

PSALM CXLIV.

Albeit that this Psalm is in some measure very similar to Psalm xviii., yet it is a new song, and in its latter portion it is strikingly so. Let the reader accept it as a new Psalm, and not as a mere variation of an old one, or as two compositions roughly joined together. It is true that it would be a complete composition if the passage from verse 12 to the close were dropped; but there are other parts of David's poems which might be equally self-contained if certain verses were omitted; and the same might be said of many uninspired sonnets. It does not, therefore, follow that the latter part was added by another hand, nor even that the latter part was a fragment by the same author, appended to the first song merely with the view of preserving it. It seems to us to be highly probable that the Psalmist, remembering that he had trodden some of the same ground before, felt his mind moved to fresh thought, and that the Holy Spirit used this mood for his own high purposes. Assuredly the addendum is worthy of the greatest Hebrew poet, and it is so admirable in language, and so full of beautiful imagery, that persons of taste who were by no means overloaded with reverence have quoted it times without number, thus confessing its singular poetical excellence. To us the whole Psalm appears to be perfect as it stands, and to exhibit such unity throughout that it would be a literary Vandalism, as well as a spiritual crime, to rend away one part from the other.

TITLE.—Its title is "Of David," and its language is of David, if ever language can belong to any man. As surely as we could say of any poem, This is of Tennyson, or of Longfellow, we may say, This is of David. Nothing but the disease which closes the eye to manifest fact and opens it to fancy, could have led learned critics to ascribe this song to anybody but David. Alexander well says, "The Davidic origin of this Psalm is as marked as that of any in the Psalter."

It is to God the devout warrior sings when he extols him as his strength and stay (verses 1 and 2). Man he holds in small account, and wonders at the Lord's regard for him (verses 3 and 4); but he turns in his hour of conflict to the Lord, who is declared to be "a man of war," whose triumphant interposition he implores (verses 5 to 8). He again extols and entreats in verses 9, 10, and 11; and then closes with a delightful picture of the Lord's work for his chosen people, who are congratulated upon having such a God to be their God.

EXPOSITION.

BLESSED be the LORD my strength, which teacheth my hands to war,
and my fingers to fight:

2 My goodness, and my fortress; my high tower, and my deliverer;
my shield, and he in whom I trust; who subdueth my people under me.

1. "Blessed be the LORD my strength." He cannot delay the utterance of his gratitude, he bursts at once into a loud note of praise. His best word is given to his best friend—"Blessed be Jehovah." When the heart is in a right state it must praise God, it cannot be restrained; its utterances leap forth as waters forcing their way from a living spring. With all his strength David blesses the God of his strength. We ought not to receive so great a boon as strength to resist evil, to defend truth, and to conquer error, without knowing who gave it to us, and rendering to him the glory of it. Not only does Jehovah give strength to his saints, but he is their strength. The strength is made theirs because God is theirs. God is full of power, and he becomes the power of those who trust him. In him our great strength lieth, and to him be blessings more than we are able to utter. It may be read, "My Rock," but this hardly so well consorts with the following words: "Which teacheth my hands to war and my fingers to fight." The word rock is the Hebrew way of expressing strength: the grand old language is full of such suggestive symbols. The Psalmist in the second part of the verse sets forth the Lord as teacher in the arts of war. If we have strength we are not much the better unless we have skill also. Untrained force is often an injury to the man who possesses it, and it even becomes a danger to those who are round about him; and therefore the

Psalmist blesses the Lord as much for teaching as for strength. Let us also bless Jehovah if he has in anything made us efficient. The tuition mentioned was very practical, it was not so much of the brain as of the hands and fingers; for these were the members most needful for conflict. Men with little scholastic education should be grateful for deftness and skill in their handicrafts. To a fighting man the education of the hands is of far more value than mere book-learning could ever be; he who has to use a sling or a bow needs suitable training, quite as much as a scientific man or a classical professor. Men are too apt to fancy that an artisan's efficiency is to be ascribed to himself; but this is a popular fallacy. A clergyman may be supposed to be taught of God, but people do not allow this to be true of weavers or workers in brass; yet these callings are specially mentioned in the Bible as having been taught to holy women and earnest men when the tabernacle was set up at the first. All wisdom and skill are from the Lord, and for them he deserves to be gratefully extolled. This teaching extends to the smallest members of our frame: the Lord teaches fingers as well as hands; indeed, it sometimes happens that if the finger is not well trained the whole hand is incapable.

David was called to be a man of war, and he was eminently successful in his battles; he does not trace this to his good generalship or valour, but to his being taught and strengthened for the war and the fight. If the Lord deigns to have a hand in such unspiritual work as fighting, surely he will help us to proclaim the gospel and win souls; and then we will bless his name with even greater intensity of heart. We will be pupils, and he shall be our Master, and if we ever accomplish anything we will give our instructor hearty blessing.

This verse is full of personality; it is mercy shown to David himself which is the subject of grateful song. It has also a presentness about it; for Jehovah is now his strength, and is still teaching him; we ought to make a point of presenting praise while yet the blessing is on the wing. The verse is also pre-eminently practical, and full of the actual life of every day; for David's days were spent in camps and conflicts. Some of us who are grievously tormented with rheumatism might cry, "Blessed be the Lord, my Comforter, who teacheth my knees to bear in patience, and my feet to endure in resignation"; others who are on the look out to help young converts might say, "Blessed be God who teaches my eyes to see wounded souls, and my lips to cheer them"; but David has his own peculiar help from God, and praises him accordingly. This tends to make the harmony of heaven perfect when all the singers take their parts; if we all followed the same score, the music would not be so full and rich.

2. Now our royal poet multiplies metaphors to extol his God. "*My goodness, and my fortress.*" The word for *goodness* signifies *mercy*. Whoever we may be, and wherever we may be, we need mercy such as can only be found in the infinite God. It is all of mercy that he is any of the other good things to us, so that this is a highly comprehensive title. O how truly has the Lord been mercy to many of us in a thousand ways! He is goodness itself, and he has been unbounded goodness to us. We have no goodness of our own, but the Lord has become goodness to us. So is he himself also our *fortress* and safe abode: in him we dwell as behind impregnable ramparts and immovable bastions. We cannot be driven out, or starved out; for our fortress is prepared for a siege; it is stored with abundance of food, and a well of living water is within it. Kings usually think much of their fenced cities, but King David relies upon his God, who is more to him than fortresses could have been. "*My high tower, and my deliverer.*" As from a lofty watch-tower the believer, trusting in the Lord, looks down upon his enemies. They cannot reach him in his elevated position; he is out of bow-shot; he is beyond their scaling ladders; he dwells on high. Nor is this all; for Jehovah is our Deliverer as well as our Defender. These different figures set forth the varied benefits which come to us from our Lord. He is every good thing which we can need for this world or the next. He not only places us out of harm's way full often, but when we must be exposed, he comes to our rescue, he raises the siege, routs the foe, and sets us in joyous liberty. "*My shield, and he in whom I trust.*" When the warrior rushes on his adversary, he bears his target upon his arm, and thrusts death aside; thus doth the believer oppose the Lord to the blows of the enemy, and finds himself secure from harm. For this and a thousand other reasons our trust rests in our God for everything; he never fails us, and we feel boundless confidence in him. "*Who subdueth my people under me.*" He keeps my natural subjects subject, and my conquered subjects peaceful under my sway. Men who rule others should

thank God if they succeed in the task. Such strange creatures are human beings, that if a number of them are kept in peaceful association under the leadership of any one of the Lord's servants, he is bound to bless God every day for the wonderful fact. The victories of peace are as much worthy of joyful gratitude as the victories of war. Leaders in the Christian church cannot maintain their position except as the Lord preserves to them the mighty influence which ensures obedience and evokes enthusiastic loyalty. For every particle of influence for good which we may possess let us magnify the name of the Lord.

Thus has David blessed Jehovah for blessing him. How many times he has appropriated the Lord by that little word *My!* Each time he grasps the Lord, he adores and blesses him; for the one word *Blessed* runs through all the passage like a golden thread. He began by acknowledging that his strength for fighting foreign enemies was of the Lord, and he concluded by ascribing his domestic peace to the same source. All round as a king he saw himself to be surrounded by the King of kings, to whom he bowed in lowly homage, doing suit and service on bended knee, with grateful heart admitting that he owned everything to the Rock of his salvation.

3 LORD, what *is* man, that thou takest knowledge of him! *or* the son of man, that thou makest account of him!

4 Man is like to vanity: his days *are* as a shadow that passeth away.

3. "*LORD what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him!*" What a contrast between Jehovah and man! The Psalmist turns from the glorious all-sufficiency of God to the insignificance and nothingness of man. He sees Jehovah to be everything, and then cries, "Lord, what is man!" What is man in the presence of the Infinite God? "What can he be compared to? He is too little to be described at all: only God, who knows the most minute object, can tell what man is. Certainly he is not fit to be the rock of our confidence: he is at once too feeble and too fickle to be relied upon. The Psalmist's wonder is that God should stoop to know him, and indeed it is more remarkable than if the greatest archangel should make a study of emmets, or become the friend of mites. God knows his people with a tender intimacy, a constant, careful observation: he foreknew them in love, he knows them by care, he will know them in acceptance at last. Why and wherefore is this? What has man done? What has he been? What is he now that God should know him, and make himself known to him as his goodness, fortress, and high tower? This is an unanswerable question. Infinite condescension can alone account for the Lord stooping to be the friend of man. That he should make man the subject of election, the object of redemption, the child of eternal love, the darling of infallible providence, the next of kin to Deity, is indeed a matter requiring more than the two notes of exclamation found in this verse.

