, then, will the unrepentant sinner find to pity him, when at last he is made answerable for a lifetime of

sin against God, yea, called to account by the very One who came into this world to disclose God's love to sinners by dying for their sins? There will be nothing for him then but righteous condemnation.

One thing more. The kindly messenger in our illustration only called upon the bankrupt *once*. Times without number have you been called upon to own your true state before God; and how have you met the call? Only, perhaps, by some fresh, fruitless effort on your own part; only by an earnest endeavour to *put yourself right with God*, as if, in some way or other, you could atone for the guilt of the past by a more strictly ordered life for the future! You are like a man who would fain pay his debts by "*promissory notes*," forgetting that *deferred* payment will make an account no less.

Oh that the Spirit of God might so work in your soul that before you proceed a step further you may honestly confess your sins and seek God's forgiveness! Only thus can you become possessed of the Holy Spirit, the earnest of the heavenly inheritance, the power for enjoying it.

In closing we commend to your notice the case of one who, though slow to own the truth of his sinfulness, did at last make full confession, and as a consequence got the very thing he needed. Listen while he relates his own story.

"When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin" (Ps. xxxii. 3-5).

Thus in four simple words did David tell his story—

I CONFESSED;
THOU FORGAVEST.

Well may he afterwards write, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is NO GUILT" (Ps. xxxii. 1, 2).

Would you have this blessedness to be yours, dear reader? Beware, then, we beseech you, lest what has sadly described thousands of others should at last describe you—

A LITTLE TOO PROUD TO CONFESS YOUR SIN,
FOR EVER TOO LATE TO ENTER IN.

"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" (Prov. xxviii. 13).

ASSURANCE POSSIBLE AND IMPOSSIBLE.

THE most dangerous lie, because the one most likely to deceive, is the lie that comes to us with a certain admixture of truth to commend it, or as truth falsely applied. What is perfectly true in one application may be absolutely false in another.

As to the affairs of this life, God has warned men not to rejoice in their boasting about the future. He declares that all such rejoicing is evil; and should any inquire why it is wrong to pin one's rejoicing to the prospects of to-morrow, He Himself furnishes the answer "*Ye know not what shall be on the morrow.*" For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (James iv. 14-16). Abundantly has history illustrated the truth of these warning words. Nations, the most mighty and wealthy, have ignominiously crumbled to decay. The most prosperous commercial

enterprises, overtaken by some unaccountable reverse, have been hopelessly blighted and suddenly brought to nothing. The ringing cheers attendant on some brilliant political success have hardly died away when humiliating defeat has overtaken the victorious party, and reduced it to a helpless minority. It is not hard to say, therefore, that the short sentence, "*Nobody can be sure,*" when applied to *temporal* things, is true to the letter. God has said it; history has witnessed it; and no sane man would stake his reputation on a denial of it.

This being the case, the wily enemy has taken occasion to make use of what God has said respecting the affairs of *this life* either to undermine, or flatly deny, the truth of what He has said as to the concerns of *eternity*. Hence it is a common thing, when the soul's eternal salvation is spoken of, or the eternal destiny of the wicked referred to, to hear men and, alas! even *professed* ministers of the gospel, coldly reply, "Oh, as to that, *nobody can be sure.*"

But to cast a doubt upon what we *may* know, because there are things which we cannot be certain about, is as sensible as would be the conduct of a madman who, shutting himself up in some dark cellar and refusing every kind of light, stoutly insists that, "*nobody can be sure* what hour it is, nor even whether it is day or night"! And when asked *why* he says so, only replies, "Because *nobody can be sure* whether to-morrow will be bright or cloudy!"

Yet this is practically what thousands are doing with the light of God's revelation, and His charge against them is this: "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself" (Ps. l. 21).

Man makes scientific investigations as to the state of the atmosphere, and will even publish what he calls a "forecast" of the weather for the day following. All

that his fellow-men can say is, "It may *possibly* be as it is predicted. But *nobody can be sure.*"

GOD SPEAKS, and man impudently says just the same, "*nobody can be sure.*" How true the indictment, "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but *I will reprove thee*" (Ps. l. 21). "Every word of God is pure: He is a shield unto them that put their trust in Him. Add thou not unto His words, lest He reprove thee, and thou be found a liar" (Prov. xxx. 5, 6).

