

# MOUNTING UP WITH WINGS

A SETTING FORTH OF

The Unrealised Possibilities of  
The Life of Simple Faith

BY

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## FOREWORD

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**G**OD wants men not only to be "born again," but to be well born; He desires them only to be saved, but to be mightily saved: saved not only from the future penalty of sin, but also from the present power of sin in daily living. He is not satisfied that men should have "life in Christ Jesus" merely: He designs that they should have "life more abundantly."

These pages on "Mounting Up with Wings," written amid many distractions, on the "Evangel," mission vessel in the Solomons, seek to set forth some of the unrealised possibilities of "the life of simple faith" of every believer, and to urge each and all to expect, and to obtain, greater things from God. N.D.

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CHAPTER I  
“ABIDE WITH US”

## “ABIDE WITH US, FOR IT IS TOWARDS EVENING”

ABIDE with us, Thou Christ of God! Abide with us! For some of us, indeed, it is not yet evening; it is only morning—the morning of life; fair, bright, and full of promise. The possibilities are boundless, and youth has boundless hope and faith in the future. All life is before us and all the world; yet we are foredoomed to failure if we have not Thee in our lives; we must make final shipwreck unless we have Thee to guide us. Come, then, into our lives while it is yet morning; before the dew has vanished, before the bloom is spent, before our lives are languid. Even now “’tis time for Thee, Lord Jesus, oh, come in!”

With others of us, fair morning has changed into bright full noonday. The sun is hot, the sun of adversity. The battle is hard, the battle of life. The way already seems long, and we long for rest. Illusions, dreams, and hopes are fading; hard stern realities take their place. Life is all too serious for us to manage in our own strength. The stress and toil of daily life would hide Thee from our gaze. The cares and troubles of this world would occupy the hearts designed for Thee. Come, Saviour Divine, into our dull, clouded lives, and make them bright with Thine own immediate Presence, and thus transform the world for us, and transform us in the world. Come, we pray Thee, and abide with us!

And then, for some of us, the world grows old. Life is passing, and with it the strength to face its battles. Our little day of life draws to a close. Our sun will soon

be setting. Already shadows are stealing across the sky. Oh, abide with us and make our evening, the evening of our lives, bright and glistening with Thine own Presence! Thus as the knees weaken, and the steps falter, as strength declines and the hands begin to tremble, take Thou our hands, "so weak we are and helpless!" Our way must grow darker and still darker, if Thou be not with us. It is only light where Thou are. Without Thee we are afraid of everything. With Thee we fear no day, no foe, no trouble. Thou hast lived for us. Thou hast died for us. Now abide with us for ever. Tarry with us through the long night, and introduce us to the dawning of eternity.

And how abide with us? Come first into our hearts as Saviour; as the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. If any of us have never really known Thee, have never felt the magic of Thy Presence, oh, may such hear Thy gracious summons: "Behold I stand...and knock." May there be no deaf ears to Thee, the Heavenly Visitor, who "stands and knocks, yet will no entrance win until the latch be lifted from within." Then here our hearts we open wide; oh, tarry not outside the door! Constrain us to make that first living contact with Thyself which shall transfer the burden of sin, of life, or service, from us to Thee. Oh! come, abide with us!

And then abide with us always. Once having come, never depart. Come in, oh, come, Thou Heavenly Guest; and yet not Guest, but Master. May all our hearts be bared to Thee; all wills bowed to Thine. Take control of our lives; place the government on Thy shoulder. Deliver us from fear of Thee and make it ever true, that:

"For Thee the door stands open wide,  
At morn, at noon, at eventide.  
Enter, dear Saviour, and abide."

"And He went in to tarry with them."

CHAPTER II  
"THE NEW COVENANT"

## "PEACE...UNTO YOU"

'Twas night! The upper room was thronged  
With men and fears, through foes without;  
The Morning Star for which they longed  
Had set in darkness and in doubt.

Or so they thought, when on the Tree  
That Blessed Master hung in death;  
When, lo! a radiant Presence, He  
Confronts His own, of bated breath.

Ah, see! from Heaven's supernal calm  
He comes to still their quaking hearts;  
Eternal joys His pains embalm,  
Eternal peace He now imparts!

"Handle My scarce-healed scars, and know  
My hands, My feet, My side. I trod  
Death's vale for men, and only so,  
Touching My wounds, may men touch God."

Those hands! What kingly labours theirs!  
To shape the staff, the plough, the yoke;  
To touch blind eyes, dissolve men's tears;  
To break Heaven's bread for hungered folk.

The poor, the halt, the maimed, those feet  
Compassionate had ever sought;  
They were at home on crowded street,  
On weary road, in Heaven's court.

That side! Ah, who can tell what love  
Came bursting forth beneath the spear!  
From thence came tears; from thence above  
All else, the Blood, men's souls to clear.

. . . . .  
"Where two or three are gathered" still  
Inviolable the promise stands.  
"Lo, there am I," men's hearts to fill  
With regnant peace from pierced hands

Art here, Lord, here? Art truly here?  
In very presence? Can it be?  
Are not Heaven's courts Thy fixed abode?  
Can'st leave them still for such as we?

"Open thy heart, My child. My right  
It is for men to intercede  
Before the throne. Yet I delight  
In thy heart's 'upper room' to plead.  
Open thy heart, I'm come indeed."

## “THE NEW COVENANT”

“This cup is the New Testament in My blood” (Luke 22. 20).

1. A New Testament or Covenant. The last dark hour had come. The traitor had gone out into the night, on the way to “his own place.” The little company were gathered close for the lowly meal, a prophetic meal indeed! As they draw together, by faith I see the glow of the lamp upon that blessed face. I bend to catch those gracious words. I would share in Christ’s parting benediction.

From the first He had come “giving gifts,” for He was a King. For three crowded years He had ever given of His best; His healing powers, His profound parables, His patient, never failing love. But, like the honoured ambassador who would keep his best gift till the hour of departure, so with the Lord. Again the “best wine” is last. His supremest gift He has kept in reserve; a gift the most wondrous that even God could bestow. So as this unspeakable gift is unwrapped and displayed, I bend to catch His momentous words. And they are these: “This cup is the New Covenant.” “The new covenant in My blood.” So He opened a new world, so He ushered men into a new relationship with God.

(a) First, then, let our thoughts go back to the Old Covenant, to ponder its wording, so precise, so sinister, so prophetic. For in Exodus 19. 5 I read: “Now if ye will obey...and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me...a kingdom of priests, a holy nation.” Here were great promises, great prospects, great expectations indeed! For had not God spoken and pledged

Himself to man? And the result? The blessed, happy result? Why, the result was, centuries of ashes and vanity, centuries of sins and of tears. The sequel was, a nation habitually apostate, which in its short intervals of contrition could only cry: "O wretched man that I am!" A nation which God was forced to deliver "to trouble, to astonishment, to hissing."

And all this was because of that one small dubious word "if." For by it the whole covenant was made conditional, and conditional upon man. "If ye will do, then I will do." "If ye, then I" (not otherwise). The covenant and its endless benefits were dependent, not upon God's actions, but upon man's. And as in man's flesh "there dwelleth no good thing," the whole covenant was foredoomed to failure.

And more, it was intended to fail! It was to demonstrate man's utter worthlessness, that we might know something of God's infinite worthiness. The old covenant was but "the Law," but a means to an end, that "the whole world might become guilty before God." It was but "our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ."

Even so, to-day, any man whose nearness, whose approach to God is conditional upon his own actions, is just as surely foredoomed to utter disaster, to outer darkness. My own grandfather, as a young military officer in India, made such a covenant with God, and to show his earnestness, wrote it out and sealed it with blood drawn from his own arm. He found but vanity of vanities, till he found shelter and safety and abiding peace under Christ's new covenant.

(b) The New Covenant. Let us then turn to the terms and conditions of that new covenant. The changed conditions are seen most clearly perhaps in Hebrews 8. 10. For though that applies primarily to the Jews, the basic principle is the same for us. For His promised

blessings are now quite unconditional. And with its fivefold “I will” I find the onus is now most blessedly upon God and not upon man. Hear, then, these far-reaching promises: “I will put My laws in their mind.” I will “write them in their hearts.” “I will be to them a God.” “I will be merciful unto them.” “Their sins and their iniquities I will remember no more.” Here, then, is no word about man, no condition for man first to fulfil. And so law gave place to grace, and God’s blessings flowed to man, not through his own deserts, but through “unmerited favour,” through his simple acceptance of the atoning work of Christ.

And how different was the writing of the new covenant! The old was written by the finger of God upon tables of stone. And most prophetically the stones were broken before ever it was received! It was written again, but still upon stones; it never got inscribed upon men’s hearts. Yet of the laws of the new covenant, Christ explicitly declares: “I will write them in their hearts.” And with what a pen He writes, and with how many a process! “With mercy and with judgment!” Perhaps the most indelible of all are the lessons and laws He writes in our hearts through pain and through anguish. So that it has been most truly said: “To suffer passes, to have suffered endures for ever!” Such scars are indeed indelible, yet throughout eternity we may find them the most precious possessions of our hearts. Thank God, then, it is no more law but grace, no longer Sinai but Calvary, no longer “strangers” but “sons and heirs.”

Yet with such large and unconditional mercies flowing from an ever loving Father, even in Paul’s day, there were mean souls who would take advantage of this unconditional covenant to sin with impunity, to “continue in sin that grace may abound.” And their counterpart to-day is found in the man of whom it is told, that, when

he realised his salvation might be assured, and rest not upon his own efforts, but upon Christ's merits, upon grace and not law, exclaimed: "Why then, when I am saved and safe, I may go away and sin as much as I like!" And the wise answer was: "Yes, you may indeed sin as much as you like, but as a child of God, with the Spirit dwelling in and illuminating your heart, you will not like. For as a child of God you will have new desires, and though you may sin, you will never again like sin."

But, thank God, not only is ours a new covenant, it is also a covenant of victory over sin. For Christ has greater designs and ambitions for His own than they realise. And He designed that each should be saved not only from the future penalty of sin, but from the present power of sin in daily living. "Sin shall not have dominion over you," He declares through the Spirit. And this peace, this virtue this power, this victory through the Spirit, are all to be attained through the simple elemental process of "reckoning." "Reckon...yourselves to be dead...unto sin, but alive unto God" through Christ Jesus, by a definite, oft repeated act of faith.

For, having begun in faith (by the first act of which faith we became children of God at the new birth), let us not make the mistake of seeking to go on by "works," trying in our own efforts to "imitate Christ." Ours is to be a life of daily repeated acts of faith, "a life of faith," as continually we draw upon His strength and fullness. For most truly:

"All speed of feet, and skill of hands  
Is for Him spent, and from Him flows."

So that the Christian of all others should be the last to boast that he is a self-made man!

2. The New Will or Testament. But there is a secondary meaning to these eternal words. In a very real sense this was the "will" by which Christ, in dying, bequeathed

His all to us, His own. Very literally and truly, let us remember, did He appoint us His heirs in His death. And He gave us the memorial cup as a continual reminder that we are come into a great inheritance; that He meant it literally when, through the Spirit, He said: "All things are yours."

And this inheritance is doubly assured to us. For He died that we might become "joint-heirs" of "all things," yet He rose again from the dead that He might become His own Executor, and so assure to each his share. So, as I hold the sacred cup to my lips, it is God's calm, strong assurance that my inheritance in Him is no more a dream, than is the cup I hold. It is intensely real. It is eternal in the heavens. Yes, this is His last "will." It is full of heavenly bequests, for which probate was granted the very day He rose triumphant o'er the grave.

The world would give untold wealth for the original tables of stone upon which the finger of God wrote (Exod. 31. 18) the foundation of the old covenant of the law. Nations and learned societies would compete for the precious fragments. Yet in the hands of the believer they would have but a pathetic interest. For they would witness indeed to a Holy God, but only to a broken covenant and a broken humanity. Yet at the simple "supper" the humblest believer may hold the priceless chalice of the new covenant, a cup ten thousand times more precious to mankind than were ever the tables of the law. For the cup is the silent yet eloquent token of the new covenant, unbroken and unbreakable, between God and man, which rests securely not on man's worth, but on God's grace.

Bishop Moule's story of the Scottish peasant girl is beautiful in this connection. She was stopped by Claverhouse's troopers on her way to the secret meeting place among the mountains, and questioned where she was

going. "Sir," she replied, "my Elder Brother has died, and I am going to hear His will read, and to get my share." And she was allowed to pass. Do we take such pains to hear His "will" read, to hear it often? Oh, but the onus is upon each of us to see to it that we do get our share. For it is so easy for God to give. His Name is Bountiful. But it is so hard for Him to get us to take, to make us able to receive! Of old it was an easy matter to the Almighty to destroy the Canaanites before the children of Israel. It was a "hard thing" even for God to make the Israelites worthy and fit to inherit the land. Yet it is His will that we should draw near "with full assurance of faith," nothing doubting that He may fill us with all the fullness of God.

In closing, we must look past the new covenant, past this last "will and testament," past even the sacred cup, to the hand that won it, and that now holds and offers it. There can be but one objective now for our eyes, our hearts, our lives, our love. It is the One for whom no title can be adequate, the One in whom dwelleth "all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." And as I think of the cost of the cup to Him, all my standards of measurement fail and fall short. They become so pitifully inadequate. "Broken for you!" I read, "broken for you." "My body broken for you!"

And instinctively my human heart would estimate the cost by the outward human sufferings: the blazing sun, the parched tongue, the tearing nails, the gaping crowds.

Yet these physical agonies, sore indeed as they were, were but on the surface of His soul. They were but the Atlantic waves over the depths of His woe. Prophetic had been the cry: "All Thy waves and Thy billows have gone over Me!" And it became divinely and terribly true that day. How best can I sound the unfathomable deeps of His desolation and woe? How but in the "*Lama*

*sabachthani*;" that rose out of the supernatural night which settled down over Him as He hung upon that hill of reproach? "My God, My God, why?" "Why?" And the one note, not of despair, lay in the double use of the "My." The relationship was still unbroken, though becoming sin for us, the fellowship was suspended.

