**THE EAGLE LIFE - STUDIES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT BY JOHN H. JOWETT**

**23. GLORY EVERYWHERE by JOHN H. JOWET**

*"The fullness of the whole earth is His glory."*

*Isaiah 6:3*

This was the song of the seraphim, those burning ministers whose purity is translucent, and who dwell in the immediate presence of God. And they sung that the fullness of natural glory is the vesture of the Lord. Wherever they gazed upon beauty, they knew it to be the hem of His garment. Every glorious thing was significant with God. Everywhere they heard the rustle of mystic wings. Their purity gave them senses of superlative refinement, and material things became transparent and sacramental, and they held communion with the inward spirit, which was the Spirit of God. Now we can almost test our spiritual strength by our discernment of the divine glory. The power of our lens is determined by the measure of our purity. We may gauge our purity by our vision. How much, then, of "the fullness of the whole earth'' do we recognise as the glory of God? How much of nature is vesture, the garment of an immediate Presence? When we go on our holidays to grand or lovely places, what kind of a time has the soul in vision and communion? How much of the grandeur of loveliness is felt to be holy ground, haunted by the indwelling Spirit of God? Or, when we gaze upon anything noble and glorious in human life, with what measure of readiness do we interpret the human "fullness" as the shining glory of God? Are our eyes dim and is our vision sealed, so that we can be in the wide house of the Lord and not know it, and be in the very brightness of His glory and not discern His presence? It is all a matter of eyes, and eyes are all a matter of holiness.

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." "Lord, that I might receive my sight!" "Lord, if Thou wilt Thou canst make me clean.'' "I will; be thou clean.'' And in that reaction the eyes are enlightened to behold the glory of the Lord.

XXIV

A MISSING HAND

"Who will go for meV"

IsA. vi. 8.

Here is the Almighty waiting for a human instrmnent. The mere statement of such a possibility touches the soul with awe. The Father of our spirits has imposed upon Himself a limitation which makes Him de- pendent upon his children. There is divine work which tarries until the appointed soul arrives. We are exalted to be fellow la- bourers with God. What sublime dignity is hidden in the fellowship ! What a coronal glory it confers upon the common life ! The seemingly tiny inlet is related to the im- measureable seas. God's holy purposes lay hold of human ministries, and the insignifi- cant inch is glorified by the Infinite.

And so it is that we men and women are to be standing at attention, waiting to re- ceive our commissions. We are to have our

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loins girt and our lamps burning. We are to be "shod with the readiness of the gospel of peace." For we never know when some purpose of the Lord is ripening, when a human instrument will be wanted and a new commission given. "At such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh." And therefore it is our wisdom to be always ready, listening for the ennobling summons of the Lord. "How soon can you be ready for the Soudan?" Gordon was asked. "I am ready now, ' ' he answered. ' ' As much as in me is, ' " said the Apostle Paul, "I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are in Rome also."

And what are our commissions likely to be? For the vast majority of us they are likely to be quite ordinary errands. The essential things in human life are spiritual vitalities, and these are carried in the sim- plest ministries. Apparently commonplace fidelities are laden with heaven 's grace. The crying needs of the world are elemental, and they are to be met by the elemental satisfac- tion of faith, and hope, and love. To be the minister of these graces is to be the fellow labourer of God. I remember an incident in "'Aurora Leigh." Lucy Gresham, the poor

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seamstress, lay dying in an attic. Marian Erie, also a poor seamstress, was in the work- room with the other girls when she heard the news. Laying down her work at once, she hastened away to the sufferer that she might be God's minister in the hour of need. "' \*Why, God,' thought Marian, "has a miss- ing hand this moment; Lucy wants a drink perhaps. Let others miss me ! Never miss me, God!' " That willingness to be the missing hand is the secret and the genius of a consecrated life.

XXV

THE LIFE THAT HAS NO MORNING

"If they speak not according to His word, surely there is no morning for them."

ISA. viii. 20.

If a man build not according to the plumb- line there cannot dawn upon him the glory of a finished pile. If a man despise the plumb-line his work will not issue in a shining temple but in a dismal rubbish-heap. Even in architecture there is no morning for the disobedient: there is only the darkness of futility and disorder. The rebellious builder, who builds as he pleases, is assuredly moving toward chaos and night. And if a man build not his life according to the divine word there will be for him no morning of bright and finished achievement. The trend of his day is toward a miserable sunset, and not toward the morning star and the things of the perfect day. When a stone is well and truly laid it is sealed with the promise of

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glory : when it is laid in iniquity it is sealed with the assurance of doom.

" Light is sown for the righteous!'' It is God who said "Let there be light/' who still makes all our mornings, and it is only when our wills are buried in His will that we be- come the children of promise, the promise of a wonderful dawn. There are some people who are most evidently and conspicuously people with a morning ! It is not a matter of wealth or poverty; it is a matter of spirit, and attitude, and relation; and we can clearly see that they are stepping east- ward" and their faces are even now catching the first flush of the dawn. And there are others who are quite as evidently people without a morning. When we think of them, or look upon them, when we consider their mode and manner of life, we think of twi- light and evening bell, of sunset and coming night. Their little game will be played out to-day -- quite played out!

The man who builds on falsehood has no morning. The nation that builds on false- hood has no morning. It is truth alone that belongs to the dawn and has the promise of the day. Falsehood belongs to the darkness,

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and in darkness and dissolution it will find its appointed end. "For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be. ' ' " But He shall make thy righteousness go forth as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday/'

XXVI

THE VALLEY OF VISION

"The valley of vision."

IsA. xxii. 5.

That is a very strange conjunction. We could have understood the phrase had it been "The hill of vision." It is the mountain summit which is usually associated with out- look. One remembers "Hhe high hill, called Clear/' where Christian and Hopeful could dimly see the gates and also some of the glory of the celestial city. But here it is the valley which is the home of vision. The outlook is given in seeming imprisonment. We are shut in by surrounding hills, and our sight attains finer perception and range. The limitation becomes the minister of expan- sion. The big wonder is born in a narrow place. I remember my surprise when I paid my first visit to the Tower of London. At one point we were taken along a narrow, dingy passage which opened into the gloomy

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chamber where the Crown jewels were kept. One was almost startled to see those flashing jewels in such confined and grey surround- ings; but a similar wonder often startles the saint when, in some gloomy valley experi- ences, there flash upon him the unsearchable riches of Christ.

And now take this word from the spiritual experience of Horace Bushnell: "I have learned more of experimental religion since my little boy died than in all my life before.'' Bushnell had had many rare experiences on the mountain-top, but they were nothing to the visions that were unveiled to him in the valley. The darker school gave him the finer sight. And may we not reverently remem- ber the word which is spoken of our Lord, that "He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.'' That mysterious en- richment came to Him in the valley. And indeed, we may be perfectly sure that mil- lions of God's children have found enlarge- ment in the valley. They have begun to see, or they have strengthened their sight, in the very season when they were blinded with tears. It is in the valley that we see into the heart of God. There are narrow roads in

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the valley in wMcli we share "Hhe fellowship of His sufferings," and in that sacred com- munion we begin to see a little way into the dark mysteries of His Cross. It is because, in our own degree, we are like Him, that we see Him a little "as He is.'"

So that when we are led into sombre val- leys, let us humbly and expectantly assume that we are in the place of vision. Maybe the Lord is going to anoint our eyes with eye-salve, and He will impart unto us one of His secrets. Perhaps it was needful that we should be led into the valley in order that we might receive our sight. And thus life's valleys will be found to be the abodes of the divine mercy as well as those breezy heights which catch the first beams of the rising sun. Even in the valley we may see the King in His beauty, and the land that is very far off.

XXYII

COMPENSATIONS

"He stayeth His rough wind in the day of the east wind."

IsA. xxvii. 8.

