

FLOWERS FROM A PURITAN'S GARDEN

by Spurgeon

Spurgeon's 1883 collection of meditations drawn from the metaphors and illustrations found throughout the twenty-two volumes of Thomas Manton's works. Spurgeon culled the best figures from Manton's sermons and composed brief devotional reflections around them, presenting Puritan wisdom in an accessible and edifying form for private worship.

3 Chapters

Table of Contents

1. 0.1. Flowers from a Puritan's Garden
2. 1. PREFACE
3. 2. Meditations Inspired by Thomas Manton

0.1. Flowers from a Puritan's Garden

Flowers from a Puritan's Garden by C. H. Spurgeon The text of this module was taken from a PDF created by Monergism ©For more free books like this, and other theological literature, please visit www.monergism.com

1. PREFACE

PREFACE

While commenting upon the One Hundred and Nineteenth Psalm, I was brought into most intimate communion with Thomas Manton, who has discoursed upon that marvelous portion of Scripture with great fullness and power. His works occupy twenty-two volumes in the modern reprint—a mighty mountain of sound theology. They mostly consist of sermons—but what sermons! There is not a poor discourse in the whole collection: he is constantly excellent. Ministers who do not know Manton, need not wonder if they are themselves unknown.

Here, then, is a man whose figures will be sure to be usable by the earnest preacher who has forsworn the baubles of rhetoric, and aims at nothing but the benefit of his hearers. I thought it worth while to go through volume after volume, and mark the metaphors; and then I resolved to complete the task by culling all the best figures out of the whole of Manton's works. Thus my clearing his house of all his pictures, and hanging them up in new frames of my own. I do not rob him, but I bless him by giving him another opportunity of speaking. To make this little book more generally acceptable, I have thrown it into a somewhat devotional form, using Manton's figures as texts for brief meditations: this I humbly hope may be found profitable for reading in the chamber of private worship. The latter half of the work was composed in the gardens and olive-groves of Mentone, where I found it a pleasure to muse, and compose. How I wish that I could have flooded my sentences with the sunlight of that charming region! As it is, I have done my best to avoid dullness, and to aim at edification. If a single practical truth is the more clearly seen through my endeavors, I shall be grateful; and doubly so if others are helped to make their teaching more striking. Highly shall we be favored if the gracious Master shall accept our service, and grant us the consciousness of that acceptance; happier still if we may hope to hear him say, "Well done good an faithful servant!" That all my readers may meet with so great a blessing is the earnest prayer of their grateful servant, C.H. Spurgeon, Westwood, January, 1883.

2. Meditations Inspired by Thomas Manton

Meditations Inspired by Thomas Manton It is time that I am done with all butterfly-hunting!

"As children catch at butterflies—the gaudy wings melt away in their fingers, and there remains nothing but an ugly worm!"

Such is the end of all earthly ambitions! They cost us a weary pursuit, and if we gain our desire—it is destroyed in the grasping of it!

Alas, poor rich man, who has wealth—but has lost the power to enjoy it!

Alas, poor famous man, who in hunting for honor, has learned its emptiness!

Alas, poor beautiful woman, who in making a conquest of a false heart, has pierced her own with undying sorrow! A butterfly-hunt takes a child into danger, wearies him, trips him down, and often ends in his missing the pretty insect. If, however, the boy is able to knock down his victim with his hat—he has crushed the beauty for which he undertook the chase, and his victory defeats him! The parallel is clear to every eye. For my part, let me sooner be the schoolboy, dashing after the painted insect—than his father worrying and wearying to snatch at something more deceptive still.

It is time that I am done with all butterfly-hunting! My years are warning me that I may hope soon to be with Christ Himself, and see greater beauties than this whole creation can set before me. I am now bent on pursuing nothing but that which is eternal and infinite. Keep me to this resolve, I beseech you Lord.

~ ~ ~ They are the willing, abject slaves of what is called amusement!

"In gambling there is a secret enchantment. A man will play a little, and only venture a small sum—but soon he is enticed in, and more and more entangled. Just so, men think it is no great matter to sin a little—and yet that little leads on to more!" The illustration is most forcible. Many people have put down a dollar on the gambling-table when passing through the room—and from that moment their ruin has been sealed. They will be seen from day to day staking their hundreds—until the last fatal roll of the dice leaves them penniless! They are the willing, abject slaves of what is called amusement!

Thus does sin begin with littles, and glides into more serious faults—until the sinner is spellbound, and finds himself enthralled by folly, which he has no ability to leave. Be it ours to give no place to the devil. Let him not have a spot whereon to set up his enchantment, and work his diabolical arts.

If we never venture a farthing upon Satan's table—we shall never be made beggars by his subtle devices!

If he is not allowed to spin a spider's web about us—he will never be able to hold us with the cords of iniquity!

If we never wade into sin—we shall never drown in it!

Lord, keep us from the very appearance of evil!

~ ~ ~ ~ All the devils in Hell, and all tempters on earth!

"A garrison is not free from danger, while it has an enemy lodged within!"

You may bolt all your doors, and fasten all your windows—but if the thieves have placed even a little child within doors who can draw the bolts for them—the house is still unprotected.

All the sea outside a ship cannot do it damage—until the water enters within.

Hence, it is clear that our greatest danger is from within. All the devils in Hell, and all tempters on earth could do us no injury—if there were no corruption in our nature. The sparks will fall harmlessly, if there is no tinder.

Alas, our heart is our greatest enemy—this is the little home-born thief!

Lord, save me from that evil man, myself!

"It is what comes from inside that defiles you. For from within, out of a person's heart, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, wickedness, deceit, lustful desires, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness. All these vile things come from within; they are what defile you!" Mark 7:20-23

~ ~ ~ ~ The devil's chessboard!

"So that Satan will not outsmart us. For we are familiar with his evil schemes!" 2Co 2:11

"Be watchful; the world is the devil's chessboard! You can hardly move backward or forward, but he is ready to attack you with some temptation!"

Those who play at the game of chess know that great caution is needed. Your opponent is working toward a design of which you know nothing; and while you imagine that you are doing exceedingly well, he is entrapping you! The game of life, as against Satan, is one in which . . . his maneuvers and artifice, his long practice and stratagems, his superior skill and deceptiveness, and his unscrupulousness— give him an immense advantage over our poor self-conceited folly!

Lord, help us! You know our adversary; be pleased to deliver us out of his hand.

"Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes!" Eph 6:11

~ ~ ~ ~ Don't bite the stick!

"As children will thank the tailor, and think they owe their new clothes to him rather than to their parent's bounty—so we often look to the instrument of blessing, and thank that instead of God."

Second causes must never be made to stand before the First Cause. Friends and helpers are all very well as servants of our Father—but our Father must have all our praise.

There is a similar evil in the matter of trials and afflictions. We are apt to be angry with the instrument of our affliction—instead of seeing the hand of God over all, and meekly bowing before it.

It was a great help to David in bearing with the railing Shimei—when he saw that God had appointed this provocation as a chastisement. He would not allow his hasty captains to take the scoffer's head, but meekly said, "Let him alone, and let him curse, for the Lord has bidden him." When a dog is struck—he will bite the stick! If he were wise, he would observe that the stick only moves as the hand directs it. Just so, when we discern God in our tribulations, we are helped to be quiet and endure with patience.

Let us not act like silly children, but trace matters to their fountain-head, and act accordingly. May the Spirit of wisdom make us understand.

"He is the LORD; let Him do what is good in His eyes." 1Sa 3:18

"Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away—may the name of the LORD be praised." Job 1:21 "Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?" Job 2:10

"When times are good, be happy; but when times are bad, consider: God has made the one as well as the other." Ecc 7:14

~ ~ ~ ~ The bishop and the knight tumble into the box with the pawns—and the king and the queen fare no better!

"As chessmen are all thrown into the bag together—so in the grave there is no distinction. Skulls wear no wreaths, and corpses carry no marks of honor." The bishop and the knight tumble into the box with the pawns—and the king and the queen fare no better! Death is a terrible leveler! It is a pity that some men carry their heads so high above their fellows all the day—for they will have to sleep at night in the same bed of clay with those whom they despise!

"Poor weeds, rich grain, mirthful flowers together stand.

Alas! death mows down all with an impartial hand!"

"All go to the same place. All come from dust, and to dust all return!" Ecc 3:20

~ ~ ~ ~ 'Tom Thumbs' in grace!

"Though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's Word all over again. You need milk, not solid food!" Heb 5:12 "An infant, if he should continue an infant always, would be a monster!"

However pleased the parents had been with the little one when it was a babe, they would soon be deeply distressed if year after year it still remained a tiny thing. Indeed, they would consider it a great calamity to be the parents of a dwarf.

What, then, shall we say of those professors who never grow? They are no more holy after fifty years! They are infants at sixty years of age!

I have in my house a picture which is made up of the portraits of my sons, taken on their birthdays for twenty-one years. They begin in the cradle, and end as full-grown young men. This is interesting and according to nature.

But, alas, I have spiritual children whom I wheeled about in the stroller twenty years ago—and they are babies still, needing as much care as ever, and are not able to walk alone. Ah me, that so many who ought to be warriors, are weaklings; that those who should be men of six feet tall, are so stunted as to be mere 'Tom Thumbs' in grace!

O for grace to grow in grace, and especially in the knowledge of my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. God save us from a life which does not grow, and from a growth which is not healthy!

~ ~ ~ ~ Even though he had a shipload of such rubbish! The more abundance of truly valuable things a man has—the more he has of true riches. A child counts himself rich when he has a great many marbles, and toys, and rocks—for these suit his childish age and imagination.

Just so, a worldly man counts himself rich when he has a great store of gold and silver, or lands and houses. But a child of God counts himself rich when he has . . .

God for his Portion, Christ his Redeemer, and the Spirit for his Guide, Sanctifier, and Comforter. This is as much above a carnal man's estate in the world, as a carnal man's estate is above a child's toys and trifles—yes, infinitely more!

It is above all things desirable, that we adopt a correct scale to estimate things. When we make our personal audit, we shall fall into grievous error if the principles of our reckoning are not thoroughly accurate. If we reckon buttons as silver, and brass as gold—we shall dream that we are rich, when we are in poverty! In taking stock of our own condition, let us be sure only to reckon that for riches, which is really riches to us. Wealth to the worldling is not wealth to the Christian. His currency is different, his valuables are of another sort.

Am I today poorer in money than I was ten years ago. And at the same time, am I more humble, more patient, more earnest, more loving? Then set me down as a rich man! Have my worldly goods largely increased during the last few years? And at the same time, am I also more proud, more carnal-minded, more lukewarm, more petulant? Then I must write myself down as a poorer man, whatever others may think of my estate. A Christian's riches are within him! External belongings are by no means a sure gain to a man. A horse is none the better off for all its gilded trappings. Just so, a man is in truth, none the richer for his sumptuous surroundings.

Paul was richer than King Croesus, when he was able to say, "I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want!" Php 4:11-12

Such contentment surpasses riches! Solomon, after summing up all his possessions and delights, was compelled to add, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!"

If a man should labor to be rich after the fashion of the poor African natives, and should accumulate a large store of shells and beads—yet when he came home to England he would be a beggar, even though he had a shipload of such rubbish!

Just so, he who gives his heart and soul to the accumulation of gold coins—is a beggar when he comes into the spiritual realm, where such coins are reckoned as mere forms of earth, non-current in Heaven, and of less value than the least of spiritual blessings!

O, my Lord, let me not merely talk thus, and pretend to despise earthly treasure—when all the while I am hunting after it! Grant me grace to live above these perishable things, never setting my heart upon them; nor caring whether I have them, or have them not. But give me grace to exercise all my energy in pleasing You, and in gaining those things which You hold in esteem. Give me, I beseech You, the riches of Your grace—that I may at last attain to the riches of Your glory!

~ ~ ~ Will we be numbered with cat-worshippers and dog-adorers?

"Those who have no children, take pleasure in little dogs and cats."

People must have an object of affection, and if they have not something noble, they will accept something less. Just so, those who disdain to live for God, will live for their own bellies.

If we do not live in all seriousness for a noble object—the probability is that we shall trifle our lives away in doing nothing! Are we prepared for this? Will we be numbered with cat-worshippers and dog-adorers? My God, save me from petty and paltry objects! Deliver me from worthless amusements and hobbies! May the objects of my life's pursuit be worthy of an immortal spirit, worthy of an heir of Heaven!

"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ—set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things!" Col 3:1-2

~ ~ ~ A hazardous game!

"If we play around the viper's hole—it no wonder that we are bitten!" An old proverb advises us not to play with sharp-edged tools, lest we cut our fingers.

It is a sin to trifle with sin! If we must play, we had better find harmless toys! That evil which caused Christ a bloody death, is no fit theme for any man's sport.

Playing with wickedness is a hazardous game! Sooner or later, we will pluck the lion of sin by the beard, and we shall be torn in pieces! This is true of indulgence in strong drink: "Do not gaze at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly! In the end it bites like a snake, and poisons like a viper!" This is equally true of all other forms of evil, especially of the lusts of the flesh. Lewd words, soon lead to foul deeds. Yet such is the folly of men, that they run dreadful risks in sheer wantonness, as though vipers and cobras were fine playmates, and devils were merry-makers!

"Keep your servant from deliberate sins! Do not let them control me. Then I will be free of guilt and innocent of great sin." Psa 19:13

~ ~ ~ Above all, wait at the cross-foot!

"Wisdom's dole is given at wisdom's gates!"

Those who wish for it—must go there for it.

Resort to the 'Beautiful Gate' of the temple—if you would obtain that healing which is given by the gospel.

Search the Scriptures—if you would find eternal life.

Hasten humbly to the gate of prayer—if you would obtain God's covenant blessings.

Above all, wait at the cross-foot—for the purchased blessings of Jesus' love. The dole is free and large, but God has His place appointed for its distribution—be often there.

Lord, I would not be absent when Your alms are being distributed, for I am as poor as poverty itself! See, I am even now waiting at the portal of Your grace. Give me, I beseech you, my daily bread from Heaven, and send me on my way rejoicing.

~ ~ ~ Square me! Prune me!

"There is more hewing, and hacking, and squaring used on a stone which is to be set in the wall of a stately palace—than that which is placed in a rock wall. Just so, the vine is carefully pruned—when the bramble is untouched." This should reconcile believers to their chastisements. It is a well-worn figure; but it is well put.

Brambles certainly have a fine time of it, and grow after their own pleasure. We have seen their long shoots reaching far and wide, and no knife has threatened them as they luxuriated upon the wastelands. The poor vine is cut down so closely, that little remains of it but bare stems. Yet, when clearing-time comes, and the brambles are heaped together for burning—who would not rather be the vine?

Ah, Lord! Let me never sigh for ease, but always seek for usefulness.

Square me until I am fit for a place in Your temple!

Prune me until I yield my utmost fruit!

"Every branch that does bear fruit, He prunes so that it will be even more fruitful!" John 15:2

~ ~ ~ ~ When you wallow in the mud of worldly pleasures!

"If you saw a man laboring in filthy ditches, and soiling himself as poor men do—would you believe that he was the heir to a crown, called to inherit a kingdom? Just so, who will believe in your heavenly calling—when you wallow in the mud of worldly pleasures, and are absorbed with carking care for trivial things?"

Princes should behave as princes! Their haunts should be in palaces—and not amid dung-heaps! How, then, is it that some who profess and call themselves Christians, are found rummaging in questionable amusements to discover pleasure; and many others are groping amid sordid avarice to find satisfaction in wealth?

What are they doing—to be thus disgracing the blood royal! How dare they drag the name of the "Blessed and only Potentate" through the mire! A prince of royal-blood acting as a beggar, would dishonor not only himself but all the royal house. Nobility has obligations! The eminent nobility of the saints, puts them under heavy bonds to act as the true aristocracy of the universe!

Come, my soul, do you behave royally? I am made a king by Jesus Christ—are my bearing and life-style answerable to the dignity laid upon me?

Lord, you must teach your poor child. I have so long been a vagabond and an outcast, that unless you teach me the majestic life-style of your holy courts—I will dishonor both myself and You!

"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God!" Col 3:1-3

~ ~ ~ ~ A poor beast that is going homeward, goes cheerfully! See how the horse pricks up his ears and quickens his pace when you turn his head to his stable. Even the dull donkey does the same.

Much more then should Christians feel the attractions of their heavenly home!

Courage, brothers and sisters; we, too, are homeward bound! Every hour brings us nearer to the many mansions! Our way is toward the Father's house on high, therefore let us rejoice at every step we take!

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. In my Father's house are many mansions. I am going there to prepare a place for you!" John 14:1-2

~ ~ ~ ~ Here little—and hereafter much!

"I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want!" Php 4:10-12

We look for more in this life than it will ever yield to us. If we would be satisfied with less—we would be less dissatisfied. Probably there is as much happiness in one station of life as in another—if we are content in that situation which the Lord has placed us in. The misery of life is when a man has a great deal less than he aspires to. Contentment is the crown-jewel of a happy life! We shall have enough, for God's promises guarantee us our necessary portion. Why need we fret after more?

"Here little—and hereafter much!" as Bunyan says, is best for us!

O Lord, grant me grace to live above the poor trifles of this fleeting world!

~ ~ ~ ~ A sin-expelling power over our lives!

"Old leaves, if they remain upon the trees through the autumn and the winter—fall off in the spring."

We have seen a hedge all thick with dry leaves throughout the winter, and neither frost nor wind has removed the withered foliage—but the spring has soon cleared them off. The new life dislodges the old, pushing it away as unsuitable to it. In the same way, our old corruptions are best removed by the growth of new graces.

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new!" 2Co 5:17

It is as the new life buds and opens, that the old worn-out things of our former state are compelled to give up their hold of us. Our wisdom lies in living near to God, that by the power of His Holy Spirit all our graces may be vigorous, and may exercise a sin-expelling power over our lives—the new leaves of grace pushing off our old worldly affections and habits of sin. With new converts, it is often better not to lay down stringent rules as to worldly amusements—but leave the new life and its holier joys, to push off the old pleasures. Thus it will be done more naturally and more effectively.

We have all heard of the expulsive power of a new affection. This new affection of love to God coming into the soul, expels love to sin!

Lord, let Your life in me, push off the relics of my former sinful self—that I may put on the new man, and manifest Your transforming grace!

~ ~ ~ ~ Yes, indeed, this is the wonder of wonders, the miracle of miracles!

"Christ died for the ungodly!" Rom 5:6

Yes, indeed, this is the wonder of wonders, the miracle of miracles—at which my mind will forever stand amazed! That the thrice Holy Savior should take the sinner's place, and, coming under the sinner's doom, should be smitten of God—this is a mystery past finding out!

Hell is horribly amazing—but the death of Jesus is far more astounding, and especially that in death He should cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me!" Only the Son of God could endure this great grief. Yet is it a mystery of mysteries, that so divine a person should be capable of enduring it. The marvel is thought to be, that a man should be able to suffer so much. But the real marvel is that, being God, He should suffer at all. The being forsaken by the Father, was the very essence of His grief! My soul, adore and love—you cannot understand it!

Behold the eclipse of your soul's Sun, and know that, had not this been, you would have been in the darkness of Hell forever!

~ ~ ~ ~ We pity the poor wretch who can dance under the gallows!

"Do you account him a happy man, who is condemned to die—because he has a plentiful allowance until his execution? Do you account him a happy man, who makes a fair show abroad—while at home he is pinched with poverty and misery? Do you account him a happy man, who revels in all kinds of pleasures today—but is to die this night?"

If we view unpardoned sinners aright, we shall heartily pity them! Let their temporal condition be as good as it may at this present time—the wrath of God abides on them, and they are "condemned already!" And as for the future, it is black with certain doom!

Alas for the unhappy man against whom God sets His face! What misery can be greater, than to be reserved for damnation in the great day of the wrath of God? We wonder at the mirth of men who are condemned to Hell—their fantasy is terrible to behold!

Hence we cannot join with them in their carnal mirth. Sinners may dance—but it will not be to our music. They may revel and riot—but we dare not endorse them in their jollity, for we know that their day is coming!

If you are indeed a child of God—let no desire to share their carnal delights lurk in your mind! Do not be envious of the prosperity of the wicked! Who would envy a criminal about to be executed, of his last cup of wine? Do not let their frivolities attract you. We pity the poor wretch who can dance under the gallows which he will shortly hang on! Just so, sinners who are on the road to Hell sporting and jesting, are worse than mad! Their singing will soon turn to sighing!

"But as for me, my feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold! For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong. They are free from the burdens common to man; they are not plagued by human ills. From their callous hearts comes iniquity; the evil conceits of their minds know no limits! This is what the wicked are like—always carefree, they increase in wealth." Psa 73:2-7; Psa 73:12

"When I tried to understand all this, it was oppressive to me—until I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny!" Psa 73:16-17

~ ~ ~ ~ What a volume Mr. Recorder Conscience has written already!

"If conscience speaks not, it writes. For it is not only a witness, but a register, and a book of record: 'The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and the point of a diamond!' Jer 17:1. We know not what conscience writes, being occupied and taken up with carnal vanities—but we shall know hereafter, when the books are opened, Rev 20:12. Conscience keeps a diary, and marks down everything! This book, though it is in the sinner's keeping—cannot be erased and blotted out. Well, then, a sleepy conscience will not always sleep; if we do not allow it to awaken here—it will awaken in Hell!"

Let those who forget their sins take note of this! There is a recorder within you taking notes, and he will publish all, where all will hear it. Never say, "Nobody will see me!" for you will see yourself, and your conscience will give infallible evidence against you.

What a volume Mr. Recorder Conscience has written already! How many 'blotted pages' he has in store, to be produced upon my final trial.

O You who alone can erase this dreadful handwriting, look on me in mercy, as I now look on You by faith.

"They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them." Rom 2:15

~ ~ ~ ~ These short-lived troubles!

"All the difficulties of the present life are but like one rainy day—compared to an everlasting sunshine!"

How readily, then, should we bear these short-lived troubles! They are but for a moment, just a passing shower—and then the sun will shine out forever!

Time is nothing, when compared with eternity. To a believer, this sorrowful life is like one drop of grief, lost in a sea of glory—or one speck of rain, in a year of fair weather. These light and momentary afflictions are not worthy to be compared with the eternal bliss which awaits us!

"Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory!" 2Co 4:16-17

~ ~ ~ ~ A child can crush a serpent's egg!

"It is easier to crush the egg—than to kill the serpent!"

It is prudent to break up all the eggs we can find, before the reptiles are hatched!

Just so, far greater wisdom will be shown in early dealing with a temptation, than in allowing it time to make headway. It is best to correct ourselves early and unhesitatingly to stamp out the first sparks of evil desire, before passion rises to a flame! A child can crush a serpent's egg—but who will contend with the venomous creature which may be hatched from it, if it is left unbroken? So is it with that vice which stings like a viper! The first glass can readily be refused; it is quite another matter to stop when the wine has entered the brain. The first lust we may readily avoid; but when unchaste desires are fully aroused, who shall bridle them?

O Lord, teach me to crush sin early, lest it should gather strength and crush me!

~ ~ ~ ~ Do we want to be rulers of the universe?

"He who will be his own carver, seldom carves out a good portion to himself. Willful spirits who attempt to control their own providence, entrench upon God's prerogative, and take the work out of His hands. Therefore, it is no wonder if He turns their wisdom into folly!

It is God's business to regulate providence—and when we attempt it, we cause only confusion and trouble. Not only does the carver for himself get a poor portion—but he frequently cuts his fingers, and spoils his clothes, by spilling the contents of the dish.

Israel went into Canaan well enough—when the Lord led the way. But when the people presumed to go up on their own—they brought defeat upon themselves.

Just so, it is never well either to run before the cloud, or to stay behind it. In either case we may expect to fall under clouds of another sort, which will darken our way and becloud our peace. Can we not trust the Lord with His own business? Can we supplement His infallible wisdom—or improve upon His infinite goodness? Have we not enough to do, if we earnestly endeavor to obey our Lord? Are we tired of being His disciples and followers? Do we want to be rulers of the universe?

Why do we strain after things too high for us, intruding into spheres which belong to God alone? My soul, be still—God is at the helm, and He is well able to pilot the vessel. Keep your hand off the helm! Down with you, unbelief—what have you to do while God Himself provides for His people?

~ ~ ~ ~ "The compass-needle may be shaken and agitated, but it never rests until it turns toward the pole!"

Thus our heart's affections, when once magnetized by the love of Christ, find no rest unless we turn to Him. The cares and labors of the day may carry our thoughts to other objects, even as a finger may turn the compass-needle to the east or west. But no sooner is the pressure removed, than our thoughts fly to the Well-beloved, just as the needle moves to its place.

We are unable to rest anywhere but in Jesus. The new birth has disqualified us for contentment with the world—and hence we have no choice but to find our all in Christ. Blessed necessity!

We are driven to Jesus, by an unrest which finds no remedy elsewhere!

We are drawn to Jesus, by an impulse which we have no desire to resist!

We mourn that we are subject to many deflections and disturbances; but you know, O Lord, that our inmost soul seeks after Yourself!

"As the deer longs for streams of water, so I long for You, O God. I thirst for God, the living God!"
Psa 42:1-2

"O God, You are my God, earnestly I seek You. My soul thirsts for You, my body longs for You, in a dry and weary land where there is no water!" Psa 63:1

~ ~ ~ ~ The Only Everlasting Flower! The flowers which grow in earth's garden, wither in our hands while we smell them. They are as frail as they are fair. They grow out of the dust—and to the dust must they return. As Herbert says, "Their root is ever in their grave, And they must die!"

How speedy is their withering. They are gathered by the hand and laid before us—and they wilt and become sickly, fainting, decaying objects. At the very longest, their lives smile through a day or two, and all is over. Which of earth's joys is better than her flowers?