So, as in thankful worship and surrender, I lift my heart to Him and cry: "Lord, reveal, restore, renew!" the centuries fall away, for "what are years to the King of Eternity?" And a thousand years does become as one day. The far past becomes infinitely near. And that remote historic day suddenly becomes now! And, "Lo! it is the Lord!" Yes, He is present in very deed, and as He hands me the simple cup of remembrance, I cannot but see the everlasting scars of the nails, by which He, too, is sealed. And I can only cry: "My Lord, and my God!"

CHAPTER III  
A BLESSED SEQUENCE

## A BLESSED SEQUENCE

"Behold what manner of love!" (1 John 3. 1).

"Behold what manner of persons ought ye to be?" (2 Peter 3. 11).

"Behold what manner of Man is this?" (Mark 4. 41).

BEHOLD what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us! We are here invited to a great sight. We are invited by the Spirit to view, and to reverently examine some of the many aspects, the wondrous virtues of the love of God. It is true "it passeth knowledge," yet in this quest we shall have the illumination, the inspiration of the unveiling Spirit. We can of course know but a fragment of the glories of such love, until that day when we shall know as we are known. Yet it is our blessed privilege and duty to ponder the sacred page wherewith that love is expounded and revealed and exemplified.

Back from the mission field on furlough, it is always one of the first pleasures to revisit the picture galleries, in whose cool arcades are displayed men's greatest conceptions of the beauties of life and nature. One has often wondered at the numbers of hurrying feet of men with eyes on the ground, who pass by, heedless, desireless, of being inspired and uplifted by gazing at such scenes, which so few turn in to view and enjoy. And so it is with the great picture gallery of the inerrant Word of God. On its sacred pages are pictured many a forlorn hope, many a desperate act of trust, many a heroic faith, many a tender passion, as God's Spirit strove and clothed Himself with men in all ages. Here, then, are the outworkings, the demonstrations of that ineffable love we would behold, we would know. Yet how few there are who care to join

us, who come to view, to ponder, to worship the love of God and the God of love.

It is a Father Love. For the great world of sinners God's compassion is indeed supreme. Yet for all His Own, redeemed and regenerate, that love takes a deeper hue, a richer wealth. "Like as a father pitieth" (Psa. 103. 13) we are reminded. How much that involves! Once after a strenuous voyage of visiting in the "Evangel," one was sitting, reading and resting, when a man came closely past, leading by the hand a little boy. He was dirty and dishevelled, with great island sores which smelled horribly; he was crying bitterly too, and was covered with flies. As the child came closer I cried out: "Zaccheus, what are you doing with that dirty little boy?" The man paused in astonishment, then blurted out: "Why, he's mine! He's my son!" That was all. That was enough, enough explanation to his mind. "His son!" Forgotten were the flies, the crying, and the sores as he was taking the boy down to the sea to wash. His father's heart saw beyond; he saw the child cured, and grown to manhood, and still the object of his love, his heart. To me the child seemed repellent, save as a matter of duty. But to him he was "my son", and that made all the difference. His father's heart was *impregnable* to the sores and the crying. And God! What of His love? "Like as a father," He says; and what a Father! What love! He too sees beyond. His love, too, is impregnable. He loves "to the uttermost" in spite of wounds to character, and bruises and putrifying sores. He beholds His Own through the precious blood, without "spot or wrinkle, or any such thing" (Eph. 5. 27).

But He is not content to restore us through the one atoning sacrifice back merely to Adam's state of innocence. He would lift us from "the mud of sin" (as the converts term it locally) right through to the heights of Heaven,

would change us from outcasts to heirs, from felons to fellow-workers with His dear Son.

Yet how shall I behold that love? What lens will portray it? What life can expound it? I think indeed of the paladins of faith; of Enoch and Noah, who walked with God; of Abraham, "the friend of God;" of Israel, "a prince with God;" and of many another, who through that love was transformed and transfigured. Yet it is just this selfsame love which is to be shed abroad in my heart and yours, without measure, without stint.

But none even of these giants of faith can give an adequate rendering of such effulgence. To find the highest exposition of that ineffable love I must go to the Holy One and the Just. I must make and take time to behold Him with reverence and godly fear as the clear shining of His heart irradiates the sacred page.

I would see Him first in the mystery of the manger, and bend with the shepherds over the Babe, wherein were combined such helplessness and yet such purity. And bending there I should hear the hurrying careless world's refrain:

"No room, no room, have we for such as Thee,  
Thou Babe of Galilee; pass on! pass on!"

So with Him I would pass in mind to that life in strange subjection and silence, through the intervening years at Nazareth, as He shaped with skilful hands those yokes which never galled, and pondered the parables He should utter, which men have never fathomed yet.

Then, with the opening of His public ministry, I would recall those wonderful conditions of His offer of pardon to men. How at the outset He made it clear, as with Nicodemus by night, that *no personal merit* could lift the bar sinister of sin, and yet in contrast, with the outcast woman at the well, He proclaimed once for all that *no personal*

*demerit* could baffle His love and pardon for a repentant heart.

But it is in the glare of GOLGOTHA and the merciful darkness which followed that the supreme climax of that love is set forth. Well may we rejoice in the triumph of affection and affliction contained in those victorious words, "It is finished!" which seemed at the time so like an admission of defeat. For by that pronouncement I know that the love of God has triumphed indeed, and I am now enabled by faith to become a member of the body of Christ, just as surely, just as literally as had I been one of the members nailed to "the tall tree" that spectral day.

And as I think of our heritage in such a love, and of our coming exalted destiny, and of the blessed company we even now may enjoy, there come to mind the challenging words of the Apostle Peter: "Seeing... these things... What manner of persons ought we to be?" For by that love there is thrown upon us the onus of having very grateful hearts, and very changed lives. And the strongest incentive for such a change is set forth by the Spirit to be the very imminence of the approaching greater change when Christ shall come again. And as one who has watched thousands of natives turn from darkness to light, one can bear conclusive witness that there is no greater spur to holier living and continued missionary zeal than that same premonition of the *Parousia*.

It has been said that Paul knew only two dates in his calendar. They were "to-day" and "that day." "To-day" to be passed and packed full of blessed service and worship; and "that day," the appointed time for giving account, towards which all his splendid energies were bent. That was long ago, and he went to his reward "more than conqueror." In this age when there are so many "hands so full of money and hearts so full of care," God give us a holy aloofness from the world and its goals and its gods.

Do not presume to pity, as unpractical, the man who lives "gazing up into Heaven," "looking unto Jesus." We shall run our engines, and sail our ships, and care for our converts, and fulfil our varied ministeries all the more earnestly and effectually for the glories we shall behold with such an uplook. God give us then to "dream dreams" and to "see visions," and "so much the more as we see the day approaching."

And it is to one of the most blessed spiritual fruits that the apostle incites us, to "all holy conversation and godliness." It is true the world will know us not, because it "knew Him not," still less will it care for the songs of Zion, or the Emmaus walk, or the Patmos vision.

"Yet in these days when lowering clouds and storms  
Have come to stay,  
And gather denser till our Lord's own voice  
Call us away,"

may it become ever more true that "our conversation (citizenship) is in Heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour."

Yet when we consider what is expected of us, what is reasonable from us, when we remember past failure and worthlessness, we must feel all too hopeless of ever being worthy of such a love and such a Lord. Indeed our hearts should fail us with fear. The only reassurance possible, feasible for our desperate case is to cry out with the astonished disciples in the storm: "What manner of Man is this!" (Mark 4. 41).

The explanation of that remarkable storm on the lake is found in a subtle transposition of words. In verse 35 He had said, "Let us pass over." In verse 36 we find that "They took Him" (not He took them). I suppose most of us would have considered Christ's mere presence in the boat sufficient guarantee to ensure a safe passage.

Yet it was not so. For they were taking Him. He was a passenger, not the captain. It may have been natural enough. They were fishermen whose business it was to daily sail the lake. They would expect to know more than He did about handling a boat. This, surely, was some service they were competent, unaided, to do for Him. Only the sequel showed them their mistake. Oh! the blessedness of some of Christ's sequels!

It is the same to-day with many a believer. Such may make very sure of Christ's continuing presence in the heart, through the Holy Ghost. They "know whom they have believed." But too often there is a wrong adjustment to Him. He is indeed an honoured Guest, yet not the supreme Guide and Master. Yet "if He is not Lord of all, He is not Lord at all." It is a matter which will have to be frankly faced. It has been said that the sinner has to choose between Heaven and Hell; the saint has to choose between Heaven and earth. This is a true saying. If the government is not definitely and deliberately placed on His shoulder, there may be no "heavenly places" nor rest, nor any lasting joy. Christ cannot be content to be merely a passenger in the life. It is far too perilous for the soul. For truly we are not sufficient of ourselves to think (much less do) anything of ourselves. But our sufficiency is of God.

Yet many souls are still seeking to manage their own storms, their own lives, their own service. And, "most weary seems the sea, weary the oar." Yet He will need little awaking. It is His way to wait till we cry. Then He is the Lord of the storm, just as much as He is the Lord of the Sabbath. Indeed, "even the winds and the sea obey Him." And for me, "Well roars the storm to him who hears a deeper voice across the storm."

Surrender then, to His almighty hands, the oar, the sail, the soul. Having received Him into the heart,

enthroned Him in simple faith, through the Spirit. Then He can work His wonders, then He will bring "a great calm," with His "Peace, be still." Then indeed the love of God may be "shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost." And then we shall be ready to cry with the disciples: "What manner of Man is this," and later, with the Heavenly host: "Blessing and honour and glory and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever!"

CHAPTER IV

REDIGGING THE WELLS

## THE LAW OF THE LARK'S SONG

I CANNOT sing  
With folded wing,  
Nor fill the air with joyful sound  
When hampered, low, upon the ground.

But I must soar,  
Before I pour  
My joyful praises all abroad;  
My heart and God of one accord.

For as I rise  
Toward the skies,  
My heart must overflow in praise  
To Him who gives such gladsome days.

But when, with weary wings, I droop  
From out the skies and earthward stoop,  
Rising no more,  
My song is o'er.

Here is the human law of praise;  
Who skyward rise, and on Him gaze,  
They Godlike grow,  
Their songs o'erflow.

Yet should earth draw them back, ah pain!  
No more the victor's glad refrain;  
If hearts grow numb,  
Lips must grow dumb.

Would'st ever sing? Then ever soar  
In God's pure love; so evermore  
Fill all thy days  
With vibrant praise.

## REDIGGING THE WELLS

(Gen. 26. 18)

ISAAC'S wells may suggest many things, but pondering the words, there rises to mind the Saviour's illuminative saying: "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." With this springing well of living waters then in mind, let us turn to that old world incident in Genesis 26. 18: "Isaac digged again the wells they had digged in the days of Abraham his father."

1. And here we find one of the primary truths of God: Every generation must know God for itself, every man must find God for himself. Abraham's labour was of no avail for his son. The fact that the father oft had drunk deep of that refreshing spring could not slake Isaac's thirst. The young man had to redig the well and find the life-giving water for himself.

Even so the travail of our fathers as they sought the living waters in the thirsty land of their generation, will not avail to quench our thirst for eternal things. We must find those living waters, each for himself. Yet surely that is largely the error that ails the so-called Christian Church to-day. The God of the fathers has not become the God of their sons. That stalwart faith, tested and proved by those gone to their reward, too often is only a theory, even a myth, with the present generation.

Men have largely confused the knowledge of God with the character which results from that knowledge. Now character is like a draft, payable partly in posterity. Our fathers travailed in faith, and lived their lives for God, and we in some sense have entered into their labours.

Reaping where they had faithfully sown, we have profited by their piety. And men to-day blindly take credit for character so inherited. Yet too often they only know God by proxy. Such knowledge has undoubtedly a restraining effect from excesses of sin. Yet it is still born and cannot propagate itself. It is not life; it is only the reflection of life.

A common cry in times of financial depression has been: "Back to the land," the primary source of wealth. A safer, surer cry in these times of spiritual bankruptcy is, "Back to the Book!" "Back to the God of our fathers!" the only source of life. A national religion, a family religion, is not sufficient. We need, each, a personal religion; a contact, each for himself with the Saviour. "And Isaac digged (for himself) the wells...of Abraham his father."

2. It is not enough to live in the strength of past blessings in our own lives. Often, we too, need to redig the springing wells of blessing that once flowed in our own lives. How many Christians are parched and dry who once overflowed in gladness around! And how many hearts are hopeless of ever regaining the first flush of life and love that once transfigured them. Yet that is not God's ordinance for His own. O! do not believe that the water of which the Saviour spake is merely a mirage, to be pursued, but ever to elude us! His well was a spring that kept on springing! He wills it that our souls should never know when drought cometh, but should ever be as a watered garden. God give us a divine discontent with our present possessions, that we too, with Isaac, may dig and dig again.

3. Springs are present in the most unlikely places. The land was arid enough when Isaac digged, and burnt up by the fierce sun. Rain was infrequent and streams were absent. All must have seemed most discouraging.

Yet the fact that his father had found, and drunk deep of that water, impelled Isaac to dig and find. There need be no arid deserts for God's children. However unlovely, however unlikely, however cold and hopeless your heart may seem, God's blessing is waiting, waiting for your seeking, for your digging.

On a sugar plantation, the valuable crop was often ruined by drought, so that many thousands of pounds were often lost in a year. Then an engineer came, who asserted that, being on a river flat, water was present all over the estate. Spear wells were driven, and connected with central pumps, and an abundant supply of life-giving water discovered, which at once made droughts a thing of the past. Abundant water had been there for years, still and silent, and only waiting to be tapped. And oh, thirsty soul, there need be no droughts of heart with God. Springs of blessing, of fresh blessing, of richer blessing, lie hidden, deep in your own soul, only waiting to be tapped.

