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and what it is that we trust Him to do further for us and for the world. And I would add that community in manner of worship—the use of a common hymnal, the recitation of a common *Credo*, and the conduct of at least some part of the regular meetings for worship according to a common liturgy—seems to me calculated to do far more towards promoting the real unity of the Churches than the federation of their government or the construction of common doctrinal formularies. Both in methods of organization and in the formulation of defensive doctrinal beliefs it is healthy to differ; but in faith it is our duty, and so in worship it is our gain, to be at one.

In the Study.

THE CHRISTIAN YEAR.

Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity.

The Garment and the Sword.

'He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one.'—Lk 22^{36}.

1. The garment is the symbol of *Luxury*. On it is lavished much of the wealth and splendour of life. 'You can tell a man by his clothes.' So the Christian soldier must often dispense with life's luxuries, if he would win life's crown. He may not say much against these. They may be harmless enough in themselves. But for himself he feels that before he can buy his sword he must cast these away. He feels, *e.g.*, that he is in such a line of business with such temptations in it that his only way of safety is the way of total abstinence from these things. Or perhaps, better still, he cannot as a father see his children grow up to trifle with these dangerous indulgences by following his example. Or best of all, he cannot speak to a poor brother who is going down to ruin by the indulgence of what is only a harmless luxury to himself. And so with no violent feelings against the thing in itself, he yet feels it his duty, nay his necessity, to put away this thing. He must sell the garment of luxury to buy the sword of victory.[1]

2. Again, the garment is the symbol of *Comfort*. We don't put on clothes primarily to look well. We put them on to keep out the cold wind and the chill rain. So we are taught here the still more searching truth, that so strenuous is the Christian struggle that sometimes a man must be prepared to sacrifice not merely his luxuries but his comforts as well to win it.

[1] W. Mackintosh Mackay.

It has been truly remarked that we cannot improve the future without disturbing the present. Established wrongs can only be put right by upheavals of the public mind corresponding in some degree with the magnitude of the evil to be combated. The gales that blow away the leaves and purify the air are God's disinfectants. The temporary inconvenience and local damage they inflict are more than compensated by the universal good. Who can calculate how many epidemics they prevent? The air that is least stagnant is most healthy. The unwholesome quiet of the 'Black Hole' is the prelude of suffocation. Better perish in a tornado than stifle in a dungeon. Death, if postponed for a while, is equally sure and still more agonizing.[2]

3. Once again, the garment is the symbol of *Propriety* or *Respectability*. Christ would teach us here that there are times when, in attacking some great public abuse, a man may have to speak and act with a plainness that will shock the public mind. This is a delicate subject, and there will always be difference of opinion on special cases. Such, *e.g.*, as the way Mr. Stead took up the question of public purity, many years ago in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. Without expressing an opinion on individual cases, we lay down a great principle, that there are times when a man, in his battle for righteousness, may be compelled to cast away the garment of propriety that he may buy the sword of victory.

It is said that St. Francis' father once took him to court on the plea that his son had left his house and taken his father's property with him. 'What have I taken?' said Francis. 'Why, the very clothes on your back are mine,' said the father. 'Then,' said the great renunciant, 'I give them back!' and disappearing out of the court he returned with the garments a few moments later, stark naked. 'We Christians,' said Hugh Price Hughes once, 'must make ourselves a public nuisance, till we have put down every other nuisance.' That is perhaps the best modern setting of this parable. In our battle for purity and righteousness,

[2] F. de L. Booth-Tucker, *The Life of Catherine Booth*, i. 248.

we must be ready, like the old British tars, to strip to the waist as we go into action; we must, like the old Hebrew prophets, be prepared to sacrifice even the garment of propriety, that we may wield the sword of the Lord and of victory.[1]

It is a pathetic sight and a striking example of the complexity introduced into the emotions by a high state of civilization — the sight of a fashionably drest female in grief. From the sorrow of a Hottentot to that of a woman in large buckram sleeves, with several bracelets on each arm, an architectural bonnet, and delicate ribbon-strings—what a long series of gradations! In the enlightened child of civilization the abandonment characteristic of grief is checked and varied in the subtlest manner, so as to present an interesting problem to the analytic mind. If, with a crushed heart and eyes half-blinded by the mist of tears, she were to walk with a too devious step through a door-place, she might crush her buckram sleeves too, and the deep consciousness of this possibility produces a composition of forces by which she takes a line that just clears the door-post. Perceiving that the tears are hurrying fast, she unpins her strings and throws them languidly backward — a touching gesture, indicative, even in the deepest gloom, of the hope in future dry moments when cap-strings will once more have a charm. As the tears subside a little, and with her head leaning backward at the angle that will not injure her bonnet, she endures that terrible moment when grief, which has made all things else a weariness, has itself become weary; she looks down pensively at her bracelets, and adjusts their clasps with that pretty studied fortuity which would be gratifying to her mind if it were once more in a calm and healthy state.[2]

Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity.

