

Jacob's Waking Exclamation

A Sermon

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“And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord in this place; and I knew it not.”—[Genesis 28:16](#).

THROUGH his own foolish wisdom Jacob had been compelled to leave his father's house. Perhaps we are scarcely able to judge of the sorrowful feelings which this banishment would beget in his soul. Here we go from one Christian home to another. If we leave the parental roof we may hope still to sojourn where there is an altar to the Most High God, and where we can still unite with worshippers who fear his name. Not so in Jacob's case. The family of which he was a member, was the only household in the land that worshipped God; or if there were some few others, probably they were unknown to one another, and as far as Jacob's knowledge would go, he was fully assured that all the way from the place where he left his father until he arrived at Padan-Aram, he would not meet with a single person who feared the God of heaven. He was passing from one oasis to another across a burning sand. We may compare him to a swallow, which for the first time leaves our shore to find no rest until it has passed with weary wing the long leagues of purple sea. You must know too that the prevalent notion of the heathens among whom Jacob dwelt was that their gods had only local authority; that for instance, the god of Gaza was not the god of Askelon; the god of Beersheba would not be the God of Bethel. Their deities were gods of the hills and not of the valleys, and it may be but just possible that from great connection with the heathen, Jacob may have failed clearly to recognize the fact that his father's God was not like their gods; so in leaving his father's house there may have been this troublous thought rising in his mind, that he was also leaving his father's God; that now his prayers would scarcely be heard; that he should be an alien from Jehovah's land, and cut off from the congregation of the blessed. Jacob was not at this time a full-grown believer, he was but a babe in grace; his ready yielding to his mother's craft proves his want of advanced piety; and it is no trifling thing for a weakling to be taken from the nurture of home and cast alone upon a world unfriendly and ungenial. Happy was it for the fugitive that his Lord's compassion tracked his way even when he knew not that God was there. Blessed was the dream which assured him that Jehovah's wing had covered his stony bed as really as it guarded his softer couch in Isaac's tent. The truth seemed to surprise him, but O how sweetly it must have yielded consolation! “Surely,” said he, and he opened his eyes to new light as though he knew that

the night of distress had passed, and that a day of confidence had begun—"Surely God is in this place, and *I knew it not.*"

I would address you this morning upon a topic which may perhaps be as useful to us as to Jacob, if God the Holy Ghost shall but enable me to preach, and you to hear. Oh thou that art everywhere, be speedily now; be thou in this place, and may we know it, and tremble in thy presence. I shall speak on three points; first, *the omnipresence of God*—the doctrine of it; secondly, *a recognition of that omnipresence*, or the spirit which is necessary in order to discover the presence of God; and thirdly, *the results of a recognition of this omnipresence*, or the practice which is sure to spring out of the conviction that God is everywhere.

I. First, then, THE DOCTRINE OF GOD'S OMNIPRESENCE. He is everywhere.

In the early Christian Church, there was a wicked heresy, which for a long while caused great disturbance, and exceeding much controversy. There were some who taught that Satan, the representative of evil, was of co-equal power with God, the representative of good. These men found it necessary to impugn the doctrine of God's universal power. Their doctrine denied the all-pervading presence of God in the present world, and they seemed to imagine that we should of necessity have to get out of the world of nature altogether, before we could be in the presence of God. Their preachers seemed to teach that there was a great distance between God and his great universe; they always preached of him as the King who dwelt in the land that was very far off; nay, they almost seemed to go as far as though they had said, "Between us and him there is a great gulf fixed, so that neither can our prayers reach him, nor can the thoughts of his mercy come down to us." Blessed be God that error has long ago been exploded, and we as Christian men, without exception, believe that God is as much in the lowest hell as in the highest heaven, and as truly among the sinful hosts of mortals, as among the blissful choir of immaculate immortals, who day without night praise his name. We believe that he filleth heaven and earth, and hell; that he is in the very space which his creation seems to claim, for creatures do not displease God; and even the space which is occupied by his handiworks is still filled with himself. The rocky bowels of the unsearched-out depths are full of God; where the sea roars, or where the solid granite leaves no interstice or vacuum, even there is God; not only in the open place, and in the chasm, but penetrating all matter, and abounding everywhere in all, and filling all things with himself. "In him we live and move, and have our being, and in him are all things, and by him all things consist." Yet, while we receive the doctrine, it is well sometimes to enlarge upon it, not so much for sake of argument, as to make the truth stand out the more clearly to our minds' eye. Let us remember, then, that in the three kingdoms God is everywhere; in the kingdoms of nature, of providence, and of grace, we may say of each spot, "Surely God is in this place."