And, therefore, as we say, there is always something to be thankful for. If one thing visits ns another thing is kept away. Or if there is impoverishment in one direction there is enlargement in another. When the darkness falls the stars come out. When winter strips the trees hidden prospects are disclosed. When we are sick shy kindnesses steal out of their seclusion. We never knew we had so many friends until death broke our fellowships. And so we are smitten on one side, and we are graciously liberated on another. We are bound with chains, and we have fellowship with angels. We are "\*cast down, but not destroyed.''

It is a blind girl in one of Ian Maclaren's stories who is speaking: "\*If I dinna' see,

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there's naebody in the Glen can hear like me. There's no a footstep of a Drumtochty man comes to the door but I ken his name, and there's no voice oot on the road that I canna telL The birds sing sweeter to me than to onybody else, and I can hear them cheeping in the bushes before they go to sleep. And the flowers smell sweeter to me -- "the roses and the carnations and the bonny moss rose. JSTa, na, ye 're no to think that I've been ill- treated by my God, for if He didna' give me ae thing, He gave me many things instead.''

Such is the confidence we may have in our God. He leads the blind by a way they know not. When they lose their eyes other discernments are quickened, and they have the mystic intimacy of an unerring Guide and Friend. Samuel Rutherford used to say that when he found himself in the cellars of affliction he began to look about for the King's wine. And John Bunyan used to look for the lilies of peace and the Lord's heartsease in the Valley of Humiliation. And out of the eater comes forth meat; the lion which prowls forth to slay us to-day will provide us with honey to-morrow.

What gracious compensation the Lord is

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prepared to give to our spirits in our day of desolation and distress ! He feeds us with Mdden manna. We have bread to eat which the world knows not of. We grow even while we are in straits. "In my distress Thou hast enlarged me.'' That is the won- der of it, that when destruction seemed to abound the soul had a mystic nourishment which established it in a more robust and vigorous health. Hagar was in the wilder- ness, but the Lord opened a fountain of water. In desert-places angels come and minister unto us. "He stayeth His rough wind in the day of the east wind. ' ' He giveth songs in the night.

XXVIII

THE MYSTERIOUS SWORD

"Then shall the Assyrian fall with the sword, not of man : and the sword, not of man, shall devour him."

IsA. xxxi. 8.

Whex we have counted the material arms upon the field we have not told the full tale of contending armaments. There is a de- vouring sword, not held in the grasp of man, and it is fearfully active in unseen but sure destruction. That invisible sword can slay- invisible things. For instance, it can kill the vitality of a man's hope, and sink him in despondency and despair. It can cut the sinews of his courage in the very thick of the conflict, and make him shake with fear. It can pierce the strength of his judgment, and cause him to wander in self-deception and delusion. It can maim men who have re- ceived no wound, and it can make the ma- terially mighty helpless as babes. "The sword, not of man, shall devour him.'"

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This invisible sword is the ally of the truth, and it is the antagonist of iniquity. It is even so in the individual life. The soul that is leagued with iniquity is being de- voured by the sword. Nay, it is the ordina- tion of the holy Lord that evil itself becomes a sword and does deadly work in the soul. "Evil shall slay the wicked.'" And so it often happens that the apparent instrument of a man's prosperity is at the same time the instrument of a deeper ruin. The falsehood that built a fortune slew the angel in the soul. "The wages of sin is death." The evildoer cannot escape this sword of the Lord.

And this invisible sword is also active in the corporate life of States. When a nation enthrones iniquity, when it harbours injus- tice, when it exalts self-will into a crusade, when it makes material interests supreme, ' ' a sword, not of man, shall devour it. ' ' The sword can no more be escaped than can God himself. The nation may remain for a time in apparent strength, as the beams of a house which have been hollowed out by the white ants may seem to be perfectly whole, but the coming day will reveal that its inner

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strengtli is hollow and dead. And what shall it profit a nation if it gain the whole world and lose its soul? Or what shall a nation give in exchange for its soul?

XXIX

THE TRANSFORMED DESERT

"The desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose."

ISA. XXXV. 1.

I HAVE lately read two fascinating articles, which had most suggestive titles. One of them was entitled " Notes from an Ambu- lance Train/' and it contained the detailed observations of a fervent botanist, and the observations were made through the window of the train as it journeyed up the line for a load. "\* Traveller's joy runs riot over the bushes and sloping banks; coming just after the roses have gone, it is especially wel- come." "The Scottish bluebell is a wel- come sight in the hedgerows." And this is from an ambulance train running through the desolate parts of France! The second article bore the title, "The Wild Flowers of the Trenches," and the enthusiastic ob- server tells how he has seen along the line of the trenches, and around the shell holes, such

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flowering plants as marguerites and hedge parsley and poppies. When I read these eager records of these waste places I could not but remember the words of the aston- ished prophet, "The wilderness and the soli- tary place shall be glad; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the rose."

Seen from an ambulance train? A much more marvellous record might be compiled from the intimate observations made by the sick and the broken as they look out over the fields of their stricken life. I went to see one such sick friend in New York, and he quietly said to me as he lay in bed: " Things look very different when seen from the horizontal position. ' ' Yes, and it is not only that things appear in different colours, and assume quite different shapes and sizes, but the grace of God reveals itself in fresh and gracious sur- prises. The via dolorosa has many a sweet blossoming thing springing up in the gloomy way. Yes, even "traveller's joy runs riot over the bushes,'' as the joy of the Lord appeared in the prison at Philippi to two scourged men whose feet were fast in the stocks. "At midnight Paul and Silas sang praises, and the prisoners heard them.'"

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What is that but the traveller's joy? And what surpassing plants of heavenly hearts- ease appear when the Lord makes the wounded spirit whole and calms the troubled breast! And what exquisite gentleness when the great Physician is busy with our broken hearts, and when He wipes away the secret tears which no other eye can see! There was one sufferer who emerged from his season of grief and bruising with this grateful song upon his lips : "Thou hast en- larged me when I was in distress. ' ' His eyes had been opened to undreamed-of riches in the inheritance of grace, and God's gentle- ness had made him great.

The wild flowers of the trenches! Beau- tiful things springing up in the home of struggle! The scenes of warfare now be- come the scenes of novel loveliness! The fields of carnage the site of new worlds! And who can tell what strong and healthy moral growths are to spring out of all the tragic desolations of our time? God's seed has been sown in the blood of our sacrifices and on the stern wilderness golden harvests will be reaped by generations yet unborn.

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There be some who say, "'To what purpose is this waste?" The waving corn of coming days shall be the answer and the memorial of our sacrifice.

XXX

THE SONGS OF THE ROAD

"The ransomed of the Lord shall come to Zion with songs."

ISA. XXXV. 10.

In his very gracious and inspiring life of his father, Denholm Brash, his son tells us of his father's passionate love for the Methodist Hjmnsl, and how they agreed to call the sections on Pilgrimage and Guid- ance ' ' The Songs of the Open Road. ' ' I like the title. It tells me that heavenly pilgrims are to be known by their songs. When we overtake them, or when they pass us on the road, they are to be distinguished by their singing. When Christian was creeping through the appalling Valley of the Shad- ows, and he became very disconsolate, and the way was exceedingly narrow and full of abominations, he heard another pilgrim sing- ing, '"1 will fear no evil,'' and with that he was made glad, for he hoped to have com- pany by-and-by.

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Pilgrims must sing for their own sakes. Songs are the appointed helpmeets of the journey, and if we reject them the road doubles its length. "If the way be weary, tell it Him in song/' and in the very telling some of the weariness will have fled. In one of the most powerful of his poems Words- worth describes a marvellous sunset which he saw from the cliffs on the northwestern coast of England. And this is how he says he felt: " Wings at my shoulders seemed to play.'' And those are the very wings which play upon the shoulders of pilgrims who pace the highway of the Lord singing the songs of Zion. The song fills the soul with a sense of lightness, and gives nimbleness to the heavy feet. Even Mr. Eeady-to-Halt " "footed it well" when Mercy began to play upon the lute, and melody was heard upon the road.

