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than the commons of Scotland were.¹ He retained still a peculiar inclination to Scotland; and if he had seen any prospect of doing good there, he would have gone and lived and died among them.' What grieved him most was the prevailing temper of the Christian Church. Even the Church of England, which seemed to him in many ways 'the best constituted Church in the world,' showed in his eyes but as 'a fair carcase of a body without a spirit; without that zeal, that strictness of life, and that laboriousness in the clergy, that became us.'

Burnet, too, shall paint for us the last scene of all: 'There were two remarkable circumstances in his death. He used often to say, that if he were to choose a place to die in, it should be in an inn; it looked like a pilgrim's going home, to whom this world was all as an inn, and who was weary of the noise and confusion in it. He added, that the officious tenderness and care of friends was an entanglement to a dying man; and that the unconcerned attendance of those that could be procured in such a place would give less disturbance. And he obtained what he desired; for he died at the Bell Inn in Warwick Lane [London]. Another

¹ F. W. Robertson, it may be remembered, thought the Sussex peasantry 'very bucolic' (see F. Arnold's *Robertson of Brighton*, p. 200).

circumstance was, that while he was Bishop in Scotland, he took what his tenants were pleased to pay him: so that there was a great arrear due, which was raised slowly by one whom he left in trust with his affairs there: and the last payment that he could expect from thence was returned up to him about six weeks before his death, so that his provision and journey failed both at once.'

V.

I have said enough, I hope, to show that Leighton's is a name on which it is good to dwell in the fireside hour. What books about him we should keep for our fireside shelf, it is not so easy to say. His story deserves a better record than it has yet received. His latest biographer (Rev. Dr. D. Butler) has made all lovers of Leighton his debtors by his careful and painstaking inquiries, but his book is needlessly long, and somehow lacks inspiration. Other books are referred to in the foregoing footnotes. On the whole, next to Burnet, I should be disposed to suggest the little volume of selections edited, with a short biography, by Dr. W. Blair, and Dr. Walter C. Smith's poem, *The Bishop's Walk*. These, if they leave much unsaid, may yet suffice to fill the whole house with the fragrance of a life as fair and sweet as ever grew in Scottish soil.

In the Study.

THE CHRISTIAN YEAR.

Quinquagesima.

PLEASING GOD.

'Without faith it is impossible to please him.'—He 11^o.

THERE are three things necessary to the pleasing of God—knowledge of God, service for God, likeness to God. Man is made to know as much as possible, to do as much as possible, and to be as good as possible. In the sphere of knowledge, in the sphere of action, in the sphere of character, faith is the one element that gives life and power to please God.

1. Look first at the sphere of knowledge, the understanding of the world and of life. We stand in a strange and mysterious universe, with certain

faculties to help us to a comprehension of it. First, we have the senses, and they tell us how things look, and taste, and sound, and feel. Then we have the reasoning powers, and they enable us to discover how things are related to each other, how causes are followed by effects, how great laws control their action and reaction. But is there not something beyond this, a depth below the deep and a height beyond the height? Every instinct of our nature assures us that there must be. The lesson of modern thought is the limitation of science and philosophy. But outside of this narrow circle lie the truths that we most desire and need to know. In that unexplained world dwells God. Why should we hesitate to confess that we must have another and a higher faculty of knowledge? The astronomer has keen

eyes, but he knows their limitation, and he does not discredit to them when he uses the telescope to bring near the unseen stars. The entomologist has quick sight, but he does not disparage it when he turns to the microscope to search a drop of water for its strange, numberless forms of life. Reason is excellent and forceful, but beyond its boundaries there is a realm which can be discerned only by faith. Where science ends, where philosophy pauses, faith begins. 'By faith we understand that the worlds have been framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.'

On the simplest soul that feels the wonder and the hidden glory of the universe, on the child to whom the stars are little windows into heaven, or the poet to whom

'the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears,'

God looks down with pleasure and approval. For in such a soul He sees the beginning of faith, which is able to pass behind the appearance to the reality, and make its possessor wise unto everlasting life.¹

2. Faith is no less necessary in the sphere of action. There are some who would persuade us that believing is appropriate only to infancy and old age; that it is a kind of dreaming, an infirmity of the weak and visionary. But the truth is otherwise. Carlyle says: 'Belief is great, life-giving. The history of a nation becomes fruitful, soul-elevating, great, so soon as it believes. A man lives by believing something, not by debating and arguing about many things.' Faith is power. It makes men strong, ardent, persistent, heroic. Nothing truly great has ever been done in any department of the world's work without faith.

If the cause be divine, if the idea come from above, if the action be impelled by faith in God and a resolve to do His will, then how dauntless and impregnable does it make the heart in which it dwells! Paul standing alone against the mocking, sneering world to testify to the truth as it is in Jesus, 'I believe and therefore speak': Luther riding into the city of Worms, though every housetop were thronged with devils, and appearing alone before the imperial council, 'Here stand I, I cannot do otherwise, God help me': Morrison, the first missionary to China, standing alone on the deck of the ship that bears him to a strange and hostile world: 'Do you think,' says the captain, 'that you will make an impression upon 400,000,000 Chinese?' 'No, sir, is the reply, 'but I believe that God will':—that is faith,—everywhere and always the victory that overcometh the world.²

¹ Henry Van Dyke, *Manhood, Faith, and Courage*.