He is everywhere in the fields of *nature*. Go if you please to secluded parts; walk through the forest-glades where the virgin moss presents a delicate carpet for human foot; where the deer starts up affrighted by the intrusion of an unexpected visitor; where the wild bird

scarcely flies from you because as yet it is not familiar with the cruel face of man. As you walk among the intertwisted boughs, the natural arches of God's own temple which He Himself hath builded, without toil of hewer of stone or dauber of clay, if you be a true Christian you will be compelled to say—

“The calm retreat, the silent shade,
With prayer and praise agree;
And seem by thy sweet bounty made
For those who follow thee.”

You will solemnly exclaim, “Surely God is in this place.” Nor will you be alone in your thought, for every waving flower-bell will bear witness to the fact, and the insect humming in the breeze, and the glossy beetle creeping among the sere leaves that lie beneath your feet, relics of many a winter's slaughter among the verdant groves, and the birds that are warbling among the trees will every one of them bear witness that surely God is there. In fact, if there be one spot more than another where the consciousness of God's presence will strike the heart of the awakened man, it will be where other men are not but where he himself is alone the only worshipper of God, save as a creation joins his strain. But you must remember too that if you go to the haunt of men, where they crowd and congregate together, that God is there. Go to one of the abutments of London Bridge and stand a moment gazing at the throng as it harries by, thousands and tens of thousands in an hour, on, on they sweep—the riches of Nations grinding the roadway, and multitudes of men, women, and children wearing away the granite pavement. God is there, though forgotten by most of them who are thinking only of the world and of its toils, forgetting that there is one above them who looks on all, and one within them who inhabiteth all space. Let not you and I forget, but let us say, “God is there; in every drop of blood that is circulating through the veins of the passengers; in every flush that is on the cheek; in every pulse that throbs or breath that heaves.” The very fact that they are fed and clothed and are in existence will bear you witness that surely God is in that place; and thoughts of awe may soon come crowding o'er your mind, and you may find yourself as much alone with God in crowded Cheapside, or in the thronging Borough or noisy Whitechapel, as though you were far away alone on the wild prairie, or in some desert of Africa where foot-print of man could not be perceived. Verily God is in this place. Then fly with the white sail across the deep, and as you skim the foaming billows, if your soul be right within you, you will say, “Surely God is in this place.” And when the storm comes on and the thunder rolls like drums in the march of the God of armies, and the skies seem to be wounded with the flashing of his glittering spear in the tremendous lightning, you may say in the midst of the storm as your bark reels and rocks, and is tossed like a sea-bird upon the billow—“Surely he holdeth the waters in the hollow of his hand, and God is here.” And when you have landed, and calm comes on, and the fair white clouds sail slowly through the air, sailing gallantly in the abated breath of the wind,

when everything comes out all fresh and green from the last shower, and there is a clear shining after the rain and the storm, and profound peace after the noisy hurricane, you may say then with refreshed enjoyment—"Surely God is in this place." But I need not continue in such a strain as this. Ye shall go where ye will; ye shall look to the most magnificent of God's works, and ye shall say—"God is here, upon thine awful summit, O hoary Alp! in thy dark bosom, O tempest-cloud! and in thy angry breath, O devastating hurricane!" "He makes the clouds his chariot and rides upon the wings of the wind." God is here. And so in the most minute—in the blossom of the apple, in the bloom of the tiny field-flower, in the sea-shell which has been washed up from its mother-deep, in the sparkling of the mineral brought up from darkest mines, in the highest star, or in yon comet that startles the nations and in its fiery chariot soon drives afar from mortal ken,—great God, thou art here, thou art everywhere. From the minute to the magnificent, in the beautiful and in the terrible, in the fleeting and in the lasting, thou art here, though sometimes we know it not.

