The prodigal son. A monograph.

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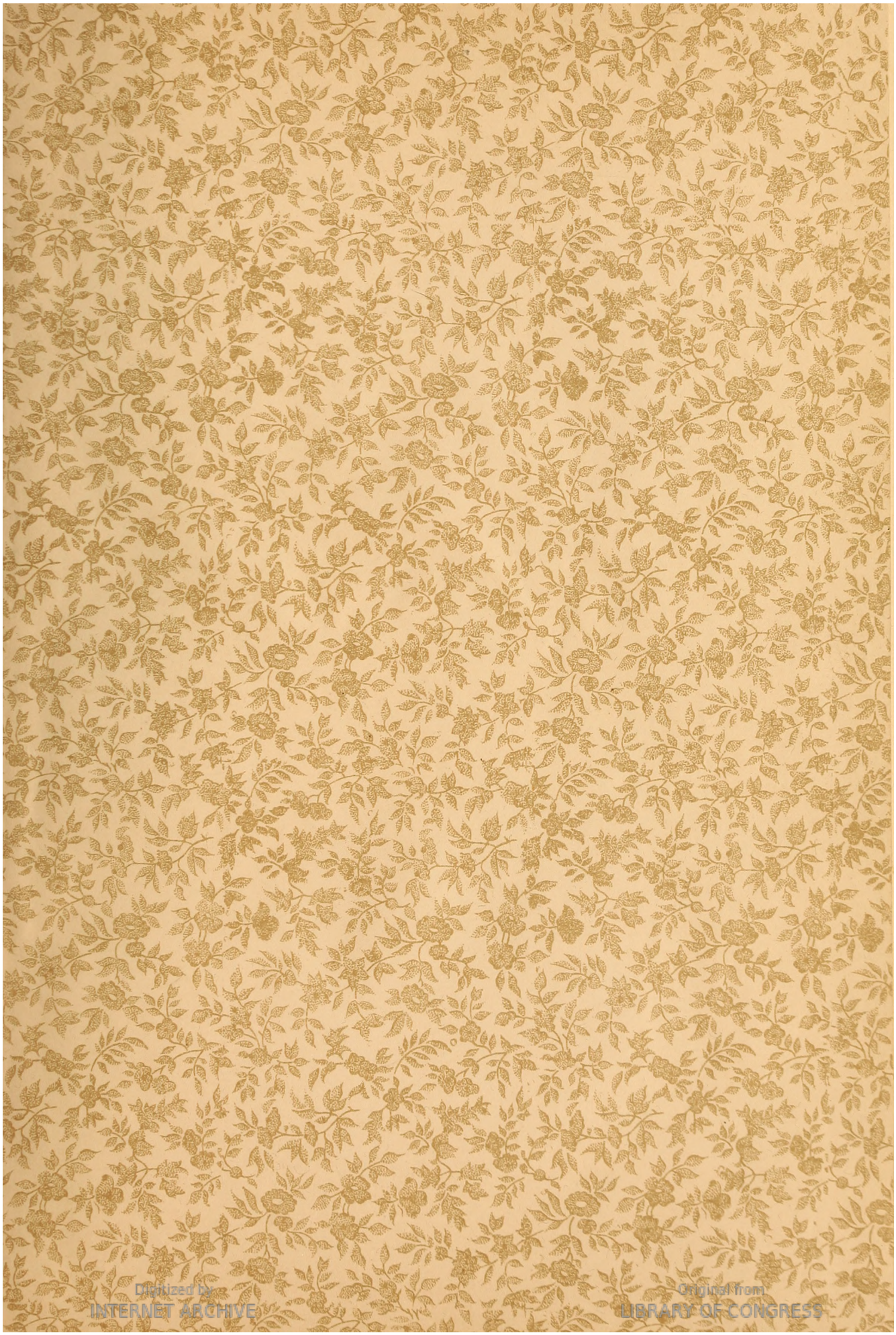

THE PRODIGAL SON.

A MONOGRAPH.

WITH AN

EXCURSUS

ON

CHRIST AS A PUBLIC TEACHER,

BY

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CONTENTS.

EXCURSUS.

ILLUSTRATION.

PREFACE.

The parable of the Prodigal Son has long been a favorite study with the author. It is therefore now impossible to recall and duly credit the source of every suggestion here used. Not a few fruitful hints of the story, which had occurred, in the author's studies, to himself, were subsequently found in various commentaries. These it was not thought necessary to acknowledge. In all instances, however, in which suggestions could be traced to those to whom they were due, credit has been given. Thanks are especially due to Rev. Dr. W. H. Willcox, of Malden, Mass., for very much and most valuable aid.

CHICAGO THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY,
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THE PARABLE.

Luke xv : 11-32.

And he said, A certain man had two sons: And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger. I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a

ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and entreated him. And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment; and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: but as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

The Prodigal Son.

In the common judgment of Biblical scholars this parable is the gem of the whole series uttered by our Lord. While its rich truths have fed the mind of the world, the pathos of the story has melted its way into the heart. Had the Great Teacher long been elaborating it, or did it fall, at the moment, from his lips, perfect as a dewdrop in its beauty? The query can only be added to the multitude of others revolved by John Foster. "I go through life," he said, "treasuring up questions to be answered in heaven."

It seems to have been for two reasons that the "beloved physician," Luke, to whom alone we owe the report of the parable, stored it among the materials for his work.

First, this is the gospel of contrasts.[1] And

1 These are, in truth, so numerous in the biography by Luke as to lead us through a ceaseless succession of lights and shades. Most of them are preserved only by him. See the doubts of Zacharias (1:18), and the faith of Mary (1:38), the child Jesus and the doctors in the temple (2:41—46), the Baptist's contrast of himself

what more natural than that he should seize with eagerness a parable which so exquisitely contrasts the broken-hearted swineherd with the immaculate elder brother?

But, for a second reason, Luke would gladly avail himself of this parable. Matthew photographs the Master as the Royal Lawgiver, Mark as the Mighty Worker of miracles, John as the Son of God. Luke pictures Him as the Friend of Man.[1] From the angels' song of peace and good will at Bethlehem, to the ascension, in which (as no other evangelist has recorded), "while He blessed them, He was parted from them and carried up into heaven," it is as the benignant Human Friend that He looks out on us in the third gospel. And where, more

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with Christ (3 : 16), Christ and Satan on the mount (4 : 1-12), Naaman and the woman of Sarepta, and the lepers and widows of Israel (4 : 25-28), the Baptist's disciples fast, Christ's not, (5 : 33), new wine and old wine-skins (5 :37), woes added to blessings (6 :24-26), the beam and mote in the eye (6 : 42), the two foundations (6 :47), the Baptist an ascetic, Jesus not (7 :34), Simon and the woman who was a sinner (7 :39), Jesus amidst the hired mourners (8 :53), Chorazin and Capernaum (10 :13), Mary and Martha (10 :39-42), Ninevites and Jews (11 :31), faithful and faithless servants (12 :47), the hundred sheep, one lost (15 :3), the ten pieces of money, one lost (15 :8), the prodigal and his brother (15 :11), the rich man and Lazarus (16 :19-31), the thankful and thankless lepers (17 :18), the Pharisee and publican (18 :9—14), the servants with the pounds (19 : 12), the tears and hosannas on Olivet (19 : 37), the rich and the poor widow at the treasury (21 :1), the good Samaritan and the priest and Levite (10 :30-37), the penitent and blaspheming malefactors (23 :39).

These vivid chiar-oscuro contrasts, lighting up the narrative with their Correggio-like effects, seem almost to lend color to the legend (drawn by Ap. York, as quoted in Smith's Bible Dictionary, from Nicephorus, and from the Menology of the emperor Basil), that Luke was an artist as well as physician. One of these word-pictures, that of the hired mourners scoffing at Jesus, is an admirable scene for a painter. The mercenary performers, suddenly checking their groans and wails to strike attitudes and make grimaces at the calm, majestic Stranger, remind one of Macaulay's picture, from "Comus," of Milton's genius surrounded by the buffoons of the Restoration. "Amidst these that fair muse was placed, like the chaste lady of the Masque, lofty, spotless and serene, to be chattered at and pointed at and grinned at by the whole rout of satyrs and goblins."

1 Bernhard's "Progress of Doctrine in the New Testament."

beautifully than in the scene of the father falling on the neck of the returning prodigal, is our Lord shadowed forth to us as the Friend of Man?

Do the two sons in the parable represent the Jews and the Gentiles? The true answer to this question, much debated, would seem to be that the elder brother and the prodigal stand for any persons, anywhere, who share in their spirit.[1] Like a geologic specimen broken from the seam at which two different strata unite, the story epitomizes two vast sections of human life and character. So far forth as the Jew on the one side and the Gentile on the other fell into these sections, they find their types in the prodigal and his brother.[2]

But to study the geologic specimen most intelligently we must see it "in situ"—in connection with the bed-rock from which it was broken. And, to discover the first and most natural aim of Jesus in this parable, we must

1 "Who is this elder son?" The question was once asked in an assembly of ministers at Elberfeldt, and Daniel Krummacher made answer, "I know him very well. I met him only yesterday." "Who is he?" they asked eagerly, and he replied solemnly, "Myself." He then explained that on the previous day, hearing that a very gracious visitation of God's goodness had been received by a very ill-conditioned man, he had felt not a little envy and irritation.

2 But, if the parable represents Jews and Gentiles, it must be only by indirect suggestion. It is a maxim in science to assume no more causes than your phenomena require. The parable is a most natural and admirable reply to the cavil of the scribes and Pharisees. In rebuking them it finds its sufficient occasion. The elder son is so true a Pharisee, and the younger so true a publican, that no farther solution seems required. Alford, too (in loco), well says that the admission of Gentiles into Christ's church (as of the returning prodigal into the home) was not yet so disclosed that our Lord would represent them as of one family with the Jews. He adds that the Gentile should be the elder, the Jew not being constituted in his superiority till 2,000 years after the creation.

return it to the occasion on which it was uttered.

As He was slowly journeying and teaching in Perea, on his way to Jerusalem and the cross, the publicans and sinners, outcast and despised, whom no other rabbi would allow to approach him, gathered about the Master.[1]

Here, as elsewhere, now as aforetime, the common people heard Him gladly. Simple souls as they were, they loved Him for what was really the profoundness of his view of humanity. Shallow rabbis and scribes were intent on the incidentals of mankind, on office, wealth, and reputation. But Jesus, with Divine insight, looking through to the imperishable worth and essential dignity of man as man, apart from his accidents, led the poorest and guiltiest of his countrymen to feel that "one touch of nature makes the whole world kin."[2] They felt that He "found" them, that He came home to their inmost life.

He dealt plainly with their sins. But, as a friend who could be trusted, a teacher who brought down to their understanding a world of such truth as had never dawned before on their vision, He won their deepest love. In reaching them He came closer to the core of humanity than in dealing with classes of men more deeply enmeshed in the conventionali-

1 De Wette (Handbuch zum N. T.) renders the imperfect, ἦσαν ἐγγίζοντες, es pflegten sich zu nahern.

2 Though this word "touch" (Troilus and Cressida, Act III., Sc. 3,) probably means blemish (Old English tache), the common meaning given it is no serious perversion.

ties of the time. The austerity of Shammai and the liberality of Hillel were alike nothing to them. The Pharisaic slave to tradition, the scoffing Sadducee, the time-serving Herodian, looked on them from afar. The lowly range and narrow vision of their minds kept them nearer the heart of things than the sect, proud of its learning, which scorned them as knowing not the law (John 7:49). They knew that, as guilty, they needed a salvation. They felt that, as helpless, they needed a friend. They were steel to the magnetism of Jesus.

And that He sought and found them was the crowning glory of Him and his Economy. His reply to the Baptist's question (Matt. 11:5) as to his Messiahship has seemed, to many, a strange anti-climax. Why, after pointing John's messengers up the sublime ascent of his miraculous wonders, the gift of sight to the blind, of speed to the lame, of health to the leper, of hearing to the deaf, yes, even to the sheeted dead of power to arise and go forth in the vigor of life, does He drop to so easy and commonplace a matter as the preaching of the gospel to the poor? Could not any one do that? But in this was the very pinnacle of the climax.

"Miracles," says John Foster, "were the great bell of the universe, rung to call attention to the sermon that was to follow." The bell was soon to cease. Its echoes would soon die to silence. But the gospel it introduced would

sound on forever. And, after centuries of aristocratic exclusiveness and pride and contempt of untitled humanity, that the poor should be invited into the brotherhood of God's great family was a monumental proof of the Messiahship of Jesus to which all miracles were but pedestal. This invitation opened the golden gate of a new era to the world.

Little the "lords, high captains, chief estates of Galilee," the Roman statesmen, or the philosophers of Greece, imagined that in the preaching of this Friend of publicans and sinners was the germ of intelligence and power for the people, of free government for the ages to come. The broadest, grandest, most beneficent civilization of our century is the forest from that single seed. There was a power in the preaching of Jesus which, like the geologic forces that upheave the continents, is slowly raising the millions to-day into the political enfranchisement that is but a single incident of "the liberty of the glory of the children of God."

"And both the Pharisees and the scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." Upon this word "eateth" falls a heavy emphasis. We must bear in mind the oriental practice of reclining at meals. To lie side by side with a man from whom a rabbi would have shrunk as from the touch of fire, to allow his head, perhaps, to fall on one's bosom,

as did that of the beloved disciple at the Supper, was a different matter from sitting, in our fashion, next him at the table.[1]

The Pharisees and scribes seem not to suspect the moral weakness they show in their fear of contamination from the "sinners." In Benjamin West's painting of "Christ Healing the Sick," Peter stands with his hand on his nostrils, dreading infection from the diseased around him. A true type, so far forth, of the Pharisee. But Jesus, in the foreground, with outstretched hand in healing, is as fearless of taking in contagion as is the morning sun of being darkened by the shadows of night. More than that, He is consciously as rich in power to breathe out purity as is the sun to drive gloom from before it. "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

But the scribes and Pharisees had, in their cavil, a second and more malicious object. In the outset of our Lord's public ministry they seem to have looked on Him rather with indifference than with hate. They were eager for a Messiah who could deliver them from Roman tyranny. In the pretenders on whom, hitherto,

1 On another occasion, at Levi's feast in Capernaum (Luke 5 :30), the scribes and Pharisees made the same complaint. Von Gerlach's comment on Lazarus in Abraham's bosom (Evang. St. Lucae 16 : 22) is suggestive. "Lap, or rather breast, means the bulging front of the garment, which is occasioned by wrapping about the breast. Jesus here presents the blessedness of eternal life as in chap. 13 : 25-29, Matt. 8 : 11, 26 : 29, under the image of a feast with the patriarchs, as the most intimate, joyous communion of life with them. At this banquet the favorite of the father of the family (here the father of believers, Abraham,) after the fashion of the ancients, lies on the couch in such position that, when outstretched, he leans on his breast."

they had set their hopes, they had found only disappointment and confusion. But now had appeared one under whom possibly they might sweep out, with the besom of destruction, the oppressors who had fattened on the spoil of the land. More than the ancient glory of David and Solomon might return to the children of Abraham. In the golden splendor which the prophets had seen from afar, the chosen people of God might find their recompense for centuries of hardship and shame. There was at least enough in his favor to suggest such a hope.

Accordingly, for more than the first year of the public ministry of Jesus the Pharisees looked on Him less inimically than later. Indeed, up to the feeding of the four thousand, some two years after his baptism, the tide of his popularity among his countrymen seems to have run toward the flood. They would have taken Him by force and made Him a king. But at that point was high-water mark. He would play no such role as that which the Jewish managers had assigned Him. They turned from Him with disgust and contempt. And since to this blight on their hopes He had added the exposure of their moral hollowness, when He pricked the bubble of their self-righteousness and their sacred name before the people, disgust and contempt gave way to the rage that sought his life.

