

PSALM CXXI.

TITLE, ETC.—*This bears no other title than "A song of degrees." It is several steps in advance of its predecessor, for it tells of the peace of God's house, and the guardian care of the Lord, while Psalm cxx. bemoans the departure of peace from the goodman's abode, and his exposure to the venomous assaults of slanderous tongues. In the first instance his eyes looked around with anguish, but here they look up with hope. From the constant recurrence of the word keep, we are led to name this song "a Psalm to the keeper of Israel." Were it not placed among the Pilgrim Psalms we should regard it as a martial hymn, fitted for the evensong of one who slept upon the tented field. It is a soldier's song as well as a traveller's hymn. There is an ascent in the Psalm itself which rises to the greatest elevation of restful confidence.*

EXPOSITION.

I WILL lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.

2 My help *cometh* from the LORD, which made heaven and earth.

3 He will not suffer thy foot to be moved : he that keepeth thee will not slumber.

4 Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.

5 The LORD *is* thy keeper : the LORD *is* thy shade upon thy right hand.

6 The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night.

7 The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil : he shall preserve thy soul.

8 The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.

1. "*I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.*" It is wise to look to the strong for strength. Dwellers in valleys are subject to many disorders for which there is no cure but a sojourn in the uplands, and it is well when they shake off their lethargy and resolve upon a climb. Down below they are the prey of marauders, and to escape from them the surest method is to fly to the strongholds upon the mountains. Often before the actual ascent the sick and plundered people looked towards the hills and longed to be upon their summits. The holy man who here sings a choice sonnet looked away from the slanderers by whom he was tormented to the Lord who saw all from his high places, and was ready to pour down succour for his injured servant. Help comes to saints only from above, they look elsewhere in vain : let us lift up our eyes with hope, expectancy, desire and confidence. Satan will endeavour to keep our eyes upon our sorrows that we may be disquieted and discouraged ; be it ours firmly to resolve that we will look out and look up, for there is good cheer for the eyes, and they that lift up their eyes to the eternal hills shall soon have their hearts lifted up also. The purposes of God ; the divine attributes ; the immutable promises ; the covenant, ordered in all things and sure ; the providence, predestination, and proved faithfulness of the Lord—these are the hills to which we must lift our eyes, for from these our help must come. It is our resolve that we will not be bandaged and blindfolded, but will lift up our eyes.

Or is the text in the interrogative ? Dose he ask, " Shall I lift up mine eyes to the hills ? " Does he feel that the highest places of the earth can afford him no shelter ? Or does he renounce the idea of recruits hastening to his standard from the hardy mountaineers ? and hence does he again enquire, " Whence cometh my help ? " If so, the next verse answers the question, and shows whence all help must come.

2. "*My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth.*" What we need is help,—help powerful, efficient, constant : we need a very present help in trouble. What a mercy that we have it in our God. Our hope is in Jehovah, for our help comes from him. Help is on the road, and will not fail to reach us in due time, for he who sends it to us was never known to be too late. Jehovah who created all things is equal to every emergency ; heaven and earth are at the disposal of him who made them, therefore let us be very joyful in our infinite helper. He

will sooner destroy heaven and earth than permit his people to be destroyed, and the perpetual hills themselves shall bow rather than he shall fail whose ways are everlasting. We are bound to look beyond heaven and earth to him who made them both : it is vain to trust the creatures : it is wise to trust the Creator.

3. "*He will not suffer thy foot to be moved.*" Though the paths of life are dangerous and difficult, yet we shall stand fast, for Jehovah will not permit our feet to slide; and if he will not suffer it we shall not suffer it. If our foot will be thus kept we may be sure that our head and heart will be preserved also. In the original the words express a wish or prayer,—“May he not suffer thy foot to be moved.” Promised preservation should be the subject of perpetual prayer; and we may pray believingly; for those who have God for their keeper shall be safe from all perils of the way. Among the hills and ravines of Palestine the literal keeping of the feet is a great mercy; but in the slippery ways of a tried and afflicted life, the boon of upholding is of priceless value, for a single false step might cause us a fall fraught with awful danger. To stand erect and pursue the even tenor of our way is a blessing which only God can give, which is worthy of the divine hand, and worthy also of perennial gratitude. Our feet shall move in progress, but they shall not be moved to their overthrow. "*He that keepeth thee will not slumber,*"—or “thy keeper shall not slumber.” We should not stand a moment if our keeper were to sleep; we need him by day and by night; not a single step can be safely taken except under his guardian eye. This is a choice stanza in a pilgrim song. God is the convoy and body-guard of his saints. When dangers are awake around us we are safe, for our Preserver is awake also, and will not permit us to be taken unawares. No fatigue or exhaustion can cast our God into sleep; his watchful eyes are never closed.