Health flies, wealth takes to itself wings, honor is a puff of air, and pleasure is a bubble!

Only from Heaven can we expect "pleasure forever more," and "everlasting joy." The Rose of Sharon blooms through all the ages; and the Lily of the Valley, which is Jesus himself, outlasts all time. Yes, this is the only Everlasting Flower, for He alone has immortality. Why, then, should we seek for the living among the dead—or search for substance in the land of shadows?

Henceforth, my soul . . . gather your Hearts-ease in the garden of the Lord, pluck your Forget-me-nots from beds which Christ has planted, and look for your Crown-Imperial only in the Paradise above. The flowers of the field are children's adornments. See how the little ones garland themselves, and fashion chaplets with the buttercups and daisies. Earth's loveliest joys are good child's play; but, my soul, you have to act a nobler part—seek the bliss which fades not away. Turn to God, your exceeding joy, and then if your years are multiplied upon earth, you shall have a life-long possession. Or if you are caught away suddenly, you shall carry with you in your bosom, the rosebud of a life which will open to perfection, in the land where fading and withering are things unknown!

~ ~ ~ ~ But for this one day of life, which is already half over!

"If a man might own a humble cottage for a hundred years—he would prize it much more than the possession of a palace for a day!" Of course he would! This is what adds so much preciousness to

the joys of Heaven—for they are eternal. The fleeting pleasures of this world, however bright they seem—are but for this one day of life, which is already half over! If they were all they profess to be, and a thousand times more—they would not be worthy to be mentioned in comparison with "eternal pleasures" at God's right hand!

O You who fill eternity, impress me with the solemn import of Your Word, and let me feel that all time's fleeting cares and caresses are as dreams; while the things of eternity alone have substance in them. Give me Your grace that I may "lay hold on eternal life."

"For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal!" 2Co 4:17-18

~ ~ ~ ~ See how people weep under a moving sermon!

"We do not judge of men's complexions by the color they have when they sit before the fire. Just so, we cannot judge of a man by the emotions which he has when he is under the influence of a compelling sermon."

If all were truly godly who are occasionally good—then godly men would not be scarce. See how people weep under a moving sermon! Think not, therefore, that their hearts are changed, for even marble drips in certain weathers. A man fresh from a revival-meeting looks like a zealous Christian—but see him when he goes to market. A face rendered red by the fire soon loses all its ruddiness. Just so, do many lose all their godliness when they leave the society of the godly.

Lord, give me a complexion which I shall wear all my lifetime, and when time shall be no more!

~ ~ ~ ~ Surely there can be no greater farce!

"Warm milk is fitter to nourish a babe, than cold milk. Just so, the Word of God delivered by a lively voice and sincere heart, has a greater congruity and suitableness to the work of grace."

Moreover, there is no milk fitter for a babe like that which comes warm from the mother's bosom. Hearing a borrowed sermon—is like a child's sucking from a bottle. But as that child grows best, which takes its nutriment fresh from the mother—so hearing of warm-hearted discourses, fresh from the preacher's heart, is the most nourishing to the child of God. There is no warmth like heart-warmth, and no testimony like that of experience. This is the grand distinction between one kind of preaching and another. One sermon is delivered with a cold propriety, as if the preacher had no concern in it, nor his hearers either—and as a rule it fails to satisfy the soul. Another discourse may have less food in it than the first—but as it comes from the preacher's inmost soul, and he speaks it with warmth of zeal and melting affection—it enters into the hearer, is assimilated by him, and makes him grow thereby.

Surely there can be no greater farce—than dull, lifeless preaching. By taking the soul out of a man, we cause him to become a loathsome and offensive corpse. Just so, has the doctrine of the gospel, when it has been divorced from the affection of the minister, become a heartless creed, bringing more of bondage to men's intellects than of sustenance to their souls.

If the shepherd is not alive, what will the sheep be? If men are compelled to feed upon ice, and to dwell among icebergs—they will be frozen. While those who are warmed by an ardent ministry are likely to become fervent Christians.

Lord, let me rather be dumb, than so preach your word as to deprive it of that holy warmth which makes it nourishing food for your children. Let me not set Your sick ones down to cold foods for which they will have no stomach. If I am not eloquent—yet let me be affectionate. If I cannot speak with the wisdom of a father—yet let me speak with the heart of a brother.

~ ~ ~ What do they expect from such folly?

"A plaster may be of sovereign efficacy—but when you keep pulling it off and on, it does you no good."

Faith applies Christ to the soul; but what if unbelief tears Him away? A promise is a great heal-all; but what if we believe and disbelieve, trust and distrust? How can the surest promise comfort us? Men turn to God in their fashion, and before any benefit can come from it, they turn away from Him. What do they expect from such folly? Instability in eternal concerns is . . . a deadly evil, a mockery of God, and a robbery of ourselves!

Lord, Your Son's atonement be the blessed plaster which has healed my soul's sore. You have applied it, and I will keep it on my heart forever—whatever may happen, and whoever may ridicule. This hope I have by your grace, and none shall take it from me!

~ ~ ~ The preacher's best commendation!

"The hearer's changed life, is the preacher's best commendation. Those who praise the man but do not practice the matter, are like those who taste wines and commend them—but they don't buy them!"

What a hindrance such vain folk are to dealers who are in earnest to do business! Their time is wasted, their labor is lost, and their hopes are disappointed.

Oh that these loafers and idlers would leave our market! We set forth the precious produce of Heaven's own vintage, and hope that they will buy from us. But no, they lift the glass, and talk like fine connoisseurs—and then go off without coming to a bargain!

Sermons which we have studied with care, delivered with travail, prayed over, and wept over—are praised for such minor matters as taste, accuracy, and diction—but the truth they contain is not received. We cannot bring our hearers to a decided bargain, though our wares are the best that Heaven can supply.

Reader, is it so with you?

~ ~ ~ The grandest benefactors of the church!

"By running and exercising every day, you are the fitter to run in a race. Just so, the oftener you come into God's presence the greater confidence, and freedom, and enlargement it will bring to your soul." No doubt by praying we learn to pray, and the more we pray the oftener we can pray, and the better we can pray. He who prays by fits and starts is never likely to attain to that effectual,

fervent prayer which avails much.

Prayer is good, the habit of prayer is better, but the spirit of prayer is the best of all.

It is in the spirit of prayer, that we pray without ceasing—and this can never be acquired by the man who seldom prays.

It is astonishing what distances men can run, who have long practiced—and it is equally marvelous for what a length of time they can maintain a high speed after they have once acquired stamina, and skill in using their muscles.

Just so, great power in prayer is within our reach, but we must go to work to obtain it. Let us never imagine that Abraham could have interceded so successfully for Sodom, if he had not been all his lifetime in the practice of communion with God. Jacob's all-night at Peniel was not the first occasion upon which he had met his God. We may even look upon our Lord's most choice and wonderful prayer with His disciples before His Passion, as the flower and fruit of His many nights of devotion, and of His often rising up a great while before day to pray. A man who becomes a great runner has to put himself in training, and to keep himself in it; and that training consists very much of the exercise of running. Those who have distinguished themselves for speed have not suddenly leaped into eminence, but have long been runners.

Just so, if a man dreams that he can become mighty in prayer just when he pleases, he labors under a great mistake. The prayer of Elijah, which shut up Heaven and afterward opened its floodgates—was one of a long series of mighty prevailings with God. Oh that Christian men would remember this!

Perseverance in prayer is necessary to prevalence in prayer!

Those great intercessors, who are not so often mentioned as they ought to be in connection with confessors and martyrs, were nevertheless the grandest benefactors of the church. But it was only by abiding at the mercy-seat, that they attained to be such channels of mercy to men. We must pray to pray, and continue in prayer—that our prayers may continue.

O Jesus, by whom we come to God, seeing You have Yourself trodden the way of prayer, and never turned from it—teach me to remain a suppliant as long as I remain a sinner, and to wrestle in prayer so long as I have to wrestle with the powers of evil. Whatever else I may outgrow, may I never dream that I may relax my supplications.

"Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful." Col 4:2

~ ~ ~ It is amazing what pains men will bear to hunt a fox or shoot a partridge!

"In hunting and fishing, though there is as much labor as in our ordinary employments—yet we count the toil nothing, because of the delight we have in them."

It is amazing what pains men will bear to hunt a fox or shoot a partridge—and yet they make nothing of it, but call it sport. In like manner, many a zealous worker for the Lord Jesus will preach, and teach, and labor—and call it his recreation, with which he fills up his leisure hours. We know many such, and we hope we shall yet know more.

Love makes labor light! Men will do voluntarily, that which they would never undertake for pay; and they will keep up freely under an amount of pressure which would crush the hireling. There lies the grand secret. Make God's holy service a delight—and you can do any amount of it.

Lord, Your service is my pleasure. Could I but serve You perfectly, without hindrance and without mistake—it would be pure delightfulness—it would be Heaven to me! It would be far more wearisome not to serve you, O my God, than it ever can be to perform the most arduous labor for Your love's sake!

~ ~ ~ Come, friend, you too are getting old!

"We see that others are mortal—but we do not number our own days!" This is an ordinary observation concerning that which is really an extraordinary piece of folly! What can it matter to us, how other are aging? Our main concern is our own conduct, and the spending of our own days.

Come, friend, you too are getting old! Snowflakes here and there upon those once raven locks, are prophetic of coming winter. Those spectacles, too! Why, you will never see fifty again! Half a century have you lived, and more—surely it is time to be wise!

We see that Mr. Brown is getting to be quite the old man. No doubt—but you are moving onward, too. Mr. Brown does not get a year older in less time than you do. We are all sailing at the same rate! Is it not time that we took observations, and found out our longitude and latitude? At any rate, it were well to know what port we are bound for!

"My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle!" Job 7:6 "Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom." Psa 90:12

~ ~ ~ If we spend our time on the newspaper, or sit hour after hour reading trashy novels!

"Take a mirror and turn it toward Heaven—and there you shall see the reflection of Heaven, the clouds and things above. Turn it downward toward the earth, you shall see the reflection of the earth, trees, meadows, men. Just so does the soul receive a reflection from the things to which it is set. If the heart is set toward Heaven—that puts you into a heavenly frame. If you set your heart on earthly objects—you are a man of the earth!" Are our thoughts and our affections full of worldliness? Let us make good use of the above figure, and turn the mirror the other way. Our mind will readily enough reflect divine things, if we turn it in that direction.

Let us see if it is not so. Prayerfully read your Bible, or look at the biography of a holy man, or some lively book of devotion—and see if the heart is not immediately filled with holy and heavenly reflections. At any rate, if we spend our time on the newspaper, or sit hour after hour reading trashy novels—we have no reason to wonder that thought and heart go after vanity! The turning of the mind upward is half the battle. We cannot expect it to reflect that toward which it does not turn. Those who mind earthly things—are earthly; those who set their affections upon things above—are heavenly.

Paul shows how practically useful it is to turn the mind Godward, when he says that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, "looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ."

We may well cry concerning this matter, "Turn us, O Lord, and we shall be turned!" If we cannot see divine truth to our enjoyment—let us nevertheless look that way; for that eye is blessed which looks in the direction of the light.

He who would behold the sun at its rising—must not look to the west!

Just so, he who would see God as his delight—must look Godward.

If the mirror of the soul is resolutely set toward the Lord, we shall with open face behold, as in a mirror, the glory of the Lord, and be changed into the same image from glory to glory!

O, my blessed Master, help me I beseech you, to keep the mirror of my mind in the right position—that evermore I may see You! True, it will be but as in a dark mirror, but even that will be a marvelous preparation for beholding Your face to face in glory!

"Those who live according to the sinful nature—have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit—have their minds set on what the Spirit desires."
Rom 8:5

"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things!" Col 3:1-2

~ ~ ~ ~ Let my life be filled, packed and crammed!

"When men have much to say in a letter, and perceive that they have little paper left, they write closely."

Looking at the shortness of life, and the much that has to be written upon life's tablets—it befits us also to do much in a short space, and so to write closely.

"No day without a line," is a good motto for a Christian. A thoroughly useful life is very short, for it is but a span—but how much may be crowded into it for God, our souls, the Church, our families, and our fellows!

We cannot afford wide blanks of idleness. We should not only live by the day, but by the 20 minutes, as Wesley did. He divided each hour into three parts. So scanty is our life's space, that we must condense, and leave out superfluous matter; giving room only to that which is weighty, and of the first importance.

Lord, whether I live long or not, I leave to your discretion. But help me to live while I live, that I may live much. You can give life more abundantly. Let me receive it, and let my life be filled, packed and crammed, with holy thoughts and words and deeds to Your glory!

"But this I say, brethren, the time is short!" 1Co 7:29

~ ~ ~ ~ Who would not drag him out?

"Sin is a malicious guest, for it always sets its lodging on fire!"

Entertained within the human heart, and cherished and fondled—sin always makes its host an evil payment. It places the burning coals of evil desire within the soul, with evident intent to fire the whole man with fierce passions. Let these passions be allowed to rage, and the flame will burn

even to the lowest Hell! Who would not shut his door on such a guest? Or if he is known to be lurking within—who would not drag him out? How foolish are those who find delight in such an enemy—and treat him with more care than their best friend!

~ ~ ~ Providence is no other than God providing!

"To be served at table by a great prince, would be counted as great a favor as the meal itself. Just so, to take outward blessings out of God's hand—to see that He remembers us, and sends our provision at every turn—this endears His mercy, and increases our delight in Him."

What, indeed, would most men give if they could say, "The Queen herself has served me, and was most anxious that I should be well supplied!" But each believer has the Lord Himself for his Provider. He loads our table, and fills ours cup. Providence is no other than God providing! He . . . measures out our joys, weighs our sorrows, appoints our labors, and selects our trials!

There is no morsel on the saint's plate, which is not of the Lord's serving—unless he has been so foolish as to put forth his hand unto iniquity.

It is delightful to know that our Father's hand provided for us the bread which we have eaten this day; that the Savior's own fingers mingled our cup; and that every blessing has come directly from God's own table!

Surely we are as dear to God as the little ewe lamb in Nathan's parable was to the poor man. For we are told that "the poor man had raised it, and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food, drank from his cup and even slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him!" Does not this make our food, and drink, and lodging more than royal? Are we not more than content with such fare?

Yes, Lord, my portion tastes of Your divine love, for Your hand has sweetened it. A sacred perfume is on my clothing and in my chamber—for You have prepared both for me. And this would be true if I wore rags, and lay in a dungeon, in sore sickness! What a heritage is mine!

O Lord, You are my all, and my all in all. My all is more than all—because it comes of You, and is dealt out to me by Your own precious self!

~ ~ ~ ~ I would rather have less earth and more Heaven! The greatest worldly advantages cannot compensate for the loss of spiritual privileges, and yet we know many who scarcely take this matter into consideration in the choice of their pursuits and positions in life. A tradesman is earning a competence, and is able to attend the house of God, and to give part of his time and talents to the service of the church. Yet he thinks it to be advisable to encumber himself with an extra job—and thereby renders himself unable either to profit the church, or to be profited himself by the services of the Lord's house. Is this the way of wisdom? Can this man say that God's words are more desired by him than gold, yes, than much fine gold? A young man is in a fair position, where he has godly surroundings, and every opportunity for spiritual progress. Yet, for the sake of a few dollars more, he re-locates, and loses every opportunity of uniting with his brethren in holy work and worship. Is this as it should be?

If I were to choose a house to reside in—I would wish to be known as Justus was, for he was "a man who worshiped God, whose house was next to the synagogue." Of course one's calling,

health, or circumstances might compel another choice; but I would ever give preference to a habitation near to a gospel ministry. If I were to choose a trade, I would select one which gave me time for the service of the Lord Jesus. If I had the option of my condition in life, I would rather have less earth and more Heaven—than more earth and less Heaven.

It argues a poor state of spiritual health when the mass of Christian professors estimate their position solely and entirely by the money which it yields them. Surely they know, unless they are ingrained hypocrites, that a man's life consists far more in the devotion which he enjoys, than in the treasure which he accumulates. My God, grant me grace ever to put the first, first; and the last, last. Let me use Paul's scales, which were the balances of the sanctuary, and reckon that gain to be loss, which is gained by loss of communion with you; and that profit to be unprofitable, which renders me less profitable to you.

~ ~ ~ Corrupt desires will often lie quiet

"A river swells by reason of dams and banks which are raised against it. Just so, our inbred corruption, the more it is opposed—the more it storms and grows. Corruptions rage against restraints, until the floods break loose." This figure is a good one. Corrupt desires will often lie quiet until they are earnestly opposed—and then they swell and rage. The gracious man sets himself with resolution to overcome a sinful habit—and, like a cornered beast, it fights tooth and nail as if for dear life. The more he prays, the more he mortifies himself, the more he avoids the sin—the more does it appear to force itself upon him. The water glides easily enough down the unimpeded bed of the river; but once put up an embankment, or attempt to stem the torrent—and it chafes and rages, and displays all its force!

Just so, sin may be quiet; but when grace enters the heart it revives, resists, and raises rebellion, setting the soul into a horrible tumult!

We must not think that the work of sanctification has ceased, just because impetuous passions are more clearly perceived, and the power of the flesh is more deeply deplored. It is possible that the energy of inbred sin may become all the more apparent, because through divine grace it is more strenuously resisted.

There are times with the ungodly man, when all goes smoothly, and the current of his life flows placidly—but, nevertheless, the whole stream is polluted from the fountain-head to the outfall, though he knows it not. The godly man life's inward stream is seldom thus deceitfully smooth. The Christian's old nature is opposed at every turn by his faith, repentance, prayers, and other dams and embankments of grace—hence the dashing of the waves, and the roaring and the swelling of the evil torrent. Even the pure stream of the river of the water of life, which flows into him from the throne of God, for a while only creates a greater tumult. The waters will not blend, and hence they contend one with another until the man is placed in the position of Paul's ship when it fell into a place where two seas met. Truly, the entrance of Christ into the heart, though it ends in ultimate rest—yet for a while brings not peace, but a sword! When a man dreams that he is fine, and therefore ceases to fight against his secret sins, all seems well. But let him look into the depths of his heart, and behold the corruptions which slumber there, and let him seek to expel them—then the battle will begin, compared with which the strife of the warrior and the garments rolled in blood are as nothing. The fierce conflict begins, and heart is rent in pieces by the opposing parties.

Let us not despair while this fierce contest is going on. Our inward travail and sore conflict will end in immortal perfection, which is the consummation of the work of the Spirit in the soul. He will quell the opposition, and in due time dry up the rivers of inbred sin, destroying the very fountains thereof, and giving to His people ineffable rest and unutterable delight.

O my Lord, give me grace to curb every evil tendency within myself. The more I perceive that these evil affections chafe and rebel, the more determined may I be that I will dam them up, and that they shall not have their way. Only help me Lord, and as the struggle grows more arduous, let Your grace become more plenteous. Surely in this conflict all power must come from You, for You alone can impart the strength that I need. Arise, O Lord, let not sin prevail within me!

~ ~ ~ He and Bacchus were rolling in the gutter together!

"In a fit of anger, we bid a naughty servant begone—but he lingers in the house, and before the next morning all is cool and quiet, and he is again in favor. Just so, many a time an argument happens between a man and his lusts—but after a short time, he again hugs his darling lusts."

Ungodly men have their quarrels with their favorite sins on various accounts. But these are like children's disputes with one another, soon over, because they come of passion, and not from principle. An unholy person will fall out with sin, because it has injured his health or his credit, or has brought him into difficulties with his neighbors. But when these temporary results are ended, he falls in love again with the same iniquity! Thus we have seen the drunkard loathing his excess in the morning, when his eyes were red, and his head was aching; but before the sun went down, the quarrel was ended, and he and Bacchus were rolling in the gutter together! Our enmity to sin should be based upon sound knowledge and solid reason, and be wrought in us by the Spirit of God—and then it will lead us to join in solemn league with the Lord, who has war with Amalek throughout all generations. We must have no peace with sin—nay, not with the least sin! Our hate of evil must be as everlasting as the love of God. Of old, converted Israelites cast their idols to the moles and to the bats—away from their sight with the moles, away from the light with the bats. Just so, our detestation must lead us to put sin among the dead and the forgotten! So far from ever entering into amity with it, we must regard it as a dead and corrupted thing, forever abandoned to silence and the worm! As Heaven and Hell will never unite—so must it be plain that a saint and sin will never come together on any terms whatever.

Lord, I beseech You to keep me ever in desperate earnest in my war with sin. Forbid that I should trifle in this conflict, or grow cold in it. Let me be bound to never-ending warfare with my own sin—and never may I be pacified until Christ has utterly crushed the foe! Like your servant David, I would hate every false way!

~ ~ ~ The garden of the soul!

"The gardener knows what flowers are in the ground long before they appear."

Look over the garden in winter, and you will not see any flowers there. But the gardener sees in his mind's eye—here a circle of golden cups, as if set out for a royal banquet; and there a cluster of snow-white beauties, drooping with excess of modest purity. His eye knows where the daffodils and anemones lie asleep, waiting to rise in all their loveliness. And he has learned the secret of the primroses and the violets, who wait in ambush until the first warm breath of spring shall bid

them to reveal themselves.

Even thus does the Lord know His hidden ones, long before the day of their conversion. He sees His church before his ministers see it, and declares concerning immoral heathen at Corinth, "I have many people in this city!" The figure may be applied to the garden of the soul. What graces are planted in the renewed heart, waiting their season—the Creator of those graces knows right well! He sees our faith, and love, and hope, and patience—long before we can see them. Yes, and He discerns them when we ourselves question their existence. He not only knows those who are His, but all that is his within them. Nothing of His implanting is hidden from His inspection.

Bulbs and seeds of holiness are sown in the righteous, and therefore are out of their sight. But he who placed them where they are, has marked the spot, and not one of them shall die. Expectantly He waits to see His people's lives become "as beds of spices, as sweet flowers."

Lord, it is because you know all things, that you know that I love you. Were you not omniscient, I fear you would not know my sadly feeble love, buried as it is beneath so much sin and carnality. Lord, cause the sacred seed of grace to grow, and then I too shall be assured of its existence, and my present questions and doubts shall flee away!

~ ~ ~ ~ Our hearts are defiled by the slightest contact with sin!

"A man who walks in the sun—his face is tanned unawares. Just so, our hearts are defiled by the slightest contact with sin!"

We have seen men who were quite fair where their hats covered their foreheads—and thoroughly bronzed where the sun had looked upon them. A man's heart had need be covered with a veil of holy carefulness all over—or the world will get at it, and brown it with evil!

Some trades and callings are like a tropical climate, and their blackening effect is soon visible. Certain companies are still more so—they make their dark mark upon the best of men. With difficulty can a man prevent the world's influencing him for evil. "Bad company corrupts good character," unless a sacred remedy is heartily used.

See the effect of evil upon professors in Jeremiah's day; he says: "Our princes once glowed with health, brighter than snow, whiter than milk. Their faces were as ruddy as rubies, their appearance like fine jewels. But now their faces are blacker than soot. No one recognizes them in the streets. Their skin sticks to their bones; it is as dry and hard as wood!"

Let us, as much as we can, keep ourselves to ourselves, and go quietly through life. A man of eminence, who outlived the French Revolution, was asked how he escaped the guillotine, and he replied, "I kept silence."

Let us, like him, stay within doors. If we must go forth abroad, it is well to walk on the shady side of the street, by keeping as much out of the world's influence as we can. It is also wise to carry with us such holy thoughts and feelings as may act as a screen to ward off the excessive power of evil. We have no wish to become as dark as the inhabitants of this sun-burnt climate, seeing we are not numbered with them, but are here as strangers and foreigners.

Wash me, most blessed Jesus, in that sacred bath which You have prepared; for it will make me fair forever. As black with sin as I now am—I shall then be whiter than snow. Renew me, and I shall be without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing!

~ ~ ~ ~ Spiritual riches enable us to bear temporal losses with great patience!

"If a poor man is robbed of twenty or thirty shillings—it is no wonder if he cries and carries on, because he has nothing left to live on. But if a rich man is robbed of such a sum, he is not much troubled, because he has more at home. Just so, a man who is justified by faith, and has assurance of the favor of God—he can comfortably bear up against all the troubles and crosses he meets with in his way to Heaven."

Remember the apostle's reckoning in Rom 8:18 : "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us!" He was so rich in grace, that all his losses were as nothing to him. Spiritual riches enable us to bear temporal losses with great patience!

It is far otherwise with the worldling, whose goods are his god. For when these are taken away, he cries out like Micah, "You have taken away all the gods I have made—and I have nothing left!" Jdg 18:24 He to whom God is all things, cannot be robbed; for who can overcome and plunder the Almighty?

Lord, lead me to count nothing my treasure, but Yourself—and then I may defy the thief. If I have suffered loss, let me make a gain thereby by prizing You the more.

~ ~ ~ ~ Jesus will not cast His pearls before swine forever!

"A merchant who has a precious commodity, and one offers a mean price—he folds up his wares with indignation."

We have seen the exhibitor turn away in utter disgust when someone has offered pence, where pounds would not have been accepted. The jeweler or artist has been as much offended as if he had been personally insulted by such a depreciation of his valuables. Do you wonder that the Lord God is grieved when men set a base price upon His priceless grace—and begin to bargain as to what sins they will give up, and what duties they will perform? Do you wonder that He should take His gospel away from such a people, and turn to others who more appreciate His goodness?

Jesus will not cast His pearls before swine forever! Woe to that man who at last angers God into turning from him, and taking the despised gospel elsewhere! He well deserves to perish, who counts eternal life to be of less value than a passing pleasure—or reckons the righteousness of God to be no better than his own poor works!

~ ~ ~ ~ God does not govern men as if they were logs and stones! The heathen may rage, and the people imagine a vain thing—but the will of the Lord stands fast forever!