² *Ibid.*

3. Faith is necessary to please God, because it is the only means of attaining to spiritual character which is spiritual power. If we were to listen to some, we might suppose that Faith is the portion of childhood and old age, an infirmity of the weak and the ignorant. And yet, if we will be honest with ourselves, we shall confess that there is nothing great and noble in the world, nothing which calls forth the admiration and the love of men which is not sealed with the sign of Faith. To feel the reality of something above us, above our temporal experience, above the limit of our single lives; of something more enduring than the shows which we see, more glorious than the visions which we frame; is just so far to rise to the possibility of a more transcending triumph. It cannot indeed but be so. For Faith not only apprehends the unseen, but enters into vital union with it, and so wields, according to its strength, the powers of the world to come.

It is not in 'main points' that character lies. Many have the same, but it is the *peculiar* way each one develops these. It is in the multifarious details which all bear the stamp of the inward spirit, and not only that but of the individual physical constitution, that the distinctive features of a character lie, and it is in the acquaintance with these, and in seeing how they unite with the main principles of the character, *i.e.* in understanding the person as a *whole*, that the charm of sympathy lies.³

First Sunday in Lent.

THE ELEVENTH COMMANDMENT.

'A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another.—Jn 13³⁴.

In the seventeenth century the minister of Anwoth, on the shores of Galloway, was the famous Samuel Rutherford, the great religious oracle of the Covenanters.

It is one of the traditions cherished on the spot, that on a Saturday evening, at one of those family gatherings whence, in the language of a great Scottish poet,

Old Scotia's grandeur springs,

when Rutherford was catechising his children and servants, a stranger knocked at the door of the Manse, and (like the young English traveller in the celebrated romance which has given fresh life to those same hills in our own age) begged shelter for the night. The minister kindly received him, and

³ *Life and Letters of Stopford Brooke*, i. 85.

asked him to take his place amongst the family and assist at their religious exercises. It so happened that the question in the Catechism which came to the stranger's turn was that which asks, 'How many Commandments are there?' He answered, 'Eleven.' 'Eleven!' exclaimed Rutherford; 'I am surprised that a person of your age and appearance should not know better. What do you mean?' And he answered, 'A new Commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another, as I have loved you, that ye also love another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.'

The stranger proved to be 'the great divine and scholar, Archbishop Ussher, the Primate of the Church of Ireland.'

1. The story is told in Dean Stanley's *Life*. No doubt Archbishop Ussher was right in reckoning the commandment to Christ's disciples that they should love *one another* as an eleventh. The disciples themselves understood it so. For they gave it a new name. When a discovery is made we need a name to call it by—'telephone,' 'phonograph.' They chose the name 'philadelphia' (from *phileo*, to love, and *adelphos*, a brother). It is the very word that was chosen by the Pilgrim Fathers for their new city in the new land.

2. So there are two kinds of love. First there is love of our neighbour—'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,' that is, every one out of Christ, including our enemies. And next there is love of brethren, brotherly-love, the love of those who are in Christ for one another. St. Peter makes this very clear when he ends his chain of virtues with 'add to godliness brotherly kindness (*philadelphia*), and to brotherly kindness charity' (*agapē*, the ordinary word for love).

3. But how is it possible to love in two different ways? Mark Guy Pearse tells us that one day he heard one of his children say to another, 'You must be good, or father won't love you.' He took the boy to himself and said, 'Do you know what you are saying, my boy? That is not true, not a bit true.' The boy looked at him in wonder. 'But you won't love us if we are not good, will you?' And he said, 'Yes I will love you if you are not good. I love you when you are good with a love that makes me glad, and I love you when you are not good with a love that hurts me. But I cannot help loving you, because I am your father, you know.'

4. It is so with the Heavenly Father. 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son'—that was 'a love that hurt Him.' 'If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him'—that is a love that makes Him glad.

5. How are the two kinds of love to be exercised? The first is a *missionary* love; it seeks to save that which is lost. The other is a *ministering* love; it serves. It is the love that Christ spoke of when He said 'If I your Lord and Master have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet.'

Second Sunday in Lent.

GREAT FAITH.

'O woman, great is thy faith.'—Mt 15²⁸.

How was her faith so great?

1. It overcame many natural obstacles. She was a woman of Syrophœnicia, St. Mark tells us—a land where you would naturally expect neither purity of love nor nobility of faith. Its people were worshippers of Moloch and Astarte, hideous names that are synonyms for cruelty and lust. Yet it was out of this dismal swamp that Christ plucked this beautiful flower of faith.

Circumstances do not make character. The noblest character can emerge from the worst surroundings, and moral failures come out of the best. Just where you are, take the things of life as tools, and use them for God's glory; so you will help the kingdom come, and the Master will use the things of life in cutting and polishing you so that there shall some day be seen in you a soul conformed to his likeness.¹

2. It would not take a No. That is the most striking feature of the story—the silence of Jesus, and the faith that would not be silenced. When first we meet her she is crying a piercing, heart-broken cry, 'Have mercy on me, thou Son of David. My daughter is grievously vexed with an unclean demon. Have mercy on me.' And He, what does He answer to that cry—He whose ear was ever open to the prayer of human need? 'He answered her never a word.' It is the strangest incident in all the life of Jesus—His silence to this broken-hearted mother's cry.