"*Or the son of man, that thou makest account of him!*" The son of man is a weaker being still,—so the original word implies. He is not so much *man* as God made him, but man as his mother bore him; and how can the Lord think of him, and write down such a cipher in his accounts? The Lord thinks much of man, and in connection with redeeming love makes a great figure of him: this can be believed, but it cannot be explained. Adoring wonder makes us each one cry out, Why dost thou take knowledge of me? We know by experience how little man is to be reckoned upon, and we know by observation how greatly he can vaunt himself, it is therefore meet for us to be humble and to distrust ourselves; but all this should make us the more grateful to the Lord, who knows man better than we do, and yet communes with him, and even dwells in him. Every trace of the misanthrope should be hateful to the believer; for if God makes account of man it is not for us to despise our own kind.

4. "*Man is like to vanity.*" Adam is like to Abel. He is like that which is nothing at all. He is actually vain, and he resembles that unsubstantial empty thing which is nothing but a blown-up nothing,—a puff, a bubble. Yet he is not vanity, but only like it. He is not so substantial as that unreal thing; he is only the likeness of it. Lord, what is a man? It is wonderful that God should think of such a pretentious insignificance. "*His days are as a shadow that passeth away.*" He is so short-lived that he scarcely attains to years, but exists by the day, like the ephemera, whose birth and death are both seen by the self-same sun. His life is only like to a shadow, which is in itself a vague resemblance, an absence of something

rather than in itself an existence. Observe that human life is not only as a shade, but as a shade which is about to depart. It is a mere mirage, the image of a thing which is not, a phantasm which melts back into nothing. How is it that the Eternal should make so much of mortal man, who begins to die as soon as he begins to live?

The connection of the two verses before us with the rest of the Psalm is not far to seek: David trusts in God and finds him everything; he looks to man and sees him to be nothing; and then he wonders how it is that the great Lord can condescend to take notice of such a piece of folly and deceit as man.

5 Bow thy heavens, O LORD, and come down: touch the mountains, and they shall smoke.

6 Cast forth lightning, and scatter them: shoot out thine arrows, and destroy them.

7 Send thine hand from above; rid me, and deliver me out of great waters, from the hand of strange children;

8 Whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood.

5. "*Bow thy heavens, O LORD, and come down.*" The heavens are the Lord's own, and he who exalted them can bow them. His servant is struggling against bitter foes, and he finds no help in men, therefore he entreats Jehovah to come down to his rescue. It is, indeed, a coming down for Jehovah to interfere in the conflicts of his tried people. Earth cries to heaven to stoop; nay, the cry is to the Lord of heaven to bow the heaven, and appear among the sons of earth. The Lord has often done this, and never more fully than when in Bethlehem the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us: now doth he know the way, and he never refuses to come down to defend his beloved ones. David would have the real presence of God to counterbalance the mocking appearance of boastful man: eternal verity could alone relieve him of human vanity. "*Touch the mountains, and they shall smoke.*" It was so when the Lord appeared on Sinai; the strongest pillars of earth cannot bear the weight of the finger of God. He is a consuming fire, and his touch kindles the peaks of the Alps, and makes them smoke. If Jehovah would appear, nothing could stand before him; if the mighty mountains smoke at his touch, then all mortal power which is opposed to the Lord must end in smoke. How long-suffering he is to his adversaries, whom he could so readily consume. A touch would do it; God's finger of flame would set the hills on fire, and consume opposition of every kind.

6. "*Cast forth lightning, and scatter 'hem.*" The Eternal can hurl his lightnings wheresoever he pleases, and effect his purpose instantaneously. The artillery of heaven soon puts the enemy to flight: a single bolt sets the armies running hither and thither in utter rout. "*Shoot out thine arrows, and destroy them.*" Jehovah never misses the mark; his arrows are fatal to his foes when he goes forth to war. It was no common faith which led the poet-king to expect the Lord to use his thunderbolts on behalf of a single member of that race which he had just now described as "like to vanity." A believer in God may without presumption expect the Almighty Lord to use on his behalf all the stores of his wisdom and power: even the terrible forces of tempest shall be marshalled to the fight, for the defence of the Lord's chosen. When we have once mastered the greater difficulty of the Lord's taking any interest in us, it is but a small thing that we should expect him to exert his great power on our behalf. This is far from being the only time in which this believing warrior had thus prayed: the eighteenth Psalm is specially like the present; the good man was not abashed at his former boldness, but here repeats himself without fear.

7. "*Send thine hand from above.*" Let thy long and strong arm be stretched out till thine hand seizes my foes, and delivers me from them. "*Rid me, and deliver me out of great waters.*" Make a Moses of me,—one drawn out of the waters. My foes pour in upon me like torrents, they threaten to overwhelm me; save me from their force and fury; take them from me, and me from them. "*From the hand of strange children.*" From foreigners of every race; men strange to me and thee, who therefore must work evil to me, and rebellion against thyself. Those against whom he pleaded were out of covenant with God; they were Philistines and Edomites; or else they were men of his own nation of black heart and traitorous

spirit, who were real strangers, though they bore the name of Israel. Oh to be rid of those infidel, blaspheming beings who pollute society with their false teachings and hard speeches! Oh to be delivered from slanderous tongues, deceptive lips, and false hearts! No wonder these words are repeated, for they are the frequent cry of many a tried child of God;—“*Rid me and deliver me.*” The devil’s children are strange to us: we can never agree with them, and they will never understand us, they are aliens to us, and we are despised by them. O Lord, deliver us from the evil one, and from all who are of his race.

8. “*Whose mouth speaketh vanity.*” No wonder that men who are vanity speak vanity. “When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own.” They cannot be depended upon, let them promise as fairly as they may: their solemn declarations are light as the foam of the sea, in no wise to be depended upon. Good men desire to be rid of such characters: of all men deceivers and liars are among the most disgusting to true hearts. “*And their right hand is a right hand of falsehood.*” So far their hands and their tongues agree, for they are vanity and falsehood. These men act as falsely as they speak, and prove themselves to be all of a piece. Their falsehood is right-handed, they lie with dexterity, they deceive with all their might. It is a dreadful thing when a man’s expertness lies more in lies than in truth; when he can neither speak nor act without proving himself to be false. God save us from lying mouths, and hands of falsehood.

9 I will sing a new song unto thee, O God: upon a psaltery *and* an instrument of ten strings will I sing praises unto thee.

10 *It is he* that giveth salvation unto kings: who delivereth David his servant from the hurtful sword.

11 Rid me, and deliver me from the hand of strange children, whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand *is* a right hand of falsehood:

9. “*I will sing a new song unto thee, O God.*” Weary of the false, I will adore the true. Fired with fresh enthusiasm, my gratitude shall make a new channel for itself. I will sing as others have done; but it shall be a new song, such as no others have sung. That song shall be all and altogether for my God: I will extol none but the Lord, from whom my deliverance has come. “*Upon a Psaltery and an instrument of ten strings will I sing praises unto thee.*” His hand should aid his tongue, not as in the case of the wicked, co-operating in deceit; but his hand should unite with his mouth in truthful praise. David intended to tune his best instruments as well as to use his best vocal music: the best is all too poor for so great a God, and therefore we must not fall short of our utmost. He meant to use many instruments of music, that by all means he might express his great joy in God. The Old Testament dispensation abounded in types, and figures, and outward ritual, and therefore music dropped naturally into its place in the “worldly sanctuary”; but, after all, it can do no more than represent praise, and assist our expression of it; the real praise is in the heart, the true music is that of the soul. When music drowns the voice, and artistic skill takes a higher place than hearty singing, it is time that instruments were banished from public worship; but when they are subordinate to the song, as here, it is not for us to prohibit them, or condemn those who use them, though we ourselves greatly prefer to do without them, since it seems to us that the utmost simplicity of praise is far more congruous with the spirit of the gospel than pomp of organs. The private worshipper, singing his solo unto the Lord, has often found it helpful to accompany himself on some familiar instrument, and of this David in the present Psalm is an instance, for he says, “*I will sing praise unto thee,*”—that is, not so much in the company of others as by himself alone. He saith not “we,” but “I.”

10. “*It is he that giveth salvation unto kings.*” Those whom the Lord sets up he will keep up. Kings, from their conspicuous position, are exposed to special danger, and when their lives and their thrones are preserved to them they should give the Lord the glory of it. In his many battles David would have perished had not almighty care preserved him. He had by his valour wrought salvation for Israel, but he lays his laurels at the feet of his Lord and Preserver. If any men need salvation kings do, and if they get it the fact is so astonishing that it deserves a verse to itself in the Psalm of praise. “*Who delivereth David his servant from the hurtful sword.*” He traces his escape from death to the delivering hand of God. Note, he speaks in the present tense—*delivereth*, for this was an act which covered

his whole life. He puts his name to the confession of his indebtedness : it is David who owns without demur to mercy given to himself. He styles himself the Lord's servant, accepting this as the highest title he had attained or desired.

11. Because of what the Lord had done, David returns to his pleading. He begs deliverance from him who is ever delivering him. "*Rid me, and deliver me from the hand of strange children.*" This is in measure the refrain of the song, and the burden of the prayer. He desired to be delivered from his open and foreign adversaries, who had broken compacts, and treated treaties as vain things. "*Whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood.*" He would not strike hands with those who carried a lie in their right hand : he would be quit of such at once, if possible. Those who are surrounded by such serpents know not how to deal with them, and the only available method seems to be payer to God for a riddance and deliverance. David in the seventh verse, according to the original, had sought the help of both the Lord's hands, and well he might for his deceitful enemies with remarkable unanimity, were with one mouth and one hand seeking his destruction.