Now there are two reasons why absolute certainty about a thing cannot be reached. Take up an ordinary "Railway and Steamboat Guide," and you will probably find that through some steamboat company having neglected to send the times of departure of their vessels, the publisher has had to insert the words, "*No information,*" instead of the hours of sailing. Now look on the cover of the book, and you will probably find something to this effect: "The publisher, while taking the utmost care to give the correct times of starting, etc., will, nevertheless, not be responsible for any inaccuracies."

In the one case, "*nobody can be sure,*" because *no information* is forthcoming; in the other, "*nobody can be sure,*" because the one who is responsible for the information is not himself absolutely certain. But how solemn to treat GOD'S TESTIMONY in this fashion!

The one who does so must either daringly maintain that God has *not* spoken, neither by His Son nor by His Spirit in the Scriptures, and therefore that "*nobody can be sure*"; or he must add insult to his daring, and, with God's Word in his hand, say, though God *has* spoken, *nobody* in this world *can be sure* whether he is saved from the wrath to come or not.

But to *faith* it is everything that "God hath spoken." The faithfulness of God is her sheet anchor; "It is

written," is the cable she holds to. "I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me," is her unwavering watchword in the face of all who challenge her (Acts xxvii. 28).

Take your pen, anxious reader, and write down those two short sentences. Would *you* have "full assurance"? Here, then, is the ground of it—

"GOD HATH SPOKEN."

"I BELIEVE GOD."

But let us look at the statement, "*Nobody can be sure*," a little more closely, and see from Scripture where it can be used and where it cannot.

YOU CANNOT BE SURE of what God's feelings are about you apart from Christ. "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" (Job xi. 7). "No man hath seen God at any time" (John i. 18). He is spoken of as "dwelling in the light that no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see" (1 Tim. vi. 16). But God has been fully revealed in Christ, so that, as thus revealed,

YOU MAY BE SURE of *all* that God is. "The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (John i. 18). "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us . . . full of grace and truth" (John i. 14). "God is light" and "God is love," and all is revealed in Christ.

In the death of Christ we see that *God is righteous*. What a slur it would be upon any rational being to say that with all his good qualities he was not very particular about just dealing. Would you give *God* this character? No. *God is righteous*, and no sin can escape its just penalty. Yet it is the knowledge of God's righteousness that is the solid foundation of the believer's peace. Do you say, "How can this be?" It is in Christ that

the answer is found. Sin's righteous judgment *has been borne* by Him. "He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification." So that God's very righteousness is as thoroughly in my favour, through Christ's death, as it was against me without it.

In Christ it may be seen that "*God is love,*" and only there. In Him we see that the very penalty due for our sin has been made the proof of God's love to us; for "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. v. 8). What doubt can there be, then, after Calvary, either of the righteous judgment of God upon sin or His love to the sinner?

Again. YOU CANNOT BE made SURE of your soul's salvation by listening to the testimony of your own heart's feelings. As to this, *God hath spoken.* Listen! "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool" (Prov. xxviii. 26). "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jer. xvii. 9). The testimony of such a witness is not to be depended on. But

YOU MAY BE SURE of salvation if you listen to *God's* testimony, and simply and thankfully accept what He has said concerning those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. This testimony, He says, is not only to "*give the knowledge* of salvation to His people" (Luke i. 77), but written that "thou mightest know the *certainty* of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed" (v. 4).

"Be it *known* unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him all that believe *are* justified from all things" (Acts xiii. 38, 39).

"If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, *thou shalt be saved*" (Rom. x. 9).

“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that *ye may know* that ye have eternal life.” “He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar” (1 John v. 10, 13).

“God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?” (Num. xxiii. 19).

“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away” (Matt. xxiv. 35).

Again. YOU CANNOT BE SURE when your end will come in this world. We read, “Therefore the misery of man is great upon him. For he knoweth not that which shall be: for who can tell him *when* it shall be? There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death: and there is no discharge in that war” (Eccles. viii. 6-8). But, if you cannot be sure *when* the end will be,

YOU MAY BE SURE *what* the end will be. For if you have heard God’s call, and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, *God has spoken* definitely enough concerning all such. “Whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified” (Rom. viii. 30).

On the other hand, if you are not converted, if you have not got the forgiveness of your sins through faith in the precious shed blood, you may be equally sure, but sure of damnation. *God hath spoken* of this also. “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark xvi. 16).