It was a real refusal. This woman felt that. She knew she had a battle to fight. Yet she refused to be beaten. She followed on, crying and weeping, right into the house where Jesus was. There she falls at His feet and sobs out the piteous

¹ M. D. Babcock, *Thoughts for Every-Day Living*, 72.

prayer, 'Lord, help me,' until at last even *He* is moved to speak.

Why is God sometimes silent? No doubt to test us. 'When he hath tried us, we shall come forth as gold.' But this story suggests to us that God may have other reasons for His silence than merely to educate our faith; nay, more, that these reasons can be overcome by persistent prayer. This is a great mystery; but it is a fact in the history of the intercession of the saints.

He who wholly believes in and trusts that Love may leave the mysterious silence and the apparent indifference to wait their explanation when Love shall find language in God's good time.¹

3. It expressed surprising spiritual insight. This comes out in the woman's marvellous rejoinder to what must seem to many the sternest word ever spoken by the Son of Man to a seeking soul, 'It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs.' At once she replied, 'Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' tables.' Christ realized from this word of hers that she had penetrated into the meaning of His refusal; that she understood that His life-work had to be for His own people, and that it was right that it should be so. That she knew *why* it must be so would be too much to say. She could not understand yet why it was necessary that 'this Prophet must not die out of Jerusalem.' But she realized that it was Christ's mission to confine His ministry to His own people, and it was for this reason, as well as for her passionate and persistent love, that Jesus felt there was no temptation here to desert His mighty task. This was a case so exceptional as to justify legislation for itself alone. 'And he said unto her, For *this* saying the devil is gone out of thy daughter. O woman, great is thy faith! Be it unto thee as thou wilt.'

The silence of God is often the prelude to His richest speech. You know what it is to come to a pause in the music of some great composition, some symphony by Beethoven or some oratorio by Handel. At a signal from the conductor there is a sudden silence, a silence over the vast orchestra that may be felt. Every violin has ceased to throb, every cornet has ceased to sound, until, after a breathless moment that seems to quiver with the tenseness of its expectancy, the conductor lets his baton fall. Then, in a twinkling, every instrument takes up its strain again. The violin makes the music; the cornets prolong it. The drums boom it

forth. The cymbals clash it. The organ adds to it the weight of its mightiest diapason, until, in a perfect blaze of melody, the music reaches its close. The pause was but the prelude to the climax.²

Third Sunday in Lent.

LAYING HOLD.

'Laying hold on eternal life.'—1 Ti 6¹².

The word here translated 'lay hold' is the same as is used elsewhere, as 'And when they had *caught* Paul and Silas!' It was not a caress with which they laid hold of them. About as far from that as could be. It was a grip that could not be dislodged.

1. Lay hold on *eternal life*. What is that? It is life that lasts, though 'eternal' is not simply everlasting. It is an attribute not of time but of condition. It is life in Christ, and life in Christ is fellowship with God. This eternal life has its beginning here, but for its perfection we look forward to the hereafter.

(1) Eternal life will comprehend the perfect knowledge of God. We have the authority of our Lord Himself for saying this. 'This,' said our blessed Lord, 'is eternal life, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.' Man, by reason of sin, has lost a correct knowledge of God. The understanding is darkened, the will perverted, and the whole moral nature enfeebled. But for the light of the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ, there would be no correct knowledge of the true God. Man is in ignorance with respect to the character of God, apart from the light of revelation. Philosophy may do its utmost; art and science may contribute their efforts to arrive at the true knowledge of God; but apart from the revelation of God in Christ we come to the same conclusion announced by the Apostle: 'The world by wisdom knew not God.' And what is the whole design of the Gospel of Christ, but to reveal to us the true character of God, to teach men the right knowledge of the ever-living Creator? And in proportion as the Gospel is known and embraced, in that degree men come to know God as He really is, and to be possessed of a correct knowledge with respect to the everlasting, ever-living Creator. Now, upon earth this knowledge will ever be imperfect—'Now we know but in part.' The largest discoveries we

¹ J. Kelman, *The Road*, i. 134.

² W. M. Mackay, *Bible Types of Modern Women*.

have respecting the character of the attributes of God leave us still but partially, but imperfectly informed; and we wait for the dawn of eternity in order to arrive at the perfect knowledge of God as He really is. 'Now we know in part, then shall we know even as also we are known.'

(2) Eternal life will be perfect resemblance to Christ. One great object of the Gospel is to accomplish the restoration of man to the Divine image; and in proportion as the Gospel of Christ gains its legitimate hold upon any man, in that degree he is brought into the Saviour's image—'changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.' But this resemblance upon earth will never be perfect. There is too much sin inherent in our nature to render it possible for us, under the present dispensation, ever to attain to a perfect resemblance of Christ. It will be one part of the glorious inheritance reserved for the saint in eternity that he shall be made fully to resemble the Redeemer. The Psalmist said: 'I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.' And that declaration on the part of the inspired Psalmist found its responsive echo in the language of the Evangelist: 'Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.'