Gladly they would have blackened his repu-

tation. Unblushingly, and doubtless with conscious mendacity, they ascribed his miracles to the Evil One. Could a point for the adhesion of a calumny have been found on his purity, they would have besmeared it with the dripping feculence of their scandal. But it was something to say that He had his associations among the dregs of society. It was something to intimate that a man is known by the company he keeps. More than a year before this (Matt. 11:19) they had called Him a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. It is evidently with a second thrust of the same envenomed weapon that they now add the sarcasm, "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them."

In reply, our Lord pronounces three parables. They are those of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Piece of Money, and the Prodigal Son. It can hardly be regarded as an accident that in the first of the three the loss is that of only one hundredth of the whole, in the second of one tenth, and in the third of one half. In this advance Jesus must have meant to emphasize the loss of these outcast countrymen of the Pharisees whom He would fain have won to himself and his Father.

Nor is it without significance that in the first two parables of the trilogy the loss is that of an animal or a coin, while in the third it is that of a man and a beloved son. The first two,

"preluding some great tragedy," are as the propylaeum conducting us to the grandest structure of all the thirty parables, in which every "stone cries out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber answers it" with some rich and fruitful spiritual lesson.[1]

In the story of the sheep, and that of the coin, the interest is focused on the loss and restoration. We feel with the shepherd and the woman in their distress. We go with them in their anxious search through the wilds of the mountains and the rooms of the house. We are glad, too, in the recovery. Far away in our western homes and our later times, we are among the friends whom they call together to share their joy.

There is no alien, like the elder brother, coming in from the field to glower jealously on the joy of either shepherd or housekeeper. All three parables, it is true, have part in our Lord's reply to the fling of his enemies as to his intimacy with the publicans. The first two, with their beautiful intimation, like an index-finger pointing heavenward, of the angels' joy over the lost soul recovered, carry their rebuke to the Pharisees. But the main object of those two is to hold forth the love of God to the wanderer. The main point of the third parable is not a repetition of those two, but the

1 Godet remarks (in loco) that, while the first parable shadows forth to us the compassion of God for the lost soul, the second conveys his sense of its value. We may add that the third includes both.

Pharisees' sanctimonious scorn of those who were their countrymen and their brethren.

Jesus, here, turning more directly on his critics, "holds the mirror up to nature." First brightening the background of the picture with the love of the father embracing the prodigal, He sets out, in dark contrast, the figure of the elder son. The portrait, as we shall see, is a "composite photograph," in which the harsh features of many Pharisees meet and blend. But, on his way to this object, our Lord in his word-picture so exquisitely paints the departure and return of the younger brother, with such touching pathos He describes the father's welcome, that the heart of the church universal has been drawn to the prodigal. To the parable, which might as well have been known as that of "The Jealous Brother," the prodigal has given a name.

11. "A certain man had two sons." A painter is careful not only of the grouping of his figures, but of the number that he admits on his canvas. Too many of them, by overcrowding, would break the unity of the effect. There was no room in this parable for more than two sons. Two characters only were to be set in contrast, each with the other and both with the father.

12. "And the younger of them." De Wette[1] claims, without giving reasons, that the younger

1 Handbuch (in loco).

son is not a direct representative of the publicans. But why not? The parable is to be judged by its setting, by the circumstances that occasioned it. Our Lord's intimacy with publicans is the charge to which He is replying. The scribes and Pharisees bring the charge. To whom else than publicans on the one side, and scribes and Pharisees on the other, should his answer refer?

For the dramatic consistency of the parable the younger son is selected as the prodigal. With no previous taste of any bitter vicissitudes, with his heart incessantly singing, "To-morrow shall be as this day and much more abundant," with eyes eager for adventures, and without a doubt of his capacity to take the helm of his life for himself, he will embark with all sails set to the flattering breeze.

"Father, give me the portion of substance that falleth to me." That the younger son (unlike the elder) is never allowed in the narrative to lose sight of this dear word father, is full of significance. Clearly it intimates to the Pharisees that, equally with themselves, the publicans and sinners are children of the one Great Parent of us all. By nature they were that. "Forasmuch as we are also his offspring." (Acts 17: 28.) John's strong language as to the wicked, "children of the devil" (I. John, 3: 10), refers not to the nature or being, but to the moral character. By overlooking this distinction many have

been led to the false and harsh tenet that "God is a father to none but the elect."

Why the authors of the Revision should have substituted "thy goods" for "the goods" as it stands in King James' version, does not appear.[1] There is nothing in the Greek to require the change. But the objection to it lies deeper. The heart of this son is already beginning to cool toward his father. The disease which will presently show its symptoms without, is already beginning to infect him within. He is leaning away toward a self-sufficient independence. He has not indeed forgotten the word "father," but he is more in the mood of demanding the inheritance as a right than of filially seeking it as a gift. In that mood he would, of course, evade recognition of the father's right to the estate. Rather "the" than "thy" substance would accord with his feeling.

This son is falling out of the sphere of mutual love and community of interest with his father. We have no evidence that, in the life above, any one of the redeemed will own or care to own

1 Τὸ ἐπιβάλλον μέρος τῆς οὐσίας. De Wette renders it "das mir zufallende Theil des Vermögens."

Says Edersheim (2 : 259) and on Deut. 21 : 17, "The demand which he makes for the portion of the property falling to him is founded on the Jewish law of inheritance. The elder would receive two thirds, the younger one third, of all movable property." Indeed it is one of the finest points in the parable, which interpreters have left far too much under shadow, that these few words of the younger son so skilfully steer clear of any recognition of obligation to the father. The son not only demands a portion of "the" rather than "thy" goods, but the ἐπιβάλλον, rendered "falleth to me," is adroitly chosen. It means substantially (see Thayer's lexicon) "belongeth to me." It descends to him, as he claims, by the due course of things, by hereditary gravitation, with which the father's will has no concern.

a particle of substance. Our jealous distinctions of "mine" and "thine" they have probably left behind forever. Each and every one is heir of the universe. His enjoyment of the universe is as full and intense as if he owned it alone. But from any such atmosphere of sublime unselfishness this younger son is descending to the level of jealous rights and titles and fee-simples. The more complete, in that sense, his ownership, the less will he, in the true sense, own anything whatever.

This son is tired of depending on daily gifts from the father. "Give us this day our daily bread," says the Master. It is that gifts received and thanks returned may be as shuttles weaving us into close union with God. It is that the points of contact and of freshly imparted life may be multiplied. And it is that the soul may find its strength and safety in closely clinging at every moment to the Almighty. By the same gale through which an ivy clings inseparably to the wall a grape vine is torn from its trellis and hurled to the ground. The vine sends out its tendrils at long intervals—the ivy at every quarter-inch on the pathway of its growth.

But this son would have, like the Rich Fool, instead of daily bread much food laid up for many years, that he may eat, drink, and be merry. He would hang more loosely, if at all, on the father. He would have an "independent

fortune." He does not see that, the more he gains of such substance without, the more meager and hollow he becomes within. Like a youth among us, looking eagerly to a brilliant career of "success," he forgets that he will rise as a rocket rises, only by burning out its own intestines as it goes, till it bursts and falls, the empty and charred shell of what it was.

By Jewish law a man might, if he chose, during his life-time, bestow his whole property on strangers.[1] Neither the elder nor the younger son had in this case, therefore, any absolute right to the estate. Though the younger son is too self-sufficient to ask the property as a gratuity, it is only as a gratuity that he can receive it. But, notwithstanding, the father "divided unto them his living." Unto them—then to the elder his two-thirds[2] as well as to the younger his one. The elder, however, receives his portion not till the death of his father.

In the father's ready assent to the demand of the younger son Jesus points us to the tremendous and perilous fact of moral liberty. "Each poorest day," says Emerson, "is the confluence of two eternities." Yes, and it may be also the point from which two eternities diverge with their immeasurable destinies.

1 Edersheim 2·259.
2 Edersheim, 2. 259.

"Men think it is an awful sight
To see a soul just set adrift
On that drear voyage from whose night
The ominous shadows never lift.
But 'tis more awful to behold
A helpless infant, newly born,
Whose little hands unconscious hold
The keys of darkness and of morn." [1]

Said Samuel J. Mills, when, in the hour of conviction and trembling, "the powers of the world to come" were borne in upon him, with the choice of destinies that they forced into his hand, "Would to God I were a dog!"

A common view of the younger son's subsequent course has been that it was the unfolding of a plan formed before asking for his share of the goods. But this misses a chief lesson of the whole story. "Nemo repente fit turpissimus." One object of the parable, as we conceive it, is to outline, first, the gradual lapse of a soul into sin, and its no less gradual recovery. The disease works slowly within before the symptoms begin to appear. The fire that has smouldered at the center of the heap finds its way to the surface. This young man, when his love begins to swerve from his father and he asks for a separate ownership, has no suspicion of the issue. As his joy in the communion of hearts is gone, he tires of the community of goods. He would say no longer "our," but "my." He would hold whatever he holds at all under the dictate of his sole, irresponsible will.

He is now relieved from the daily prayer for

1 J. R. Lowell, "Extreme Unction."

daily bread. And in the relief is the beginning of ruin. Faster and faster advances the inward alienation. Now, too, the silent rebuke of his father's contrasted example begins to be more than he can bear. In a certain Christian college a young lady resigned a position to which she had been appointed. "Is the work too hard for you?" she was asked. "No, not at all," was her answer. "Is the salary, then, insufficient?" "No." "Why, then, do you resign?" "Well, to be frank, I find that the atmosphere around me here is such that, if I remain, I must become a Christian. And that I am determined not to do." The atmosphere of the prodigal's home is such as, with a character like his, he can no longer endure.

13. "And not many days after." The parable is the picture of a life-time. Within a few verses it covers years. It is like the fan that the fairy Paribanou, in the "Arabian Nights," gave to Prince Ahmed. When closed, it was a toy for a lady's hand. When spread, an army could rest under its shade. The "not many days," therefore, allow ample time for the growth of selfishness in the soul of the prodigal. And steadily it has grown till his whole inner life is saturated with it throughout. The alienation from his home is complete.

"The younger son gathered all together." The glory of a man is to be a fount of blessing. Like a steam fire-engine, working with its tremen-

dous energy before a burning building, and crying, as it were, to the hydrant "give," and to the building "take," he is to receive the gifts of Providence only that he may become the larger benefactor to men. The talons and claws of birds and beasts of prey turn inward. The human hand is made to open wide. Each is an object lesson. The younger son now bends himself as abjectly as the miser to clutch and rake together for his own greed. He has lost already much of the natural generosity of his youth.

Matthew Henry is apt in his suggestion here, that they who depart from God venture and risk their all. Every farthing of his gatherings this young man sets afloat on the wild excesses in which they will soon all sink together.

When "he took his journey into a far country" he was not, like the wandering sheep, unconsciously straying.[1] It was a deliberate act of self-will. He was resolved to level down and dissolve by distance the sharp contrast between his father's spirit and his own. The "far country" which a godless soul of our day puts between the Father and himself is the diversions and distractions of the world. Like the ostrich with her head in the bush, he thrusts the God who is "out of sight" also "out of mind."

The self-deception cannot last forever. A prisoner in the French Bastile, who had re-

1 Edersheim, 2 : 258.

signed himself to his lot, was startled by the sight of a human eye intently watching him through a little aperture in the ceiling of his cell. In no corner was there any escape from it. He looked forward to evening for relief. But at sunset the dungeon was lighted, and all night long, as through the day, an eye was there, intent, unmoving, relentless, seeming to pierce his inmost life. He pined away under it as a torture. Yet there was no indignation in the eye—nothing to carry remorse to the heart of the prisoner. Let the world's distractions be swept from around a godless soul, let him find himself, with no escape, under an eye aglow with the just indignation of abused and outraged love, and how must it rankle within him!

"And there wasted his substance with riotous living." In the outer framework of the story, substance, of course, can mean nothing but the wealth he had received from his father. Wasting can mean nothing but wild prodigality in expending it. But the parable is not so shallow as to reach only that. It is not so narrow in application as to touch only the spendthrift and the debauchee. There is included, also, the inner substance of the spiritual being, that capacity for conviction, affection, desire, resolve, aspiration, with which the soul, as an immortal creature, is endowed, and which, by godlessness, may be wasted and ruined. The "ca-

pacity for religion" may be "extirpated by disuse."[1] The soul may be caged in a bondage to the senses till it loses the use of its pinions. It may be dismantled and paralyzed till it falls prone in impotence, with its moral elasticity hopelessly lost.

All this may be done without scandal in the outward life. It is a disease which has vice or crime as a mere symptom of one of its forms. In self-will and self-righteousness and covetousness and pride it works within. Like ants in the East Indies, that pulverize the fiber of the timbers of a house, leaving the surface sound and smooth, it saps the soul's moral vitality and

> "Spreads a poison through the frame
> Without a deed that men can blame."

14. "And when he had spent all." We should think it quite needless, after mentioning that a man had fallen from a house, to add that he had struck the ground That follows as a thing of course. So our Lord does not pause to say that the prodigal did spend all—that this wasteful career ended in exhaustion. But, none the less, there is a pregnant lesson in it.

As in bodies, so in souls, there is an awful momentum. Once under headway, they hold on, especially in a downward career. Under the fearful gravitation in evil a man gathers force as he descends. In Chicago, not long since,

1 Dr. Horace Bushnell, Sermons for the New Life, p. 165.

a ponderous iron tank, which had been hoisted to the top of a twelve-story building, broke through the floor. Plunging down through one story after another, it carried not only its own momentum, but that of the ruins it tore from every floor through which it passed, till with a tremendous crash it reached the ground. So does a man, plunging down through one restraint and warning after another, carry from them, each and all, an added and resistless force.

"There arose a mighty famine in that country." At the crisis at which the soul discovers its emptiness the world most utterly fails. The famine was only "in that country." There was none of it in the prodigal's native land. There is in the world, as to any spiritual supplies, always a famine. The unhappy youth now only becomes aware of that which existed before.

"And he began to be in want." As we have already seen (on v. 13), the parable is the picture of a life-time. As such it shows the gradual lapse of a soul to the depths of sin and woe. In this beginning to be in want we have another slip in the long, dark descent. The prodigal has not yet drunk to the dregs the bitter cup. He is in arrears as to his desires only. He will soon be so as to his necessities. He is taking only his first taste of misery. Up to this day he has reveled under sunny skies;

but now the clouds begin to lower. He looks with a shudder down the dark vista opening before him.

But the case is not yet quite desperate. There is a recourse left. His pride, therefore, is unbroken. It stands against a humble return to his home, still stiff and strong. Pride is, in truth, the spinal column of a godless character. It upholds whatever faculty begins to weaken and incline to righteousness. Or it is the stem that bears the weight of the whole evil growth. Though all be lost, pride still remains. In the winter of the soul, when the foliage of wealth and pleasure has been stript away, and harsh winds of adversity sweep through the branches, pride stands as the trunk in its lone desolation, unbending and defiant.

15. "And he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country." He "went." Instead of returning on his footsteps homeward, he kept on in the same ill-omened direction in which he had traveled before. His back was still toward home.

"And joined himself." The verb[1] means literally glued himself. He stuck to him from whom he sought bread. He was a drowning man clutching a straw. It implies, moreover, a cold reception.

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1 ἐκολλήθη. "It was," says Godet (in loco), "as the publicans, whom the prodigal represents, adhered to their heathen Roman masters." Also, "the unhappy wretch is a sort of appendage to a strange personality." He adheres to him as mutually foreign substances are glued together. "But," says Bengel, "he did not himself become a citizen."