4. "*Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.*" The consoling truth must be repeated: it is too rich to be dismissed in a single line. It were well if we always imitated the sweet singer, and would dwell a little upon a choice doctrine, sucking the honey from it. What a glorious title is in the Hebrew—“*The keeper of Israel,*” and how delightful to think that no form of unconsciousness ever steals over him, neither the deep slumber nor the lighter sleep. He will never suffer the house to be broken up by the silent thief; he is ever on the watch, and speedily perceives every intruder. This is a subject of wonder, a theme for attentive consideration, therefore the word “*Behold*” is set up as a waymark. Israel fell asleep, but his God was awake. Jacob had neither walls, nor curtains, nor body-guard around him; but the Lord was in that place though Jacob knew it not, and therefore the defenceless man was safe as in a castle. In after days he mentioned God under this enchanting name—“The God that led me all my life long”: perhaps David alludes to that passage in this expression. The word “*keepeth*” is also full of meaning: he keeps us as a rich man keeps his treasures, as a captain keeps a city with a garrison, as a royal guard keeps his monarch’s head. If the former verse is in strict accuracy a prayer, this is the answer to it; it affirms the matter thus, “Lo, he shall not slumber nor sleep—the Keeper of Israel.” It may also be worthy of mention that in verse three the Lord is spoken of as the personal keeper of one individual, and here of all those who are in his chosen nation, described as Israel: mercy to one saint is the pledge of blessing to them all, Happy are the pilgrims to whom this Psalm is a safe-conduct; they may journey all the way to the celestial city without fear.

5. "*The LORD is thy keeper.*" Here the preserving One, who had been spoken of by pronouns in the two previous verses, is distinctly named—Jehovah is thy keeper. What a mint of meaning lies here: the sentence is a mass of bullion, and when coined and stamped with the king’s name it will bear all our expenses between our birthplace on earth and our rest in heaven. Here is a glorious person—*Jehovah*, assuming a gracious office and fulfilling it in person,—Jehovah is thy keeper, in behalf of a favoured individual—*thy* and a firm assurance of revelation that it is even so at this hour—*Jehovah is thy keeper*. Can we appropriate the divine declaration? If so, we may journey onward to Jerusalem and know no fear; yea, we may journey through the valley of the shadow of death and fear no evil. "*The LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand.*" A shade gives protection from burning heat and glaring light. We cannot bear too much blessing even divine goodness, which is a right-hand dispensation, must be toned down and shaded to suit our infirmity, and this the Lord will do for us. He will bear a shield before us, and guard the right arm with which we fight the foe. That member which

has the most of labour shall have the most of protection. When a blazing sun pours down its burning beams upon our heads the Lord Jehovah himself will interpose to shade us, and that in the most honourable manner, acting as our right-hand attendant, and placing us in comfort and safety. "The Lord at thy right hand shall smite through kings." How different this from the portion of the ungodly ones who have Satau standing at their right hand, and of those of whom Moses said "their defence has departed from them." God is as near us as our shadow, and we are as safe as angels.

6. "*The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night.*" None but the Lord could shelter us from these tremendous forces. These two great lights rule the day and the night, and under the lordship of both we shall labour or rest in equal safety. Doubtless there are dangers of the light and of the dark, but in both and from both we shall be preserved—literally from excessive heat and from baneful chills; mystically from any injurious effects which might follow from doctrine bright or dim; spiritually from the evils of prosperity and adversity; eternally from the strain of overpowering glory and from the pressure of terrible events, such as judgment and the burning of the world. Day and night make up all time: thus the ever-present protection never ceases. All evil may be ranked as under the sun or the moon, and if neither of these can smite us we are indeed secure. God has not made a new sun or a fresh moon for his chosen, they exist under the same outward circumstances as others, but the power to *smite* is in their case removed from temporal agencies; saints are enriched, and not injured, by the powers which govern the earth's condition; to them has the Lord given "the precious things brought forth by the sun, and the precious things put forth by the moon," while at the same moment he has removed from them all bale and curse of heat or damp, of glare or chill.

7. "*The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil,*" or *keep* thee from all evil. It is a great pity that our admirable translation did not keep to the word *keep* all through the Psalm, for all along it is one. God not only keeps his own in all evil times but from all evil influences and operations, yea, from evils themselves. This is a far-reaching word of covering: it includes everything and excludes nothing: the wings of Jehovah amply guard his own from evils great and small, temporary and eternal. There is a most delightful double personality in this verse: Jehovah keeps the believer, not by agent, but by himself; and the person protected is definitely pointed out by the word *thee*,—it is not our estate or name which is shielded, but the proper personal man. To make this even more intensely real and personal another sentence is added, "*The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul,*"—or Jehovah will keep thy soul. Soul-keeping is the soul of keeping. If the soul be kept all is kept. The preservation of the greater includes that of the less so far as it is essential to the main design: the kernel shall be preserved, and in order thereto the shell shall be preserved also. God is the sole keeper of the soul. Our soul is kept from the dominion of sin, the infection of error, the crush of despondency, the puffing up of pride; kept from the world, the flesh and the devil; kept for holier and greater things; kept in the love of God; kept unto the eternal kingdom and glory. What can harm a soul that is kept of the Lord?