(3) Eternal life will consist in the companionship with all the blessed, with all the saints of God from Abel, the first martyr, downwards to the last saint that shall be brought forth to complete the spiritual edifice. In every age, in every clime, in every country, all who have ever known, and loved, and served the same Lord shall be brought together in one glorious throng, to unite for ever in celebrating and adoring the wisdom and the goodness of Christ.

Grant Duff in his *Notes from a Diary* says: 'An old priest was trudging home through the deep snow after early Mass on the morning of All Saints' Day, when a man stopped him to ask how many had been at his service. "Millions! Millions!" he replied. Farther on Grant Duff again refers to the incident, and quotes a comment of a friend: 'That is a lovely story about all the saints at Mass; quite lovely. It reminds me of a line I always liked:

Multitudes, multitudes stood up in bliss.

One imagines them as a field standing thick with corn.'

2. *Lay hold* on eternal life. To lay hold is not to make ourselves worthy of it; nor to attempt to

merit it; nor to wait till we are holy before we come to Christ. Salvation is not of works, but of faith. 'Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.' To lay hold on eternal life is to lay hold on Christ. We have nothing to do then, but to believe; to open the door and receive Him into our hearts, who is knocking there. Jesus is ready to come in, as a king into his palace—followed by penitence, humility, goodness, meekness, temperance, hope, peace, joy, charity; a long, shining train of graces. It is only by the hand of faith that we can lay hold of Christ.

In his voyage to the Polar Regions, Kane, when involved with his brave companions among broken ice fields, found himself placed between two mighty, moving bergs. Each a towering, floating, crystal mountain, they rapidly approached to give battle—threatening to crush his ship between them, like an empty shell. The danger was imminent; destruction seemed inevitable. There was not a breath of wind to fill their sails; and their ship, as if herself paralysed with terror, lay still on the water—waiting her doom. At that moment of terrible suspense, when no power of theirs could extricate them, or clear their way through the ice that choked the only path of escape, just then, a low, water-washed berg, set in motion by some strange current, came driving up from the southward. If they could follow in its wake, it might make a way for them through the floating ice; and they might yet be saved—plucked from the very jaws of destruction. Their despair was now turned into hope. It nears them; it is passing them. They seize the opportunity; and, God blessing the attempt, succeed in planting an anchor on its slope—holding on it by a whale line. 'It was an anxious moment,' says Dr. Kane, 'our noble tow-horse hauled us bravely on; the spray dashing over his windward flanks, and his forehead ploughing up the lesser ice as in scorn.' The two great ice mountains, whirling on their axes, and roaring, grinding through the sea, encroach on the ship as it advances; they drew nearer, and still nearer, to each other; the channel is now narrowed to forty feet; another moment and their fate is sealed. With the promptitude of sailors, they fly to the rigging and brace the yards to clear the ice-walls. They pass clear—saved as by the skin of their teeth: and 'never,' writes Dr. Kane, 'did men acknowledge with more gratitude their merciful deliverance from a wretched death.'¹

Fourth Sunday in Lent.

EFFICIENCY.

'I can do all things.'—Phil 4¹³.

There are four elements of efficiency.

1. The first is *vision*—clear vision of the actual facts of life. It takes courage to face facts, but courage is one of the fundamentals of efficient

¹ Guthrie, *The Way to Life*.

living. He who would attain to effective living must stop every form of make-believe, clear his eyes of every scale that hangs between his soul and the naked truth. This is hard on people who try to make themselves believe that they are good when they know that they are bad, who pretend they are succeeding when they know they are piling up failure, who make believe they are well when they know they are sick. Efficiency does not come by that route. This propensity for playing fast and loose with life is one of the first things to be cured in a man who aspires to the life that can do all things through Christ who empowers him—to see clearly the truth.

We must try to see things as they are, not obscured by prejudice or privilege or sentiment or selfishness; and sin does not cloud the vision so much as stupidity and conceit.¹

2. The second element of efficiency is *consistency*. Growing out of the appetite for pretence is the discrepancy between what we know we ought to do and what we actually do. Always and everywhere there yawns a gulf between ideals and conduct. No life can be efficient which consciously does the things condemned by conscience. So fundamental and axiomatic is this principle that it is as hard to prove as that two and two make four. But assumed as it is by the most rudimentary human creatures, it is not so readily realized that violation of conscience lies at the root of most ineffective and flabby living. The student who is content to do work below his possible grade of attainment, the mechanic who is willing to slur over work when he could do it as it should be done, anybody who does anything carelessly and is content to let it go at that is undermining the whole effectiveness of his life and poisoning the stream of life blood at its heart.