The citizen would gladly have shaken him off. How different, as he afterward turns his steps homeward, is the reception he has from his father! He meant only to "see life" for a while in the strange land, and then return home. He sees more of it than was in his plan. The pitiless trap has sprung and caught him. "His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins." (Prov. 5:22).

Who is this citizen? Trench[1] intimates, some more inveterate sinner, and quotes Bengel as suggesting Satan himself. At all events, he is no stranger, but a permanent dweller in the far land. He has no concern with the father's house, no thought of ever seeing it. So, as one drifts into evil, he drifts into associations with those who were evil before him. Like seeks like. The soul lets go above and takes hold below. She makes fast to those whose downward momentum is heavier and swifter than her own.

The citizen who would be willing enough to cast off the prodigal completely, in contemptuous pity so far relents that

"He sent him into his fields to feed swine." "Be off, vagrant," that is, "to the edge of my lands! Make no show of your woe-begone face at my table or about my house. Shift for yourself amongst the swine." It is the sort of sym-

1 "On the Parables," p. 333.

pathy that the world, everywhere, out of Christendom, too often in it, has for the unfortunate. If guilt has mingled with the ill-fortune, adding to the misery of the case, and therefore, one would think, pleading harder for compassion, so much the more stony is the world's face, the more heartless its tone.[1]

This feeding swine was not only a deep and harrowing humiliation. To a Jew, such as was, presumably, the prodigal, it involved sin as well. A curse rested on it. A prohibition, supposed to have originated with the Maccabean Sanhedrim,[2] rendered the ownership, and by implication the feeding, of these animals unlawful for every Israelite. To a Jew no lower degradation was easily conceivable. This brings up to us another truth. Iniquity has grappling hooks for the soul. A man half detected in crime, in the desperate struggle to extricate himself adds a lie, a forgery, or a murder. Like one floundering in a bog, by every effort at escape he defiles himself more thoroughly with the mire.

16. "And he would fain have been filled with the husks that the swine did eat." "Would fain" gives but half the meaning of the Greek word.[3]

1 An incident related by Mr. C. L. Brace, of the Children's Aid Society, of New York, will serve as an illustration. Meeting a poor girl who had wandered from her home in the country, and, after a wild life, was in want and distress, he wrote to her father, informing him of her penitence and eagerness to return. The reply was substantially—"Dear Sir, my daughter had as good a home as child could wish. She left it, disgracing herself and her friends, and shall never enter my house again."

2 Edersheim, 2 : 260.

3 ἐπεθύμει. It is used of Lazarus (Luke 16 : 21) hungering after the rich man's crumbs, and Luke 17 : 22, "Ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man."

He longed, in his famished condition, for any relief from the pangs of starvation. It hints that awful hunger of the soul, compared with which the craving of the body is the weakest relish.

Various writers[1] have pointed to this word "filled" as differing from "fed." Significantly the Great Teacher chose the word. As little as the pods of the carob tree,[2] the food of swine, with some sweet savor, but little nutriment, can feed the body, can the world's wealth or pleasure feed the soul. Indeed, the world, or the Evil One who acts through it, serves us a still worse turn. When the anarchists of the Commune had fired the buildings of Paris, the firemen, bribed by them, were detected in throwing petroleum from their engines on the flames. So Satan deals with the fires of passion and remorse and despair that rage in a human soul.

And this thought of filling himself, cheating himself into the idea of being fed, with the husks, is a hint to us of the greatness of the being of man. An animal is content with coarse food, finds his pleasure in that, because he has no reserves of a higher life in his own nature which such food fails to supply. He is down near the level of inanimate things. We can pour happiness into him and pour it out, as we do water with a pitcher. Give him his fodder and he can

1 Stilla, Ambrose, Augustine, quoted by Trench, "Parables," p. 325.

2 Κερατία. These, says Lange, grew in Egypt and Syria to the length of a foot. The pods were given to swine. The bean, or kernel, was the smallest weight used by Jewish tradesmen.

hardly be miserable. Take it away and he can hardly be anything else.[1] So, too, with the animal part of our own being. Reject all luxuries for which the body never asks as food, all costumes for which it will never thank us as raiment, and the costly mansions, more than it needs for shelter, come down to what for its own sake alone it requires, and how easily we could find wherewith to live!

These all are supplies demanded by the vast, deep, hungering soul. She attempts to crowd herself down within the body, to feed upon the food of that. The place is too narrow, the supplies are too small, for her being. And so see her struggling by unnatural appetites and extravagant indulgences to expand it. We call these the sins of the flesh. A groundless slander on the flesh! It is not the body that wants them. It is this unseen, but gigantic, occupant of the body, which, when the body is full to repletion and nausea, insists upon more. One Roman emperor wished for the neck of a crane that he might taste his delicacies the longer. Another brought his jaded palate to the habit of throwing off his food before digestion, that he might enjoy many meals in a day. Still others invented numberless and nameless forms of vice. In our own day men go mad with drink

1 The English orator and wit, Sheridan, is said to have once asked his friends at table, "Shall we drink like men now or like beasts?" Astonished and indignant, they answered, "Like men, of course." "Ah, well, then," said he, "we shall soon be all tipsy. No beast will drink more than he needs."

to drown their sorrows. What have we here but the soul, in her awful need, attempting to be "filled" with the body's beggarly elements?

"And no man gave unto him." This, it has been claimed[1] in view of the famine in the land, implies that he was denied even the husks. But that seems overstrained. As the prodigal certainly fed the swine, and at a distance from their owner, he could help himself from their food. "No man gave unto him" food fit for a man.

In his fearful descent he has now touched bottom. He is at the edge of starvation. Like a man driven by a tornado to the brink of a cliff, like one drifting out helplessly, on an ebb-tide at midnight, into a howling ocean-storm, he awakes to the full horror of the scene. The gloom is absolute, his home is far away below the horizon. No helper in earth or heaven appears. Only the pitiless powers of darkness seem closing in around him. And conscience whispers sternly from within that his own guilt has brought its penalty.

"I, I only," he is forced to acknowledge, "am author of it all!"

> "I flung away
> The keys that might have open set
> The golden sluices of the day,
> But clutch the keys of darkness yet.
> I hear the reapers, singing, go
> Into God's harvest. I that might
> With them have chosen, here below
> Grope, shuddering, at the gates of night!"

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1 De Wette. Handbuch (in loco). "Niemand gab ihm davon." Von Gerlach says, "In dieser Zeit der Noth, waren seinem Herrn die Schweine wichtiger als der Hirt."

What now shall he do? But one thing is possible. Let us, still remembering that the parable is the picture of a life-time, that the unhappy youth has been perhaps years in his descent, trace the slow course of recovery.

17. "But when he came to himself." This has been often taken as implying a full return to a right state of heart. "To come to one's self and to come to God," says Trench, "are one and the same thing." Not so, as we apprehend, at all. His first utterance, as we shall see, gives no hint of that.

Coming to himself was simply coming to his senses. He had been beside himself. He had been perpetrating a slow suicide. He discovers the fact. He begins to act like a rational being, with an intelligent view to his own welfare.

"How many hired servants[1] of my father's have bread[2] enough and to spare, and I perish[3] here[4] with hunger!" We have, in all this, a hint of the Divine method in the arrest of souls in sin. The misery which sin has brought on the prodigal is made to work toward his redemption from sin. It has been illustrated from the ocean. Against the sea, charging with

1 Μίσθιοι, hired, not δοῦλοι, slaves. Their condition was like his own. Even such a servant as he had, in his father's house, bread and to spare. "The hired servants," says Dean Plumptre, "are obviously those who serve God not in the spirit of filial love, but from the hope of a reward." The prodigal has sunk too low in his sensuous life, his spiritual vision is too much bleared, to see the freedom and gladness of love.

2 Bread, not husks. God's poorest supplies are better than the world's best.

3 Ἀπόλλυμαι, middle voice, "am letting myself perish."

4 Ὧδη in this wretchedness, so different from his home. This word is not in King James' version.

the heavy shock of billow after billow, stands the solid breastwork of the shore. But what reared the sandy breastwork? Only the sea itself. With the surges that dash on the walls of its prison it has built the walls higher and higher. Guilty indulgences build barriers against themselves. They waste a man's resources. They break down the health with which he has enjoyed them. If not with a soul recovered, then with a body blighted, they compel him to pause, perhaps to turn.

This arrest, too, brings a man to self-recognition. He has, before it, been dazzled by his surroundings or his prospects. "Who will show us any good?" has been his constant cry. Into the depths of his own being he has never looked. The tremendous question of his errand from his Creator in the world is one that he has never asked. When first he sets himself before the mirror of his own reason, when he probes himself with the query, "Who and what am I, and whither tending?" he returns at least to sanity.[1] But not at once, perhaps—not of necessity at all—does he advance one step farther.

This first exclamation of the prodigal has not a moral sentiment in it. There is no confession of his sin, no sign of contrition, no plea for pardon, no aspiration for a better life. It is only

1 Dr. N. W. Taylor, of New Haven, Ct., used sometimes to discuss the theological puzzle, "How does one make his first start toward Christ? As a sinner?—then it is not a start toward Christ. As a Christian?—then it is not his first start." His reply was that it is as a man made in God's image, in the use of the native moral powers that God gave him.

the hoarse, hollow cry of his human nature in her anguish. He is starving. He remembers where food can be had. For the present it is nothing more. If we see in the whole story the picture of a life-time, we may well allow an ample period for the advance from the 17th to the 18th verse. By taking these verses as both uttered at the same moment, we lose sight of the ascent of the prodigal from one spiritual plane to another. That ascent is as gradual as we saw (v. 13) his lapse into evil to be.

By making him start at so low a point as the wants of his animal nature, our Lord beautifully teaches how low He gladly stoops to recover a lost soul. So soon as any feeling of even want or suffering arises, He reaches down to lay hold on that. And, responding to it, by the contrast with his own perfections He awakens the soul to a sense of sin and need of pardon. "Now mine eye seeth Thee; wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes."(Job 42 : 6).

In all his shame and gloom he has still kept in memory this dear word "father." Without the use of it he never speaks either to him or of him. Our Lord, by constantly putting it into his lips through the story, is steadily reminding the Pharisees, to whose scoff (v. 2) He is replying, that the publicans and sinners were from the same Father with themselves. But the word is, though in a good sense, Janus-faced. It looks not only toward the Pharisees, but toward the

prodigal himself. His own use of it—ah! what a flood of bitter memories it brings rushing in upon him! His innocent boyhood, his happy home, the love of his father, his base return for it, his rich desert of all he has suffered, the place he must be content to take if he shows his dishonored face again among the friends of his youth—how they roll as billows over him! Yet not to submerge him in despair. Presently they lift him rather, as a ground-swell, toward a higher life.

18. "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight." "I will arise," from among the swine. He seems aware that that alone will be no easy or insignificant act. "And go unto my father"—*my* father, who is everything to me. "And will say unto him, Father." I will begin with the word that shall itself plead for me. It shall remind him of the dear tie that all my sin and shame have not severed. "For Thou art our Father, though Abraham knoweth us not, and Israel doth not acknowledge us." (Is. 63 : 16). "I have sinned." The prodigal has already advanced to a higher spiritual level. The pangs of conscience, too, have, as a counter-irritant, dulled those of hunger. "Against heaven." He had learned (as had the Psalmist, "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned," Ps. 51: 4), that a sin against God is immeasurably worse than a crime against men.

"And in thy sight," openly, flagrantly. I have abused thee to thy face.

19. "I am no more[1] worthy to be called thy son. Make me as one of thy hired servants." Though I am thy son, I am no longer fit to bear the title.[2] As Godet says, he is like the publican in the temple, who "stood afar off and would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven." (Luke 18:13). "Make me as one of thy hired servants." Among such types of selfishness as the fair-weather friends who fled when his wealth was spent, and this citizen who has sent him to the swine, it is hard for him to conceive of a magnanimity like that of his father.

This poor notion of his father, moreover, seems thrown in by our Lord as a hint of the weakness of the prodigal's faith. It is like the eyes of the new-born babe that cannot yet bear the light. He does not see that, as says Godet, "pardon implies complete, instantaneous restoration." He expects that, even if his father shall receive him at all, he will show some sternness[3] of look, some bitterness of tone. Though the

1 Οὐκέτι, no longer.

2 As he has squandered his own share of the estate, he can expect no more of that.

3 The writer, in conducting a mission-school some years ago, asked a young Irish boy, who had seen nothing but neglect or abuse at home, and was specially intractable, if he could think of any motive, except the hope of doing good, which would have brought the teachers to that work. "Well," he answered, after thinking a moment, "the praste don't want ye here!" He was told that the teachers were not aiming to proselyte—that they were willing, if the children would follow Christ, that they should remain Catholics. After thinking again, he answered briskly, as if he had guessed the secret, "Well, anyhow, the city pays ye for it!" He seemed sceptical of the possibility of a disinterested motive.

prodigal is arising from spiritual death, the grave-clothes still hang round him.

But while his faith is slow, he has, at another point, already made good progress. His only idea, when the first thought of the hired servants occurred to him, was that they had abundance of food—"enough and to spare." It was better in quality, too, than his own—not husks, but bread. And he is now as earnest as then to be one of their number. But it is for a very different reason. It was starvation then. It is humility now. It is contrition for his sin. It is a harrowing sense of his ill-desert. The body demanded it before; the soul pleads for it now. So it is that, as motives rise, their heavenly alchemy changes the same outward act or utterance from base metal into gold.

20. "And he arose and came to his father." Not to, but rather toward.[1] Quite a journey intervened.

"But while he was yet afar off, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him." How is it that the aged man, presumably with dim and failing sight, is the first of all the household to discover him? Is not that a beautiful touch on the word-picture? The father alone was watching for the wanderer. No one else about the premises cares for his return. To them he is a wretched vagabond.

1 πρὸς. "Ist nicht das vollendete Kommen," says De Wette.

His room they prefer to his company. But the father we seem to see standing, with hand shading his eyes, eagerly, tearfully looking toward the last point on the horizon whence his boy disappeared. Therefore it is that he, of all in the home, first sees him. Our Lord is picturing here to the Pharisees his own solicitude, the yearning and straining of his heart, toward these outcast countrymen of theirs, the publicans and sinners. And likewise, as we may easily believe, He is lifting his eyes above and beyond his immediate surroundings; He is proclaiming to all wanderers, sin-burdened, in every land and age, how eagerly, travailing in soul for them, He longs to draw them to Himself.[1]

"And was moved with compassion." He might, not unnaturally, have been moved with indignation. He might have demanded satisfaction for the past. But he is in no such mood.

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1 Plain as the Master made all this two thousand years ago, it would seem till recent times to have almost perished, like the "lost arts," from the recognition of the church. Too often our Lord was pictured as a sovereign, seated in his majesty, whom the penitent must besiege and beseech, through a long agony of "law-work," before he could hope for mercy. The imagery of one of the older hymns, for instance, is taken from Queen Estner, venturing, with her life in her hand, before the merciless tyrant Ahasuerus, the Xerxes of profane history.

"Perhaps He will admit my plea;
Perhaps will hear my prayer;
But if I perish, I will pray
And perish only there."

A far better type than Ahasuerus, of the waiting Redeemer, we have in the familiar story of the Scotch mother whose daughter had wandered into a life of sin in London. The child, growing penitent, resolved to return to her home. From fear of discovery by old neighbors, she timed her arrival at night. As she caught sight, from a hill-side, of her mother's cottage, she was surprised to see a light at the window. Coming to the door, she was still more surprised to find that unfastened. And when, after a warm welcome, she asked what these things meant, the answer was, "My child, that light has been set at the window, and that door left unfastened, every night since you went away."