4. Why necessary to redig? In that country, as in all hearts, wells do not keep open of themselves. The sandstorms of the desert swept over that land, and, little by little, the wells were choked. And "hearts deceitful... and desperately wicked" have their storms of passion and of sin, and just as surely need constant cleansing. We need to keep short accounts with God if springs are to flow.

But further, the wells were blocked because "the Philistines had stopped them." Incredible though it may seem, these wells had no value for the Philistines. One might have thought that anyone would treasure water in that thirsty land; but they did not. And equally one might expect that "living water" would be prized in such a world of drought and death as this. But no. Supremely true it is that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit...they are foolishness unto him."

How many Philistines there are to-day, opposed to and opposing the truth, who set themselves to "stop" the wells of blessing in those around them.

5. Some of the wells. (a) The well of the Word of God. How men have done their best to pollute and choke it! Yet those words that once thrilled your heart are still living and life-giving; they still retain their power to assuage men's thirst of heart. Yet this is the well that the Philistines have set themselves first of all and above all to "stop." To-day in their subtlety they do not call themselves Philistines. Mostly these "higher critics" still call themselves Christians. Yet in the clear searchlight of the Spirit we know that these are "wells without water," for most of whom there would seem to be but one destiny, "to whom," alas, only "the mist of darkness is reserved for ever" (2 Peter 2. 17).

Oh! then, "give attendance to reading" the Word of God, the fountain of life; drink deep again of the fountain once opened in the Saviour's side. "Open wide thy mouth," thy life, thy heart for there are still "waters to swim in." "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust."

(b) The well of Prayer. How needful, yet how often "stopped." Yet "God fades out of the life of the man who does not pray." In the mission field we know full well the one plan of campaign. We know that never was there such need for intercessors, never such rewards as to-day. If there is one ministry more essential for missionaries it is that of fervent prevailing prayer. For many of Satan's strongholds may only be stormed as we advance upon our knees. If there is one grace we covet, one prayer you need to pray for us, it is that, in spite of weariness and overpressure, and the "care of all the churches" among multiplying converts, we may be enabled to remain upon our knees. As you seek His face, oh, cry

to God to lay upon our hearts that burden that only finds relief when the spring of prevailing prayer continually gushes forth.

(c) The well of the Spirit's fullness. If we have once known that ecstasy of heart which comes from being truly "filled with the Spirit," may none of us be content with memories. We need constantly a fresh appropriation by faith of the Spirit, that He may exalt the Saviour in our hearts, and continually revive and refresh us. God waits to give it.

(d) The well of Joy. The joy of the Lord is still to be our strength. A joyless Christian is a libel on his Master; he is a contradiction in terms. And nothing is so infectious as joy. There is nothing the world so really longs for as joy. And nothing may be so enduring as the joy of the Lord. Why "with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation" is meant to be your happy and abiding experience. God give you back your joy.

6. Yet there comes a time when it is not easy to redig the wells. Isaac found it so, and so may we. It meant striving (v. 20). It meant sweat and labour and toil, and perhaps some failures; but it was worth it all. And one thing is certain, we shall not dig far or long before (v. 24), like Isaac, we shall meet with God. He will be found of us. The world thirsts, and God has ordained that each of His own shall bear the water of life, brimming, it may be trembling, to some of these thirsty souls. May all our wells, then, be cleansed; may the springs of our own hearts be unstopped that we, like Isaac, may more and more be "fruitful in the land."

CHAPTER V

“IMPOTENT FOLK WAITING”

## “IMPOTENT FOLK WAITING”

(John 5. 3)

HERE are words underlined in many Bibles; may God underline them in many hearts.

It was at Bethsaida. It must have been a motley gathering that thronged its famous pool. From East and West they came, from North and South; rich and poor, old and young, from all, came some. There was indeed only one passport to the pool; that passport was their common need. It was their hope of healing from some malady, deformity, or weakness. Yet in the precincts of that porch we find, alas, a picture of many of Christ's Church to-day. For notice, each decrepit one who sheltered round the pool had life. The dead you must seek further. We, too, who own Christ's sway have life. Once we were dead in sin, but now in Christ we have been “made alive.” Here, then, we see a picture of the Christian; and though it is tragical, it is still true that in this portrait gallery of the pool we shall see only too surely many a likeness to ourselves.

For read the pathetic list of such as sought the pool, and see how clearly we are included. In the multitude there were many—

1. Blind (v. 3). We read of two whose eyes were “holden” for half an hour. Yet many, alas, have “holden eyes” for half a lifetime. Many eyes indeed are only really opened at their exit from this world of opportunities for service. Such are born again, yet blind; blind to the spiritual world, all too unconscious of the Master's call. They are living in the present, and for the present: buying

no gold tried in the fire, winning no souls, doing no service for the King of kings. "Blind" to their eternal interests.

2. Halt or Lame. How many Christians walk with a limp. They go through life with some obvious deformity or weakness of character that emasculates their witness and makes their testimony of no effect. For how a limp betrays its presence! Indeed, nothing singles out a man when passing in a throng more quickly than his lameness; and the world has eyes to see. Oh! the limping army of God that should be leaping! Is there no limp in your life, no failing that spoils your service, that betrays your weakness, that causes constant defeat and disgrace and shame upon the Master's Name?

3. Withered, Dried Up. Here, too truly, is familiar ground. How dry we get, even in God's service, unless constantly and freshly anointed with the oil of the Holy Ghost; so dry that we often become veritable fossils, holding the truth yet the truth not holding us, till we personify the dryness of a dead orthodoxy.

4. Impotent, not able. This is the most descriptive, the most pathetic of all. We run our schools, we teach our classes, we preach our sermons, we carry on our missions, we wear ourselves out with "much serving;" too often we accomplish—almost nothing. Can you not look back on such service for God, that, in spite of utmost endeavour, and greatest pains, and brightest hopes, has yet been almost fruitless? Yet He has ordained that we should bear "much fruit." The secret is simple. We are like the savage who bends his bow, and with the same human energy that he bends his bow, just so far does the arrow fly, to fall far short of the mark. What quivers full of such arrows we have shot in God's service! How zealous we have been, how hard we have toiled, how meagre has been the result! Because? Because we have been impotent; because we have not drawn upon the

resources of God, but have gone forward in fleshly energy, which in the realm of the Spirit is worse than useless.

Yet at Pentecost the Christian's armament was changed, so to speak, from arrows to cartridges. On that day God placed the dynamic power of the Holy Ghost at the disposal of the simplest, most humble believer. Thus our only qualification needs to be, not “a strong right arm” to bend the bow of the flesh, not a dominating personality to impress the mind of man, while leaving his spirit untouched, but a sanctified finger to press the trigger of faith, and thus by a simple act of obedience to release the stored up power of Pentecost.

Now “a great multitude” was there. Many may have found consolation in the fact that others were worse than themselves. A man with a palsied hand might so look down upon a man with a loathsome sore. How practiced we get in thus excusing our failings, in finding motes in other eyes. How willing we are to apply to someone else the message God has meant for us. Truly the cry of the sinking ship: “Every man for himself” needs to be sounded in Churches and to Christians. For our first business is to apply God's message to our own hearts and consciences.

And that is just what the Saviour did here; for, leaving the multitude to fade into the background, He focuses all notice and attention upon one “certain man” (v. 5). That “certain man” is not your neighbour, but you. And now for the moment reckon that there are only two in the world—yourself and your Saviour. For such “a certain man” what was the Saviour's chief concern? Was it his malady, his suffering, the length of his illness? No, none of these. The one thing important was his willingness to be well. “Wilt thou be made whole?” is the Saviour's surprising question. Such is still the one thing needful, often the one thing lacking. For many professing Christians to-day are like professional cripples,

unwilling to be well. Yet before God will exercise His healing, transforming power, there needs to be a waiting, expectant attitude, a longing to be whole. All else is easy. For length of illness or of sin is no obstacle. To Him to whom a thousand years is as one day, this man's thirty-eight years of sickness, his chronic condition, was no difficulty.

When Jesus knew he had now been a long time in that case, can you hear Him saying sadly: "Ah! that is too long. It is too late. The disease is chronic and can't be changed. It is your character; it is you." Ah, never the Son of Man spake like that. Such a belief is but the seduction of Satan, who, while he accuses us to God, is bent on excusing us to ourselves. No, thirty-eight years, or thirty-eight minutes is just the same to the Saviour. However long that kink in your character, that besetting sin, that powerless life has lasted, what seems inevitable to you is not impossible to God. Test this impregnable couplet, which applies to all things which are the will of God: "All power is given unto Me." "All things are possible to him that believeth." Here is your assurance of present deliverance.

In such an incurable case, what means could avail? This man was waiting for a stirring of the waters. That is a common practice with Christians to-day, to wait for a stirring up. Yet, like the ripples in a pool, how quickly such an experience subsides. More is needed. This man got more. He got a personal interview with the Saviour. It changed his life and sent him on his way rejoicing.

To-day, in a sense, the Saviour is gone. Having finished His work, He has "sat down at the right hand of God." But He has sent Another. He has delegated the work to the Comforter. Thus, to-day, the contact with God must be made through the Holy Ghost, whose office

it is to manifest and magnify the Saviour in our hearts. He is now the Executive of the Godhead. His personality looms so large in the counsels of the early Church that the record of their doings has been truly called “The Acts of the Holy Ghost.”

Yet the Holy Ghost has become largely ignored, unnoticed, and unknown to the Church to-day. We have known of Him, but have not known Him. He abides for ever in the heart of every true believer. Too often His work of revealing the Saviour is hampered, for He is only on the threshold, when He needs to be upon the throne of our hearts. He should be in the living room, to control all daily conduct; in the sleeping room to purify the secret thoughts; in the prophet’s chamber to give point and power to our prayers. He should be consulted in the counting house, that our testimony be not tarnished. He would share with each his daily toil and joy; and, as tastes differ, even so, in us His temples, there will be many things we cling to which will grieve Him. If we are to know His power, all such must go. He must have a free hand. Only when supreme can He impart to us that power so essential for daily joy and victory and service. He may be enthroned by a single definite act of faith and surrender. Then, daily, hourly, He must be consulted, recognised, obeyed. Will this make life oppressive? Will it make life a burden? Why, it will lift us into the seventh heaven!

Now take a last look at this man, “walking and leaping and praising God.” (Those are not the words of the text, but they are true of every one thus freed and healed.) The man has now a trophy upon his shoulder—it is his bed. Thus the very emblem of his weakness has now become the clearest evidence of his abounding health. This is prophetic! Even so, though it may mean time and repeated failures, the Holy Ghost can take the infirmity

or sin which is overcoming you, and spoiling your testimony, to make it the most convincing proof of His power to heal and keep. It has been done for multitudes. It may be done for you. This man lamented that others had stepped down before him. Even so, while we hesitate and hold back, many have stepped out in faith, have been filled with the Holy Ghost, and have gone on their shining way into God's blest service, rejoicing. Wilt thou, too, be made whole?

CHAPTER VI

TURNING PROMISES INTO FACTS

## TURNING PROMISES INTO FACTS

OUR Christianity is still-born if it is not practical, if it does not profoundly and continually influence life and conduct. For Christianity is a life rather than a mere profession, a life to be lived daily in Christ by the power of the Holy Ghost. But if it is to really yield "the peaceable fruit of righteousness" there is a certain definite reaction of the soul which must be realised and consciously practised. I refer to the habit of daily definite acts of faith, so needful throughout the believer's life.

Yet, consciously or unconsciously, many Christians have two gospels; a Gospel of faith for conversion to be followed by a gospel of works or of self-effort, for sanctification in after life. With some, indeed, this is deliberate. They must perforce yield, and leave the heavenly future in God's hands, when they become children of God by faith; but they are often unwilling to surrender the earthly present into those same wonderful hands. To such I would solemnly say, it is terribly possible to have a saved soul and yet to have a lost, and entirely lost life. Thus though salvation depends entirely on Christ and His finished work, our enjoyment of that salvation depends largely on ourselves and on our daily yielding and appropriating His fullness. And to the carnal soul who will not yield, who disdains to "walk by faith," there can be no real enjoyment of Christ.

But there are many who are not consciously rebellious, who pray much, but who are yet really living lives of self effort, and are only too conscious of powerlessness and defeat. To such, "having begun in the spirit are ye now

made perfect in the flesh" (Gal. 3. 3), is God's searching question of this, which is literally a gospel of works, by which men, justified by a definite saving act of faith in the Son of God, are yet really seeking to be sanctified by a process of their own efforts.

Yet we are warned of God: "The just shall live by faith" (not merely believe and be saved by faith). So, though "try" must be the believer's best motto if he does not walk by faith, yet "trust" must continually be his method if he is to harness and appropriate the resources, the power of God. It may be humbling to the flesh, but it is one of God's certainties that the great wonderland of grace and of glory and of God can only be possessed by a life of faith. And a "life of faith" implies a series of conscious, definite, repeated daily acts of faith, by which we take God at His word, believe His promises, claim them for our own in spite of feelings or appearances, and so turn them into present blessed facts. So holiness by faith is the only logical sequence of justification by faith.

It has been beautifully said that every true believer walks continually through life upon a pathway literally paved with the promises of God. And these promises are the most far-reaching and particular and comprehensive it is possible to imagine, so that wondrous possibilities are open to each of God's pilgrims. Now from time immemorial the foot, the human foot, has been the most ancient and significant standard of measurement. And for us wayfarers who to-day walk the celestial pathway the believer's foot may be just as definite a measure of spiritual things.