Of Professor Robertson Smith it is said: In the course of these years (before he was twelve) we had the consolation of learning that a work of grace was wrought upon him, and in such a form that he was at length delivered from the fear of death and made partaker of a hope full of immortality. That the change wrought upon him was real, we had many satisfactory evidences—not the less satisfactory that there was no parade of piety, no sanctimoniousness, but a cheerful performance of daily duty, truthfulness in word and deed, and a conscientiousness which we could not help thinking was sometimes almost morbid. I never knew a boy with so sensitive a nature and so tender a conscience. When still very young, and on the occasion of one of his serious illnesses, his old nurse came from a distance to see him and brought

him a paper of sweets. His mother, who disapproved of the free use of such dainties, and generally kept the distribution of them in her own hands, permitted him to keep the whole store himself, and told him to take one when he thought it needed. Some days after, she was surprised to see him rush into the parlour in his nightdress in great and evident distress, and on inquiring into the cause, was told that he could not go to sleep until he had confessed that he had that day helped himself to *two* of his goodies—the second one without any special necessity.²

3. The third element of efficient living is *peace*. Personal adjustment is one of the greatest arts of life. Blessed is the man who acquires a smooth-running, accurate-working personality. To co-ordinate the faculties of a human soul, that they may work together harmoniously in the output of life—that is to become humanly efficient. Perfect adjustment, stable balance, controlled reserve—these are indispensable for him who would get ready to do all things.

I dined with an old friend one night, whose children had been brought up with my own. When the war broke out his eldest daughter was newly married to a brilliant University professor. He enlisted at once, with the entire consent of his young wife. He went to France with the first British forces, fought through eight terrible months unscathed, and came home on leave to see his new-born son. He returned, and within a few weeks news came that he was severely injured. His wife instantly crossed the Channel, but arrived at the hospital too late to see him alive. She travelled back alone, and her mother said, 'We sat in this room dreading her arrival. We watched the garden gate, and wondered what we could say to her when she came, and how we could comfort her. She came at last, just as the darkness fell, and directly we saw her we knew that it was she who would comfort us, not we who could comfort her. She was perfectly composed; she came up the garden path quietly and proudly. I could not have imagined it possible. All I can say about it is, that Dorothy seemed to have found the peace that passeth understanding.'³

4. There is a fourth element in efficient living. It is *power*. The other three things are in the man himself. He must see clearly with his own eyes, he must connect his conduct with his conscience, he must be at peace within and without; but all of these are but the polishing of the lamp, the adjustment of the engine, the regulation of the machine. It will take something more before we can do 'all things.' It takes power. You cannot become efficient without it. Beyond the common sense, beyond the trained mind, beyond the co-ordinated personality are higher ranges of being, deeper sources of power. The efficient individual,

¹ A. C. Benson, *The Silent Isle*, 11.

² *The Life of William Robertson Smith*, 12.

³ W. J. Dawson, *The Father of a Soldier*, 118.

the efficient Church must have something different from the results of culture and the social spirit of effective organization. There are burdens that we can never bear and roads that we can never travel unless there comes to us a strength that is stronger than ours—and different in kind. Unless some Hand be downstretched from heaven to help us we are lost, and all the pomp and pride of culture and adjustment will avail us nothing in the hour of our testing.¹

Virginibus Puerisque.

MARCH.

Some Spring Flowers.

'God seeketh again that which is passed away.'—Ec 3¹⁸.

'Let no flower of spring pass us by: Let us crown ourselves with rosebuds before they be withered.'—Wisd. Sol. 2⁷⁻⁸.

I heard of a prayer offered by a very little boy on a cold January night. 'Jesus, I thank Thee for skating, and sleds, and snowballs, and my big snow man in the yard; and, Jesus, I thank Thee most for next Spring when I won't have to wear an overcoat, and when I can go out and pick flowers.' I wonder if he thanked God for the Spring after it was past.

Very few boys or girls do, I fear. That is why I chose the second of the texts. It is from the Apocrypha, a sacred book that is not read in church here, but one in which there is much good advice which we would all do well to follow.

1. Spring is upon us again and we are all glad. You love it, I love it, we all love it. On a fine March day it is a joy to walk along a country road, saunter through a wood, or spend an afternoon in one of the city parks. Where a little while before there were only signs of winter there are flowers; sweet, shy, pretty little things they mostly are. In the gardens there may be a few exceptions so far as shyness is concerned, for the crocus and the early tulip always seem rather proud of their gay dresses. If you want to make any sick little companion very happy with a present of spring flowers, pick a bunch of wood-anemones, or a little bouquet of snowdrops; you might even come across some sweet violets—if your friend is a girl she would love them.

In the country here and there, there is to be seen a flowering tree or a bush. Their flowers,

¹ G. A. Miller, *The Life Efficient*.

however, have very little colour. The hazel that grows nuts in the autumn is blossoming, and the elder down by the river. Then, of course, you know of the pussy-willows and the flowering currant bushes. I like the pussy-willow best of all. To see it in March makes some people think of fairies, especially when the birds seem so happy among its branches. They keep chattering to each other just as if their little hearts were ready to burst with joy. They, of course, see the fairies.