The foundations of the great deep of sympathy, affection, joy, in him, have been broken up. This is their hour and the power of love.

"And ran and fell on his neck," in all his rags and dirt, as the prodigal is, from among the swine. Observe that this is an oriental father of the early ages. In what dignity the head of the household ruled his little realm! How the children stood uncovered before him, and reverently deferred to his commands! But the love of this father, like a bursting freshet, has swept his dignity along its current. He can wait for no ceremony. His heart will have its way.

"And kissed him." Or, as the Greek[1] implies, kissed him again and again, in a passion of love that could find no utterance. "What warmer reception," exclaims Bengel, "could the prodigal have had coming back from a faithful life?" A fine practical comment is all this on James 4:8, "Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you."

Observe that the embrace and the kiss go before the opening of the prodigal's lips.[2] Enough for the father that it is his long-lost

1 Κατεφίλησεν. In the tender and tearful scene of Paul's departure on the shore at Miletus (Acts 20 : 37) we have the same word.

2 "Trench on the Parables," p. 332. Edersheim (1,507) says: "As regards the sinner, all other systems (than the Christian system) know of no welcome to him till, by some means, inward or outward, he has ceased to be a sinner and become a penitent. They would first make him a penitent and then bid him welcome to God. Christ first welcomes him to God and so makes him a penitent." He calls attention to the fact that the words "to repentance" (Matt. 9 : 13 ; Mark 2 : 17), which are excluded from the Revision, are spurious. But nothing of all this, of course, implies that one who should continue impenitent would continue to be welcome.

son returning. If any coldness is still left in his heart, the father will not keep him at a distance till the frigid reception has frozen him dead. Rather, with the warmth of his generous welcome he will melt the coldness out. If any low motive still lingers in him, the father, with his own higher life, will raise it.

21. "And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight; I am no more worthy to be called thy son." His resolution has persisted, his penitence has held out, through all the long journey from the far land.[1]

But the striking fact in these words of the prodigal, which has been often noticed, is that he entirely omits the request to be made one of the hired servants.[2] Has he forgotten it? That is incredible. Has his pride rallied against it? His humble confession of sin forbids that explanation. Two solutions have been offered. One is that his father's magnanimous welcome shames him out of the thought of that humiliation. He shrinks from it, as a reflection on his father's sincerity. It would seem like classing his father with the citizen who had sent him to the swine. He has been living so long amidst selfishness and heartlessness that this

1 "Beweist die Ernstlichkeit und Nachhaltigkeit seiner Reue." De Wette.

2 This request, which the Revision repeats here, but only in the margin, is inserted (in brackets) in the Greek text by Westcott and Hort. It was, however, so evidently thrust in by some superserviceable copyist, who supposed Luke had forgotten it, as to be beyond question spurious.

flood of disinterested love bewilders him. Coming out of darkness, he is dazzled by so much light. Deterred from saying what he had intended, he knows not what to say.

Another, and perhaps better, interpretation of our Lord's thought, in suppressing these words of the prodigal, is that the father interrupts him. It is he who prevents the proposition. He has seen enough, in the son's whole manner and tearful confession, to show that he has returned a changed man. Before this confession and these words of deep contrition he could only embrace him with a father's kiss. But now he sees him ripe for the old honors of his sonship. The moment the prodigal speaks of his unworthiness, therefore, the father, anticipating what may follow, seems to silence him with tender peremptoriness, saying, as it were, "No, no, my son! Away with all that! It is out of the question!"

But another beautiful feature of the story is that the father's reply is made, not to the son, but to the servants.

22, 23. "But the father said to his servants, Bring forth quickly the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet, and bring the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry."

The meeting of the father and the prodigal had been "afar off." The two have been return-

ing to the house together. They are now in the midst of the servants, who have gathered to the spectacle of their master running in so strange fashion. The sight of the prodigal, in his unkempt and soiled and ragged condition, moves them to anything but reverence. Presumably, both father and son perceive it. The father, therefore, in one breath, with the same words, replies to both the son and the servants. He summons these menials to fall at once into their old relations to the son. As aforetime they are to serve him. The question whether he is to become as one of them is promptly and effectually answered.

"Bring forth quickly." The adverb (added by the revisers) shows his excitement in the excess of his joy. He must have his son instantly honored. "The best robe"—a rich festal robe, in honor both of the son and of the occasion.[1] "And put a ring on his hand." From the most ancient times the ring was a token of special confidence and distinction.[2] "And shoes on his feet." The prodigal, after his long wandering and miserable penury, may easily have been barefoot. And this, among the ancients, was

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1 Στολήν, from στελλω, our English "stole," is any stately robe; and long sweeping garments would have eminently this stateliness about them; always, or almost always, a garment reaching to the feet, or, trainlike, sweeping the ground. Trench, "Synonyms of the New Test.," p. 186.

2 Gen. 41:42, Esther 3:10. "This right of wearing the golden ring, which was subsequently called the 'jus annuli aurei,' or the 'jus annulorum,' remained, for several centuries at Rome the exclusive privilege of senators, magistrates, and equites, while all other persons continued to use iron rings." Appian, quoted in Anthon's Dict. of Gr. & Rom. Antiq. Art. Rings.

commonly the condition of slaves. The shoes would, like the robe and the ring, imply that the son had, as before his departure from home, the freedom of the house. "And bring forth the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and be merry."[1] Let us, i. e. the whole household. It is as in the two previous parables of the shepherd who recovers his sheep and the woman who finds her coin; each cries, "Rejoice with me." A generous joy is social and sympathetic. It hates exclusiveness. It insists on others sharing it.

The robe, the ring, the shoes, and the fatted calf all point in the same direction with those great words of the Apostle, "For all things are yours" (I. Cor., 3:21). He who refuses Christ, standing out in self-will againt Him, makes the whole universe his enemy. He is like one who, by leaping from a precipice, makes our beneficent mother earth, which upholds and feeds us from her bosom, his foe. She clutches him in the terrible grip of her gravitation and dashes him on the rocks below. But he who yields to Christ makes the eternal laws of moral and physical order his friends. The stars in their courses fight for him. He is geared into the machinery of the universe, runs in harmony

1 The spiritualizing process, by which the robe is made to mean the imputation of Christ's righteousness, the ring the gift of the Spirit, or the pledge of the betrothal of the soul to Christ, the shoes "the preparation of the gospel of peace," and the fatted calf the great Atoning Sacrifice, seems more ingenious than sound. It is clearly not the intent of our Lord in the parable to teach a system of dogmatic theology.

with that, and has all its forces pledged to work for his welfare.[1]

"And let us eat and make merry." The kingdom of God is often compared to a feast, never to a funeral.[2] Outward pleasures, no less than inward peace and joy, are the normal attendants of righteousness. Man has put asunder what God has joined together. Righteousness linked with suffering, iniquity with enjoyment, are an exception, a parenthesis in the story of the unfolding plan of God. Disturbed relations have their day and go by. Mutual affinities, first or last, shall re-assert themselves. That a righteous and omnipotent Ruler sways the universe is our voucher for that.

24. "For this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found." "My son" is a re-announcement to both the son and the servants that he is fully restored to his old honors in the house. "Was dead and is alive again." He might have been that in the far country as well as at home. The father would have neither enjoyed nor seen the recovery. Therefore follows the clause, "Was lost and is found." The wanderer is restored not only to spiritual life, but to the father's house.

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1 Godet explains to us why we have no reference to any atonement here before the father's reception of the prodigal. "The absence of every figure fitted to represent the sacrifice of Christ is at once explained when we remember that we have here to do with a parable, and that expiation has no place in the relations between man and man." Very ingenious—and very needless. It is quite considerate in the interpreters to look with so much care after the orthodoxy of our Lord. There was no need that this parable, or any other, should cover the whole scheme of redemption.

2 Abbott's Commentary on Luke (in loco).

We now come to a chief, if not the chief, object for which the parable was spoken. The elder son brings in a contrast, broad and deep, with the prodigal.

There has been, as to this brother, considerable difference of opinion. Trench[1] sees in him, or in those whom he represents, "a low, but not altogether false, form of legal righteousness." He puts it to his credit that while his brother had wandered he had remained at home. He points to the father's allowing this son's boasts of his own fidelity to go uncontradicted. Goebel,[2] on the contrary, offers no extenuation for him whatever. This last was the view, as cited by Trench, of Jerome, Theophylact, and others.

Our Lord's intent in picturing the elder son is to be learned from the circumstances in which He spoke. Beyond question, the three parables of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Prodigal Son were all uttered on the same occasion. They were in reply to the complaint of the Pharisees and scribes, "this man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." In the first two Jesus portrays his eagerness to win these outcasts to Himself. In the third He advances a step farther. Turning more directly to his critics, He makes the elder son pose as the true Pharisee.

Kitto (art. Pharisee) remarks that Paul, who must have known of our Lord's denunciations

1 "Parables," p. 340. So De Wette, Hier spricht sich nun der Tugendstolz des sonst wirklich, unbescholtnen gerechtes Sohnes, &c.

2 "The Parables of Jesus," by Siegfried Goebel, trans. by Prof. Banks, pp. 214, 215.

of this sect, not only has not a word against it, but boasts of having belonged to it.[1] Doubtless there were Pharisees and Pharisees. Josephus[2] makes them to have been 6000 in number. Nicodemus, one of them, and Joseph of Arimathea, probably another, were certainly estimable men. But, with two or three such exceptions, those whom our Lord encountered, or of whom He spoke, were all that we mean by the word Pharisee as used in our day. The disposition of many modern writers to palliate their faults gets no countenance from Him. Infallible as He was in judging men, the very soul of impartiality and charity as He was, He never, unless possibly in a single slight particular,[3] lightens by a shade the blackness of their character.

Take in succession the instances in which He meets or refers to them. He warns his disciples that, unless their righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, they shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.[4] An ominous intimation as to the future of the Pharisees themselves. He is maligned by them in the base calumny that He represents Satan on earth.[5] He bids his disciples beware of their teaching.[6] They approach Him with their crafty questions as to divorce.[7] He declares that they lay on men heavy burdens,

1 Acts 23 : 6 ; 26 : 5 ; Phil. 3 : 5.
2 Antiquities—Book 17, chap. 2.
3 Matt. 23 : 23, in regard to the tithes of mint, anise and cummin. "These ought ye to have done, and not to have left the others undone."
4 Matt. 5 : 20. 5 Matt. 9 : 34. 6 Matt. 16 : 6. 7 Matt. 19 : 3

which they will not move with one of their own fingers,[1] that they are hypocrites,[2] that they will neither enter the kingdom of heaven themselves nor suffer others to enter,[3] that they make their converts two-fold more the sons of hell than themselves,[4] that they have cast off judgment, mercy and faith,[5] that, while making an outward show of cleanness, they are full within of extortion and excess,[6] that they are like whited sepulchres,[7] that they have the malice of them who slew the prophets,[8] that they are a generation of vipers who can hardly escape the judgment of hell,[9] that they love ostentation and flattery;[10] and we are told that they rejected for themselves the counsel of God,[11] and were lovers of money.[12] In one instance they endeavor to drive him over from Perea into Judea, where they would have had Him in their power,[13] as hunters drive their game into a corral. They send officers to take Him,[14] and, by the questions in regard to the woman taken in adultery,[15] and about the tribute-money,[16] they lay snares for his life.

This, then, being so clearly our Lord's opinion of the Pharisees, we can look for no different character in their representative, the elder son

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1 Matt. 23 : 4. 2 Matt. 23 : 13. 3 Matt. 23 : 13. 4 Matt. 23 : 15
5 Matt. 23 : 23. 6 Matt. 23 : 25. 7 Matt. 23 : 27. 8 Matt. 23 : 31
9 Matt. 23 : 33. 10 Luke 11 : 43. 11 Luke 7 : 30. 12 Luke 16 : 14
13 This, as Trench holds, in "Studies in the New Testament," is the true explanation of Luke 13 : 31.
14 John 7 : 32.
15 John 8 : 1-11 (if we account this genuine).
16 Matt. 22 : 15—17.

in the parable. When the hand of Jesus drew a portrait it was a good likeness.

His object was neither resentful nor irreconcilable. He would fain, by exhibiting them to themselves, induce them to avert through repentance their coming doom.

25. "Now his elder son was in the field." And how comes he there? Why has he not been invited into the house? Why has he not been called to share the rejoicing? Clearly enough, because the father has already seen enough of his spirit to know that he would decline. The elder son has, doubtless, often expressed his opinion of his brother—often thanked God that he was not as other men, or even as this prodigal.

The father, when the younger son asked for his share of the goods, divided unto them his living. All that the younger son, when departing, had left behind had, therefore, been allotted to the elder. In reversion, if not in actual possession, it was his.[1] His work in the field is really, then, in his own interest. But, in form at least, he is still in his father's service. He is tithing mint, anise, and cummin. Like a true Pharisee he keeps a fair exterior. And, as we shall see, he makes the most of it.

The younger son, after the disease of selfishness had begun to break out over him, found the contrasted spirit of his father a sharper,

1 We offer no apology for making this "substance" refer, when the prodigal wastes it, partly to spiritual gifts and then viewing it here more literally. Parables, like allegorical pictures, are constructed for suggestion, not for strict accuracy or consistency in the letter.

though silent, rebuke than he could bear. Why is not the same effect wrought on his brother? Why has not he too taken his departure? Because the same disease in him has struck in. Showing fewer eruptions, it is only so much the deeper and more deadly. A model, he imagines himself, of self-sacrificing, filial fidelity. The notion of any serious contrast between his father and himself has not occurred to him. Or if there be a contrast—so much the worse for his father.

"And as he came and drew nigh to the house he heard music and dancing." Had he then had anything of the spirit of the true son, how promptly would he hasten into the house! How eager would be his cry, "What has happened? What is the good news?" With what glad heart-throbs, too, would he fall on the prodigal's neck and take up the refrain, "For this my brother was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!" That he can possibly abstain from all this is itself, before a word from his lips, proof enough that his heart is unsound. He will soon give us proof more than enough.

26. "And he called to him one of the servants and inquired what these things might be." He does not, says Godet, feel at home in the house. No one within the doors has come up to his own level of zeal and labor for the house. He is shocked by their levity while there is so much to be done. The cruel necessity, therefore,

is laid on him of turning to one of the menials about the premises. In other words, not to put too fine a point upon it, he has already in spirit become "as one of the hired servants." He has sunk in soul to the plane of them with whom, in outward condition, he would scorn to be graded. He would rather consort with one of them than with his father.

"And inquired what these things might be." There is an imperiousness in the very cast of the words—an insolent calling of the whole household to account. He will have an explanation of all this ado to which he has not been invited. Possibly he half suspects the cause of it. If so, that adds only more gall to his bitterness.

27. "And he said to him, Thy brother is come, and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound." With what singular dramatic fitness this low menial is made to speak—how exactly like himself! Not a clause, hardly a word, fails to betray the man that he is. Let us see.

The father's announcement of the return of the prodigal glows with a tremulous joy. We seem to see a new light in the dim eyes, a light in which the glad tears glisten as he speaks. We seem to hear a voice broken with excess of feeling in his exulting cry, "For this my son was dead and is alive again!" and then, repeating as for emphasis, "was lost and is found!" Recovery, restoration, redemption, is

the thought that thrills him. But what is the servant's announcement of the same fact? How the glory and the beauty fade out of it. How clean gone is the festal charm! How meager and miserable a platitude is left! "Thy brother is come,"—has passed from one locality yonder to another here—"only that, and nothing more." The servant can appreciate nothing more. The father's words are to his what pyrotechnics are to the sticks that remain, what an overture of Beethoven is to the rosin and the strings.