Let us enter now the kingdom of *Providence*, again to rejoice that God is there. My brethren, let us walk the centuries, and at one stride of thought let us traverse the earliest times when man first came out of Eden, driven from it by the fall. Then this earth had no human population, and the wild tribes of animals roamed it at their will. We know not what this island was then, save that we may suspect it to have been covered with dense forests, and perhaps inhabited by ferocious beasts; but God was here, as much here as he is to-day; as truly was he here then, when no ear heard his foot fall as he walked in the cool of the day in this great garden,—as truly here as when to-day the stings of ten thousand rise up to heaven, blessing and magnifying his name. And then when our history began—turn over its pages and you will read of cruel invasions and wars which stained the soil with blood, and crimsoned it a foot-deep with clotted gore; you will read of civil wars and intestine strifes between brother and brother, and you will say—"How is this? How was this permitted? "But if you read on and see how by tumult and bloody strife Liberty was served, and the best interest of man, you will say, "Verily, God was here." History will conduct you to awful battle-fields; she will bid you behold the garment rolled in blood; she will cover you with the thick darkness of her fire and vapor of smoke; and as you hear the clash of arms, and see the bodies of your fellow men, you say, "The devil is here;" but truth will say, "No, though evil be here, yet surely God was in this place though we knew it not; all this was needful after all—these calamities are but revolutions of the mighty wheels of Providence, which are too high to be understood, but are as sure in their action as though we could predict their results." Turn if you will to what is perhaps a worse feature in history still, and more dreary far—I mean the story of persecutions. Read how the men of God were stoned and were sawn asunder; let your imaginations revive the burnings of Smithfield, and the old dungeons of the Lollards' Tower; think how with fire and sword, and instruments of torture, the fiends of hell seemed determined to extirpate the chosen seed. But remember as you read the

bloodiest tragedy, as your very soul grows sick at some awful picture of poor tortured human flesh, that verily God was in that place, scattering with rough hands, it may be, the eternal seed, bidding persecution be as the blast which carries seed away from some fruit-bearing tree that it may take root in distant islets which it had never reached unless it had been carried on the wings of the storm. Thou art, O God, even where man is most in his sin and blasphemy; thou art reigning over rebels themselves, and over those who seem to defy and to overturn thy will. Remember, always, that in history, however dreadful may seem the circumstances of the narrative, surely God is in that place. You may say that yon nation depended for its welfare upon a woman's will, or that its destiny hinged upon a child's life; that this dynasty rose and fell at the will of some far-famed adventurer; that another nation was rocked to its very center by the fanaticism of a foolish pretender. We will grant you all this, for who denies the second cause when he vindicates the first?—but let me say, more present is God than even man himself; more truly is *he* King, than the kings of the earth; more certainly is the Lord a man of war than even warriors themselves. In everything in the page of history, from the moment of its first unrolling till the last of the seven seals shall be loosed, and the book shall be read out before men and angels, you will have to say, “God was in it all.” But you will please to recollect that while this is true of history in the mass, it is also true of it in the detail, and with reference to yourself and your own lot—God is there. You had a fire by which you lost your all, but God was there. By some fortunate circumstances, as you call it, you rose in life—God was there—but by a reverse, as you name it, you soon fell back again—God was there. There has nothing happened to you but what has been under his knowledge, his superintendence, and his ordination. Do not, I pray you, forget yourself while you are thinking of nations and of kingdoms, for it is as true of a gnat that God supports it in life as it is of an angel, and God is as certainly in the creeping of the aphid upon a rosebud as in the tumble of an avalanche from the mountain. He is in all things. He is in you; he is in your circumstances to-day. Take the thought home, and may God grant that it may have its due effect upon your minds. In Providence, then, we may say, “Surely God is in this place.”

But we now come to the third great kingdom of which the truth holds good in a yet more evident manner—the kingdom of *grace*. In yonder province of conviction, where hard-hearted ones are weeping penitential tears, where proud ones who said they would never have this man to reign over them are bowing their knees to kiss the Son lest he be angry; where rocky, adamantine consciences, have at last begun to feel; where obdurate, determined, incorrigible sinners, have at last turned from the error of their ways—God is there, for were he not there, none of these holy feelings would ever have arisen, and the cry would never have been heard—“I will arise and go unto my Father.” And in yonder province which shines under a brighter sun, where penitents with joy look to a bleeding Saviour, where sinners leap to lose their chains, and oppressed ones sing because their burdens have rolled

away; where they who were just now sitting in darkness and in the valley of the shadow of death have seen the great light—God is in that place, or faith had never come and hope had never arisen. And there in yonder province, brighter still, where Christians lay their bodies upon the altar as living sacrifices, where men with self-denying zeal think themselves to be nothing and Christ to be all in all; where the missionary leaves his kindred that he may die among the swarthy heathen; where the young man renounces brilliant prospects that he may be the humble servant of Jesus; where yonder work-girl toils night and day to earn her bread rather than sell her soul; where yonder toiling laborer stands up for the rights of conscience against the demands of the mighty; where yonder struggling believer still holds to God in all his troubles, saying—“Though he slay me yet will I trust in him”—God is in that place, and he that has eyes to see will soon perceive his presence there. Where the sigh is heaving, where the tear is falling, where the song is rising, where the desire is mounting, where love is burning, hope anticipating, faith abiding, joy o’erflowing, patience suffering, and zeal abounding, God is surely present. In the temple of the human heart, consecrating it unto himself. In all these three kingdoms then, my brethren, let us never forget that “God is in this place.”