Men are free to will and to act—but God's omnipotent wisdom rules over them, despite their free agency. God does not govern men as if they were logs and stones—but as rational, intelligent, free agents, He permits them to do their own will—and works His own purposes notwithstanding. This is a great marvel.

Men are as free as if there were no divine predestination—and predestination is accomplished as surely as if there were no free agents in the universe! We are full of wonder at this, but it is true. The figure before us is not perfect, but it has many merits; and, at any rate, it sets out the one idea that the rebellions and sins of mankind do not thwart the eternal purposes of the Most High. The royal vessel pursues its way whether men delight in its glorious progress, or rail against it.

"Our God is in Heaven; He does whatever pleases Him!" Psa 115:3

"The LORD does whatever pleases Him, in the heavens and on the earth, in the seas and all their depths!" Psa 135:6 "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns!" Rev 19:6

~ ~ ~ ~ Our life is a paradox!

"As many times the sun shines when the rain fails—so there may be in the soul a mixture of spiritual rejoicing and holy mourning. There may be a deep sense of God's love—and yet a mourning because of the relics of corruption."

All spiritual people understand this. The inexperienced ask how a man can be "sorrowful—yet always rejoicing." But this is no puzzle to a Christian. Our life is a paradox! Never in the world elsewhere, is there such sunshine of delight as we enjoy—and never such rain as that which dampens our joys.

It seems at times as if Heaven and Hell met in our experience!

Ours is a joy unspeakable—and yet an agony unutterable.

We rise to the heavenlies in Christ—and sink to the abyss in ourselves!

Those who have seen . . . fire burning on the sea, trees living and flourishing upon a rock, feathers flying against the wind, and doves vanquishing eagles— have begun to see a list of marvels, all of which are to be found within the believer, and much more of equal or greater singularity.

Lord, when my own experience puzzles me, let me be comforted by the thought that it does not puzzle You. What I know not now, You have promised to make me know hereafter; and there I leave it.

~ ~ ~ ~ Alas, father, the holes are there, where the nails used to be!

"As a squanderer, who has gone bankrupt, is not trusted again. Many after a severe disease, do not regain that pitch of health which formerly they had—but they carry the fruits of their disease with them to their graves. Just so, God's children after sinning grievously, may not recover that fullness of inward strength and comfort, which they had before."

Men do not care to ride a broken-kneed horse; if it has been down once—it may go down again. A wise father does not restore a son to a position for which he has proved himself to be an unfit squanderer.

Even so has the Lord dealt with many backsliding ones. Like David, they have been restored—but never to their former peace, prosperity, and power. Into the army of our Lord, the deserter is received with gladness; but he must begin in the low ranks, and must prove his fidelity before he is again entrusted with a commission. A fallen one, when restored, may have gained in

self-knowledge—but he must necessarily be a loser in many other respects. A little boy, who had fallen into the habit of lying, was made by his father to drive a nail into a post every time he had exaggerated or told a lie. At last the habit was conquered, and in several trials the boy had displayed complete truthfulness. Then his father allowed him to draw out some of the nails, and this was repeated until no nail was left in the post. The little fellow, so far from being proud when every nail was gone, exclaimed, "Alas, father, the holes are there, where the nails used to be!"

Just so does evil leave its marks. However fully restored, the fallen professor seldom loses the memory of impurity, and does not easily regain his injured reputation. He is always weak in those points which led to his former fall, and, for the most part, weaker all around.

O Lord! if you have counted me faithful, putting me into Your service, I beseech You to keep me from being either unfaithful to my charge, or negligent in ray life. Let me be so upheld, that I shall not have need to be picked out of the mire!

~ ~ ~ ~ My conception of happiness will largely regulate my whole course of life "Every man desires happiness!" No doubt this is true; and it is equally true that the notion of happiness is as varied, as the wish for it is universal.

What is my view of happiness? This is a question of the highest importance; for as I am sure to seek after that which I desire, and am sure to desire that which I conceive to be happiness—it is clear that my conception of happiness will largely regulate my whole course of life. Remember this, O my soul, and take good heed that you do not seek . . . happiness apart from holiness, nor rest apart from Jesus, nor pleasure apart from pleasing God.

Lord, teach men that you are their bliss, and then draw them to seek after You with their whole hearts.

"Whom have I in Heaven but You? And earth has nothing I desire besides You. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever!" Psa 73:25-26

~ ~ ~ ~ If they cannot have a fresh dish from Satan's kitchen!

"If ravens are driven away from carrion, they love to abide within scent of it. If you would be free from sin—then avoid the temptations that lead to it!" This first sentence is a grim parable, but all too true. We have seen those who dared not enter the devil's house—linger long around his doors. The old woman in the fable could find no wine in the jar—yet loved to smell at it. It is a clear proof of the love of human nature to evil that, when restrained from actual sin—men will rehearse their former exploits, and dote on the lusts which they indulged years ago. If they cannot have a fresh dish from Satan's kitchen, they will have his crumbs, sooner than go without. Our author gives sage advice at the outset, when he says: To avoid sin—avoid temptation.

He who would not be wounded, should keep out of battle.

He who would not be tossed about, should not go to sea.

He who would not be burned, should keep away from the fire.

If men will get into the train which runs to the terminus of iniquity—they must expect to be carried to their journey's end.

If I stand in the way of sinners, I shall soon run with them.

Oh to possess a godly fear, which shall lead me rather to go ten miles round about, than pass by the place of temptation!

It is well to keep out of the smell of sin, for the very odor of it is baneful.

If we seek a temptation—we shall soon find it. And within it, like a kernel in a nut, we shall meet with sin!

Oh that we had the wit to see this, and were more firmly resolved not to stand in the broad road that leads to destruction, or even go near it—lest we should become regular travelers upon it!

Lord, give me prudence. As I would not devour the carrion of sin, give me such a renewed nature that the most distant scent of it shall at once sicken me, and cause me to keep my steps as far from it as possible!

~ ~ ~ ~ We must not sit near the fire—and then complain of the heat!

"Who will pity the man who complains of soreness and pain in walking, and yet does not take the stone out of his shoe?"

Many of the trials of our spiritual life are preventable: if we indulge a sin—we invite a sorrow.

Others are curable: if we refuse the remedy—we will keep the disease.

All that we can do for ourselves, we are bound to do. We must put away evil habits, and not content ourselves with whining out our regrets. We must flee from temptation. We must not sit near the fire—and then complain of the heat!

There is too much of this insincerity abroad. What would we have thought of the prodigal if he had lamented his destitution—but had continued in the far country? What do we now think of the drunkard who mourns over the redness of his eyes—and yet tarries long at the wine? Or of the lascivious man who bemoans his vice—and yet frequents the harlot's house? By gracious instruction I beseech You, O Lord, teach me to be practical in going to the bottom of things, that I may not waste time in regretting evils which it is my duty to prevent. Let me not cry over my chastisement—and yet continue in my folly. Lord, make me to know wisdom. To this end, make me mindful of little things. Help me to remove the little stone in my shoe, for this may cause me many a blister, and even lame me, so that I cannot hold on my way.

~ ~ ~ ~ Hew the delicate Agag in pieces!

"A lust indulged, will bring us into our old bondage!"

Nothing is harder to bury than the tail of a habit. But unless we do bury it, tail and all—the viper will wriggle out of its grave! A clear, clean, and complete escape is the only true deliverance from an evil practice which has long been indulged. A drunkard is not safe from drink—while he takes his occasional glass with a friend. A man who allows himself any one sin—will be sure to allow another! Where one dog comes into the room, another may follow. A fish is not free while a hook is in his mouth, and a line holds him to the rod. However thin the line, it will be the death of the fish, if it holds. Just so, however slight the bond which links a man to evil, it will be his sure ruin.

Oh for grace to war with every sin! So long as one Amalekite remains, Israel is not free from peril from the accursed race! Let us, like Samuel, hew the delicate Agag in pieces before the Lord. He may have a gentle speech and pleasing manners—but he is the very king of the evil band, and must not be spared. We must not let our heart go after one of its idols—or it will be in bondage to it, and afterward in servitude to every other form of sin.

Lord, set me free from the last link of my chain! Do not allow me to drag behind me even a fragment of my fetters. Free to obey, free to be holy—this is what I crave!

~ ~ ~ He took special pains to fetch them out, and hang them up!

"A benumbed snake is still a snake. A washed sow is not changed. Just so, our natural corruption does not always break out in full."

There may be a winter to our corruptions—as well as to animal and vegetable life. And then the sin which dwells in us may be quiet, as though frozen into a rigid powerlessness—but what of that? The weather will change, and then the nest of vipers will be all astir again, each one with venomous tooth aiming to destroy!

Experience has taught the wise observer that sin may be bound by sin, and one evil passion may hold the rest in check. One man is kept from immorality, by covetousness: he would be glad to revel in vice—if it were not so expensive. Another would be a profligate, but then it would not be respectable, and thus his pride checks his passions. This restraint of sin by sin, is no proof that the nature is one jot the better—but that it only puts on a fairer appearance, and is more likely to deceive.

Nothing will answer with inbred sin, but the killing of it! When Joshua had captured the five kings in the cave, he was not content to simply shut them in with large stones. No, he took special pains to fetch them out, and hang them up! The condemned race must die—and then Israel can breathe freely.

Sin will be our death—if we do not put it to death! Checks and restraints are of small value; what is needed is the root-cure—crucifixion with Christ! To cure sin by sin, is a mere piece of stage playing, which will never answer before God.

O destroyer of the serpent and his seed, break the head of sin within me, so that it may never lift up its usurped power within my soul. Let the sword of the Spirit do a thorough work within my nature, until not a single rebel lust shall remain alive in the wide domains of my being. Furbish your sword, Almighty Captain, and do Your office within me, for I cannot rest until sin is slain!

~ ~ ~ Burdened by rotten pretenders!

"When the tree is shaken, the rotten apples fall." When religion is persecuted, and godliness is derided—then hypocrites and unsound professors desert the cause. It is astonishing what a little shake will get rid of the commonplace members of our churches! Let but a minister die, or relocate—and off they go!

Sound believers, who are full of life, and untouched by the worm of insincerity—hold to the church of God in all weathers. May more of these be produced every year to God's glory!

Rougher winds than these try other professors. The fashion of the world, the luxuries of life, and the habits of wealthy society— fetch down many rotten Christians! When they fall, the loss is all their own. The church may apparently lose by their apostasy, but it is not a real injury. In fact, it may be in God's sight a gain.

God thinks no better of a tree for being burdened with rotten fruit—than of a church for being burdened by rotten pretenders!

Lord, make me true to the core, and keep me so!

~ ~ ~ It needs no Solomon to see it!

"A corpse may be lavishly adorned—but there is no life within!"

Adornments are out of place in the chamber of death—they do but make the scene the more ghastly!

We have heard of a dead prince who was place upon a throne, dressed in imperial purple, crowned, and sceptered! How pitiful the spectacle! The courtiers pressed to so wretched a travesty, must have loathed the pageantry! So is it when a man's religion is a dead profession—its ostentatious zeal and ceremonious display are the grim trappings which make the death appear more manifest!

When, like Jehu, a man cries, "Come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord," his false heart betrays itself. The more he boasts of his godliness—the more does the hypocrite's spiritual death appear!

It is not possible to supply the lack of the divine life. There is an essential difference between a dead child at its best—and a living child at its worst—and it needs no Solomon to see it!

Unless the Spirit of God shall gives life, sustains life, and perfects life—none of us can ever dwell with the living God. This is the point to look to—the vestments and trappings are a secondary business.

"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing!" John 6:63

~ ~ ~ His work is yet on the anvil!

"God many times works contrary to outward likelihoods. When the bricks were doubled—who would look for deliverance? As the Hebrew tongue must be read backward, or as the sun going back ten degrees in Ahaz' dial was a sign of Hezekiah's recovery—so divine providence is to be read backward. Joseph was made a slave—that he might be made a favorite. Who would have thought that . . . the dungeon had been the way to the court, error is a means to clear truth, and bondage makes way for liberty?"

Thus have we found sickness work for our health—and poverty promote our wealth. Our worst days, have turned out to be our best days; and our low estate has lifted us on high. When storms come we may welcome them, for they bring blessing on their wings. But when our calm is long and deep, we ought to be on our watch, lest stagnation and disease should come of it!

Science talks of curing by likes; but the Heavenly Physician heals both by likes and by contraries. In fact, He bends all things to His gracious purpose! To judge His proceedings, is folly and ingratitude. What can we know? Especially what can we know of His design and purpose—while His work is yet on the anvil? Our judgments at their best, are only moderated foolishness.

We are neither prophets nor sons of prophets, and it would be wise if we would no more speculate upon the results of His divine operations—but firmly believe and patiently wait until the providence comes to the flower and to the seed, and God becomes His own interpreter!

~ ~ ~ He who does not strive godly every day—is not godly any day!

"Godliness is not a holiday suit, but clothing that is for constant wear." This illustrates a very important truth. Some people seem to imagine that they can put their religion on and off, as they do their Sunday clothes. Such religion is better put off once for all! He who does not strive godly every day—is not godly any day!

We should aim at serving God with all our hearts on Sundays, in songs, and prayers, and sermons. But if these are to be acceptable, we must also serve God on all the week-days in an honest, upright, holy life. True Christians will endeavor to make . . . their houses temples, their meals sacraments, their garments vestments, and all their days holy-days. That profession which is merely on the surface, like the paint upon a rotten post, is too poor a thing to enter Heaven!

Lord, make me to wear Your righteousness within me, and then I cannot leave it off. Make me like the king's daughter, "all glorious within." Weave Your grace into the warp and woof of my being!

~ ~ ~ Secret religion is the very soul of godliness!

"A woman who only bemoans the loss of her husband in company, but banishes all thoughts of him when alone—might justly be suspected to act a part, and to pretend sorrow rather than feel it." The moral is, that one who only has Christ upon his tongue in public, and has no thought of him when alone—is a mere actor and hypocrite! Secret religion is the very soul of godliness! What we are alone—that alone we are! Private communion with Jesus is a better sign of grace, than all the outward religious duties that were ever performed!

It is not likely that a hypocrite will delight in solitary devotion; there is nothing in it to pay him for his trouble, for his reward is the praise of man. Judgment upon ourselves will be much more likely to be correct, if we examine our hidden life—than if we measure ourselves by that which is seen of men.

~ ~ ~ Who cares for pebbles—when jewels glitter before him?

"To rule a kingdom, is a nobler matter than to play with marbles."

What, then, is the folly of the worldling's choice, when he prefers to be contending among men for earthly toys—instead of seeking those things which are above!

How great is the degradation of professing Christians, when their minds are taken up with fashionable trivialities—instead of living alone to glorify their God, and acting as those whom Jesus has made to be kings and priests! Who cares for pebbles—when jewels glitter before him? Who would choose toys and rattles—when the wealth of the Indies is offered him?

Let us be no longer children or fools—but act as men who have put away childish things.

"Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth!" Col 3:1-2

~ ~ ~ ~ Children are not afraid of a dead lion!

"A Christian should be always as a ship that is prepared and furnished with all necessary tackling, ready to set sail—only awaiting the good wind to carry him out of the port."

O that it were always so with us. We are fully stored and equipped in Christ Jesus, and yet we do not always enjoy the holy quiet which ought to spring out of so divine a fact.

All is well. Why do we not feel that it is so? Why do we fear to depart and be with Christ? There remains nothing for us but to obey the call, let loose the cable, and float into the heavenly haven! But we act as if it were not so, and often dread the time for commencing the last voyage!

It is more important to be prepared to live aright—than to be in an ecstasy at the thought of death. But, still, while we are ready for service, it is sweet also to be ready for glory. The thought of death should never put us in a flurry. It should be every-day work to die. Where this is realized, death is dead. Children are not afraid of a dead lion—so we also are not disturbed at the prospect of departing out of this world unto the Father.

"All that remains for me is but to love and sing, And wait until the angels come To bear me to my King!"

~ ~ ~ ~ Should He see fit to dip us in the Arctic Ocean itself!

"The old Germans used to dip their children in the cold Rhine River to harden them. Just so, God sees it fitting sometimes, at our first setting forth—to season us for our whole course by plunging us in trouble. Saints must bear the yoke from first acquaintance with Christ, for this is good for them."

Some of us can endorse this opinion from our own experience. Sharp trials in our early days, hardened us for our life's warfare. Abused and misrepresented both by good and bad—we learned to set small store by the judgment of men. And when praise and flattery followed—we had an antidote for the poisons.

Just so, pain and depression endured in early life—have prepared many to sympathize with the unhappy, and to live a life of benevolence. A baptism into fire is, for young converts, a terrible ordeal—and yet an incalculable blessing.

Let us never despise the chastening of the Lord. Should He see fit to dip us in the Arctic Ocean itself, let us believe that it is for our good, and stand to Job's resolve, "Though He slays me—yet will I trust in Him!"

~ ~ ~ ~ The master-strokes of the Divine Artist!

"We would have speedy riddance of trouble—but God does not think it fit to grant our request. Showers that come by drops, and soak into the earth better than those which come in a tempest

and hurricane!" The gradualness and long continuance of a trial, which are its sharpness and bitterness—are also, to a large extent, the causes of its usefulness. If the sharp affliction came and departed with a rush—we would be rather swept away by it, than softened and saturated by its influence. To push a crucible among the glowing coals and snatch it out again, would answer no purpose in refining—the metal must tarry in the furnace until the fire has done its work.

Perhaps the reader has long lived in the perpetual grip of affliction, and now feels himself to be quite weary of the endless torture. Let him not faint under the lengthened process—the highest degree of benefit is accruing to him, from the continuance of his adversity. In the later part of a trial, every stroke brings forth a tenfold result, and operates with a greatly increased efficacy. It would be a pity for the Lord to stay His hand, when it is working with such special and marked result. All the preceding affliction has only worked the heart into a fit condition to receive the master-strokes of the Divine Artist! The foundational colors have hitherto been laid on—but the second and finishing touch is now being given! Therefore, do not ask God's hand to cease, but rather pray that its work may be carried on with power, and the Lord's glory be seen in it all.

It will not cease raining yet—and why should it, so long as the soil is being softened, saturated, and fertilized by the falling drops? Let patience have her perfect work—and how can that be, unless the tribulation runs its full time?

Lord, make me ready to tarry for the vision, however long it may be delayed. Your way of trying me is the best. I would not hurry Your hand, if I could.

~ ~ ~ ~ Payment in gold instead of copper!

"Through the excellency of His person, Christ paid the same debt as that which is due from His chosen people. But it was done in a shorter time. A payment in gold is the same sum, as a payment in copper. Only, through the exceeding value of the gold, it takes up less room than the copper."

Thus do we clearly see how the one death of Jesus was a fit and full substitute for the eternal woe of many. How precious does it appear in that light! We are redeemed with an inconceivable price! Gold and silver are corruptible things in comparison therewith.

How we ought to prize the adorable person of our Lord! What high thoughts we ought to entertain of Him, seeing that it is "by the sacrifice of Himself" that he purged our sins! His own intrinsic excellence, was the essential value of the great price which He had paid. Had He been a less illustrious person, His sufferings would have been insufficient. Precious blood! Yes, more precious Lord Jesus, from whose preciousness the finished work derives its infinite efficacy!

~ ~ ~ ~ God knows best how to ripen both corn and men!

"Before corn can be ripened, it needs all kinds of weather. The gardener is glad of showers as well as sunshine. Rainy weather is troublesome, but sometimes the season requires it."

Even so, the various conditions of man's life are needful to ripen him for the life to come. Sorrows and joys, depressions and exhilarations—all have their part to play in the completion of Christian character. Were one grief of a believer's life omitted, it may be that he would never be prepared for Heaven—the slightest change might mar the ultimate result.

God knows best how to ripen both corn and men, and orders all things according to the counsel of His will. It is our wisdom to believe in the infallible prudence which arranges all the details of a believing life.

"And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose!" Rom 8:28

~ ~ ~ ~ No pestilence is so imperceptible, so penetrating, so all-pervading, so deadly!

"The devil is called 'the prince of the power of the air.' Infected air is drawn into the lungs without pain, and we get a disease before we feel it, and so die of a pestilential air!"

Thus does Satan injure and destroy men's souls by an influence so subtle and painless, that before a man is aware of it, he is inflicted with error or iniquity, and falls a victim to the evil!

Whole cities have been carried off by a pestilence arising from causes which the sick ones never suspected. Just so, whole classes of men perish from wild passions which only the devil could have excited to such a pitch! No pestilence is so imperceptible, so penetrating, so all-pervading, so deadly—as the subtle wiles of the Devil! In these days it is not polite to speak of the Devil—it would seem that he is so much respected by his own children, that they cannot endure to hear a word against him. The common doubt of his existence, is a proof of his powerful cunning. Nothing will serve his turn better, than for silly men to dream that he is dead or incapacitated. He laughs in his sleeve, for he is surrounding the very men who deny him, and for him they live and move! His subtlety slays, without leaving the stain of blood to alarm other victims. Who knows the depth of his cunning!

Alas, that so many should be so ignorant of his subtle devices, as to be unsuspecting of the deadly influence which he breathes into the moral atmosphere! May the health-giving Spirit preserve all new-born hearts, so that they may pass through this pestiferous world unharmed.

Surely we may give a spiritual as well as a natural meaning to that promise in the psalm, "You shall not be afraid for the pestilence which stalks in darkness. A thousand shall fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you!" Does not the Scripture expressly say, "Sin shall not have dominion over you?" Under the protection of this assurance, we may pursue our callings in the midst of this evil generation, and yet remain in vigorous health of soul. May God grant it, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

"That Satan will not outsmart us. For we are familiar with his evil schemes!" 2Co 2:11

~ ~ ~ ~ It would make us sleep more quietly, and die more comfortably! A man goes to bed willingly and cheerfully—because he knows he shall rise again the next morning, and be renewed in his strength.

Just so, confidence in the resurrection would make us go to the grave, as cheerfully as we go to our beds! It would make us sleep more quietly, and die more comfortably!

"So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.

1Co 15:42-44 "Therefore comfort one another with these words!" 1Th 4:18

~ ~ ~ ~ A father carrying all his children on his back, or lapped up in his garment!

"We must look upon Jesus as a father carrying all his children on his back, or lapped up in his garment, through a deep river, through which they must needs pass; and, as it were, saying to them, 'Fear not, I will set you safely on land!' Look upon Christ wading with all his children through the floods of death and Hell, and saying: Fear not, worm Jacob; fear not, poor souls, I will get you safely across!" Our adorable Redeemer waits at the river to bear us over, lest the water-floods prevail against us. He has made us, and He will bear us, He will even carry us. Here is our safety. He shall gather the lambs in His arms, and carry them in His bosom.

O my gracious Lord, be pleased to carry me among your own redeemed children, in life and in death. Yes, set me safe on the further side to sing forever of Your saving power.

"He will feed His flock like a shepherd. He will carry the lambs in His arms, holding them close to His heart. He will gently lead the mother sheep with their young." Isa 40:11

~ ~ ~ ~ Lord, I thank you for shaking me!

"When the tree is soundly shaken, the rotten apples fall to the ground. Just so, in great trials, unsound professors will fall away."

First, trials and afflictions test me, that I may see how far my supposed graces are real and vital. Those which are unsound will soon be lost; only the living and growing graces will remain.

Secondly, trials and afflictions relieve me, for it is a hurtful thing to the tree and to its living fruit—to be cumbered with rottenness, in which may breed noxious worms, which when they multiply may come to be devourers of the tree's life.

We are enriched when we lose fabricated virtues. Stripping of filthy rags, is an advance toward cleanliness—and what are counterfeit graces but mere rags, worthy to be torn off and cast into the fire? In the end, such a result of affliction also beautifies me. For as rotten apples disfigure the tree, so would the mere pretense of virtue mar my character in the sight of God and holy men. It is always better to be openly without a virtue, than to bear the form of it without in reality possessing it. A sham—is a shame! An unreal virtue—is an undoubted vice!

Lord, I thank you for shaking me, since I now perceive that all this good and much more is designed by the process; and is, I trust, in some measure accomplished thereby. Oh that your Holy Spirit may bless my adversities to this end!

~ ~ ~ ~ Do we love a taking God—as well as a giving God?

"By knocking upon a barrel, we see whether it is full or empty, cracked or sound. Just so, by the knocks of providence given us in affliction, we are revealed for what we really are." Not only does affliction thus try our characters—but prosperity does the same. When we are afflicted, it is wise to watch the result upon ourselves. Can our faith bear trial—or is it a mere counterfeit? Do we love a taking God—as well as a giving God? Do we cleave to Christ when under a cloud—or is our religion only a fair-weather amusement?

Heart-searching may thus be greatly helped, and we shall run less danger of self-deception.

It will be an awful thing to be mere empty barrels, and never know it until death deals a blow with his rod of iron, and we answer to it with hollow sounds of despair!

~ ~ ~ No one fights with a statue!

"A wolf does not worry a painted sheep—nor does the world annoy a mere professor. But when any are holy indeed, and live strictly according to God's Word—they are hated, reviled, and persecuted!" No one fights with a statue—but living soldiers are often in the wars.

Just so, living Christians are sure to be assailed in one way or another. Let us therefore for once gather figs from thistles, and find comfortable fruit upon the thorns and briars of persecution. The world is no fool; it would not be so fierce against us, if it did not see something about us contrary to itself. Its enmity therefore is part evidence that we are the children of God. When we see wolves worrying the picture of a sheep—we shall expect to see the ungodly scoffing at those who are like them.

"If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you!" John 15:19 "Do not be surprised, my brothers, if the world hates you!" 1Jn 3:13

~ ~ ~ Our churches have many wooden legs!

"A wooden leg may be a support to the body, though it is not a true member. Just so, wicked men may supply the needs of a church, as Judas for a while did duty as an apostle."