But again. "And thy father hath killed the fatted calf." Nothing has the servant to say of the robe, the ring, or the shoes. They are all nothing to him. They lie beyond his range of interest. But one thing he can appreciate —this fatted and petted calf. It fills his whole horizon. Probably he has fed and tended it. He has given his whole mind to it. He may have seen this swineherd returning in his rags from the far country. And it is for him that the master has ordered killed the servant's pet! He who has been feeding swine must now feed upon the fatted calf! With the wary diffidence of a true menial, he dares not give vent to his feeling. But his meaning is easily read between the lines.

Once more, in the analysis of the servant's answer. Why, according to him, has the best of all the herd been sacrificed? Because the

father has recovered his child from wretchedness and disgrace? Because a soul has been won to a noble life? Nothing of all that. But "because he hath received him safe and sound." He has returned with a whole skin. No bones are broken. In this the servant's notions culminate. They rise no higher. The soul, with its interests, is nothing. The body is all in all. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, * * * and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

And now we return to the elder brother.

28. "But he was angry and would not go in." He is not the man to consort with a vagabond. If his father in his weakness "receiveth sinners and eateth with them," so much the more must some one in the family retain his self-respect.

"And his father came out and entreated him." The natural and just reply of the father to the announcement from the son that he would not go in, would have been, "Then let him stay without! If he has no more than this of the spirit of a true son or brother, let him remain till he comes to a better mind, where he is." But no. With the same impartial love with which he ran to embrace the prodigal, the father goes out to his brother. He does more than invite. There is no room here for the embrace or the kiss. Though the youth needs both, he would welcome neither. And so, as if de-

pendent on him, as if his presence in the house were a necessity, the father stoops to entreat him to be reconciled.

As to the character of the Pharisees, Edersheim[1] falls in with the judgment of our Lord. And this elder son, who represents them, now proceeds to show us how accurate is the portraiture.

29. "But he answered and said to his father." Why these two words, "his father"? To designate the person meant they are certainly not needed. There are but two parties to this interview. It could be no one else but his father that he answered. In the father's rejoinder (v. 31) we have (not, he said unto his son, but) "he said unto him."[2] Is it not designedly that our Lord, introducing the son's insolent reply, brings in these words? It was to his father, who at the moment was entreating him, that he answered in this arrogant style. So lost he was to all sense or thought of the reverence due from a son.

And now another point must be noted. The younger son, as we have seen, nowhere loses sight of the dear word "father." Low as he

1 1 : 312, 313. "Indeed," he says, "some of the sayings of the rabbis, in regard to Pharisaism and the professional Pharisee, are more withering than any in the New Testament." "Their assertions of purity were sometimes conjoined with Epicurean maxims betokening a very different state of mind;" as, "Make haste to eat and drink, for the world, which we quit, resembles a wedding-feast;" or this, "My son, if thou possess anything, enjoy thyself, for there is no pleasure in Hades, and death grants no respite." Maxims these to which also too many of their recorded stories and deeds form a painful commentary.

2 Likewise (v. 27) the servant "said unto him."

falls, he never sinks beyond sight of that. When he asks for his share of the goods, when among the swine he remembers his home, when he resolves to return, when he meets the embrace and the kisses of welcome, that word comes again and again to his lips. Fearfully as he had strained the tie to the forsaken parent, he had never completely parted it.

But this word is one for which his brother has no use. He prefers not to recognize the relation. He has wandered a greater distance from his father in his heart than his brother had wandered with his feet.

"Lo!"[1] the first word, which should be "father," is more like a blow in the face. Substantially it is, "See here! look you to this! how true and faithful a son you have been neglecting here at home!" And in view of the reverence expected from a son among the orientals of old towards a father, the affront seems still more gross.

"These many years do I serve thee." Here leers on us again the face of the genuine Pharisee. We encounter him a little later in Luke's gospel. He is always as true to his character, in his utterances, as we have seen the hired servant to be to his own. "I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I get."[2] The

1 Ἰδού, defined in Thayer's lexicon as "a demonstrative particle * * * giving a peculiar vivacity to the style by bidding * * * the hearer attend to what is said." We should think it did, in this case, add a very peculiar vivacity to the style.

2 Luke 18 : 12.

Pharisee at the temple has drawn the Lord, as he imagines, far into his debt. He has done more than the law required. While an annual fast was prescribed[1] he had fasted twice in the week. While tithes of the increase of only the field and the cattle[2] were demanded, he had tithed all he acquired. So with this elder son. For these many years he has been heaping up merit. And, as the word[3] he uses intimates, it has been by a slavish drudgery, hard to bear. In this marvelous, disinterested, unrequited fidelity of his, he has shrunk from nothing that could promote his father's interest.

"And I never transgressed a commandment of thine." Here again is the same type of Pharisee with him at the temple. "God," he cried, "I thank thee that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners," etc. How keen the irony of our Lord's putting this word, above all others, into his lips! He belongs to the class of worthies "which devour widows' houses,"[4] "and are full of extortion and excess."[5] It is as if one of our modern Shylocks, who make "corners" in beef and grain and pork, were to thank the Lord for inspiring him with so tender an interest in the poor. But this elder son is like-minded. Boasting that he has never transgressed a commandment of his father, he is doing it at this identical moment. His father is entreating him, and he is insolently refusing,

1 Lev. 16 : 29-30. 2 Lev. 27 : 30-33. 3 δουλεύω.
4 Luke 20 : 47. 5 Matt. 23 : 25.

to go into the house. The perfection of his hypocrisy is exquisite.

And now, having established his own righteousness, the way is open to exhibit the iniquities of his father.

"And yet," notwithstanding all I have done for thee, "thou never gavest me a kid." In the Greek[1] he thrusts himself much more conspicuously forward. "And to me," it reads, "thou never gavest." So before yet mentioning his brother he puts himself, in sharp contrast, beside him.

And here, too, he shows how completely he is divorced in feeling from his father. "Thou never gavest me" shows the same spirit as that of his brother in his "Give me the portion of the substance that falleth to me"—the spirit[2] of which his brother had bitterly repented. And the elder son is putting everything down on the cold, legal ground of work and reward.[3] Love for his father has leaked out of his heart, and left it, like the bones in Ezekiel's vision, exceedingly dry.

"Thou never gavest me a kid," the smallest of all possible creatures in the herd, "that I might make merry with my friends." How sharp the contrast here with the magnanimous sympathy, the all-embracing joy, of the father! "That I might make merry with my friends," says the son. "Let us eat and be merry," says the

1 Καὶ ἔμοὶ οὐδέποτε. 2 Alford (in loco). 3 Edersheim 2 : 260.

father. An electric charge can as well traverse half a net-work of steel, and no more, as the joy of a generous man can confine itself within him alone.

The analogy between the sons is much closer than the elder imagines. The one had wished something set apart to him that he might feast separately in the far land. The other wishes something set apart that he may feast separately at home. The alienation from the father is in the two cases equally complete. The elder, showing the same spirit of which his brother had repented, is like the Pharisee in the temple, disgraced by the very extortion which was his chief charge against the publican he so despised.

But now, having opened the vials of his wrath on his father, he turns part of their contents on his brother.

30. " But when this thy son came." As a bee's cell is made to contain the most possible honey under a given surface, so do these words seem shaped to contain the utmost amount of gall. "This thy son"—as an angry brother among us would clearly enough indicate to his father his feeling with, "That boy of yours." But it is not clearly enough for this elder brother. Something more explicit is to come.

"Thy son," as many interpreters have noted, are words chosen to disclaim all relationship of his brother to himself. As he began with evad-

ing the word "father," he continues with evasion of "brother." The father alone must be responsible for the new-comer.

"Came." So the elder son, too, has gone down to the level of the hired servant. No more than the servant can he appreciate the glory of the father's view of it—"dead and alive again; lost and found." He has become in soul (what his brother had thought to do only in outward condition) "as one of the hired servants."

"Which hath devoured[1] thy living with harlots." "Devoured thy living," which I, by serving thee these many years, have toiled to keep and increase. "Thy living," an insinuation thrown in as a wedge of jealousy between the father and the prodigal. The fact was that the latter had wasted only his share of the estate. "With harlots" comes, as a climax, with the deadliest thrust of all. And it may be as false as it was malicious. Wasting substance with riotous living would not of necessity imply it. Even if it be true, the elder brother, who has not yet seen the prodigal, can hardly be supposed to have heard of it. He is bent on putting the worst construction possible on the conduct of his brother.[2]

Thou hast killed for him the fatted calf," while

1 Ὁ καταφαγών, perhaps as strong and violent a word as could have been found.

2 Trench seems to us quite in error when in a note on the prodigal's wasting his substance ("Parables," p. 322) he says, "We are not, in this early part of the parable, expressly told, but from v. 30 we infer, that he consumed with harlots the living which he had gotten from his father." Matthew Henry, in his commentary, comes much nearer the truth.

I could have not even a kid. Here again this brother shows how far he has descended toward the level of the servant. As completely as the servant he is absorbed in the loss of the calf. He is not ashamed to betray that his whole heart was on the creature.

31. "And he said unto him, Son." How beautiful the contrast of this with the son's arrogance! "Son!"—if thou, that is, wilt not even recognize me as father, that shall not prevent me from claiming thee. The word itself then, before the appeal goes farther, is a tender reminder. The Greek word[1] it represents is not the same with that for "son" just used by the elder brother. It is "my child," in the most touching expostulation.

"Thou art ever with me."[2] I am thy exceeding great reward. Why talk of kids and calves and jealous lines of ownership? In heart and in possessions let us be one!

"All that is mine is thine."[3] Let us be done with claims and rights, and fall into the union of love.

It is a mistake in many writers, as it seems to us, who infer from the loving words of the father that he found something to approve in the elder son. Those words show nothing but

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1 Τέκνον, child, while the brother had used υἱος. "The word (τέκνον) is used," says Thayer's lexicon, "in affectionate address, such as patrons, helpers, teachers, and the like, employ." He cites Matt. 9 : 2, "Son, be of good cheer;" Mark 10 : 24, "Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches," etc.

2 Which is far better than your "friends," Bengel (in loco),

3 The younger son had already taken his share.

parental anxiety to pour some sweetness into the son's bitter spirit. Of complacency in his character they give no hint. To learn what is that character we have only to look to the words and acts of the son himself. In them there is no redeeming feature to be found.

32. "But it was meet to make merry and be glad." The making merry is outward rejoicing. The being glad is inward delight. "For this thy brother" (whom the older of the two had coldly called "thy son") "was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found." He had done more than "come," as his brother, with no sense of the greatness of the recovery, declared.

And so the marvelous story, like a string of gems, with every word, almost, a brilliant, rounds to its close.

The reader will perhaps complain that the older son has, in these pages, been judged too severely. But this son, as we have held, was intended by our Lord to represent the Pharisees. Several considerations prove this. Jesus was now directly addressing Pharisees, in reply to a cavil of theirs. The older brother treats the prodigal precisely as the Pharisees treated their outcast countrymen. This son has unmistakably the same features with the Pharisee praying in the temple.

Holding therefore that the elder brother is a Pharisee, and remembering our Lord's judgment of them, we seem forced to the conclu-

sion that he meant to give their character to this brother. And if we look for his real spirit, not in the words of his father, but his own, we seem led to the same conclusion.

What but righteous indignation toward a spirit like that of the Pharisees was possible to our Lord? What but a discredit would anything else than indignation have been to Him?

It is essential to a perfect character that one should be as good a hater as lover. Dr. Arnold, of Rugby School, said he never felt sure of a boy who only loved good. It was not till he began to hate evil that he knew him to be safe. Then he showed himself in earnest. Nor was it enough for the inspired writer (Heb. 1:9) to describe our Lord as having "loved righteousness." Something more must be added. "Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed Thee." Jesus hated evil as intensely as he loved good. From the same lips that tenderly invite the laboring and heavy laden fall those awful words, "Fill ye up, then, the measure of your iniquities. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the condemnation of hell?"

The key to the mystery is not far away. "Ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers." "Ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers." They were saints in the synagogue and knaves

in the market. And it was the sheer, pure love to the outraged poor, of the Friend of publicans and sinners, who could weep with them that weep, which thundered in those sentences. It was the Good Shepherd turning against the wolves because He loved the sheep.

The German artist, Maurice Retzsch, has pictured, with deep spiritual insight, a battle between angels and demons. The heavenly legions mount no guns, discharge no musketry. No sabre among them flashes in the air. They sprinkle roses, only, over the hosts of hell. But every rose, in falling, turns to flaming fire. It burns its way into the very vitals of whomsoever it strikes, till he sinks and writhes in anguish. So is it with the wrath (not of the "lion of the tribe of Judah," but) of the Lamb, from which the guilty multitudes entreat the mountains to fall and hide them.

This indignation of Jesus, like all righteous indignation, was at bottom pure benevolence. In the character of the ingrate son, boasting of his unrequited service, our Lord exhibits the Pharisees to themselves only that He may, if possible, even at the eleventh hour, draw them to repentance and life.

EXCURSUS.

Christ as a Public Teacher.

It might be expected that a Divine Teacher would be instructive not only in the truths he would convey, but in his way of conveying them. If our Lord was infallible, He showed it no less in his methods and manner than in his subject-matter. That "the common people heard Him gladly" has been generally ascribed to the beauty of his life and doctrine, the tenderness of his sympathy, the contrast, at every point, with the teachers to whom they had been accustomed. But He took care to be an effective speaker. He showed marvelous power and skill in his use of occasions and object-lessons and words.

How far the human in Him was aided by the Divine will ever, on earth at least, remain a mystery. What amount of study He gave to his style of speech, how far it was spontaneous and unconscious, will never be known. But, whatever may have been the process, the results remain as a charming and exhaustless theme for study.

There has been, we are persuaded, a serious error as to this matter. The external acts of our Lord, in general, are by no means an

invariable guide to us. They were largely modified by the usages of his life, land, and age. They were foliage—not roots; shifting sands—not bedrock. We have naturally and rightly turned to the great principles He unfolded, which no conventionalities can reach, no changing customs touch.

So we have drifted under the impression that his methods of speech and instruction, like his costume and posture at meals, were peculiar to his day and locality. We have looked little to them for suggestion and help in the great art of holding the attention and reaching the hearts of men. But this essay will fail of its purpose if it does not show that many of these methods were addressed, not to Jews of the first century, as such, but to man as man, to human nature and the human mind, working under laws that never can

"Grow old or change or pass away."

From the teachings of Jesus there are hints to be drawn as to practical tact in reaching and leading men, as to the choice of words, the shaping of sentences, the art of illustration, which to any Christian teacher are invaluable helps.

I. "He taught them as one having authority (Matt. 7:29), and not as the scribes." He recognized the difference between moral and mere scientific truth. The latter follows from induction and ratiocination. It carries no self-evidential power. It shines, like a planet, in

reflected light. But moral truth, as a sun, carries a light of its own. It speaks with an imperative to the moral sense. And, in clear recognition of all this, Jesus spoke. The scribes and lawyers, with their casuistries and sophistries, raised more doubts than they laid. Dialectics were the atmosphere in which they lived and breathed. In a mechanical way they skimmed the surface of things. It was with them as if one were to say of Raphael's Transfiguration, "This painting is of the right proportions of height to breadth. The pigments are laid on with the proper thickness. The laws of perspective have been observed. Therefore it is a fine painting."

Our Lord put the truth He taught, not only in such "sweet reasonableness," but in such commanding power, that as the words fell from his lips the mind of the hearer echoed its reverent Amen! What occasion for argument there? It would have been as crutches to Samson. And in a Teacher who quietly and authoritatively assumed the truth of what He said there dwelt a power over the rough natures around Him like that which a resolute man has over a wild animal.