8. "*The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.*" When we go out in the morning to labour, and come home at eventide to rest, Jehovah shall keep us. When we go out in youth to begin life, and come in at the end to die, we shall experience the same keeping. Our exits and our entrances are under one protection. Three times have we the phrase, "Jehovah shall keep," as if the sacred Trinity thus sealed the word to make it sure: ought not all our fears to be slain by such a threefold flight of arrows? What anxiety can survive this triple promise? This keeping is eternal; continuing from this time forth, even for evermore. The whole church is thus assured of everlasting security: the final perseverance of the saints is thus ensured, and the glorious immortality of believers is guaranteed. Under the ægis of such a promise we may go on pilgrimage without trembling, and venture into battle without dread. None are so safe as those whom God keeps; none so much in danger as the self-secure. To goings out and comings in belong peculiar dangers, since every change of position turns a fresh quarter to the foe, and it is for these weak points that an especial security is provided: Jehovah will keep the door when it opens and closes, and this he will perseveringly continue to do so long as there is left a single man that trusteth in him, as long as a danger survives, and, in fact, as long as time

endures. Glory be unto the Keeper of Israel, who is endeared to us under that title, since our growing sense of weakness makes us feel more deeply than ever our need of being kept. Over the reader we would breathe a benediction, couched in the verse of Keble.

“God keep thee safe from harm and sin,
Thy spirit keep; the Lord watch o'er
Thy going out, thy coming in,
From this time, evermore.”

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS.

Title, “A song of degrees.”—It has been ingeniously pointed out that these “degrees” or “steps” consist in the reiteration of a word or thought occurring in one clause, verse, or stanza, which in the next verse or stanza is used, as it were, as a *step* (or degree) by which to ascend to another and higher truth. Thus in our Psalm, the idea of “*my help*,” expressed in verse 1, is repeated in verse 2. This has now become a step by which in verse 3 we reach the higher truth or explanation of “*my help*,” as: “*He that keepeth thee will not slumber*,” the same idea being with slight modification re-embodied in verse 4. Another “degree” is then reached in verse 5, when “*He who slumbers not*” is designated as *Jehovah*, the same idea once more enlarged upon being (the *word* occurring twice in verse 5) in verse 6. The last and highest degree of this song is attained in verse 7, when the truth implied in the word *Jehovah* unfolds itself in its application to our *preservation*, which, with further enlargement, is once more repeated in verse 8. *Perhaps* some internal connexion might be traced between all the fifteen Psalms of Degrees. At any rate, it will not be difficult to trace the same structure in each of the Psalms “of Degrees,” making allowance for occasional devotions and modifications.—*Alfred Edersheim, in “The Golden Diary,”* 1877.

Whole Psalm.—According to verse 1 this Psalm was designed to be sung in view of the mountains of Jerusalem, and is manifestly an evening song for the sacred band of pilgrims, to be sung in the last night-watch, the figures of which are also peculiarly suitable for a pilgrim song; and with Ps. cxxii. which, according to the express announcement in the introduction, was sung, when the sacred pilgrim trains had reached the gates of Jerusalem, and halted for the purpose of forming in order, for the solemn procession into the Sanctuary, Ps. cxxxiv. . . .

The idea is a very probable one, that the Psalm was the evening song of the sacred pilgrim band, sung on retiring to rest upon the last evening, when the long wished-for termination of their wandering, the mountains of Jerusalem, had come into view in the distance. In this we obtain a suitable connection with the following Psalm, which would be sung *one* station further on when the pilgrims were at the gates of Jerusalem. In this case we find an explanation of the fact, that in the middle point of the Psalm there stands the Lord as the “*keeper*” of Israel, with reference to the declaration, “*I keep thee*,” which was addressed to the patriarch as he slept on his pilgrimage; and in this case also “*he neither slumbereth nor sleepeth*” is seen in its true light.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

It has been said Mr. Romaine read this Psalm every day; and sure it is, that every word in it is calculated to encourage and strengthen our faith and hope in God.—*Samuel Eyles Pierce.*

Verse 1.—“*I will lift up mine eyes*,” etc. Since we, being burthened with the effects of worldly pleasures, and also with other cares and troubles, can by no means ascend to thee that art on the top of so high a mountain, accompanied with so many legions of angels that still attend upon thee, we have no remedy, but with thy prophet David now to lift up the eyes of our hearts and minds toward thee, and to cry for help to come down from thee to us, thy poor and wretched servants.—*Sir Anthony Cope, in “Meditations on Twenty Select Psalms,”* 1547.

Verse 1.—“*I will lift up mine eyes*,” etc. In thy agony of a troubled conscience always look upwards unto a gracious God to keep thy soul steady; for looking downward on thyself thou shalt find nothing but what will increase thy fear, infinite

sins, good deeds few, and imperfect: it is not thy faith, but God's faithfulness thou must rely upon; casting thine eyes downwards on thyself, to behold the great distance betwixt what thou deservest and what thou desirest, is enough to make thee giddy, stagger, and reel into despair. Ever therefore *lift up thine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh thy help*, never viewing the deep dale of thy own unworthiness, but to abate thy pride when tempted to presumption.—*Thomas Fuller* (1608—1661), in "*The cause and Cure of a Wounded Conscience.*"

Verse 1.—"*The hills.*" There can be no doubt that in Palestine we are in the "Highlands" of Asia. This was the more remarkable in connection with the Israelites, because they were the only civilized nation then existing in the world, which dwelt in a mountainous country. . . . The Hebrew people was raised above the other ancient states, equally in its moral and in its physical relations. From the Desert of Arabia to Hebron is a continual ascent, and from that ascent there is no descent of any importance, except to the plains of the Jordan, Esdraelon, and the coast. From a mountain sanctuary, as it were, Israel looked over the world. . . . It was to the "mountains" of Israel that the exile lifted up his eyes, as the place *from whence his help came*.—*Arthur Penrhyn Stanley*.