Quaint, but true. It is to be feared that our churches have many wooden legs, in the form of . . . lifeless ministers, graceless deacons, and unregenerate pastors. The church body may move with these—but her walk must be limping, painful, slow, and awkwardly! As for the wooden limb itself, its end is to be burned. It will be a fearful thing to turn out to be a dead member of a living body—a false arm, or a glass eye! Such shams can never be part of the body of Christ.

O for living, loving, lasting union with the living Head!

~ ~ ~ The Misfit!

"A garment too short will not cover our nakedness—and a garment too long will be a dirty rag to trip up our heels."

O for contentment! "Too much," we see by the figure used above, has its inconveniences as well as "too little."

Enough is the standard, and God knows best when we are at that point. We see around us, those who are much hindered in holy living by the fact of their being wealthy. And yet perhaps we are pining to run in their silken clothes! Others we see who are impeded by their poverty—and yet this need not be, for some of the Lord's poor, are far ahead of other runners, and keep up all the better pace because they have so little to carry!

Come, my heart, be satisfied! It should be no hard task to you to be content, seeing that your Father acts as your steward, and deals out daily "necessary things" for you. The garment which

He puts around you, fits you in every part; blessed are you if you can wear it befittingly and praise Him for it.

God is bound only to do what is necessary for His redeemed people—and that we must leave Him to judge. The sheep must not choose the pastures—but the shepherd!

~ ~ ~ Beware of the little wedges!

"When a man cleaves a block, he first pierces it with small wedges, and then with greater ones. Just so, the devil makes entrance into the soul by degrees.

Judas first steals out of the bag.

Then he censures Christ with wasteful lavishing, 'Why this waste?'

Then, upon Christ's rebuke, he hates Him.

Lastly, he betrays Him to his enemies!"

There is no dealing with the devil, except at arm's length. Those little wedges of his are terribly insinuating, because they are so little. Keep them out—or worse will follow!

Occasional drinking, leads on to drunkenness.

Occasional theater-going, grows into impurity and immorality.

Trifling pilfering, soon grows to downright theft.

Secret backslidings, end in public abominations. The beginning of all mischief, is as small as a mustard seed. It is with the transgressor as with the falling stone—the further he falls, the faster he falls! Again we say—beware of the little wedges, for they are in crafty hands, and our utter destruction may be compassed by them! Even cast-iron safes have been forced open, when little wedges have made room for the burglar's lever. Take heed of the plea, "Is it not a little one?"

O my Savior, let me not fall little by little; or think myself able to bear the indulgence of any known sin, because it seems so insignificant. Keep me from sinful beginnings—lest they lead me on to sorrowful endings!

~ ~ ~ He makes it bitter in their bellies!

"Until we sin, Satan is a parasite. But when once we are in the devil's hands, he turns tyrant! As an angler, when the fish has swallowed the bait, reveals himself; or as a hunter lies out of sight until the beast is gotten into the toils, and then he shouts and triumphs over his prey—so the evil one lets not his enmity be seen, until he has deceived his dupe!"

How often have I seen this. Satan first acts as deceiver—and then as accuser. While men can be made to suck down sin—he will make it sweet in their mouths. But when the poison is down—he makes it bitter in their bellies! At the first he tells them that there is no punishment for sin—and after they transgress, that there is no mercy for them!

Lord, teach us how to baffle Satan's arts, and rescue us from his wiles. No mere human wisdom can match his subtlety.

"In order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his evil schemes!" 2Co 2:11

"Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil!" Eph 6:11

~ ~ ~ ~ A thousand pictures of the King! A man had better have the King for his friend, than possess a thousand pictures of the King!

Just so, we must get beyond all the outward signs and symbols of religion, and even beyond the letter of Scripture—to Jesus Himself! My soul, let this endear Jesus to you beyond all else, and let it make you urgent and eager to draw very near to Him. What a happy thing for you, that your God, your Heaven, your all—are treasured up in one so accessible to you as your Mediator and Friend!

~ ~ ~ ~ Make the sparks fly and have your tinder ready!

"God's seasons are not at your beck and command. If the first stroke of the flint does not bring forth the fire—you must strike again." That is to say, God will hear prayer, but He may not answer it at the time which we in our own minds have appointed. He will reveal Himself to our seeking hearts—but not just when and where we have settled in our own expectations. Hence the need of perseverance and importunity in prayer. In the days of flint and steel, we had to strike and strike again, dozens of times, before we could get a spark to light the tinder; and we were thankful enough if we succeeded at last! Shall we not be as persevering and hopeful as to heavenly things? We have more certainty of success in this business, than we had with our flint and steel—for we have God's promises. Never let us despair. God's time for mercy will come. Ask in faith, without wavering; but never cease from petitioning because the King delays to reply. Strike the steel again! Make the sparks fly and have your tinder ready—you will get a fire before long!

~ ~ ~ ~ Clear light, a keen eye, and a tender heart!

"Some say, 'the fundamentals are few; believe them, and live well, and you are saved.' This is as if a man in building should be only careful to lay a good foundation—and care nothing for roof, windows, or walls. If a man should unroof your house, and tell you the foundation and the main buttresses are safe—you would not be pleased. Why should you be more careless in spiritual things?" The least particle of diamond is diamond; and the least grain of truth is truth—and therefore to be prized above the rarest gems. That which is not essential to salvation, may yet be essential to comfort, and necessary to our complete spiritual manhood. Our Lord threatens those who teach men, that to disregard the least of His commandments—that they shall be called the least in the kingdom of Heaven. It does not befit servants to trifle with the smallest commands of a perfect master. How can the church ever be a perfect house of God, if one of the parts should be left out through our neglect? No, we must receive all the truth, that we may be built up "a holy temple in the Lord."

Grave errors have been suggested and nurtured, by what at first appeared to be trifling departures from scriptural rule. Therefore we ought to give earnest heed even to minor precepts. Future ages may have to mourn over the defalcations of today—unless we are careful to do the building of the Lord's house with faithfulness.

Lord, make me watchful in little matters, lest I grow careless in weightier concerns. You spoke concerning the pins and cords of the tabernacle, and ordained that all should be made to divine

pattern. By this, I perceive that you regard even the small things of Your service. I beg You, therefore, give me clear light, a keen eye, and a tender heart—that in all things I may please You!

~ ~ ~ Inherently fragrant!

"Perfume boxes retain their scent after the perfume is removed. Just so, when we have had sweet communion with Christ—our thoughts and discourse and actions should still savor of their sweet solemnity." This retaining of their perfume by boxes and drawers in which sweet scents have been placed, is a fragrant figure of the abiding nature of grace in a heart wherein it has once been stored up. If prayer and Scripture reading yield the influence designed by them, their savor will remain in our lives; and the effect of it will be seen as long as we dwell among men.

We cannot come away from real communion with Christ, without carrying some of the delightful fragrance of His good ointments. Grace will reveal itself by its fragrance if it is genuine, and that fragrance will be a perfume of everlasting continuance, an indestructible sweetness.

It should be said of every believer, in his measure, even as it is written of his Lord, "All your garments are fragrant with myrrh, and aloes, and cassia!" The hypocrite has a temporary perfume, with which he takes care to odorize himself whenever he goes into the company of God's people. But the true believer is, by grace, made inherently fragrant, and the heavenly spices have so thoroughly saturated his garments, that they shed their savor abroad even when he is engaged in his worldly calling, yes, as long as he lives, and wherever he goes!

Sweet Lord Jesus, do so anoint me, that I may always bear about with me the fragrance of Your infinite perfections, and be a savor of life unto life among my neighbors.

~ ~ ~ Your recreations

"Certainly the best of our hours should be taken up with the best business, and not in recreations. They are to be blamed, who as soon as they rise think about amusements, and wear away their energy in adding pleasure to pleasure, not in working." This is an especially wise hint. Doubtless many occupy the chief of their thoughts upon mere sports and amusements. To expend more pains upon their pleasures than upon their duties, is the mark of ungodly men, and the sign of folly. Recreation, which should be a rest from thought, is made to be the theme of thought, and so a second wear and tear is created by the very process which ought to have prevented it.

Christians, remember this! Let not allowable diversions become occasions for transgression. This they will be, if they cause waste of time; for in such a case you will be reported to your Master as a steward who has wasted his goods! Nor will you be blameless, if your recreations weary the brain and heart, and cause a new and unremunerative expenditure of energy. Above all, you will be greatly censurable, if there is the slightest tinge of sin about the amusement, "Abstain from all appearance of evil."

~ ~ ~ Be prepared for tempest and hurricane!

"He who is on a journey to Heaven must make provisions for all weathers. For though it is sunshine when he first sets forth, a storm will overtake him before he comes to his journey's end."

Very small must be the number who have had fair weather all the way to glory! It is questionable if anyone has ever been so favored. Hence we ought, every one of us, to be prepared for tempest and hurricane—or we may be found in an evil plight in the day of our calamity. The presence of God is the only universal preservative. When He is with us, the sun shall not hurt us by day, nor the moon by night. God, all-sufficient, meets every contingency, seen or unseen. A man who has made ample provision for all weathers, is not sorry to be driven to use what he has provided. Even so, trials are almost welcomed by the man who is fully armed against them. He feels that it would be a kind of waste to be well-stored and then never have to draw upon the supply—a sort of superfluity to be fully armed, and yet never to meet an enemy. Have faith in Christ and you are . . . ready for anything, thankful for everything, and afraid of nothing.

"You are complete in Him!"

~ ~ ~ The clock of Providence!

"There is a clock with which Providence keeps time and pace—and God Himself sets it!" Our time is always now, for we are in selfish haste—but everything happens according to God's divine time-table. Our sovereign God is never before His time—and never too late. We may well admire the punctuality of Heaven. Our trials come in due season—and leave at the appointed moment. Our fretfulness will neither hasten nor delay the purposes of our sovereign God.

We are in hot haste to order all affairs. But the Lord has the leisure of omnipotence and unerring wisdom—and it will be well for us to learn to wait. The clock will not strike until the hour; but when the instant comes, we shall hear the bell. My soul, trust in God, and wait patiently when He says, "My time has not yet come—but your time is always here!" John 7:6

~ ~ ~ They will lie and die, and fry in their sins!

"A sottish drunkard lies where he falls; and except some friendly hand lift him up, there he perishes. And just so it is with lost sinners, they are pleased with their condition, and if they are not soundly roused up and awakened—they will lie and die, and fry in their sins! Oh! then, pluck them out of the fire, warn them to flee from the wrath to come!" Be in earnest with them! Exhort, rebuke, entreat. Do not leave them to perish in their sins. Use a holy violence with them, and pull them out of the mire! Common humanity would lead us to help a sheep which had fallen into a ditch—and shall we not come to the rescue of an immortal soul? The sottishness and folly of the ungodly must not dishearten us—we must take that into the account, and we shall not wonder at their uncouth and ungrateful treatment of us. As a drunken man does not want to be helped, and curses those who would serve him—so is it often with those ungodly ones who most of all require our aid. Let us not be put off by them, but labor to save them, even though they are resolved to destroy themselves. Whatever evil expressions they use toward us now, they will think and speak very differently if they are saved by our means.

Blessed Master, make us more concerned to win souls, and let us never give up, however bad men may be. How can we let them perish, when we remember that You would not leave us to die in our sins, though we were as far gone as any of those around us!

~ ~ ~ The fear of Hell whips him off some favorite vice "A wolf may be scared from his prey—yet he keeps his ravenous nature."

He has not lost his taste for lambs—though he was obliged to drop the one which he had seized.

Just so, a sinner may be forced to forego his beloved lust—and yet remain as truly a sinner as before. He may give up his drinking, for fear of losing his job, or dying of disease—but he would be at his liquor again if he dared. The fear of Hell whips him off some favorite vice—and yet his heart pines for it, and in imagination he nourishes it. In the sight of God, each man is as his heart is. The muzzled wolf is still a wolf, the silenced swearer is still profane in heart, the lewd thinker is still immoral.

Something is done when a wolf is scared, or a transgressor driven out of his evil ways—yet nothing is done which will effectually change the wolf, or renew the ungodly heart. A frightened sinner—is a sinner still. Like the frightened dog, he will return to his vomit! And like the sow that was washed, he will wallow in the mire again as soon as opportunity offers.

"You must be born again!" This is the only effectual cure for sin! While the nature is unchanged—it is but the outside of the cup and platter which is washed.

"Truth in the inward parts" is that which God desires, and until that is given, we remain under divine wrath.

Any thief will turn honest under the gallows—and yet if he were set free, he would rob the first house he came to! A scare is not a conversion. A sinner may be frightened into hypocrisy, but he must be wooed to repentance and faith. Divine love tames, and divine grace transforms. May the God of all grace deal thus with each of us!

~ ~ ~ But the mice are a nuisance!

"If one should set his house on fire to destroy the mice in it—we would think him to be mad!"

Yet those who consider themselves to be reasonable men, will set a church in a blaze about the merest trifle. Meeting after meeting will be called, and angry discussions provoked, and holy work overturned—about the smallest mistake of the preacher, or the minutest fault of a deacon. One would think that Heaven itself was endangered—yet it turns out to be a question of infinitesimal importance! Societies which were doing great Christian service, have been broken up by the crazy whimsies of foolish brethren, who made much ado about nothing, and did great harm in trying to do a little good. But the mice are a nuisance! Of course they are, and we must buy a cat or set a trap. But we certainly shall not burn the house down when a simple means will accomplish our purpose. We aim at reformation—not at desolation!

Religion has been thought to be sick, and fools have doctored it until they brought it to death's door by their poisons!

Lord, make me wise as a serpent, and harmless as a dove! And if I am called to protest against error or sin, help me to do it in the meekness and gentleness of Christ.

~ ~ ~ "If cripples mock us for walking upright, we pity them!"

If worldlings rail at us for endeavoring to lead godly and sober lives—we should not be angry, but rather sorrow over their delusion. No wise man will swerve an inch from his path to please those who are mad with sin. Nor will he be heart-broken, because idiotic sinners make a jest of his

uprightness!

~ ~ ~ ~ We think that it would be easy to be rich—but it is a harder thing than we think it to be!

"A garment which is too long, trails in the mire and soon becomes a dirty rag. Just so, it is easy for large estates to become much the same encumbrance. It is a hard lesson to 'learn to abound' (Php 4:12). We think that it would be easy to be rich—but it is a harder thing than we think it to be!"

It is hard to carry a full cup with a steady hand!

High places are dizzy places, and many have fallen to their eternal ruin, through climbing aloft. The simile of the trailing garment is simple, but instructive. Such robes raise the dust, and gather upon themselves all sorts of filthiness, besides being subjected to needless wear and tear.

Just so, a man may have so much of this world—that he misses the next! His long robe may trip him up in the race for the heavenly prize, and he may fall a victim to the wealth he idolized! Alas, for the poor rich! They fare sumptuously every day, and yet are often strangers to that deep and peerless joy which belongs to those who, in the deep waters of poverty, find a boundless bliss in trusting God! When the rich are saved they should count it a miracle of grace, and feel great gratitude to Him who enables a camel to go through the eye of a needle, notwithstanding his hump.

Lord, give me neither poverty nor riches! Or, rather, You be my riches, and give Yourself to me. As for all else, I would leave myself without reserve in your hands.

"For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs!" 1Ti 6:10

~ ~ ~ ~ Let not my religion be a painted pageantry for me to go to Hell in!

"A ministry that deals in the paint of words, will beget but painted grace."

If it is not a real, hearty ministry of grace, inspired by the Holy Spirit—it will end in nothing.

Fine words neither wound nor heal.

Oratory may amuse, but it cannot convert.

Rhetoric may astonish, but it will never save.

We must have more than mere words, however striking—paint will not do! We want living preaching, by men in downright earnest, attended by the living Spirit—or else spiritual life will never be created or sustained by it.

What is the use of coloring the cheek of the dead? The coloring is a mockery, while death reigns within. That is evil preaching which creates the semblance of piety, but never imparts the substance.

Lord, save me from being the imitation of a Christian—the product of a mimic gospel. Give me thoroughness and sincerity—and let not my religion be a painted pageantry for me to go to Hell in! Create in me a clean heart, O God!

~ ~ ~ ~ The sheep will follow the shepherd!

"O you ministers of the word, consider well that you are the first sheets from the King's press; others are printed after your copy. If the first sheet is well-set, a thousand more are stamped with ease. See, then, that holiness prevails over your own hearts, lest you not only lose your own souls, but cause the ruin of others!"

Getting the type ready for the press is work which has to be done with great care, since thousands of copies will be faulty if the proof-sheet is not as it should be.

Just so, should the minister of a congregation be seriously earnest to be right, because his people will imitate him. "Like priest, like people!" The sheep will follow the shepherd. What need there is that the pastor should order his steps aright, lest he lead a whole flock astray!

If the town-clock is wrong, half the watches in the town will have the wrong time!

We have all an influence over others. Even the least one among us has some individual to whom he serves as an example, for whom, indeed, he is a sort of proof-sheet. O that the good Lord would make us correct in all points, lest we be propagators of sin through the influence of our faults. By self-examination, let us labor to correct the proofs!

~ ~ ~ ~ The sheep must not be driven as if they were swine!

"Though swine must be driven with violence—yet poor stray lambs must be brought home, as the shepherd brought home his lost sheep 'upon his shoulders rejoicing.' Many well-meaning men may err. Do not be too severe with the sheep, lest you make them obstinate. Likewise with 'erring brethren,' lest they become heretical."

Sound advice this! It is true that certain troublesome heretics need to be rebuked sharply that they may be sound in the faith—but discretion is needed, and a loving spirit to guide the discretion. The sheep must not be driven as if they were swine! The tendency of stern orthodoxy is to act toward an erring one, as cruel fathers do when they whip their boys without mercy—for they drive ten devils in, while they think they are whipping one out. A doubter may be worried into being a heretic, before we are aware of it. Men usually will learn anything from those they love—and nothing from those who are harsh with them. The gentleness of Christ is a choice qualification for a pastor! Heresies are better kept out by preaching a full gospel—than driven out by fierce controversy. Sheep may be worried into worse strayings, but they can be kindly led into plentiful pasture. O for the Holy Spirit's direction in dealing with weak and unstable believers.

"By the meekness and gentleness of Christ, I appeal to you." 2Co 10:1

~ ~ ~ ~ The minister may blow as long as he pleases!

"A great deal of fire falls upon a stone and it burns not—but a dry chip soon takes fire."

According to our heart condition, we are affected by the fire of the gospel. Hearts of stone are not kindled by the most vehement preaching of the word, nor will they ever be—until effectual grace works a change in their nature. The same sermons which are powerless with them are, through divine grace, most potent with souls prepared of the Lord to feel the flame. The failures of ministers are often traceable to the sinful state of their hearers. What is a man to do who labors to

kindle a fire with stones for the fuel? Must he not labor in vain?

Just so, the minister may blow as long as he pleases, and burn his heart out with fervor—and yet his hearers' hearts will not catch the flame. So long as the natural mind remains what it is, he cannot effect his purpose. "The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned!" 1Co 2:14. "The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so!" Rom 8:7

Lord, I thank you not only for the heavenly fire, but for the power to be affected by it. It is Your grace which makes me capable of grace, and unto You be all the praise.

"I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow!" 1Co 3:6-7

~ ~ ~ "Charity, charity!"

"When a fire is kindled in a city we do not say coldly, 'Yonder is a great fire, I hope that it does no harm.' No! We cry, "Fire! Fire!" Just so, in times of public defection from the gospel, we are not to read tame lectures on social action, or fight with ghosts and antiquated errors—but to oppose with all earnestness the growing evils of the world, whatever it may cost us."

If men valued truth as they do their goods and their houses—they would not regard error with such cool contentment. The cant of the present day cries, "Charity, charity!" As if it were not the truest charity to grow indignant with that which ruins souls!

It is not uncharitable to warn men against poisonous foods, or a deadly disease. And surely it cannot be more uncharitable to put them upon their guard against that which will poison or rob their souls!

Lukewarmness of love to truth, is the real evil to be deprecated in these times. We have new doctrines among us, full of great mischief, and against these there is need to raise an earnest outcry, lest they gain so great a headway that both church and state should be set on fire!

Lord, arouse your watchmen, and bid them arouse all your saints, for the times are full of danger!

~ ~ ~ "Fruit that has but little sun, can never be ripe!"

We have had practical proof of this, for during the year 1879, there being a scant measure of sunshine, the fruit was never properly ripened, and was therefore destitute of flavor and sweetness. Whatever might be its outward appearance, the fruit was insipid and altogether unlike what the sun would have made it, had he smiled upon the swelling fruit.

Thus, without communion with God, no soul can develop its graces; neither can those graces become what they should be. No measure of care or effort can make up for the light of the Father's face; neither can attendance upon means of grace nor the use of religious exercises supply the lack.

We must have intimate fellowship with God, or . . . the essential honey of love will be deficient, the bloom of joy will be lacking, the aroma of zeal and earnestness will be missed.

We we may exhibit some feeble, insipid graces—but the secret savor and mystic richness of grace will not be in us unless we abide in the full light of divine love.

Lord, evermore be as the sun unto our souls, that we may be as fully ripe fruit, attaining to all the perfection and maturity of which our nature is capable!

~ ~ ~ ~ Can we dare to play fast and loose with that which concerns God's glory, and the destiny of immortal souls?

"The first appearances of error are many times modest. There is a chain of truths; the devil takes out a link here and a link there, that all may fall to pieces!" The argument of "charity" is used to screen those who are robbing us of the gospel! We are bidden to be cautious how we condemn those who only differ on small points; whereas the truths which they would take away from us have important bearings upon other truths, and cannot be denied without a serious break-up of the whole doctrinal chain! Let us not give up a single link of the divine system, for if we did so, we would prove traitors to the whole plan of revealed truth. In these times, the illustration given above is exceedingly instructive. Satan knows that we would never consent to give up a wheel of the gospel chariot, and therefore in his craftiness he only asks for the lynch-pins to be handed over to him. May God grant wisdom to His servants that none of them may be beguiled by the deceitful cunning of the adversary.

Long ages may have to rue the defalcations of this day, if we sell the precious gospel to its foes. Until the Lord shall come, we are entrusted with the gospel. Will we be fraudulent trustees? Can we dare to play fast and loose with that which concerns God's glory, and the destiny of immortal souls?

"Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care! Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge, which some have professed and in so doing have wandered from the faith!" 1Ti 6:20-21

~ ~ ~ ~ The swollen arm!

"Certainly a proud man is no great man—any more than a swollen arm can be accounted to be strong."

Many mistakes are made on this matter both as to men and language.

Boasters are by foolish people reckoned at their declared value. But no mistake can be greater—a proud man is of necessity small and base in the judgment of God.

Language is thought to be forcible because it is harsh, severe, and blustering. And yet there is little power in such speaking, except to provoke opposition and furnish motives and weapons for the opposer.

Judge, then, between swelling and strength! Avoid the one and prudently aim at the other. True humility is beloved of God, and He ever comes to its aid.

I must be less and less in my own esteem—if I would have power with God and prevalence with men. It seems not so—and yet so it is! Lord, write the lesson on my heart!

~ ~ ~ The nettle and the violet

"Laden boughs hang low. The nettle mounts above its fellow weeds—but the violet lies shrouded under its leaves, and is only found out by its own scent."

Walking by a stream one day, we were conscious of a delightful fragrance, and only then did we perceive the little blue eyes which were looking up to us so meekly from the ground on which we stood.

Virtue is always modest, and modesty is itself a virtue. He who is discovered by his real excellence, and not by his egotistical advertisement of his own perfections—is a man worth knowing! The other is a mere nettle who is sure to be forgotten—unless indeed his blustering pride should sting some tender heart, and secure a wretched kind of remembrance.

O that I may ever be more gracious than I seem to be. Never may it be any concern of mine to be seen by men. And yet let me so live, that I need not fear to be read and known of all.

~ ~ ~ Children are fond of new toys!

"We gaze more on a comet, than on the sun." This is the reason why erratic teachers are for a while popular, and attract public attention. It is given out that they are "some great one," and all the town is staring with open mouth. The nine day wonder is everyone's talk. The new teaching is something marvelous—and the old creed is to be driven out of the land. New lights are to eclipse the old; at least, so we are told.

Let us wait a while, however, and the comet will have vanished, and the half-forgotten fixed stars will be seen to be shining on with unfading splendor! May the Lord give us such fixed and established judgments that no novelties of doctrine may ever dazzle us. Children are fond of new toys—let us be men and keep to the tried word of the Lord.

"Thus says the LORD: And ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and walk in it. Then you will find rest for your souls." Jer 6:16

~ ~ ~ Sit down at mercy's gate—and show your sores, and groan, and sigh!

"A mute beggar gets an alms at Christ's gate if he can but make signs, when his tongue cannot plead for him." This is a cheering sentence for the many poor souls who feel that they cannot find words with which to pray. Sit down at mercy's gate—and show your sores, and groan, and sigh! Let your rags ask for clothing, and your hunger plead for bread.

Wounds are eloquent orators with a tender-hearted surgeon. Expose your wounds to Jesus, and He will bind them up.

Misery is mercy's best constraint. When the psalmist could not pray a set prayer, he says, "I opened my mouth and panted." He declares in another place that he panted like a thirsty deer. There is nothing articulate in panting, and yet no one ever misunderstood the meaning of the act.

Come, then, you mute beggars, and learn the language of signs. Come and pant—come and spread your misery before the eyes of divine mercy, and doubt not that He who knows the thoughts of the heart will readily understand you and speedily grant your desires!

~ ~ ~ ~ The bags will come to an end, long before the treasure is exhausted!

"If a mighty king should open his treasure, and bid men come and bring their bags, and take as much as they would—do you think they would neglect this occasion of gain? Surely not! They would run and fetch bag after bag, and never cease. Thus does the Lord act toward us with His grace."