In all this there is a lesson for a preacher of our time. He does not, indeed, speak like the Master with personally Divine authority. But that authority, if not in him, is behind him. The day for argument to establish the great staple

truths of our religion has, in the main, gone by. Christianity has not, for many centuries, stood before the world as an experiment. It is no mendicant, with hat in hand to beg favors. In a Christian country the burden of proof, in any discussion of its great truths, lies on the objector. These truths have often enough been weighed in the balances and not found wanting. The preacher who gratuitously puts them in again throws away his advantage. He dishonors the word of his Master. "I am not in the pulpit," Dr. W. M. Taylor has said, "to defend the Bible. The Bible is there to defend me."

Life is too short, time is too precious, to be wasted in incessantly laying foundations. There is work enough to be done on the grand superstructure that from age to age so steadily and sublimely rises.

The minister of Christ, therefore, who stands where he should, at the height of his vocation, will do no timid apologizing for the instructions, invitations, and warnings he utters. Neither will he nervously declare or affirm or insist. We have no more occasion to re-enact the moral law of God than the law of gravitation. The wise preacher will take for granted the basilar truths of Christianity. He will assume them as the bed-plate on which the whole machinery of his service is to run. In all meekness, arrogating nothing to himself, yet remem-

bering in whose name he stands, he will speak "as one having authority."

II. Jesus pressed with uncompromising force whatever truth He had in hand. "I came not to send peace, but a sword." "I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother." "Of him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away." "And he that hath none, let him sell his cloak and buy a sword." Paradoxes and half-truths had no terrors for Him. He knew that but half a globe can be seen at once. He knew that, to present a truth in all its broad relations, is often to press the soul rather with a surface, easily resisted, than with a point that pierces. A fully rounded, carefully balanced statement of a truth is an anodyne to the intellect. The work that the intellect ought to be summoned to do has been already done for it. "The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," may indeed have been presented. But what will a mind receive of it that is too dormant to receive anything? The amount of profit to the hearer will be in direct ratio to the activity stirred within him. That activity is what exercise is to a convalescent. For the invalid's recovery no vehicle will answer in place of exertion of his own muscles.

But a bold, perhaps hyperbolic, statement of a truth is a goad to the soul. Provoking resistance, it compels to thought. "But it leads to error!" No; the danger of misapprehension

is small. The advantage of thinking one's way through the paradox is great.

Our Lord was, therefore, more bent on stirring his hearers to receive some truth than on a vain attempt to load them with more truth than they would carry. Wielding the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, He looked rather to its temper and keenness than to its symmetry or beauty. It is quite impossible for us, to whom his pointed utterances have become dulled by long use, to appreciate the startling shock with which they struck his hearers' ears. The outcries of astonishment[1] in reply, show plainly that the arrow had reached its mark.

This method of address is, in a modern teacher, of course liable to abuse. Easily it may run to an extravagance which the occidental mind is slower to forgive than the oriental hearers to whom Jesus spoke. But, none the less, it is a power with which no wise preacher will wholly dispense. Precision of thought and speech is not the only requisite. Our congregations are more in danger of nodding a drowsy and unmeaning assent than of falling into error. Many a preacher, in mincing his words and cumbering his sentences to guard against misunderstanding, clogs their entrance to the minds of men. Better the truth incisively, clean of all obstructions. Then put the counterbalancing truth, if required, on some other occasion.

1 Matt. 19 : 25.

III. It is often said that our Lord taught doctrines less than Paul. It would be nearer the truth to say that He taught the more practical aspects of doctrine. There is, perhaps, no one of such dogmas of the faith as are legitimately drawn from Scripture, and which confront us in imposing order in our theologies, which does not, in some form, appear in his teachings. But as He himself brings down to us the majesty of the Most High under the lowly lineaments of a human life, so is it that these doctrines take shape in his simple, informal words. They lay by their stateliness of bearing and their regal costumes, and come home to the heart as work-day truths for common life. Jesus leads us into no metaphysical discussion of the origin or nature of sin. But in the example of the young ruler (Matt. 19: 21-23) how fearfully He exposes its tenacious hold on the soul! He gives us no treatise on the impotence of a godless morality to fulfill obligation. But as this same amiable youth turns away sorrowful with his great possessions, facing toward the dark, we seem to see the Master looking sadly after him with a lamentation like that over Jerusalem: "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God !"

Our Lord gives no doctrinal statement of atonement. He is little concerned to set the Great Redemption, with its profound and awful mystery, sharply outlined before us in the dry

light of intellect. But with what touching tenderness does He commend it to the heart! "The Good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."[1] "This is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."[2] "The Son of man came to give his life a ransom for many."[3] His aim is not so much to draft a "plan of salvation" as to move the soul with the appeal of the transcendent fact.

Jesus formulates no dogma of regeneration. But under exquisite imagery He shadows out the features of the momentous change. Describing it as a new birth, He teaches that it is a revolution of one's character as radical as if he were to go back into non-existence and commence his life anew. He gives it, in one of his word-pictures, as a strait gate, with an unwelcome humiliation to pride. The narrow portal, tearing off as we enter it all tinsel of self-righteousness, all faith in sacraments or creeds as a groundwork of hope, leaves the soul in its naked helplessness to throw itself on Christ. Again, Jesus figures the great change as leaven thrust into the meal. It is as gradual in the transformation, then, as it is radical and complete. Though at first like the distinct mass of the leaven, almost an alien principle in the soul, working against old habits, estimates, and moral drifts, it comes in time to dissolve and blend

1 John 10 : 11. 2 Matt. 26 : 28. 3 Matt. 20 : 28.

itself as homogeneous with the whole inmost life. So, instead of a dry, doctrinal treatise on regeneration, under a score or two of heads and sub-divisions, Jesus instructs us by this striking imagery, rich in its wealth of suggestion.

Again, He discusses no dogma of the perseverance of the saints. He spins no gossamer theory of the harmony of necessity and certainty, builds no cloudy structure of

"Fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute."

But, looking on us through the loving features of the Good Shepherd, who knows his sheep and is known of them, He assures us, of his sheep, "they shall never perish, neither shall any man be able to pluck them out of my hand." (John 10 : 28).

We shall find in his teachings no theological discussion of repentance. The questions, debated for centuries, whether faith or love or contrition is the first act of the renewed soul, whether "efficacious grace" or "natural ability" only is requisite, whether regeneration must precede conversion in the order of time or only in the order of nature, get no illumination from a word of his. But any benighted wanderer, sin-burdened, heart-sore, and glad to surrender his life to his Saviour, will find more light in the story of the prodigal returning, and the father's kiss, than in all the systems of theology ever constructed.

So as to justification. Whether the pardoned soul has been ransomed, according to the theory of the earlier Christian centuries, as a prisoner taken in fair fight, from the captivity of Satan, or delivered from a debt, on the commercial theory, or from a penalty, on the moral government theory, we shall not learn from the Great Teacher. But in the beautiful story of the "woman which was a sinner," who "loved much" and whose sins, which were many, were forgiven her, we have all the justification of which any guilty soul will need to know.

In these methods of our Lord there is a lesson for the modern preacher. The mistake is common of supposing that, unless one has taken up the doctrines serially, calling the roll and forming them in lines as for a parade, unless he deals with them in a more or less technical discussion of the ingenious theories with which our theologies attempt to explain them, he has failed to preach the doctrines.

Jesus, if we may judge from his example, thought otherwise. Doctrines are instruments or implements to be used in the upbuilding of souls. To that end they ought to be well shaped and adapted. In the hands of too many a preacher, with his obsolete speculations, they are as if one were to cling to the watches, the flint and tinder, the matchlocks and plows and flails, of a century ago. The methods of Jesus are perennially new. They come home to the

heart. They touch the deepest life at the core of one's being. They show these grand, eternal truths of the gospel as living truths, that vitalize souls dead in sin.

IV. It is instructive to study those silences of our Lord in which He refrained from audible teaching. His sparse disclosures of the life beyond the grave, especially in contrast with the abundant and astonishing revelations of Mohammedan and Romish teachers and Spiritualist mediums, have been often noted. His wise design seems to have been to mass, for a solid moral impact on the soul, the rewards on the one side, and the woes on the other, of the life to come. He knew the inevitable effect of a multitude of such details as to the surroundings, the language, the social life, the occupations, of the redeemed as would gratify our curiosity. These details and minutiæ, even if it be possible to disclose them to us in our earthly life, would have comminuted and frittered away those weighty moral sanctions which He wished to bring to bear, in their unbroken bulk and weight, from the world to come.

At another point there has been some wonder as to his silence. Why not have given us ample light as to denominational questions that so distract the Christian world? How easy for Him to have settled all controversy as to baptism of infants, immersion, predestination, church polity! What divisions and schisms He

might have saved! How far more harmonious and effective might the churches, as one compact body, have been! Natural questions these all seem. But is it certain that one vast organism would have been more in the interest of the kingdom of Christ? Has it so proved in the Romish or the Greek church? Do we not all know the sure drift toward despotism of an immense corporate body necessarily entrusting enormous power to a few hands? Probably, with all the evils flowing from sectarian bigotry, it is better that Christians should fall off into various sects and communions than that the churches should, as a single huge organism, be ruled by a hierarchy.

If this be so, it was well that the minor distinctions, around each of which a denomination has crystalized, were not swept away by an utterance of the Master.

But in single instances as well how striking in his silence! In the account of the woman taken in adultery (John 8: 3-11), assuming the passage to be genuine, how solemn is the pause after those searching words, "Let him that is without sin among you cast the first stone!" How suggestive of the yet more awful silence of eternity, in which guilty consciences may yet speak to souls. Again, when He is summoned to entertain Herod and his men of war by calling up infinite wisdom and omnipotence to perform for their amusement (Luke 23: 8-11), in

what majestic meekness, with sealed lips, He stands! In what unutterable pity, bound and helpless and mocked as He is, He looks on the king and his officers in the splendor of their purple and gold! Why has not some great artist taken the scene for his pencil?

A still more striking lesson from the silence of Jesus we have in the case of the Syrophoenician woman.[1] We will consider this somewhat more fully. "He entered into a house," says Mark, "and would have no man know it." He was tired down with excess of work in doing good. Elsewhere He was so exhausted that He could sleep through all the uproar of a storm on the lake. And now He was willing to allow his burdened and complaining body a little rest.

"But," as Chrysostom has it, "the ointment betrays itself." And He whose "name was as ointment poured forth" could not be hid. This Syrophoenician woman, though brought up in both an alien nation and religion, had heard of Him. Where or how she came to the keenness of spiritual insight and strength of faith she soon betrays, we are not informed. It is reasonable to suppose also that the Master knew of her. He who perceived in Perea that Lazarus had died in Bethany (John 11: 11-14), may well have been no stranger to this good woman, even before He met her.

1 Matt. 15 : 21-28, and Mark 7 : 24-30.

She has left, it appears, in her home a daughter possessed by a devil. Day after day the wretched mother has sat beside the child in silent, helpless anguish,

"Love watching madness with unalterable mien."

But now the wonder-working Healer of disease has come. She has heard of his power and compassion. She has been told of demons that had scoffed at all other exorcists, but had heard from Him the voice of a master and obeyed. Not a moment is to be lost. He never came her way before—may never come again. He will hear her cry, as He has heard a thousand cries, with relief and gladness in his answer.

But now a strange, dark mystery. He answers her not a word. What can be the meaning of it? Does He despise her as a heathen? Are all the reports of Him false? Or is his power only a lying invention?

At this point the disciples interpose. "Send her away, for she crieth after us." They speak in no better spirit, apparently, than that of the godless judge in the parable: "I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me." The disciples are tired of the woman and would gladly be rid of her.

But still the Master keeps his silence. He will not speak the word of relief. "I am not sent," He replies to them, "but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." A rebuff that comes like a cruel blow to the sad woman's hopes.

Not a syllable yet spoken to her. Not a syllable of sympathy for her. Only cold, hard words, which possibly she overhears.

But still, like a bird driven back seaward by harsh winds from the shore, yet struggling with tired wings for shelter, she holds on and holds out. Close to his feet she comes, and kneeling to look up into his face, she cries, "Lord, help me!" He replies as if his heart were turned to stone, "Let the children first be fed. It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to dogs!"[1] There is no hope. He scorns her as a heathen dog. He is a narrow, haughty, heartless Jew.

But no—that cannot be. It is Jesus of Nazareth! She watches Him more closely, kneeling there at his feet. Does she detect, through this disguise of bigotry and scorn, a glance from the true Jesus? The keen insight of faith! The quick wit of inspired humility! "Truth, Lord," I am a pagan dog: and therefore I claim the blessing; for "the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their master's table." "She snares the Lord," says Luther, "in his own speech."

And now He lets drop the disguise. Like Joseph, when ruler in Egypt, first sternly re-

1 Κυνάρια, literally, "little dogs." Some interpreters have seen in this a mitigation of the harshness of our Lord's repulse. Others have thought it an aggravation, as more contemptuous than "dogs," without the diminutive. There is apparently little ground for either view. But the word is certainly harsh—was intended to be—as part of the test to which our Lord was putting the Syrophœnician's faith. As Trench remarks ("Miracles," p. 275), the nobler qualities of the dog are nowhere recognized in Scripture.

pelling his brethren till he can learn what manner of men they have become in his long absence, and then revealing himself to welcome them with open arms, the Lord Jesus shows the love that lay hidden behind this harsh rebuff. "O woman! great is thy faith! For this saying, go thy way. The devil is gone out of thy daughter."

The use He makes of silence is as beautiful as anything in all Scripture. A lapidary spends small pains on any common stone. The stone might crack and fly in fragments; or, if finished, might not pay for the labor on it. But when some priceless diamond in the rough comes into his hands, he cuts and grinds and files and shapes and polishes, till the full beauty of the brilliant is brought out. So there were weaklings whom our Lord could take through no such discipline of exclusiveness and mystery and repulsion. To the leper He replied at once, "I will ; be thou clean !"[1] At the gate of Nain, amidst the widow's woe over the dead form of her son, before she asks for sympathy, "Young man, I say unto thee, arise!"[2] To the impotent man at Bethesda, without waiting for a prayer for healing, "Arise, take up thy bed and walk."

So, in other instances, the feeble faith of some could stand no strain of delay. "The bruised reed He would not break, or quench the

1 Matt 8 : 3. 2 Luke 7 : 14.

smoking flax." But this Syrophoenician woman was neither reed nor flax. Her faith was strong. Her spiritual sight was keen. So the Master folds in his love and veils it over. He brings out the beauty and power of her trust in Him. He holds it up, honored and glorified, to the world's admiration to the end of time, that no sad soul, hard pressed and long waiting, may ever despair.

V. There are lessons, also, in the acts of our Lord, when He is not by word of mouth directly teaching. Dr. Horace Bushnell[1] beautifully sketches his sleep on the fisher's boat. "No wildest tumult without can reach the inward composure of his rest. The rain beating on his face, and the spray driving across it, and the sharp gleams of the lightning and the crash of the thunder and the roar of the storm and the screams of the men, not all of them can shake Him far enough inward to reach the center where sleep lodges and waken Him to consciousness." What a suggestion here, though indirectly, of the energy with which He labored to bless men. Relieving the body and comforting the soul of every sufferer, to his own worn body He is a pitiless master, incessantly demanding from it, "Give, give, more work for the lame, deaf, blind and leprous and possessed, more teaching for the benighted multitudes!" till it sinks on the deck of the little vessel, utterly exhausted and worn out.