Pussy-willow had a secret that the snowdrops whispered her,

And she purred it to the south wind while it stroked her velvet fur;

And the south wind hummed it softly to the busy honey-bees,

And they buzzed it to the blossoms on the scarlet maple-trees;

And these dropped it to the wood-brooks brimming full of melted snow,

And the brooks told Robin Redbreast, as they chattered to and fro;

Little Robin could not keep it, so he sang it loud and clear

To the sleepy fields and meadows, 'Wake up! cheer up! spring is here!'²

2. Do you know how it is that the flowering trees and bushes are so hardy and flower so early? And why it is that the snowdrop and the crocus and the tulip come so soon? Well, the trees have a store of energy to spare; they have been laying it up nearly all the winter, some of them indeed are almost evergreens, and have never had any break in the laying up process. So you see they are always ready. Certain of them have even ready-made buds in position for unfolding. Then, they come of a good, old stock, made strong by our trying climate. And where do you think the dear little snowdrop and the crocus have their reserve store of energy? They have it underground, in their bulbs.

3. Nature preaches a great many sermons. Every March, when the early flowers are showing themselves, she says to you boys and girls, 'You may think that a great deal of your work at school is useless, you may often feel hopeless because there are certain subjects that you cannot master, but if you do your best the effort will create within you a reserve of what we call moral power, fitting

² 'Telltale,' in *A Garland of Verse*, 149.

you to become strong and good men and women. Nothing you ever really learn is lost.'

And God expects you to get good from having lived in this world. The trees and bushes become hardy from being tossed about in the wind. Don't things sometimes happen to you that you don't like at all? If you bear them, holding up your head and saying nothing, that will mean that there will be something added to your store of moral strength. Then, the fact that you are brought to church means that your father and mother believe that true strength of character comes only through religion, so you too are of a good stock.

4. God does not send us the Spring for nothing. Some elderly people love the Spring so much that they try to hold every moment of it. You love it too in your own way. But while God is good to us, He is also our master. You know that at school you prefer a strict master to one who is very lenient. And the text, 'God seeketh again that which is passed away,' means that we are here not merely to have a good time, but to make our characters. And in this God wants to be your best friend. He is true, He is just, but above all He is loving. If He is a strict master, He is full of sympathy for you when you fail. Confide in Him then: tell him everything. And so with His friendship you will be able truly to enjoy the beauty of Spring, and, as the last half of the text has it, to 'crown yourself with rosebuds' before they be withered.'

O.H.M.S.

'The posts went with the letters.'—2 Ch 30⁶.

And so our good old friend the post is to be found in the Bible! Yes, but I'm afraid you might not recognize him if you met him, for the posts mentioned here did not wear a navy-blue uniform with red pipings as our posts do, and they didn't carry letters from house to house. They were couriers or runners chosen from the king's body-guard, and they were employed to carry the king's messages all over the land.

I wonder how many of you would like to be postmen? How many would like to be king's messengers carrying the king's letters? You can all be that if you wish, and to a much greater king than King George, or King Hezekiah who sent out those posts in our text. Sometimes it is difficult for a boy or a girl to get into King George's postal

service, because the vacancies are few, and only a certain number of applicants are chosen. But this King has always plenty of room in His service, and any one can get in who likes to apply.

Now there are three things I want to say about postmen in the service of the Heavenly King.

1. They must be *prompt*—ready to obey the King's commands at a moment's notice and to do whatever He asks them to do.

When Professor Henry Drummond was a very small boy at Stirling High School the boys decorated and illuminated the school in honour of the marriage of the late King Edward, who was then Prince of Wales. They cut out Prince of Wales feathers and suitable mottoes in coloured paper—blue, and pink, and red, and yellow—and stuck them on the windows. When night came on they put lighted candles in the windows so that when people passed outside they saw Prince of Wales feathers shining in every window.

Henry was too small to help, but he was eagerly watching the cutting out and pasting when a big boy came to him and asked him to run down town and buy twopence worth of pink paper. Now Drummond thought it was much more fun watching the others than going on a dull errand, so he refused. 'Why won't you go?' asked the big boy. 'Because I don't want to.' 'But do you know it is "O.H.M.S."?' asked the other. 'You don't really mean it!' said Henry, and off he went like a shot. And as he ran down the street he felt, as he afterwards said, about 'ten feet high.'

You see it makes all the difference in the world when you are 'O.H.M.S.' When the King gives a command you obey at once without questioning. And the errands that are bothersome, and the duties that are disagreeable seem quite different. If they are difficult or disagreeable it is all the more honour to us that the King has asked us to do them.

In ancient Persia the posts were mounted on swift steeds. It was said of these messengers that nothing mortal travelled so fast, and that they outstripped the flight of birds. And the messengers of the Great King must be like these ancient Persians—swift to do the King's bidding, ready to go whenever and wherever the King calls them.

2. The King's postmen must be *faithful*. King Hezekiah's postman carried his messages written on parchment, but the Great King writes His message on boys, and girls, and men, and women.

His postmen carry the message on themselves. They are the letters as well as the postmen, and by their life and conduct they show the mind and heart of the King.

Now there are a great many people going about the world who call themselves the King's messengers, and when other people see them they say, 'Well, if the King is at all like them we don't want to be His followers!' They are unfaithful postmen and bring disgrace on the King's name.