He makes over all His fullness to His people, and says, "All is yours!" We are not straitened in Him. The bags will come to an end, long before the treasure is exhausted!

Let us come, then, to the throne of grace with enlarged desires and widened expectations! The Lord does not stint us—Why should we put ourselves upon scanty fare? He says, "Eat and drink, yes, drink abundantly, O beloved!" Why, then, do we sit at the table and starve, or rise from it hungry? Let us by faith, drink of the abundance of the sea of grace, and partake largely of the hidden treasure which the Lord has laid up for us!

~ ~ ~ ~ A painted child will be the same size ten years hence, as it is now!

"Where there is life, there will be growth. Just so, if grace is true, it will surely increase. A painted flower keeps always at the same pitch and stature; the artist may bestow beauty upon it, but he cannot bestow life. A painted child will be the same size ten years hence, as it is now."

What need there is to observe the wide distinction between the picture and the living thing! Of painted likenesses of Christians, we have more than enough. Nor is the manufacture of portraits a difficult operation. What we want is the real thing—and not the artistic imitation!

Growth is the test of life! Many professors remain right where they began. If they were saved, they would find themselves making some measure of advance: not always advancing at the same rate, for all life is not equally rapid in its growth, but still progressing somewhat, forgetting the things behind, and reaching forth to that which is beyond.

Reader, how do you stand under this test? Come, search yourself, and see whether you are adding to your faith, courage; and to courage, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. If there is no growth, it may be, nay, surely it must be, that you are not a child born into the family of God. You are but a pretty picture, which may adorn a room, but which cannot perform any of the actions of life! It is a sad thing if such be your case, for Heaven is not a portrait-gallery. It is the home of loving, living souls, whom grace has quickened with spiritual life!

~ ~ ~ ~ This is a wonder of wonders!

"If a king, passing by an execution, should take the malefactor's chains, and suffer and die in his stead—this would be a wonderful event indeed." The deed would ring through all history, and be quoted as an amazing instance of heroic pity. And well deserved would be all the words of praise and sonnets of admiration which would record and eulogize it.

Yet our Lord Jesus did this and infinitely more, for those who were not merely malefactors—but rebels and enemies to Him. This is a wonder of wonders!

But, alas, it meets with small praise. The most of men around us have heard of it and treated it as an idle tale, and multitudes more regard it as a pious legend, worthy to be repeated as a venerable

fable, and then forgotten as an idealistic myth.

Even those who know, believe, and admire—are yet cold in their emotions with regard to the story of the cross. Herein is love which ought to set our hearts on fire, and yet we scarcely maintain a smouldering spark of enthusiasm.

Lord Jesus, be more real to our apprehensions, and so be more completely the Master of our affections.

"You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us!" Rom 5:6-8

~ ~ ~ Pour this living water into your dry pump!

"Love must be paid in kind. As water is put into a pump, when the springs lie low, to bring up more water—so God sheds abroad His love into our hearts, that our love may rise up to Him again by way of gratitude and thanksgiving."

How idle is it, then, to hope to chide ourselves into loving God! The price of love is love; the origin of it is not found in law or in a sense of duty—but in love, or a return of gratitude. When the sun of eternal love melts the glaciers of the soul—then the rivers of affection flow! But if the rocks of ice could all be broken to shivers with hammers—not a drop of affection would stream forth. Only a sense of divine love, will ever create love to God in the heart.

How vain also is the attempt to recompense the mercy of God by mechanical acts of religion, or works of legal service! "Love must be paid in kind." No other coin is current in love's empire, but that which bears her own image and superscription. Do what we will, even to martyrdom—if we have not love, it profits us nothing. In this case it is specially true, "If a man should give all the substance of his house for love—it would utterly be despised."

Come, my heart, does your love run dry? Then beg the Holy Spirit to shed abroad the love of God within you. Pour this living water into your dry pump—and you will soon pour forth a plentiful stream of love to God.

~ ~ ~ Tight-rope dancing suits not our poor head!

"They weaken Christian comfort—who make believers walk with Christ like tight-dancers—every moment in fear of breaking their necks!"

Those who deny the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints deserve this censure. We cannot tell whence these brethren derive their comfort. Our notion of trusting Christ includes in it a reliance upon him for the present and the future, as well as for the sins of the past. It is the glory of the gospel, that it gives us now, at this very moment, a present and everlasting salvation. Once grasped in the hand of Jesus, what can pluck us thence or cause us to perish? Tight-rope dancing suits not our poor head—we prefer to be "safe in the arms of Jesus." A temporary, questionable salvation does not suit me. I abide in His eternal, unchangeable love, and fear no final fall. My soul, let others say what they will—accept your Lord's word for it, and believe that He will keep the

feet of His saints.

"I give them eternal life, and they will never perish—ever! No one will snatch them out of My hand!"
John 10:28

~ ~ ~ ~ When we are looking out of the windows of the future! The flesh says to believers, 'I will surely fail them and make the miscarry!' And the world says, 'I will deceive them and entice them!' And Satan says, 'I will snatch them and carry them away!' But God says, 'I will keep them, I will never fail them nor forsake them!'

Here lies our safety and security. The flesh says, "I will deceive you!" The world says, "I will defile you!" The devil says, "I will destroy you!" But the Lord says, "I will defend you!" and that one word of God takes the sting from all the rest. The flesh is as a drawn sword, the world is as a sharp spear, and Satan is as a poisoned arrow—but the Lord God is a shield, and this baffles all. The flesh is much, the world is more, and Satan is most of all—but God is all in all. The flesh must die, the world must pass away, Satan must be overthrown—but the Word of our God abides forever!

What a rest this affords us, when we are looking out of the windows of the future! The Lord will be our support in the days to come!

"I give them eternal life, and they will never perish—ever! No one will snatch them out of My hand!"
John 10:28

"Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name; you are Mine! When you go through deep waters, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown. When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you. For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior!" Isa 43:1-3

~ ~ ~ ~ Every egg in our basket will become a chicken!

"Plenty of blossoms do not always foretell an abundance of fruit." Not every blossom which promises an apple, bears fruit. It has ever been so, and he is an unwise man who dreams that his trees will be exempted from the universal law. The same rule holds good in all earthly matters. Out of many hopeful results which we look for from our plans and labors—some must fail us.

Because we make appointments for ourselves, and forget the appointments of God—we meet with many more disappointments than would otherwise fall to our lot. It is of no use reckoning that every egg in our basket will become a chicken—for it will not so happen—and our over-anticipation will be the cause of needless sorrow to us.

Every prudent merchant reckons upon a certain amount of bad debt and loss in his trading—and when it comes, he writes it off as a part of his estimated charges, and is not broken-hearted. Our wisdom lies in doing the same with all earthly hopes, and even with the visible results of our service for the Lord. It is ours to sow with unwearied hand both at morning and at night—but we must leave the result with the Master. "I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow!" 1Co 3:6

~ ~ ~ ~

Make me a star!

"Meteors are soon spent, and fall from Heaven like lightning—while stars keep their course and station." When a meteor darts across the sky, children say that a star has fallen—but it is not so. Look through the telescope, and you will find Jupiter, and Saturn, and Venus, each one in its place, shining as usual—yes, even the tiniest satellite is in its predestined sphere, fulfilling its times and seasons.

Just so, we hear men say that a true Christian has fallen from grace—a true saint has become an apostate. This also is an error. The saints are in their places still, for it is written, "the righteous shall hold on his way."

Those who have fallen were meteors—not stars!

They were professors—but not genuine possessors of the heavenly light. The seven stars are in a hand out of which nothing can fall, "All the saints are in Your hand." Jesus says, "he who believes in Me has everlasting life," and therefore we are sure that they cannot fall away.

O my blessed Savior, give me no temporary salvation! Make me a star whose brightness shall never be quenched. To be enlightened for a time will not do—grant me light which Satan cannot extinguish! Let me be "saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation."

~ ~ ~ ~ Smothered in flowery pleasures and to be led down to Hell!

"The heathen were accustomed to hang beautiful garlands around the necks of the beasts which were about to be slain at the altar, and to crown them with roses as they led them to sacrifice."

Just so, many are thus decked with the ornaments of wealth and mirth, who are on the way to the slaughter! Ungodly men may be garlanded with social distinctions, scientific attainments, and courtly honors—and yet be no better than beasts devoted to the ax, at the altar of the god of this world.

How little did the roses avail to the creature doomed to die! If men were wise they would regard with equal disesteem, those earthly honors and possessions which do but deck out a condemned criminal, and adorn a wretch over whom the wrath of God is hovering! O silly men, to rejoice in the tokens of your destruction, and to glory in your shame!

Lord, it is better to bear Your cross, and march heavenward with the blessed burden—than to be smothered in flowery pleasures and to be led down to Hell!

~ ~ ~ ~ This is a dish for me!

"As at a feast, when there is a dish for which we have a great liking set upon the table, though all the company is welcome to partake of it—yet we say, 'Here is a dish for me!' Just so, should you apply and take to yourselves your own portion of the Word. Though it is propounded generally, when God directs the tongue of His messengers to speak expressly to your case, you should say, 'This is a dish for me!'"

How often has this been the case when reading the Word of God, or hearing it! We have felt an inward relish and delight in divine truth, and our spiritual instincts have taught us that it was intended for us. A man may be misled by his natural appetite, but the spiritual man's holy taste never deceives him. If he can feed upon the Word, this is clear evidence that it is "food that is

needful for him," and that the Lord intends it for him. The Holy Spirit has said, "Eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness," plainly indicating that the truth which gives delight to the renewed soul may be safely feasted on, and that we have full license to enjoy it without stint. My heart, here is good news for you! Do not be slow to avail yourself of the divine invitation. At the feast of love, eat the fat and drink the sweet, and bless the Lord who satisfies your mouth with good things!

"Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet drink!" Neh 8:10

~ ~ ~ There is no such deity as MOTHER NATURE!

"All creatures hang upon God, as a garment upon a nail. Take away the nail, and the garment falls down!" The emblem is simple but accurate. All the weight falls upon the nail. Just so, all the need of the creature's existence hangs upon the Omnipotent One. What power must He have, from whom all power is derived! All that we see around us of force and might, is but God in action. There is no such deity as MOTHER NATURE! Nature is the Lord at work! Do all things depend upon God? It should then be an easy thing for my creature-life to hang upon its Creator. Had it not been for sin, faith would have been my very nature, and dependence upon God a constituted quality of my existence.

Who, then, are they that laugh at faith? Rationalists? Let them laugh on, for my heart is well assured that confidence in God is the highest reason, and trust in my Maker is the finest common-sense.

O Lord! I bless you that the nail on which creation hangs can never fail—for You never faint. Neither will my confidence be put to shame, for it hangs where the worlds hang! Until You Yourself cease from your almightiness, my soul's hope is safe beyond question, for it rests solely upon You!

~ ~ ~ People do not think!

"Continued meditation brings great profit to the soul. Passing and transient thoughts are not so profitable. Deliberate meditation is of most use, because it secures the return of the thoughts. Sudden thoughts pass away from us, and, as a rule, they do not return to benefit us; as children shoot away their arrows into the forest, and do not look after them; or as a ball stricken in the open field goes out from us, whereas a ball struck against a wall returns to our hand again."

We need more meditation—more of this shooting of thought-arrows at a mark on which they will strike and stick—more of this throwing the thought-ball at the wall that we may catch it again. This would make us a more solid race of Christian men and women.

People do not think! Gentle reader, do you never think? Are you too busy to meditate? Is your time occupied from morning to night? Then stop a moment while we whisper in your ear—if you are very busy, think and pray all the more, or your work will wear and weary you, and drag you away from God. For your work's sake, break away from it, and give the soul a breathing time. Get a holy subject and keep to it, until you have drawn something from it to feed your soul upon—and then you will do your lifework with less fatigue because you will have more strength to spend upon it.

"Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long!" Psa 119:97

~ ~ ~ ~ Behold, this dreamer comes!

"Worldly men hear . . . of the beauty of holiness, of the excellency of Christ, of the rich treasures of grace, of the preciousness of Heaven— as if they were in a dream! They look upon such things as mere fantasies—like foolish dreams of golden mountains, or showers of pearls."

"This their way is their folly." When scientific men describe to us their curious experiments and singular discoveries—we know them to be people of credit, and therefore accept their testimony. So why do not men of the world do us the like justice, and believe what we tell them? We are as sane as they, and as observant of the law of truth—why, then, do they not believe us when we declare what the Lord has done for our souls? Why is our experience in the spiritual world to be treated as a fiction—any more than their discoveries in chemistry or geography? There is no justice in the treatment with which our witness is received.

Yet the Christian man need not complain, for in the nature of things he may expect it to be so; and the fact that it is so, is a confirmation of his own beliefs. In a world of blind men, an elect race, to whom sight had been given—would be sure to be regarded as either mad or false! How could the sightless majority be expected to accept the witness of the seeing few? Would it not touch their pride, to admit that others possessed superior faculties, of which they were destitute? And would it not be highly probable that the blind would conspire to regard the men of eyes as fanatical dreamers or deluded fools?

"The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned!" 1Co 2:14. Unrenewed men know not the things of the Spirit of God, and it is by no means a strange thing, that they should deride what they cannot understand.

It is sad that those who are dreamers in the worst sense should think others so, but it is by no means so extraordinary as to cause us surprise.

O my Lord, whatever others may think of me, let me be more and more sensible of Your presence, and of the glorious privileges and hopes which are created in the heart by Your grace! If men should even say of me, as of Joseph, "Behold, this dreamer comes!" it will not grieve me so long as You are with me, and Your favor makes me blessed.

"The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God!" 2Co 4:4

~ ~ ~ ~ Oh that I had more of these heavenly gales laden with the spices of Immanuel's land!

"The fragrances and sweet smells of Arabia are carried by the winds and air into the neighboring provinces, so that before travelers come there they have the scent of that aromatic country. Just so, the joys of Heaven are by the sweet breathings and gales of the Holy Spirit, blown into the hearts of believers; and the sweet fragrances of the upper paradise are conveyed into the gardens of believer's hearts. Those joys which are stirred up in us by the Spirit before we get to Heaven—are a pledge of what we may expect hereafter."

Oh that I had more of these heavenly gales laden with the spices of Immanuel's land! Gracious Lord, cause such a celestial wind to awake at this very hour!

I am already accepted in Christ Jesus, adopted, and beloved in Him—this is a foretaste of Heaven. In Him I am secure, immortal, triumphant—these also are heavenly privileges. In Jesus I have peace, and rest, and profound confidence—is not this also something of paradise? I have fellowship with God, and exceeding joy in His love—surely the wind is blowing from the glory quarter, and has taken up much of the fragrance of the beds of spices whereon the saints recline. The Holy Spirit has revealed unto us in our inward experience, a taste of the bliss which the Lord has prepared for those who love Him. The life of the believer on earth is the same as that which will be in him throughout eternity; and the joy with which the Lord favors him below, is of the same nature as that which shall fill him forever. When Jesus reveals Himself to my soul, the winds are blowing from Heaven—I can discern the fragrance. All around me delight is poured forth, and my heart is singing all the time!

~ ~ ~ The old nail of self-love is rusted in, and will not stir!

"Men cannot drive out of self-love. It must be another more powerful love, which must draw them from love of self; as one nail drives out another." This is true philosophy. Love to God, can alone expel the love of sin. Many forget this, and set to work extracting the old love. This is a very tedious task—impossible, indeed, with such poor tools as we possess. They torture the body and torment the mind—but the old nail of self-love is rusted in, and will not stir. They might sooner break up the fabric of their manhood, than tear out its old deep-seated affections! The self-nail has been driven well home, and clinched besides, and we cannot dislodge it!

It is wonderful to see how love to Christ fetches out the love of self from its lodging. At the first it shakes and loosens it; by and by it drives it a little from its place, and at last it drives it out altogether. Self is at first somewhat denied, then it is chastened and kept under control, and finally the man finds pleasure in warring against it, and glories in the submission of the flesh to suffering and loss.

O blessed hand of Jesus, drive in the nail of divine love! Smite hard, Lord! Force out the rusted iron of my selfishness. Let not a fragment of it remain. You love alone can vanquish my love of self. You alone can conquer self in me. No secondary force will suffice. My God, you must display the power of love—or my vile heart will never part with self.

~ ~ ~ Our main concern must be as to the root!

"As when the root of a tree perishes, the leaves keep green for a little; but within a while they wither and fall off. Just so, love, which is the root and heart of all other graces—when that decays, other things decay with it. The first works go off with the first love; at least, are not carried on with such care, and delight, and satisfaction, as they should be."

Swiftly other graces follow, withering in their turn; for the fatal blow has been struck, and failure of every good thing is but a matter of time. Could the love of saints to Jesus utterly die out, all their virtues must die also, for love is the root of all. The outward form of piety might survive, as the wretched counterfeit of holiness—but what would be its worth? Even this in many cases passes away, for some men are bravely consistent in their wickedness, and do not care to keep up the name to live, when the life of God is not within their souls. Our main concern must be as to the root! The heart must be alive with gracious gratitude—or the leaf cannot long be green with living holiness.

How is it with you, my soul? Is there root-life in you? Is Jesus precious? Is the Father's name most sweet? Does the Holy Spirit move you to ardent affection? A chill love, whose very existence is questionable, means a miserable experience. He who doubts his own love to Jesus, generally doubts Jesus' love to him.

O love, be the living root in me, and, through your quickening and nourishing energy, may the branches of my consecrated life grow exceedingly!

~ ~ ~ ~ What an awaking, from the dreams of bliss—to the realities of Hell!

"As the madman at Athens boasted that all the ships of the city were his own—so carnal men claim a saving interest in heavenly things which are none of theirs. Deceived hearts believe they are running to Heaven—when they are posting to Hell! Like rowers in a boat, they look one way, and go contrary!"

Religious delusions may be very comfortable while they last—but what will be the misery of their unmasking! To have all your imagined godliness vanish like the mists before the sun, will be grievous indeed! In proportion to the false confidence—will be the despair involved. The poor madman in Bedlam in the olden time placed a straw crown upon his head, and issued orders like a Caesar; it was his madness which made such a farce a comfort to him. In the next world the sinner's madness will be over—he will be sobered by his despair. What then will he think of his former fancies and fond self flatteries! What an awaking, from the dreams of bliss—to the realities of Hell!

O my soul, see you to it that all your hopes are well-grounded! Do not call Christ yours, and Heaven yours—if they are not so. Do not play the fool with eternal things, but get a sure title to everlasting blessedness.

~ ~ ~ ~ Alas, they munch their acorns—and scorn the Bread of life!

"The main reason why men dote upon the world, is because they are not acquainted with a higher glory. Men ate acorns, until they were acquainted with corn. A candle is useful before the sun rises."

Now it has been given unto us to eat the bread of angels, and to see the Sun of righteousness—and never again can we find contentment in baser things! All the joys of the world are now but beggarly elements to us—compared with our delight in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Carnal wisdom has become folly in our esteem; the mirth of fools is a weariness to us; and the pomp and glory of earth are mere baby toys, scarcely worthy of a glance!

What grace is this, which has revealed such precious things to us!

Worldly-wise men think us fanatics and fools—but we know what they are, and where the folly really lies! Oh that their eyes were opened to join with us in the joys which they ridicule! If they will persist in their blindness, it shall not be for lack of plain testimony on our part, for we are bold to declare in all companies that there is more satisfaction in Christ's worst things—than in sin's best things! A half-hour of Christ's presence—is better than all the feasting of royal courts for a lifetime. Oh that they would believe us so far as to try for themselves!

Alas, they munch their acorns—and scorn the Bread of life!

~ ~ ~ ~ Truly, the race of fools has not yet died out!

"And I'll say to myself, 'You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.' But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?' This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself, but is not rich toward God." Luk 12:19-21 May not the like be said of those who give grudgingly to the cause of God, and of those who ruin their souls in order to increase their pelf? They refuse to be losers for Christ—and so lose their souls. Religion might cost them a loss in business, by leading them to act with strict uprightness. This they cannot afford, and so they throw away their souls—in order to keep their pennies! Truly, the race of fools has not yet died out! Thousands still think it profitable to gain the world, and lose their own souls.

O Lord, teach me true wisdom! Make me willing to lose wealth, and health, and home, yes, and my life also—in order that I may follow Jesus and possess his salvation!

"For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?" Mark 8:36

~ ~ ~ ~ Foolish and stupid arguments!

"Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels!" 2Ti 2:23 This is abundantly seen in many who pretend to interpret prophetic seals and vials—and yet neglect family devotion and the plain precepts of the Word. Such are found occupying their time in hair-splitting over difficult theological points—but they do not careful to love the brethren. They are very contentious upon speculative doctrinal topics of no consequence whatever—and often argue with the brethren.

We have enough to do with watching over our own hearts and endeavoring to bring sinners to Christ, without becoming more contentious upon matters of theological subtlety and word-spinning. The wide difference between wisdom and knowledge is forgotten by many: they hoard up theological knowledge like collectors of coins—and keep it for show, a rarity to be looked at, labeled, put away in a glass case and exhibited to those who are admirers of curios and rarities.

Lord! Make me practical, and do not let my head swim with airy notions until I rush upon my own destruction!

~ ~ ~ ~ "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed!" Psa 57:7

While we search after graces and additional comforts—we must not leave our simple trust in Jesus. Whatever sweep our knowledge may take as we advance in years—we must retain most fixedly the one and only center which is worthy of a regenerated soul, namely, our Lord Jesus. If the circle of our energies should encompass all the world—still must the heart stay in delightful continuance with the Well-Beloved. Immovable and steadfast must we be, our willing soul unswervingly loyal to its sole object of trust and love—the one and only Lord of our whole being, the chief among ten thousand, the altogether lovely one! To whom else can we go? Where else is there rest for us? Let us then abide in Christ Jesus. Fix the center with the whole force of a resolute heart; nay, more, with the whole power of divine grace.

O you who are the same yesterday, today, and forever, hold me fast forever, and bid me sing, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed!"

"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus!" Heb 12:2

~ ~ ~ ~ As long as we are this side of Jordan—we are within gunshot of the enemy!

"Not only colts, but horses already broken, need a bridle."

Indeed they do, and so also do we who are advanced in years and full of Christian experience.

Old men are not always wise men! Passions which should have been by this time quite subdued, still need the bit and bridle, or they may hurry us into dreadful sins. The flesh does not improve over time, nor do corruptions sweeten by the lapse of years.

New converts need to watch in the morning of their days—but old saints must be equally on their guard, for the hours become no safer as they draw toward evening. As long as we are this side of Jordan—we are within gunshot of the enemy!

"Without Me you can do nothing," is as true of mature Christian men, as of babes in grace.

Temptation, like fire, will burn where the wood is green—and certainly it has no less power where the wood is old and dry.

We shall need to be kept by grace—until we are actually in glory! Those who think themselves at Heaven's gate, may yet sin their souls into the deepest Hell, unless the unchanging love and power of God shall uphold them even to the end.

Lord, bit and bridle me, I beg you, and never let me break loose from your divine control. Conduct me every mile of the road, until I reach my everlasting home!

"Hold me up, and I shall be safe!" Psa 119:117

~ ~ ~ ~ Many who claim to be the sons of God, act as basely as if they were scullions in the kitchen of Mammon!

"Live as kings, commanding your spirits, judging your souls to be above ordinary pursuits. It is not for eagles to be hunting for flies! Of old it was said, 'Remember that you are Caesar's!' So say we to each believer, 'Remember that you shall one day be a king with God in glory, and therefore walk worthily.'"

"Walk worthy of God, who has called you unto His kingdom." 1Th 2:12 This is important teaching, and much needed in these days. Many who declare themselves to be eagles, spend the most of their lives in hunting for flies! We even hear of professing Christians frequenting the theater. Instead of acting like kings, many who claim to be the sons of God, act as basely as if they were scullions in the kitchen of Mammon!

What separation from the world, what exemplary holiness, what self-denial, what heavenly walking with God— ought to be seen in those who are chosen to be God's redeemed people, the representatives of God on earth! As the world waxes worse and worse, it befits men of God to become better and better. If sinners stoop lower, saints must rise higher, and show them that a

regenerate life cannot share in the general corruption.

O Lord, I know that in Christ Jesus, you have made me a king. Help me, then, to live a right royal life. Lay home to my conscience that question, "What kind of person ought I to be?" And may I so answer it that I may live worthy of my high calling.

~ ~ ~ ~ Lord, give me the true Jerusalem blade!

"We do not judge a sword to be good merely because it hangs by a golden belt, or because it is set in a jeweled hilt."

Neither is a doctrine to be valued, because a fine orator delivers it in gorgeous speech with glittering words. A lie is none the better, for being bespangled with poetic phrases and high-sounding phrases. Yet half our people forget this, and the glittering oratory fascinates them. Alas, poor simpletons! The same blunders are made about men, who should ever be esteemed according to their native worth—and not according to their position and office.

What mistakes we would make if we considered all the followers of godly men, to be themselves necessarily godly. Alas! the Lord Himself had his Judas—and to this day, swords of brittle metal hang at the golden belt of many professors. A man is not a saint because he occupies a saintly office, or repeats saintly words!

No, the test of a sword's soundness is to be found in battle. Will its edge turn in the fray, or will it cut through a coat of armor?

Just so, will our faith bear affliction? Will it stand us in good stead, when we are hand to hand with the enemy? Will it avail us in the dying hour?

If not, we may suspend it on the glittering belt of great knowledge, and hold it by the jeweled hilt of a high profession—but woe unto us!

Lord, give me the true Jerusalem blade of childlike faith in you, and may I never rest content with a mere imitation thereof.

~ ~ ~ ~ You are a Godlike thing!