1 Christ and his Salvation, p. 140.

What a suggestion, too, of eagerness for service, even at fearful cost (Mark 10 : 32), in his going before the disciples on his way to Gethsemane and the cross! In his three months in Jerusalem the Jews had plotted to assassinate Him, had twice mobbed Him, had once issued an order for his arrest,[1] and had been fired, by the raising Lazarus, to still more desperate rage.[2] No wonder that the disciples, as they follow Him while He presses on before them in the way, are amazed and afraid. How searching and pathetic a rebuke to any one of us inclined to complain of too many demands for Christian work, too many calls on his purse!

Another act of Jesus, which seems at first reading insignificant, is fruitful in suggestion. Sitting ("wearied," again, as on the fisher's boat) by the well-side, He says to the dissolute Samaritan woman, "Give me to drink."[3] He

1 John 7 : 19-32 ; 8 : 59 ; 10 : 31-39.

2 John 11 : 45-50.

3 John 4 : 7. Some most interesting points in the conversation that follows are noted by Trench "Synonyms of the N. T., on αἰτεω. The woman in her reply, "How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink," etc., uses αἰτεω which, like the Latin *peto*, implies a petition from an inferior to a superior. She evidently, at first, looks on Jesus as a friendless wanderer. But He, in his rejoinder, carefully avoids the use of her word and the concession it would involve. "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink;" then, proceeding, He significantly adopts her word, "thou wouldst have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water." Instead of supposing thyself superior, thou wouldst have acknowledged thine inferiority to Him. Cremer, in his lexicon, remarks that Trench (who is supported by Bengel, and by Webster in "Syntax and Synonyms of the N. T.") "wrongly limits the use of αἰτεῖω, when he says that, like the Latin *peto*, it is submissive and suppliant; as many examples of the opposite might be quoted: Deut. 10 :12; Acts 16 :29; etc." It is true that, in Deut. 10 : 12, "And now Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee," αἰτεῖται can have no such suppliant meaning. Also, Acts 16 : 29, where the jailer "called for a light," must be conceded to Cremer. Perhaps, too, he would claim Luke 1 : 63, where Zacharias asks for a writing-table. Another instance, (Ephes. 3 : 13), "I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations," is not so clear. It would be quite like the great apostle, in his meekness

asks a favor. And nothing so gratifies and conciliates a person in humble life as to be solicited for a favor that he can easily grant. Jesus understood human nature. And his methods of approaching those whom He sought to benefit are a study in themselves.

Another suggestive act of our Lord is the removal of the hired mourners from the room where lay the dead maiden. (Mark 5 : 40.) It is easy to imagine how utterly repulsive to his sensitive nature must have been these charlatans ("skillful in lamentation," Amos 5:16), howling like dervishes, and as hollow-hearted as the "sounding brass and clanging cymbals" which aided in the uproar they made. He came to be, not a perfect man, but a perfect human being. All the finest qualities of both sexes were harmoniously blended in Him. As no man ever equalled Him in the sterner, masculine

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and gentleness, to adopt toward his brethren a word generally used by an inferior.

But αἰτεῖν is used in the New Testament, no less than seventy-one times. And in every instance, with the above few possible exceptions, it is in a request made to a superior. The following examples are taken at random: Matt. 5 :42; Mark 6 :22; Luke 11 :9; John 15 :7; Acts 12 :20. A usus so uniform could be no matter of accident.

Thayer's lexicon (sub verbo) asserts that Prof. Ezra Abbott proves, in the N. Am. Review (1872, p. 182), that Trench is wrong. Not so. Dr. Abbott, who makes αἰτεω occur seventy-one times, says only, "The following passages must, at least, be regarded as exceptions, and may suggest a doubt as to the distinction asserted." He adds no exceptions to those above cited but I. Cor., 1 : 22, "the Jews ask for signs," and I. Pet., 3 : 15, "everyone that asketh of you a reason of the hope that is in you." Allowing both these, they would make five, at most six, instances, out of seventy-one. Dr. Abbott did well to speak cautiously.

Another suggestive point, though a little aside from our line of discussion is that to the Samaritan woman's first reply to our Lord we find no "Sir" prefixed. The omission corresponds to her presumptuous use of αἰτεῖν. But in her second reply, struck by the words of Jesus, "If thou knewest who it is," etc., as well as, probably, by the unconscious dignity of his manner, she commences with "Sir," or "Lord," κυριε.

virtues, so no woman in the refined sensibility with which He shrank from everything unseemly, everything spurious and false.

In the rude age and land in which He had chosen to live He had, from such sources, trials to endure that rarely occur to us. There could hardly be a more striking scene than this of the Master standing in his majestic calmness, before pronouncing the almighty word that was to raise the dead, with these tragic harlequins jeering and scoffing around Him.

The intense significance of that other act (Luke 22 : 61) in the court of the high priest, when "the Lord turned and looked upon Peter" swearing to his falsehood, and the apostle "felt how awful goodness is," we pass with no vain attempt at description.

Instances in which there was a startling power in the very appearance of Jesus, in which the hidden divinity must have shone through the lowly exterior, the reader can study for himself in Matt. 21 : 12; Mark 9 : 15; Luke 4 : 20, 30; John 7: 44-46; 18: 6.

VI. There is suggestion in our Lord's constant citation of the Old Testament Scriptures. For one reason this is specially remarkable. Being Himself the Truth, as well as the Way and the Life, He was, independently of Scripture, an infallible source of instruction. Also, as introducing the New Economy, which was to sweep away so large a portion of the require-

ments of the Old, had He referred less than He does to the latter He might not have surprised us.

And yet, in driving out the traders from the temple (Mark 11:17), in replying to the cavil of the scribes about the resurrection (Mark 12 : 20), when tempted by Satan (Matt. 4 : 1-11), on the way to Emmaus (Luke 24 : 27), almost everywhere and at all times, He is bringing in some utterance of Moses, the Psalms, or the Prophets.

Is there no lesson here for preachers of our time? They have too often been content with "motto texts"—texts which are simply figure-heads to a sermon. One old New England divine is reported to have said that he "wanted nothing from a text but to get a subject out of it." There was formerly much of that style of discourse. But more recently the sermon is the direct child of the Scriptures. It lies on the bosom of Scripture and draws its life from that. It becomes, in consequence, less technical and formal. It has greater variety, richness, freshness of thought.

VII. But various lessons our Lord taught by his miracles of healing. We have seen something of these in the story of the Syrophœnician woman. Quite as striking is that of the woman with the issue of blood. And, equally with that, it seems to call for special notice.

When a man has been placed on an insula-

ting stool and then thoroughly charged with electricity, one may, with a touch of the finger, draw off from any part of his person a share of the mysterious fluid. It may be done without his wish or knowledge. He may be slyly approached from behind. The electricity is not in his will, but in his body. And his body will communicate it through a touch. So this woman evidently supposes the healing power to be in Christ. Tormented with a cruel disease, which is slowly wearing out her life, she expects to find Him so overflowing with the curative virtue that it saturates even his garments. She means to steal, from behind, some share of this virtue with a touch, and then to make off with her blessing before He is aware.

Her whole notion, of course, is a delusion. There is a large alloy of superstition mixed with the gold of her faith. And, had our Lord been as narrow and harsh as too many a servant of his through the ages since, He would have bidden her begone with her wretched conceit and to wait for a cure till she had learned how to approach Him.

But not so the gracious Master. The poor woman's body is to be healed and her soul instructed. But the healing comes first. To ask her to come out, while diseased and doubting and trembling, with a full disclosure of her sad condition, would have been too stern a test for her feeble faith. He will take a gentler way.

He honors at once this dim-sighted, superstitious faith of hers. He falls in, for the moment, with her way for the healing.

Quick as an electric flash, and thrilling as that, the throb of returning health runs through her nerves and startles her with a vigor never known for many a weary year before. Now she can stand the test of exposure. "The joy of the Lord is her strength." Now, not till now, the Master turns with his searching question, "Who touched my clothes?" The magical virtue in his clothing, as the woman supposes, has had its effect. The Master knows nothing of what has been done. She will hide within her own bosom the gladdening secret and escape with it undivulged.

But the Lord cannot let her evade Him without a better and more lasting blessing than she had in her thought. Her renewed, invigorated body will, ere many years, be mouldering in the dust. Into the undying soul, therefore, Jesus will throw new life and light. "Who touched my clothes?" is his persistent question. Peter, of course and as usually, wiser than his Master, thinks the question absurd. "The multitude throng Thee and press Thee," he cries, "and sayest Thou, Who touched me?" But Jesus is not to be baffled in his loving search for this daughter of Abraham. "Though many had thronged," says an old interpreter, "only one had touched Him." Through the contact of the

others went out no stream of blessing; through that of the woman passed life for the dying.

When, in a flutter of mingled joy and awe, she comes out to fall down before Him and tell all the truth, the word follows which is to glow to her latest day in her memory: "Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath saved thee. Go in peace." "I knew," that is, "who was behind me. I knew how feeble and benighted was thy hope. It was no magic in my garment, but my love for thee, in response to thy faith, that has cured thee. Not only trust and be healed in the body, my daughter. Believe and be saved in the soul."

The whole beautiful narrative shows the use and value of an immature, ignorant faith. It teaches at how low a point in darkness and error the Lord Jesus is able and eager to lay hold on a soul.

Again, take the account of the palsied man (Matt. 9 : 1-8). In all his wretched helplessness he is laid by his friends, on his pallet, before the Master. They desire nothing so much as the sovereign word of cure. But how indifferent seems the Lord to his sad condition! For some time not a syllable of relief from it falls from his lips. There is no sign reported of sympathy with his sufferings. There is not a trace of recognition of them in any way. Yet, while the man is still lying unrelieved, Jesus cries to him, "Son, be of good cheer!" What,

to most of the bystanders, could this have seemed but irony? Jesus evidently intended to intimate, as well to them as to him, that the body is nothing—that, even if cured of its ailments, it soon goes to the dust—and that the soul is the jewel within the casket.

"Thy sins be forgiven thee!" That great deliverance, He will have all present understand, may well thrill one with gladness, however palsied and distressed the outward frame.

It is not till after the charge of blasphemy from the Pharisees, and the necessity of vindicating his Divine prerogative in the forgiveness of sins, that He pays any attention at all to the body of the sufferer. Even then He brings in the miracle only incidentally. "Now," He seems to say, "since I have granted this poor sinner the greatest boon conceivable, in the forgiveness of his sins, if you count the little matter of the healing of his body of so much moment, before dismissing him I will attend to that." The manner of the miracle is every way as instructive as the miracle itself.

VIII. Our Lord's way of startling his hearers by paradoxes and solecisms is remarkable. "Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life" (John 6 : 54). "She is not dead, but sleepeth" (Matt. 9 : 24). "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2 : 19). These and like utterances sometimes seem as if He cared for nothing so much as to

rouse the dull minds around Him and bolt them into some activity of thought on the great themes He handled.

There is danger to the preacher, of course, in following this example, that he may run into sensationalism and extravagance. But nothing of much value is to be had without danger. And without more or less of this style of speech the preacher is exposed to a more serious danger —that of inattention and indifference to his words.

IX. The dramatic skill with which Jesus makes the characters in his parables speak, each one like himself, is admirable. Take, for example, the two sons bidden by their father to go into the vineyard. (Matt. 21 : 28.) The father uses, as in the story of the prodigal, the filial title "Son." This is an intimation both of his rightful authority and that he commands not as a heartless task-master. But the first son, who represents the reckless, defiant publican or sinner, answers without the corresponding "Father." His surly reply is short, sharp, and decisive: "I will not!"[1]

But his brother is a true Pharisee — a model of hollow, unmeaning obsequiousness. "I go, Sir."[2] He lays great stress on the "I." It is like him who prays in the temple. "I thank Thee that I am not as other men." "I fast twice

1 Or rather, as, in contrast with his brother, he omits the ἐγω, it is "Will not" (οὐ θέλω). He puts all force into his rebellious will.

2 ἐγω, κύριε.

in the week. I give tithes of all that I get." Again, the "go" is not a word used by this hypocritical son. It is thrown in by the translators. The son omits it, apparently to give more prominence to the "I." And finally the "sir," which his rough brother omits, he deferentially inserts. His reply is, "I, sir!" "I am the model son, who knows the respect due to a father." And his sycophancy ends in words.

So is it with the Rich Fool (Luke 12 : 17-19). What fine irony in making him congratulate his *soul* on having a store of luxuries for the palate! As if one, reversing the process, were to feed the body on the nutriment of the soul—on grand ideas and hopes and aspirations. How absolute a fool he is! And with what tragic power comes in the voice of God, "This night thy soul," for which thou hast provided thy dainties, "shall be required of thee!"—to startle him from his fatuous dream.

Again, in the parable of the Pounds (Luke 19 : 12-27), as contrasted with that of the Talents (Matt. 25 : 14-30), there are lessons in the bearing and acts of the characters introduced. In the latter parable, the several servants have different sums entrusted to them, five talents, two, and one, with, of course, different grades of responsibility. When then they render accounts, their master addresses him who with five talents, has gained five more, in the words, "Well done, good and faithful servant;

thou hast been faithful over a few things; I will set thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy lord."

Then comes he who has doubled his two talents. He has brought to his master less than half what his brother has earned. But relatively to his ability he has done precisely the same. Not only, therefore, does he receive the same reward, that of entering into the joy of his lord, however much or little this may mean, but it is conveyed to him, syllable for syllable, in the same words. The verse which contains it, one of the very longest in the whole parable, cannot have been so carefully repeated by the Great Teacher without an object. Jesus plainly meant to stamp deep into our conviction the truth that God is no respecter of persons, that the humblest, lowliest disciple, if equally faithful with his eminent brother, shall have, to the last particle, as large and rich reward as he.

But turn, now, to the parable of the Pounds. Here the amounts entrusted to the servants are not, as the talents, unequal. But each receives, like every other, one pound. And in the reckoning, after the lord's return, he who has multiplied his pound ten-fold has an "entrance ministered unto him abundantly" into his master's favor. Hear the welcome, "Well done, thou good servant! Because thou wast found faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities." Almost every word is praise.

The utterance blooms and shines along the lines with commendation.

But how with him who, with the same ability and opportunity, has been but half as faithful? He has gained but five pounds. How different the Lord's answer to him! No long verse repeated, as to the servant who had earned two talents. Not a word of commendation now. No "well done!" for him as for his brother. No "thou good and faithful servant!" for him. No "because thou wast found faithful in a very little." He had received more than a very little. And short and abrupt is the answer, "Be thou also over five cities." He is "saved so as through fire."[1]

In the parable of the Pharisee and the publican at the temple, what keen irony (in view of his offering not a single request or petition) in saying, "The Pharisee prayed thus with himself"! The publican's plea, on the other hand "God be merciful to me a sinner!" is *all* petition. And, with downcast eyes and hands beating his breast, he strives, in the intensity of his feeling, to find a tongue in every limb.

X. Our Lord is remarkable for his word-pictures. Like a true artist, He never paints without a background. He looks well to the lights and shades. He puts truths and facts by comparison.

1 These significant distinctions, as well as the "entrance ministered abundantly" and the "saved as through fire" (escaping from a house on fire), indicate far greater differences of reward in heaven, far more occasion for regret on the part of self-indulgent Christians, there, than most Bible readers imagine.

To warn Chorazin of the giddy height and tremendous peril of her privilege, He points her to Sodom and Gomorrah (Matt. 11:21), which, with her light, would have long ago repented in sack-cloth and ashes. To rebuke the churlish ruler of the synagogue, canting about the Sabbath, he contrasts the poor woman, delivered from a demon, with the sheep released from a pit on the Sabbath day. (Matt. 12:11.) In cheering his disciples with the assurance of their Father's protection and care, He reminds them of Him who feeds even the fowls of the air, and clothes with more than the splendor of Solomon, the lilies of the field. (Matt. 6:26-29.) That He may raise the standard of character among his disciples, He takes, as the foil on which to exhibit the righteousness He requires, that of the scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 5:20). Though despised and rejected of men, He reminds those around Him, with the assurance, "A greater than Solomon is here," (Matt. 12:42) of the transcendent majesty of his person.