PURSUIT.

'Follow after righteousness.'—2 Ti 2[22].

This word 'follow' is elsewhere translated 'persecute.' Go after goodness with the intensity and fierceness of a hound following up a scent. Follow after righteousness, which Paul defines as godliness, with faith (here in a sense of fidelity). Godliness is a thing we are inclined in our day to forget in defining righteousness.

1. Where is it?

(1) It is above us. I used to see the boats going out from Newcastle Quay to places where the magnetic currents in the water made sailing dangerous, as they would deflect the compass, and these boats would take an extra compass fixed somewhere high up above the influence of these disturbing powers. So we often come into currents —expediency, prejudice, 'conclusions hastily formed,' and other mesmeric and magnetic influences—so take your life into the altitudes where these will not affect it, let your righteousness be first the rights of God; you cannot be righteous only on the lower planes, get near God![3]

(2) It is beside us. When we are righteous to God, when we respect God's rights, then we will be righteous to men, respecting our neighbour's rights.

Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life. Righteousness is the great end of Christ's sacrifice. Through righteousness alone we get eternal life. It is more difficult to live a healthy life and be a Christian than to be a Christian in affliction. Grace begins by an inward renewal followed by an outward change. Sacrifice is the measure of love. There can be no love without self-sacrifice.[4]

2. How is the pursuit maintained?

(1) By Love. To follow righteousness without the gracious medium of love is hard and unfruitful work, but if a man is upright and loving his following will be all right! What is Love? It is a certain attitude of soul, the kindly eye, the generous judgment. It must begin by being a mental attitude, the pose of goodwill, of benevolence, and the pose creates a disposition! The emotions follow the mind. 'Set your affections' in the old Version becomes 'Set your mind' in the Revised, and if we follow the Revised we produce the Authorized! Look for the lovely, the beautiful, in your brother. Give all his actions a fair interpretation, and soon in your heart there will come the very love of Jesus Christ!

Would you know God? I say to you, discover what true love means. Get your heart so full of it that it will send you forth in God's Spirit seeking to save the lost, yearning to redeem the erring and sinful, binding up the broken-hearted, drying streaming eyes, and comforting them that mourn; get such a love as that into your soul, and you need look no further for an image of God. Moreover not only is it true that every one that loveth knoweth God, but it is equally true that you will know God just to the extent that you really love and no more.[5]

(2) By Patience. You cannot get very far without that. The patience of God is so wonderful. In only three years, so soon past, how much time He spent over one woman at the well of Samaria; how much on Nicodemus; how much on the slow, stupid disciples! He waited for the lagging pupil; for the slowest in the group. As Isaiah said, 'And gently lead those that are with young'; the

[1] W. M. Mackay, *Words of this Life*, 89.
[2] George Eliot.
[3] J. H. Jowett.
[4] *John Brown Paton: A Biography*, 370.
[5] *Quintin Hogg: A Biography*, 304.

weakest, the slowest, are to set the pace for the flock!

It was a characteristic of Fénélon that he bore the passions and faults of others with the greatest equanimity. He was faithful, without ceasing to be patient. Believing that the providence of God attaches to times as well as to things, and that there is a time for reproof as well as for everything else, a time which may properly be denominated *God's time*, he waited calmly for the proper moment of speaking. Thus he kept his own spirit in harmony with God.[1]

(3) By Meekness. What is that? When the old Greeks took a young foal from his wild galloping round the field, and put a yoke round his neck, they called him 'meek.' Meekness is power harnessed to a useful purpose. 'I came to minister'; 'he that would be great let him be your minister.' Let him get the yoke on, and serve! No more licentious scampering round the field, or the world. Get into collar and serve! 'My yoke is easy,' says Christ, and men and women are just burdened in spirit because they are not meek. Take up some one else's load and your own will be light.