12 That our sons *may be* as plants grown up in their youth ; *that our daughters may be* as corner stones, polished *after* the similitude of a palace :

13 *That our garners may be* full, affording all manner of store : *that our sheep may bring forth* thousands and ten thousands in our streets :

14 *That our oxen may be* strong to labour ; *that there be* no breaking in, nor going out ; *that there be* no complaining in our streets.

15 Happy *is that* people, that is in such a case : *yea, happy is that* people, whose God *is the* LORD.

Riddance from the wicked and the gracious presence of the Lord are sought with a special eye to the peace and prosperity which will follow thereupon. The sparing of David's life would mean the peace and happiness of a whole nation. We can scarcely judge how much of happiness may hang upon the Lord's favour to one man.

12. God's blessing works wonders for a people. "*That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth.*" Our sons are of first importance to the state, since men take a leading part in its affairs ; and what the young men are the older men will be. He desires that they may be like strong, well rooted, young trees, which promise great things. If they do not grow in their youth, when will they grow ? If in their opening manhood they are dwarfed, they will never get over it. O the joys which we may have through our sons ! And, on the other hand, what misery they may cause us ! Plants may grow crooked, or in some other way disappoint the planter, and so may our sons. But when we see them developed in holiness, what joy we have of them ! "*That our daughters may be as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace.*" We desire a blessing for our whole family, daughters as well as sons. For the girls to be left out of the circle of blessing would be unhappy indeed. Daughters unite families as corner stones join walls together, and at the same time they adorn them as polished stones garnish the structure into which they are built. Home becomes a palace when the daughters are maids of honour, and the sons are nobles in spirit ; then the father is a king, and the mother a queen, and royal residences are more than outdone. A city built up of such dwellings is a city of palaces, and a state composed of such cities is a republic of princes.

13. "*That our garners may be full, affording all manner of store.*" A household must exercise thrift and forethought : it must have its granary as well as its nursery. Husbands should husband their resources ; and should not only furnish their tables but fill their garners. Where there are happy households, there must needs be plentiful provision for them, for famine brings misery even where love abounds. It is well when there is plenty, and that plenty consists of "all manner of store." We have occasionally heard murmurs concerning the abundance of grain, and the cheapness of the poor man's loaf. A novel calamity ! We dare not pray against it. David would have prayed for it, and blessed the Lord when he saw his heart's desire. When all the fruits of the earth are plentiful, the fruits of our lips should be joyful worship and thanksgiving. Plenteous and varied may our products be, that every form of want may be readily supplied. "*That our sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets,*" or rather in the open places, the fields, and

sheep-walks where lambs should be born. A teeming increase is here described. Adam tilled the ground to fill the garner, but Abel kept sheep, and watched the lambs. Each occupation needs the divine blessing. The second man who was born into this world was a shepherd, and that trade has ever held an important part in the economy of nations. Food and clothing come from the flock, and both are of first consideration.

14. "*That our oxen may be strong to labour ;*" so that the ploughing and cartage of the farm may be duly performed, and the husbandman's work may be accomplished without unduly taxing the cattle, or working them cruelly. "*That there be no breaking in, nor going out ;*" no irruption of marauders, and no forced emigration ; no burglaries and no evictions. "*That there be no complaining in our streets ;*" no secret dissatisfaction, no public riot ; no fainting of poverty, no clamour for rights denied, nor concerning wrongs unredressed. The state of things here pictured is very delightful : all is peaceful and prosperous ; the throne is occupied efficiently, and even the beasts in their stalls are the better for it. This has been the condition of our own country, and if it should now be changed, who can wonder ? for our ingratitude well deserves to be deprived of blessings which it has despised.

These verses may with a little accommodation be applied to a prosperous church, where the converts are growing and beautiful, the gospel stores abundant, and the spiritual increase most cheering. There ministers and workers are in full vigour, and the people are happy and united. The Lord make it so in all our churches evermore.

15. "*Happy is that people, that is in such a case.*" Such things are not to be overlooked. Temporal blessings are not trifles, for the miss of them would be a dire calamity. It is a great happiness to belong to a people so highly favoured. "*Yea, happy is that people, whose God is the Lord.*" This comes in as an explanation of their prosperity. Under the Old Testament Israel had present earthly rewards for obedience ; when Jehovah was their God they were a nation enriched and flourishing. This sentence is also a sort of correction of all that had gone before ; as if the poet would say—all these temporal gifts are a part of happiness, but still the heart and soul of happiness lies in the people being right with God, and having a full possession of him. Those who worship the happy God become a happy people. Then if we have not temporal mercies literally we have something better : if we have not the silver of earth we have the gold of heaven, which is better still.

In this Psalm David ascribes his own power over the people, and the prosperity which attended his reign, to the Lord himself. Happy was the nation which he ruled ; happy in its king, in its families, in its prosperity, and in the possession of peace ; but yet more in enjoying true religion and worshipping Jehovah, the only living and true God.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—The Psalm, in its mingled tones of prayer and praise, is a fit connecting link between the supplicatory Psalms which go before, and the strains of thanksgiving which follow it.—*Speaker's Commentary.*

Whole Psalm.—After six Psalms of sorrowful prayer in distress, we have now a Psalm of praise and thanksgiving for God's gracious answer to supplications ; and also a Psalm of intercession. The present Psalm bears a strong resemblance to David's last song in 2 Sam. xxii. and to Ps. xviii. Here we have a vision of Christ rejoicing ;—after his passion—risen in glory, and having ascended in triumph, and pleading for us at the right hand of God.—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm is ruled by the numbers ten and seven. Ten verses complete the first part of the Psalm, which falls into two divisions. The first portion contains, in verses 1 and 2, ten attributes of God,—three and seven, the seven divided into four and three. In like manner it contains ten requests to God in verses 5—7, divided precisely as the attributes. To this significance of the number ten for the first part, allusion is pointedly made in verse 9. Seven blessings are prayed for in the second part, four in verses 12, 13 (valiant sons, beautiful daughters, full store-houses, numerous flocks), and three in verse 14 (labouring oxen, no breach and

diminution, no cry). The whole contains, apart from the closing epiphonem, which, as usual, stands outside the formal arrangement, seven strophes, each of two verses.

An objection has been brought against the Davidic authorship from the "traces of reading" it contains. But one would require to consider more exactly, what sort of reading is here to be thought of. It is only the Psalms of David which form the ground-work of this new Psalm. But that it is one of David's peculiarities to derive from his earlier productions a foundation for new ones, is evident from a variety of facts, which, if any doubt must still be entertained on the subject, would obtain a firm ground to stand upon in this Psalm, which *can* only have been composed by David. The way and manner of the use made of such materials is to be kept in view. This is always of a spirited and feeling nature, and no trace anywhere exists of a dead borrowing. That we cannot think here of such a borrowing; that the appropriation of the earlier language did not proceed from spiritual impotence, but rested upon deeper grounds, is manifest from the consideration of the second part, where the dependence entirely ceases, and where even the opponents of the Davidic authorship have not been able to overlook the strong poetical spirit of the time of David. They betake themselves to the miserable shift of affirming that the Psalmist borrowed this part of the Psalm from a much older poem now lost.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 1.—"Blessed be the LORD." A prayer for further mercy is fitly begun with a thanksgiving for former mercy; and when we are waiting upon God to bless us, we should stir up ourselves to bless him.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 1.—"The LORD my strength," etc. Agamemnon says to Achilles—

If thou hast strength, 'twas heaven that strength bestowed;
For know, vain man! thy valour is from God.

Homer.

Verse 1.—"My strength" [Heb. "my rock"]. The climax should be noted; the rock, or cliff, comes first as the place of refuge, then the fortress or *fastness*, as a place carefully fortified, then the personal deliverer, without whose intervention escape would have been impossible.—*Speaker's Commentary.*

Verse 1.—"The LORD . . . teacheth": and not as man teacheth. Thus he taught Gideon to fight with the innumerable host of Midian by sending to their homes two-and-twenty thousand, and retaining but ten thousand of his soldiers: and then again by reducing that remnant to the little band of three hundred who lapped when brought down to the water. Thus he taught Samson by abstaining from strong drink, and by suffering no razor to pass over his head. Thus he taught the three kings in the wilderness to war against their enemies, not by any strength of their armies, but by making ditches in the desert. Thus he taught David himself by waiting for the sound of the going in the tops of the mulberry trees. And so he taught the arms of the True David to fight when stretched on the cross: nailed, to human sight, to the tree of suffering, but, in reality, winning for themselves the crown of glory: helpless in the eyes of scribes and Pharisees; in those of archangels, laying hold of the two pillars, sin and death, whereon the house of Satan rested, and heaving them up from their foundation.—*Ayguan, in Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 1.—"The LORD my strength, which teacheth my hands to war." There were three qualities of a valiant soldier found in Christ, the Captain of our salvation, in his war against Satan, which his followers are bound to emulate: boldness in attack, skill in defence, steadiness in conflict, all which he teaches by his example (Matt. iv. 1, 4, 7, 10, 11). He was *bold in attack*, for he began the combat by going up into the wilderness to defy the enemy. So we, too, should be always beforehand with Satan: ought to fast, even if not tempted to gluttony, and be humble, though not assailed by pride, and so forth. He was *skilful in defence*, parrying every attack with Holy Writ; where we, too, in the examples of the saints, may find lessons for the combat. He was *steadfast in conflict*, for he persevered to the end, till the devil left him, and angels came and ministered unto him; and we, too, should not be content with repelling the first attack, but persevere in our resistance until evil thoughts are put to flight, and heavenly resolutions take their place.—*Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 1.—"Teacheth my hands." Used to the hook and harp, and not to the sword and spear; but God hath apted and abled them to feats of arms and warlike exploits. It is God that giveth skill and success, saith Solomon (Prov. viii.); wisdom

and ability, saith Daniel (chap. ii.). And as in the spiritual warfare, so here; our weapons are "mighty through God" (2 Cor. x. 4), who promiseth that no weapon formed against his people shall prosper (Isa. liv. 17).—*John Trapp.*

Verse 1.—"To war, . . . to fight." I want to speak of a great defect among us, which often prevents the realization of going "from strength to strength"; viz., the *not using, not trading with*, the strength given. We should not think of going to God for money only to keep it in the bank. But are we not doing this with regard to strength? We are constantly asking for strength for service; but if we are not putting this out in hearty effort, it is of no use to us. Nothing comes of hoarded strength.