Once more. YOU CANNOT BE SURE when you will have gone beyond the *space* given you *for repentance*. “I gave her space to repent . . . and she repented not” (Rev. ii. 21). “Thou knewest not the time of thy visitation” (Luke xix. 44). But

YOU MAY BE SURE of this, that if, in your day of opportunity, you do not find your sin out and repent, your sin will one day find you out, and carry you beyond the reach of repentance. God hath spoken. Will you pay no regard to His warning? "*Be sure your sin will find you out*" (Num. xxxii. 23).

YOU CANNOT BE SURE that God will ever speak to you again on the subject of your soul's eternal blessing, often though He has previously spoken. He said of some (and they had only been twice invited), "None of those men which were bidden shall taste of My supper" (Luke xiv. 24). But

YOU MAY BE SURE that His Spirit will "not always strive with man," and, that, when finally challenged for your reason for appearing in His presence without a wedding garment, you will be speechless. Nothing more sure than that.

Then again. YOU CANNOT BE SURE of forgiveness on a dying bed.

You cannot be sure of *having* a dying bed.

You cannot be sure, even if you have one, that you will be *conscious* when you reach it.

You cannot be sure that you will not have become too hardened to seek forgiveness at such a time. Many, many *have* been. But

YOU MAY BE SURE of forgiveness if you repent and believe the gospel now. God has spoken through His servants plainly enough. Hear ye His gracious voice.

"There is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared" (Ps. cxxx. 4).

"Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme" (Mark iii. 28).

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as

snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa. i. 18).

"Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb. x. 17).

"I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. For this shall every one that is godly pray unto Thee in a time when Thou mayest be found" (Ps. xxxii. 5, 6).

"The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John i. 7).

"I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake" (1 John ii. 12).

Lastly. YOU CANNOT BE SURE of the exact day of the Lord's second coming, though many have been foolish enough to try to fix it. Christ Himself has said, "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but My Father only" (Matt. xxiv. 36). But

YOU MAY BE SURE of this, that if the Lord's coming find you with an oil-less lamp—a Christless profession—you will be shut out from His presence for ever. "They that were ready went in with Him to the marriage: and the door was shut" (Matt. xxv. 10). And equally sure you may be that, if you *are* Christ's—yea, even one of the feeblest—you will, at His coming, be numbered with His glorified ones. "Every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits; afterward *they that are Christ's* at His coming" (1 Cor. xv. 23).

In view of these solemn statements, my reader, take a bit of friendly advice, and do not confound what God says you *cannot* be sure of with that which He declares you *may be sure of*. A mistake on this point might, in the end, prove fatal to your eternal well-being, and your soul is precious.

MAN'S SELFISHNESS AND GOD'S LOVE.

IN the Gospel of Luke God and man are heard asking precisely the same question. Let us briefly consider both.

In the twelfth chapter we are introduced to a rich farmer. God is seen providentially crowning all this man's former prosperity with the bestowal of a harvest so richly plentiful, that he has actually no barn-room for the overflowing abundance. He looks round his waving fields, he carefully gauges the capacity of his existing storehouses, and then asks the significant question, "*What shall I do?*" The answer that follows shows only too well what his heart is set upon. Four times in a few brief sentences he says, "I WILL"; but it is all in connection with his own easy-going, self-indulgent purposes. No less than ten times in ten short lines he uses the significant words "I" and "my." As for God, He is not in all his thoughts. He is completely shut out. It is self, self, only self, from beginning to end of the story—"my barns," "my fruits," "my goods." His own selfish will must reign supreme, and God be nowhere.

Now it should be remembered that every farmer in Israel was only a *tenant-farmer*. Every Jew would understand this. He held his land under divinely appointed conditions. The land was God's; and before *any* of these tenants came into actual occupation He had made a very distinct statement about it, and by the hand of His servant Moses had written it down for their more certain understanding. See Leviticus xxv. 23, "*The land shall not be sold for ever. IT IS MINE.*" Instead of owning this, the rich farmer before us is seen shutting God out entirely, until his discharge at a moment's notice

proved only too surely that he was only a very dependent tenant after all; for with the discharge comes the question, "*Then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?*"

But now for the refreshing contrast. In the parable of "the vineyard" (Luke xx.) God is distinctly presented to us as the owner of the vineyard. As such He naturally asks for that portion of the fruit which, by arrangement, was due to Him. Instead of receiving fruit, however, we see that His servants only get wounds and bruises; and it is in view of this shameful treatment that the vital question on God's part comes in. At this point we hear Him asking, "*What shall I do?*"

We have seen *man* asking this question, and we have heard his answer: "This will I do, I will gratify myself and shut God out." And will God in turn shut man out? O God of matchless grace, what will *Thy* answer be?—"This will I do," "*I will send My beloved Son.*" Thrice blessed decision!