There was a poor woman who having become, under God's grace, rich in faith, bore much misfortune with the meekness and patience of an angel. By her personal labours she supported both her five children and her husband. Her poverty was extreme; her suffering from other causes great; but amid her trials and distractions, she kept constantly recollected in God; and her tranquillity of spirit was unbroken. When she prayed, there was something wonderful in it. Two deeply religious men, intimate friends with each other, learning the situation of the poor laundress, had agreed to visit her in turn, and to render her some assistance by reading to her. But they were surprised to learn, that she was already instructed by the Lord Himself in all they read to her. God, they found, had taught her inwardly by the Holy Ghost, before He had sent, in His providence, the outward aid of books and pious friends to confirm His inward communications. So much was this the case, that they were willing to receive instruction from her. Her words seemed Divine.[2]

Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity.

Christian Perfection.

'For the perfecting of the saints.'—Eph 4^{12}.

Christian perfection or true saintliness is nothing else than the perfection of the man, the reaching the full growth of the man according to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; that is to say, the rightful use of all the faculties which God gave to man, in the way and to the ends for which God gave them, and no otherwise.

1. It is *perfection in the intellect*, comprising wisdom, a right judgment, knowledge, especially the knowledge of the Son of God, and of His love which passeth knowledge, enlightenment of the understanding for the perception of Divine mysteries, comprehension of God's revealed purposes, and withal a manly strength of mind to hold fast the truth which has once been received, and to reject enticing novelties.

When John Knox and his coadjutors gave Scotland a religious life instead of a form, they unloosed the Scottish intellect, to make it then and ever since one of the great intellectual forces of the world. There has never been a great revival that has not had a higher mentality as an after-product. The second or third generation that trace back to it may change their attitude to the belief of their fathers, may even adopt a hostile one. All the same, it remains that the deep, inward movement at the beginning is the hidden source of the mental products that succeed. When you turn men from frivolity and vice to depth and seriousness of character, you have fructified not only the world's soul, but all its powers.[3]

2. It is *perfection in the moral qualities of the soul*, comprising aptitude for communion with God, a close union with Christ, faith, love, kindness, tenderness, patience, forbearance, sincerity, fidelity, purity, moderation, temperance, and lowliness of mind.

Ian Maclaren preached religion rather than theology; and he lived what he preached. If he did not know the difficulties that beset men who think, he yet knew the wants of men in general. He knew the power of sympathy, and he knew that the story of the life and the death of Jesus will reach men's hearts to the end of time. And then he had mastered the evil that was in himself. No one ever knew him to be angry. Even his wife could only once remember any approach to hastiness, and it was when the servant omitted to tell him of a case of sickness to be visited. He could bear opposition; he could suffer to see himself despised or thrust aside if any good came of it. He used to buy things at a shop in Perth where the shopkeeper was not civil to him. He was asked why he continued to go where his custom was not wanted; and he answered that he was trying to soften that man by kindness.[4]

3. It is *perfection in the actual conduct of life*, comprising constant and unwearied prayer and intercession; the preservation of unbroken union with the Body of Christ into which he has been baptized; peaceful relations with all men; right-

[1] T. C. Upham, *The Life of Madame Guyon*, 454.
[2] *Ibid.* 187.
[3] J. Brierley, *Religion and To-day*, 82.
[4] W. Robertson Nicoll, *Ian Maclaren: Life of the Rev. John Watson, D.D.*, 19.

eousness and honesty in all his dealings; industry in working the thing that is good; charity in helping the necessities of the poor; the careful husbanding of precious time; the conscientious employment of the great gift of speech; and the faithful discharge of all the relative duties of life, as wives or as husbands, as children or as parents, as servants or as masters; and all for the sake of Christ.

Theoretical theology is valuable only as it bears on the practical conduct of life.[1]

Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity.

CALLED.

'And called.'—Jude [1].

1. When we think of Vocation we nearly always begin by thinking of some work we choose to do, from some motive higher than just satisfying our own personal likes and dislikes, but if we take the meaning of the word—'a calling or summons'—we realize that we do not choose; we are chosen. What difference did this new relationship with Christ make to Jude? It meant that his life now had taken on new values—it had become something to be lived every minute, in every thought and every deed for Christ. It had become a 'vocation.' A vocation, then, is not just some special work we do, but also the living of the whole of our life for Christ. It is a new relationship out of which come the many and separate 'calls.' It is not merely 'doing' something, but also an attitude of mind towards everything we do.