"Blessed be the Lord my strength, *which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight.*" David, you see, was looking for strength for a purpose. Some people seem to expect strength, but never attempt to put forth their hands to war, and their fingers to fight—there is so little venturing upon God, so little use of grace given, partly from fear of man, partly from indolence and worldly-mindedness. . . . It is not for us to be merely luxuriating in the power which God supplies. Action strengthens, and before we have a right to ask for an increase, we must use that already given.—*Catherine Pennefather, in "Service," 1881.*

Verse 1.—Is not the spiritual victory of every believer achieved by God? Truly it is he who teaches his *hands to war and his fingers to fight*: and when the final triumph shall be sung in heaven, the victor's song will be, "Not unto me, O Lord, not unto me, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy and for thy truth's sake."—*John Morison.*

Verse 1.—"My hands for fight, my fingers for war." *Fight* and *war* are both verbs and nouns in English, but the Hebrew words are nouns with the article prefixed.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 1.—"My fingers to fight." Probably the immediate reference here is to the use of the bow,—placing the arrow, and drawing the string.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 2.—"My goodness," etc. This way of using the word in a passive sense, as in the Hebrew, sounds harshly; just as elsewhere (Ps. xviii. 50) he calls himself "God's king," not in the sense of his having dominion over God, but being made and appointed king by him. Having experienced God's kindness in so many ways, he calls him "*his goodness*," meaning that whatever good he possessed flowed from him. The accumulation of terms, one upon another, which follows, may appear unnecessary, yet it tends greatly to strengthen faith. We know how unstable men's minds are, and especially how soon faith wavers, when they are assailed by some trial of more than usual severity.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 2.—"My fortress." David calls God by names connected with the chief deliverances of his life. The Psalms abound in local references and descriptive expressions, e.g. Ps. xviii. 2 [and in this place]. The word translated "*fortress*" is *metzudah* or *masada*. From 1 Sam. xxiii. 29, I have no doubt that he is speaking of Masada, an isolated peak 1,500 feet high, on which was a stronghold.—*James Wareing Bardsley, in "Glimpses through the Veil," 1883.*

Verse 2.—"My high tower." Such towers were erected on mountains, on rocks, or on the walls of a city, and were regarded as safe places mainly because they were inaccessible. So the old castles in Europe,—as that at Heidelberg, and generally those along the Rhine,—were built on lofty places, and in such positions as not to be easily accessible.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 2.—"My shield." The Hebrew word signifies, not the huge shield which was carried by an armour-bearer, but the handy target with which heroes entered into hand-to-hand conflicts. A warrior took it with him when he used his bow or his sword. It was often made of metal, but still was portable, and useful, and was made to serve as an ornament, being brightened or anointed with oil. David had made abundant use of the Lord, his God, from day to day, in battles many and murderous.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 2.—"Who subdueth my people under me." David, accordingly, having ascribed the victories he had gained over foreign enemies to God, thanks him at the same time for the settled state of the kingdom. Raised indeed as he was from an obscure station, and exposed to hatred from calumnious charges, it was scarcely to have been believed that he would ever obtain a peaceable reign. The people had suddenly, and beyond expectation, submitted to him; and so surprising a change was eminently God's work.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 3.—“*LORD, what is man,*” etc.

Now what is man, when grace reveals
The virtues of a Saviour's blood?
Again a life divine he feels,
Despises earth, and walks with God.

And what in yonder realms above,
Is ransomed man ordained to be?
With honour, holiness, and love,
No seraph more adorned than he.

Nearest the throne, and first in song,
Man shall his hallelujahs raise,
While wondering angels round him throng,
And swell the chorus of his praise.

John Newton, in Olney Hymns.

Verse 3.—“*LORD, what is man?*” Take him in his four elements, of earth, air, fire, and water. In the *earth*, he is as fleeting dust; in the *air*, he is as disappearing vapour; in the *water*, he is as a breaking bubble; and in the *fire*, he is as consuming smoke.—*William Secker, in “The Nonsuch Professor.”*

Verses 3, 4.—“*LORD, what is man,*” etc. There is no book so well worthy reading as this living one. Even now David spake as a king of men, of *people subdued under him!* now he speaks as a humble vassal to God: “*LORD, what is man that thou takest knowledge of him?*” In one breath is both sovereignty and subjugation: an absolute sovereignty over his people; “*My people are subdued under me*”; an humble subjection to the God of kings; “*LORD, what is man?*” Yea, in the very same word wherein is the profession of that sovereignty, there is an acknowledgment of subjection: “*Thou hast subdued my people.*” In that he had a people, he was a king: that they might be his people, a subjection was requisite; and that subjugation was God's and not his own: “*Thou hast subdued.*” Lo, David, had not subdued his people, if God had not subdued them for him. He was a great king, but they were a stiff people: the God that made them swayed them to a due subjection. The great conquerors of worlds could not conquer hearts, if he, that moulded hearts, did not temper them. “*By me kings reign,*” saith the Eternal Wisdom; and he that had courage enough to encounter a bear, a lion, Goliath, yet can say, “*Thou hast subdued my people.*”

Contrarily, in the lowliest subjection of himself, there is an acknowledgment of greatness. Though he abused himself with, “*What is man?*” yet, wital he adds, “*Thou takest knowledge of him, thou makest account of him*”; and this knowledge, this account of God, doth more exalt man than his own vanity can depress him. My text, then, ye see, is David's rapture, expressed in an ecstasical question of sudden wonder; a wonder at God and at man: MAN'S VILENESS; “*What is man?*” GOD'S MERCY AND FAVOUR, in his knowledge, in his estimation of man. Lo, there are but two lessons that we need to take out here, in the world, God and man; man, in the notion of his wretchedness; God, in the notion of his bounty.

Let us, if you please, take a short view of both; and, in the one, see cause of our humiliation; of our joy and thankfulness in the other: and if, in the former, there be a sad Lent of mortification; there is, in the latter, a cheerful Easter of our raising and exaltation.

Many a one besides David wonders at himself: one wonders at his own honour; and, though he will not say so, yet thinks, “*What a great man am I! Is not this great Babel, which I have built?*” This is Nebuchadnezzar's wonder. Another wonders at his person, and finds, either a good face, or a fair eye, or an exquisite hand, or a well-shaped leg, or some gay fleece, to admire in himself: this was Absalom's wonder. Another wonders at his wit and learning: “*How came I by all this? Turba hæc!* This vulgar, that knows not the law, is accursed”: this was the Pharisee's wonder. Another wonders at his wealth; “*Soul, take thine ease*”; as the epicure in the gospel. David's wonder is as much above, as against all these: he wonders at his *vileness*: like as the Chosen Vessel would boast of nothing but his infirmities: “*LORD, what is man?*”

How well this hangs together! No sooner had he said, “*Thou hast subdued my people under me,*” then he adds, “*LORD, what is man?*” Some vain heart would have been lifted up with a conceit of his own eminence; “*Who am I? I am not as other men. I have people under me; and people of my own, and people subdued*

to me ;" this is to be more than a man. I know who hath said, " I said ye are gods."—*Joseph Hall*.

Verse 3.—Dr. Hammond refers this Psalm to the slaying of Goliath, and thus understands the appellation "*son of man*,"—"David was but a young stripling, the youngest and most inconsiderable of all the sons of Jesse, who also was himself an ordinary man."

Verse 3.—"Thou takest knowledge of him." It is a great word. Alas ! what knowledge do we take of the gnats that play in the sun ; or the ants, or worms, that are crawling in our grounds ? Yet the disproportion betwixt us and them is but finite ; infinite betwixt God and us. Thou, the Great God of Heaven, to take knowledge of such a thing as man ! If a mighty prince shall vouchsafe to spy and single out a plain homely swain in a throng, as the Great Sultan did lately a tankard-bearer ; and take special notice of him, and call him but to a kiss of his hand and nearness to his person ; he boasts of it as a great favour : for thee, then, O God, who abasest thyself to behold the things in heaven itself, to cast thine eye upon so poor a worm as man, it must needs be a wonderful mercy.—*Exigua pauperibus magna* ; as Nazianzen to his Amphilochius.—*Joseph Hall*.

Verse 4.—"Man is like to vanity." As he that goeth to a fair, with a purse full of money, is devising and debating with himself how to lay it out—possibly thinking that such and such commodities will be most profitable, and bring him in the greatest gain—when on a sudden a cut-purse comes and eareth him both of his money and how to dispose of it. Surely thou mightst have taken notice how some of thy neighbours or countrymen, when they have been busy in their contrivances, and big with many plots and projects how to raise their estate and names and families, were arrested by death in a moment, returned to their earth, and in that day all their gay, their great thoughts perished, and came to nothing. The heathen historian could not but observe how Alexander the Great, when he had to carry on his great designs, summoned a parliament before him of the whole world, he was himself summonsed by death to appear in the other world. The Dutch, therefore, very wittily to express the world's vanity, picture at Amsterdam a man with a full-blown bladder on his shoulders, and another standing by pricking the bladder with a pin, with this motto, *QUAM SUBITO*, How soon is all blown down ! —*George Swinnoek*.