Verse 1.—"*The hills, from whence cometh my help.*" See no riches but in grace, no health but in piety, no beauty but in holiness, no treasure but in heaven, no delight but in "the things above."—*Anthony Farindon*.

Verse 1.—"*From whence cometh my help.*" The natives of India used to say that when Sir Henry Lawrence looked twice to heaven and then to earth he knew what to do.

To Heaven I lift mine eye,
To Heaven, Jehovah's throne,
For there my Saviour sits on high,
And thence shall strength and aid supply
To all He calls His own.

He will not faint nor fail,
Nor cause thy feet to stray:
For him no weary hours assail,
Nor evening darkness spreads her veil
O'er his eternal day.

Beneath that light divine
Securely shalt thou move;
The sun with milder beams shall shine,
And eve's still queen her lamp incline
Benignant from above.

For he, thy God and Friend,
Shall keep thy soul from harm,
In each sad scene of doubt attend,
And guide thy life, and bless thy end,
With his almighty arm.

John Bowdler, 1814.

Verses 1, 2.—Faint at the close of life's journey, a Christian pilgrim repeated the line,—

"Will he not his help afford?"

She quoted it several times, trying to recall the song in which it occurs, and asked that the once familiar hymn, part of the voice of which she caught, might be all fetched home to her mind again; and she was greatly refreshed and comforted when we read at her bedside Charles Wesley's spirited paraphrase, beginning,—

"To the hills I lift mine eyes,
The everlasting hills;
Streaming thence in fresh supplies,
My soul the Spirit feels.

Will he not his help afford?
Help, while yet I ask, is given:
God comes down; the God and Lord
That made both earth and heaven."

Edward Jewitt Robinson, in "The Caravan and the Temple," 1878.

Verses 1—3.—

Look away to Jesus,
 Look away from all !
 Then we need not stumble,
 Then we shall not fall.
 From each snare that lureth,
 Foe or phantom grim,
 Safety this ensureth,
 Look away to him !

Frances Ridley Havergal.

Verse 2.—“*My help cometh from the Lord.*” I require to remember that *my help cometh from the Lord*, not only when seemingly there is no *outward* help from men or otherwise, but also and especially when all seems to go well with me,—when abundance of friends and help are at hand. For then, surely, I am most in danger of making an arm of flesh my trust, and thus reaping its curse ; or else of saying to my soul, “Take thine ease,” and finding the destruction which attends such folly.—*Alfred Edersheim.*

Verse 2.—“*Maker of heaven and earth,*” and therefore mighty to help.—*James G. Murphy.*

Verse 3.—“*He will not suffer thy foot to be moved.*” The sliding of the foot is a frequent description of misfortune, for example, Ps. xxxviii. 16, lxvi. 9, and a very natural one in mountainous Canaan, where a single slip of the foot was often attended with great danger. The language here naturally refers to complete, lasting misfortune.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 3.—“*He will not suffer thy foot to be moved.*” A man cannot go without moving his feet ; and a man cannot stand whose feet are moved. The foot by a *synecdoche* is put for the whole body, and the body for the whole outward estate ; so that, “*he will not suffer thy foot to be moved,*” is, he will not suffer thee or thine to be moved or violently cast down. The power of thine opposers shall not prevail over thee, for the power of God sustains thee. Many are striking at thy heels, but they cannot strike them up while God holds thee up. If the will of thine enemies might stand, thou shouldst quickly fall ; but God “*will not suffer thy foot to be moved.*” —*Joseph Caryl.*

Verses 3—8.—There is something very striking in the assurance that the Lord will not suffer the foot even of the most faint and wearied one to be moved. The everlasting mountains stand fast, and we feel as if, like Mount Zion, they could not be removed for ever ; but the step of man—how feeble in itself, how liable to stumble or trip even against a pebble in the way ! Yet that foot is as firm and immovable in God’s protection as the hills themselves. It is one of his own sweet promises, that he will give his angels charge over every child of his, that he come to no harm by the way. But, oh, how immeasurably beyond even the untiring wings of angels is the love promised here ! that love which engages to protect from every danger, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings. In the hours of occupation and hurry, in the conflicts and perils of the day, in the helplessness of sleep, in the glare and heat of the noon-day, amid the damps and dews of night, that unslumbering eye is still over every child for his good. Man, indeed, goeth forth to his work and to his labour till the evening ; but alike as he goes forth in the morning, and as he returns in the evening, the Lord still holds him up in all his goings forth and his comings in ; no manner of evil shall befall him. And oh ! what a sweet addition is it to the promise. “He shall preserve *thy soul.*” It is the very argument of the apostle, and the very inference he draws, “The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry,”—“He neither slumbereth nor sleepeth,”—and then he asks, “Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good ?” From the very dawn of life to its latest close, even for evermore, “He will preserve thee from all evil ; he will preserve thy soul.”—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verses 3, 4, 5.—A great practical difficulty is to find a “keeper” who will remain *awake during the whole night.* The weariness of those who keep a faithful watch, and their longing for day during the tedious lonely hours of darkness, is alluded to in a graphic and beautiful figure of the Psalmist—

“My soul waiteth for the Lord
 More than keepers for the morning,
 More than keepers for the morning.”