It is said of William Penn that his integrity so won the confidence of the Indians that they offered to give him all the land his foot could cover in a day. So he set off one day and walked nearly thirty miles, encircling and so gaining possession of the whole area that Philadelphia

now occupies; and one of the Indians shrewdly said to him: "The paleface has made a very long walk to-day!"

And God? Why, God has promised to each of us the very same! Shall we not take Him at His word? He says: "Every place (and so every promise) that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto thee" (Josh. 13). So, a human foot, measuring, taking possession of God's promises of faith, has possibilities which are quite incalculable. Yet in spite of this spiritual pathway of promises many true believers continue to be literally "spiritual paupers," to the scorn, the derision of the world. "All things are yours" is so clearly, so tragically untrue for them.

They pathetically remind one of the original owners of Mount Morgan, in Queensland, who toiled for years on its barren slopes, eking out a miserable living, never knowing that underfoot was one of the richest mountains of gold the world has known. Here was wealth, vast, unimagined, yet unrealised, unpossessed. Yet every believer has, in the wealth of God's promises, a spiritual Mount Morgan under his very feet, only waiting to be recognised and claimed and so appropriated.

The heart of the matter may be best explained by the old illustration of walking on two feet. In all our spiritual progress there are two elements in each act of faith. First asking, and then taking from God. Thus if a child asks me for a present, and I hold out a shilling, it is no use for the child to go on asking any more. The shilling is already proffered; it must now take in order to possess it. Even so, many believers are good at asking, but fail to take, to appropriate. They go on praying, and praying, and praying for some blessing God is trying to get them to receive. They are, as it were, hopping round on one foot, praying, and praying, and praying. But hopping is a laborious mode of progress, never intended by God, and so is such praying.

For, strange as it may seem, there is a time not to pray, a time then prayer can do no more. And that is when it is time to act. "Get thee up! Wherefore liest thou upon thy face?" was God's command to Joshua, when he was praying to Him for guidance and help (Joshua 7. 10). What! Not pray? No, not when it is time to act. For as God's intended way of progression for man was walking on the feet, first the one foot and then the other, even so it is in spiritual things. We must ask and then take, ask and then take, and so we shall advance joyfully and continuously in the normal appointed way. But taking, appropriating, must always be the sequel to asking, just as the left foot follows the right. So, literally we shall learn to "walk and not faint," and so acquire the blessed habit of "obtaining promises." Are you daily walking on two feet spiritually? Have you learned the happy art of asking and then taking the treasures God is longing to pour out? If so, then you really know how to turn His promises into present facts.

It is recorded of Mr. Hudson Taylor, that one day of deep depression, in his daily reading he came across God's significant statement of the believer: "My cup runneth over." "Yes, Lord, if Thou dost say so, it must be true; but yet it really is very far from running over, for there is not enough money for the missionaries." And he read again: "My cup runneth over." "Yes, Lord, Thou sayest it; but there are dissensions among some of the missionaries." But again: "My cup runneth over," and still other very real burdens and difficulties came to mind. "But, Lord, thou art eternal, and Thy Word is eternally true. So, in spite of appearances, it must be true just now for me." "My cup runneth over!" "I do now believe it and count it true, and thank Thee for it." So by God's grace that burdened, heroic missionary was enabled, in a time of great difficulty, to rest upon that gracious state-

ment and promise of God, and to appropriate it as true for him just then. So he "obtained" (Heb. 11. 33) that promise, and turned it into a present happy fact by a definite act of faith. And the effect was very much more than the more subjective effect of cheering his own heart. For God very soon showed him that it was literally true at that moment, by dissolving all the difficulties in His own wonderful way, so well known to us in the mission field. That, to me, is a perfect instance of turning a promise into a present fact by an act of faith, by a man who had learned to walk on both feet, by praying and believing, by asking and then taking.

And it is a habit one can most humbly and thankfully recommend after some years of experience, as most practical and profitable; indeed, as being often the only pathway open to the burdened believer. How very often in years past in the conflict of the mission field, spiritual defeat has only been changed into victory by a deliberate taking hold in faith, and by holding on in spite of feelings, to some such promise of God till He had intervened and given deliverance. And deliberately practising this blessed habit continually tends to enlarge our expectations, so that, as with Mr. Geo. Muller, asking and then expecting in faith becomes almost automatic, and prayer becomes asking and accepting. So, gradually, graciously, after repeated experiences, there is developed in the believer that super-sight of faith which is God's most precious gift to His children, so that we may learn to—

"Feel through all this fleshly dress,  
Clear sights of everlastingness."

And when a promise is so realised by an act of faith, I like to think of the joy of Him, and I seem to see the blessed Master turn His gracious face as of old, to ask again: "Who touched Me?" "Somebody hath touched Me." And there is love, not censure in His look and

tone, love and gladness at His Child's boldness and confidence in Him. For it is just that very tangible act, that touching in faith, that taking in confidence, that touches the Saviour's heart as well as His garment, and opens His hand of bounty.

Oh, often put out, even tremblingly, thy hand of faith, and touch, and so take! This is the happy life of faith. And as we read in the long and luminous portrait gallery of the Bible, and find there the paladins of faith, and listen to the cadence of their triumphant voices as they "subdued kingdoms...obtained promises...out of weakness were made strong," may their mantle descend in some humble degree upon us, may our hearts be stirred to like expectations as we deliberately set ourselves to turn God's promises into present facts. Gracious Lord, "increase our faith." Enlarge our expectations. Teach us to ask, and touch, and take.

CHAPTER VII  
"TOILING IN ROWING"  
OR TRIUMPHING

## “TOILING IN ROWING” OR TRIUMPHING

(Matt. 14. 24)

1. The Sequence of Scripture. Some of the deepest lessons of the spiritual life lie hidden from the casual reader, and it is most blessed to ponder and compare the sacred records, that we may realise afresh God's methods with man. There is a Divine sequence in Scripture, and the lake scene before us, with its storm and sudden calm, most naturally and necessarily follows the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand. For that was a “mountain top” experience to the disciples, when they were shown the Saviour's power, and their resources in Him. Yet that peaceful scene on the mountain side was immediately followed by the stormy crossing of the lake, that with the remembrance of the miracle fresh in their minds, they might learn to lean upon Him by faith, to expect the impossible in the daily trials of life, and so habitually to become “more than conquerors” over all the assaults of the enemy.

And exactly so from our “Keswicks,” from our conventions, from our mountain tops, where, led by the Spirit, we have dreamed dreams and seen visions of the wondrous possibilities of the Spirit-filled life, we have to descend to the dead level of daily living (so often so very dead). And there our dreams must be either dissipated, and we be disheartened, or they must become transmuted and transfigured through the faithful exercise of faith, into present blessed facts and possessions.

Yes, here for their own sakes the Saviour constrained

the disciples to enter the ship, that presently they might enter the storm. And, then, dismissing the multitude, "He went up into a mountain apart to pray." We can well imagine one of the subjects of His prayer that night, can faintly picture His heart of love as He followed His chosen followers in spirit into the storm whither His love had consigned them. Here, then, is a sequence that must needs often be repeated in your life and mine if we are to grow into His likeness. Revelation must be followed by realisation, trusting by testing, if we are to possess our possessions as only would please Him.

2. "Toiling in rowing." Follow now the fortunes of the little ship, "tossed with the waves for the wind was contrary." Picture the long dark hours of conflict, as the perplexed disciples strained at the oars. At long length, when they had discovered their helplessness, "Jesus went unto them." Yet having troubled to leave the mountain top of prayer, and to cross the raging waters that stormy night, He yet "would have passed by them." What a wonderful unveiling of His attitude of love, what a gracious "make-believe" on His part! For it was no indifference that would have taken Him past them. It was a tender way He had of provoking, of drawing forth their cry for help. It takes us in mind at once to Emmaus, where again "He made as though He would have gone further." How precious evidently to Him the cry for succour, the heart turned to Him for help, for fellowship, the wide-opened door of the life. For He will not force His blessed company, His aid, even upon His own. He waits, He longs to-day, as He waited then, waits to be gracious in answer to our call. "Christ passes on His ceaseless quest; nor will He rest with any, save as welcomed, chiefest Guest."

It was perhaps natural that the disciples should be troubled at the sight of the Saviour walking on the waters,

and should cry out for fear, saying, “It is a spirit!” At once came one of the two prompt responses recorded in the story. For “straightway Jesus spake unto them,... It is I. Be not afraid.”

3. And then we hear the instinctive cry of faith. “Lord, bid me come.” For it was a true instinct which drew, that night, from impetuous Peter, that challenge of faith. For this was the man, remember, who said later, “Lord, I am ready to go with Thee both to prison and to death.” This was the man, too, who afterwards wrote: Jesus “left us an example that we should follow His steps.” Following became indeed the attitude of his life, his faith. Indeed it was a Divine instinct which he well fulfilled in later years; even to the cross by which we believe he afterwards glorified God. Here, then he was making a good beginning in wanting to be with his Master, to be like Him even to following Him upon the water. A true instinct indeed! And that is perhaps the one pure ambition down here, to long for a greater likeness, a greater nearness to the Holy One and the Just.

4. The one condition of faith. “Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come.” It is a dangerous thing, usually, trying to make conditions with God. He does not bargain with men. Jacob used an “if” once in his younger days; but he later learned the blessedness of trusting implicitly. We had a tribe of converts once in the Solomon Islands, who, stirred by some special meetings, sought to bargain with God, to the effect that if He sent good rains, and a bounteous harvest that year, they would then serve Him with all their hearts. But the desired rains did not fall. Ah, no! Absolute surrender is the one and only attitude of heart which inevitably compels blessing from God.

But here the if was justified. The one right we have is to be sure that “it is the Lord.” Peter remember, had never seen his Master like this before. He had not “passed

this way heretofore" in experience. And he had no right to assume that it was the Lord without clear guidance; for upon occasion even "Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light." So we conclude Peter was justified in asking to be assured that it was indeed his Master.

5. The test word. And instinctively he took a simple yet sure way to know his Lord. "Shibboleth" was the test word in the days of the judges. Here Peter but asked for a repetition of the old call "Come." "Lord," he said, "bid me come." For he had heard that sweet compelling word fall from those gracious lips once before by the lakeside (Mark 1. 17). There he had abandoned, never to regret it, his life, his calling, to become a fisher of men. Could he but hear that word, that call once again, it would dissolve all his doubts. He would "know His voice." For it is blessedly true that, "My sheep hear My voice, and a stranger will they not follow." It is ever a wonderful comfort and assurance when meeting the Lord in unfamiliar surroundings thus to recall past blessed experiences, that we may be certain it is He.

For this is the way the Saviour Himself took of recalling to the two at supper at fragrant Emmaus, the tragic yet sacred memories of the fateful night before He suffered. For at Emmaus we read, "He took bread and blessed it and brake" as of old, and thereby made Himself "known to them in the breaking of bread." The voice, the gestures, the attitude, the action, were so familiar, so suggestive; inevitably they brought the burning heart, the opened eyes, the glad recognition.

Yes! It was indeed a happy inspiration which impelled Peter to cry, "Lord, bid me come."

6. And what said the Saviour? Did He check this burst of faith, of confidence, impetuous though it may seem to us? No. He spoke the one word demanded; that word which seems to fall from His lips more naturally,

more beautifully, than perhaps any other; that seems so to typify the motive of His life, the yearning of His heart. "Come," He said, and so waited.

Now it would have been presumption on Peter's part to have stepped out without that word. Christ Himself, conscious of all His Divine powers, would not act except at His Father's distinct command. ("The Son can do nothing of Himself"—John 5. 19.) So that while, in the Temptation the quotation of the Evil One seemed apt enough, and is eternally true, "They shall bear Thee up," there was no putting to the proof that day of such rich protection, for even He lived "but by every word...out of the mouth of God."

So we conclude for Peter, for ourselves, we have no business or authority to go into positions of temptation or peril, save at God's express command. It is not faith, but frowardness and foolhardiness to do so. God give us richly of that sanctified common sense, so needed, so often lacking, in our daily walk down here.

This matter of guidance is most difficult in the mission field. Dealing with converts who have been accustomed in the past to be guided by externals, by signs and sicknesses and omens, it is most difficult to know how to advise them when they become Christians. One has known believers kept out of blessed service, or the pastoral care of whole villages of converts, merely through a passing attack of fever which was taken as a token, when considering the call, that God would not have them go. Yet in default, the village has remained untaught, the teacher unused, sometimes till he has been taken home. Ah, may we be "free indeed" to serve, yet ever closely bound to Himself, His side, His service!

7. "He walked on the water to go to Jesus." Walked, mark you; not stepped merely as many imagine. Walked far enough to Jesus to be within reach of that blessed

steadying hand. "How did he walk?" asks the poor sceptical world. That is a very small matter to the One with whom we are dealing. A mere mass of iron magnetised, can counteract the gravitation of the earth, and work an apparent miracle. And should I deny to the Lord of Life and Glory the possession of such powers as could counteract, for the time, Peter's puny weight? God forbid! Why, "all power is given unto Me," He has declared.

But in that quickly acted scene I find a very exact illustration and explanation of the way of victory over sin for the Spirit-filled believer. "Thanks be unto God which giveth us the victory." "Which causeth us to triumph" may and should be the "fair music," the rejoicing refrain of our hearts. But it will never be by way or eradication of sin, till this mortal shall have put on immortality. Peter walked upon the water, not because Christ had eradicated his tendency to sink, for soon we find him sinking again. But the Master, having commanded him to come, Peter was obeying (and was therefore in the line of God's will), and Peter as well was believing and counting that Christ could and would sustain him upon the water. He was, in fact, obeying and trusting, ever a wonderful combination. And as long as he was doing these two things, just so long was he upheld. Christ had not eradicated his tendency to sink, but was momentarily counteracting it. It was a moment by moment trust for a moment by moment counteraction of his weight. There was no new power in Peter to walk, inherent in himself; no new virtue in his flesh. But he had learned the blessed possibility of the power of faith, the wonderful secret of drawing upon the illimitable resources of the Son of God. And precisely so to-day with the power of sin; the believer filled with the Spirit, obedient to the Spirit's promptings, may trust Christ for victory over sin, and so have the

blessed experience of being more than conqueror. And this, not because sin has been eradicated, but because for the time being, Christ through the Spirit is counteracting the tendency to sin. Thus the liability, the possibility to sin remains for ever in this mortal body, but there is also the blessed possibility of victory, continuous victory, just so long as the Spirit's counteraction is continued through our trusting and obeying, moment by moment.