2. What is the spirit of the vocation?

(1) It is the spirit of loving *sympathy*. Jesus, Paul, St. Francis, Mary Slessor, John Woolman, and many others whose lives were 'called' to the service of God, were all passionately and intensely in love with humanity. Without this love our work is useless.

What a strange thing is sympathy! Undefinable, untranslatable, and yet the most real thing and the greatest power in human life! How strangely our souls leap out to some other soul without our choosing or knowing the why. The man or woman who has this subtle gift of sympathy and magnetism of soul possesses the most precious thing on earth. Hence it is rare. So few could be trusted with such a delicate, sensitive, Godlike power and hold it unsullied that God seems to be hampered for want of means for its expression. Is that the reason that He made His Son a 'Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief'?[2]

(2) The spirit of *humility*. We must be willing to learn from those among whom we work. If the call shall come to us to be missionaries, let us go out seeking points of contact, willing to give but also to receive; if to be social workers, let us be prepared to learn much of generosity, courage, long-suffering, and real Christianity expressed in ways that are unusual and perhaps uncouth to us; if the call is to bring us among 'ordinary' people coming in this spirit, we shall find them not 'ordinary' but 'wonderful.'

The first personal impression Dr. Cairns made on all who met him was one of wonder at his humility. It came out in ways so unstudied, and in degree, judging by common standards, so excessive, as sometimes to arouse incredulity and provoke a smile. These, however, were in their way striking tributes to the beauty of this grace. For the thought underlying them was—how can so great a man, consistently with perfect ingenuousness, display such lowliness and speak in such generous exaltation of tone, about commonplace achievements and inferior men?[3]

(3) The spirit of *sincerity*. This implies truthfulness in our thoughts as well as in our acts. When the time shall come for us to enter into our 'vocation,' let us be quite sure that we are willing to go where God shall send us, not slipping into the first avenue of service that offers, and then convincing ourselves that this is our appointed work. Let us make quite sure that the motives for work are really what we think they are.

Sincerity is not so easy a task as some people think; it is not easy at all to be sure that one tells the truth, even if one tries, either to others or to oneself. There are those who hold bluntly that the essence of Christianity is deliberate self-deception—not very historically, for if character is ever to be read at all, it is plain that in few societies have there been so many persons as in the Christian Church diaphanously candid with themselves, in self-criticism and in apprehension of truth.[4]

(4) The spirit of *simplicity*. The Christian ought to be simple enough to be recognized as a disciple by all with whom he comes in contact. Our mode of thought, of life, and of speech should raise no barriers. Let us remember this against the time when our call shall come.

[1] Lyman Abbott, *Reminiscences*, 19.

[2] *Mary Slessor of Calabar*, 288.

[3] *Life and Letters of John Cairns, D.D., LL.D.*, 600.

[4] T. R. Glover, *Vocation*, 61.

Four things a man must learn to do
If we would make his record true:
To think without confusion, clearly;
To love his fellow-men sincerely;
To act from honest motives purely;
To trust in God and heaven securely.[1]

Virginibus Puerisque.

SEPTEMBER.

A Thanksgiving Feast.

'The feast of ingathering at the year's end.'—Ex 34^{22}.

A little girl was feeling very happy one day at the prospect of visiting an aunt who lived in a big city. She could scarcely sleep the night before for thinking of all the wonderful things she would see. Next morning she kept chattering to her uncle about her joy, when he suddenly asked, 'Have you said "Thank you" this morning?' 'I have nothing to say "Thank you" for,' said the little girl. 'This dress is quite old, my hat is old.. I have nothing new at all.' 'But, Annie,' answered the old gentleman, 'think how well you are, and what lovely weather you are going to have for your journey. If these things had been different, you could not have gone to visit your aunt.' The child looked 'put out,' and stammered, 'I never thought of that; I'll go and say "Thank you."'

'Thank God for every little thing,' a clergyman wrote to a friend at Easter-time. In the same letter he told about a Hawaiian girl who 'could not see a flower without thanking God for it,' and then he added, 'Thank God for the blue skies when you have them, and the flowers as they unfold, and think "How wonderful it is that God should have made all this beauty for me."'