Verse 4.—"Man is like to vanity." When Cain was born, there was much ado about his birth ; " I have gotten a man-child from God," saith his mother ; she looked upon him as a great possession, and therefore called his name *Cain*, which signifies " a possession." But the second man that was born unto the world bare the title of the world, "*vanity*" ; his name was *Abel*, that is, "*vanity*." A premonition was given in the name of the second man what would or should be the condition of all men. In Psalm cxliv. 4 there is an allusion unto those two names. We translate it, "*Man is like to vanity*" ; the Hebrew is, "*Adam is as Abel*" ; *Adam*, you know, was the name of the first man, the name of *Abel's* father ; but as *Adam* was the proper name of the first, so it is an appellative, or common to all men, now *Adam*, that is, man or all men, are *Abel*, vain, and walking in a vain show.—*Joseph Caryl*.

Verse 4.—"Man is like to vanity," etc. The occasion of the introduction of these sentiments here is not quite clear. It may be the humility of the warrior who ascribes all success to God instead of to human prowess, or it may be a reflection uttered over the corpses of comrades, or, perhaps a blending of the two.—*A. S. Aglen*.

Verse 4.—"Man is like to vanity," etc. With what idle dreams, what foolish plans, what vain pursuits, are men for the most part occupied ! They undertake dangerous expeditions and difficult enterprises in foreign countries, and they acquire fame ; but what is it ?—*Vanity* ! They pursue deep and abstruse speculations, and give themselves to that " much study which is a weariness to the flesh," and they attain to literary renown, and survive in their writings ; but what is it ?—*Vanity* ! They rise up early and sit up late, and eat the bread of anxiety and care, and thus they amass wealth ; but what is it ?—*Vanity* ! They frame and execute plans and schemes of ambition—they are loaded with honours and adorned with titles—they afford employment for the herald, and form a subject for the historian ; but what is it ?—*Vanity* ! In fact, all occupations and pursuits are worthy of no other epithet, if they are not preceded by, and connected with, a deep and

paramount regard to the salvation of the soul, the honour of God, and the interests of eternity. . . . Oh, then, what phantoms, what airy nothings are those things that wholly absorb the powers and occupy the days of the great mass of mankind around us! Their most substantial good perishes in the using, and their most enduring realities are but "the fashion of this world that passeth away."—*Thomas Raffles*, 1788—1863.

Verse 4.—"A shadow that passeth away." The shadows of the mountains are constantly shifting their position during the day, and ultimately disappear altogether on the approach of night: so is it with man, who is every day advancing to the moment of his final departure from this world.—*Bellarmino*.

Verse 5.—"Bow thy heavens." This expression is derived from the appearance of the clouds during a tempest: they hang low, so as to obscure the hills and mountains, and seem to mingle earth and heaven together. Such an appearance is figuratively used to depict the coming of God, to execute vengeance upon the enemies of his people. See Ps. xviii. 10, and other instances.—*William Walford*.

Verse 5.—"Bow thy heavens, O LORD, and come down," etc. This was never so remarkably fulfilled as in the incarnation of Jesus Christ, when heaven and earth were, as it were, brought together. Heaven itself was, as it were, made to bow that it might be united to the earth. God did, as it were, come down and bring heaven with him. He not only came down to the earth, but he brought heaven down with him to men and for men. It was a most strange and wonderful thing. But this will be more remarkably fulfilled still by Christ's second coming, when he will indeed bring all heaven down with him—viz., all the inhabitants of heaven. Heaven shall be left empty of its inhabitants to come down to the earth; and then the mountains shall smoke, and shall indeed flow down at his presence, as in Isa. lxiv. 1.—*Jonathan Edwards*.

Verse 5.—"Touch the mountains, and they shall smoke." The meaning is, when God doth but lay his hand upon great men, upon the mightiest of the world, he makes them smoke or fume, which some understand of their anger; they are presently in a passion, if God do but touch them. Or we may understand it of their consumption. A smoking mountain will soon be a burnt mountain. In our language, to make a man smoke is a proverbial expression for destroying or subduing.—*Joseph Caryl*.

Verses 5, 6.—

Bow thy heavens, Jehovah,
Come down in thy might;
Let the rays of thy glory
The mountain-tops light.

With the bolts of thy thunder
Discomfit my foe,
With the flash of thine arrows
Their force overthrow.

William Digby Seymour.

Verse 6.—"Cast forth lightning." The Hebrew here is, "Lighten lightning;" that is, Send forth lightning. The word is used as a verb nowhere else.—*Albert Barnes*.

Verse 7.—"Send thine hand from above." Hebrew, *hands*, both hands, all thy whole power, for I need it.—*John Trapp*.

Verse 7.—"Rid me, and deliver me." Away, you who theorize about suffering, and can do no more than descant upon it, away! for in the time of weeping we cannot endure your reasonings. If you have no means of delivering us, if you have nothing but sententious phrases to offer, put your hands on you mouths; enwrap yourselves in silence! It is enough to suffer; but to suffer and listen to you is more than we can bear. If Job's mouth was nigh unto blasphemy, the blame is yours, ye miserable comforters, who talked instead of weeping. If I must suffer, than I pray for suffering without fine talk!—*E. De Pressense*.

Verse 7.—"Rid me, and deliver me . . . from the hand of strange children." We must remember that as the Grecians (conceiting themselves the best bred people in the world) called all other nations "barbarians;" so the people of Israel, the stock of Abraham (being God's peculiar covenant people), called all other nations

"aliens" or "strangers;" and because they were hated and maligned by all other nations, therefore they called all professed strangers *enemies*; so the word is used (Isa. i. 7), "Your land strangers shall devour"; that is, enemies shall invade and prevail over you. "Deliver me out of the hand of *strange children*," or out of the hand of strangers; that is, out of the hand of mine enemies. The Latin word *alienus* is often put for *hostis*, and the Roman orator [Cicero] telleth us that "he who is now called a stranger was called an enemy by our ancestors." The reason was because strangers proved unkind to, yea, turned enemies against those that entertained them.—*Joseph Caryl*.

Verse 7.—"Strange children." He calls them *strangers*, not in respect of generic origin, but character and disposition.—*John Calvin*.

Verse 7.—The "strange children," now the enemies of David, shall be either won to willing subjection, or else shall be crushed under the triumphant Messiah (Ps. ii.). The Spirit by David spake things the deep significance of which reached further than even he understood (1 Pet. i. 11, 12).—*Andrew Robert Fausset*.

Verse 8.—"Whose mouth speaketh vanity," etc. Two things go naturally together in the verse—the lying tongue and deceitful hand. The meaning is that upon the matter in hand nothing was to be looked for from any of their promises, since it was only to deceive that they flattered with their mouth and gave the hand.—*John Calvin*.

Verse 8.—"Their right hand is a right hand of falsehood." The pledge of the right hand, which used to be a witness of good faith, was violated by treachery and wickedness.—*Cicero. Philip. xi. c. 2*.

Verse 9.—"Psaltery—an instrument of ten strings." *Nebel-azor*. We are led to the conclusion that the *nebel* was the veritable harp of the Hebrews. It could not have been large, because it is so frequently mentioned in the Bible as being carried in processions. . . . The English translators render *nebel* (apparently without any special reason) by no less than four words; (1) Psaltery, (2) Psalm, (3) lute, (4) viol. The first of these is by far the most common in the Authorised Version, and is no doubt the most correct translation if the word be understood in its true sense as a *portable harp*. *Nebels* were made of fir-wood, and afterwards of almus, or algum, which was, perhaps, the red sandal-wood of India. . . . With *nebel* is often associated the word *azor*, which is traced to a root signifying *ten*, and which has therefore been rendered in the Septuagint by *ἐν δεκαχορδῶν* or as *ψαλτηριον δεκάχορδον* (*psalterium decem chordarum*), or in *dechachordo psalterio* in the Vulgate. In the Chaldee, Syriac, and Arabic versions also are found words implying the existence of ten strings in the *nebel-azor*. The word *azor* may therefore be considered as qualifying or describing the special kind of *nebel* to be used, much in the same way as we now speak of a *trichord pianoforte*. It is in our English version always rendered by the words "ten-stringed."—*John Stainer* in "The Music of the Bible," 1882.

Verse 10.—"It is he that giveth salvation unto kings." Ferdinand, king of Aragon, sending his son against the Florentines, thus bespake him: Believe me, son, victories are not gotten by art or subtlety, but given of God.—*John Trapp*.

Verse 10.—"It is he that giveth salvation unto kings." What a doctrine this for the kings and great men of the earth to remember! Could they be brought to feel and acknowledge it, they would not trust to the sagacity of their own councils, nor to the strength of their own arm; but would ever remember that the Most High is the ruler among the nations, and that he putteth down one and raiseth up another according to the dictates of his own all-perfect will. Such remembrances as this would stain the pride of all human glory, and would lead men to feel that the Lord alone is to be exalted.—*John Morison*.