The usual method adopted to secure due vigilance is to require the man to call out loudly, or to blow a whistle, every quarter of an hour. . . . Yet, notwithstanding all precautions, as soon as sleep falls on the tired camp, it is too often the case that the hireling keeper lies down on the ground, wraps around him his thick *abaiyeh*, or cloak, and, careless of his charge, or overcome with weariness, yields himself up to his drowsy propensities.

Viewed in the light of these facts, how full of condescension and cheer is the assurance of God's never-ceasing care—

"He who keepeth thee will not slumber.
Behold, he who keepeth Israel
Doth not slumber or sleep.
Jehovah is thy keeper."

While the services of the keeper constitute at all times a marked feature of life in Palestine, they are perhaps more needed when travelling through the country than at any other time. Then, when the moving camp is nightly pitched in strange fields, it becomes absolutely necessary to apply to the nearest authorities for a nocturnal guardian, before one can safely lie down to rest. Now this Psalm cxxi. being one of "the Songs of Degrees," was probably composed to be sung on the way to Jerusalem, as a pilgrim hymn, when the Israelites were coming up annually to keep the three great feasts. As a journeying Psalm, it would therefore have peculiar significance in its allusion to *the keeper by night*.—James Neil, in "*Palestine Explored*," 1882.

Verses 3, 4.—When one asked Alexander how he could sleep so soundly and securely in the midst of danger, he told him that Parmenio watched. Oh, how securely may they sleep over whom *he* watcheth that never slumbers nor sleeps!—From "*The Dictionary of Illustrations*," 1873.

Verses 3, 4.—A poor woman, as the Eastern story has it, came to the Sultan one day, and asked compensation for the loss of some property. "How did you lose it?" said the monarch. "I fell asleep," was the reply, "and a robber entered my dwelling." "Why did you fall asleep?" "I fell asleep because I believed that you were awake." The Sultan was so much delighted with the answer of the woman, that he ordered her loss to be made up. But what is true, only by a legal fiction, of human governments, that they never sleep, is true in the most absolute sense with reference to the divine government. We can sleep in safety because our God is ever awake. We are safe because he never slumbers. Jacob had a beautiful picture of the ceaseless care of Divine Providence on the night when he fled from his father's house. The lonely traveller slept on the ground, with the stones for his pillow, and the sky for his canopy. He had a wondrous vision of a ladder stretching from earth to heaven, and on which angels were seen ascending and descending. And he heard Jehovah saying to him, "Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest."—N. McMichael.

Verse 4.—It is necessary, observes S. Bernard, that "*he who keepeth Israel*" should "*neither slumber nor sleep*," for he who assails Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps. And as the One is anxious about us, so is the other to slay and destroy us, and his one care is that he who has once been turned aside may never come back.—Neale and Littledale.

Verse 4.—"*Slumber*." "*Sleep*." There is no climax in these words, as some have supposed. Etymologically, the first is the stronger word, and it occurs in Ps. lxxvi. 5 [6] of the sleep of death. In this instance there is no real distinction between the two. Possibly there may be an allusion to the nightly encampment, and the sentries of the caravan.—J. J. Stewart Perowne.

Verse 4.—"*He . . . shall neither slumber nor sleep*." This form of expression, *he will not slumber nor sleep*, would be improper in other languages, according to the idiom of which it should rather be, *He will not sleep, yea, he will not slumber*: but when the Hebrews invert this order, they argue from the greater to the less. The sense then is, that as God never slumbers even in the smallest degree, we need not be afraid of any harm befalling us while he is asleep.—John Calvin.

Verse 4.—"*He that keepeth Israel*." With an allusion to Jacob, who slept at Bethel, and to whom the promise of God took this form, "And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest": Gen. xxviii. 15.—Aber Ezra, quoted by H. T. Armfield.

Verse 4.—"Shall neither slumber nor sleep." Man sleeps; a sentinel *may* slumber on his post by inattention, by long-continued wakefulness, or by weariness; a pilot *may* slumber at the helm; even a mother *may* fall asleep by the side of the sick child; but God is never exhausted, is never weary, is never inattentive. He never closes his eyes on the condition of his people, on the wants of the world.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 4.—A number of years ago Captain D. commanded a vessel sailing from Liverpool to New York, and on one voyage he had all his family with him on board the ship.

One night, when all were quietly asleep, there arose a sudden squall of wind, which came sweeping over the waters until it struck the vessel, and instantly threw her on her side, tumbling and crashing everything that was moveable, and awaking the passengers to a consciousness that they were in imminent peril.

Everyone on board was alarmed and uneasy, and some sprang from their berths and began to dress, that they might be ready for the worst.

Captain D. had a little girl on board, just eight years old, who, of course, awoke with the rest.

"What's the matter?" said the frightened child.

They told her a squall had struck the ship.

"Is father on deck?" said she.

"Yes; father's on deck."

The little thing dropped herself on her pillow again without a fear, and in a few moments was sleeping sweetly in spite of winds or waves.

Fear not the windy tempests wild,
Thy bark they shall not wreck;
Lie down and sleep, O helpless child!
Thy Father's on the deck.

"The Biblical Treasury," 1873.