"When Bernard happened to see a poor man dressed in rags, he would say to himself, 'Truly, Bernard, this man has more patience beneath his cross than I have!' But if he saw a rich man finely clothed, then he would say, 'It may be that this man, under his fine clothing, has a better heart than I have under my religious exterior!'" This showed an excellent charity! Oh, that we could learn it! It is easy to think evil of all men—for there is sure to be some fault about each one which the least discerning may readily discover. But it is far more worthy of a Christian, and shows much more nobility of soul—to spy out the good in each fellow-believer. This needs a larger mind as well as a better heart, and hence it should be a point of honor to practice it until we obtain an aptitude for it.

Any simpleton might be set to sniff out offensive odors! But it would require a scientific man to bring to us all the fragrant essences and rare perfumes which lie hidden in field and garden.

Oh, to learn the science of Christian charity! It is an art far more to be esteemed, than the most lucrative of human labors. This choice art of love, is the true divine alchemy. Charity toward others, abundantly practiced, would be . . . the death of envy, the life of fellowship, the overthrow of self, and the enthronement of grace.

Charity, be my study, my poetry, my science, my music—for you are more to be desired than all these. You are a Godlike thing, and I would be filled with you! The most of us are but feather-bed soldiers!

"Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets!" Luk 6:26

Certainly, it is an honor to be made vile for God. Shame for Christ's sake, is the highest dignity a mortal man can wear!

Among the early Christians, the martyrs were regarded as the nobility of the Church—and the relatives of martyrs were a sort of aristocracy.

We need a spice of the same spirit at this day. A true believer should tremble when the world commends him—but he should feel complimented when it utterly despises him!

What do we suffer, after all? The most of us are but feather-bed soldiers! Our ways are strewn with roses, compared with those who endured hardness in the olden time. We are poor and lowly successors of noble ancestors—ennobled by their supreme sufferings. If we cannot reach their superior dignity, nor hope to wear the ruby crown of martyrdom—at least let us not shun such glory as may be obtainable, but accept with cheerful patience, whatever of opprobrium this worthless world may honor us with!

"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you!" Mat 5:11-12

~ ~ ~ ~ A stitch in time!

"He who keeps a house in constant repair, prevents all fear of its falling to ruin. By stopping each hole and chink as he finds it, he keeps off greater mischief."

We shall do well to use the same economy with our spiritual life. No great decays will occur—if we look to each of our graces, and lament the first sign of declension in any one of them. A loose stone here, and a fallen tile there, and a rotting timber in a third place—will soon bring a house to total ruin. But the hand of diligence maintains the structure.

Thus must we watch our spiritual house, lest we fall little by little. Are there no repairs needed at this time? Does not my soul show a number of flaws and decays? Come, my heart, look about you, and pray the Lord to restore that which has fallen.

"Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first!" Rev 2:5

~ ~ ~ ~ If the reins of providence were placed in our feeble hands!

"God knows what is best for us. Like foolish children, we desire a knife. But, like a wise Father, he withholds it."

It would be a most unfatherly thing for a man to give his son that which would cause his death. The greatest generosity must refuse some requests, when it is a higher kindness to withhold, rather than to bestow. The limit which is set to prayer—namely, that if we ask anything in accordance with God's will, He hears us—is just such a limit as love on God's part must fix, and as prudence on our part must approve. Would we have the Lord act according to our ignorance—or according to His own wisdom? Shall our uninstructed self, become the arbiter of God's providence? Assuredly not! No Christian in his senses would propose such an arrangement.

If we could have our own will absolutely, it would be wise not to have it, but to divest ourselves of the horrible privilege.

How much more restful are our minds, now that we know that our wise and loving Father arranges all things—than could possibly be the case if the responsibility of management rested with ourselves. We should soon perish by our own folly—if the reins of providence were placed in our feeble hands! It is better far that the rule should be, "Not as I will—but as You will."

Lord, give me not what I ask—but what I should ask—yes, what You see to be most for my eternal good and your glory!

~ ~ ~ Blessed be the burning coals!

"Spices are most fragrant when burnt and bruised. In the same way, Christian graces have their best fragrance in hard times."

Herein lies one of the benefits of affliction—it fetches out latent sweetness and virtues. Certain herbs yield no fragrance until they are trodden on. Just so, Christians do not reveal their excellence, until they are tried. The developing power of affliction is very great. Faith, patience, resignation, endurance, and steadfastness are best seen, when put to the test by adversity, pain, affliction, and temptation.

God is not glorified by unused graces, for these lie hidden and bring Him no honor. May we not, therefore, rejoice in tribulation, because it fetches out our secret graces, and enables us to give glory to the Lord whom we love? Yes, blessed be the pestle which bruises us, and the mortar in which we lie, to be beaten into fragrance.

Blessed be the burning coals which liberate our aromatic fragrances and raise them up to Heaven like sweet incense. Can we not say this? Then perhaps our present affliction has been sent for that very end—that we may learn the way of complete consecration, and be made perfect through suffering.

"God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in His holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it." Heb 12:10-11

~ ~ ~ ~ Lord, make and keep me humble!

"Behold, I am vile!" Job 40:4 The higher a spire rises toward Heaven—the smaller it becomes. In the same way, the more holy we are—the less shall we be in our own esteem.

Great thoughts of self, and great grace—never go together. A sense of great self worth—is a sure sign that there is not much depth of grace.

He who overvalues himself—undervalues his Savior.

He who abounds in piety—is sure to be filled with humility. The best of God's people have abhorred themselves.

Light things, such as straws and feathers, are borne aloft.

Valuable things keep their places, and remain below—not because they are chained or riveted there, but by virtue of their own weight. The more full we become of the presence of the Lord—the more shall we sink in our own esteem; even as laden vessels sink down, while empty ships float aloft.

Lord, make and keep me humble! Lift me nearer and nearer to Heaven—and then I shall grow less and less in my own esteem.

"I abhor myself!" Job 42:6 "Woe is me! For I am undone!" Isa 6:5 "I am a sinful man, O Lord!" Luk 5:8 "What a wretched man I am!" Rom 7:24

~ ~ ~ The ship is sinking!

"To fix our confidence upon a dying world, is folly! It is as if we were building our nests when the tree is being cut down; or decorating our cabin when the ship is sinking!"

Too many professors set their hearts on their money—they build their nest in the golden grove! Or they are wrapped up in their children, and, as it were, nestle down among those who spring up as willows by the watercourses. The ax is laid at the root of all earthly comforts! Therefore, those who are taught of God, soar aloft and make their eyries on the Rock of Ages.

You whose eyes are now scanning this page—where is your heart?

What is its dearest delight and joy? Is it of earth? Then be sure that to earth it will return. Is your joy a thing of Heaven? Then alone is it stable and sure. My soul, the world is passing away—do not set your love upon it! The ship is sinking—do not be overly concerned about the little luxuries of the cabin which you have for a while occupied in it. Up and away! This is not your rest! See, before your eyes the world is passing away! Look to eternity and to your God, for there alone is solid bliss.

"Those who use the things of the world should not become attached to them. For this world as we know it will soon pass away!" 1Co 7:31 "Arise and depart, for this is not your rest, because it is polluted!" Mic 2:10

~ ~ ~ ~ Indeed, little allowances are more dangerous than greater compliances

"Take heed of giving way to sin. The heart that was easily troubled before, when once it is hardened to sin, loses all its sensitiveness and tenderness. And what seemed intolerable at first,

grows into a delight. Alipius first abhorred the bloody spectacles of the gladiators, but through the importunity of friends, attended one. He would not so much as open his eyes at first; but at length, when the people shouted, he allowed himself to look, and then not only beheld the bloody spectacles with delight, but drew others to behold what himself once loathed!" The story has had its counterpart in thousands of instances. Men who shuddered at the sight of a dead bird have, by familiarity with cruelty, come to commit murder without remorse. Those who sipped half a glass of wine, have come to drink by the gallon! Stanch Protestants have given way to some little form and ceremony, and become more Popish than the Romanists themselves.

There is no safety, if we venture an inch over the boundary line! Indeed, little allowances are more dangerous than greater compliances, since conscience does not receive a wound. And yet the man is undone, and falls little by little.

Come, my soul, leave sin altogether. Do not give Sodom so much as a look, nor take from it so much as a thread! Do not set a foot within her doors, for God abhors the abode of sin, and would have His people refrain their foot from it.

~ ~ ~ ~ How much better could the Pope pick our purses with his purgatory, indulgences, and relics!

"A thief is always desirous to have the candles put out!" His trade is best carried on in the dark. This is the reason why Satan is so dead set against faithful preachers and teachers. He can rob the church, and plunder souls so much better—when the light of the gospel is withdrawn.

How much better could the Pope pick our purses with his purgatory, indulgences, and relics—if the gospel light were quenched among us! The old-fashioned "doctrines of grace" are the candles of the Lord, and we must keep these well alight among the people—or we shall soon find the Romish thieves busy among us! This is one reason why the "doctrines of grace" are so much detested by men of the modern school—these candles are not to their mind, for they prevent their robbing us of the treasures of divine truth!

Lord, I bless You for the gospel light, and I pray that I may not quench even the tiniest candle by which You enlighten me.

~ ~ ~ ~ The hen which does not sit on her eggs!

"A hen that soon leaves her nest, never hatches her chicks. Just so, a sudden glance at truth without meditation upon it, brings nothing to perfection."

How can she? Patience is needed, and the quiet self-denial by which she renders up the warmth of her heart—otherwise her eggs will lie as dead as stones! The value of truth will never be known, by those who look at it and hurry on. They must brood over it, and cover it with their heart's love—or it will never become living truth to their souls. We must apply ourselves to a doctrine, giving our whole soul and heart to it—or we shall miss the blessing. Herein is wisdom.

Lord, when I hear a sermon, or read in a good book—let me not be as the hen which neither sits on her eggs, nor hatches them. But make me to ponder Your Word, and to rejoice over it as one who finds great spoil.

"Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth. Meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful!" Jos 1:8

~ ~ ~ "A drop of honey is not enough to sweeten a hogshead of vinegar!"

Under great troubles—we need great grace to console us. We must seek the special aid of the Holy Spirit, and be more diligent and fervent in prayer, for the eternal consolation of God. A proportion must be maintained. He who sets out upon a long journey, takes all the more money with him. Just so, in prospect of a great trial, we should seek extraordinary grace. The heavier the wagon—the more horses the farmer puts into the team. Just so, the more difficult our service—the more grace must we bring to bear upon it.

Lord, when we have much sorrow, let us taste more of your love—and the vinegar will become sweet wine! If you try us severely—be pleased also to comfort us richly.

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles!" 2Co 1:3-4

~ ~ ~ A far-off Hell is the dread of no man!

"The stars, those vast globes of light, by reason of the great distance between us and them—seem but as so many sparks in the sky. Just so, we have but a weak sight of things which are at a great distance, and their effect on us is usually but small."

Hence the need of faith, by which spiritual realities are brought near to us, and made to stand out in their reality. A far-off Hell is the dread of no man—and a far-off Heaven is scarcely desired by anyone. God Himself, while thought of as far away, is not feared or revered as He should be. If we did but ponder upon the matter, we would soon see that a mere span of time divides us from the eternal world, while the Lord Almighty is nearer to us than our souls are to our bodies.

Strange that the brief time which intervenes between us and eternity should appear to the most of men to be so important—while eternity itself they regard as a trifling matter. They use the microscope to magnify the small concerns of time. O that they would use the telescope upon the vast matters of eternity!

How differently would they order their lives, if judgment were felt to be at their doors! How eagerly would they seek to escape from infinite wrath, if they felt it to be near!

Lord, arouse me to a due estimate of eternal matters. Enable me to project my soul into the infinite. Break me free of this narrow present—and launch my soul upon the wide and open sea of the infinite ages to come. You are in eternity, and let my soul even now dwell there with You.

~ ~ ~ The palate sees more into the essence of things, than the eye can do!

"Love makes faith more operative. There is a knowledge by sight—and a knowledge by taste. A man may guess at the goodness of wine by the color—but more by the taste. Augustine prays, 'Lord, make me taste by love, what I perceive by knowledge.' Surely, we are never sound in Christianity, until all the light that we receive is turned into love."

It is so. Love comes to close dealings with truth, and gets a truer knowledge of it than any other grace. A hot iron, even though blunt, will penetrate further into a substance than a cold tool, though it is sharp. Just so, love enters further into truth than mere thought or study can do. David would have us "taste and see;" for the palate sees more into the essence of things, than the eye can do. Love discovers more than reason can ever know. That which love learns is also more useful, than the cold notions of the brain—for it sets men working for Jesus, and leads them to follow Him, and makes them willing to suffer for Him. We have heard of some who could not dispute for their Lord, and yet they died for him. Were not these among the best of His followers?

He who only knows truth in the light of it, is not worthy to be compared with the believer who receives truth in the love of it.

O Lord, let me never use your Word as a pillow for my head—but as a medicine for my heart. Do not allow me to be content with mere knowing. Cause me always to be deeply in love with your Word!

"Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day!" Psa 119:97 "They perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved." 2Th 2:10

~ ~ ~ ~ Do not let me taste of Satan's dainties!

"If a man had poison mixed with his food, although the excellence of his digestion and the strength of his constitution might bear him through—yet he would run great hazard."

Just so, a soul may survive grave doctrinal error. It is possible for it to struggle out of the power of a strong dose of Popery, or Socinianism, or "Modern Thought"—but it runs such great risks, that no one should lightly venture upon them. Our safest course is to take heed what we hear, and partake of nothing which comes from doubtful quarters.

O my Lord, feed me with the bread of life. Do not let me taste of Satan's dainties! Forbid that I should go near it, thereby imbibing the deadly teachings of those who err from your truth!

"Avoid every kind of evil!" 1Th 5:22

"Their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have wandered away from the truth!" 2Ti 2:17-18

~ ~ ~ ~

Invisible ink!

"Things written with the juice of a lemon, are plain and legible when they are brought to the fire. Just so, when wicked men draw near to the fires of Hell—their secret sins stand out before them, and they cry out upon their beds!" The prospect of eternity reveals those secret beliefs and inward fears which they labored so hard to deny and conceal. Few men can keep up a deceit when they approach their end. The skeleton hand readily tears off the mask. A death-bed is not always free from hypocrisy; but, assuredly, it is hard for the dying sinner to keep up his deceit. The fire of his approaching doom brings out the secret writing upon his soul, which even he himself had not before cared to read—and then he who thought himself to be a firmly rooted skeptic, finds out that he had after all, an inward conviction which he could not stifle, and a fear in his heart which he

could not smother.

O that men would seek to know themselves, for it might turn out that the defiant blasphemy of their tongues is not, by any means, a sure index that their heart is at rest in unbelief.

What must be that man's condition, whose very infidelity is feigned? It is a terrible thing to be a sham Christian—but what must be the worthlessness of a hypocritical infidel? When the genuine metal is worthless—what shall we say of its counterfeit? Yet we do not doubt that thousands of skeptics, in their inmost hearts, believe what they blusteringly deny. The day will come when, like him whose children they are—they will believe and tremble! (Jas 2:19) Lord, help me to read my own heart. Let me know my true state, and let that state be such as you will approve.

~ ~ ~ You cannot discover even a tiny apple on them!

"Some talk, but do nothing. They are like cypress trees, tall and beautiful—but unfruitful. Their zeal is more in their tongues, than their actions."

These are a numerous race, and never more so than at this time. Persecution is an unhealthy season for false professors, who prefer the prosperous times, when godliness is gain, and when it pays to get Christ today and sell him tomorrow. The cypress tree is an excellent emblem of the more prominent specimens of this class. They are conspicuous, and aim to be so—rising above their fellows, they invite attention. But when you turn your eyes toward them, you cannot discover even a tiny apple on them, or any other useful fruit. Certainly they are shapely and stately, and when you have said that, you have said all.

They are not half as valuable as the more lowly fruit-bearers which flourish unobserved with a cheerful verdure. Certain professors whom we know are prim, stiff, orderly, and melancholy—but we are not fond of their neighborhood; for they yield no refreshing shade or nourishing fruit, and make us feel doleful to the last degree.

Lord, let me be as low and unnoticed as you please—but enable me to bear fruit, to the honor of your name and to the comfort of your people!

"By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them!" Mat 7:16-20

~ ~ ~ ~ If responsibility began and ended with ability

"A drunken servant is a servant, and bound to do his work. His master does not lose his right, by his servant's default."

It is a mere assumption, though some state it with much confidence, that inability removes responsibility. As our author shows, a servant may be too drunk to do his master's bidding—but his service is still his master's due.

If responsibility began and ended with ability—a man would be out of debt as soon as he was unable to pay! And if a man felt that he could not keep his temper—he would not be blamable for being angry! A man may be bound to do what he cannot do. The habitual liar is bound to speak the

truth—though his habit of falsehood renders him incapable of it.

Every sin renders the sinner less able to do right, but the standard of his duty is not lowered in proportion to the lowering of his capacity to come up to it. Otherwise, it would follow that the more a man is depraved by sin—the less guilty his actions become. This would be absurd.

Every genuine Christian will confess that it is his duty to be perfect, and yet he mourns over his inability to be so. It never enters into the Christian's head to excuse his failings, by pleading the incapacity of his nature; nay, this is another cause for lamentation. The standard of responsibility is the command of God. The law cannot be lowered to our fallen state. It is sin to neglect or break a divine command. All the theology which is based upon the idea that responsibility is to be measured by moral ability or inability, has the taint of error about it.

Lord, make me to know my obligation, that I may be humbled; and help me to adore your grace, by which alone holiness can be wrought in me.

~ ~ ~ Half-baked cakes!

"Some, in their deep troubles and trials, are frightened into a little religiousness—but it is poor and superficial work. They are like ice in thawing weather—soft at top and hard at bottom!"

They melt, but to no very great extent. It is upon the surface only, that they yield to heavenly influences. This is a sorry state of things, for it generally ends in a harder ice than before, and the bonds of cold indifference bind the very soul.

Let those in whom there are any meltings of holy feeling, take heed, for their danger lies in being content with a partial subjection to God's gracious influences.

God will have all—or nothing! The ice must all melt, and the soul must flow like a river. Jesus did not come to create temporary and partial religious feelings—but to make new creatures of us.

"Ephraim mixes himself among the peoples; Ephraim is a cake not turned!" Hos 7:8. God will have nothing to do with those Ephraimites who are as half-baked cakes, which are black on one side with too much baking—but have never been turned so as to feel the fire on the other side. The center of the heart must feel the warmth of divine love—or nothing is done.

Lord, shine on my soul until I am wholly melted, and all my ice has vanished. You alone can break up nature's frost. Shine on me, most patient Lord.

~ ~ ~ Sinners take more pains to go to Hell—than the saints do to go to Heaven!

"You cannot drive a donkey into the fire that is kindled before its eyes." The ungodly are far more brutish—for they choose the way of destruction, and rush with eagerness into the flames of Hell!

"Surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird," and yet wicked men see the net, and hasten into it! Sinners take more pains to go to Hell—than the saints do to go to Heaven! They are more bold to destroy themselves—than saints are in their salvation. What greater proof can we have of the madness of their hearts! What plainer evidence that salvation is not by the will of man, but by God's sovereign grace alone?

Lord, save me from that obstinate love of sin which makes men more brutish than the ox and the donkey!

~ ~ ~ The world is an old nut which we crack!

"Vanity of vanities! All is vanity!" Ecc 1:2 Without God, the world is a old nut which we crack, but find nothing in it but dust!

"When I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun!" Ecc 2:11

"Naked a man comes from his mother's womb, and as he comes, so he departs. He takes nothing from his labor that he can carry in his hand." Ecc 5:15

~ ~ ~ Save the jewels!

"As men in a great fire will hazard their trinkets to preserve their treasure, their money, or their jewels—so should we take care, that if we must lose one or the other, that the better part be out of hazard. Whatever we lose along the way, let us make sure that we come well to the end of our journey."

Herein is wisdom. See how men throw overboard the tackling of the ship—when it becomes a question of saving their lives. Reason teaches them that the less precious must go first. They do not throw over their gold and their food at first—neither do they lose their lives to save their ingots. So let us, above all things, care for our souls and their eternal interests.

He whose house was burned to ashes, kneeled down and thanked the Lord because his child was safe. Just so, he who loses the whole world but obtains eternal salvation, has so much to rejoice in, that he would waste his tears if he shed them over his worldly losses.

Suppose it were said that the ancient Roman poet Virgil died worth half a million dollars—it is so long ago that it would be stale news for us. And if the same were said of a man who died yesterday—there would really be no more to it.

Yet if the soul of Virgil's slave was saved, though he never owned a single gold coin—Heaven has not ceased to ring with joy concerning his salvation! The soul should be our main care. It is our ALL, for it is ourselves. Lord, teach men this wisdom.

Lord, teach me this wisdom!

~ ~ ~ We must watch every stroke and touch upon the canvas of our lives!

"The house-painter will think the fine artist too meticulous, because his own work is so plain. Just so, the broad way pleases the world best—but the narrow way leads to eternal life." The house-painter goes over a great deal of ground—as compared with the artist who is producing a masterly painting. Of house-painting there is plenty to be had, and there is a great market for it. Yet, though thoroughly fine art is scarce, it is infinitely more precious than house-painting.

Just so, that religion which needs no care, and takes no trouble—is in great demand in the world. It is produced by the acre, and may be seen spread over the surface everywhere. Not so with the religion of grace. It costs many a tear, and a world of anxious thought, and solemn

heart-searching, and it is but slow work at the best. But then it is of great price, and is not only acceptable with God, but even men perceive that there is a something about it to which the common religious daubers never attain.

If we let the boat drift with the stream, and leave our religion to random influences, without care or thought—what can we look for but slovenliness and worthlessness?

If we would please God, we must watch every stroke and touch upon the canvas of our lives! We cannot think that we can lay it on with a trowel and yet succeed. We ought to live as fine artists work, for they watch every stroke and tint. O for more careful work, more heart work! Otherwise we shall lose that for which we have wrought!

~ ~ ~ ~ Fired by the heroic self-sacrifice of our King!

"Alexander the Great, when his army grew sluggish because laden with the spoils of their enemies, to free them from this encumbrance, commanded all his own treasures to be set on fire, that when they saw the king himself devote his rich treasures to the flames, they might not murmur if their mite and pittance were consumed also. Just so, if Christ had taught us contempt of the world, and had not given us an example of it in His own person—His doctrine would have been less powerful and effectual." But what an example we now find in Him, seeing He had nowhere to lay His head in life, nor a rag to cover Him in death, nor anything but a borrowed grave in burial.

What kind of people ought we to be? We ought to live holy and godly lives, when we have such a Lord! He has not said to us in matters of self-denial, "Take up your cross and go," but "Come, take up your cross, and follow Me."

Fired by the heroic self-sacrifice of our King, the sternest abnegation of self, and the severest renunciation of the world—should become an easy matter.

Well may the soldiers endure hardness, when the King himself roughs it among us, and suffers more than the lowest private in our ranks. My soul, I charge you, endure hardness—and look not for ease, where Jesus found death!

~ ~ ~ ~ This is transmuting lead into silver!

"Lead is lead still, whatever stamp it bears." A change of form is a very different thing from a change of substance. You may cast lead into the shape of a shilling—but you cannot make silver of it.

Now, the only change which can save us, is a thorough transformation of nature, and this is as clearly beyond human power, as the turning of lead into silver! When we see a great moral improvement in any man, we ought to be glad. But if the man's heart remains the same, the alteration is only casting a lump of lead into a pretty form. When the man's nature and disposition are radically altered, we may then exclaim, "This is the finger of God!" This is transmuting lead into silver!

"You must be born again!" Nothing less will suffice.

Lord, grant that I may truly know this change of heart and nature. If I am mistaken and have never been regenerated, be pleased to exercise Your gracious power upon me now, for Jesus' sake.

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~ ~ ~ ~ The yoke will be easier soon!

"Some beginners are discouraged in their first attempts at a godly life, and so give up through despondency. They should remember that the bullock is most unruly at the first yoking—and that the fire at first kindling casts forth most smoke."

They forget this, and therefore are tempted to give up religion and as hopeless. When a man is new to the ways of God, those duties are difficult, which afterward become easy. Gracious habit gives impetus to gracious action.

Self-denials, which seem hard at first, become delights in due season, so that we even wonder that we thought them denials.

Some things there are which are most easy in our first days of grace, but other things will be found to improve as we proceed upon the way. Let not the young beginner be discouraged, but fully believe that "it will be easier as we go along." The yoke will be easier soon—and the fire will yet burn with a clearer blaze!

Lord, help your babe. Nurse me into vigor by your good Spirit.

~ ~ ~ ~ We are kind to a man who has a gouty toe

"Though we cannot love their weaknesses—yet we must love the weak, and bear with their infirmities, not breaking the bruised reed. Infants must not be turned out of the family because they cry and are troublesome. Though they are peevish and froward—yet we must bear it with gentleness and patience, as we do the frowardness of the sick; if they revile, we must not revile in return, but must seek gently to restore them, notwithstanding all their censures." This patience is far too rare. We do not make allowances enough for our fellows, but sweepingly condemn those whom we ought to cheer with our sympathy.

If we are out of temper ourselves—we plead the weather, or a headache, or our natural temperament, or aggravating circumstances. We are never at a loss for an excuse for

ourselves—why should not the same ingenuity be used by our charity in inventing apologies and extenuations for others? It is a pity to carry on the trade of apology-making entirely for home-consumption; let us supply others.

True, they are very provoking, but if we suffered half as much as some of our irritable friends have to endure—we would be even more aggravating! Think in many cases of their ignorance, their unfortunate bringing up, their poverty, their depression of spirit, and their home surroundings—and pity will come to the help of patience.