Robert Louis Stevenson, that delightful writer of books, seemed to believe that it was in people's hearts to be thankful. He wrote the life of a Professor whom he knew and loved; in that Memoir there is a beautiful word-picture of the Professor's old father. He was a sea-captain. When he had become very old and frail, he said one day, 'I want you to work something, Annie. An anchor at each side—an anchor—stands for an old sailor, you know—stands for hope, you know—an anchor at each side, and in the middle THANKFUL.'

Robert Louis must have been a thankful little chap himself when he was a boy. Some of you know his 'Child's Garden of Verse.' Do you remember this verse?

[1] Henry Van Dyke.

It is very nice to think
The world is full of meat and drink,
With little children saying grace
In every Christian kind of place.

And

The world is so full of a number of things,
I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings.

I remember seeing a very old farmer who, I feel sure, was just about as thankful as the sea-captain. He was presiding at a harvest-home supper, or, as your text speaks of it, a Feast of Ingathering. His farm was quite a small one—it was but a croft, in fact—and the farmhouse a thatched cottage. Above the supper-table there were rafters blackened with peat-smoke, for the dining-hall was a kitchen, with a peat fire. But the company at the table was a truly happy one. Both the old farmer and his wife looked kindly on their guests; they, in turn, were glad because the plentiful harvest had been safely brought in. I think an artist could have made a fine picture of that harvest supper party. The two or three women, the farmer's wife included, wore cotton print dresses, and the old man a red woollen night-cap. So, with the peat fire, the black rafters, the supper-table, and the company there was a wonderful combination of colour. But apart from all that, on the old farmer's part at least, it was a feast of thankfulness to God. One could tell that by the reverent way in which he said grace. When supper was over there came the reading of a chapter from the Bible and the singing of a harvest psalm. It was part of the sixty-fifth. One verse they sang was:

So thou the year most liberally
Dost with thy goodness crown;
And all thy paths abundantly
On us drop fatness down.

Then prayer followed. Such harvest-homes, I feel sorry to say, have gone out of fashion. People may be thankful without saying much or indeed without saying anything at all. Boys and girls know that. But the world would not get on very well if every one were silent when they felt sorry or when they felt glad or thankful.

Once when there was a great cotton famine in Lancashire, the mills were idle for months, and there was a great deal of distress among the people. But one day there came the first load of cotton, which meant that the opportunity to earn their

daily bread was returning again. The workers met the wagon and formed a triumphant procession in front of it. Oh, how glad the people were; they hugged the bales of cotton, and seemed almost frenzied with joy. Then, as though moved by a common impulse, they broke into singing, 'Praise God from whom all blessings flow.' That was better than silence, was it not? Have you boys and girls nothing that you can thank God for? I know you have. Then, why not thank Him? A missionary heard a little boy say that he knew he had a great deal to thank God for, but, somehow, he did not feel thankful. 'Do you ever tell God that you know you have many mercies?' the missionary asked. 'Why, no,' the little fellow said; 'I never did thank God aloud.' 'Try it, and keep on trying,' said the missionary. The boy did. He thanked God aloud for all His gifts, and he grew so happy that after a bit he loved to thank God, because he really had a grateful heart.

Try it, boys and girls. Thank God for your health, for your friends, for your games, for what you call your 'good luck.' Thank Him for everything.

Upside Down and Right Side Up.

'These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also.'—Ac 17[6].

When we read these words I think our first inclination is to smile, just because they are such 'upside down' words themselves. Here is a city mob led by the very rabble of the city, the habitual disturbers of the peace, and they are accusing a few quiet Christian missionaries of turning the world 'upside down.' But that is often the way in this world. When people are in the wrong they are very fond of blaming those who are in the right. They think they must be in the right themselves, so, naturally, everybody else must be in the wrong.

Of course these wild men didn't care one bit whether Paul and his friends were turning the world upside down or downside up. All they cared about was having an excuse to create a little disturbance. The people who really cared were the jealous Jews who had stirred them up to make the disturbance so that they might get rid of the missionaries.