I shall turn from this point when I have just made the remark that we are still so apt to think that God is not here. You remember that splendid picture which God himself gives—“Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool.” You have seen, perhaps, the drawings of those wonderful statues which amid the ruined temples of Egypt, lift their heads into the very clouds. They sit upon their awful thrones continually, men of common stature reach no higher than the pedestals of their feet, while these gigantic ones tower upwards into the very sky. Now consider these to be but a minute representation, and let the colossal figure of Deity rise before your mind. Heaven is his throne, and there he sits; earth is his footstool, and here are his feet; while higher than angels fly is the head of the All-glorious One. We cannot comprehend the Lord at all, but we may think of him as he represents himself to us; he does it, you know, under human representations—let us then get the human representation into our mind. He is greater than the greatest thought—his head higher than heaven; his feet lower than the deepest hell; earth his footstool; heaven his throne. Do not let us think that he is ever absent here, for if his face be seen in heaven, the skirts of his garments are trailing over the whole earth. We are never at a distance from him; he is here, there, and everywhere; with you and with me, very present at every time and in every circumstances. I cannot bring out the truth more clearly than that; I therefore leave it to pass on to the second head.

II. BUT HOW ARE WE TO RECOGNISE THIS PRESENCE OF GOD? “What is the Spirit which shall enable us constantly to feel it? The presence of electricity is very soon discovered by those bodies which are susceptible of its action. The presence, for instance, of iron in a vessel is very soon detected and discovered by the magnetic needle. There is an

affinity between them. That carnal men should not discover God here I do not wonder at: that they should even say, "There is no God," is no marvel, because there is nothing in their nature akin to him, and therefore they do not perceive him. They lack all the affinity that can discover his presence.

To commence, then. If you would feel God's presence, you must have an *affinity to his nature*. Your soul must have the spirit of adoption, and it will soon find out its Father. Your spirit must have a desire after holiness, and it will soon discover the presence of Him who is holiness itself. Your mind must be heavenly, and you will soon detect that the God of Heaven is here. The more nearly we become like God, the more sure shall we be that God is where we are. To a man who has reached the highest stage of sanctification the presence of God becomes a more sure fact than the presence of anything else beside. In fact, he may even get to such a state that he will look upon the fields, streets, inhabitants and events of the world as a dream, a passing background, while the only real thing to him will be the unseen God which his new nature so clearly manifests to him, that his faith becomes the evidence of things not seen, the substance of things which sense cannot perceive. Likeness to God is first necessary for the clear perception of his presence. Next, there must be a *calmness of spirit*. God was in the place when Jacob came there that night, but he did not know it, for he was alarmed about his brother Esau; he was troubled, and vexed, and disturbed. He fell asleep, and his dream calmed him; he awoke refreshed; the noise of his troubled thoughts was gone and heard the voice of God.

"In solemn silence of the mind,
My heaven and there my God I find."

More quiet we want, more quiet, more calm retirement, before we shall well be able, even with spiritual minds, to discover the sensible presence of God.

But then, next Jacob had in addition to this calm of mind—a *revelation of Christ*. That ladder, as I have said in the exposition, was a picture of Christ, the way of access between man and God. You will never perceive God in nature, until you have learned to see God in grace. We have heard a great deal about going up from nature to nature's God. Impossible! A man might as well attempt to go from the top of the Alps to heaven. There is still a long gulf between nature and God to the natural mind. You must first of all perceive God incarnate in the flesh of Christ, before you will perceive God in the creation which he has made. We have heard a great deal about men worshipping in the forest glades, who never frequent the sanctuary of the saints. You have heard much, but there was little truth in it. There is often great sound where there is much emptiness, and you will frequently find that those men who talk most of this natural worship are those who do not worship God at all. God's works are too gross a medium to allow the light, and the road to him is a rugged one if we go the way of the creatures. But when I see Christ, I see God's new and living way, between my

soul and my God, most clear and pleasant. I come to my God at once, and finding him in Christ, I find him everywhere else besides.