We are kind to a man who has a gouty toe—and cannot we extend the feeling to those who have an irritable soul? Our Lord will be angry with us—if we are harsh to His little ones whom He loves. Nor will He be pleased if we are unkind to His poor afflicted children with whom he would have us be doubly tender. We ourselves need from Him, ten times more consideration than we show to our brethren. For his sake we ought to be vastly more forbearing than we are. Think how patient He has been to us, and let our hard-heartedness be confessed as no light sin.

~ ~ ~ No spiritual grace will thrive if we neglect it

"An exotic plant requires more care than a native plant. Just so, worldly desires, like nettles, breed of their own accord; but spiritual desires need a great deal of cultivating." The more spiritual the duty—the sooner the soul wearies of it. An illustration of this is seen in the case of Moses, whose hands grew weary in prayer—while we never read that Joshua's hands hung down in fight.

Spirituality is a tender plant, and without great care it soon flags. But sin needs neither hoeing nor watering, but will spring up in the dark, and flourish even amid the wintry frosts of trouble. The fair flower of grace, is, however, so precious that God himself has promised to tend it. What must be the value of that plant of which the Lord has said, "I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day!"

Let us watch and pray, and never dream that things will go well with us—if we neglect these necessary duties. No spiritual grace will thrive if we neglect it. We ought to be very diligent in our spiritual husbandry; nor should our labor be grudged, for the fruit will well reward our pains.

~ ~ ~ The devil was not so scrupulous!

"The way to destroy noxious weeds, is to plant good herbs that are contrary."

We have all heard of weeds choking the wheat. If we were wise, we would learn from our enemy, and endeavor to choke the weeds by the wheat!

Preoccupation of mind is a great safeguard from temptation. Fill a bushel with corn, and you will keep out the chaff. Just so, have the heart stored with holy things—and the vanities of the world will not so readily obtain a lodging-place.

Herein is wisdom in the training of children. Plant the mind early with the truths of God's word, and error and folly will, in a measure, be forestalled. The false will soon spring up—if we do not early occupy the mind with the true.

He who said that he did not wish to prejudice his boy's mind by teaching him to pray, soon discovered that the devil was not so scrupulous, for his boy soon learned to swear! It is well to

prejudice a field in favor of wheat at the first opportunity. In the matter of amusements for the young, it is much better to provide than to prohibit. If we find the lads and lasses interesting employments, they will not be so hungry after the gaities and ensnarements of this wicked world. If we are afraid that the children will eat unwholesome food abroad—let us as much as possible take the edge from their appetites by keeping a good table at home.

"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good!" Rom 12:21

~ ~ ~ ~ Orthodox in creed—but heterodox in life! When we hear of men living in sin and yet claiming to be Christians, we are disgusted with their pretenses, but we are not deceived by their professions. In the same manner, we care little for those who are orthodox Christians in creed—if it is clear that they are heterodox in life. He who believes the truth, should himself be true. How can we expect others to receive our religion—if it leaves us foul, false, malicious, and selfish?

We sicken at the sight of a dirty dish, and refuse even good meat when it is placed thereon. So pure and holy is the doctrine of the cross, that . . . he who hears it aright will have his ear cleansed, he who believes it will have his heart purged, and he who preaches it should have his tongue purified.

Woe unto that man who brings reproach upon the gospel by an unholy walk and life!

Lord, evermore make us vessels fit for your own use, and then fill us with the pure juice of the grapes of sound doctrine and wholesome instruction. Do not allow us to be such foul cups as to be only fit for the wine of Sodom!

~ ~ ~ ~ Blind obedience!

"A trustworthy author makes mention of one who willingly fetched water from two miles away, every day for a whole year, to pour it upon a dead, dry stick, at the command of his superior—when no reason else could be given for it. And of another it is recorded, that he professed that if he were asked by his superior to put to sea in a ship which had neither mast, tackling, nor any other equipment—that he would do it. And when he was asked he would do this, he answered: The wisdom must be in him who has power to command, not in him that has power to obey!"

These are instances of implicit obedience to a poor fallible human authority, and are by no means to be imitated. But when it is God who gives the command, we cannot carry a blind obedience too far, since there can be no room for questioning the wisdom and goodness of any of His precepts. At Christ's command, it is wise to let down the net at the very spot where we have toiled in vain all the night. If God bids us, we can sweeten water with salt, and we may walk the waves of the sea, or the flames of a furnace. Well said the Blessed Mother, "Whatever He says unto you—do it!" My heart, I charge you follow your Lord's command without a moment's question, though he bids you go forward into the Red Sea, or onward into a howling wilderness!

~ ~ ~ ~ The graceless run into it, wallow in it, and again and again return to it!

"Meadows may be occasionally flooded—but the marshes are drowned by the tide at every return thereof."

There is all this difference between the sins of the righteous, and those of the ungodly.

Surprised by temptation, true saints are flooded with a passing outburst of sin. But the wicked delight in transgression, and live in it as in their element. The saint in his errors, is a star under a cloud—but the sinner is darkness itself. The gracious may fall into iniquity—but the graceless run into it, wallow in it, and again and again return to it!

Lord, grant that we may be uplifted by your grace, so that the great water-floods of temptation may not come near us. And if through the prevalence of our inward corruption, the enemy should come in like a flood, O Lord, deliver your servants by your great power!

~ ~ ~ ~ A world of evil lurks in a drop of rebellion!

"There is as much felony in counterfeiting pence, as pounds" The principle is the same, whatever the value of the coin may be—the law of the government is violated by the counterfeiter, even if he only counterfeits the smallest coin. He has set the official stamp to his base metal, and the small monetary value of his coinage is no excuse for his offence.

Any one sin willfully indulged and persevered in, is quite sufficient to prove a man to be a traitor to his God. Though he may neither commit murder nor adultery—which would be like counterfeiting the larger coins—he may be as surely a felon in the sight of God, if he deliberately utters falsehoods or indulges pride—which some think as lightly of as if they were but the counterfeits of pence. The spirit of rebellion is the same, whatever is the manner of displaying it. A giant may look out through a very small window. Just so, may great obstinacy of rebellion manifest itself in a little act of willfulness.

How careful should this consideration make us! How earnestly should we watch against what are thought to be minor offences. A world of evil lurks in a drop of rebellion! Lord, keep us from pence transgressions, and then we shall not commit the pound offences.

~ ~ ~ ~ The Cracked Pot!

"The unsoundness of a vessel is not seen when it is empty. But when it is filled with water—then we shall see whether it will leak or not."

It is in our prosperity that we are tested. Men are not fully revealed to themselves, until they are tried by fullness of success. It is then that . . . praise finds out the crack of pride, wealth reveals the flaw of selfishness, and learning discovers the leak of unbelief.

David's besetting sin was little seen, when he was a shepherd boy with his sheep—but it became conspicuous upon the terraces of his palace!

Success is the crucible of character! Hence the prosperity which some welcome as an unmixed favor—may far more rightly be regarded as an intense form of test! O Lord, preserve us when we are full—as much as when we are empty!

"When your herds and flocks grow large, and your silver and gold increase, and all you have is multiplied—then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery!" Deu 8:13-14

~ ~ ~ ~ The ship which is always sailing on

"The ship holds on her course, and makes for the desired port—whether those on board sit, lie or walk, eat or sleep."

Thus time is always bearing us onward to the land where time shall be no more. There is never a pause in our progress toward eternity, whether we trifle or are in earnest. Even while we read these lines, the great ship is still speeding onward at the same rapid and unvarying rate. We shall soon see the shore of eternity—far sooner than we think! It befits us to be ready for the landing, and for the weighty business which will then engage us—namely, judgment at the hands of Christ!

If we could lie becalmed a while and make no movement toward eternity—then we could afford to sport. But if we look over the ship's stern, we may see how she is cutting through the waves. Past time urges us to diligence, for it has reported us in Heaven; and future time calls us to earnestness, for it must be short, and may end this very day. And then!

~ ~ ~ ~ Who shall blame either the justice or the mercy of God?

"God has been at so great a cost to provide a throne of grace, that we must not neglect prayer." The mercy-seat under the law was overlaid with pure gold to foreshadow the costliness of its antitype. It cost the death of Christ, to erect a mercy-seat for men. To neglect it is a shameful ingratitude to God, and a wanton rejection of one of His costliest blessings. If there were no throne of grace, men might die of despair because they could not approach God. But now that God has prepared a way of access for all who desire to approach Him, the refusal to draw near must rank among the grossest and most willful of rebellions.

There is no conceivable excuse for the prayerless. A man who dies of starvation with bread before him; or perishes with disease when the remedy is in his hand—deserves no pity. Just so, he who sinks down to Hell beneath the burden of his sins because he will not sincerely pray, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" deserves all that damnation means! Pardon, life, salvation, Heaven, are all to be had for the asking. But if he who asks not, receives not—then who shall blame either the justice or the mercy of God?

"Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Heb 4:16

~ ~ ~ ~ Snow that falls softly, soaks deeply

"The preacher's loud outcries only frighten simple and over-credulous souls—and that only for the present. Scripture proofs and calm instruction do a great deal more good. Snow that falls softly, soaks deeply."

How gently fall the snowflakes, but how surely they penetrate into the ground—a driving rain has not half such efficacy! The voice of the snowflakes is not heard, but their influence is felt.

Proofs from Scripture, winsomely put, carry all before them—because Jesus loves to reach men's minds by such means, and not by bombast and fury. This is a word to harsh disputants. Strong words appear to them to be forcible—but they are not. The force of the lightning is not increased by the thunder. Just so, the best arguments are best couched in soft language. Gentleness gives

double force to arguments.

Alas, we too often forget this, and call in our evil passions to aid our holy doctrines. It is to be feared that true religion has been rather hindered than furthered, by the ferocity with which some have maintained it.

Some of our present controversies are essential to fidelity; but it will be well if we all remember that to be faithful to truth, we need not be angry toward opponents. Truth and love are of the same heavenly family, and are loveliest when they walk hand in hand.

It has happened that some have been so overly charitable that they would not lift a finger to save truth's life, lest they should wound one of another opinion. This is a sad practical error. But we shall not mend matters if we fight truth's battles so savagely, that we hurl shot and shell upon the abode of love.

Lord, teach us, for we are fearfully apt to err in this matter. Give us bold and clear words, taken from your own Word—and let us use these with the lowly confidence which comes from being filled with your Spirit. But never allow our own spirit to get the upper hand, so that we breathe out threatenings and utter bitter expressions. Let our sword be always like that which comes out of Christ's mouth—sharp but beneficial; flaming, but only with the fire of love!

~ ~ ~ ~ A bore, a burden, a bugbear!

"He would be a cruel man who would cast his provisions into the street, and deny them to the poor; or would give his milk to the dogs in the kennel, rather than that the thirsty should taste a drop of it. Such are we to God; we know not what to employ our thoughts upon, and yet we will not think of his name. We will go musing upon vanity all the day long, and thus grinding chaff rather than we will take good corn into the mill."

Well put! We meet with people upon whose hands time hangs heavily; they have nothing to do, and are dying of boredom. Why will they thus spend their time in waste? Yet all the while they give not God a thought, nor spend a little time in reading His word, or in conversing with Him in prayer. Are they full of time even to boredom, and yet cannot they give ten minutes' space to their Maker?

Well does our author speak of cruelty. Was ever such cruelty on earth, as this denial of an hour of our superfluous time to God? Will we rather waste it, or defile it—than give Him a portion of it? Must we invent pastimes to pass time away, and yet refuse ten minutes for meditation?

Oh that this little parable might meet some careless eye, and through the eye pierce the heart!

What, will you sooner kill time at cards, or with a novel, or in utter idleness—than do your greatest Benefactor the honor of thinking of Him? Is He so distasteful to you, that you count it a bore, a burden, a bugbear even to hear His sacred name? Come, do yourself this favor—give the next hour to God and to your own soul. Your cruelty to your God will prove to be cruelty to yourself. Do not persevere in it, but yield to your heavenly Friend a portion of your weary time.

Perhaps you will thus find out a way of never being bored again— and find the way to make time pass like a river which flows over golden sands, with a paradise on either bank.

~ ~ ~ ~ To whom else should we go?

"Trees that receive life from the earth and the sun—send forth their branches to receive the sun, and spread their roots into the earth, which brought them forth. Fish will not live out of the water that breeds them. Chickens are no sooner out of the shell but they shroud themselves under the feathers of the hen by whom they were at first hatched. The little lamb runs to its mother, though there are a thousand sheep of the same wool and color. By such a native inbred desire, do the saints run to God to seek a supply of strength and nourishment." This is an excellent lesson for every believer. All our instincts should lead us to our God. We ought not to need so much as directing, much less impelling—toward the great source of our spiritual life. We ought as naturally to seek after the Lord from day to day—as the river seeks the ocean, or the sheep its pasture, or the bird its nest. "O God, you are my God; early will I seek you," should be the perpetual cry of our heart. Onward and upward be still our movement—a secret ardor ever burning in us toward the Lord our God. To whom else should we go? This question has never received an answer, and never will receive one. As we find all in God—so we find no satisfaction outside of Him. What the fish would be without water, or the chick without the hen—that we would be without our God.

"Whom have I in Heaven but You? And earth has nothing I desire besides You. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever!" Psa 73:25-26

~ ~ ~ ~ We are living paradoxes and contradictions!

"Heaven is the believer's native country. Though carnal men are at home in this world—yet the Christian is not."

Hence our position is a paradox. We were literally born outside of our native country! We can say, "Lord, you has been our dwelling-place in all generations," and yet we often cry, "Oh that I knew where I might find him!" We are exiles in spirit, while we are at home in the body. We shall never be at home until we have left this world, and have returned to the country which we have never yet seen. We are living paradoxes and contradictions—and it is no wonder that men know us not, for we scarcely know ourselves!

~ ~ ~ ~ What a sacrifice has been presented for us!

"The penalty must be in proportion to the extent of the crime. A debt of a thousand dollars is not discharged by paying two or three pennies. Creatures are finite, and their acts of obedience are already due to God."

Jesus alone, as the Son of God, could present a substitution sufficient to meet the case of men condemned for their iniquities. The majesty of His nature, His freedom from personal obligation to the law, and the intensity of His sufferings and death—all give to His atonement a virtue which elsewhere can never be discovered. None of the sons of men "can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him." Jesus alone could stand in our soul's stead, and pay the dreadful price.

What sinners we are! What a sacrifice has been presented for us! No brass farthings were our price. Nay, gold and silver are called "corruptible things" when compared with the precious blood which has paid our ransom!

~ ~ ~ ~ "It is better for us that Christ should be in Heaven—than with us upon earth!"

Let us think of the amazing profit which this departure of our best Beloved is bringing in to us.

He is pleading in the place of authority—what an enrichment to us to have an Intercessor at the throne of grace, through whom every true prayer is accepted!

He is ruling on the seat of empire, arranging all providences for the success of His people—what a gain to have our Head and Leader raised above all principalities and powers!

He is preparing a place for His people—what a blessing to have such a Forerunner, Representative, and Preparer!

Moreover, by His departure we have received the Holy Spirit, of whose divine value, what pen shall write! He is with us and in us—our Instructor, Quickener, Purifier, and Comforter.

Even upon these few points, we are great gainers by Christ's bodily absence—but there is much more. If our Lord judged it to be necessary that He should go, therefore let us solace ourselves in His present bodily absence from us, "until the day breaks, and the shadows flee away!"

~ ~ ~ ~ Looking for an expected guest

"When we expect anyone, we turn our eyes that way—just as the wife looks toward the sea, when she expects her husband's return."

Surely, then, if we look for Christ to come, we shall keep our eyes heavenward, and our minds occupied with the country from which He comes. If we mind earthly things, it will be evidence that the coming of the Lord has no power over us.

Yet a good wife does not sit idly by the sea watching for a sail, but she sets the house in order for her husband's return. She who would sit looking out of window, or reading novels, and have no provision made for her husband's home-coming—would show but scant love for her husband.

Just so, we should watch, but we should also stand with our loins girt, and do the duty of the hour—that when our Lord comes He may not blame our negligence in His service. If we know little of the prophecies—we can show our expectancy by keeping the precepts!

~ ~ ~ ~ Let him howl as he pleases! When Satan would disturb us at our devotions by injecting blasphemous thoughts or trifling ideas—we had better keep right on, and as much as possible disregard his interruptions. As blind Bartimeus cried all the more because officious people sought to silence him—so should we be the more vehement in our supplications when the devil seeks to take us off from them. When he knocks, let us fasten another bolt—and let him knock until he grows weary. Our business is with the Lord, and let us give our whole heart to seeking His face, for if we turn away to answer the enemy, he will at once have gained his point. When he paints images on our imagination, if we steadfastly refuse to look at them—he will cease from the unprofitable work, and betake himself to work upon some more foolish folk, who will turn aside from prayer to answer his vile insinuations. Let him howl as he pleases—if we do not regard him, his pride will be hurt more severely than by any blow that we can aim at him.

Therefore, let us keep to our praying, and let him keep to his tempting until he has had enough of it. "Get behind me Satan!" is as much attention as he deserves. Herein is wisdom, and he who has understanding will learn from it.

~ ~ ~ ~ Let our whole being be set apart for Jesus!

"If an earthly king stays but a night in a house—what care is there taken that nothing be offensive to him, but that all things be neat, clean, and sweet. How much more ought you to be careful to get and keep your hearts clean, to perform service acceptably to Jesus; to be in the exercise of faith, love, and other graces, that you may entertain your heavenly King as you ought, who comes to take up His continual abode and residence in your hearts!"

We know a house in which an empress rested for a very short time, and the owner henceforth refused to admit other inhabitants. Such is his devotion to his royal guest, that no one may now sit in her chair or dine at the table which she honored. Our verdict is, that he makes loyalty into absurdity by this conduct. But if we imitate him in this procedure in reference to the Lord Jesus, we shall be wise. Let our whole being be set apart for Jesus—and for Jesus only. We shall not have to shut up the house; for our beloved Lord will inhabit every chamber of it, and make it His permanent palace! Let us see to it that all IS holy, all pure, all devout.

Help us, O Purifier of the temple, to drive out all intruders, and reserve our soul in all the beauty of holiness for the Blessed and Only Potentate!

~ ~ ~ ~ Two ways of putting out fire!

"Fire is quenched by pouring on water—or by withdrawing fuel. Just so, the Spirit is quenched by living in sin, which is like pouring water on a fire—or by not improving our gifts and graces, which is like withdrawing fuel from the hearth."

Many are found carefully avoiding outward sin—and yet they daily neglect the gifts of grace! What folly! Will it not come to the same thing in the end with the fire upon my hearth—whether I pour water on the logs, or refuse to place fresh wood thereon? It will die out with equal certainty, whichever is my mode of procedure. So will it be with the fire in my heart. To be careless, is as dangerous as to be disobedient. Not to do good—is to do evil. Sins concerning neglected grace and omitted duty—are as mischievous to us as actual wrongdoing. This is a caution to thousands—possibly to the reader—certainly to the writer. Oh for grace to attend to the state of the inward fires—lest Satan should get an advantage over us by our neglect! Though he may have been foiled in every attempt to lead us into active rebellion against God—the enemy may yet prevail by bringing us into a state of indifference and apathy.

There is a passive disobedience, which is exceedingly injurious to the soul. May the Lord save us from this great peril. Let us hear Him say, "Do not quench the Spirit!" and yet again, "Stir up the gift which is in you."

~ ~ ~ ~ If the queen came to sup with us!

"Alexander the Great would be painted by none but Apelles—and his statue carved by none but Lysippus. The emperor Domitian would not have his statue made, but in gold or silver. Just so, God, the great king, will be served with the best of our affections. When we care not what we offer to God—how will He accept us?"

It is but ordinary manners that, when we entertain a friend who is greatly our superior—we should at least do our best and set before him all that our house and purse can afford, with many an

apology that it is no better.

If the queen came to sup with us, we would do our very best to please her majesty. How much more ought we to be devoutly intent to offer fit homage to the King of kings!

O my Lord, teach me to give You the choicest product of my being, and instruct me how to do this in the most acceptable manner. May I never play the sluggard with You. Angels cannot serve You as You deserve to be served—and shall I think to please You with hap-hazard offerings?

If I sing to you, make me earnest and hearty in spirit, and as musical in utterance as my harsh voice permits. When I pray, forbid that I should even seem to be chill and dull.

If I am honored to preach your gospel, may I plead for You with my whole heart; and speak even to a few, as zealously as if thousands waited on my words.

It is fit that the best should have the best—that You, the most loving of Lords, should have my most loyal services.

"Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me. New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations—I cannot bear your evil assemblies! Your New Moon festivals and your appointed feasts, my soul hates. They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them!"
Isa 1:13-14

~ ~ ~ Most guilty men, when their crimes are exposed!

"A harp must be framed and strung, and put in tune—before it can make melody. A tree must first be made good—before we can expect any good fruit from it."

Precisely so; and yet this fact is seldom considered. Men are reluctant to believe that their sins arise out of themselves, and that they must themselves be improved before their lives will be bettered. They say that their circumstances and associations are blamed. But the fault lies in themselves—only they will not believe it.

They will not admit that there is a bias in the ball itself—but they blame the hand which threw it. The harp-strings they will not attend to—but complain of the musician's touch. They will not chide the tree for bearing crab apples—it is the soil, the season, or the gardener.

Most guilty men, when their crimes are exposed, blame their bad-luck, and not their evil hearts. The world has come to call an immoral woman, "unfortunate." This is but one expression of what it secretly believes as to all sin. The world reckons our evil to be our misfortune, or a bad choice—rather than our sin.

"We are poor erring mortals, and are more to be pitied than punished!" This is the secret creed of mankind, and there is a floating philosophy abroad, that we ourselves are right enough, but our circumstances renders sin unavoidable. When will our fellow-men give up this falsehood, and perceive that if the vessel leaks—it is because it is broken! And if foul water flows from the vessel, it is because its contents are unclean? Oh, that they would blame themselves, and seek a change of heart—for nothing short of this can set the matter right!

"What comes out of a man is what makes him defiled! For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man defiled!" Mark 7:20-23

~ ~ ~ Rotten at the core!

"When the root of a tree perishes, the leaves keep green for a while—but within a while, they wither and fall off. Just so, love to Christ is the root and heart of all other duties—and when that decays, other things decay with it."

What would the virtues be—if they could remain without love? A sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal! But, as a rule, they do not long remain. First one drops off and then another, like falling leaves. And by and by the man is as a bare branch, only fit to be cut down and cast into the fire. Some, who once professed great things, have now hardly enough rags of morality left decently to go to Hell in—and all because they were without true love, and therefore were rotten at the core!

Evil in the heart is a deadly wound, but it is usually unperceived until it has done its work. No axe has been lifted against the man's morals, no great strokes have gashed his visible character—and yet the end has been certain, the ruin has been complete. The spiritual life-sap ceased to flow, the branch of usefulness withered—and at last the tree fell over, to lie prone among the spoils of death.

We have seen it—seen it so often, that our most solemn warnings are reserved for secret declensions. There is something nobler in falling by the woodman's strokes—than in perishing by a little worm at the root. The baseness of decaying into corruption, while standing in the midst of a church, is dreadful.

Lord, have mercy upon us, and keep us from this evil. Amen.

~ ~ ~ Absalom's hair!

"If a man set his house on fire—he is liable to the law. But if it is set on fire by others, or by accident—he is pitied and helped."

We are to take up our cross when laid upon our shoulders by God's providence—but we are not to make trouble for ourselves. We are not to fill our own cup with gall and wormwood—but to drink it off when God puts a bitter draught into our hand. We are to meet temptation and overcome it—but we may not venture into temptation on our own account, or we may have to rue our foolhardiness! The figure of the burning house is a very apt one, and capable of many illustrations. A man who partakes of strong liquors willfully sets his own house on fire, and, whatever may be the result of his intemperance, he can only blame himself. Just so, he who reads skeptical books, or frequents infidel society, cannot be pitied if he loses faith and comfort, for he runs a wanton and useless risk. To be taken at unawares by a fierce temptation, is to be like a building set on fire by a malicious hand, and this is a grievous calamity. But to go willfully into temptation is another matter, and is comparable to the crime of arson, in which a man collects combustible materials and secretly kindles them, that his house may be burned down!

Lord, evermore keep me from being my own destroyer! Let me not, like Absalom, grow my hair for my own hanging! "Let not any iniquity have dominion over me!"

~ ~ ~ The smallest seed will bring forth a terrible harvest!

"Keep oneself unspotted and uncontaminated from the world." Jas 1:27

Holy horror ought to fill us, when so much as a spot of sin defiles us. We are to keep ourselves unspotted from the world; not only free from smears and daubs—but even from spots. O for a deep hatred of sin, and a determination to part with anything and everything which bears its stain. Let us pull off a polluting habit and utterly abstain from it, however pleasing it may have been to our carnal nature.

Sins of the flesh especially are so apt to grow, that the least approach to impurity must be regarded as a plague-spot. Here there must be no dallying with evil, or winking at the appearance of it. The same is true of all other forms of evil—the smallest seed will bring forth a terrible harvest! From the least error, the least impurity, the least falsehood—we must be purged if we would walk with Christ and be His "disciples indeed."

Lord, cleanse me, that I may be without fault before Your throne!

~ ~ ~ Lord, let me not be a mere ant on the world's hill!

"The world is a great theater—and the spectators are God and angels. I confess we little think of it—there is such a foolish levity in our minds. As to us, the world is like a hill of ants; you stand by watching, and they run up and down, and do not think of your being there. Just so, the Lord stands by and observes all our motions, and we run up and down like busy ants, and do not think of God's presence among us! We live in a great hurry and clatter of business, and have but few thoughts of God."

Lord, let me not be a mere ant on the world's hill! But as you have given me an understanding, help me to use it upon Yourself, that so I may rise to the true level of an intelligent and immortal being.

