

## In the Study.

### *Virginibus Puerisque.*

#### The Seller of Spices.

BY THE REV. HERBERT S. SEEKINGS.

'They took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.'—Ac 4<sup>18</sup>.

In a narrow street in the Holy City in the days of long ago lived old Tobiah, apothecary and seller of spices. Morning by morning while the dew sparkled on the grass and gathered in the tiny cups of the lilies Tobiah roamed over Olivet in search of rare herbs and choice flowers. Night by night he sorted his herbs into bundles and distilled the perfume from his flowers. And day by day he went through the city crying, 'Buy sweet herbs and fragrant spices, buy to-day. God sends them, I gather them, buy of me. Boons of the earth for the sorrows of men, take while you may!'

'Ah, Tobiah!' said a keen-faced youth, 'spices again! Doth not the prophet say, "Wherefore spend ye money for that which is not bread?"' To whom the spice seller made reply, 'Is it thus with you, Simon Zelotes? Mayest thou yet learn that the world requireth fragrances as much as it needeth bread.' And Tobiah, heeding not the fiery lad, went on his way. And as he went he droned his familiar cry, 'Buy sweet herbs and fragrant spices, buy to-day.'

Into the street at the sound of his call bounded Judith and Reuben, merry-hearted children of Miriam—wife of Ezra the shepherd. After Tobiah they ran, and into their hands he thrust bundles of spices, and upon their garments his perfumes he sprinkled. Tobiah loved children. Do you ask why? Well, maybe for their own sake, and maybe because he thought of a tiny grave in the burying-place of his fathers!

At midday homeward the children wandered, radiantly happy. 'Guess where we have been, mother, guess where we have been.' 'Ah, children,' said Miriam, as the scent of the spices reached her, 'so you have been with Tobiah again!' And then the wise Miriam added, 'And quite right, my jewels; if you wish to be fragrant keep near to the seller of spices.'

And was not that a beautiful thing to say? Keep near to the seller of spices. St. Paul said

that in his own way to his Philippian friends. He told them that whenever they found anything they could reverence, anything that was pure or lovely or well spoken of, they were to fasten their mind upon it. Such things were to be the spices they were to handle every day. We become like the things we love. St. Paul knew that if these friends of his were to be good and pure and true they must keep near to the Seller of spices. And he knew of a wonderful Seller of spices—One whose wares were 'without money and without price.' The Lord Jesus is that Seller of spices, and the sweetest, brightest, happiest lives are those lived closest to Him.

Our text tells us that that was the secret of Peter and John. They were simple men, yet they did wonderful things. And the reason they wanted to do them, and could do them, was 'they had been with Jesus.' They had been so long with Him that they had become like Him. And when the Jewish council looked at Peter and John, they said, 'These men could never have done these things had they not been with Jesus.' A lady who has a natural gift of mimicry once told me that when she was a little girl her mother could always tell with whom she had been by the manner in which she spoke when she came home. That is it. Our deeds and our words reveal with whom we have been. And is it not simply splendid to think that every lovely thing in our life—our truthfulness, our kindness, our cheerfulness, our love of right—may tell others that we, no matter how little or how lowly we may be, have been close to Jesus, just as the perfume of the spices told Miriam that her children had been with Tobiah the seller of spices? Will you try to remember that it is so?

#### Fruit Trees.

'By their fruits ye shall know them.'—Mt 7<sup>16</sup>.

I once went to live in a new house with a garden, and in the garden I found some gooseberry bushes growing. To all appearance they were very much alike. They had the same situation, the same soil and sunshine, and the same care. But when the fruit season came one bush had large, finely-flavoured fruit, the berries on another, close beside it, were hard and tart and green. They were two

different varieties. Until the fruit came on, and after it had passed, I could not tell which was which. I could tell them only by the fruit.

People are very much like trees in an orchard. They are planted there by a Gardener who sets them in the place and soil He thinks best for them. There are good people and bad, and they are not unlike to look at. How shall we know them? Our Lord told His disciples how. He said, 'You will know them by their fruits.' If a man finds apples growing in an orchard, he says 'This is an apple-tree.' For apples grow on no other kind. If he finds plums, he knows he has a plum-tree. So if you know some one who does good, you say he is a good man, but if you know some one who does wicked things, you say he is a bad man, for good people do not do such things. You know people, like trees, by their fruits, that is, by the deeds they do, because these show their character.