And we must force ourselves to sing the song even when the bird has injured wings. "How can we sing the songs of Zion in a strange land?" Yes, but as Dr. Eendel Harris has somewhere said, "What might have happened if they had tried?" What missionary influence there might have been

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in the uplifted psalm ! A song in the night has a haunting strain ! ' ' Nearer, my God, to Thee," sung when the tempest is sweeping down the road, becomes a call and an evan- gel to many who have not yet turned to the pilgrim road. And so the pilgrim heart should be the home of song. Song shortens the road, it doubles the service.

XXXI

THE EAGLE LIFE

"They shall mount up with wings.''

ISA. xl. 31.

"My religious organs have been ailing for a while past. I have lain a sheer hulk in con- sequence. But I got out my wings, and have taken a change of air!" That is just it, we forget or neglect our wings. We travel along our roads as mere pedestrians, and we are sorely overcome, for the hostility of our circumstances wearies us to the dust. Or we are engaged upon some exacting ministry which imprisons us in our particular place. Or maybe we are shut up in a chamber of sickness, either as the patient or in service upon the patient. In a hundred different ways we can be cribbed, cabined, and con- fined, and our religious organs are in danger of becoming sickly, and of losing their brightness both in mood and discernment. And all the time those wings are waiting !

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And if we would we could soar into larger regions in an ampler air. In one of Ms most powerful poems BroT\Tiing addresses an angel as '"thou bird of God!" And surely we are entitled to use the phrase of the soul. Perhaps we have held too much to the con- ception of the pilgrims, and even in our thinking we may have kept too close to the road. We are not only pilgrims of the night; quite as truly we are the birds of God, en- dowed with power to mount up with wings as eagles, to respond to the upward calling, and to breathe the lofty air of the heavenliness in Christ Jesus. But we forget our wings ! We are like the Alpine insects of which Fabre tells us in his wonderful book on the grasshopper. '"I do not know," he says, "why the insect deprives itself of wings and remains a plodding wayfarer, when its near kinsman, on the same Alpine swards, is ex- cellently equipped for flight. It possesses the germs of wings and wing-case, but it does not think of developing them. It persists in hopping, with no further ambition; it is sat- isfied to go on foot." These words of the great naturalist are as true of multitudes of men and women as they are of the insects

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that hop about the lower slopes of the Alps. They walk; they never soar. They go along the road with heavy feet; they never rise in joyful exaltation. They are always on the earth. They never leave the earth and re- turn to it again with freshened spirits after a renewing flight in heavenly places with Christ Jesus. They have no upper air which they regard as part of their blessed inheritance.

Even the finest pilgrims are those who remember that they are also birds. The crusaders, who wage the noblest conflicts along the road, are just those who get out their wings and soar for a change of air. The man who takes occasional flights to the new Jerusalem is a more efficient labourer in the old Jerusalem. The man whose citi- zenship is in heaven is sure to be a very noble citizen of earth. They have the freshest eye, and the most hopeful vision, and the most inspiring mood, and all this just because they are the most inspired. They are "Hrue to the kindred points of heaven and home.''

And how do we put on the wings? ' ' They that wait upon the Lord . • . shall mount

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up with wings!" In this reahn communion is ascension. When we turn our hearts unto the Lord the power of wing is ours, and we can rise from our little prisons, or from our tiresome road, into the high heaven of spirit- ual rest and vision. In the Christian life rising is resting. When we have been on the wing we shall be able to walk and not faint. And those wings are waiting for us! But how we do forget them!

XXXII

LIKE THE WAVES

"0 that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments ! • . . then had thy righteousness been like the waves of the sea."

IsA. xlviii. 18.

So that is what our rectitude is to be like; it is to possess an irresistible energy wMch will make it like the waves of the sea. I am writing these words in mid- Atlantic, and I have just been watching one gigantic wave\* which has hurled itself against our boat with terrific force and made it tremble from bow to stem. But we need not be a thousand miles away on the Atlantic to experience the power of the waves. We have watched the common breakers as they emptied their floods upon the shore, smashing up every impediment, and carrying every opposing thing before them as they raced along the beach. They toss heavy beams about like shuttlecocks, and they take up boulders and throw them hither and thither as a very little

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thing. And our righteousness is to be like that, tremendous and inevitable.

But our righteousness is too often like a tiny runlet which has scarcely outlasted the drought. There are streamlets which just creep along in indolence as though at any moment they might lose themselves in the sands. A little child can turn them aside. Make a little channel with your foot and the water takes the new course. You can lead them where you please; they have no power, no imperative trend, no uncompromising destiny. And the righteousness in some lives is just like these faint and easily diverted streams. It is a mere rill of loyalty, and anything and anybody can change its goings. An opposing difficulty arises, and the feeble conviction seeks an easier way. If Vanity Fair interposes, or the mysterious enticements of the Enchanted Ground, this anaemic righteousness is entirely lost. It has no force, no inherent and unbribable energy; there is nothing imperative about it, nothing glorious and irresistible.

It is God's will that our righteousness should be like the waves of the sea. Think of our moral energy advancing against

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temptations with the power of an advancing tide ! Think of our encountering moral ob- stacles and "impossibles" with the mighty strength of racing waves ! And think of the co-operative strength of the righteousness of the Church of Christ attacking social evils with all the tremendous assault of a great sea! Too often we only tickle evils, we do not smash them! We flow lazily around them, we do not sweep them away !

"O that thou hadst hearkened to my com- mandments,'' then this mighty wave of power would have been ours. But this " hearkening" implies divine communion. It is the listening of reverence, it is the mood of reception. This sort of hearkening makes the soul hospitable to the divine, and the great God enters in. And it is the God within us Who makes our righteousness like the waves of the sea. "I can do all things in Christ Who strengtheneth me." With God within we are irresistible.

XXXIII

THE DIVINE MINISTRY OF DISPLACEMENT

"Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree."

ISA. Iv. 13.

These words unveil one of the great ways of our God. He displaces one thing by another. The fir comes up in strength and fills the place that was occupied by the thorn. The myrtle appears in vigour and makes its home in the bed of the brier. And so it is in the soul of man. God crowds out one thing by another and the first thing withers away. He imparts His own spirit, and the new spirit excludes the old temper. He gives a vision and some prejudice dies. He plants a royal virtue and some miserable vice disappears. This is how the Lord makes His gardens. It is the wonderful process described in Dr. Chalmers" famous and familiar phrase, "The expulsive power of a new affection.'' And so it becomes clear what a harrow- ingly disappointing way it is to try to create

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a garden in the spirit by merely pulling up the weeds. I read tMs counsel in a book of devotion: "Pull up one fault a week, and what a clearance there will be in the course of the year!'" It is disastrous advice, and there will be no end of heartache at the close of the year. In the first place, who knows what his faults and vices really are? There are some which the Bible describes as " presumptuous.'" Anybody can see them because they are so glaring. But there are others which the Bible describes as " secret/" and their hiding-place is as intricate as a rabbit warren. "Who can discern his errors?'' Who can tell just what they are? And, as a second difficulty in the way of this counsel, who is to determine the order in which the vices are to be removed? Which is the more deadly, drunkenness or false- hood, and which shall go out first? Which is the more insidious influence, pride or envy? Which does the more harm, jealousy or censoriousness? What shall we first lay hold of in the work of uprooting? Shall we seize a presumptuous sin or seek for something more secret? A furtive cancer is more seri- ous than an external rash.

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And there is still another question. How may we know that a vice is really uprooted, and that the last delicate fibre of its most secret rootlet has been removed? How may we be quite sure that there is nothing left to form the beginning of a new growth? Who is to say when the soil is clean and when every bit of thorn and brier has been cast out? It is surely very bad counsel to urge us to clean our hearts by weeding.