8. The boisterous wind. "And beginning to sink." Yes, it is sadly true that Peter, losing that moment by moment touch and trust in the Saviour, began to sink. He did not sink, mind you. He was only "beginning to sink." For I read to my intense comfort that, crying out, "immediately" Jesus stretched forth His hand and caught him. Where there is real need, and the cry of His own, He is ever prompt and able to succour and satisfy.

But the lesson, the blessing for you and for me, emblazoned in gold in the record, is not that Peter could still faint and begin to sink. That is an old experience, centuries old. But the blessed outstanding fact which transfigures this simple record is that through a living touch of faith it was possible for him to walk on the water. Here was but a prefiguring of the great fact, "Sin shall not have dominion over you." Here but a foretaste of the experience foretold, "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." And in this dispensation of the Spirit, it is our bounden duty and supremest privilege, moment by moment, to be so filled with the Spirit that we may walk unscathed and unafraid upon the many seas of trouble and temptation that beset our path down here. Then:

"Not a surge of worry, not a shade of care,  
Not a blast of hurry, touch the spirit there."

Thus, day by day, "I bare you on eagles' wings," may become our happy reposeful experience. Let us have

faith, then, to step out on the promises, so that daily, by faith, we may possess the unrealised power that is for each and all His own. Thus shall the Saviour daily become "more amazing, more admirable, more worshipful" to our wondering gaze.

9. Christ's sad summary. Peter's experience was wonderful that day, yet of some of the disciples we have still to read Christ's sad summary: "They considered not the miracle of the loaves and their heart was hardened" (Mark 6. 52). It is ever so. Yet why should they and we "wonder" and be "sore amazed" at the possibilities of faith and the Spirit-filled life? Why should it be thought a thing incredible that Christ should raise the dead, and empower the feeble, and give victory to the defeated? What verdict is going on record of your life? Are you a blood-bought child of God, hopeless as well as helpless in face of temptation and trial? Oh, thou of little faith, wherefore dost thou doubt?

10. Two ways of crossing the lake. As with reverent wondering hearts we read the conclusion of the matter in John's Gospel (John 6. 21), we reach the most amazing sentence of all. And we find to our astonishment that there were two ways of crossing the lake. There was the way the fishermen knew so well, the way of the boisterous wind and contrary sea, the way of the hoisted straining mainsail, and the toiling in rowing; these they knew full well.

Yet here following the feeding of the multitude, the spectacle of Peter's testing, and the reception of the Lord Himself into the boat, we meet one more miracle, often unrecognised, unrealised. For we read, when at last, their fears allayed, they were at length "willing therefore to receive Him into the boat," not only that, "the wind ceased," but added wonderful fact, "Immediately the ship was at the land whither they went."

Here was a new method of travel! A new way to triumph over the difficulties of the way. And, oh, it is true. This life of service here, beset though it often is with countless difficulties, through the filling, the power, the operation of the Spirit may be changed from a pilgrimage into a royal progress. Are you content, resigned to be “toiling in rowing?” distressed by the waves? Is that your conception of God’s best for His own? Is this the “perfect peace” of which He speaks, the power He predicted to date from Pentecost? Ah! let us not wrong Him with our heavy thoughts! Whatever the Saviour does, He does magnificently. When men are born again He wants them well born. When men are saved, He wants them mightily saved. And what He wants He is ready to empower for. Why, then, should your life be “dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon,” when you might continue to enjoy and reflect the very presence of the Prince of Love.

There are, then, two ways of life, of service for each pilgrim who would be a stranger in the world. There is the toilsome way of fleshly effort, which misguidedly attempts often so much, expects but little, and accomplishes still less. It is the way, the disappointing way of many, too many true believers. Yet for each of His own there is God’s way of simple victorious faith, in the Name and blessed company of Christ, through the power of the indwelling Spirit.

In a true sense the disciples were believers in Christ; yet it was a further stage when they willingly received Him up into the ship. So, too, Christ dwells in the heart of each believer through the Spirit; yet when He is willingly received up into the mastership of the heart, at once there arise new possibilities of power, fresh vistas of blessedness. How will He find you when He comes—comes in clouds descending? Will He find you still troubled, still

tossed with the waves of circumstance, still toiling in rowing? Or may He not have the joy of finding you so triumphing through faith and grace, that it may be true of you as of the saints of old: "Twas but a step for their victorious feet from their day's walk into the golden street?" That were an Apocalypse indeed!

CHAPTER VIII

“CIVIL WAR IN THE SOUL”

## “CIVIL WAR IN THE SOUL”

“Now there was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David, but David waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker” (2 Sam. 3. 1).

As we ponder this long war between the carnal house of Saul and the spiritual house of David, there come to mind important personal applications to the citadel of our own souls. For here we find a suggestive picture of that relentless warfare waged between the Spirit and the flesh, in the heart of each believer, from the time of the new birth-right on till each is finally and for ever “with Christ.”

For, being by God’s grace “out of Egypt,” and entered safely into the land of His promises, we shall find awaiting us “a long war,” and this the worst kind of war. It is the civil war in the soul. It does not refer primarily to the warfare to be waged for Christ with the powers of darkness outside; indeed we shall find that we can do little aggressive work for Him till we have learned the habit of victory in this same civil war.

Many times one has told our converted cannibals in the Solomons, who have fled from their mountain homes and wars, down to the comparative peace and safety of the coast, and the longed-for heart-rest of the Gospel, that though they can put away their muskets and spears, they are yet entered upon a new fight. One has explained how the war in the soul, to be waged by the Holy Spirit with the flesh, is longer, fiercer, more inveterate, than even their own fierce vendettas. And even so, as we seek to extend our possessions, to possess God’s promises, to make “full proof” of our varied ministries, we shall find that we are

inevitably entered upon this long war, in which God is longing to make us "more than conquerors."

But there are all too many of God's children who have too little of the soldier's spirit, or the pilgrim's garb about them. They do not desire a long war, nor anything so uncomfortable or inconvenient. It would so interfere with pleasure, or business, or "getting on in the world." Many such say they will be content to reach the bottom step of Heaven, to get just inside the Golden Gates. This is false humility. It cloaks unfaithfulness. It hides a worldly heart. In any case, such least footholds in Heaven are already fully occupied by Demas and company, who, "having loved this present world" rather than the world's Saviour, have little part or lot with Him.

It is deeply pathetic how such worldly minded Christians, many of whom seem to be true believers, seem to stand still in the Christian life. Years pass, and there seems little or no growth or advance; they are not becoming sanctified. Such men seem to look upon salvation as a necessity, but upon sanctification as a luxury which can be well done without. Yet sanctification is not optional, a mere matter of choice to those who are "not their own." It is preordained and preordered: "This is the will of God, even your sanctification" (1 Thess. 4. 3). It is the only response of obedience, the only door to advance. And what exactly does the process "sanctification" mean? It has two simplest aspects; it means being set apart or separated from any known sinful habit, and being continually cleansed as befits our being living temples of the Holy Ghost.

Yet many of the redeemed seem to have no spiritual ambition after holiness or cleansing or pleasing God. And for them God has no word of encouragement. For there are no prospects for those "disobedient unto the heavenly vision." No progress is possible unto the unrepentant believer.

But with many others of His own, if they will not give, the Master, in kindness, begins to take. He is too solicitous for their eternal welfare and future. It is recorded of one of the early evangelical fathers, that he had just signed a cheque for £10 for a mission, when he received news of the loss of one of his ships. "I must ask you to give me back that cheque," he said. And when it was sorrowfully handed over, he changed the amount to £100, and again handed it to the recipient, who asked in surprise: "How can you afford this now you have lost your ship?" "I am learning," he said, "that if I do not give, God is beginning to take." What a safe thing it is to so put the onus, reverently, upon God! Such an act is the beginning of that self-judgment of 1 Corinthians 11. 31, which pleases God, and averts chastisement. And shall you be a grudging conscript to this long war for holiness rather than a glad willing volunteer? Will you for ever renounce the blessing that came to those who "willingly offered themselves?" Oh! even to-day it is true, "If I do this thing willingly I have a reward," which is Christ Himself.

How then is this war to be prosecuted? How are we always to be led in triumph? The plan of campaign God has ordered is both simple and reassuring to the humblest believer. As we "live in the Spirit by the Spirit let us step" (Moule). There must and will be acute crises in our lives. Yet most of our progress will consist in small, almost imperceptible advances, as daily we "step by the Spirit." "We are to rise in the morning, each quiet morning before the world is awake, not so much to seek to be heroic, or to be famous, as to seek to be faithful, and most faithful in the common tasks of life." For in our relation to them lies God's process for the extraction of the dross, and the refining of the soul, which is the oldest, the surest, the most celestial in the world.

And He can bend the most varied tasks to this alchemy of the soul. For us in the mission field, it may be to find some reef-encircled port on a dark night, or to climb inland to visit with the Gospel some mountain devil worshipper, or to minister daily to the many little flocks amongst multiplying converts. To you quite other tasks, yet fraught with the same profound virtue in sanctifying the soul. It may be for you, the busy home, with its ever recurring meals, and the need of a continual supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, or the labour of the crowded Sunday school, or the ministry of the Inerrant Word to mature believers. Yet in all these things we may become more than conquerors, and conquerors most of all over self, in the long war, as we daily "step in the Spirit."

Here, then, are the factors of victory: A yielded heart, a tender conscience, a listening ear, a quick confession, and a continual claiming of the Spirit's fullness. Then we may go forward, day after day, feeding upon the Word and quietly confident that we are being conformed to His image, as we walk in His blessed company and employ.

"King, tried in fires of woe,  
Men hunger for Thy face,  
And daily through earth's strife I go,  
Learning Thy wondrous grace."

And this sanctification is for all. All may not have the talents for public ministry. Yet all have hearts which may be conformed to His, and so fulfil His joy. The best pearls are often in the strangest shells. And God's aristocracy is found often among the poor and despised of the world. And what needs emphasising most, to encourage humble hidden believers, is, that given the right adjustment to God, sanctification is automatic; it "cometh not with observation," yet it is none the less assured. There is no need to be continually introspective, looking within.

The true objective of spiritual eyes is "looking unto Jesus." He does not want spiritual hypochondriacs. He wants us to go on, daily, quietly, "doing the next thyng," as He shall show it, that He may still further show Himself.

Yet we shall have to recognise at the outset that it is a long war. It takes time to be holy. It takes time for the soul to be conformed to "the image of the invisible God." And so holiness and hurry are quite incompatible. There are numbers in the world who want to get rich quickly. And there are many of God's own people who would like to get holy quickly. They come to a convention or to special meetings expecting a miracle of holiness, to be changed in an instant. They want a cheap Christ, and a cheap sanctification, without too much cost or trouble to themselves. They are truly "bargain hunters" after holiness; inevitably they will get only "remnants!" For the price will never come down. It cost the Holy One and the Just a broken body, and a broken heart. At least it will cost us a broken will. And it may cost us many other things besides. Are we prepared for the cost? Are we "able to drink of the cup?" Yet indeed it is worth while; for, oh, it is worth all!

God is willing, indeed, in an instant to reveal to any truly seeking soul the secret of becoming sanctified; that by a simple act of faith we may claim the in-filling of the Spirit, even as at the new birth we receive by faith the incoming of the same Spirit to daily manifest Christ in our hearts. But having discovered the secret, it is for us to put it into practice in our life. We may experience the crisis in a moment, the crisis of the act of faith and in-filling; it is to be but the beginning of the process, the life process of daily being "filled with the Spirit." "Is the sermon done?" asked a man outside the Church, of the attendant at the door. "The preacher is done," he

answered; "but the sermon is to *be* done." And he voiced a profound truth.

So we may leave the crowded meeting, the inspiring mountain top, the helpful fellowship of "just men," and betake ourselves to our dim Emmaus, or our dread Colossae or even to our far Macedonia, quietly confident that just where He has placed us, in the usual round of life, the "sermon" may be "done," the "process" applied, the borderland possessed, the victory won. We can do without the fervent crowds, for with us goes the Lord Christ.

"Our task is but to lose and to forget,  
Thus, small, despised, to be;  
All to unlearn, this task before us set,  
Unlearn all else but Thee!"

Thus it is that the long standing faults of character are to be, and may be dealt with. God has power to heal them in an instant, and He is willing to give immediate victory over known sin. But there is something deeper than sin. It is self. And in every self there is "the carnal mind," there is the "law of sin," and there is many an "unruly evil." And to subdue them unto Himself may take time, and repeated failure, and repeated faith on our part. Yet victory is possible; it is certain; it is assured to all who will "trust and obey."

The Christward bias of the Believer. But there can be no truce, no armistice, no final settlement in this long war. No, not even in the "green pastures and waters of quietness;" never till "this mortal shall have put on immortality." Yet, thank God, there is this to look forward to: we may confidently expect the obedient soul, as life goes on, to develop a stronger and stronger bias towards the things of God. The game of bowls provides an apt illustration here. The science and secret of the game lies in the metal weight inserted in one side of the wooden bowl. This weight has little effect while the

bowl is travelling fast, but as it slows up, the weight of the "bias" acts more and more strongly, and turns the bowl from its old course sharply in towards the white ball, which is the goal. Even so there is a natural bias in every true believer towards the things of God. This may not be very apparent at first, and there is much conflict and waywardness and wandering in the soul. But as the pace of life slows up, and the exuberance of youth in Christ gives place to the steadier pursuit of His in maturity, the bias of the soul toward God becomes blessedly stronger and steadier and more potent, and we can truthfully and thankfully begin to cry with joyful surprise: "O God, my heart is fixed!" "O how I love Thy law!" This growing bias towards God, then, is one of the assured and present rewards of the long war; it may certainly reward "patient continuance in well doing," and a steadfast seeking after that holiness which God desires and designs for each of His own.