But if we apply this test to other people, we must apply it to ourselves as well. Perhaps you think you are kind and loving at heart, and your grapes quite sweet. You may be a little cross sometimes, when you are put out, but it is nothing to speak of, a few prickles don't matter. Yet vines do not have thorns. Other people will judge you by your fruits. They may be saying, 'I cannot ask anything of that boy or girl, he is so disobliging, or she is so selfish.' While you think you are vines, they may be finding you little thorns, to which they need not go if they want grapes. It is a good thing to test yourselves by this. How do you look to others? Do they gather good fruit from you? You will be known both to them and to yourselves by your fruits, for by them you prove what your character is, and whether you are a good fruit-tree or a barren thorn.

God knows you by your fruits. He is the Gardener who has planted the orchard of this world, and He has planted His trees that He may have fruit. That is what He wishes to have, and if He does not find it, He knows He has a poor tree. What kind of fruit does He want? St. Paul has told us nine 'fruits of the Spirit.' They are Love, Joy, Peace, Longsuffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, Meekness, and Temperance. Very likely you do not see much fruit yet, when you look into your hearts. Such fruits as these take a long time to grow. They must grow slowly all your life in the sunshine of happiness, and the rain of trouble, and the frost of unkindness; and the Gardener is

watching the fruit grow slowly but surely till it is ripe. He sees first the flower-bud, and then the blossom, and then the fruit. He does not expect ripe fruit before its season, but He sees it growing, and He knows His tree is not barren. The best we can do is poor enough, but in it God sees the promise of what we shall be hereafter, if only we are really and honestly doing our best.

Within the folded seed

God sees the flower and in the will the deed.

The story is told of one who, in her early days, was considered the most uncomely girl in the village where she lived. But this did not discourage or dishearten her. 'I will make my life,' she said, 'so beautiful that people will love me in spite of my ugly features.' So she set to work under the training of Christ, took lessons from Him in patience, thoughtfulness, kindness, humility, graciousness. She embraced every opportunity of doing good. If there was trouble in any home, there she was sure to be found. At last, by her many deeds of love and tenderness, she became known as the angel of the village. Through her face, though plain, shone a gentle radiance of peace and love. People loved her because they saw Christ in her.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Rendel Harris has published, under the title of *The Sufferings and the Glory* (Headley; 2s. 6d. net), a volume of addresses given by him at the Woodbrooke Settlement on Monday mornings. It is that form of book—a rare form—that the reviewer can make nothing of. If he were a highly trained reviewer he might describe it as a highly trained gardener will describe a greenhouse. But it is better even then to pick a flower. This is the first address—

#### Gnosis and Agapé.

It has been one of the distinctive features of Evangelical Religion to emphasize what is called the Assurance of Faith, an experimental temper which borders so closely on spiritual certainty, that the believer comes to talk like a Gnostic, and faith appears to mark out for itself a claim in the very area of knowledge. Such persons (and I myself am one of them) have been in the habit of affirming kinship with the Apostle John on the ground that they are able to use the same language that he uses, or at all events, that they have a right to the same vocabulary, with such necessary modifications as may be required in passing from the experience of an actual apostle (and one of the most intimate of Christ's companions) to that of

<sup>1</sup> H. W. Morrow, *Questions put by Christ*, 50.

an ordinary Christian. Certainly the one will say as readily as the other that 'we know we have passed from death unto life,' because the believer is as sensible of the spiritual change which he has undergone as the Apostle himself; he may not be able to say with the same combination of outward and inward knowledge that he has seen and handled the Word of Life, but he will be able with another apostle (also one of the inner circle) to affirm that 'though now we see him not, yet believing we rejoice with an unutterable and glorified joy'; to have actually touched the outward body of a manifested Christ could not take you much further than that. And this affirmation and language of assurance, which is a characteristic so strongly marked of Evangelical Faith, has led the students of the New Testament to point out how constantly the Biblical writers (and in particular St. John) use the word 'know' in preference to any other word, such as 'hope,' or 'suspect,' which might seem to be intellectually or spiritually more suitable as well as more modest. They even hold that we have not grasped truly the Christian calling unless we have this word incorporated in our spiritual vocabulary; and sometimes, especially if they are devoted to the letter of the Scripture, they will emphasize the matter by an actual calculation of the number of times the words 'know' and 'knowledge' recur in the first epistle of John, so that they take sides with those who affirm that, however much the Apostle may be at war with Gnosticism, he makes war by transferring to himself the very title and terms of the people whom he is confuting (just as Clement of Alexandria did at a later date), and is himself the first and greatest of the Gnostics.