Verse 11.—This Psalm is the language of a prince who wished his people's prosperity: that their "garners might be full of all manner of stores"; that their "sheep might bring forth thousands and ten thousands in their streets"; that their "oxen" might be fat for slaughter, or "strong for labour"; that there might be neither robbery nor beggary in their streets: no oppressive magistrates, nor complaining people: and as if all these blessings were to be derived from the

character of the people, and the character of the people from the education they had received, our text is a prayer for the youth of Judea.—*Robert Robinson* (1735—1790), in "*The Nature and Necessity of Early Piety.*"

Verse 12.—The reminiscences or imitations of Ps. xvii. suddenly cease here, and are followed by a series of original, peculiar, and for the most part no doubt antique expressions. On the supposition that the title is correct in making David the author, this is natural enough. On any other supposition, it is unaccountable, unless by the gratuitous assumption, that this is a fragment of an older composition, a mode of reasoning by which anything may be either proved or disproved.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 12.—"That our sons may be as plants," etc. They who have ever been employed in the cultivation of plants of any kind, are continually tempted to wish that the human objects of their care and culture would grow up as rapidly, as straight, as flourishingly, would as uniformly fulfil their specific idea and purpose, as abundantly reward the labour bestowed on them. . . . If our sons are indeed to grow up as young plants, like our English oaks, which according to the analogies of Nature, furnish no inappropriate type of our national character, they must not be stunted or dwarfed or pollarded, for the sake of being kept under the shade of a stranger. They should grow up straight toward heaven, as God had ordained them to grow. . . . There is something so palpable and striking in this type, that five-and-twenty years ago, in speaking of the gentlemanly character, I was led to say, "If a gentleman is to grow up he must grow like a tree: there must be nothing between him and heaven."—*Julius Charles Hare*, in a Sermon entitled "*Education the Necessity of Mankind.*" 1851.

Verse 12.—"That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth," etc. Thus David prays for the rising generation. Metaphors seem generally unsuitable to prayer, but they do not wear this aspect in the prayers recorded in the Scriptures. The language of the text is tropical, but the metaphors are suitable and seasonable. *Roots of vegetables* are necessarily invisible. *Tender plants* are insignificant. A plant *grown up*, having height in its stem, width in its branches, abundance in its foliage, and fulness in its bloom, is conspicuous. David prays that the sons of that generation might be in their youth "*as plants grown up*," that is, that their piety might not only live, but that their godliness might be fully expressed. The stones of a *foundation* are concealed. The stones in the *mid-wall* of a building are also necessarily hid. The stones on the *surface* of a wall are visible, but they are not distinguished. The *corner-stone* of buildings in that day was prominent and eminent. Placed at the angle of the structure, where two walls met, on the top of the walls, and being richly ornamented and polished, it attracted attention. David prays that the daughters of that day might make an open and lovely profession of religion—that both sons and daughters might not only *have piety* but *show it.*—*Samuel Martin*, in "*Cares of Youth.*"

Verse 12.—"Plants grown up." "*Corner-stones polished.*" These processes of growth and polish can be carried on in one place only, the church of Christ.—*Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 12.—"That our daughters may be as corner stones," etc. "*The polished corners of the temple,*" rather "*the sculptured angles, the ornament, of a palace.*" Great care and much ornament were bestowed by the ancients upon the angles of their splendid palaces. It is remarkable that the Greeks made use of pilasters, called *Caryatides* (carved after the figure of a woman dressed in long robes), to support the entablatures of their buildings.—*Daniel Cresswell.*

Verse 12.—"That our daughters may be as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace" or temple. By daughters families are united and connected to their mutual strength, as the parts of a building are by the corner-stones; and when they are graceful and beautiful both in body and mind, they are then polished after the similitude of a nice and curious structure. When we see our daughters well established, and stayed with wisdom and discretion, as corner-stones are fastened in the building; when we see them by faith united to Christ, as the chief corner-stone, adorned with the graces of God's Spirit, which are the polishing of that which is naturally rough, and "become women professing godliness"; when we see them purified and consecrated to God as living temples, we think ourselves happy in them.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 12.—"That our daughters may be as corner stones," etc. One might perhaps

at the first glance have expected that the *daughters* of a household would be as the graceful ornament of the clustering foliage or the fruit-bearing tree, and the *sons* as the corner-stones upholding the weight and burden of the building, and yet it is the reverse here. And I think one may read the love and tenderness of the Lord in this apparently casual but intended expression, and that he meant the nations of the earth to know and understand how much of their happiness, their strength, and their security was dependent on the female children of a family. It has not been so considered in many a nation that knew not God: in polished Greece in times of old, and in some heathen nations even to this day, the female children of a family have been cruelly destroyed, as adding to the burdens and diminishing the resources of a household; and alas! too, even in Christian countries, if not destroyed, they are with equal pitiless and remorseless cruelty cut off from all the solace and ties and endearments of life, and immured in that living mockery of a grave, the cloister, that they may not prove incumbrances and hindrances to others! How contrary all this to the loving purpose of our loving God! whose Holy Spirit has written for our learning that sons and daughters are alike intended to be the ornament and grace, the happiness and blessing of every household.—*Barton Bouchier*.

Verse 12.—“*After the similitude of a palace.*” Most interpreters give the last word the vague sense of “*a palace.*” There is something, however, far more striking in the translation *temple*, found in the Prayer Book and the ancient versions. The omission of the article is a poetic license of perpetual occurrence. The temple was the great architectural model and standard of comparison, and particularly remarkable for the great size and skillful elaboration of its foundation-stones, some of which, there is reason to believe, have remained undisturbed since the time of Solomon.—*Joseph Addison Alexander*.

Verses 12—15.—In the former part of the Psalm he speaks of such things as concern *his own* happiness: “*Blessed be the Lord my strength*” (verse 1); “*Send thine hand from above; and deliver me out of great waters*” (verse 7); “*Rid me, and deliver me from the hand of strange children*” (verse 11). And he might as easily have continued the same strain in the clauses following: “*That my sons may grow up as plants, my daughters may be as the polished corners of the temple, my sheep fruitful, my oxen strong, my garners full and plenteous*”; and accordingly he might have concluded it also—“*Happy shall I be, if I be in such a case.*” This, I say, he might have done; nay, this he would have done, if his desires had reflected only upon himself. But being of a diffusive heart, and knowing what belonged to the neighbourhoods of piety, as loth to enjoy this happiness alone, he alters his style, and (being in the height of well-wishes to himself) he turns the singular into a plural—*our sheep, our oxen, our garners, our sons and daughters*, that he might compendiate all in this.—“*Happy are the people.*” Here is a true testimony both of a religious and generous mind, who knew in his most retired thoughts to look out of himself, and to be mindful of the public welfare in his privatest meditations. S. Ambrose observes it as a clear character of a noble spirit, to do what tends to the public good, though to his own disadvantage.—*Richard Holdsworth* (1590—1649), in “*The Valley of Vision.*”

Verses 12—15.—These words contain a striking picture of a prosperous and happy nation. We are presented with a view of the *masculine youth* of the nation by the oaks of the forest, become great in the early period of the vigour and excellency of the soil. They are represented in the distinguishing character of their sex, standing abroad the strength of the nation, whence its resources for action must be derived. On the other hand, the *young females* of a nation are exhibited under an equally just and proper representation of their position and distinguishing character. They are not exhibited by a metaphor derived from the harder tenants of the forest, but they are shown to us by a representation taken from the perpetual accompaniments of the dwelling; they are the supports and the ornaments of domestic life. *Plenty* of every kind is represented to us in possession and in reasonable expectation. “*No breaking in,*” no invasion by a furious foe, oppresses the inhabitants of this happy country with terror; neither is there any “*going out.*” The barbarous practice employed by Sennacherib, and other ancient conquerors, of transporting the inhabitants of a vanquished country to some distant, unfriendly, and hated land,—the practice at this moment employed, to the scandal of the name and the sorrow of Europe—they dread not: they fear no “*going out.*” Under circumstances of such a nature causes of distress or complaint exist not; or, if they do, they are capable of being so modified, and alleviated, and remedied, that *there is no*

complaining in the streets. "Happy, then, is that people, that is in such a case."—*John Pye Smith, 1775—1851.*

Verse 13.—"*That our sheep may bring forth thousands,*" etc. The surprising fecundity of the sheep has been celebrated by writers of every class. It has not escaped the notice of the royal Psalmist, who, in a beautiful ascription of praise to the living and the true God, entreats that the sheep of his chosen people might "*bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets.*" In another song of Zion, he represents, by a very elegant metaphor, the numerous flocks covering like a garment the face of the field:—"The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing": Ps. lxx. 13. The bold figure is fully warranted by the prodigious numbers of sheep which whitened the extensive pastures of Syria and Canaan. In that part of Arabia which borders on Judea, the patriarch Job possessed at first seven thousand, and after the return of his prosperity, fourteen thousand sheep; and Mesha, the king of Moab, paid the king of Israel "a yearly tribute of a hundred thousand lambs, and an equal number of rams with the wool": 2 Kings iii. 4. In the war which the tribe of Reuben waged with the Hagarites, the former drove away "two hundred and fifty thousand sheep": 1 Chron. v. 21. At the dedication of the temple, Solomon offered in sacrifice "an hundred and twenty thousand sheep." At the feast of the passover, Josiah, the king of Judah, "gave to the people, of the flock, lambs and kids, all for the passover offerings, for all that were present, to the number of thirty thousand, and three thousand bullocks: these were of the king's substance": 2 Chron. xxxv. 7. The ewe brings forth her young commonly once a year, and in more ungenial climes, seldom more than one lamb at a time. But twin lambs are as frequent in the oriental regions, as they are rare in other places; which accounts in a satisfactory manner for the prodigious numbers which the Syrian shepherd led to the mountains. This uncommon fruitfulness seems to be intimated by Solomon in his address to the spouse:—"Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep that are even shorn, which came up from the washing; whereof every one bear twins, and none is barren among them": Cant. iv. 2.—*George Paxton (1762—1837), in "Illustrations of Scripture."*