Verses 4, 5.—The same that is the protector of the church in general, is engaged for the preservation of every particular believer; the same wisdom, the same power, the same promises. "*He that keepeth Israel*" (verse 4), "*is thy keeper*" (verse 5). The Shepherd of the flock is the Shepherd of every sheep, and will take care that not one, even of the little ones, shall perish.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 5.—"The Lord is thy keeper." Two principal points are asserted in these previous words. 1. Jehovah, and Jehovah alone, the omnipotent and self-existent God, is the Keeper, and Preserver of his people. 2. The people of God are kept, at all times and in all circumstances, by his mighty power unto everlasting salvation; they are preserved even "for evermore." In the first particular, the divinity of the great Keeper is declared; and, in the second, the eternal security of his people through his omnipotence and faithfulness. This was the Psalmist's gospel. He preached it to others, and he felt it himself. He did not speculate upon what he did not understand; but he had a clear evidence, and a sweet perception, of these two glorious doctrines, which he delivered to the people. . . . This character, under the name of Jehovah, is the character of Christ. Just such a one is Jesus, the Shepherd of Israel. He says of himself to the Father, "Those that thou gavest me *I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the Son of Perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.*" . . . From what has been premised, it seems evident, that the keeper of the faithful is no other than Jehovah. This the Psalmist has proved. It appears equally evident that Christ is their Keeper and Preserver. This he hath declared himself; and his apostles have repeatedly declared it of him. It follows, therefore, that Christ is truly and essentially Jehovah. All the sophistry in the world cannot elude this conclusion; nor all the heretics in the world destroy the premises. And, if Christ be Jehovah, he is all that supreme, eternal, omnipotent being, which Arians, Socinians, and others deny him to be.—*Ambrose Serle, in "Horæ Solitariae,"* 1815.

Verse 5.—"Keeper." "Shade." The titles of God are virtually promises—when he is called a sun, a shield, a strong tower, a hiding-place, a portion. The titles of Christ, light of the world, bread of life, the way, the truth, and life; the titles of the Spirit, the Spirit of truth, of holiness, of glory, of grace, and supplication, the sealing, witnessing Spirit; faith may conclude as much out of these as out of promises. Is the Lord a sun? then he will influence me, etc. Is Christ life? then he will enliven me, etc.—*David Clarkson, 1621—1686.*

Verse 5.—"Thy shade upon thy right hand." That is, always present with thee; or, as the Jewish Arab renders it, "Nigher than thy shadow at, or from thy right hand."—*Thomas Fenton*, in "*Annotations on the Book of Job and the Psalms*," 1732.

Verse 5.—"Thy shade." In eastern countries the sun's burning rays are often arrows by which premature death is inflicted; and when the Psalmist speaks of Jehovah as a shady covert for the righteous, that imagery suggests the idea of the "coup de soleil" or sunstroke as the evil avoided.—*J. F.*, in "*The Baptist Magazine*," 1831.

Verse 5.—"Shade." The Hebrew word is *tsel*, "a shadow," and hence it has been supposed that the words, "thy shadow at thy right hand," are a figurative expression, referring to the protection afforded by the shade of a tree against the scorching rays of the sun or to the custom which prevails in tropical climates especially, of keeping off the intense heat of the sun by a portable screen, such as an umbrella or parasol. The word is often put for *defence* in general. Compare Num. xiv. 9; Isaiah xxx. 2; Jer. xlviii. 45.—*James Anderson*.

Verses 5-8.—How large a writ or patent of protection is granted here! No time shall be hurtful, neither "*day nor night*," which includes all times. Nothing shall hurt, neither *sun nor moon*, nor heat nor cold. These should include all annoyances. Nothing shall be hurt, "*Thy soul shall be preserved, thy outgoings and thy comings in shall be preserved*." These include the whole person of man, and him in all his just affairs and actions. Nothing of man is safe without a guard, and nothing of man can be unsafe which is thus guarded. They should be kept who can say, "The Lord is our keeper"; and they cannot be kept, no, not by legions of angels, who have not the Lord for their keeper. None can keep us but he, and he hath promised to keep us "for evermore."—*Joseph Caryl*.

Verse 6.—"The sun shall not smite thee." שֶׁפָּרַח of the sun signifies to smite injuriously (Isa. xlix. 10), plants, so that they wither (Ps. cii. 5), and the head (Jonah iv. 8), so that symptoms of sunstroke (2 Kings iv. 19; Judith viii. 2 seq.) appear. The transferring of the word to the moon is not zeugmatic. Even the moon's rays may become insupportable, may affect the eyes injuriously, and (more particularly in the equatorial regions) produce fatal inflammation of the brain. From the hurtful influences of nature that are round about him the promise extends in verses 7, 8 in every direction. Jahve, says the poet to himself, will keep (guard) thee against all evil, of whatever kind it may be and whencesoever it may threaten; he will keep thy soul, and thereafter thy life both inwardly and outwardly; he will keep thy going out and coming in, *i.e.*, all thy business and intercourse of life everywhere and at all times; and that from this time forth even for ever.—*Franz Delitzsch*.

Verse 6.—"The sun shall not smite thee by day," etc. A promise made with allusion unto, and application of that care which God had over his people, when he brought them out of Egypt through the wilderness, when he guarded them from the heat of the sun by a cloud by day, and from the cold and moistness of the night and moon by a pillar of fire by night.—*David Dickson*.