Yet in spite of all this, many may turn sadly away, feeling, "No, this is not for me. I may not attain unto it." It is deeply instructive and encouraging to note in 1 Samuel 22. 2, the three classes who first joined King David for the long war: "Every one that was in distress, ... that was in debt, and...that was discontented." In distress! How that fits hearts in this distressful age! In debt to sin, to Satan, to God! Discontented. God make us all discontented! A great employer of labour once described two classes of discontented workers: The man who was discontented with his work, "We can do without him," he said; and then the man who was discontented with himself and his way of doing his work. "And he is priceless, we want to hold on to him." And that is the Divine discontent we need to develop—discontent at our failure and shortcoming, at our paltry ideas of God's power, and our puny hold upon His promises.

That is the Divine discontent God would instil into our hearts, as, gathered before Him, He contrasts His power with our powerlessness.

Yes; in distress, in debt, discontented. Why, "Thou art the man!" Then let us each humbly put our name there, and with Abner and the elders of old (2 Sam. 3. 17), tired of talking, and broken resolutions to crown the King, let us encourage ourselves with (v. 18), "Now, then, do it."

Oh! Gracious Master, behold our hearts in all their debts and discontents. And as we ponder Thy far reaching promises, which to us to-day are like the hem of Thy garment, Thy robe, touched of old by the diseased and the impotent, we, too, would touch in blind, believing faith; that, as ever, virtue may flow from Thee, and we be made "perfectly whole," and "more than conquerors" in this holy war. Now may our need and Thy great fullness meet!

CHAPTER IX

MOUNTING UP WITH WINGS

## MOUNTING UP WITH WINGS

"They that wait upon the Lord...shall mount up with wings as eagles...shall run and not be weary...shall walk and not faint" (Isa. 40. 31).

THE voice had said, "Cry" (v. 6). "What shall I cry?" And the cry of the land, the cry of the restless, godless world was the cry of despair, "All flesh is grass, the grass withereth, the flower fadeth...surely the people is grass" (Isa. 40. 6).

And, after many centuries, the cry of the modern sceptical world is essentially the same:

"Where is a god?" doth weary reason say,  
 "I see but starlit skies."  
 "Where is the sun?" so crieth at midday  
 The man with sightless eyes.

This but echoes the despair of Jean Paul Richter's hopeless vision. In it the soul, groping blindly in vacancy for some certainty in the dissolving mists of life, seemed only to find at the final centre of the universe a vast pathetic eyesocket—an eyesocket without an eye! Such must be the blindness, the blankness of life and death and the world, to the unbeliever who knows nothing of the revelation of God through Christ.

But, thank God, He has not left Himself without a witness, without human witnesses. For hear the calm, clear, reassurance of a watching God to this challenge of unbelief: "Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard? that the everlasting God...the Creator...fainteth not, neither is weary?" (v. 28).

And we? Yes, we in the mission field could give a thousand proofs of His reality and real presence. For

under our more elemental conditions the contrasts between darkness and light are greater, and in this virgin soil for the Gospel we are continually watching the reactions of many souls to the appeal of God. And the response of the blighted minds and scarred bodies of cannibals and demon worshippers to God's transfiguring power is so profound, so striking, so oft repeated. It is the peculiar privilege of many in the foreign field thus to see enacted before their eyes the most heartening results of the moving of God's Spirit.

And as year is added to year, and many of us can look back on a lengthening life, crowded with past blessings and deliverances, we know whom we have believed. And we can indeed set our seal to the certainty that God's threefold promise of future equipment is sufficient to meet all the unknown in life. "They that wait...(1) shall mount up...(2) shall run...(3) shall walk."

Now the first in importance is the attitude of waiting—waiting in childlike trust and expectation. This is most vital to success. God wants, and deigns to use the products of the best, the ablest brains of men. But His love, His blessings, His resources are peculiarly available to the simple expectant faith of the hearts of men. Hearts are far more precious, more potent with God, than brains. The motive power of a heart full of faith is omnipotent.

"They that wait upon." It is not that God is unready, that we must wait for Him. He is never behind time. No, this waiting "upon" is far more intimate and significant; it is the attitude of the bondsman watching gladly for the least need, the slightest desire of the loved Master. And it is just in this childlike trust and simple, whole-hearted devotion that many native converts so excel their missionaries. But this waiting takes time and strength. It needs to become habitual. It can only be compassed by forming a rule of waiting. And in our

teachers' training school at Onepusu we have reaped undoubted and rich blessing from fostering this habit.

The world wakes early in the tropics, and before the first streak of dawn the great bell at Onepusu clangs to call a hundred hearts to the beginning of a new day. The first half hour is for eating. Then there is a sudden short clang of the bell, the call to individual prayer, the "quiet time bell." It has been well said that "the first hour is the rudder by which the plane of life is set for the day," and we are seeking to teach these dear men and women its peculiar value in approaching God. The married people mostly pray in their own little houses, but many of the single men stream out among the nearby coconuts to get alone and with God, with bowed heads and hearts. A little later the bell regathers them for the usual morning meeting. But all testify to the great spiritual help and gain from the daily "quiet time" which all are encouraged to develop.

Now for those who wait, three things are promised—they shall mount up with wings, they shall run, they shall walk. Why this unusual sequence? Man would have reversed the order and put the walking first and the wings last. But not God. For He has a Divine order, and very often it is man's order exactly reversed, and we seem to see just such a Divine sequence and progress in the development of these dear teachers.

1. Mounting up with wings. For, somehow, somewhere, we must mount up if we are ever to know God and to properly tell of God. "Where there is no vision the people perish," is a permanent truth. And the modern world, rich and powerful, and harnessing many of the forces of nature as never before, was never more perishing, more pitiful, than to-day. For there is no "open vision." But until we have mounted up with wings we can never get that sight of God which will disgust us with ourselves,

and show us the real perspective of life, and the glories that are in Christ. We must never be content with small things, with what we have got, with just knowing we are redeemed. The man who says "enough" is a lost man spiritually. We must learn to dream dreams and see visions; we must learn to have far horizons.

Now this is just the spiritual experience and progress that converts and teachers must know if ever they are to go far in the deep things of God; if ever they are to lead their people on. For the whole native Church will be limited to their spiritual standard. It is very wonderful and deeply impressive how these young men of cannibal ancestry, lately worshippers of demons, steeped in all that is degrading, are affected and illuminated by the Spirit. Illumination seems just the word that expresses the profound change in their life and outlook.

For, from living as animal a life as perhaps it is possible to imagine, at a bound, in a few short months, they may become sincere believers whose whole mental outlook and objective in life is changed. Then as they "trust and obey" and go on learning, athirst for knowledge and the Word of God, they begin to "mount up with wings" spiritually. And they begin to catch glimpses of what is possible for men, in the spirit-filled life, while literally old things begin to pass away and all things to become new. It is a wonderful vision for us, that takes our breath away. How much more for them who have gone through life with their eyes to the ground.

I remember one dear lad's testimony the Sunday evening after one had been speaking of this mounting up, and how it was far more needed and more precious than all the book learning they could get, and of what a sight an eagle sees, and what a sight we too can so get of Christ and His glories. He said: "Oh, this lesson fits my heart altogether! Many years some of us have known Jesus,

and have been telling and teaching men how He died for their sins. But we do not see Him very close ourselves. But now we have come again to Onepusu we have been learning some of the hard things of God. And we see in Him more than we ever saw before. He is more beautiful and more wonderful than we ever thought, and His power is greater; and now all this world does not seem much good, it is passing away. And now as I learn I want to mount up more and more with wings, to see more of the things of God, and then to tell our people He is a wonderful Saviour."

A new perspective, too! And mounting up with wings gives a new perspective, too. What panoramas of Divine love we get from an eagle's height in the sky; and how this world, with its little passing show of life, shrivels to its proper insignificance! I remember once looking sheer down from a great building. And there, far, far below could be seen swarms of little hurrying creatures. Were they ants? No, they were men, busily rushing about, but just like ants; while on the height above there was the calm, the serene expanse of God's blue sky. And those little hurrying ants were busy seeking gold. But, oh, it all seemed so paltry that day. It seemed like the dust of death they were toiling and dying for. And it is just that contrast, that realised perspective, that impels these men to give up secular positions and wages and the many little comforts they might buy with them, to go out to toil, and teach, and die, without thought of earthly reward; to endure hardness that they may "make the Gospel of Christ without charge."

Of course it takes a great deal of patience and time and hard plodding work to get such knowledge of the Word of God into these men's minds and lives. In most cases the men we get to Onepusu have learned English on the plantations, and many of them have already finished reading

the "question book," our catechism in the words of Scripture. That has to be known first. Then come the Bible courses. The Bible is a difficult book, and to an illiterate people is impossible without careful guidance and teaching. So definite courses of Bible lessons are carefully chosen and outlined, so as to cover the main truths of redemption and the Christian life. In the chapter chosen, certain selected verses are first marked and read repeatedly in unison. Then the chapter or story or incident is explained and applied spiritually, under a certain number of headings, which are printed and given to each pupil. Such a lesson is not given once or twice, but every day for a week, till most of the class, from continual reading and hearing, and retelling the lesson in turn, have soaked in something they are likely to remember and take home to their people.

Thus the whole future of the work is staked upon the inerrant Word of God, that Word which, in the hands of the Man Christ Jesus, proved valid and invincible against a world of spirits. And it is being backed by increasing volumes of prayer, as continually the work becomes wider and wider known. Thus Onepusu has become indeed the place of "mounting up" for the mission, and the best strength and talent of our workers is engaged in this most encouraging work.

2. "They shall run and not be weary." But we cannot stay always on eagles' wings, or on the mountain top. We have to "come to earth." But is it possible to find that just as there is "a new Heaven" for us since we got our sight of Christ, even so there is to be "a new earth" for us in our daily living.

And so the time comes when the crowded "Evangel" leaves the cheering wharf at Onepusu on one of her many voyages, with a big cargo of Hope and good wishes and young teachers who have "finished their time." And now

they have a new lesson to learn. They have to "run" with the Gospel without being "weary," to run the race set before them. And as old teachers grown grey in the work have often feelingly said: "Plenty men can be strong for God at Onepusu, but when they come home and too many wicked men (heathen) are around them, often their blessing breaks down." But the proportion of those who "break down" is very small nowadays, and the results of the training of teachers the last six years has resulted in a tremendous accession of strength to the work.

Again it must be emphasised that the burden of the evangelism of the heathen must rest upon the native church, and mainly upon these teachers. This has been recently recognised as a guiding principle in most mission fields. But for the past fifteen years in the islands the natives have been recognised and trained as the main evangelists. And we find in experience that those villages thrive best which are at a distance from whites, and are therefore more thrown upon God in their troubles. For health and growth in a Christian village there are two main essentials—efficient native teachers who know God and His Word, and regular visitation from a missionary, to advise in difficulty and cheer in sickness.

We try to give the Onepusu learners as much practical mission work as possible, that they may begin to learn to "run" with the Gospel "and not be weary." So generally three or four parties set out from Onepusu on Sunday afternoons in canoes and boats to visit nearby heathen and mission villages. This is a great blessing and outlet to men who have been learning all the week. Then when they go home we furnish them with a picture of the Crucifixion and a diagram of "the two roads." These they take with them far up into the mountains, to distant tribes and relations, preaching at many a market and camp fire. The result is that with "feet shod with the preparation of the

Gospel of peace," they have "great joy," and very literally do they learn to "run and not be weary." For in this land at least "the Word of God is not bound."

3. "They shall walk and not faint." But in this "Holy War" there is a harder lesson to learn than mounting up to get a vision of God, and then running with the Everlasting Gospel to those who have never heard. It is to walk daily with God, and for men, and not to faint. For the man who would do an abiding work for God will have to learn the grace of "patient continuance." There are men amongst us who can run with the Gospel, and with zeal and enthusiasm, who fail in the tiring daily lifelong work of a teacher.

For real spiritual work is, and must be tiring taxing work. Virtue must go out. But human nature does not like this taxing spiritual work. It is so often hidden work, without plaudits or applause. And natives are very human, only more so! And it is the grace of continuance which mainly turns the scale and wins the victories. It is the man who patiently teaches a growing flock, day by day, year after year, and goes on teaching, who has really learned what it is to "walk and not faint," and who gathers a grateful flock around him.

There are many such of God's warriors in these islands who rise to one's mind, men grown grey in the Gospel, who have gone on year after year, the last ten or fifteen years, without pay of any kind, teaching and leading and loving and burying the many heathen who have believed through their word. And those of them who are left are as keen as when I first met them years ago. They have many duties and offices. They were usually the founders of the villages in the first instance, cutting down the forest, and building the first little leaf hut and church. And as they were faithful and diligent, men, women and children were added unto them, the flotsam and jetsam of the heathen,

who came because of sickness or trouble or killing or relationship.