There is nothing for it but to hand over the thorny, briery desert to the Lord. "Here is the mlderness of my life! I sur- render it to Thee, most holy and gracious Lord!" And the good Lord accepts the surrendered desert. The first thing He does is to renew the soil by the mighty enriching energies of His grace. And then He plants His new growths. He plants the vigorous word of His truth, and the thorns and briers of falsity are smothered in its presence. He imparts His own peace, and there is an end of the thorns of feverish distraction, and there is an end of the briers of ill-temper and discord. And He gives His own joy, and the thorns of discontent cannot live beside it, and the briers of moroseness and bitterness

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pass away. That is the great secret of the transformed wilderness. It is our part to abide in the great Gardener, and He will make His own garden.

XXXIV

THE GAZE OF THE QUESTIONER

"They shall inquire coneeming Zion with their faces thitherwards." Jeb. 1. 5.

The trouble is that so many people inquire about a thing while their faces are set upon something else. They ask about one way but they are looking another. They are inter- ested in theology but not in religion. They will engage in ecclesiastical controversy, but they will not surrender themselves as vital members of the Church of Christ. They will discuss the psychology of conversion, but they will not turn their feet toward home and seek the Lord with all their minds and hearts. They will study the map, but they have no intention of making the journey. They will read the guide-book, but they are not like travellers whose faces are stead- fastly set to go to Jerusalem. They inquire concerning Zion, but their faces do witness against them.

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Now that kind of inquiring is fruitless. What is the good of asking questions in one direction while the soul is looking another? For one thing, such a soul does not bring the needful equipment for the apprehension of the truth. A merely curious spirit can never really know the secrets of the Lord. It is one of the conditions of spiritual discovery that the entire strength of mind and heart be brought to the exploration, and that we ask, and seek, and batter away at the closed doors until they open, and we pass from room to room in the ever-brightening rooms of the temple of truth, which is the home of our God. The secret of the Lord is not revealed to a mere debating society; it is un- veiled in the holy place where we have built an altar and offered our entire being in holy sacrifice. The man who is only curious is turned empty away. The seriousness, or flippancy, of our questions will be seen in the fixed direction of our gaze. Are our faces thitherward?

Every minister is acquainted with the talk- ing inquirers whose souls are looking an- other way. They will discuss the Atonement by the hour, but if we ask, \*\*Do you desire

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to have your sins forgiven, and to become a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ?" we speedily find that their faces are not thither- ward. They will question through a long night, even to the cock-crow, about the divin- ity of our Lord, but if we ask them if they are ready to cast their crowns at His feet, we see at a glance that their faces are not thitherward. And therefore all such ques- tioning is a waste of time. Nay, it is worse than a waste of time, for it wastes the powers of the soul in a semblance of earnest- ness which is only an unreal and painted fire. If there is ever to be revelation and revolu- tion, the asking must be packed by that eager and determined gazing which is the primary secret of triumphant prayer.

XXXV

THE ALMOND TREE

"Moreover, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, "Jeremiah, what seest thou?' And I said, "I see the rod of an almond tree.' Then the Lord said unto me, "Thou hast well seen, for I watch over my word to perform it/ "

Jer. i. 11-12.

The almond tree is the first tree to lift its blooms in mastery of winter. It is in flower when all other things are sleeping. It is like a wakeful, watchful sentinel when all the troops are locked in slumber. Or shall we rather say that the almond tree is always first upon the field? No other tree ever an- ticipates it or takes it by surprise. And so it is with our God. He is the wakeful Pres- ence when all other beings are asleep. The merely clever man, the cunning man, dis- covers that the place is occupied which he designed to fill alone. God is before him! The enemies of the Lord are always too late. God watches over Israel: He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.

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Well, here is a young man named Jere- miah, who has been called to an unfamiliar and exacting office. He is fearful before the prospect; he trembles at the demand. He feels his lack of experience. He is miserably- conscious of the poverty of his equipment. He shrinks from the task. It will be too much for him. His enemies are many, and they have the double advantage of years and ingenuity. In every emergency he will be outrun. In every crisis he will be outclassed and outdone. "Ah, Lord God, I cannot speak; for I am a child ! ' '

And as he walks along the way, buried in this melancholy mood, the Spirit of God directs his eyes and mind to an almond tree as it unrolls its living banners over the win- try waste. " Jeremiah, what seest thouT' And as he gazes upon it the almond tree be- comes sacramental, a vital symbol of still more significant things. It is awake, while everything else is sleeping. "And I,'' says the Lord, " watch over My word to perform if The young prophet is not abandoned to the thin armour of scanty experience. He is not left to the mercy of more " knowing'' antagonists. His God anticipates all human

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devices. His servants do not follow a blind leadership. Neither do we walk in our sleep. Following God, we are children of the day, and we walk in the light even as He is in the light.

And thus it is that the servant of the Lord finds prepared ground at every step of the road. ' ' The Lord, He it is that goeth before thee!'" God has a plan of campaign: there are no surprises in His warfare; every hos- tile attack is foreseen and provided for. We are not led by ignorance or by caprice which is confused a hundred times a day. Our God has eyes ! He is Alpha and Omega, and He sees the end from the beginning. He is the first and the last on the field.

And, therefore, with such a leader, trem- bling fear should change into songful courage. It is not enemy's country through which we are marching, and where he alone is familiar with the ground. "We are marching through Emmanuel 's land ! ' ' And we are to step out with a steadfast assurance which is the parent of peace and quiet joy. We are to begin our difficult tasks in the blessed mood of finished achievement. We are to sing doxologies as we go forth to

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battle. We are to give thanks for the bless- ings "we are about to receive," and the thanksgiving must be a vital part of our fighting before even the real struggle begins. I mean that battles must be won in our hearts before they are fought in the open field. Jeremiah must slay his fears before he can subdue priests and kings. He must believe in their overthrow before they can be over- thrown. He must expect it before it will happen. He must see victory on the w"ay, and he must sing the songs of victory because he sees his God. That was the way of Jesus, and it must be our way. Our Lord Jesus gave thanks for miracles before they hap- pened. " Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me!'' When that word was spoken Lazarus was still in the tomb, but with the grace and thanksgiving upon His lips He commanded grim death to loose its bonds, and Lazarus came forth! Jesus be- lieved in the wakefulness of God, and He confidently assumed it at every turning of the way.

XXXVI

FIXEDNESS OF CHAKACTEK

"I have made thee ... an iron pillar.''

Jeb. i. 18.

That great, divine word was spoken to a young prophet who was timidly shrinking from his stern commission. The odds seemed all against him. Principalities and powers were ranked in fierce antagonism. The priesthood was his foe. He had not even the support of the people. "Ah, Lord God, I am a child !'" He felt like a broken twig in the fierce current of a river in flood. He felt like a desert-reed in a tempest. And it was just in that season, when his heart trem- bled before a tremendous task, that the Lord spake to him and said, "Be not dismayed; I have made thee an iron pillar!" The young prophet was divinely equipped for his divine commission. He was to be matched with the hour. His mind was to be established in the truth of God. His heart was to be con-

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firmed in the purpose of God. His will was to be possessed by the holy strength of God. He was to confront all hostilities like an iron pillar -- not breaking, not bending, not yield- ing -- invincible, to the onslaught of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

In all great crises these divinely-fashioned pillars are the salvation of the State. The crises are not always times of war. They may be times of luxury, and apathy, and ease. The grave dangers, maybe, abound in Lotus-land, in heavy and slumbrous after- noons. There are subtle perils on the En- chanted Ground as well as in Vanity Fair. Indeed, a warrior may fight his way through Vanity Fair and collapse on the Enchanted Ground. And so we need stalwart Great- hearts who are invincible in every place and season. We need men and women of abso- lutely settled and vital convictions, who are " rooted and grounded, '' as the Apostle Paul says in his agricultural-architectural figure -- "men and women who are able to stand against the enervating airs from the south and the fierce blasts from the icy north. It is the souls of this order, steady and deter-

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mined at all times, who are the pillars of a people's hopes.