In the life of Bishop Bompas, whose work lay in the district of the Mackenzie River, away in the cold North-West of Canada, there is a funny story of how some letters got mixed up. The mails arrived only twice a year, and their arrival was always a great event in the life of the fort. In the winter time they were brought from a long distance by Indians with dog-sledges. On one occasion the Indian in charge broke through the ice, and man, dogs, and letters all got a thorough soaking. The Indian made for the shore and lit a fire to dry his clothes. Then he looked ruefully at the wet letters. What was to be done with them? Suddenly a brilliant idea occurred to him. He took them out of their envelopes and stacked them up round the fire to dry. When they were all nicely toasted he proceeded to replace them, but then he discovered to his dismay that he did not know which letter belonged to which envelope. As he was unable to read he could get no clue, so he just popped any letter into any envelope and proceeded on his way.

By and by he arrived at the fort and delivered up the mail, and *then* the fun began. The Bishop opened sedate-looking envelopes addressed to himself and found they contained private documents or love-letters intended for the officers at the fort. And the officers on opening some of their letters discovered epistles intended for the Bishop. At last the Indian confessed what had happened, matters were cleared up, and everybody had a good laugh.

Now the unfaithful messengers are like letters that have been put into the wrong envelope. When the people to whom they are sent look inside they say, 'Why, this isn't the writing of the King at all. It is the writing of selfishness, or pride, or greed. This boy is wearing the King's uniform, the envelope and the address seem all right, but inside he is a sad disappointment and not at all what we expected.'

Don't get into the wrong envelope, boys and girls. Don't pretend to belong to the King and be really serving yourself. Remember when you wear the King's uniform you must carry His messages faithfully.

3. Lastly, if we want to be swift messengers, if we want to be faithful messengers, we must *keep in touch with the King*. We cannot carry His messages unless we are in communication with Him. But He has made a path for us all whereby we may reach Him in a moment, and that path is called the Way of Prayer. If we go to Him frequently by that path we need never fear to prove unfaithful, for He will show us His mind and heart, He will fill us with His Spirit, He will guide us in all our ways.

The Jasper.

'The first foundation was jasper.'—Rev 21¹⁸.

Our stone for March is the jasper. I have chosen it because the bloodstone, which is one variety of jasper, is the birth-stone for the month.

There was more of the jasper than of any other stone in the New Jerusalem, for not only was the first foundation of the city jasper, but its walls were jasper as well. Then He who sat upon the throne was compared to a jasper; and the light of the city was said to be as the light of a jasper.

The stone which the ancients called jasper may have been a translucent stone—that is to say, one that you can see light through,—but the stone that we know as jasper is an opaque stone—one that you cannot see light through. It is a stone of many colours. The commonest jasper is yellow, but there is a scarlet jasper, and a red jasper, and a crimson jasper, and a green jasper. There is a jasper in different shades of brown which comes from Egypt, and Siberia gives us what is called ribbon jasper because it is striped like a coloured ribbon. India, too, has a rare green jasper, with little red spots in it. This is known as the blood-stone, and it has sometimes been chosen as the special stone for Easter, because the head of Christ crowned with the crown of thorns has been cut out of it, and the red drops have been used to represent drops of blood.

The jasper has been, from earliest times, a favourite both as a gem and as an ornamental stone in building. The portraits of the Roman Emperors were carved on it, and the finest intaglio (an

intaglio is the opposite of a cameo, it is cut in, whilst a cameo stands out) in the British Museum, the head of the Roman goddess of wisdom, Minerva, is cut out of a jasper. To this day it is a favourite stone for signet rings. If father has a signet ring with a red or green stone in it—a stone you can't see through—ten chances to one it is a jasper.

Large pieces of jasper are used in buildings. The altar in Canterbury Cathedral stands on a platform of yellow jasper, thirty feet long and fourteen wide. Any one who has been to Italy and has visited her wonderful churches will tell you that they owe much of their beauty to the use of the jasper stone.

Jasper is very hard. It is so hard that it cannot be removed from the bed-rock in the ordinary way. Instead, the workmen bore holes in the rock, and into these they drive wedges of wood which they soak in water. The water makes the wood swell till it bursts the rock. Then the fragments are carefully collected and sent to be cut and polished.

Because jasper is hard and strong it made a splendid first foundation-stone of the Holy City. The other eleven foundations could safely rest on it. Because it is so hard and suitable for foundations it has been called St. Peter's stone. You remember Christ called Peter a foundation-stone when He said, 'Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church.'

Now, what is the jasper's message to us? Is it not this?—'Be strong.'

1. *Be strong in body.*—Do you know what makes the red spots in the beautiful bloodstone? It is a stuff called oxide of iron. Do you know what makes the red in your cheeks? The very same iron. You have heard people speak of having iron in the blood. You must have plenty of iron in your blood if you want to be healthy boys and girls.

What gives us that iron? Why! good plain food, and plenty of sleep, and lots of fresh air. Don't turn up your nose at milk puddings or an honest plate of porridge, and sigh for pies and paste. Stick to the plain fare and you'll grow both tall and strong. Don't want to sit up late at night. Remember one hour's sleep before midnight is equal to two after it, and the person who burns the candle late at night will soon have cheeks to match the candle wax. Don't be afraid of fresh air, or an open window or a shower of rain. Change your shoes and stockings when they get

wet, but be out as much as possible in the open. That will bring to your cheeks roses as red as any in the garden.