So, day by day, year after year, the little company gathered twice daily to pray, to praise, to learn and to worship. As others learned they would take part in the services, but the teacher had to be there to see that the bell was rung. He must be the doctor, too, who gets the little scanty store of medicines we give out at intervals, and has the unending task of dressing the sores and attending to the sick. He is the peacemaker, too; yet often like Joseph, he has to learn to "speak roughly unto" the evil doers, and yet to preserve a heart full of love like Joseph's, when (Gen. 42. 24) "he turned himself about from them and wept." These dear teachers do their work often "in weariness and painfulness," bearing always "the care of all the Churches." They are indeed the salt of the earth, a loyal and loving company of men whom it is a joy and privilege to know and meet in place after place on the "Evangel's" voyages. And about many of them Ignatius' words would be literally true: "I am God's corn, and I am willing to be ground, that there may be bread for God's children." Yes, through long years they have learned "to walk and not faint." They are the spiritual aristocracy of the islands, to whom have been committed the oracles of God. And their lives are well worth remembering, and sharing by following in prayer.

CHAPTER X

TESTED TO BE TRUSTED

## TESTED TO BE TRUSTED

“Cast it (the rod) on the ground.”

“It became a serpent, and Moses fled from before it ”

“He caught it...it became a rod in his hand” (Exod. 4. 3, 4).

MOSES was a man of destiny, a destiny such as is the birthright of every true believer. God purposed to use him. This man had made a mistake once before, which had cost him forty years of solitude in the desert, forty years of fellowship with the sands and the stars, and with God; when his fleshly energy was discredited, and his character and faith were tempered and developed by the working of God's Spirit.

Now was come the last preparation for the constant conflict he was to wage for God, with His people and their enemies. Moses must be tested before he could be trusted, even as his own trust must be developed through testing. To us, God took a strange way to prove His servant, yet a way that is centuries old. His staff, his trusted staff, the badge of his office as shepherd, the companion of many years and many journeys, this he was to cast away. It was perhaps his most precious possession at the moment, the most useful to his calling. “Cast not away your confidence,” echoes the Word of God, yet it seemed very much like this that he was told to do.

It is ever so. The God of all grace often lays His hand on that which seems most needful, that He may give more grace. It may be He demands our riches, it is His own wonderful way of multiplying our truest riches. It may be, as with Paul, our liberty that must go; it is that He may make us “free indeed.” Or He takes away

our health, that we may more abundantly magnify Him out of our weakness. It may be even the only son Isaac, whom His far-seeing love desires and requires. Yet whatever He demands, it must be given. There must be implicit trust and obedience if we are to know more, if we are to know God. And Moses gave it! Happy, blessed, fruitful will be the man who is prepared without question to obey God in the dark, to stake all upon His faithfulness.

So "Moses cast it upon the ground." And the result, the rich and blessed reward of faith, of obedience? Why, the result seemed utter disaster; for the faithful staff became a pursuing serpent, and "Moses fled from before it." How true of life in all ages! How often the supreme act of faith seems but to land us in insuperable difficulties; it results as the world, the cynics, predicted, in seeming utter disaster.

"And Moses fled from before it." No second causes were possible here, for it was indeed the voice of God, clear, unmistakable, and he obeyed simply and literally, and thereby seemed to be confounded. Yet somehow, when we make a supreme effort of faith, when, in obedience to the Spirit's clear guidance we do the thing which seems humanly foolish and imprudent, we expect God to at once justify us, and reward us for our faith, forgetting that sometimes, for our own sakes, it is only "afterwards" the reward can come. How many times do we see such a drama enacted in the foreign mission field; how many times have we reverently and triumphantly traced the sequence of events, and rejoiced over the "latter end" of the matter.

For the next command was as strange, as unexpected, as apparently foolish as was the first. "Put forth thy hand and take it by the tail." Here was a new way of dealing with serpents, with difficulties, not to flee from them, not to attack them in fleshly energy, but merely to take hold

in quiet trustful faith, believing that He who had made (the difficulty) would also bear.

Even so, many times in the wild islands of the Solomons we have seen this same elemental process of trusting and testing being demonstrated before our eyes. One scene in especial rises to mind; a little Christian village, standing apparently defenceless in the silent forest. True, it was no new thing for them to watch for the manslayer, but suddenly a demand had come, hot, urgent, compelling, from a powerful fighting tribe in the mountains, for the payment by the Christians of a large sum of money for alleged bewitchment and death of one of the bushmen. There were some whose hearts sank, and who counselled that some at least of the money be paid to appease their enemies. Yet the faithful teacher stood out undaunted, urging they should rather suffer death than tarnish their testimony and their Master's Name, by admitting any connection with the bewitchment.

So a brave stand was made. So these seemingly feeble defenceless folk dared in God's Name to defy the heathen laws, enforced for generations past. So, like Moses when he cast away his rod, they took their stand in faith, and elected rather to fall into the hands of God than to lean upon the arm of flesh. Yet, like Moses, as the event proved, they seemed but to have achieved disaster. For almost at once news came back, native fashion, through a dozen channels, and therefore the more menacing, that the clan was summoned. It told how the date was set, when the raiders, successful in many a past affray, would come down *en masse*, burn the village, and take vengeance on the teacher and his little flock.

The "Evangel" arrived at the nearest harbour the very day appointed for the massacre, and when, unarmed, of course, we arrived through the forest, it was so that we found our friends. There was a small heathen section

nearby, not directly concerned, waiting anxiously with their spears, and there were the Christians (defenceless otherwise), waiting with their prayers, while over all brooded the oppressive silence of the forest. It was a strange time, that day, waiting for the avengers, listening for any distant shout that might signal their approach. There was more prayer of course, but no word of yielding; for all felt that they had made their boast in God, and anything was to be chosen rather than to pay.

So the day declined, and the shadows lengthened, and still no attack. At last as the sun sank in the west, a woman arrived, hot-foot from the mountains, saying that the attack was postponed indefinitely. For in God's providence, the night before, as these very heathen were preparing for the raid on the Christians, they themselves had been attacked in the dead of night by a tribe, who in turn had been hunting them for years. So clear an omen was prohibitive of further attacks on the Christians. So, simply and effectively, they were diverted from their prey, and so once again it was proved to be no vain thing to have taken their stand in faith; no vain thing to believe God could then deliver; His power was yet the same, and as with the Syrians, He had made them "to hear a noise in the night;" as with the Assyrians, He had decreed that they should not "shoot an arrow there," but had turned them back. And though in these cannibal islands trouble abounds, that tribe has never troubled them since.

Here is but a reminder of His infinite resources, but an object lesson of how He stands by His own when they take their stand in faith; of how He is better to us than all our fears. Yet in these days of doubt and drift, how many "Mr. Greathearts" are needed to prove to the "Feeble-faiths" and "Pliables" that He is still faithful, still almighty, still quick to deliver those who put their trust in Him.

History tells us that centuries ago an open Bible was chained in every parish church, that the Word of God might never be wrested from the people. What a significant attitude towards the Word of God! Even so to-day, the humblest believer needs so to regard the sure promises of God. We need so to fasten ourselves to them that we shall resemble the ancient paladins of faith. For of them we read that, though they had not received the promises (but had only seen them afar off), yet "they were persuaded of them and embraced them. Oh, that we might so embrace, so chain ourselves to the sure promises of God as to be able to cry out with the saint of old: "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him!" Then let us take our stand on His promises as on a rock, and, regardless of consequences, with holy boldness, expect great things, and attempt great things for Him!

CHAPTER XI  
THE VICTORIOUS ART OF  
"RECKONING"

## THE VICTORIOUS ART OF "RECKONING"

"THIS is My Blood of the New Covenant," said the soon-to-die Saviour, as He handed the simple cup to His humble band of followers on the eve of Calvary, and so ushered men into a new relationship with God. And, thank God, in contrast to the broken law, it is a covenant of victory over sin. For very clearly the Saviour's desire and design for His own is foretold: "Sin shall not have dominion over you." And if we ask soberly, anxiously: "Is such a thing really possible to-day?" "Is it really for me?" we have the clear, positive assurance, "Yes," for what the law could not do, in that it was weak, "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" can do, for it "hath made me free from the law (dominion) of sin" (Rom. 8. 2, 3).

How then am I to become possessed of this peace, this virtue, this power of the "spirit of life in Christ?" Again I am most clearly directed: Why, "Reckon...yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God through Christ Jesus." So this change over from defeat to victory, from the despair of Romans 7 to the exultation of Romans 8 is all in Christ, and may come about, not by continual efforts on our part, but by a definite mental process of "reckoning" by faith.

Now this process of "reckoning" seems a difficulty to many. One of the simplest, most helpful demonstrations of this act of "reckoning" by faith is found in Joshua 10. 24. There we find that Joshua, having defeated and overcome "five kings," enemies of the children of Israel, and of God, calls in verse 22 for them to be "brought out "

Then He does a strange, a significant thing. He calls (v. 24) for the captains to come and identify themselves with him in his victory over these enemies. "Come near," he says, "and put your feet upon the necks of these kings." Then he (not the captains) slays the kings. This was no vain boasting, no idle show. It had a spiritual significance that day. It was a far reaching spiritual significance for our day as well, and is recorded for "our instruction."

For here is a whole mine of spiritual truth in action. Jesus is our Joshua. He, too, has vanquished "kings," sin, and Satan, and death. Each to Him is a defeated foe. For, (1) becoming a man amongst us, He became "sin for us," who "knew no sin." Sin was vanquished. (2) Satan He defeated, with the threefold thrust of the Word of God, "It is written," dismissing him with "Get thee hence, Satan." (3) Death, too, He defeated, for He "loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be holden of it," and "death is swallowed up in victory."

So, having in Himself defeated these three deadly foes of the soul, having "made a show of them openly," He now invites us, like the Joshua of old, to become partakers of His victory, by placing, by an act of faith, our feet, too, upon the necks of these vanquished "kings" and adversaries of the soul, so identifying ourselves with Him in His triumph.

And this must be done, I think, not so much in the moment of temptation. It is too late then to begin to "reckon." In practice we need to be beforehand in the reckoning. Thus whatever the besetting sin, the procedure is the same. We must definitely bring it before Him in prayer, and deliberately and by a definite act of faith "put our feet upon it," claiming complete deliverance from it. "O Lord, through Thy death, Thou hast conquered this sin, and as Thy child I do take my place

with Thee in Thy death. I do reckon myself quite dead to this sin, and so I do claim to become 'more than conqueror' by faith, putting my foot upon it. Now, therefore, I do claim that Thou wilt slay this foe for me."

Now, by this act of faith we do in the most practical way "reckon" ourselves dead to sin. And we do appropriate and become possessed of Christ's resurrection power, a power quite outside ourselves, by which when the temptation comes (as it comes to all), we may indeed "stand fast" and "put to flight" the armies of our adversaries. And this definite practice does greatly strengthen faith, as we see these enemies prostrate before our Joshua, and in His Name put our feet upon their necks. It is a practice which one can humbly testify from blessed experience does bring an accession of strength "from on high," which "giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." "Now, then, do it!"

CHAPTER XII

“VOICES FROM THE EXCELLENT  
GLORY”

## “VOICES FROM THE EXCELLENT GLORY”

(2 Peter 1. 17)

It is good for us often to resort in memory, as did the aged apostle, to certain scenes in the Saviour's life, there to hear voices from the excellent glory, and there again in spirit to become with Him eyewitnesses of Christ's majesty. For in these days of doubt and the world's despair, our place is not with His detractors who would fain strip Him of His divinity and kingly majesty. No, our habitual attitude is to be that of the first disciples as they "looked stedfastly toward Heaven"; our blessed privilege it is to worship, while we wait expectantly for our Lord's return. Yet it may cheer and confirm our hearts, through this little while, if we note how the Eternal Father broke the silence of Heaven to express His good pleasure in the Son, and to publicly authenticate Him at each crisis of His earthly ministry.

1. In the first scene we would turn to Luke 21. 13, it is indeed not the voice of the Father that we hear. For there we read, "Suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, goodwill toward men."

Yet though the worshippers were the heavenly host, which could no longer be restrained, but burst into this celestial chorus, yet their praise was but the direct echo of the Father's joy, the expression of the Father's heart. For it was at God's express command that those peaceful fields in the night and the starry heavens above were

filled with the worship of Emmanuel. "For when He bringeth in the first begotten into the world, He saith, Let all the angels of God worship Him" (Heb. 1. 16). For was it not the signal that the Lord Christ had now taken upon Himself the form of a servant, that He was even now born in the likeness of men. Was it not a paeon of joy that for us men and our salvation the Lord of Glory had humbled Himself, that He might presently become obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.

Thus the Eternal Father could not allow the One who was the brightness of His glory, the express image of His Person, to begin His redemptive work and life, unheralded, unwelcomed, unannounced. So, acclaimed in the clouds, was born in Bethlehem the Babe, the "Holy Child Jesus," upon whom all eyes, all ages, all hopes were centred.

2. Then, passing over the intervening years, we would go with Him in spirit to the waters of Jordan. There around the prophet of the wilderness were gathered multitudes of sinners, repenting from their sins and being baptised into that repentance. And, lo, another approaches to whom the prophet himself gives reverence and worship. It is the Son of the Father, the Son of Man, at the outset of His earthly ministry. And He comes to the Jordan, intent on fulfilling all righteousness. And so He goes down into the waters to be baptised. Here was no need for baptism of repentance. For in Him, the Holy One and the Just, there was naught to be repented of. To Him this baptism had other significance, for as He went down under the waters, He thus first and faintly fulfilled the prediction: "All Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over me" (Psa. 42. 7). For see, His going down under the waters did forthtell His pains and sorrows for us sinners; nay, indeed, it spake most clearly of His going down even unto death for us, unworthy though we be.

Thus by His baptism He clearly announced to His Father, and to all, that after all the quiet years at Nazareth His purpose was unchanged, His love undaunted. He, the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world, had set His feet upon the path that led through all the shame, the conflict, and the contradiction of sinners, to end only on the brow of Calvary. This path, should He not tread it?

What then was the heavenly response, the Divine comment upon this prophetic act of obedience? The response was twofold. For coming up out of the water, straightway, "the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily form, as a dove upon Him," and straightway the voice of the Father was heard, to Him, to the multitude: "Thou art My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." So indeed did the Father glorify the Son, and that publicly, as day by day, act by act, the Son was glorifying the Father.