There is in all this a rhetorical suggestion for the young preacher. He comes upon many a great truth which, because it is great, has been so often repeated as to seem threadbare. He is at a loss how to give it so fresh an utterance as will hold attention. Let him remember that a painter often brings out a figure, not by touching it at all, but by darkening its surroundings.

Let the young preacher paint a background, show a contrast, to his thought. So he may easily throw it out into new and more vivid light.

XI. The style of our Lord in public speech is at other points instructive. It abounds in hints as to "the art of putting things." Every student of rhetoric is aware how superior in vivacity and energy is the metaphor to the simile. It is more forcible to call an extortioner a shark than to say that he acts like a shark—to declare that a good woman is an angel, than that she is like an angel.

Now our Lord's style of speech wonderfully abounds in metaphor. A tame speaker might have said that He was the source of sacred truth to men. Jesus says, "I am the light of the world." The unskilled preacher might have reminded believers that they were a preservative element among men. Jesus says, "Ye are the salt of the earth." So, "I am the good shepherd," "I am the door," "I am the vine; ye are the branches," "I am the bread of life."

The objection to metaphor is, that it is liable to obscurity and misapprehension. But often, even at the risk of that, Jesus adheres to it. For instance, in the beautiful metaphors (John 10:1-5) of the shepherd, the sheep, the porter, and the fold, "they understood not what things they were which He spake unto them." He is obliged to come out more plainly with his meaning.

Jesus had peculiar modes of illustration. He often unfolded a great principle, not so much by taking analogies from animate or inanimate nature as by selecting a special instance, a concrete application, of the principle itself, and, with wonderful power, picturing and pressing that home on the souls around Him.

Instead of enjoining meekness in general terms, He says "If a man smite thee on the one cheek, turn to him the other also." Urging philanthropy, He says, "From him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away." Instead of asking, in general, what father would refuse favors to his children, He demands, "If a son ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone?" Instead of forbidding uncharitable judgments, with what vividness He puts it: "Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, and considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?" (Matt. 7 : 3).

As Whately remarks, too, this is an excellence in style which, without loss of power, can be translated into other tongues. The eloquence of many a fine rhetorician, rendered into a foreign language, is like the golden clouds of sunset condensed into a spatter of water drops. Macaulay says of "Paradise Lost," that not a word could be altered or displaced without injury to the poem. But the wonderfully effective style of Jesus is essentially the same in any

human tongue. Is it hard to see a Divine prescience in all this?

XII. Jesus illustrates, not only with familiar speech, but from familiar objects. The wine, the sheep, the tree, the nets, the bargains in the market-place, the lost coin in the house, the wine-skins with their contents, the salt losing its savor, the servant called in from feeding cattle, the sower and his seed, the wheat and the tares, the plowman looking back from the plow, the leaven, the mustard-seed, the importunate widow and the judge—all are made to move as in a panorama before us, each with its golden lesson.

So each of these objects becomes, in its turn, a preacher eloquent in its silence, to remind disciples of their Master's words and to speak in his name long after He has passed away. The salt that has lost its savor becomes a savor unto life, and the barren fig-tree bears such fruit as never hung on tree before.

Again, Jesus was no indifferent observer of the events of his time. From them, as from other illustrations, He drew lessons of wisdom. He warns the disciples against the foul influence of Herod. (Mark 8: 15.) He cautions them against the examples of the scribes. (Matt. 23: 3.) He admonishes them to draw no hasty inference as to the guilt of them whose blood Pilate mingled with their own sacrifice (Luke 13: 2, 3), or them on whom had fallen the tower in Siloam. (Luke 13: 4.)

He teaches Christian duty toward the Roman emperor (Matt. 22:21). He shows himself abreast of the times, awake to what goes on around Him and to the duties which flow out of the hour that is passing.

Here, too, there is a lesson for the pulpit of our time. Not that the preacher should secularize himself or his work. Not that, from a mere temporal point of view, he should deal with mere temporal interests. But the grandest truths of Christianity lie often in close connection with the passing events of the time. They look out, with fresh light and meaning in their faces, through these events. Prof. Phelps, of Andover, records the powerful impression made by a Boston pastor, at the time of the conviction and execution of Prof. Webster of Harvard College, by drawing from that event lessons as to retribution.

XIII. The parable was pre-eminently the beauty and glory of our Lord's way of teaching. "Without a parable spake He nothing unto them. (Matt. 13:34.)

A parable is very precarious ground on which to build any great doctrine of Scripture. A doctrine which is taught elsewhere in literal speech, we may recognize as re-appearing in one of these beautiful pictures. But where and how far the imagery of the parable represents literal fact is no easy matter to decide.

The use of the story is not so much to teach

any new doctrine as to illustrate and enforce what is elsewhere taught. It appeals, like an allegorical painting, to the imagination. It is rather for suggestion and impression than for information. And the suggestive richness of it is largely due to the fact that it faces, with different incidental meanings, in various directions.

In Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, which might be regarded as a sort of modified and extended parable, what is the meaning of the "Valley of the Shadow of Death"? To one reader it means a time of deep spiritual gloom; to another, of terrible bereavement that left him alone in the world; to another, of heavy reverses that swept away his livelihood. The dismal Valley serves indifferently for any or all these trials. And because it does, it is far richer in themes for thought than a baldly literal statement of truth.

The right view of analogies between the material creation and moral truth, we conceive to be that they are no accident. They are not ingenious inventions. They were divinely inwrought in the plan of creation itself. The world is a vast diagram drawn to shadow forth truth.

Take, for example, the relation of parent to child. What could be more superficial than to suppose it instituted solely for the perpetuation of the human species? How easily that might have been accomplished by direct creation, as of Adam in Eden! But the plan of God was

evidently first to bring us into the world, in a helpless infancy, from human parents; and then, when with every tendril of our being we have clung to an earthly father, when a thousand endearing memories and associations have sanctified the word father, God comes in to proclaim Himself the Infinite Father and invite us to a childlike trust in Him.

So again, the solid bulk and weight of things in the visible creation, controlled as it is by such ethereal, unseen forces as gravitation, animal and vegetable life, heat, light, electric currents—what room for question that all this was originally designed of God to shadow forth "the invisible things of Him" which are "clearly seen in things that do appear"?

All nature, in short, is a vast and infinitely varied system of diagrams, or object-lessons, with spiritual uses of suggestion and instruction inwoven with its material laws.

But Jesus, in his illustrations of truth, goes even farther than this. He finds "a soul of good in things evil." His parables are remarkable for the suggestions they draw from the selfishness, the cruelties, the iniquities in general, of men.

Sometimes the parable, as the one which is the main theme of this volume, touches the truth illustrated at many points of contact. But again it has, as in these analogies from the sins and crimes of men, hardly more than one such point.

Thus, from the story of the Unjust Steward (Luke 16:1-9) we learn only that we are wisely to make provision, not only for the life that now is, but for that to come. The parable of the Unjust Judge (Luke 18:1-8) is simply a dark background on which to paint the contrasted love of God for his people. In the parable of the Unmerciful Servant (Matt. 18:23-35), whose lord commands him and his wife and children all to be pitilessly sold into slavery, Jesus, without intending to ascribe to God such cruelty and injustice toward the innocent as this, is only warning an unforgiving soul of its peril.

When the man finding a treasure hid in the field (Matt. 13:44), instead of honestly reporting it to the rightful owner or his heirs, hides it again, and selling all that he has, buys the field for himself, the only lesson is that we must make any sacrifice for the priceless treasure of immortal life.[1]

This method, as a whole, of extracting good from evil falls in with the Divine policy of making the wrath of man to praise Him. "My Father worketh hitherto and I work." It hints

1 The parable of the Leaven (Matt. 13:33 and Luke 13:21) also seems to illustrate our Lord's way of extracting good from evil. In the Old Testament, leaven, as implying fermentation and incipient decay, is used as a symbol of depravity. The only apparent exceptions are Lev. 7:13, 23:17; and Amos 4:5. The first two instances are those of the consecration of the first-fruits of the bread made from the new wheat. It was such bread as was eaten in the households. The instance in Amos is indignant irony against those who worship false gods with offerings of leaven. in the New Testament leaven typifies moral corruption. It must have been, through the training of centuries, associated in the Jewish mind with sin. It is quite remarkable, therefore, that Jesus, in the parable, should have made it a type of moral purity.

to us, also, that in all Christian effort, whether of instruction or of securing help for Christian ends, we are to make the best use possible even of evil men.

XIV. Our Lord, in his teaching, drew out from his hearers the expression of their own thought. He quickened in that way their mental activity in receiving the truth. Question and answer was largely his method. He endorsed the Socratic method. The following are examples: Matt. 9:28; 17:25; 20:22; 21:25-31. Mark 8:27-29; 10:3. Luke 10:26, 36. And often, as we saw above (VIII), He threw his thought into such paradoxes as, even more effectually than questions, would stimulate the mind.

Question and answer, in the delivery of sermons, are, of course, impracticable. But a far larger share than has been common, of the attention of the pulpit, ought to be given to the children of the congregation. With them this method is indispensable. It is the easiest way of holding their attention. It impresses truth deep on the memory. It will, better than any other method, awaken the mind to activity. The saying applies to these little hearers under instruction, as fully as elsewhere, that "it is more blessed to give than to receive."

The entire subject of illustration in public address is one as to which the discourses of Jesus are rich in suggestion. It is a subject which our

homiletical teachers have strangely neglected. Two bulky octavo volumes on sacred rhetoric, of more than 600 octavo pages each, occur to us, in neither of which is more than two pages given to this whole matter.[1] Not so the Great Teacher. As to this excellence in his methods, no less than as to others, "never man spake like this Man!"

It was with various objects and aims that He resorted to illustration.

I. For explanation of a truth. When the Pharisees and Herodians, hoping to compass his destruction, ask whether or not to pay tribute to Cæsar, how clearly, with a coin as an object-lesson, He sets the case before them: "Whose is this image and superscription?" "Cæsar." "Render, therefore, to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's." By the very stamp, that is, which you put on your money you acknowledge the emperor's authority. Act, then, as to the matter of tribute, accordingly.

Again, after the question why his disciples do not, like those of John the Baptist, fast, when explaining that the liberty of the Christian Economy cannot be imprisoned within old Jewish rites, how happy his illustrations (Matt. 9:16, 17) of the folly of that! The new cloth must not be sewed into the old garment. It

1 Prof. F. W. Fisk's "Manual of Preaching," which devotes to illustration an entire chapter, indicates an advance toward a fuller appreciation of the subject.

would only, by tearing away the edges, enlarge the rent. The new wine must not be poured into the old skins. Its vigorous ferment would soon burst them. One such illustration is worth, for explanation, a whole treatise.

So, when the Jews charge Jesus with casting out demons through the prince of the demons, He asks (Matt. 12 : 29), "How can one enter into the house of the strong man and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man?" How could I snatch his victims from Satan if I had not a supernatural power over Satan? The commonest of the people could see, if the Pharisees could not, the point and force of that question.

Once more, listening to his explanation why bad men must be allowed, for the present, to live amongst the good, the dullest disciple would see how the roots of the tares become entangled with those of the wheat—how, lest the wheat be uprooted, they must be suffered to grow with it till the harvest.

II. Jesus used illustration for *impressing* such truth as needs little or no explanation. What power for that purpose in Nathan's touching story (II Sam. 12: 1-7) of the ewe lamb! How tame and weak, in comparison, would have been a direct complaint to David of his infamous treatment of Uriah! When the prophet had first gathered a storm of just indignation in the king against the imaginary rich man

oppressing his poor neighbor, and then turned the point of it round against the king himself, it might well pierce within him the fountain of contrition and tears.

In Matt. 8:19, 20, where one who, if we may judge from the reply of Jesus, was governed by self-interest,[1] offers to follow our Lord, it would have been a feeble reply for the Master to say that He was poor. But the illustration, with its pathetic contrast—how absolute a destitution it pictures: "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." No mercenary fortune-hunter would travel far along the road which led to that.

Again, to preach a homily on the sovereign right of God to allot to his creatures, who of right can claim nothing, such conditions as seem to Him best, might have wearied many and convinced none. But when, in the parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard (Matt. 20:1-16), the employer had paid all for which the men engaged in the morning had agreed, every hearer would see that he was entitled, if he chose, to give to those who had toiled but an hour an equal sum.

III. For awakening sympathy Jesus uses many a touching illustration. The Good Samaritan, the Lost Sheep, the Prodigal Son, have

1 The man probably expected Jesus to set up a temporal kingdom and reign in splendor. Like James and John (Mark 10:37), he was apparently an office-seeker.

moved men of every generation to tears. In another case, the reply of the people (Matt. 21 : 41), "He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen," shows how Jesus, like Nathan the prophet, actually moved the indignation of his hearers against imaginary offenders who were simply the hearers' own reflections in a mirror.

IV. Our Lord's different ways of introducing illustrations will well reward study. This is a matter in which the average preacher, if he illustrate at all, often falls into monotony. "This subject may be illustrated as follows," or "Let us suppose a case for illustration," is enough to tire a hearer with what is coming before he has heard the first word of it. Jesus, on the contrary, illustrates sometimes by metaphor (Matt. 5:13, 14), sometimes by simile (Matt. 13 :33; Luke 13 :19), now by analogy, then by contrast (Matt. 11:21; Luke 18:1-8), now by assertion (Matt. 13 : 45), then by question (Matt. 7 :10; Luke 11 :5), again, by an object-lesson (Matt. 18:2; Luke 5:10; 7:44). At times He draws out his fictitious narrative with no intimation, at first, of the uses to which He will apply it (Luke 8:5; 10:30). In some cases (Matt. 13:18-23, 37-42), He explains a parable. Often He leaves us to find for ourselves the application.

Jesus was indeed, in Himself, in his whole

personality and mission, a grand visible illustration of the unseen, eternal Godhead. It was as natural that exquisite word-pictures of truth should fall from his lips as that light should flow from the sun or fragrance from a grove of spices. He so marvelously shadowed forth, under visible forms, both the glory of the Divine nature and the lowliness of a perfect and suffering humanity, that neither hostile Jews nor friendly disciples admitted to intimacy could comprehend Him.

That the same Being, born of a virgin, throwing the shadow of mystery in advance, from even before his birth, should be both "Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace," regnant in transcendent majesty, and also that, when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him, despised and rejected of men—is it any marvel that saint and seer alike, along the centuries of the older Economy, studied the mystery of his nature in vain?

As one looks along the face of the famous cliff in the White Mountains for the outlines of that gigantic face, of which he has heard, he discovers nothing but angles and jags of rock jutting out in seemingly wild confusion. They have no form or comeliness. They appear to have nothing in common. But, going on, till, at a turn in the pathway, a finger-board significantly points upward, he looks again. And

there he beholds, in clear, sharp relief against the azure, all these scattered crags and notches blending sublimely into the grandest semblance, perhaps, on the planet of the "human face divine." The ancient believers, searching what time or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow them, among all the scattered, incongruous features of his Messiahship, foretokened through the centuries, "found no end in wondering mazes lost." But when, in due time, was reached the exact, essential point of view, there showed these strange, isolated features of his life, so long predicted, falling harmoniously into the one perfect and Divine humanity. What could such a Being be but the Way and the Truth, no less than the Life? If in Him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily (amazing words!), how inevitably shall we find in Him also, for the matter not only, but the manner as well, of Divine illustration, an exhaustless study, an unfailing inspiration!