Verses 13, 14.—"*Streets,*" though not incorrect, is an inadequate translation of the Hebrew word, which means external spaces, streets as opposed to the inside of houses, fields or country as opposed to a whole town. Here it includes not only roads but fields.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 14.—"*That our oxen may be strong to labour.*" [Margin: "*able to bear burdens,*" or, *loaded with flesh.*] As in the verse before he had ascribed the fruitfulness of the herds and flocks to God's goodness, so now the fattening of their oxen, to show that there is nothing relating to us here which he overlooks.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 14.—"*That our oxen may be strong to labour.*" Oxen were not only used for ploughing, thrashing, and drawing, but also for bearing burdens; compare 1 Chron. xii. 40, which passage is peculiarly fitted to throw light on the verse before us. Laden oxen presuppose a rich abundance of produce.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 14.—"*That there be no complaining in our streets,*" etc. Rather, "and no cry of sorrow" (comp. Isaiah xxiv. 11; Jer. xiv. 2; xlvii. 12) "in our open places," *i.e.*, the places where the people commonly assembled near the gate of the city (comp. 2 Chron. xxxii. 6; Neh. viii. 1). The word rendered "*complaining*" does not occur elsewhere in the Psalter.—*Speaker's Commentary.*

Verse 14.—"*No complaining.*" No outcries but "*Harvest-homes.*"—*John Trapp.*

Verse 15.—"*Happy is that people,*" etc. We have in the text happiness with an echo, or ingemination; "*happy*" and "*happy.*" From this ingemination arise the parts of my text; the same which are the parts both of the greater world and the less. As the heaven and earth in the one, and the body and soul in the other; so are the passages of this Scripture in the two veins of happiness. We may range them as Isaac does the two parts of his blessing (Gen. xxvii. 28); the vein of civil happiness, in "the fatness of the earth;" and the vein of Divine happiness, in "the fatness of heaven." Or (if you will have it out of the gospel), here's Martha's portion in the "*many things*" of the body; and Mary's better part in the *unum*

necessarium of the soul. To give it yet more concisely, here's the path of *prosperity* in outward comforts, "Happy is that people that is in such a case"; and the path of *piety* in comforts spiritual: "Yea, happy is that people, whose God is the LORD."

In the handling of the first, without any further subdivision, I will only show what it is the Psalmist treats of; and that shall be by way of gradation, in these three particulars. It is *De FELICITATE*; *De Felicitate POPULI*; *De HAC Felicitate Populi*: of happiness; of the people's happiness; of the people's happiness, as in such a case.

Happiness is the general, and the first: a noble argument, and worthy of an inspired pen, especially the Psalmist's. Of all other there can be none better to speak of *popular* happiness than such a *king*; nor of *celestial*, than such a *prophet*. Yet I mean not to discourse of it in the full latitude, but only as it hath a peculiar posture in this Psalm, very various and different from the order of other Psalms. In this Psalm it is reserved to the *end*, as the close of the foregoing meditations. In other Psalms it is set in the *front*, or first place of all; as in the xxxii., in the cxii., in the cxix., and in the cxxviii. Again, in this the Psalmist ends with *our* happiness and begins with God's. "Blessed be the LORD my strength." In the 41st Psalm, contrary, he makes his *exordium* from man's; "Blessed is he that considereth the poor"; his *conclusion* with God's; "Blessed be the LORD God of Israel." I therefore observe these variations, because they are helpful to the understanding both of the *essence* and *splendour* of true happiness. To the knowledge of the *essence* they help, because they demonstrate how our own happiness is enfolded in the glory of God, and subordinate unto it. As we cannot begin with *beatus* unless we end with *benedictus*: so we must begin with *benedictus* that we may end with *beatus*. The reason is this,—because the glory of God is as well the *consummation* as the *introduction* to a Christian's happiness. Therefore as in the other Psalm he begins below and ends upwards; so in this, having begun from above with that which is principal, "Blessed be the LORD"; he fixeth his second thoughts upon the subordinate, "Blessed, or happy, are the people." He could not proceed in a better order: he first looks up to God's kingdom, then reflects upon his own, as not meaning to *take* blessedness before he had *given* it.—Richard Holdsworth.

Verse 15.—"Happy is that people, that is in such a case," etc. The first part of this text hath relation to temporal blessings, "Blessed is the people that be so": the second to spiritual, "Yea, blessed is the people whose God is the LORD." "His left hand is under my head," saith the spouse (Cant. ii. 6); that sustains me from falling into murmuring, or diffidence of his providence, because out of his left hand he hath given me a competency of his temporal blessings; "But his right hand doth embrace me," saith the spouse there; his spiritual blessings fill me, possess me so that no rebellious fire breaks out within me, no outward temptation breaks in upon me. So also Solomon says again, "In her left hand is riches and glory," (temporal blessings) "and in her right hand length of days" (Prov. iii. 16), all that accomplishes and fulfils the eternal joys of the saints of heaven. The person to whom Solomon attributes this right and left hand is Wisdom; and a wise man may reach out his right and left hand, to receive the blessings of both sorts. And the person whom Solomon represents by Wisdom there, is Christ himself. So that not only a wordly wiseman, but a Christian wiseman may reach out both hands, to both kinds of blessings, right and left, spiritual and temporal.

Now, for this blessedness, as no philosophers could ever tell us amongst the Gentiles what true blessedness was, so no grammarian amongst the Jews, amongst the Hebrews, could ever tell us what the right signification of this word is, in which David expresses blessedness here; whether *asherei*, which is the word, be a plural noun, and signify *beatitudes*, blessednesses in the plural, and intimate thus much, that blessedness consists not in any one thing, but in a harmony and consent of many; or whether this *asherei* be an adverb, and signify *beate*, and so be an acclamation, O how happily, how blessedly are such men provided for that are so; they cannot tell. Whatsoever it be, it is the very first word with which David begins his Book of Psalms; *beatus vir*; as the last word of that book is *laudate Dominum*; to show that all that passes between God and man, from first to last, is blessings from God to man, and praises from man to God; and that the first degree of blessedness is to find the print of the hand of God even in his temporal blessednesses, and to praise and glorify him for them in the right use of them. A man that hath no land to hold by it, nor title to recover by it, is never the better for finding, or buying, or having a fair piece of evidence, a fair instrument, fairly written, duly sealed,

authentically testified ; a man that hath not the grace of God, and spiritual blessings too, is never the nearer happiness, for all his abundances of temporal blessedness. Evidences are evidences to them who have title. Temporal blessings are evidences to them who have a testimony of God's spiritual blessings in the temporal. Otherwise, as in his hands who hath no title, it is a suspicious thing to find evidences, and he will be thought to have embezzled and purloined them, he will be thought to have forged and counterfeited them, and he will be called to an account for them, how he came by them, and what he meant to do with them : so to them who have temporal blessings without spiritual, they are but useless blessings, they are but counterfeit blessings, they shall not purchase a minute's peace here, nor a minute's refreshing to the soul hereafter ; and there must be a heavy account made for them, both how they were got, and how they were employed.—*John Donne.*

Verse 15.—“*Happy is that people,*” etc. It is only a narrow and one-sided religion that can see anything out of place in this beatitude of plenty and peace. If we could rejoice with the Psalms fully and without misgiving, in the temporal blessings bestowed by heaven, we should the more readily and sincerely enter into the depths of their spiritual experience. And the secret of this lies in the full comprehension and contemplation of the beautiful and pleasant as the gift of God.—*A. S. Aglen.*

Verse 15.—“*Yea, happy is that people, whose God is the LORD.*” “*Yea, happy.*” This is the best wine, kept to the last, though all men be not of this opinion. You shall hardly bring a worldly man to think so. The world is willing enough to misconstrue the order of the words, and to give the priority to civil happiness, as if it were first in dignity, because 'tis first named : they like better to hear of the *cui sic* than the *cui Dominus*. To prevent this folly, the Psalmist interposeth a caution in this corrective particle, “*yea, happy.*” It hath the force of a revocation, whereby he seems to retract what went before, not simply and absolutely, but in a certain degree, lest worldly men should wrest it to a misinterpretation. It is not an *absolute* revocation, but a *comparative* ; it does not simply deny that there is some part of popular happiness in these outward things, but it prefers the spirituals before them : “*Yea,*” that is, *Yea more*, or, *Yea rather* ; like that of Christ in the Gospel, when one in the company blessed the womb that bare him, he presently replies, “*Yea, rather* blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it :” Luke xi. 28. In like manner, the prophet David, having first premised the inferior part and outside of a happy condition ; fearing lest they should of purpose mistake his meaning, and, hearing the first proposition, should either there set up their rest, and not at all take up the second ; or if they take it in, do it preposterously, and give it the precedence before the second, according to the world's order, *Virtus post nummos*. In this respect he puts in the clause of revocation, whereby he shows that these outward things, though *named* first, yet they are not to be *reputed* first. The particle “*Yea*” removes them to the second place ; it tacitly transposeth the order ; and the path of piety, which was *locally* after, it placeth *virtually* before. 'Tis as if he said, Did I call them *happy* who are in such a case ? Nay, miserable are they if they be only in such a case : the temporal part cannot make them so without the spiritual. Admit the windows of the visible heaven were opened, and all outward blessings poured down upon us ; admit we did perfectly enjoy whatsoever the vastness of the earth contains in it ; tell me, What will it profit to gain all and lose God ? If the earth be bestowed upon us, and not heaven ; or the material heaven be opened, and not the beatifical ; or the whole world made ours, and God not ours ; we do not arrive at happiness. All that is in the first proposition is nothing unless this be added, “*Yea, happy are the people which have the Lord for their God.*”—*Richard Holdsworth.*

Verse 15.—

Thrice happy nations, where with look benign
Thine aspect bends ; beneath thy smile divine
The fields are with increasing harvests crown'd,
The flocks grow fast, and plenty reigns around,
Nor sire, nor infant son, black death shall crave,
Till ripe with age they drop into the grave ;
Nor fell suspicion, nor relentless care,
Nor peace-destroying discord enter there,
But friends and brothers, wives and sisters, join
The feast in concord and in love divine.