Certainly there is nothing lacking in the Apostolic statements: they include historical verities, such as when he says that 'we know that the Son of God is come,' experimental verities, as when he says 'we know that we are in him,' or that 'we have passed from death unto life,' as well as some cases where he comes near to the declaration of omniscience and might be criticized for extravagance, in affirming that all knowledge resides with the illuminated believer, and none of it with the person that is outside the new fellowship of which he is a leader. However that may be, there is no narrow or monopolist expression of assurance on his part inside the limits of the Church; the writer identifies himself with his followers and disciples

by the use of the first person plural, in the form which we call the community—We. His experience is theirs, and theirs is his. In that sense he transfers his Gnosticism, or, if we prefer it, his Assurance of Faith, which is the heart of his Gnosticism and the kernel of his Evangelicalism, to the people who are with him, and to those who are to follow him: they are brethren, not because they practise community of goods (a custom which had disappeared by the time he was writing), but because they enjoy a common spiritual life, whose main feature is a Divine Assurance. Now it may very well be asked whether this way of presenting Christianity is likely to commend itself to enquiring minds at the present time? We recall the salutary lesson that we have lately had from the Presidential chair of the British Association against dogmatism in science, and its accompanying arrogance in temper. The method of rebuking this bad temper is by setting up Uncertainty as a new idol in place of Certainty, and by telling us that we cannot be sure of anything in this world, not even that the priests are wrong in more than half that they say. I should have thought that we might at least have gone as far in Gnosticism as that; but in this enquiry Dr. Lodge follows Mr. Balfour, whose examination of the Foundations of Belief was happily described in the House of Commons as an attempt to show that Science was as baseless as Religion! Well, it is no doubt salutary, as we have said, to learn modesty of temper and expression from the fact of our limitations; but perhaps the lesson was overdone. After all, there are facts both of science and religion! If we are too positively told that we really know nothing, some of us will make a wild protest to the effect that we really are beginning to know something in both regions of enquiry. Are we going too far in that statement? Must Faith be warned off as trespasser from the field of Knowledge, or St. John treated as an illegitimate squatter on the soil of Certainty? Ought he to have spoken with 'bated breath, and whispering humbleness' of his knowledge of the Father, or his relation to the Son? Ought we? Suppose he had freely used the word 'perhaps,' which is altogether absent from his Gospel and Epistles (and is becoming increasingly frequent in our own speech), would he have made any converts, and would they have been of much use if he had made them? So it seems there is something to be said

after all in favour of ecclesiastical dogmatism, when the ecclesiastic is a person who really knows. I admit that the qualification in that sentence is far reaching; perhaps on that account I ought not to have called St. John an ecclesiastic, but simply a Churchman.

At this point I am checked in my investigation by the Apostle himself, who takes me aside to point out that my presentation of his teaching is altogether one-sided and inadequate. He tells me that I have misrepresented him; that I cannot count rightly, or I should have found *love* oftener in the Epistle than *knowledge*; that I cannot measure rightly, and words, he says, are *ponderanda, non numeranda*, to be weighed, not to be numbered. He says that I ought to have inferred his ruling principle from the extent to which it was applied, whether from God towards man, or from man towards God, or again from man towards his brother. He says that when he wrote the letter he did not address it to Gnostics, as if he had said, 'Gnostics, now are we the children of God!' or 'Gnostics, I am not writing a new commandment to you,' or 'Gnostics, do not believe every spirit.' He says that he sometimes packed the sentences so full of Universal Love that there was hardly an inch of standing ground for any other idea. In proof whereof he drew my attention to chapter iv. verses 7, 8, 9, 10: 'Beloved, let us love one another,' etc., and asked me whether one could have put a single idea more prominently or more absorbingly in the same space or in as many breaths of utterance. He told me to look at iv. 21: 'Love the Father and love the brethren,' and the following pair of verses, in which he had spoken of loving 'Him that begat,' *i.e.* the Father, and 'Him that was begotten,' *i.e.* the Son, and how he had connected this with the love of the brethren, by speaking associatively of the love of the Father and the love of the children of God.