More than this, no man will perceive God, wherever he may be, unless he knows that God has made a *promise* to be with him and is able by faith to look to the fulfillment of it. In Jacob's case God said, "I will be with thee whithersoever thou goest, and I will not leave thee." Christian, have you heard the same? Is the twenty-third Psalm the song of your faith? "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for thou art with me." Have you consciously perceived that though men forsook you, God stood with you? Could you join the song of one who said,

"When trouble like a gloomy cloud
Has gathered thick and thunder'd loud,
He near my side hath always stood,
His loving-kindness O how good!"

Then to you it will not be difficult to perceive the presence of God. You will in fact look upon it as so real that when you open your eyes in the morning, you will look for him with praise, and when you close them at night, it will only be that you may repose under the shadow of his wings. I wish we could get back to the spirit of the old Puritans, they believed in a present God always. We speculate about the laws of nature, we are always talking about organic matter and so on, but with them it was God and God alone. We look to the barometer about the rain, and very properly in some sense, they looked to God, and they prayed God either to stay the bottles of heaven, or to pour down the refreshing floods upon the thirsty earth. We are talking about attraction, finding out the laws by which the worlds are governed, the Puritans looked to the Lawgiver rather than to the law, and to the present power of God manifest in his present hand, rather than to any power which some dream may exist in matter itself, or in the laws of matter. Oh to feel God everywhere, in the little as well as in the great, in our risings up and in our sittings down, in our goings forth and in our comings in! I can conceive of no life more blessed, and of no Spirit more akin to the spirit of the glorified, than the mind and heart of the man who lives in God, and knows and feels that God is ever present with him.

III. This brings me, very briefly, to one or two concluding remarks upon the PRACTICAL RESULTS OF A FULL RECOGNITION IN THE SOUL OF THIS DOCTRINE OF GOD'S OMNIPRESENCE.

One of the first things would be to check our inordinate levity. Cheerfulness is a virtue: levity a vice. How much foolish talking, how much jesting which is not convenient, would at once end if we said, "Surely God is in this place." The next time you have been indulging in mirth—I mean not innocent mirth, but that which is connected with uncleanness, or with any sort of ill—think you see a finger lifted up, and you hear a voice saying, "Surely God is in this place." Let your recreation be free from sin; let your amusements be such that

you can enjoy them while God looks on. If, too, we felt that God was in this place, how much oftener should we talk of him and of Christ. This afternoon what will many of you talk of? Sunday afternoon talk is generally a great difficulty to some professors. They do not like to go right down into what they think worldly conversation, so they generally talk about ministers. They consider *that* to be a spiritual subject; and generally, this talk about ministers is more wicked than talk about the devil himself, for I had rather you should speak religiously concerning Satan, than irreligiously concerning even the angels of the Churches. There is one tale retailed about this minister and another tale about the other, and the conversation ministers no edification. If they heard an angel say, "God is in this place," the afternoon of the day of rest would be spent in much more profitable conversation. But suppose that I have some here, to-day, who have been lately exposed to personal danger and peril; brethren, do you not think if in the midst of the storm, or in time of disease, you had heard a voice saying, "Surely God is in this place," you would have been perfectly at rest? The noxious air grows pure if he be there. The lightning cannot scathe, or if they scathe 'tis bliss; the storm cannot devour, nor can the hungry deep engulf; or, if they do, 'tis bliss if God be there: what need have you at any time to fear? What is your nervousness but wickedness, when the Eternal God is your certain refuge? A Christian in alarm at in the hand of his God, surely he distrusts his Father, and doubts the heart of infinite love! "God is in this place though I knew it not." I speak to some, too, who are in great poverty. You will go home to-day, and there are bare walls. Perhaps the seat you sit upon hath many of the rushes torn away and the table will be but very scantily furnished, and very homely at the best. "Well," but you will say, "surely God is in this place." What comfort for you! You may remember the old Christian's exclamation as you sit down for a blessing, "What, all this, and my God present with me!" Better this, and feel his presence, than be possessed of the best of the world's dainties and not know that he is here. Perhaps you have today some sore trouble at home. There is a Christian wife who has to go home to an ungodly husband, or sons and daughters who have to go home to a household which is anything but what it should be. Do not be afraid to go home, and as you cross the threshold, say, "Surely God is in this place." I think as John Bunyan passed over the threshold of the dungeon of Ledford Jail, if he could have known that he should be twelve years there, but that in those twelve years he would write the "Pilgrim's Progress," he would have said, "Surely God is in this place." And you, if you are called to enter a den such as Bunyan called his dungeon, can say, "Surely God is in this place," and you make it a palace at once. Some of you, too, are in very deep affliction. You are driven to such straits that you do not know where things will end, and you are in great despondency to-day. Surely God is in that place. As certain as there was one like unto the Son of God in the midst of the fiery furnace with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, so surely on the glowing coals of your affliction the heavenly foot-prints may be seen, for surely God is in this place. You are called to-day to some extraordinary duty, and you do not feel