How can I disregard my God, my Father, my all? How can I be taken up with these trifles—while You are so near me, asking my love, and proving Your right to it by daily loading me with benefits?

What a mere insect I am! Why am I thus? Why should I live like an insect—when you have made me a little lower than an angel? I shall never rise to what I ought to be, unless You reveal Yourself in me and to me by your good Spirit. Deliver me from that foolish levity which makes me fill my mind with contemptible vanities—and let me seriously remember You, and the day when I shall stand before Your judgment-seat.

"Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account!" Heb 4:13

~ ~ ~ Let Your black dogs of affliction fetch home Your wandering sheep!

"Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble!" Psa 107:28

Free grace is a harbor into which few ships ever run, except forced there by bad weather. "Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble!" That is to say, when they are well-near wrecked and are altogether at their wits' end. Until the end of the creature is reached—men will not seek to their Creator, even as the prodigal never thought of home until he had spent all, and there was a mighty famine in the land.

Lord, be pleased by your great mercy to overrule the vast amount of poverty and suffering which is now in this land, that men may be driven to you thereby. Let Your black dogs of affliction fetch home Your wandering sheep! Let Your fierce, breaking tempests compel full many a wanton voyager to abate the sails of pleasurable sin, and steer for the haven of forgiving love!

~ ~ ~ A golden master-key!

"As one that would open a door, tries key after key until he has tried every key in the bunch—so does God use one method after another to work upon man's heart."

God's saving grace will not be baffled.

He frequently begins with the silver key of a mother's tearful prayers and a father's tender counsels. In turn, He uses the church-keys of His ordinances and His ministers, and these are often found to move the bolt. But if they fail, He thrusts in the iron key of trouble and affliction which has been known to succeed after all others have failed.

He has, however, a golden master-key, which excels all others: it is the operation of His own most gracious Spirit, by which entrance is effected into hearts which seemed shut up forever.

Wonderful is the patience and long-suffering of the Lord, or He would long since have left hardened and careless sinners to themselves. He is importunate, whether we are so or not. We take pains to resist His heavenly grace, but He abides faithful to his own name of love.

O Lord, we bless You that You have opened our hearts, and we ask You now that You have entered, abide in our souls forever, as a king in his own palace!

~ ~ ~ The Watchmaker!

"He who makes a watch, can mend it when it is broken and disarranged."

Just so, it is certain that the best physician for the body, is the Maker of the human frame. This is too much forgotten, and faith is placed in men and medicines, and the great Lord is forgotten. We would not have men decline the aid of medicines and surgery—but yet we count it a sort of idolatry to trust in these, and make no appeal to the Lord Himself. It is unwise to neglect the means—but do not be so utterly foolish as to leave out of mind the First Cause and true Author of all good. It is best to trust in the Lord and use medicine too. But of the two evils—faith in God and no use of means, or use of means and no faith in God—we should certainly prefer the former. With regard to the soul, none can do anything to purpose in putting it into order, except the Creator Himself. All merely human attempts at the repair of the spiritual nature, are a kind of tinkering which injures more than it benefits. The Lord can set mainspring, and balance-wheel, and lever, and hands in good working order. He can cleanse, repair, and regulate—and what He does is done to purpose.

We have known a child wash a watch until it was spoiled—and so may one wash another, until he makes a hypocrite of him. An ingenious young man repaired a watch so that it would never work again. Just so, may the superstitious impress men with foolish fancies until they lose all capacity for true religion. God himself must put His hand to the business, or it will be a total failure.

Lord, with all my imperfections and irregularities, it gives me joy to know that I am in Your hands, and that You will set me right. No case has ever baffled You; neither will mine. You will yet make me perfect in every good work to do Your will.

~ ~ ~ A necessary motto if we are to accomplish anything!

"When the beams of the sun are contracted by a burning-glass upon one spot, then they cause fire. Just so, when our thoughts are concentrated on one object—they warm the heart and at last burn the truth into it!" This is the reason why so many sermons and books are so cold and ineffective—they are not sufficiently focused upon one point. There are many rays of light—but they are scattered. We get a little upon many things—while what is needed is one great truth, and so much upon it as shall fix it on the heart, and set the soul blazing with it. This is the fault of many lives: they are squandered upon a dozen objects, whereas if they were focused on one, they would be mighty lives, known in the present and honored in the future.

"This one thing I do!" is a necessary motto if we are to accomplish anything! Our friend lay basking in the sunshine, and the beams of the sun did not disturb his sleep for a moment. In a mirthful moment we crept to his side, and holding up a burning-glass, we formed a little bright spot on the back of his hand. He startled in an instant as if touched with a hot iron, and was sometime before he quite appreciated our lecture upon concentrated energies. He did not invite a repetition of the interesting experiment, but confessed that when he next wished to arouse a careless mind, he would try the burning-glass on him.

Great Lord, teach me how to accomplish something for Your glory; and, to that end, enable me to live for You with my undivided being, that what little light and heat I have may be so focused, that I may burn my way to successful service!

~ ~ ~ Lord, arouse me from the folly of groveling among earthly things!

"Would it not be insanity to dig for iron, with shovels of gold? Just so, to prefer our own ease, quiet, profit, before the glory of God, is madness!"

It must always be unreasonable to make the means greater than the end. When man lives for the glory of God, he spends his strength for something far beyond himself in value, and thus he acts as reasonably as when men dig for gold with shovels of iron. But when an immortal mind spends itself upon decaying objects, such as transient gain and pleasure—it is occupied beneath itself, and is like a shovel of gold used in searching for base iron.

It is a misapplication of forces for the nobler to spend itself upon the meaner. Men do not usually care to spend a dollar in the hope of getting back a dime. And yet, when the soul is given up for the sake of worldly gain, the loss is greater still, and not even the dime remains!

Lord, arouse me from the folly of groveling among earthly things! Make my soul reasonable, that it may devote itself to worthy pursuits; and what can be so worthy of me as Yourself! You are above

all, and infinitely better than all—to You I devote my whole being. O help me to live alone for Your glory!

~ ~ ~ Sleeping by waterfalls!

"Things which we are accustomed to, no longer impact us. 'Custom' makes men sleep quietly by the roaring waterfalls. In the same way, some parts of the body grow callous, brawny, dry, and dead by much use—as the laborer's hand and the traveler's foot."

Just so does the conscience gradually lose its force. At first, like a waterfall, its great roar astounds the soul, and effectually prevents its slumbers of carnal security. But by and by its noise is scarcely heard, and men are even lulled to sleep by its sound! A hardened conscience is to be dreaded exceedingly, for it is the forerunner of spiritual doom! No more warnings are heard, because sentence has gone forth, and the man's destruction is sealed.

Even on a smaller scale, it is a serious thing to have conscience lose its tenderness. Christians, by association with the world, and by a lack of thorough consideration, may come to do with impunity, things which would shock them if their consciences were in a healthy state.

It is dangerous for a steam-engine when the brakes do not act. Just so, no one knows what mischief may come through the failure of the soul's conscience. It is a serious calamity when the warning faculty has become dulled and silent through continuance in sin. Better far to live in perpetual anxiety to be right—than to remain at ease while doing wrong!

Lord, make my conscience as tender as the pupil of my eye. Awaken it, and keep it awake!

~ ~ ~ Stop up every hole and cranny!

"A man that would keep out the cold in winter, shuts all his doors and windows. Yet the wind will creep in, though he does not leave any opening for it."

We must leave no inlet for sin, but stop up every hole and cranny by which it can enter. There is need of great care in doing this, for when our very best is done—sin will find an entrance.

During the bitter cold weather we tightly close the doors, seal up the windows, and draw the curtains—and yet we are made to feel that we live in a northern climate. In the same way must we be diligent to shut out sin, and we have abundant need to guard every point, for after we have done all, we shall, in one way or another, be made to feel that we live in a sinful world!

Well, what must we do? We must follow the measures which common prudence teaches us in earthly matters. We must drive out the cold—by keeping up a good fire within. Just so, the presence of the Lord Jesus in the soul—can so warm the heart that worldliness and sin will be expelled, and we shall be both holy and happy. May the Lord grant it, for Jesus' sake.

~ ~ ~ Of all matters, religion is the very worst to play with!

"Michal laid a statue in David's bed, and, covering it with David's apparel, made Saul's messengers believe it was David himself sick in bed. Just so, many people cover themselves with certain external actions belonging to religion, and the world believes them truly sanctified and spiritual; whereas, indeed, they are but statues of devotion to God."

Formalism is a vain show, and will, in the end, be discovered, and the cheat will cease to impose upon anyone. Of all matters, religion is the very worst to play with! It may be easy to mimic it, but the price to be paid for such hypocrisy will be terrible.

If men must act a borrowed part, let them ape the princes of this world. Let them go to their theaters if they would wear a mask; to do so in the house of God is an insult which the Lord will not tolerate. The best imitation of religion will make its possessor wail forever when the hand of eternal truth shall lay bare its falsehood.

O You who are "the truth," deliver me from all pretensions, and let me be in truth, that which I profess to be.

~ ~ ~ Do not eat forbidden morsels today!

We know one who broke his arm in his youth, and though it was well set, and soundly healed—yet in cold seasons the bones cry out bitterly.

Even so, though early vice may be forsaken, and heartily repented of, and the mind may be savingly renewed—yet the old habits will be a lifelong trouble. The sins of our youth will give us many a wrench, fifty years after they have been forgiven. How happy, then, are those who are preserved from the ways of ungodliness, and brought to Jesus in the days of their youth—for they thus escape a thousand regrets!

It is well to have a broken bone skillfully set—but far better never to have had it broken! The fall of Adam has battered and bruised us all most sadly; it is a tragic that we should incur further damage by our own personal falls. The aches and pains of old age are more than sufficient when every limb is sound, and recklessly to add the anguish of fractures and dislocations, would be folly indeed.

Young man, do not run up bills, which your riper years will find it hard to pay. Do not eat forbidden morsels today, which may breed you sorrow long after their sweetness has been forgotten!

"Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap!" Gal 6:7

~ ~ ~ ~ If he had thrown mud into our face with deliberate intent!

"An indulgent father may pass by a falling when his son waits upon him—for instance, suppose the child would spill the water and break the glass. But surely the father will not allow the child to throw it down willfully!"

Everyone can see that there is a great distinction between sins of infirmity, and willful transgressions. A man may splash us very badly with the wheel of his carriage, as he passes by, and we may feel vexed. But the feeling would have been very much more keen, if he had thrown mud into our face with deliberate intent! By the grace of God, Christians do not sin willfully. Our wrongdoing comes from weakness or carelessness, and causes us many a pang of conscience—for we would gladly be blameless before our God. Willfully to offend God, is not according to our mind. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil:

Deliberation and delight in sin, are sure marks of the heirs of wrath!

Sin in believers is a terrible evil, but there is this mitigation of it, that they do not love it, and cannot rest in it. The true son does not wish to do damage to his father's goods. On the contrary, he loves to please his father, and he is himself grieved when he causes grief to one whom he so highly loves.

O my Lord, I beg you let me not sin carelessly, lest I come to sin presumptuously. Make me to be watchful against my infirmities—that I may not fall little by little.

"Keep Your servant from willful sins—do not let them rule over me!" Psa 19:13

~ ~ ~ ~ What grace the Lord displays in accepting our poor, imperfect offerings!

How often do we mingle sulphur with our incense! A strong expression, but most sadly true. When we offer prayer, is there not at times a sorrowful mixture of self-will, petulance, and impatience? Does not unbelief, which is quite as obnoxious as brimstone—too often spoil the sweet odor of our supplications? When we offer praise, is it all pure spices after the art of the heavenly apothecary? Do not self-laudation and pride frequently spoil the holy frankincense and myrrh? Alas, we fear that the charge must lie against us, and force us to a sorrowful confession. As the priests of God, our whole life should be the presentation of holy incense unto God—and yet it is not so. The earthly ambitions and carnal lustings of our nature deteriorate and adulterate the spices of our lives; and Satan, with the sulphur of pride, ruins the delicate perfume of perfect consecration.

What grace the Lord displays in accepting our poor, imperfect offerings! What rich merit abides in our Lord Jesus! What sweet savor beyond expression dwells in him, to drown and destroy our ill-savors, and to make us accepted in the Beloved! Glory be unto our glorious High Priest, whose perfect life and sin-atonement death is so sweet before the Divine Majesty that the Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake, and accepts us in him with our sweet savor.

~ ~ ~ ~ Better be dim gold—than shining brass! A counterfeit coin may look better and brighter than the true piece of money, and yet be altogether worthless. And in the same manner, a base professor may for a while seem to be brighter than a true Christian. He is not downcast, for he has none of those inward strivings which cause sincere believers so much anguish of soul. He is not sad, for he has no penitence of heart at the remembrance of those shortcomings which humble the living child of God. Doubts and fears he has none, for these are the moss which grows upon faith, and of this grace he is quite destitute. Failures in holiness, loss of communion with God, non-success in prayer, smitings of conscience, all of which happen to the elect of God—come not near to him, for he is a stranger to the inward, sensitive principle of which these are the tokens of saving grace.

Sad sons of God, be not utterly dispirited by these men's equable tempers and quiet assurances, for they will be troubled indeed when the testing hour shall come. As for you, your gracious inquietudes and holy anxieties are a proof of the reality of your spiritual life, and evidences of grace which ought to afford you comfort.

Dead men do not suffer from changes of weather. Mere imitations of life, such as paintings and statues—know nothing of the aches and pains of living men.

Pity those who are never in soul trouble, and bless the Lord that he has not left you to their vain peace and false hope. Better be dim gold—than shining brass!

~ ~ ~ ~ If all of this should fail me!

"By tacking about men get the wind, not by lying still; many times a supply of grace comes before we are aware." When we do not seem to have the favoring gale in our voyage toward Heaven, let us not therefore cast anchor, and idly lie still—but let us use what wind we have, employing that measure of grace which is given to us. Let us put up the sail to catch side winds, that we may be aided by indirect helps until we get where more propitious breezes blow.

If I cannot pray, let me read a Scripture chapter. It may be that while I hear God speak to me, I shall learn how to speak to Him.

If in my private reading I feel no unction upon the Word, let me go forth and attend the meeting of the saints. Perhaps God intends to bless me by the ear, or in company with others.

If this fails, let me go and visit the sick, or perform some deed of charity. Perhaps in helping others, I may find support for my own soul. God has often saved a man from freezing, by setting him to rub a brother into warmth and life.

If all this shall not have succeeded, let me hold converse with some choice servant of God.

If all of this should fail me, let me get to my knees again, or begin to sing a psalm, or tell to others what I have experienced of God's love in times past.

How often it will happen that "Before I realized it, I found myself in the royal chariot with my Beloved!"

"While I was musing," said one, "the fire burned."

"The wind blows where it wills," and a heavenly gale often comes suddenly. But it seldom or never comes to idle souls, or to those who are indifferent about it, listless, inactive, dead, careless whether it comes or not.

Come then, brother, do not complain of the lack of heavenly wind—but rather complain of lack of consecrated energy!

~ ~ ~ ~ When the wind blows through the chinks, and the rain drips through the roof!

"If the walls of our house became rotted, and the roof ready to drop down upon our heads—we would not desert it. No, we would have it built in a better manner."

Even thus the soul desires to leave the poor frail tenement of the body, but not that the body may be utterly destroyed. It leaves it with the hope of having the house of clay rebuilt in more glorious form. "Not that we would be unclothed," says the apostle, "but clothed upon with our house which is from Heaven;" not that we would be turned out of house and home; but that we would enter upon our better and permanent abode, which the Lord will surely provide for us. The Lord does not despise this house of clay—He will rebuild it, and we shall inhabit it forever. Therefore let us be comforted when the wind blows through the chinks, and the rain drips through the roof—it will all the sooner come down, and all the sooner will it be restored. The little while in which we shall be unhoused, will cause us no inconvenience, for even then we shall be with the Lord. Therefore let us in all things be of good cheer.

O, my Lord, You have made me to know that this body will soon cease to be a body for me, therefore I will not pamper it. But you promise it a resurrection, therefore I will not defile it. Teach me how, in the body or out of the body, to dwell in You, and honor Your holy name.

~ ~ ~ Our souls will soon be taken up to Heaven!

"A Christian should be always thinking of Heaven—how he may get there, and what he shall enjoy there."

"For to me to live is Christ," says the apostle. To be engrossed in a pursuit, is the readiest way to success in it. We are thoroughly alive unto God, when we get so far as even to eat, and drink, and sleep eternal realities. Where our treasure is, there will our heart be also. The object which is supreme in our heart—will continually make itself prominent in our life. The color of our chosen pursuit, will tinge our whole existence. The musician will be moving his fingers upon the table as if he were playing a tune. The sailor will roll about in his walk on shore, as if he were still on board ship. Just so, will the soul that communes with God rehearse its joys when it is busy with other matters. When God and Heaven bear our thoughts away—it is good evidence that we are preparing for eternal felicity. For he must needs be soon in Heaven—who already has Heaven in him. When heavenly things take up our souls—our souls will soon be taken up to Heaven!

~ ~ ~ Satisfaction, self-glorious, ease

"A racer does not stand still, or look behind him, to see how much of the way is already past, or to see how much the other runners come short of him—but it is his business to get through the remainder of the race." The claim to "perfection", which some have stated, raises a serious question as to whether they have ever entered that race, of which the apostle Paul said, "Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus!" Php 3:12-14

Surely these men must be of another order than Paul—or must be upon another race-course. He saw much which he had not attained—and they see nothing. He was all for pressing on—and they are at the mark already. They speak fluently of their perfection—and he groaned over his imperfection. As for us, we have no belief in these pretenders. We have nothing to consider but the goal and the prize. We may not rest in what we are—we must hasten on to what we ought to be. Attainments and successes will breed no pride, if we treat them as Paul did, when he regarded them as "things which are behind," and therefore forgot them. "Onward" is our watchword!

Satisfaction, self-glorious, ease—these are not to be mentioned among us. As swift as arrows from the bow—we would speed toward the mark of our high calling.

Lord, if I am ever tempted to be satisfied—scourge me into a holy restlessness, and make the very ground beneath me burning to my feet. With my Lord before me, I am a traitor to Him if accept a present satisfaction in barter for higher things.

~ ~ ~ We would soon have him on trial for manslaughter!

"The prescriptions of a physician must not be altered, either by the druggist or the patient. Just so, we, the preachers, must not alter God's prescriptions—neither must you, the hearers. We must not shun to declare, nor you to receive, the whole counsel of God."

It is as much as a man's soul is worth to alter a word of the Lord's own writing. To take away from the Scriptures, or to add to it, is forbidden; and threatened with the heaviest penalties.

It is not ours to improve the gospel—but to repeat it when we preach, and obey it when we hear. The gospel, the whole gospel, and nothing but the gospel, must be our religion—or we are lost men.

Imagine a druggist altering the ingredients of a medicine to suit his own notions! We would soon have him on trial for manslaughter; and surely he would deserve to be tried on a still higher charge, should a patient die through his folly. The gospel prescription is such that an omission or an addition may soon make that which was ordained to life, to be unto death. We may not attempt to be wiser than God, for the idea involves blasphemy. No, it is ours to follow our copy to the letter, come what may of it.

Lord, in my teaching I have ever kept to what You have said; and therefore men think me old-fashioned, and behind the age. Give me grace to continue so. Never may I aspire to practice a new pharmacy, but may I faithfully dispense Your own ancient and unvarying prescription of salvation by grace through faith!

~ ~ ~ ~ He is under no bonds to grant them luxuries

"Prayers to God for spiritual things are the most acceptable, but prayers for temporals are not despised. A child pleases his father more when he desires him to teach him his book, than when he begs for a candy; yet this request is not refused when it will do him no ill to grant it." A pretty, simple picture, rightly drawn upon divine authority; for the Lord Himself teaches us to judge what our heavenly Father will do for us, by that which we would do for our children.

If I go to God, and ask for spiritual blessings, He will be pleased with my request, and most surely grant it—even as a father will readily give his boy a lesson in some useful work or book. But I may also beg for temporal mercies, as a child asks for its bread and butter.

More than this, as a child may ask for a candy—so may I make requests for that which I desire. Only in this latter case, I am bound to remember that a child is not bidden to ask for the sweet, though he is allowed to do so. Moreover, the child's request is one which must be left entirely to the father's own discretion—he is bound by promise to give his offspring necessities, but he is under no bonds to grant them luxuries.

Here is a difference ever to be noted between prayers commanded—and prayers tolerated. As we are children of the great Father, we have a large liberty of request. If we delight ourselves in the Lord, He will give us the desires of our hearts. But still when we are praying, it is well for us to press our suit just so far as it may be pressed, and no further. A child asking for necessary food may be vehement even unto tears; but if what he wishes for is only a candy—he will be a naughty child if he be passionately importunate. Mind this, you babes in grace, when next you pray. Ask, seek, knock, according as God's promise invites you. But in temporal matters, submit your will unto the will of the heavenly Father.

"Give me this day my daily bread," is a petition prescribed.

~ ~ ~ ~ He must be a very foolish child, who begs to be whipped!

"I have read of a devout man who, being one year without any trial, cried out: Lord! You have forgotten me, and for a whole year have not appointed trial for me."

We would not recommend any of our readers to unite with this devout but mistaken expression. We should count it all joy when we fall into various trials—but, at the same time, we ought to be thankful if we do not fall into them. If a cross be laid upon us—then let us take it up cheerfully. But it would be folly to make a cross for ourselves, or go out of our way to look for one. He must be a very foolish child, who begs to be whipped! "Lead us not into temptation," is a prayer of our Lord's own teaching, and we prefer to keep to it; rather than follow this devout man in what reads very like a prayer for temptation.

Those who cry for chastisement will have enough of it before all is over. Be it ours to leave our corrections and trials in our Lord's hands, and never let us be so unwise as to desire more trials than His infinite wisdom appoints us.

~ ~ ~ ~ When traversing this world's dusty roads!

"Ears of corn do not catch on our clothes and hang on them, but thorns and burrs will do so." In passing through the midst of this crooked and perverse generation, we are far more likely to learn evil than good. It is well to keep our clothes well-brushed when traversing this world's dusty roads, for it is not a fragrant spice, but a defiling dust, which we gather in our journeying.

Often have we gone for a walk, and brought home mire upon our shoes—but we never remember to have come home with our clothing improved by our journeys. Just so, the tendency of everything around us, is to soil us and mar the beauty of our holiness. May the Lord help us to be very careful on this point. May we be among those of whom there were a few even in Sardis, "who have not defiled their garments;" for the Lord Jesus says of them, "they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy." What a walk will that be! What joy had Enoch in such a walk on earth! What honor will be given us by such a walk in Heaven!

~ ~ ~ ~ A sunbeam shines upon a dunghill without being stained by it. Just so, God can by no means be looked upon as the direct author of sin, or the proper cause of that evil which is in the actions of His creatures.

~ ~ ~ ~ What a proof of our natural depravity!

"We easily catch an infectious disease from one another, but no man receives health from another's company."

All too true. "Bad company corrupts good character." But good company cannot improve bad character. We more readily learn evil than good—and we are also more forcible in communicating sin than virtue. Both as to the giving out and the receiving—the aptness lies on the wrong side. What a proof of our natural depravity!

What a change must grace work in us, before we shall be fully like our Lord Jesus, who was incapable of being infected by sin, but abundantly able to communicate goodness; for healing

virtue proceeded from him. When shall we become disseminators of holiness by our very presence? When shall we dwell where every companion shall minister to our soul's health? Such a place Jesus is preparing for us, and there is he bringing His redeemed ones.

~ ~ ~ ~ A quick and tender conscience!

"The pick of a pin startles a man—but a heavy blow may only stun him."

Thus it is, that a slight departure from right will startle the conscience—while a gross sin may stun it into a horrible insensibility.

Much serious thought is suggested by this most striking simile. Among other things, it teaches us to dread a benumbed conscience—for it may have been brought into that condition by a terrible sin. Better far to be morbidly sensitive, and condemn one's self needlessly—than to be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. A quick and tender conscience is among the best gifts of grace; let those who have it guard its delicacy with jealous care.

Lord, let my conscience be as tender as the apple of my eye. As well-balanced scales are tremulous at the fall of a single grain of dust, so let the minutest sin startle me. Never, I beseech you, permit me to become heavy with the intoxication caused by a deep draught of evil! "Keep back your servant from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me."

~ ~ ~ ~ The carrion which professors can now feed upon!

"It is not a wonder for a pauper, who has not been acquainted with fine foods, to love husks. But it would be strange for a prince who has been acquainted with better diet, to leave the dainties of his father's table for such base food. I do not wonder at carnal men, that they are delighted with carnal objects—they know no better. But for a child of God, who has tasted how gracious and sweet Christ is, to find savor in coarser fare—this is astonishing!"

Yet were our author now alive, he might weep his eyes out as he saw professing Christians craving for the ball-room and the theater! The carrion which professors can now feed upon, is disgusting to the real Christian. Sinful entertainments are enjoyed among religious professors, which are unworthy even of decent worldlings.

Many true hearts are deeply wounded by this terrible degeneracy. Were it not for a small remnant, we would have been as Sodom and Gomorrah!

~ ~ ~ ~ Mary might well complain of Martha!

"Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her." Luk 10:41-42

"The world eats up our time, our energies, and our thoughts—and God has but a little share, little worship, little reverence." For the most part in our households, Mary might well complain of Martha, for family cares still encumber many and keep them away from Jesus' feet. Very seldom are Christians nowadays too much in the closet, too much with their Bibles, too much at prayer-meetings. Alas, the most of them are all zeal for the world, the shop, or the evening party. Martha, Martha, we may well complain to the Master of you—for you leave Him alone, and forsake His teaching—and all for this poor, cumbering world!

Lord, help us to balance our duties, and thus may we serve you after the best manner, through your grace.

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

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