2. *Be strong in your character.*—Have good principles and stick to them. Know the right and do it. Don't be either coaxed or driven into doing the wrong. Be firm and immovable as the jasper rock. After all, what is the use of knowing the right if you don't do it?

A bright little chap was sent home from school for bad behaviour. 'Why! Willie,' said a friend, 'How did this happen? I thought you had better principles.' 'Oh!' said Willie, 'It wasn't my principles, my principles were all right. It was my conduct they sent me home for.' It's no use merely knowing what's right. The thing is to do it. And that is what takes real strength of character.

3. *Be strong for others.*—The jasper foundation had to bear the weight of the other eleven foundations, but it was equal to its task. We have often to be foundation-stones. We have to be strong for others. We have to act as a support to those weaker than ourselves. We have to infuse a little of our strength into them.

A man in the north of Scotland once got the present of an eagle. He was very proud of it, and kept it chained in the courtyard of his house. He fed it and petted it, but the poor bird pined and grew weaker day by day. It looked so heart-broken with its drooping wings and its film-covered eyes, that at last the owner feared it might die, and he determined to give it its freedom. He took it out to the hillside, and he set it on a rock, and then he lay down in the heather to watch what would happen.

Presently he saw it raise its head, open its eyes, and look upwards. The man himself saw nothing, but the eagle saw something that he could not see, and heard a sound that he could not hear. By and by a speck appeared in the sky. It grew larger and larger, and as it drew near the man saw that it was another eagle coming to the rescue of the sick bird. At last, with a cry of joy, it swooped down beside the invalid. It fanned the poor creature with its mighty wings and lifted it on its broad pinions, till the sick bird gathered strength and courage from its strong friend, and, spreading its wings, soared aloft beside it into the blue sky.

Boys and girls, we should be like that eagle. We should be strength to the weak. We can help

those who have little strength in a thousand small ways. We needn't make a parade of it, but when we see an opportunity of backing some one up, or of lending a helping hand, or of giving a good lead, we should slip in quietly and use the strength God gave us.

Do you know that about eleven-twelfths of the people in the world are weak people—not bad people? They are people who need a strong leader. They are excellent followers if some one

shows them the way. The other twelfth are the leaders, the strong men, those who bear the burdens, those who are the foundation-stones on which others build.

If God has made you one of the rare twelfth, use the strength He has given you to serve your fellow-men. So doing you will serve Him, and make yourself one with Him. For He came to earth two thousand years ago just that He might help the fallen and be strength to the weak.

Christianity the World Religion.

BY THE REV. SYDNEY CAVE, D.D., HENLEAZE.

I.

IT has become a commonplace to say that the War has made the world seem a very small place. We are compelled to-day to think on the world scale and to seek a world polity. Is that possible without a common moral ideal, and can there be a common moral ideal without a common religion? Is there such a religion? Can Christianity, for instance, rightly claim to be of final and so of universal value?

I.

To some, such a question suggests a sort of spiritual Prussianism. The rights of religions, as of nations, should be respected, and each religion allowed its full and free development, without interference of any kind. Thus in India, where the contact between East and West has been most intimate, no attitude is commoner than that of Rāmakṛishṇa's, that every man should follow his own religion, for all religions are pathways to the truth. A Christian should follow Christianity, a Muḥammadan Muḥammadanism, and so forth: and for the Hindus, the ancient path of the Aryan Rishis is the best. That God is one and that He receives all honest worship to whomsoever it is addressed, we would almost all agree, but is such catholicity as Rāmakṛishṇa's true to fact? Can religion be thus independent of its objects? Thus Rāmakṛishṇa himself worshipped an image of Kālī as the Mother of the Universe and believed, in his enthusiasm, that it took food from his hand. When later he desired to experience the ecstasy of

Kṛishṇa's love, he put on woman's clothes, lived in the women's part of the house, spoke in a woman's voice, until at last as Rādhā, Kṛishṇa's paramour, in a trance he saw standing before him the Kṛishṇa that he so passionately loved. Surely we cannot say that it makes no difference whether men see God in the dreaded Kālī or in the holy Christ. A devotion to Kṛishṇa which is the ecstasy of human passion in its moment of breathless abandonment, is not the same as that quiet, constant faith in Christ, which means repentance, forgiveness, and a new moral ideal and power. The truly religious man will recognize and appreciate in other religions sincerity and zeal, but, when we remember how diverse religions are, to say that all religions are alike true, is impossible unless we hold that all religions are alike false, or regard God as so unknown that it simply does not matter how we think of Him. Truth after all is not a mere question of geography. Humanity is one. In religion *svādesheism* is out of place. We may try to ignore religion, but its problems will not be evaded. We have to-day a common world life. Religions have met, and we are forced back again to the question, Is there any religion of final value? Can Christianity, for instance, claim to be the world religion, and, if so, in what sense?

II.

As we turn to the books of the New Testament this much at least seems clear. From its inception, Christianity was proclaimed as a religion of uni-