Paul, and Silas, and Timothy had come to Thessalonica, which is just the modern Salonika, to preach the gospel. They had been showing the Jews how the prophets had foretold that Christ should suffer, and die, and rise again. But the Jews did not like their message. They had looked for a Messiah who should be an earthly king to lead them on to great victories. And they did not like the influence of the missionaries over the Greeks who had adopted the Jewish religion; for a great many of these had believed Paul's message and become his followers. They were too wily and too dignified to create a disturbance themselves, but there were plenty of lazy good-for-nothings who would be glad to do it for them. So while they remained in the background, the rabble set the city in an uproar. And this was the accusation that they put in the mouth of the mob—'These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also.'

Now the Jews were nearer the truth than they thought when they accused the apostles of turning the world 'upside down,' only they made one important mistake. The poor old world was already as upside down as it possibly could be, in fact it was standing on its head; and it was the message which the apostles brought that was going to turn it right side up.

I want you to think first of what turns the world upside down, and second of what is going to put it right again.

1. And first, What turns the world upside down? Of course there is just one answer to that, and it is 'Sin.' God did not mean the world to be upside down, He meant that it should be good, and beautiful, and noble; but sin entered and spoiled it. And what turns the world upside down is just what turns *you* upside down; for the world is made up of the men and women in it. When you are angry, when you are selfish, when you are untruthful, when you are disobedient or dishonourable, you are just upside down, and you are helping to keep the world upside down too.

2. But, second, what is going to turn the world right side up? Again we can answer in one word —'Love.' Jesus Christ was just Love Incarnate, and it is the love that He sheds abroad in men's hearts that is going to set the old world right again.

When Christ came down to earth, He found things in a sad state. The Romans were the conquerors of the world in those days and were supposed to be highly civilized. Yet in the

Colosseum at Rome men were torn to pieces by wild beasts while emperors and fine ladies looked on and applauded. Tiny babies were left outside the city gates to perish of cold and hunger. And when people grew old and frail and of no more use, they, too, were turned out to die. For the weak, and the poor, and the helpless there was no pity and no help. There were no hospitals and no asylums. Slaves were over-burdened, ill-treated, tortured; and the worst of it all was that very few people thought there was anything amiss in any of these things.

But Jesus came into the world. He healed the sick, He comforted the sad, He blessed the little children. And wherever they went His followers tried to imitate Him. Gradually people came to have new ideas about things. Instead of neglecting and oppressing the weak and the helpless they began to try to help them.

And is the world still upside down? I'm afraid it is still pretty topsy-turvy, but very slowly and surely it is coming right. Sometimes we think it is going back a bit, but that is only because we are so short-sighted. God, who sees all, knows that it is coming right.

But you must do your part. Jesus Christ can set the world right, but He cannot do it without men to help Him. Every deed of love and kindness, every piece of self-sacrifice, every act of forgiveness helps to turn it in the right direction.

The world can come right side up only when the men and women in it are right side up. So first we must get right ourselves by letting the love of Jesus into our hearts to drive out all that is bad, and then we can help to put the world right by loving and serving others.

THE SAPPHIRE.

'A sapphire stone.'—Ezk 1^{26}.

Our September gem is the sapphire.

You will remember that two months ago we said the sapphire was a cousin of the ruby. So it is—for both are corundum—only the ruby is red and the sapphire blue.

'Sapphire' is one of the oldest words in the world. It is found in most of the ancient languages, but clever men who have studied such things tell us that the name 'sapphire' was not always given to the same stone. The sapphire of the ancients, they say, was more probably a stone which we now call the *lapis lazuli*, a blue stone with little gold flecks in it, which looks very like the sky on a starry night. These same clever men tell us that the stone we now call the sapphire was, in the days when the Book of Revelation was written, known as the jacinth or hyacinth. Well, we are not going to worry about that. We know that the sapphire *is* mentioned in the Bible, and whether it is called the sapphire or the jacinth does not matter very much for our purpose.

The sapphire is, next to the diamond, the hardest stone known. In proof of this there is an old tale that a certain man once went to Rome to sell a sapphire. The purchaser said he would buy it on one condition—that he might first test it. He placed it on an anvil and struck it a mighty blow with a hammer. The hammer flew in pieces and the anvil split, but the stone remained whole We may have to take that story with a large grain of salt, but it shows what a hard stone the sapphire was supposed to be.

Ceylon has for ages been noted for its sapphires. They are found there as crystals, in water-borne deposits of sand and gravel. But Ceylon is not their only home. They come also from Siam, Upper Burma, Kashmir, Madagascar, Australia, Tasmania, and the United States. When they come from so many places you can understand that they are not so rare as rubies; still, a sapphire is one of the most valuable and lovely of gems.