strong enough for it. Go to it, for "Surely God is in this place." You have to address an assembly this afternoon for the first time. Surely God is in that place. He will help you. The arm will not be far off on which you have to lean, the divine strength not be remote to which you have to look. "Surely God is in this place."

But were I to multiply pictures, I might not describe the condition of one-tenth of my hearers. Let me rather leave it to you or to the blessed Spirit of God to make an application to your own lot, and you shall find this to be a very well of comfort springing up with clear transparent water of life, "Surely God is in this place."

And lastly, if we always remembered that God was where we are, what reverence would it inspire when we are in his house, in the place particularly and specially set apart for his service! I do not think we always feel in the assembly of the saints as we should do. It is not the place that is holy;—holiness cannot attach itself to anything but moral virtues and to intelligent beings. There cannot be holy bricks and holy stones,—the thing is absolutely impossible; but where two or three are met together in Christ's name, there is He in the midst of them. He is here, and yet how many come out of form and fashion. Some few think rather more of the dress they come in than they do of what they shall hear, or of what Spirit they shall come in. Oh! be dressed, stay not for another pin, but stay for another prayer it thou wilt, that thy soul may be dressed, for often thou comest with thy body decked out, but with thy soul naked before God for want of preparation in coming up to his house. And when we sit here, what thoughts come in! What buyers and sellers transact business here! How have some of you been looking to the cares of housewives, and some of you been busy with your shops! At home you do not take the shutters down on the Sunday, but you keep them up; I wish you would keep them up in your souls. You do not go into the field and look after the crops, but some men bring the crops into the house of God and look at them there. You would not take down the ledger and cast up your accounts to-day, (though some do that) but at the same time you have a ledger in your brains, and are busy with that when you ought to be thinking of your God. And I have noticed this, too, that in so large a house as this, where so many have to be occupied in showing persons to their seats, keeping the pews and arranging the services, there is such a tendency in the minds of such to have their minds dissipated from the solemn occupation in which they are engaged. I think there ought never to be employed in churches and chapels pew-openers who are not converted, for they will not be converted afterwards. I suppose the case of a pew-opener being converted after taking the office was never known. Those persons who have to do with the externals of the House are just those persons who seldom know anything of the internal. They are occupied with the shell; they can not think of the kernel. As with the grave digger and with undertaker's men, the least thoughtful of all, the most careless of all men, so is it with them who are most in the sanctuary, they are often furthest from God. Oh, may we remember "Surely God is in this place," and it will give us awe when we come into his immediate presence!

But once more, what a restraint from sin would this thought be if it could be painted upon our very soul! A man once took his child with him while he went out to steal from a neighbour's stack, and he said to the boy, "Look about you for fear anybody should see your father." The boy had read the Sculptures, so, having looked all round, his father said, "Have you looked all ways?" He said, "No, father, there is somebody looking." "Who is it?" "Father, you have not looked up, and there is God looking down upon you." The man's conscience was pricked. Sinner, you look round you, there is no one in the chamber, you perpetrate the crime. Look up! The father with murderous thoughts in his mind gets his son into an unfrequented lane, no eye he thinks beholds him, but the divine watcher looks on and finds helpmates on earth to keep watch too. Man, there are eyes in every wall. Nature is God's great photographer, photographing every act you do, nay, every thought that you feel as it prints itself upon your brain and upon your brow. You shall find at the last great day the picture of everything that you have done preserved, for he shall speak to the beam out of the sun and it shall tell what you said, and he shall speak to the sun itself and it shall reveal the picture of the uplifted hand and of the dark deed. You are always seen. Eyes watch you: through the thick darkness he beholdeth. The spirits which he sendeth abroad to and fro are ever at your elbow, and he himself is there. Now go and sin in the presence of God if thou darest. Curse him to the face if thou darest; go home to day to break his Sabbath if thou darest while he looks on. Surely men would not offend in the very presence of the Judge! They would not break the laws with the Lawgiver himself before their very eyes. Let him then abide in your thoughts.

"Nor let your weaker passions dare
Consent to sin, for God is there."