In his hero lecture on Cromwell, Thomas Carlyle has these words : " Perhaps of all the persons in that anti-Puritan struggle, from first to last, the single indispensable one was Cromwell. To see, and dare, and decide, to be a fixed pillar in a welter of uncertainty : a king among men, whether they called him so or not.'' And that is the purposed office and distinction of every soldier of the Lord Jesus Christ, and pre-eminently so in the times through which we are passing. We are to be as fixed pillars among folk who are shaking in uncertainty. We are to steady those who are trembling. We are to be strong enough for timid hearts to lean upon. And this glorious strength we are to receive from our Lord as the gift of His grace. He is the fashioner of this royal character, and in His hands the reed, which is shaken by the wind, is transformed into an iron pillar which cannot be moved.

XXXVII

THE MAKING OF HEROES

"The people that do know their God shall be strong, and shall do exploits/'

Dan. xi. 32.

It is like a strong and noble tree, of which the roots are found in a certain knowledge, and the fruit in heroic deeds. Exploits are not manufactured goods. They are not the deliberate creation of set purpose. They are not works; they are fruits. They are not made; they are grown. They are not the startling surprises of occasional ventures; they are the natural and spontaneous ex- pression of the habits of the soul. A true hero is always heroic. Sometimes his hero- ism is seen by the public, but he is still heroic when the audience has withdrawn. This kind of tree " yields her fruit every month'' -- "that is to say, there is no season when its fruit cannot be found.

If, therefore, a life is to abound in heroic deeds it must have the heroic nature. It

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must "be strong'' if it is to "do exploits/' Every other kind of heroism is superficial, and it will pass with the occasion which ex- cited it. We want a heroism which is heroic in its own secret thoughts. We want heroes who slay dragons in private. We want the royal courage which strangles an unworthy impulse as soon as it is born. We want ex- ploits in sacrificial thinking, magnificent conquests of selfishness in the quiet courts of the soul. A real man must wrestle with lions and bears in the jungle of his own spirit, and there he must register a courage of which the world has no account. All of which means that a man must be a hero in the very pith and fibre of his being. It must be his nature to be heroic.

And how can we deal with a man's nature excepting through his God? How can we make the tree good? The prophet's word gives us the eternal answer -- if a man is to "be strong" he must "know God." And that is not the shallow knowledge of recogni- tion, it is the vital knowledge of communion; it is the partaking of the divine nature. It is the living fellowship which makes a man a branch on the living vine. The life-sap of

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the tree of life pervades every fibre of his being. He lives; yet not he; Christ liveth in him. In such a life all the fruit shall be exploits, and the flavour of the heroic shall be in everything.

XXXYIII

IRREVERENT FEAR

"I fear the Lord, the God of Heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land."

Jonah i. 9.

That is a seemingly sane expression of a very healthy piety. Here is a man contem- plating the stormy heavens and the assem- bled wonders of the tempestuous seas. And his heart bows in reverence and in Godly fear. But is all this really happening? Who is the man? It is Jonah, and at the very mo- ment he is speaking he is in flight from his appointed task. He has been commissioned to go to Nineveh, and he is deliberately turn- ing his course to Tarshish. And he makes a profession of his religious devotion in the very season when he is abandoning his com- mission. Here, then, is a strange encounter. Here is piety and duty in conflict. Here is a song of loyalty wedded to an act of deser- tion. This man makes the ways of trespass

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resound with the notes of praise. This man fears the Lord and shirks his task.

How does such a strange association come about ! What is the origin of this incongru- ous wedding? Can there be such a mongrel as impious piety? Yes, I think there can. Can there be such a perversion as immoral religion? Yes, I think there can. Was Jonah genuine when he declared his fear of the Lord? Yes, I believe he was. How, then, does it come about that a man can be singing a psalm while he is on his way to Tarshish? I think this is the explanation. Jonah's religion was in the realm of feeling, it was not in the realm of action. It centred in the emotions and not in the will. It was a matter of sentiment and not of obedience. It was a question of " "feeling nice" rather than of " doing justly,'' and of " walking humbly with thy God." And that is the strange di- vorce which anyone can successfully accom- plish in his own life. We can cultivate our emotions independently of our wills. Of course the emotions are counterfeit and de- lusive, but there they are, and it is the easiest thing in the world for us to assume that they are genuine, and so at length to believe in

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their reality. There is nothing which is so cunningly deceptive as artificial emotion. We can generate any amount of it, and when we are under its sway we can believe we are having a really good time. The emotional world may be our religious world, and as long as our emotions are lively we can believe ourselves alive.

And thus it comes about that we have indictments like this in the word of God. "Ye have given your tears to the altar, and ye have married the daughter of a strange god." Yes, and their degradation was seen in this, that they were sincere in both. They gave their emotions to the Lord, and they gave their wills to a strange god. When the notorious Pigott, who forged the name of Parnell, the Irish leader, was examined after his suicide, it was found that he was wearing a crucifix next to his skin. He was a living lie and he was hugging a crucifix. The cru- cifix carried his emotions, the lie expressed his will.

And thus it was with Jonah; he feared the Lord and he fled to Tarshish. But what is this fear worth which shirks its appointed task? It is devoid of all saving salt, and it

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adds itself to tlie forces of corruption. "The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life. '' How great is the contrast. One sort of fear is the ally of death, the other makes everything alive. One kills the sense of duty, the other quickens obligation and turns statues into songs.

XXXIX

LITTLE-MINDEDNESS

'"God repented . . . But it displeased Jonah ex- ceedingly, and be was angry."

Jonah iv. 1.

That is a most extraordinary conjunction of circumstances. A great city had repented of its sin, and because of its repentance God had lifted the curse. The dark, menacing cloud had been rolled up like a garment, and the blue sky was unveiled, a radiant symbol of forgiveness, and hope, and peace. But here is a prophet who had predicted that the black cloud would break in terrors of tempest and overwhelming flood, and be- cause events had turned out otherwise, and black sky had been changed into blue, he was displeased exceedingly and he was angry. That is very startling, a man blazing in fury because God's hand had moved in pity and in grace! I should have expected that he would have lifted his heart in gladness, and

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that he would have sung as the lark sings when the tempest passes away. But, no, he was angry because God was merciful, and his anger is all the more bewildering because God had been merciful to him, and had offered him the open door of a second chance. How is it that some people are so much sterner than God? How is it that they are so antagonistic to even a trembling sugges- tion that God's love may go out far beyond our dreams? In my early ministerial life, when I used to dare to speak about anything and everything, I once ventured to preach on the text, "And he went to his own place. '" The reference is, of course, to Judas Iscariot. I cannot recall what I made of the solemn words, and I am not anxious to recall it. I certainly should hesitate to speak about it now. But I do remember one thing. I re- member that, in closing the sermon, I left "our brother Judas" in the hands of God's wonderful mercy, and I quoted the familiar words of Tom Hood :

"Owning his weakness, His evil behaviour, And leaving with meekness His sins to his Saviour."

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When I got back to my vestry a lady fol- lowed me storming with passion. She knew all about the fate of Judas. She could not have spoken with greater assurance if she had stood by the great White Throne and heard the words of final judgment. And what right had I, she said, to, etc., etc., etc., etc. She was " displeased exceedingly.'" I had rested my bewildered mind in the mar- vellous hostel of the divine mercy, and she was very angry.