If He had said, I will sweep these ungrateful wretches out of earthly existence: they are a foul blot on My fair creation, a standing dishonour to My holy name, and I will, in consuming judgment, put an end for ever to the entire race—who could have charged Him with unrighteousness in doing it? But instead of this, "*I will send My beloved Son*" is His wondrous answer. Instead of setting man aside for ever, He will send His beloved Son in human form as His final appeal for fruit from man.

Who does not know the result, how that the finality of God's appeal only brought man more fully to light in the full stature of his wickedness and selfishness? "*Let us kill Him,*" they said, "that the inheritance may be *ours.*" Angels might have said, Surely this will be the

seal of man's eternal doom. But no. Even this would not be allowed to baffle the purposes of grace. God would use this very act of wickedness as the means of putting away man's sin and securing man for the joys of His own eternal presence. How wonderful! Read one or two of the closing verses of this very gospel, chapter xxiv. 46, 47: "Thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, *beginning at Jerusalem.*" Tell the very worst that I am prepared to forgive and bless him. What a God!

"And couldst Thou be delighted
With creatures such as we,
Who, when we saw Thee, slighted
And nailed Thee to a tree?
Unfathomable wonder,
And mystery divine,
The voice once hushed by hatred
Says, Sinner, I am thine."

How wondrous, then, the contrast between man's plans and God's purposes.

Man says, All that I have got I will carefully secure for myself, and, shutting God out, will enjoy my "much goods" for many years.

God says, I will give all that I have to secure man's deliverance, and then introduce him to My own unalloyed pleasures. These he shall enjoy, not for "many years," but for ETERNITY.

Reader, have you made God's acquaintance? If not, be persuaded to do so at once.

“THE CAGE DOOR IS OPEN : ESCAPE !”

A COUNTRY lad has caught and caged a poor little forest bird, and placed it outside the cottage door. Presently his mother returns home. Her kind heart is moved at the sight of the tiny fluttering prisoner, too excited to eat even a single crumb. She walks towards the cage, but the poor bird, as it sees her approaching, is in a panic of terror. She gently opens the cage door, and says, “There! that’s what *I* feel about you. Your cage door is wide open. Don’t wait a moment. Use your wings and enjoy your liberty.”

And God has declared what He feels about the captive sinner. Nothing now remains in the background; nothing left for the disclosure of a future day; nothing to be further manifested in some coming dispensation. All, all that God is has been brought to light, and He is declared to be on the side of ruined man—a just God and a Saviour. Oh, what rest, what liberty for the heart that enters into it!

Perhaps you will say, “But man is a poor fallen creature, the sport of his lusts and passions, a dupe of Satan, and subject to the just judgment of God for his sins. In befriending such an unworthy object, is He not, therefore, practically ignoring His own righteousness, or hiding the unsullied glory of His own holiness?” No, no, thank God, far otherwise. The very way in which He *has* declared Himself upholds and maintains every attribute on His own side, while meeting every need on ours. When Christ came to the earth two things were brought to light.

1. Every moral excellency that was in God Himself found its perfect expression in that blessed, lowly Man.

2. All that in God's eye was lovely, all that His heart could possibly wish for in man, all was found in Jesus.

But how could the holy life of the Lord Jesus meet the desperate condition of a guilty sinner, of one not guilty only, but entirely estranged in heart from God? Of itself, Christ's life, spotlessly pure as it was, could *not* have met man's need. For just as a white pin adds nothing of its own whiteness to a black pin, but only makes the black one look all the blacker, so Christ's holy life served only the more to expose man's unblushing wickedness. *Death* must come in. Nay, death has come in. Christ has *died for the ungodly*, and risen again.

By Christ's death sin has received its righteous judgment, and the believing sinner is justified.

By Christ's resurrection the portals of death have been thrown wide open. All may escape. None need perish.

By Christ's death the love of God has been perfectly expressed, and the believer reconciled.

By Christ's resurrection God's power to release men from the grip of death has been abundantly set forth.