Verse 6.—"Nor the moon by night."

The moon, the governess of floods,
Pale in her anger, washes all the air,
That rheumatic diseases do abound.

William Shakespeare (1564-1616), in "*The Midsummer Night's Dream*."

Verse 6.—Joseph Hart in one of his hymns speaks of some who "travel much by night." To such this promise is precious.—"*Biblical Treasury*."

Verse 6.—"Nor the moon by night." The effect of the moonlight on the eyes in this country is singularly injurious. . . . The moon here really strikes and affects the sight, when you sleep exposed to it, much more than the sun, a fact of which I had a very unpleasant proof one night, and took care to guard against it afterwards; indeed, the sight of a person who should sleep with his face exposed at night would soon be utterly impaired or destroyed.—*John Carne*, in "*Letters from the East*," 1826.

Verse 6.—"Nor the moon by night." In the cloudless skies of the East, where the moon shines with such exceeding clearness, its effects upon the human frame have been found most injurious. The inhabitants of these countries are most

careful in taking precautionary measures before exposing themselves to its influence. Sleeping much in the open air, they are careful to cover well their heads and faces. It has been proved beyond a doubt that the moon smites as well as the sun, causing blindness for a time, and even distortion of the features.

Sailors are well aware of this fact ; and a naval officer relates that he has often, when sailing between the tropics, seen the commanders of vessels waken up young men who have fallen asleep in the moonlight. Indeed, he witnessed more than once the effects of a moonstroke, when the mouth was drawn on one side and the sight injured for a time. He was of opinion that, with long exposure, the mind might become seriously affected. It is supposed that patients suffering under fever and other illnesses are affected by this planet, and the natives of India constantly affirm that they will either get better or worse, according to her changes.—C. W., in *"The Biblical Treasury."*

Verse 7.—*"The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil."* Lawyers, when they are drawing up important documents, frequently conclude with some general terms to meet any emergency which may possibly occur. They do this on the principle, that what is not in may be supposed to be intentionally left out. In order to guard against this inference, they are not content with inserting a number of particular cases ; they conclude with a general statement, which includes everything, whether expressed or not. A similar formula is inserted here. It is of great importance that the feet of travellers be kept from sliding, as they pursue their journey. It is of great importance that they be preserved from heat by day, and from cold by night. But other dangers await them, from which they require protection ; and lest the suspicion be entertained, that no provision is made for these being surmounted, they are all introduced in the saving and comprehensive clause. No matter what may be their character, no matter from what quarter they may appear, no matter when they may come, and no matter how long they may continue, the declaration covers them all. Divine grace changes the nature of everything it handles, and transforms everything it touches into gold. Afflictions are overruled for good ; and the virtues of the Christian life are developed with unusual lustre. *"The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil."*—N. McMichael.

Verse 7.—*"The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil,"* etc. It is an absolute promise, there are no conditions annexed ; it honours God for us simply to believe it, and rest on the Lord for the performance of it. As we view it, what have we to fear ? The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it, his word is immutable. Jesus preserves body and soul, he is the Saviour of the body as well as of the soul.—Samuel Eyles Pierce.

Verses 7, 8.—The threefold expression, *"shall keep thee . . . thy soul . . . thy going out and thy coming in,"* marks the completeness of the protection vouchsafed, extending to all that the man is and that he does.—J. J. Stewart Perowne.

Verses 7, 8.—It is of importance to mark the reason why the prophet repeats so often what he had so briefly and in one word expressed with sufficient plainness. Such repetition seems at first sight superfluous ; but when we consider how difficult it is to correct our distrust, it will be easily perceived that he does not improperly dwell upon the commendation of the divine providence. How few are to be found who yield to God the honour of being a *"keeper,"* in order to their being thence assured of their safety, and led to call upon him in the midst of their perils ! On the contrary, even when we seem to have largely experienced what this protection of God implies, we yet instantly tremble at the noise of a leaf falling from a tree, as if God had quite forgotten us. Being then entangled in so many unholy misgivings, and so much inclined to distrust, we are taught from the passage that if a sentence couched in a few words does not suffice us, we should gather together whatever may be found throughout the whole Scriptures concerning the providence of God, until this doctrine—*"That God always keeps watch for us"*—is deeply rooted in our hearts ; so that, depending upon his guardianship alone, we may bid adieu to all the vain confidences of the world.—John Calvin.

Verse 8.—*"The LORD shall preserve."* The word *shamar* imports a most tender preservation ; from it comes *shemuroth*, signifying the eyelids, because they are the keepers of the eye, as the Lord is called in the verse preceding—*shomer Israel, "the keeper of Israel."* If the lids of the eye open, it is to let the eye see ; if they close, it is to let it rest, at least to defend it ; all their motion is for the good of

the eye. O, what a comfort is here! The Lord calleth his Church "the apple of his eye": "he that toucheth you, touches the apple of mine eye." The Church is the apple of God's eye, and the Lord is the covering of it. O, how well are they kept whom "the keeper of Israel" keepeth! The Lord was a buckler to Abraham, none of his enemies could harm him; for his buckler covered him throughly. The Lord was a hedge unto Job; Satan himself confessed he could not get through it, howsoever many a time he assayed it, to have done evil unto Job.