"The love of God is broader

Than the measure of man's mind, And the heart of the Eternal Is most wonderfully kind/'

But there are some people who seem to prefer the prison of God's law to the com- forting home of God's grace. Or shall I put it like this -- they would fain imprison the grace of God in the fetters of His own law. They would silence the Father in the Judge. They seem to like to live near Sinai, with its thunderings and lightnings, its cloud and its tempest, rather than on the Hill of Beatitudes, with a sight of another hill called Calvary, a green hill just outside the city wall, where the dear Lord was crucified

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Who died to save us all. They have chosen a very shaking and disturbing site for their spiritual home. I prefer a sunnier spot, where grace is abounding, and where there are resources of spiritual hope and comfort which are called "the unsearchable riches of Christ." Yes, I prefer to pitch my tent at a sheltered spot called Expectation Cor- ner, from whence I can look out upon the multitudinous mercies of the Lord, and there is more than enough in that outlook to fill my days with fruitful vision and my nights with happy dreams. And if I see the re- deeming pity of God resting upon anybody on whom there once seemed to rest dark menace and frown, I will certainly not be angry or displeased. Rather shall my mouth be filled with happy laughter, and I will re- joice with the Great Shepherd because he has found another of His sheep which was lost.

XL

WEEK-DAY HOLINESS

"In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, -Holiness unto the Lord."

Zech. xiv. 20.

Not only shall church-bells pour forth their holy intimations, and their divine signifi- cance, but the bells upon the horses shall bear the same testimony in the centres of business and trade. These are holy bells ringing in the midst of common circum- stances. This is a very large and health- giving sense of consecration; it not only per- vades the holy place in the temple, but it in- cludes the outer courts, and it sends forth its purifying energies into the bustling affairs of the street. We are prone to limit the holiness we seek to the floor and circum- stances of the sanctuary; but here is a holi- ness which moves with the swift things of the thoroughfares and distinguishes the couriers of commerce. It is holiness amid the fast life of the ordinary world.

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Now holiness is always a very unimpres- sive weakling if it cannot face and endure the rigours and inclemencies of the street. It has the inevitable paleness of all cloistered virtue. It never gets beyond the wanness of a prison plant. It is an invalid which never goes forth on daring ventures. And it was in reference to this peril of spiritual invalidism that our Lord prayed we might have deliverance: "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world. ' ' That would mean an escape from hardness, and therefore the deprivation of hardihood. But our Lord purposes for His children spiritual lustiness. " Endure hardness as a good sol- dier!" God's trees are able to stand in ex- posed places. They thrive in the blast. They reveal incomparable vigour in the streets of the city, where there are cross-currents, and where rough winds are blowing. All of which means that the holy glory of the divine communion will break into our most com- monplace circumstances, and colour and transfigure them. It expresses itself in the great cardinal virtue of justice, integrity, fair-play, magnanimity and wise compas- sion. It emerges in the pure and noble dig-

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nity of faithful words. It is revealed in all the varied forms of a strong and winsome fraternity. The divine holiness is nnveiled in all that is truly human. The bells upon the horses mingle harmoniously with the melody of the church bells.

Now these bells upon the horses are very attractive heralds of the King. Many men and women, who are never arrested by the church bells, listen to the bells that ring through the busy streets of trade. They would not be impressed if they saw us look- ing very holy in church, but they are im- pressed when they find us scrupulously holy in our business. That kind of music makes very indifferent people stand, and listen, and talk. When I do a bit of business with a man, and I hear the bell-music of divine honour, sounding through the transaction, the strong music makes me think, and may very soon make me pray. And this great kind of consecrated life is possible because the Lord Jesus Christ is so greatly conse- crated to us -- we are not limited in the Lord, and all things are possible in the inexhaus- tible powers of His grace.

XLI

ON THE EDGE OF THE CLIFF

"Altlionnfli <lio iiix tree shall not blossom, neithor shall fruit be in the vine: the labour of tlic olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the lloek shall be cut off from the fold and there shall be no herd in the stall, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

IlAB. iii. 17-18.

There is something very arresting in a man's words when he stands in a hard and difficult place. We hold our breath to catch the testimony of men who are marching through the darkness of the night. I can just remember my old minister, Dr. Enoch Mellor, in the day wlien he suffered the be- reavement of his wife. I was a very young lad, but I vividly remember with what im- patient eagerness I waited to learn what his text would be when he appeared again in the pulpit. And my spirit was awed when he read out the words, "M was dumb, I opened not my mouth, for Tliou didst it. " There was a quiet serene courage as of a man whose

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confidence was sure, for he saw the hosts of the Lord upon the road.

But a man's word and act are always arresting when he is brought to the edge of a cliff. When the material means of life begin to fail! When the fig-tree does not blossom, and there is no fruit in the vine. Or when we lose some faculty or power which has been a vital instrument in our work and existence. How do we adjust our- selves to the change, and what kind of wit- ness is there in our adjustment? Henry Fawcett lost the sight of both eyes when he was out shooting on the moors. He was a highly-gifted man, and he had brilliant poli- tical prospects, and it seemed as if they were all blotted out with the loss of his sight. But as soon as he was led back home he said to his staggering father, who had just heard the news, " Father, it shall make no difference.'' When General Booth suffered a similar loss, and found himself blind in old age, he said to his son, "Bramwell, I have sought to serve the Lord with my sight, now I must serve Him with my blindness." These men, and countless others, have built altars out of ap-

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parent ruins, and they dedicated themselves anew in the hour of their disaster.

It is a wonderful thing to sound God's praises on an apparently broken instrument, and to compel the instrinnent to yield the sweetest music. God does not despise the broken reed, and we must not despise it, even though the breakage be in our own life. In the divine fellowship we can make our very breakages bear witness to His grace, and we can fetch melody out of our disasters. Men's words are always very vital when they breathe a quiet courage amid the smashing blows of calamity. " Though He slay me yet will I trust in Him. ' ' That man \* ' builds a heaven in hell's despair."

God does not leave hard places without His own witness. God has wonderful manna for the desert. There is a mysterious bottle of water near Hagar as she wanders in the wilderness. There are " sustaining herbs'" on the " cliff-edge of misery." The tree of life lifts itself in utterly unsuspected places, and it bears its fruit in every kind of season. Yes, God has food for courage. We are not left in loneliness and negligence when we come to the brink of terrible things. \*\*I

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will never leave thee nor forsake thee/' The Lord of Gethsemane and Calvary will not desert us when we come to the brinks and precipices where death and destruction seem to make their home. '"I have com- manded the ravens to feed thee there.'' " Behold angels came and ministered unto Him."

XLII

BAFFLED TO FIGHT BETTER

"When I fall I shall arise."

Mic. ii. 8.

One of the primary secrets of a victorious life is to learn how to take defeat. We are not to be too much surprised by it. Still less are we to be startled and unnerved by it. We are to be prepared for it, and we are to allow for it in our plan, and we are to regard it as an incident on the way to final triumph. Now no man is ever really defeated who re- fuses to accept defeat. A man refuses de- feat when in the very hour of apparent ad- versity he keeps his eyes glued on coming victory. The darkness never conquers so long as the soul is dreaming of the dawn. A man who can sing in the midnight begins to change his midnight into noon. "And at midnight Paul and Silas sang praises unto God, and the prisoners heard them.''

There is a great word in Ibsen's play, The Emperor Julian. It is spoken by the

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Christian, ApoUinaris. " Verily I say unto you, so long as song rings out above our sor- rows, Satan shall never conquer.'' It is the very truth of holy writ. But if we are thus to make our sorrows subordinate to our songs, if we are to rise above them, if our very defeats are to become the starting points of victorious campaigns, our faith in the risen Lord must be so strong that our Gethsemane is flooded with the glory of Olivet, and even on our Calvary we can rise into " heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

In Christ Jesus we can extract virtue from our defeats. Out of the eater can come forth meat. We can feed our wills upon our disappointments. Angels ' food can be found on fields of apparent disaster. In this great way we can command stones to become bread, and we can emerge, like giants refreshed, from the wilderness and the solitary place.