By this time a spirit of humility had come over me, and I asked him gently how it was that he had been so much misunderstood. For, said I, all those that are called Gnostics say that they belong to thy school, and they have taught me that the passwords of thy teaching by which I can recognize it in any document are such terms as *Gnosis, Grace, Truth, Life Eternal*. Did such people really belong to thy school? He answered me that these were really his words, and the men, to some extent, his scholars. But of the words,

we may say that 'the greatest of these is Love,' and of the men that they belonged to the lower school, and did not easily pass to the higher school; where, said he, I took all the classes myself; for, said he, they cannot be promoted until they have learned the art of weighing as well as counting words, and knowing how to distinguish what is great from what is small. I asked him further and said, If, as thou sayest, *Gnosis* and *Agapé* are closely related, I observe that thou drivest them in thy epistle as horses in the same chariot. Do they not then belong to one team, or to a single yoke: and will they not go all the way to the same end of the like accomplished journey? To which he replied that he had indeed driven them together, but that they were not really a pair. To begin with, said he, *Gnosis*, whom you see yonder, whom all men take to be the better horse, is really the weaker, and the harder to drive. He will balk if, in driving, we pass such a simple thing as a wayside cross, and he becomes intractable when he hears me say '*In hoc signo vinces.*' Whereas the other high *Agapé* mendeth her pace whenever she seeth what the other avoideth, and taketh in good cheer that which the other interpreteth as discouragement; moreover, she can find her way in the darkest of nights. Wherefore, said he, the trained and the tractable is better than the undisciplined and the erratic. And further, said he, for him that will travel far, *Gnosis* is the worse horse; he showeth ever and increasingly a weakness in the knees, whereby I know full well that he will not win all the way to my destination; or if I pressed him beyond his strength or his due distance, he hath such a horror of waters that must be crossed, wherein he seeth not his own feet nor how to place them, and is so unskilled in swimming, that if the floods should be out (as they say at certain seasons men may expect), I should risk myself as well as him in such ill travelling over uncertain or covered pathways. Wherefore I cut him loose when I saw his goings were uneven or that fear did beset him; and I finished my journey with the other.

After I had thus conversed with the blessed man, I met with certain Elders of the Church at Ephesus, of whom I enquired concerning the blessed man and his last days amongst them and the manner of his passing from them. And they told me with some such shame and compunction as I had myself experienced, that they too had

somewhat misunderstood him. For, said they, at the last he was become like a harp of many strings, of which all strings but one had been broken. Yet upon this string he would essay to make music as though he found it a whole harp in itself. And we, who remembered his ancient skill in touching a clear harp of divers tones, had thought it would be better that he should not play any longer upon one string who had been used to play upon seven. And when his bodily presence became weaker, and we were wont to carry him to the assembly of the children of God, and set him in his place, from whence he used to utter the oracles of the Kingdom, he found speech with difficulty, nor did the oracle say anything except, 'Little children, love one another.' So we, being ashamed that he should repeat one truth over and over, and one commandment as though it were the sum-total both of the ancient decalogue and of the later beatitudes, did chide with him and say, Master, all this thou hast often said to us, neither have we altogether forgotten nor transgressed it, but hast thou not some new message to deliver before thou goest from among us, and we see thee no more? Whereupon he turned towards us with surprise, as if he had really said a new commandment, which we had ill supposed to be old, and said, 'This is the Lord's commandment, and when it is fulfilled nothing is wanting.' Whereupon we, seeing our error, and being made humble by his gentleness, did kiss his hands affectionately, desiring that we might really be the little children to whom he desired to speak. And one of the elders said to me, that he believed a man might be cold in his brain before he was chilled in his heart; whereof, said he, thou mayest take a token. For he lieth in yonder graveyard, and many of us, who have stood by his grave and remembered his gracious presence and speech, and his visions of Christ's life on earth and in heaven, have seen the turf upon his grave heave rhythmically as though his heart were beating yet, and the mould were lying very light upon him. And there were of our number who said that they had seen the motion, but had judged it to be due to the earth's quakings, whereof, thou knowest, Ephesus is much vexed. But others said, We saw the turf moving indeed, but what one sees through tears is not calculated to be received as testimony in courts of strict enquiry. But in any case, neither he nor Love is really dead. Nor will Christ live without him,

who lived so much with Him in the days of His flesh.