But seeing this same promise of preservation was made before (for from the third verse to the end of the Psalm, six sundry times, is the word of keeping or preserving repeated), why is it now made over again? Not without cause; for this doubling and redoubling serves, first, for a remedy of our ignorance. Men, if they be in any good estate, are ready to "sacrifice to their own net," or "to cause their mouth to kiss their own hand," as if their own hand had helped them: thus to impute their "deliverance" to their "calf," and therefore often is this resounded, "The Lord," "The Lord." Is thy estate advanced? The Lord hath done it. Hast thou been preserved from desperate dangers? Look up to the Lord, thy help is from on high, and to him let the praise be returned. Secondly, it is for a remedy for our natural diffidence: the word of the Lord in itself is as sure when it is spoken, as when it is sworn; as sure spoken once, as when it is oftener repeated; yet is not the Lord content to speak only, but to swear also; nor to speak once, but often, one and the selfsame thing. The reason is showed us by the apostle, that hereby he may "declare to the heirs of promise the stability of his counsel." Heb. vi.; Gen. xxi. 32. As Joseph spake of Pharaoh his vision, "It was doubled, because the thing is established by God, and God hasteth to perform it"; so is it with every word of the Lord, when it is repeated; it is because it is established, and God hastens to perform it.—*From a Sermon by Bishop Cowper, entitled "His Majesties Comming in," 1623.*

Verse 8.—"The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in." All actions being comprehended under one of these two sorts, "going out" to more public, and "coming in" to more private affairs; or again, "going out" to begin, and "coming in" at the end of the work. But by this expression may here perhaps be more particularly signified that God would protect David, even to the end of his days, whenever he marched out with his armies, or brought them home.—*Thomas Fenton.*

Verse 8.—"From this time forth and even for evermore." He has not led me so tenderly thus far to forsake me at the very gate of heaven.—*Adoniram Judson.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—The window opened towards Jerusalem. I. The hills we look to. II. The help we look for. III. The eyes we look with.

Verse 1.—"Whence cometh my help?" A grave question; for, I. I need it, greatly, in varied forms, constantly, and now. II. In few directions can I look for it, for men are feeble, changeable, hostile, etc. III. I must look above. To Providence, to Grace, to my God.

Verse 2.—The Creator the creature's helper.

Verse 2.—I. God is his people's "help." II. He helps them in proportion as they feel their need of his help. III. His help is never in vain. "My help cometh," not from the earth merely, or the skies, but "from the Lord, which made heaven and earth." Isa. xl. 26—31.—*G. R.*

Verse 3 (first clause).—The preservation of saintly character the care of the Creator.

Verse 3.—Comfort for a pilgrim along the *mauvais pas* of life. We have a Guide omniscient, omnipotent, unsleeping, unchanging.

Verse 3.—"He that keepeth thee will not slumber." I. The Lord's care is personal in its objects. The keeper of Israel is the keeper of the individual. God deals with us individually. 1. This is implied in his care of the church, which is composed of individuals. 2. It is involved in the nature of our religion, which is a personal

thing. 3. It is affirmed in Scripture. Examples ; promises ; experiences. " He loved me," etc., etc. 4. It is confirmed by experience. II. The Lord's care is unwearied in its exercise : " Will not slumber." 1. He is never unacquainted with our condition. 2. He is never indifferent to it. 3. He is never weary of helping us. We sometimes think he sleeps, but this is our folly.—*Frederick J. Benskin, 1882.*

Verse 4.—I. The suspicion—that God sleeps. II. The denial. III. The implied opposite—he is ever on the watch to bless.

Verse 4.—He keepeth Israel, 1. As his chief treasure, most watchfully. 2. As his dearest spouse, most tenderly. 3. As the apple of his eye, most charily and warily.—*Daniel Featly, 1582—1645.*

Verse 5.—The Lord Keeper. I. Blessings included in this title. II. Necessities which demand it. III. Offices which imply it,—Shepherd, King, Husband, Father, etc. IV. Conduct suggested by it.

Verse 5 (last clause).—God as near us, and as indivisible from us as our shadow.

Verse 5.—"The LORD is thy keeper," not angels. I. He is able to keep thee. He has infinite knowledge, power, etc. II. He has engaged to keep thee. III. He has kept thee. IV. He will keep thee. In his love ; in his covenant, etc., as his sheep, his children, his treasures, as the apple of his eye, etc.—*F. J. B.*

Verse 5.—"The LORD is thy keeper." I. Wakeful : " Will not slumber." II. Universal : " Thy going out and thy coming in : " " From all evil." III. Perpetual : " Day : " " night : " " evermore." IV. Special : " Thy : " " Israel."—*W. J.*

Verse 6.—The highest powers, under God, prevented from hurting believers, and even made to serve them.

Verse 6.—Our Horoscope. I. Superstitious fears removed. II. Sacred assurances supplied.

Verse 7.—I. Personal agency of God in providence. II. Personal regard of providence to the favoured individual. III. Special care over the centre of the personality—" thy soul."

Verse 8.—Who ? " The Lord." What ? " Shall preserve thee." When ? " Going out and coming in from this time forth." How long ? " For evermore." What then ? " I will lift up mine eyes."

Verse 8.—I. Changing—going out and coming in. II. Unchanging—" The Lord shall preserve," etc.