Our Lord is greatly honoured when we re- fuse defeat. No higher eulogy can the enemy pay to Christian souls than to say that "they know not when they are beaten." A song in the night is one of the most arresting witnesses to the uplifting power of redeem- ing grace.

XLIII

OR rather!

"But now after that ye have known God, or rather are known of Grod."

Gen. iv. 9.

The latter way of stating the believer's wealth was to Paul far the more wonderful. It was a ' ' rather' ' that opened out vistas that were unutterable. Whenever, in any of his letters, he comes in sight of the glory his soul breaks forth in rapturous doxologj" In a certain way Nathanael knew Jesus, but when he discovered that He was known of Jesus the fountains of a holier wonder began to flow. And so it was with Zaccheus; he had a faint elementary knowledge of the Christ, but when it unexpectedly dawned upon him that he was known of Christ springs of joy welled forth which he had never experienced before. But in the loftier and still more sa- cred sense, a sense into which Nathanael and Zaccheus entered at a later day, the Apostle

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Paul gloried in consciousness that lie was known of the redeeming God, who had gone forth among the children of men in the sav- ing ministry of love and grace.

For God's knowledge of Paul was not the mere knowledge of perception, or of dis- crimination, or of dry intelligence, but the knowledge of which love is the organ, the yearning, imparting, hallowing communion of the Father's heart. Perhaps we may get a glimpse of different kinds of knowledge by comparing the mere botanist's knowledge of flowers, and the gardener's knowledge, and the poet's and the lover's. I read a book on the " Scenery of Switzerland"; it was by a geologist. And then I read Words- worth 's sonnets on the same scenery. Each revealed his own type of knowledge, but one entered into secrets of which the other did not dream. If all these ministries of knowl- edge could be combined in one searching, kindling, quickening light, a light that not only reveals but makes alive, a light that con- veys the mystery of life, like a mother's yearning knowledge over her child -- such knowledge might give us some elementary in- sight into God's knowledge of the Apostle

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Paul and of all who hide with him in the shadow of the Almighty.

When, therefore, Paul speaks of God's knowledge of him he does not think of it as dazzling, heavenly rays falling upon him as the beams of a searchlight fall upon a cottage on some bleak and desolate shore. It is the knowledge of a communion -- "perhaps a road more than a light -- a road filled mth divine commerce, even the marvellous riches of redeeming love. In that knowledge are combined the secrets of heavenly wisdom, the gifts of divine love, and the ministries of eternal grace. In that knowledge Paul found his rest, and his hope one day awaken- ing in the likeness of his Lord.

XLIY

SLOW WALKING

"To walk and not faint/'

ISA. xl. 31.

That is the severe testing season, when our going slackens down to a slow walk. There is an exhilaration in movement when life speeds along, and its general interests are vivid, and we have congenial and kindling companionship. When the sleigh-horses are galloping, and we are just flying through the air, how the sleigh-bells ring out their merry peal ! Bees hum when they are on the wing ! And so it is in human life. It is easy to sing when we can mount up with wings as eagles. We come to the supreme test when the swift movement is over, when the merry pace is ended, when the stimulating fellowship is withdrawn, and we come to the slow walk, and something very vital seems to have been lost. It is a happy attainment to mount ud

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with wings as eagles; it is a noble victory to walk and not to faint.

Sometimes, even when we pass out of the brilliant hours, our busy pace is the soul's defence. Here is a woman nursing her loved one. She is going from morning to night. And then there comes a day when her loving service is no longer required. The sick one has slipped away from her and has recovered immortal health in the healing presence of the Lord. The swift, absorbing pace of the loving nurse is changed into an awfully slow walk when there seems nothing to do. We say one to another, " There will be a reac- tion!'' or we whisper, " There will be a col- lapse!" It is evidently a great testing time when the saving pace is almost halted, and the ministering servant comes to the hour of folded hands. Can she walk and not faint?

Here is a man who has been wakened to the knowledge of his Saviour. He wakens amid the excitement of a great revival. There is the exhilaration of a multitude. There is the stimulus of music whose volume is as the sound of many waters. He goes night after night, and the unusual and glo- rious pace of everything keeps his spirit on

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the run. Then the day comes when the phe- nomenal season is over. The extraordinary stimulants are withdrawn. ' ' The tumult and the shouting dies; the captain and the kings depart.'' The surroundings become quite normal, and he settles down to the slow walk on the ordinary road. That is the testing time. Can we walk and not faint?

That man is not strong who needs the fierce pace, nor is he strong who only reveals his strength in fits of convulsion. He is the strong man who can walk slowly, and under a heavy weight, without staggering. And this triumph is the promised victoiy of grace, and the grace is surely given to those who "wait upon the Lord.'' Grace offers strength for the trudge on the long, grey road. Nay, grace offers more than strength, it offers Companionship. It is not satisfied with the gift of power; its gift is a Friend, and He brings His own cordials and balms to our sorrows, and His own bread to our hungry needs. " They that wait upon the Lord shall walk and not faint."

XLV

THE EAGLE LIFE

"They shall mount up with wings as eagles."

ISA. xl. 31.

I HAVE been reading a recently published Life of Roosevelt and I think that the out- standing sentence in the book is one spoken by Mrs. Roosevelt when the last of her four boys had enlisted in the service of his coun- try. Mr. Roosevelt was just a little daunted when the last, and youngest, left for the Front; but Mrs. Roosevelt said to him, " You must not bring up your children like eagles, and expect them to act like sparrows." It is a royal word : it links itself with some of the great sayings of the Roman mothers, which are still ringing through the years. Her boys had been created for great ven- tures, and when the call came they went forth as naturally as eagles when they leave their eerie for hazardous flights. And Mrs. Roosevelt's word unveils the

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true ideal of discipline and training. We are to rear our boys and girls in such largeness and quality of being that they will instinc- tively do the big thing because they are made and moulded in big ways. They are not to turn to the path of venture with trembling and reluctant choice, but because it is their nature to do it. They are eagle in spirit and they are to take to the vast ways as naturally as they breathe.

And this, too, is the teaching of our Lord. In all His teaching the primary emphasis is on the state of being, and only secondarily upon the issues in conduct. Create an eagle, and you may look for eagle flights. Make the tree good and good fruit will appear in sure sequence. The teaching is expressed in many different ways. "Ye are of your father the devil." Christ lays his finger upon the very substance of their souls, the fibres of their nature, "'the works of your father are absolutely sure" What is in will come out. We cannot weave fine robes from rotten fibre. We cannot have pure streams from foul springs. We cannot have exploits from cowards. The sparrow will not take the path of the eagle.

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There are three verbs of very different degrees of value. There is the verb \*Ho have.'' What a swaggering place it fills in the speech of men! It denominates a man's material possessions. And there is the verb ''to do," a word of much more vital signifi- cance. It dominates a man's activity and services. Thirdly, there is the verb 'Ho be," which is incomparably more vital than the other two. It denominates the essential na- ture and character of a man, and its contents reveal his inherent work. Not in what we have, and in what we do, but in what we are is found the real clue to the value of our life. Are we sparrows or eagles? Who is the father of our spirits? Are we partakers of the divine nature? What am I, who am I? a child of dust or a son of God? It is the glory of redeeming grace to change the char- acter and quality of our beings. We can be re-created in Christ Jesus. We can be en- dued with the powers of endless life. We can have the eagle spirit, and then we shall "mount up with wings as eagles, we shall run and not be weary : we shall walk and not faint."

XLYI

THE STRENGTH OF THE INSIGNIFICANT

"Fear not, thou worm Jacob ... I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument with teeth."

IsA. iv. 15.