The shade for a sapphire is cornflower blue, but there are sapphires of every other shade of blue you can mention, beginning at dark indigo and ending with palest sky. There is even a white or colourless variety which is so like a diamond that it takes an expert to tell the difference. There is also a wonderful kind known as the star-sapphire. In its blue depths there shines a star. With the slightest movement of the gem the star seems to move and twinkle also. This star-sapphire has been called 'the gem for Christmas' because its shining star reminds us of the star which shone in the sky two thousand years ago, and led the wise men to Bethlehem.

The sapphire has always been such a favourite that virtues of all kinds have been attributed to it. In olden days it was supposed to check fevers, calm the temper, mend manners, heal quarrels, and drive away melancholy. Funny, isn't it? that a blue stone should be supposed to frighten away 'the blues'! It was also said to bring happiness,

and good fortune to its possessor. Last but not least it was the emblem of truth, of constancy, and of heavenly-mindedness. No wonder, then, that it has always been a favourite with the Church, and that in the Cardinal's ring of office is set a sapphire gem.

Now, the diamond has already told us to be happy, the amethyst has told us to be true and loyal, so we are left with the last meaning of the sapphire as our message for to-day—'Be heavenly-minded.' The ruby said 'Love'; the sapphire says '*Love what is good.* Love the best. Seek what is beautiful and true. Have noble aims and high ideals.' That sounds a little difficult; perhaps this story will help to explain it.

A friend was visiting the studio of the great American artist, William Merritt Chase. He admired one by one all the many beautiful paintings in the room. Then he turned to the artist and said, 'Which of all these paintings do you consider your best?' The artist walked over to a large empty canvas, stretched in a frame, and said, 'That is my best work. I am sorry I cannot show you that picture. I am always trying to paint it, but it still creeps ahead of me. I have painted it there in my mind a thousand times, and some day perhaps I shall be able to paint it as I see it.'

I want you to be like that famous artist. I want you to have beautiful thoughts that you want to make real, and noble dreams that you try to make true. For, boys and girls, you are the children of to-day, but you are the men and women of to-morrow. You have to make the world of to-morrow, and what your thoughts and dreams are, that—and exactly that—the world is going to be. For you are not to stop at mere thoughts and dreams. You are to turn these thoughts and dreams into deeds. I tell you solemnly that you can, if you will, make this world very nearly heaven upon earth. Yes, you can. High and pure and noble thoughts mean pure and noble deeds, and each pure and noble deed is just a little bit of heaven on earth.

See, then, that your sapphire is a star-sapphire. The star of Bethlehem led the three wise men to Heaven itself come down to earth. Let your Star Sapphire lead you too on and up to Christ.

Calvin as a Preacher.

By the Rev. A. Mitchell Hunter, M.A., Cardross.

Nowhere does the whole personality of Calvin stand out in such clear relief as in his sermons. He was a born preacher. For years the spacious church of St. Pierre in Geneva was thronged, not once or twice, but several times a week to hear him. He was the star of the Genevan pulpit, but his words carried far beyond the city in which they were spoken. Seldom has any man addressed a wider audience or received a more grateful response. His sermons became models and standards for hundreds of pastors confined to such help as their publication supplied. Admiral Coligny, warrior, diplomatist, and saint, was not the only one who made them his daily provender; it is a testimony to their worth and substance that he read the 150 homilies on Job several times, beginning again as soon as he had finished. It was on Calvin's sermons on Ephesians that John Knox stayed his soul as he lay on his death-bed.

There is something of a perennially modern note in Calvin's preaching. He was not afraid to risk the charge of vulgarizing his theme by the use of the picturesque language of colloquial social intercourse. Whatever enabled him to grip the people's attention and penetrate to their consciences and hearts was legitimate. Much of his preaching was familiar talk poured forth by a man whose humanism could accord with a love for popular speech. If vernacular and classical alternatives presented themselves, the vernacular commonly received the preference. Proverbs tripped from his tongue as though coined on the spot for the occasion, and gave agreeable piquancy to his words. Illustrations and metaphors he drew from all sources, sometimes surprising by their unexpectedness, coming from the lips of such a man. An early translation, reproducing the flavour of the original, represents him as saying, 'We would fain live in