So that not only has God opened a way of escape for you; He has expressed His own heart in doing it. The gospel *proclaims* that the "cage door" is wide open. All that you have to do, therefore, is to avail yourself of it. "Escape for thy life!" Then fly to His presence with a song of praise for His great deliverance. Thousands have; and the writer one of the happy number. Oh, linger not.

A WILY SNARE EXPOSED.

“HIM that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out”
(John vi. 37).

What blessed encouragement is here! What a gracious assurance for every trembling seeker after soul-blessing. Nor could a single act be found in the whole of the Saviour’s life below to throw the faintest shadow upon the glory of the grace that shines in this sentence.

In the gospels some of the very worst of men and women are to be seen approaching Him with their varied needs pressing heavily upon them. Which of all that ever sought a favour went away with a denial? Who among them was found to be too worthless for His welcome, too base for His blessing? None. “Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.”

Oh! but it is the other part of that verse that perplexes me, not the sentence just quoted. If I only knew that the Father had given me to Him, I could come. Does He not say, “All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me”? He does, but *this* should not perplex you. For there is no question that what He there gives expression to was a comfort to His own heart at that moment. And that which was a comfort to the blessed Lord’s heart should certainly not be a trouble to yours. Think of Him surrounded by those who were carping at His gracious words, and murmuring at what He was saying to them of His heavenly mission into this world. That which then seemed uppermost in His devoted heart, and to which in this sentence He gave expression, was that, spite of all man’s opposition, the Father’s will should yet be faithfully carried out, His heart’s desire gratified, His creature, man, be blessed.

“All that the Father giveth Me *shall come to Me.*” That was the Father’s side, and was no doubt a comfort to the heart of the Son; while “Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out,” was the Saviour’s side, and may well be a comfort to our hearts.

What could more clearly prove the subtlety of the great adversary, what more forcibly bring to light the perversity of the human heart, than the way in which the very truths that are graciously intended as bulwarks against the assaults of the enemy are turned into barriers to resist the inflowing of comfort to those who need it most? How often has it been found that the subtle foe has succeeded, for a time at least, in turning the believer’s “tower of strength” into a sort of whispering gallery, and, by his crafty insinuations, distorted the very truth itself into a lie, and filled the heart with groundless fears. How often has he made an exercised soul believe that the very truth which ought to have been an impregnable fortress against the foe is only a dismal prison to shut him out from the liberty of the gospel, and prevent him from enjoying its richest blessings.

May the Lord expose the fowler’s snare, and grant to the troubled reader a speedy escape.

Take an illustration. You are, we will suppose, far away from home and friends, and, moreover, in such pressing need that you have not a single sixpence left. As you walk, with heavy heart, through the streets of the town, a printed notice is put into your hand. It has not much interest for you at first, but as you sadly saunter on you read it. Suddenly you stop. “*What is this?*” you say with some excitement, and then read it through once more.

“James ——, of such a number, such a street, herewith offers five shillings each to 500 needy persons.” It continues, “*No one in need*, who calls upon him during

the time the flag remains hoisted over his house, will be sent empty away."

Now what are you going to do?

"Going to *do*? Going to call, of course. Where is the street? Which is the nearest way to it? I must go at once."

Oh, but wait a little. How do you know you are one of the 500? Perhaps you are not!

"Don't detain me two seconds by any such fruitless parleying as this. *This* I know, I have spent my last sixpence, and night is coming on. It is not *my* business to count the 500, but, while the flag is still hoisted, to accept the five shillings, and thus to *prove* myself one of the number."

And, without another word, off you run to the benefactor's house. Your mind is not filled with speculations as to whether or not you are included in the specified 500. Your eye is fixed on the hoisted flag, and your only fear that it may be lowered before you reach the place, for this would place the proffered boon beyond your grasp.

At last you reach the door. The flag still floats overhead. You knock as one that says, I'm in haste, please don't keep me waiting. You show the printed notice; you are introduced to the benefactor; you make known your need, and ultimately come away well pleased that you were in time.

Have you got what you went for?

"Yes, and more. Not only did I find him as good as his word, but oh, *such* a man! His like I never met. Indeed, I should count myself abundantly recompensed for going, if only to get these few minutes in his company. When I entered the town this morning such benefit as I have received was outside my utmost expectation. But oh! the benefactor him-

self! No words can describe the homeliness and grace of his demeanour, or the touching tenderness of his sympathy, or give any adequate idea of what it is to be in his company."