It would be scarcely possible to find two images in more violent contrast than these. On the one hand is a worm, which a harrow can tear in pieces. And on the other hand is an instrument with teeth, a thing which can break other things in pieces. That is the contrast -- a worm, soft, helpless and trodden on; and an instrument with teeth, firm, positive, impressive, ascendant! And the Lord God is to change the one into the other. The commanding word is spoken of a people, but the promise is equally and gloriously true as addressed to the individ- ual. Our God can endow the weakling with strength and character, by which he shall be able to write his services in deep, clear letters upon the life of his generation. He can

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transform the worm, and possess it with a force by which it shall leave its mark upon the fellowship of the race.

The miracle has been witnessed ten thou- sand times. The life that appeared very- weak and helpless has been marvellously converted into impressive strength. I sup- pose that if we could trace the influence of the slave Onesimus we should see that it had made deep marks on the life of his master Philemon. Many a noble lineament in the character of Philemon was probably due to the strong but unconscious pressure of his now transformed and consecrated slave. The splendid spiritual loyalty of the servant etched many a fine line in the countenance of the saint. And if we knew everything I won- der what we should see of the influence of the transformed John Mark upon the Apostle Paul. Mark had been a weakling, so weak indeed that Paul wished to discard him as unfitted for the high honours and tremendous tasks of the missionary of the Cross. But the Lord laid an invigorating hold on the worm, John Mark, and I am wondering what distinguishing lines he en- graved upon the glorious character of the

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Apostle who was once willing to cast him away!

This transforming power is, in Christ Jesus, the promised and privileged posses- sion of everybody. Thomas Carlyle wrote in one of his essays: "The genuine use of gun- powder I believe to be that it makes all men alike tall." Yes, gunpowder makes the little Japanese the height of the British grenadier ! And the marvellous power of the Holy Spirit, which transformed mere worms into magnificent instruments of grace, makes wonderful work of small and commonplace folk. " Things that are not" are used to " bring to nought things that are!" Mere nothings are alive with omnipotence. The slenderest wire becomes the channel of the electric current. The humblest slave enters into the fellowship of Jesus Christ. "Ye shall receive power when the Holy Ghost is come upon you." That is the transforming Minister and He is every day engaged on His miraculous work. "I know not the man ! ' ' There 's the worm ! ' ' When they saw the boldness of Peter ! ' ' There 's the thresh- ing instrument with teeth! Pentecost had been!

XLYII

DUNGEONED HEARTS

"Is it nothing to you, all that ye pass by?"

Lam. i. 12.

Great things were happening, but these folks seemed to know nothing about it. God was on the field in mighty movement, but these folks were indifferent. They seemed to be living in another world, and the other world was a self-created prison. There are dungeoned hearts. The dungeon is not built in a day, but every day we may add to the thickness of its walls and strengthen its power of imprisonment. The walls are built from the secretions of selfishness. A selfish soul creates its own bondage. I would say that it exudes a deposit which seals up its own sjnupathies and discernments. Its re- lationships are checked and contracted more and more, and its fine communions are de- stroyed. At last, all the active sensitive power of the life are shut up in a heart of

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stone; they have become petrified; they are numb. They have no more feeling than statues, they do not hear the clamant and pitiful cries of the streets.

Herbert Spencer devised a sort of stop- ping with which he filled his ears when he wished to shut himself away from a company and retire from any part in their conversa- tion. His biography offers abundant evi- dence that he was equally successful in more costly forms of self -imprisonment. There was a strange contraction of his sympathies, and his relationship with the pathetic needs of man was more fretful and irritable than helpful. In some directions he acquired a perilous benumbment. But then this is a peril which besets us all. We can dungeon our hearts until the great cries of the world cannot reach us. Men can be "made to stumble" and we bum not. Indeed, we do not hear the wails of men. Many a cry may come from many a Macedonia, but they beat against a stony heart when they ought to be received on sensitive heart-strings which thrill with eager and sympathetic response.

In all such experiences the soul is suffering a deadly contraction. In dungeon lives the

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soul is like a shrivelling kernel, becoming smaller and smaller in its hard encasement. And yet the supreme purpose of life is to grow a great soul, and to help other souls to grow theirs. Souls with large communings are like spacious harbours, offering hospi- table commerce to the laden liners which come from the near and distant parts of mankind. Our souls are purposed to have big relationships with God and man. Aye, with God ! But the dungeoned heart ceases to have connnunion with God. It does not heed. It does not hear. ' ' I stretched out my hands to you all the day long, and ye would not hear.'' We cannot selfishly build a wall of stone between us and our fellows and maintain a living communion with our God. Dying sympathies and vital devotions can- not dwell together in one heart. If our in- terest in humanity is shrinking, we cannot have a large and growing intimacy with God. The dungeoned heart shuts out both God and man. "If a man love not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?''

XLYIII

THE SOUND SLEEP OF THE COWAKD

"He lay and was fast asleep."

Jonah i. 5.

"He was fast asleep,'' And yet that man was in flight from a duty which had been laid upon him by the Lord. He was travel- ling in the way of rebellion. He had shaken himself free from life 's sanctities and he had turned his back upon the great white throne. And yet he could sleep, and his sleep was like infants' slumbers, soft and light. And he could do this while a tempest was shriek- ing across the deep. One might have ex- pected that he would never sleep a wink. Surely his conscience would be thundering in his soul, and his agitated being would give his body no rest. Does not the Divine Neme- sis chase a deserter, and does it not prevent him from pitching his tent in quiet places and lying down in innocent sleep " Can bad men sleep while dutiful men are awake at

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hazardous posts? Yes, that seems to be the significance of the narrative. Jonah was a rebel, and yet he slept soundly in the unhal- lowed way of desertion.

Our great dramatists have usually trou- bled the sleep of their villains. The ill deeds of the villains march with them into their tent and chamber and goad them into fearful dreams. It was so with the Duke of Clar- ence : ' ' Oh, I have passed a miserable night ! ' ' It was so with Richard III: "'I did but dream ! O coward conscience, how thou dost afflict me!'' It was so with Lady Macbeth: "'Here's the smell of the blood still!'' And so it was with all Shakespeare's villains. Their sleep is troubled : the sword of judg- ment gleams through their dreams. They have followed evil ways of their own devis- ing, and they have lost the precious gift of restful sleep.

And yet I think it is a worse penalty when we have sinned and retained the power of sleep, when we can lie down in undisturbed rest as though we had just returned from a healthy walk in paths of righteousness. There is something terrible in the judgment which rests upon a man when he can sin and

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not be troubled, when be can leave bis ap- pointed post and go to sleep like one wbo bas spent a noble day in splendid vigilance. Jonab was a coward, and be slept soundly wbile better men were awake,

Tbe most appalling judgment of sin bas been inflicted wben we become "'past feel- ing.'' Every sin works like a drug, and continued sin tends to stupefaction. Tbe more we sin, tbe less we care. It is tbe subtlety of sin to create delusive conditions, and a very fatal part of tbe delusion is a deadly sense of contentment. We can lie and be comfortable. We can desert and sit bappily at tbe feast. But it is tbe comfort of tbe opium-eater, it is tbe sleep of tbe be- numbed, it is tbe restf ulness of deatb. Let us clearly understand tbe possibility tbat lies in our bands; we can live wickedly into a de- based contentment; we can drug ourselves into apatby. But bow wretcbed is tbe con- tentment! How tragically small is our world ! Our comfort is drowsiness mistaken for bappiness : it is tbe foetid air of a tiny room mistaken for tbe vital air of tbe moun- tains. " ' Tbou say est, I am ricb, and knowest

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not that thou art wretched and miserable anc poor and blind!''

There is no rest to compare with the rest that is found in the Lord. There is no peace like unto the peace of the Lord which passeth all understanding. There is no comfort which is fit to be named beside the consola- tions of the Spirit. There is no sleep like the sleep which God giveth to His beloved.

THE END

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