Then one of the company, a young man, I think his name was Polycarp, said that the music which the saint made at the last was really the best, albeit made upon a single string. For if, said he, as I have heard, great musicians have been known to make strange melodies out of a single string, what music will not he make who, after searching into all that will make music to a Master's touch in the wide world, should find his trembling finger laid at last, in great reverence, upon the heart-strings of God, to which all other music is tuned and from which all phrases of all harmony are borrowed? And I judge, said he, that this had happened to our Master, when he thought he was playing upon a lyre of his own. Moreover, said he, I do remember an ancient tale of one who contested for a lyric prize in such controversies as Athens loved to honour, desiring ever to put crowns and wreaths upon the heads of them that had surpassed the rest in strength or skill. And this one of whom I speak had the mishap that, as he neared the music's close, and his hand was like to pass from the lyre and its finished strains to the prize and its symbolized honours, a string did break and carry away with its breaking all hope, whether of music or of prize. And it would have gone hard with him that made the music, if a certain grasshopper, who also had music in him, but only one note (nevertheless it was the very note of the broken string), had not perched himself un-noticed on the lyre, and given forth the true note as the occasion required, watching carefully that he lost not either the time or the proper rising and falling of the note. Hence it came to pass that the musician gained his prize and found in the little grasshopper his friend. But with St. John, he said, it was not that one string had broken, and all else remained, but that every string was gone but one, wherefore he must be his own grasshopper, and sound out Love, Love, Love, when some of us were foolish enough to have wished him to say Logic, Logic, Logic, or at least, Logos, Logos, Logos, or Philosophy, Philosophy. Nor did he deliver his last message as a man of despair, from whom all opportunities, or almost all, had fled; as I have heard of painters who made a limning of Hope with such a broken lyre as I have spoken of, and reflected the brokenness of the lyre upon the singer, so that one might not

tell at the first glance whether it was Hope or Despair (they had become so like to one another); but he, on the contrary, strangely bedecked with sunshine in the midst of gathering shadows, and covered with the warm enwrapping of his new commandment, when all things were waxing old and cold, and preparing to vanish away, and pressing forward the more earnestly as the strength for motion declined, did at last set a full sail on seas that we may not traverse yet, in such a bark whereon it seemed to us as if there sailed with him

one who had been with him before-time on the Galilean lake. Wherefore he will land to the same strain wherewith he left us, and with the music set to a repaired and renovated instrument, will discourse again of Love, which was in the beginning, which was with God, and which was God.

Thus much the good Polycarp, to whom, if I understand him rightly, I do assent, and to the rest of the brethren at Ephesus who saw the vision when their Master was taken from them.

## The New Jerusalem.

BY THE REV. WILLIAM WATSON, M.A., B.D., OVNE.

THE eyes of the Jews were ever turned to their national city, Jerusalem. To them it was, without exaggeration, the centre of the universe. It was the place which God had chosen for His habitation, and which He had called by His own name. For long the belief was cherished that Zion was inviolable, that God would never forsake His Holy City, but as time passed the leaders of Jewish religious thought, under the influence of the teaching of history and new ideas of God's majesty and holiness, gradually attained to the perception that Jerusalem as it was could never be His permanent dwelling-place. Hence there arose the belief that the earthly Jerusalem needed to be purified, and finally that it required to be replaced by its heavenly representative. As Christians we are familiar with the idea of the New Jerusalem which comes down from God out of heaven, and with the pictures of heavenly blessedness connected with it; and for this idea we are indirectly indebted to Jewish apocalyptic writers of olden time.

Jerusalem, as has just been said, was to the Jews the centre of the universe. It was regarded as being situated in 'the middle of the earth' (1 En 26<sup>1</sup>). It was called 'the centre of the navel of the earth' (Jub 8<sup>19</sup>). The Jews dwelt 'around the city of God at the centre of earth' (Sib 5<sup>250</sup>). It was with Jerusalem that all their hopes of national greatness were connected, and hence it was but natural that it should be regarded as the centre of the Messianic Kingdom. It was so regarded by the Old Testament prophets, and it continued to be so regarded by the Jewish writers

who wrote in the intervals between the Old and New Testaments.

At first it was thought that the earthly Jerusalem was fit to be God's permanent dwelling-place, and this was an idea which lingered long. Even in the time of Christ it was called 'the city of the great King' (Mt 5<sup>35</sup>). But as early as the Exile the prophets did not fail to drive home the lesson which they themselves had learned from the history of God's dealings with His people, the lesson that the earthly Jerusalem must be purified before it can become fit for God's habitation (see Ezk 40-48). 'All thy children shall be taught of the Lord,' it is said to the desolate land; 'and great shall be the peace of thy children. Through righteousness shalt thou be established' (Is 54<sup>13, 14</sup>). Of the restored Jerusalem it is said, 'The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. . . . Thy people also shall be all righteous' (Is 60<sup>19, 21</sup>). In Is 65<sup>17-25</sup> 66<sup>22</sup> it is declared that the nature of the earth and of its inhabitants will be transformed, though the transformation will not be such as to bring all wickedness to an end (65<sup>20</sup>). We seem to have here the beginnings of the idea that the present earth is not fit to be the scene of the Messianic Kingdom which is to be established in the last days.

The need for the purification of the earthly Jerusalem was also felt by the Jews of the second century B.C. In the Book of Enoch it is promised that the tree of life 'will be transplanted to the