Need I apply the illustration in detail?

It is summed up in this. Leave entirely to *God* that which belongs to Him alone, and do as He bids you. Obey the gospel message. Do you need salvation? Do you believe that Christ's death is the only righteous means whereby your need can possibly be met? Then seek His face at once. "Him that cometh to Me," Jesus says, "I will in no wise cast out." Go with His written promise in your hand, or at least with His own very words in your heart. Defeat the "fowler" by going at once. It is an old saying, but a true one, that

"While the lamp holds out to burn
The vilest sinner may return."

Remember that if God's gracious gospel message comes to you entirely at *His* cost, the refusal of it will be entirely at your own cost. Harken to Christ's complaint, "Ye *will not* come to Me that ye might have life!" "How often would I," He said with weeping, "*but ye would not.*" Oh, renounce such wicked folly. Refuse Him no longer. The gospel banner is still to be seen on high. Christ still remains seated on the throne of grace. Seek for a personal introduction to the Great Benefactor Himself, and don't rest satisfied till you get one. Here is a true story to encourage you.

A certain large house in the village of Laceby, North Lincolnshire, was at one time said to be "haunted," and no one cared to take possession of it as a residence. At last a Christian family, who gave no credence to such stories, took the house. Friends often inquired of them if they had yet seen or heard anything peculiar or

supernatural in the old manor house, and for some time they had to report that nothing more than the most ordinary sounds had reached their ears.

One night, however—a night not soon forgotten by those under the roof—they were, just after twelve o'clock, aroused from their slumbers by strange and startling cries in one part of the house. The family arose to see what it was, and found that the noise proceeded from the room occupied by the groom.

For some time previous this young man had been under deep conviction of sin, and that night had resolved on retiring to his room not to sleep until he could cast himself upon the Saviour. He had been upon his knees for four hours in succession, and in silence all the time. At last, through the precious blood of Jesus, God spoke peace to his troubled heart, and he was so overwhelmed with joy, and gave so loud an expression to his feelings, that he awoke the whole house. He *wanted a personal interview*, and he got it; and was it not well worth waiting for? May the reader be satisfied with nothing less than coming to a living Person, in whom he can safely repose his heart's full confidence. His word to the troubled is, "It is I; be not afraid." It is Jesus. He has said to His servants, "Go ye into *all the world*, and preach the gospel to *every creature*," and this message has reached *you*. God is love. Christ has died. "Yet there is room." Come, then, to Jesus. "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out."

PARDON AND POWER.

THE reception of the gospel is the real starting-point of a holy life. Till that point is reached every effort to be holy is utterly futile. It is only the sense of pardoning love that can impart power for holy living. Man reverses the order! "Prove," he says, "by a holy life that you are worthy of God's love, and He will love and bless you." But this is not the gospel. The Lord does not say to the sinful woman (John viii. 11), "Go, and sin no more, and I will not condemn thee"; but, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more." His love is not dependent on ours. "We love Him because *He first loved us*" (1 John iv. 19).

GOD RIGHTEOUS IN SAVING.

IT is one of the brightest glories of the blessed gospel that it announces the welcome fact that in expressing His love to sinful men God has by no means made light of their evil deeds. On the contrary, that He has dealt with them in the only way that a holy, righteous Being like Himself *could* deal with them, for He has carried into execution the heaviest sentence that could possibly fall upon them. It is this that relieves the conscience of the divinely awakened sinner as nothing else really can.

The apostle Paul may well say, "I am not ashamed of the gospel"—the gospel of God's grace—when he can

add, "for therein is the *righteousness* of God revealed" (Rom. i. 16, 17). Oh, wondrous glad tidings, that righteousness and grace have joined hands in bringing infinite blessing to rebellious men. If sin *must* have its judgment—and it must—God has found One not only equal to the bearing of it, but willing to accept its full weight, and all that the sinner might be righteously blessed and God be righteously gratified in blessing him. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." Herein is love indeed—

"I the chief of sinners am,
But Jesus died for me."

But oh, it is this very fact that will make the day of judgment so intolerable to everyone who has disregarded the gospel message. Not only will a Man then judge them—the Man Christ Jesus—but that very Man will Himself be the eternal witness that *on no account whatever* can sin be sparingly dealt with. Every mouth will then be stopped, every lip be sealed. He who in love to men bore God's righteous judgment will then be the executor of that same righteous judgment. Who, then, in that awful day will dare complain of its unbending severity?