Callimachus.

Verse 15.—David having prayed for many temporal blessings in the behalf of the people from verse 12 to verse 15, at last concludes, "*Blessed are the people that are in such a case*"; but presently he checks and corrects himself, and eats, as it were, his own words, but rather, "*happy is that people whose God is the Lord.*" The Syriac rendereth it question wise, "Is not the people [happy] that is in such a case?" The answer is, "No," except they have God to boot: Ps. cxlvi. 5. Nothing can make that man truly miserable that hath God for his portion, and nothing can make that man truly happy that wants God for his portion. God is the author of all true happiness; he is the donor of all true happiness; he is the maintainer of all true happiness, and he is the centre of all true happiness; and, therefore, he that hath him for his God, and for his portion, is the only happy man in the world.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 15.—"Whose God is *Jehovah.*" A word or name well-known to us English, by our translators now often retaining that name in the mention of God in our English Bibles, and therefore we do well to retain it. *Lord* was a lower word, in common acceptation, than *God*. But *Jehovah* is a higher name than either, and more peculiar, incommunicable, and comprehensive. Exod. vi. 3: "I appeared" (saith the Lord) "unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name *God Almighty*, but by my name *Jehovah* was I not known to them."

To have God to be our *Jehovah* is the insurance of happiness to us. For of many, observe but these two things in the name *Jehovah*: First, God's absolute *independency*—that he is of himself omnipotent, Exod. iii. 14: "And God said, *I AM THAT I AM.*" Secondly, God's *faithfulness*, that he cannot but be as good as his word, Exod. vi. 2, 3, 4, 6: "And I have also established my covenant with them; wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am *Jehovah* (so in the Hebrew), and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians." So that this name is our *security* of God's performance. Examine we therefore our bonds, and bills, that is, his promises to us; behold, they are all the promises of *Jehovah*; they must stand good, for they bear his name; they must reflect his name, and promote both our good and God's grand design.—*Nathanael Homes, 1678.*

With this prayer of *Jehovah's* anointed One end the prayers of the Book of Psalms. The remaining six Psalms consist exclusively of praise and high *Hallelujahs*.—*Lord Congleton, in "The Psalms: a new Version, with Notes," 1875.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—I. Two things needful in our holy war—*strength and skill*; for the hands and the fingers, for the difficult and the delicate. II. In what way God supplies us with both. He is the one, and teaches the other. Impartation and Instruction. The teaching comes by illumination, experience, distinct guidance.

Verse 1.—Things not to be forgotten by the Christian Soldier. I. The true source of his strength: "The Lord my strength." If remembered, 1. He will not be found trusting in self. 2. He will never be wanting in courage. 3. He will always anticipate victory. 4. He will never be worsted in the conflict. II. His constant need of instruction, and the Teacher who never forgets him: "Which teacheth my hands," etc. If remembered, 1. He will gird on the armour provided and commended by God. 2. He will select for his weapon the sword of the Spirit. 3. He will study the divinely-given text-book of military tactics and discipline, that he may learn (1) the devices of the enemy; (2) methods of attack and defence; (3) how to bear himself in the thick of the fight. 4. He will wait upon God for understanding. III. The praise due to God, both for victories won and skill displayed: "Blessed be," etc. If remembered, 1. He will wear his honours humbly. 2. Glorify the honour of his King. 3. Twice taste the sweets of victory in the happiness of gratitude.—*J. F.*

Verse 2.—Double flowers. I. Good preserved from evil: "goodness" and "fortress." II. Safety enlarged into liberty: "tower," "deliverer." III. Security attended with rest: "shield, in whom I trust." IV. Sufficiency to maintain superiority: "subdueth my people under me." View God as working all.

Verse 2.—A Group of Titles. Notice, I. Which comes first. "Goodness." *Heb.* "Mercy." 1. It is right and natural that a saved sinner should make the most of "mercy," and place it in the foreground. 2. Mercy is the ground and reason of the other titles named. For whatever God is to us, it is a special manifestation of his mercy. 3. It is a good thing to see a believer ripe in experience making mercy the leading note in his song of praise. II. Which comes last: "He in whom I trust." It suggests, 1. That what God is makes him worthy of trust. 2. That meditation upon what he is strengthens our trust. III. What peculiar force the word "my" gives to each. It makes, 1. A record of experience. 2. An ascription of praise. 3. A blessed boasting. 4. An incentive, enough to set others longing.—*J. F.*

Verse 3.—A note of interrogation, exclamation, and admiration.

Verse 3.—The question, I. Denies any right in man to claim the regard of God. II. Asserts the great honour God has nevertheless put upon him. III. Suggests that the true reason of God's generous dealings is the graciousness of his own heart. IV. Implies the becomingness of gratitude and humility. V. Encourages the most unworthy to put their confidence in God.—*J. F.*

Verse 3.—I. What was man as he came from the hands of his Creator? 1. Rational. 2. Responsible. 3. Immortal. 4. Holy and happy. II. What is man in his present condition? 1. Fallen. 2. Guilty. 3. Sinful. 4. Miserable, and helpless in his misery. III. What is man when he has believed in Christ? 1. Restored to a right relation to God. 2. Restored to a right disposition toward God. 3. He enjoys the influences of the Holy Spirit. 4. He is in process of preparation for the heavenly world. IV. What shall man be when he is admitted into heaven? 1. Free from sin and sorrow. 2. Advanced to the perfection of his nature. 3. Associated with angels. 4. Near to his Saviour and his God.—*George Brooks*, in "*The Homiletic Commentary*," 1879.

Verse 3.—Worthless man much regarded by the mighty God. Sermon by Ebenezer Erskine. Works iii., pp. 141—162.

Verse 3.—It is a wonder above all wonders, that ever the great God should make such account of such a thing as man. I. It will appear if you consider what a great God the Lord is. II. What a poor thing man is. III. What a great account the great God hath of this poor thing, man.—*Joseph Alleine*.

Verse 4.—He is nothing, he pretends to be something, he is soon gone, he ends in nothing as to this life; yet there is a light somewhere.

Verse 4.—The Shadow-World. I. Our lives are like shadows. II. But God's light casts these shadows. Our being is of God. The brevity and mystery of life are a part of providence. III. The destiny of the shadows; eternal night; or eternal light.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 4.—The brevity of our earthly life. 1. A profitable subject for meditation. II. A rebuke to those who provide for this life alone. III. A trumpet-call to prepare for eternity. IV. An incentive to the Christian to make the best of this life for the glory of God.—*J. F.*

Verse 5.—Condescension, visitation, contact, and conflagration.

Verses 7, 8, 11.—Repetitions, not vain. Repetitions in prayer are vain when they result from form, thoughtlessness, or superstition; but not, *e.g.*, I. When they are the utterance of genuine fervour. II. When the danger prayed against is imminent. III. When the fear which prompts the prayer is urgent. IV. When the repetition is prompted by a new motive, verses 7, 8; by God's condescension, verses 3, 11; by God's former deliverance, verse 10; and by the results which will flow from the answer, verses 12—14.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 8.—What is "a right hand of falsehood"? Ask the hypocrite, the schemer, the man of false doctrine, the boaster, the slanderer, the man who forgets his promise, the apostate.

Verse 9.—For God's Ear. I. The Singer. A grateful heart. II. The Song. Praiseful. New. III. The Accompaniment: "Psaltery." Helps to devotion. Give God the best. IV. The Auditor and Object of the eulogium: "Thee, O God."—*W. B. H.*

Verse 11.—Persons from whom it is a mercy to escape: those alien to God, vain in conversation, false in deed.

Verses 11, 12.—The Nature and Necessity of early Piety. A Sermon preached to a Society of Young People, at Willingham, Cambridgeshire, on the First Day of the Year M.DCC.LXXII.—*Robert Robinson*.

Verse 12.—Youth attended with development, stability, usefulness, and spiritual health.

Verse 12 (first clause).—To Young Men. Consider, 1. What is desired on your behalf: "Sons may be as plants," etc. 1. That you may be respected and valued. 2. That you may have settled principles and virtues. Plants are not blown hither and thither. 3. That you may be vigorous and strong in moral power. II. What is requisite on your part to the accomplishment of this desire. 1. A good rootage in Christ. 2. Constant nourishment from the word of God. 3. The dews of divine grace obtained by prayer. 4. A resolute tendency within to answer the God-appointed purpose of your existence.—*J. F.*

Verse 12 (second clause).—To Young Women. Consider, 1. The important position you may occupy in the social fabric: "As corner-stones." 1. The moral and religious tone of society is determined more by your character and influence than by those of men. 2. The complexion of home life will be a reflex of your conduct and character, either as daughters, sisters, or wives. 3. The moulding of the character of the next generation, remember, begins with the mother's influence. 4. Let these facts weigh with you as a motive in seeking the grace of God, without which you can never fulfil your mission worthily. II. The beauty which ought to belong to you in your position. "Polished after," etc. The beauty of, 1. Heart purity: "The King's daughter is all glorious within." 2. A noble and modest conduct: "wrought gold," no imitation; real gold. 3. Gracious and gentle demeanour. III. How both the right position and right beauty are obtained. 1. By yielding yourselves to God. 2. By Christ dwelling in your heart. 3. By becoming living stones and polished stones under the workmanship of the Holy Spirit.—*J. F.*

Verse 14.—A prayer for our ministers, and for the security, unity, and happiness of the church.

Verse 14.—The prosperous Church. There—I. Labour is cheerfully performed. II. The enemy is kept without the gate. III. There are few or no departures. IV. Faith and content silence complaint. V. Pray that such may be our case as a church.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 15.—The peculiar happiness of those whose God is the Lord.