A young man in the Midland Counties was brought to the law courts for theft. He told a very pitiable tale of his misfortunes. He said that having had the offer of a situation at a distance, and not having money enough to pay his railway fare the whole way, he had stolen an umbrella and pawned it to make up the difference.

In the opinion of our informant—one of the jurymen at the time—the poor young fellow's story, true or false, seemed to touch the heart of the judge, and all expected

that he would pass a very light sentence on the prisoner. But in this they were mistaken, and so was the prisoner himself, if he had imagined any such thing. For very quietly, very soberly, the judge thus addressed him: "I have records here against you for years past, and *having myself a responsibility to the Queen, whose laws you have broken*, I am compelled to give you your full penalty."

Now did it ever strike you, dear reader, that in becoming Man the Son of the Eternal God took the *Servant's* place (Phil. ii. 7)? So it really was. In coming down to die for man it was *God's* business He was doing—He was *God's Lamb* (John i. 29; xvii. 4). Again, when He takes His great power and reigns in the coming day of glory, He will still be carrying out God's purposes, fulfilling God's promises—He will be *God's King* in Zion, and reign in righteousness.

And lastly, when He judges men for their sin and unbelief He will still be doing God's work—His "*strange work*." We read that "*God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ*." And how faithfully, how perfectly will the Appointed One do it! If we have seen an earthly judge true to his sovereign, and giving a criminal his righteous due, you may depend upon it the Son of Man will not be lacking in like faithfulness. All that is righteously due to the sinner for his lifetime of sins, and for that which crowns all—the refusal of the salvation of God—the sinner will most certainly receive. God "*will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained*." Nothing will escape Him, not even an idle word. He who *endured* God's righteous judgment did it perfectly, and when the time comes to *execute* God's righteous judgment He will do that perfectly also.

Remember this, my reader, and bow at once to God's righteousness, gladly accept His love.

Your moments here are numbered. Eternal realities are close before you. How light and vain will appear your brief days of sojourn here when viewed from that fixed eternal state to which you are so quickly speeding, whatever that state may be.

“This world can never give
The bliss for which we sigh ;
'Tis not the *whole* of life to live,
Nor all of death to die.

“Beyond this vale of tears
There is a life above,
Unmeasured by the flight of years,
And all that life is love.

“There is a death whose pang
Outlasts the fleeting breath.
Oh, what eternal horrors hang
Around the second death.”

You may be very sure of this, that if God does not display His righteousness in saving you, He will do it in judging you, and whom will you blame when He does it? Be it your wisdom to come to the righteous Saviour this very day.

*PEACE WITH GOD: WHY CAN'T I FIND IT?

PEACE is a *result*. Many a perplexed soul has been helped by this fact. Peace with God is *the result of something done, but not done by me*; and if this is so, it can only be possessed by me when I know that this necessary something *has been done—done by Another* for me. If nothing will dispel darkness but light, and you are in darkness and wish it to be dispelled, nothing will avail but bringing in the light. Do what else you may, you will be kept in the dark till then. The condition must be fulfilled before the desired result can be obtained. Now the necessity of peace-making always supposes a *disturbance* of some kind. Peace is the result of the disturbing thing being removed. To talk of having peace while the *cause* of the disturbance still remains is as empty as vanity itself. It is only whispering, "Hush, hush," to the waves while the tempest still roars, or crying, "Behold," to the blind while the dense cataract remains on the eye; or, as the old prophet expressed it, "*saying* peace when there is no peace." Alas for this "*saying* peace" with the question of sin unsettled before God!

Let us take an illustration from a scene enacted about 2,700 years ago. A ship is in distress in the Mediterranean. The storm fiercely rages around her, and captain and crew are at their wits' end. They are heathens, and every man cries to his own personal god. Of course these cries and prayers, from darkened hearts to heathen gods, bring no answer whatever, and the tempest rages on.

Various other measures are now adopted. The vessel's cargo, or part of it, is thrown overboard; but

plisher Himself, on the morning of His resurrection, putting these two things together as, displaying His wounded hands and side before His disciples, He says, "Peace be unto you"! No longer is it "Peace, be still," to lashing waves, but "Peace, be still," to troubled hearts and consciences.

"Ah," says one, "if Jesus still dwelt below, and I could hear Him speak such gracious words to me, I should certainly be set at rest."

Oh! say not so. His Spirit is here; the word of the gospel is here; the news of what He has done is here; and since *you* are still here, and not in hell, you are simply called upon

to believe the message that brings the peace.

It is the *precious blood* of Christ that justifies before God. Nothing can be added to that. God is satisfied with it.

It is the *good news* that satisfies me—the news of what Christ received when He stood in my place, the news of *God's* satisfaction in it.

Two things, to me, are absolutely certain:—

1. *I know* that I deserved God's judgment for my sin.
2. *I know* that Christ received that judgment in my place.

Do you challenge the ground of my knowledge? I simply answer, "It is *God's* gospel that proclaims it, and I am as certain that He received my condemnation as I am certain that I deserved it."

But more, Christ is risen. "The God of peace" has raised Him, and the result is peace with God for me—peace as solid as the fact that He received what I deserved, as stable as the word of Him who proclaims it. He was "delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification." This alone is the basis of peace;

hence the apostle adds, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. v. 1).

God is now "preaching peace by Jesus Christ" (Acts x. 36; Eph. ii. 17), and it would be charging Him with positive mockery to believe that He is sending forth a message of peace to us through Christ's death, and He Himself not perfectly satisfied with that death on our account. Oh! but He *is* satisfied, so satisfied that He has, as we have seen, actually subscribed Himself as the "*God of peace*," and this, too, in connection with the blood-shedding of Christ on our account. It was "the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant" (Heb. xiii. 20).

Peace, then, is the result *within* of that which has been accomplished *without*. It is the effect produced *in* you by the knowledge of that which has been accomplished on the cross *for* you, of that, moreover, which has been accepted by God on your behalf.

"How is it, then, that *I* have no peace?" someone may say. There can be only one of two reasons: either, as far as *your* knowledge goes, the work has not been done at all, or, if done, it has not been done satisfactorily, and consequently not accepted by God in expiation of your guilt.

"Oh, but I do believe that Christ died for my sins." But what is the good of *saying* you believe, when the testimony you professedly believe brings you no certain knowledge? And how could you have the certain knowledge that Christ has died for your sins, and that in God's account the penalty due to you has been completely covered by that death, without your having peace about it? It is impossible!

Then how is it? Well, perhaps you are *occupied with*

the peace itself, and not with that which alone can produce it. This is a common mistake. I once saw two pictures: they were companion pictures; that is, the subject of one of them had a relative connection with the subject of the other. One was entitled "THE VERDICT," the other "WAITING FOR THE VERDICT," and each seemed to tell its own tale. A young man is being tried for some crime laid against him; the aged father with other relatives and friends are outside the court-house in sadness; misery and anxious suspense seem stamped on every face. Whatever are they waiting for? They are longing for peace of mind, and hoping to get it, and yet if you had been there and asked them the question they would have said, "It is the *verdict* we are waiting for. Peace is only a secondary matter. The verdict is the thing we want. As soon as we *know* that the verdict is in our loved one's favour, peace will be ours instantly."

The other picture portrayed a joyful satisfaction on every countenance. What made the difference? Just two words, "GOOD NEWS!" News had come of the prisoner's acquittal. A verdict of "Not Guilty" had been pronounced. All was settled. They had peace and joy because they knew it; and they knew it because they believed the news brought to them; and they believed it because the very one who had pleaded the prisoner's cause was the one who brought it. The tidings was too trustworthy to be doubted for a moment.

Now the resurrection of Christ is the divine declaration of acquittal for every sinner who believes the gospel. "If Christ be not raised, ye are yet in your sins" (1 Cor. xv. 17). If Christ be raised, we have God's own declaration that every believer is clear of his sins; that is, that he is justified. It is not the innocent that He justifies, for all have sinned: not the reformed character either,

for "God requireth that which is past." It is the one who has nothing to say for himself but this: "I am guilty, without an excuse, unworthy, without a merit, but I believe in the reality of the love commended to me (Rom. v. 8). I see the proof of it in the death of Jesus. I see how entirely it meets my case, and can bless Him for it." "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." It is because Christ died for the ungodly that God can justify the ungodly one who believes on Him.

"He took the guilty culprit's place,
 And suffered in his stead ;
 For me—oh, miracle of grace !—
 For me the Saviour bled.

"Jesus, my soul adoring bends
 To love so full, so free ;
 Thy word declares that love extends
 In saving power to me."