3. Later came the wonder of the Transfiguration. And pondering its meaning, the heart of the matter seems to lie in Matthew 16. 21, where "from that time forth began Jesus to show unto His disciples how He must... suffer...and be killed." It is to these sayings that Matthew 17. 1 and Luke 9. 22 point back. A crisis had come in His ministry. Welcomed by the poor and the sick, the needy, He had yet been rejected by the nation and its rulers. From now on His teaching pointed clearly to the Cross as His immediate goal. Now He began to prepare His disciples for His death on Calvary, which seemed to them like absolute disaster. No wonder they cried, "Be it far from Thee, Lord," as their dreams of earthly glory faded, and they were assured that life could come only through death.

Deep must have been their misgivings those "six days" when in panic of heart "they were afraid to ask Him further of His meaning." Then to three of them was vouchsafed

the reassuring vision on "the holy mount." "O the depth of the riches...of the wisdom...of God!" For in place of reproaches they were given a further revelation of the high estate and future glory of the Son of Man; a revelation which the apostles held in trust for, and sought to keep in the remembrance of the Church, and after their decease, in the hearts of generations of believers yet unborn (2 Peter 1. 15).

And with the wonder of the scene, with the "glistening" garments of the Saviour, and that blessed face, shining "as the sun," there came from the overshadowing cloud the voice of the ever-present Father, again commending the Son in accents of supremest confidence; again He was "My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

4. So the end approached, and still the disciples failed yet to understand the way of the Cross. So that when, the last week, He declared, "The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified" (John 12. 23), it was with a glory that passed their understanding. It was not indeed such as the world counts glory. What He spoke of was the glory of the dying grain (the corn of wheat), which finds in the silent ground but a quiet place in which to fall and die, that it may afterwards bring forth abundant fruit. But such dying being His Father's perfect will for Him, the shame of the Cross was thereby transfigured into the supremest glory. So that, though troubled in soul, in spite of all He could but cry, "Father, glorify Thy Name," though that could only be through His own death on the Cross.

Again the response was immediate, and deeply impressive. For the sake of the disciples' wavering faith there came the calm clear assurance from Heaven, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." Ah! Glorious Master, forgive our feeble faith, our wayward steps, our frightened hearts! Pardon and strengthen us, that we

may nevermore be “afraid to ask Thee” the way, afraid to follow.

5. And now He was come to the last dark scene on Calvary, where by wicked hands He was crucified and slain. The very nation to whom had been committed the living oracles of God, and which, year by year, century after century, had watched and waited for their expected Messiah, now in their blindness, in place of welcoming Him with a crown, had crucified Him on the Cross. Let us then reverently join the onlookers as “they sat and watched Him there,” that we may realise afresh the profound truth of their accusation, “He saved others, Himself He cannot save.”

About the time of the evening sacrifice, through the merciful darkness that enshrouded Him, came that cry of anguish, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” For then indeed “the Lord...laid on Him the iniquities of us all.” And because God is of “purer eyes than to behold iniquity,” for the first time the Father averted His face from His beloved Son, wringing from Him that awful cry. With the averted face there could be no voice from the excellent glory, as on former occasions. Yet in the events that followed we can clearly discern the Father’s approval in the Saviour’s sacrifice. For, confirming His dying triumphal cry, “It is finished!” came the Father’s reiterated assent. We hear the clear “Amen” of the Father in the rent veil (clearest token that the way into the holiest was now made perfect), the earthquake, and the open graves of the resurrected saints; and clearer still, we hear His verdict in the empty tomb of the risen Saviour.

Truly indeed was He called “Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God...by miracles and wonders and signs!” He is now enthroned on high, angels and principalities being subject to Him. Yet it is our wondrous privilege,

in this His day of rejection, to bring Him our service, our hearts, our homage. Oh, may He even now be glorified in us His saints. May He to-day truly and worthily be worshipped and admired in all of us that believe!

“We would dwell on Calvary’s mountain,  
Where the flocks of Zion feed;  
Oft resort unto that fountain  
Opened where our Lord did bleed:  
Thence deriving grace and strength  
For every need.”

CHAPTER XIII

“SPIKENARD VERY COSTLY”

## "GIVE ME TO DRINK"

(John 4. 7)

"Give me to drink!" The Syrian sun's hot eye  
Relentless poured upon that Sacred Head.  
And Christ by whom all suns were made was nigh  
To faint beneath its burden, ere He bled.

"Give Me to drink!" Yes, emptied so was He,  
That from an outcast woman He was fain  
To crave a draught, and so her debtor be,  
Although a pensioner upon His pain.

"Give Me to drink!" Ah! wonder infinite!  
I, too, may help to slake that wondrous thirst;  
I, too, should minister to His delight  
For souls of men for whom Himself was cursed.

And if my cup of life I doubtful bring  
Trembling and brimming o'er with love unseen,  
A willing offering to this mighty King,  
Will He despise, reject, a gift so mean?

Ah! never so, or He had never died!  
But ere He from my life may slake His thirst,  
By His appointment, streaming from His side,  
A living fountain from my heart must burst.

Then here and now, the floodgates of our heart,  
Impending benedictions to obtain,  
We open wide, nor shut again, that part  
Of His blest thirst for men we may sustain.

But shall His "other sheep" in heathen lands,  
Who vainly wait His embassy of peace,  
Shall they not slake His thirst, because your hands  
Unfaithful prove, to bring their soul's release?

## “SPIKENARD VERY COSTLY”

(John 12. 13)

IT is to Bethany we are called, to join the Saviour in a feast, there to listen to the cadences of that blessed voice, like which “never man spake,” there to realise with Him the shadow of His impending Cross, and to consider His prophetic anointing. For it was in the pregnant week preceding the world’s Passover that He was asked to a humble home to share an evening meal, garnished with love.

O those suppers of the Saviour! How many sacred memories and precious sayings cluster round them! For there, the day’s work over, the doors closed, and the world shut out, in the penumbra of His Divine Presence, the Eternal Word was won’t to reveal Himself to the inner circle of His own.

At this supper at Bethany there were two women. We have met them before (Luke 10. 38). It was in connection with the same simple happy function of entertaining, of giving hospitality to, the Prophet of Galilee. “Entertaining angels unawares!” Why here was the Lord of Life and Glory! Then, as on the present occasion, Martha was “serving,” an occupation blessed, yet not the best. (The good is often the enemy of the best.) Oh! Martha, Martha, art still busied with “much serving,” preparing in eastern fashion perhaps, an elaborate feast for the Master, who would have been content with “a dinner of herbs, where love is,” and who needed the undivided attention of His hosts.

But Mary was there, too; Mary who had lingered long in

His presence, had sat at His feet, had treasured His words. And those pondered words had enlightened her mind, and had revealed as a flash the Way of the Crucified, when all the disciples were preoccupied with the dream of a regnant Messiah. So this thoughtful woman, to the astonishment of all present, broke her alabaster box of ointment, and anointed the Lord for His burial.

1. Think first of the motive of Mary's act. That motive was love, pure love. She broke her cruse with no hope of reward, with no pledge of payment, save to salve her own heart, to give vent to her pent up devotion. She had reached that blessed stage where she had to find an outlet for her love. As has been aptly said: "She must break her cruse of ointment or else her heart would break." So she found a prophetic outlet which deeply moved the heart of the soon-to-die Saviour. For the shadow of the Cross was already heavy upon His heart. The winding sheet of His tomb was high upon His breast. The burden of the world's sin already oppressed Him.

So, to His heart, surcharged with sorrow, Mary's act was a tender intimation that she knew His goal, His destiny, that she understood something of His travail (perhaps as far as human heart could then understand), that she would anoint Him for His burial. Of Mary it might have been truly said:

"She lives detached days,  
She serveth not for praise,  
For gold she is not sold."

No, she served, lived, laboured, and poured out her cruse, "for hire, just love entire."

2. Yet how much did she give? Did she carefully pour out upon that sacred head just enough of the spike-nard to make a pleasant impression, just enough to gain for herself an odour of sanctity? Was she like those, who,

at the wedding feast, give the cheapest possible gift that will keep up appearances?

Thank God, there was a holy abandon in Mary's giving. There are times when it is unworthy to “count the cost.” Such times are when we would give our lives, our strength, our all. Oh, these cold and cautious and calculating hearts of ours! “They forsook all and followed Him.” How often or how long do we really do that for the Master? Does that describe our habitual attitude to Him? Such an abandonment is the surest way to the Father's heart, the surest guarantee of our truest riches; it is the highway into the Heavenlies.

Yet what a contrast was Mary's act and attitude to the continual self-seeking, the carnal outlook which obsessed the hearts of the disciples. For at the most tender and sacred moments, the “strife which of them should be the greatest” checked the Saviour's most precious revelations. It sullied even the sanctity of the upper room. It was only exorcised by the Holy Ghost at Pentecost. O for Mary's heart, and something of Mary's abandon!

3. The resulting sweet savour. First there is the privilege, the possibility of being a sweet savour unto the world's Saviour. How it evidently refreshed Him, comforted Him that day, at the simple feast made for Him by those lowly loving hands. With the jeers of Jerusalem still in His ears, surely Mary's act of love and confidence must have been the sweetest savour of that day and of many days; that which pleased Him the most.

And for us? With our lives often to be lived amidst the commonplace, what is there for us to do? What precious cruse is there for us to outpour in these busy modern days? How can we show Him our devotion; we, whose hands, whose thoughts, must so often be occupied with pressing daily duties? Why, it is still blessedly possible for God to make them the alabaster boxes to be

poured out at His feet. For He can enable us in daily life to do the little things as though they were great things, as though they were God's things. He can add such a factor, can give such a fragrance that "the cup of cold water" will become a draught from the Lord of Glory. There is still room and to spare, for poured out lives, spite of the world's disdain. And for those so doing, daily He can transform, can transfigure the way and the day. So, though the feet still tread life's dusty ordinary pathway, heart, brain, and love may move on a higher plane; daily they may dwell on the heavenly horizon.

But are not Heaven's courts His permanent abode? And amid all the hosannas and the homage, the incense and the offerings of the hosts above, can He, will He, notice and appreciate our lowly hidden service? Can the savour of His own sweetness, which through the Holy Ghost may distil from the humblest hearts, can it still reach even unto Him? Yes, for here we have a very sure a very comfortable word of prophecy, being assured by the Holy Ghost (2 Cor. 2. 15) that we are indeed "unto God a sweet savour of Christ."

4. And that savour may extend, too, to those who surround us in life. "The house was filled," and all were sensible of Mary's offering. It is our happy possibility to go through life with a radiance a real fragrance of the Crucified. There is large room, too, and a desperate need for many alabaster boxes to-day, for the pouring out of many lives we count the most precious, in the darkness of the world's midnight lands. Never did the Lord so need the fellowship of more of His own in the foreign field; never were the rewards so great.

Yet if in our ardour we seek to furnish a sweet savour of Him, merely through the historic "imitation of Christ," we shall be sadly disillusioned. For He is beyond imitation by mortal man, and our imitation graces will be only

spurious, of self, not of Him. And men do not want an imitation Christ, they crave for “the very same Jesus.” But if, instead of seeking to imitate Christ, we shall so enthrone Him in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, that He is supreme, then daily, and simply, and naturally we may manifest Christ. And we shall be on sure ground, for it will indeed be the true light that “now shineth” out of our hearts and through our lives. And such shining will be permanent and inevitable, and convincing.

5. The first social Gospel. But in spite of the sweet savour, there is still the selfish question of the disciples: “Why was this waste?” this waste of anointing that sacred head? So in that solemn moment, even His own would have robbed Him of His due, who was presently to face Calvary for their sakes. Instead of endowing Him (and so themselves), they would have the ointment given to the poor. Here was indeed the earliest beginning of the present day “social Gospel,” which too often ignores the claims and rights of Christ (and is therefore no “God’s news”), to centre all effort and attention on alms and good works. There is indeed our pressing duty to our neighbour: “Let us do good unto all men.” But first let us “render unto God the things that are God’s.” Then we may “have the mind of Christ” and His guidance and Divine programme for the betterment of mankind.

6. Think next of the unique opportunity. Mary apparently had obtained the spikenard that she might anoint the Lord’s body in burial. Possibly it was only an afterthought which made her decide to anoint Him beforehand in this way. In any case she was well advised to do so. There were four women later who would have done the same, and set out with their spices, only to find an empty tomb. They failed, for the hour, the opportunity for anointing had passed. It is passing to-day! Not in the realms of glory will we be able to share in His

sufferings, to pour out our lives and service at His feet, to help in bearing the cross. Here, and here alone, such service may be ours.

And the far-reaching effects, who can foretell or measure? Could Mary have dreamed that the cruse that she broke that evening would blazon her love abroad through all the centuries, wherever Christ is named and loved? Yet our service, our little cross carried, our poor lives outpoured, may have wondrous, and eternal, and ever blessed results. Yet for all too many of His own the cry will come with the dawning: "Too late! Too late! Ye cannot serve Him now!" Not in His humiliation. For the time of cross-bearing will have passed, the time for sharing His sufferings, with all its blessed, formative, sanctifying results. Oh, "to-day...to-day harden not your hearts!"

7. Breaking the cruse. Mary, to make sure that there should be no half measures, that the last drop might be out-poured, not only emptied, but broke the cruse. And for us, in our day and generation, it is still a true and literal and searching fact that only broken hearts and broken wills are worthy to partake of the "broken bread." Hearts broken in the truest, happiest sense of the word. For I think He gently breaks down our wills, our hearts, with love and kindness, more often than with a Gethsemane of suffering. Both are often used by the Celestial Surgeon. Yet I believe the normal experience of our days is to continually enjoy "the fellowship" of His joys, even though in the background there is also "the fellowship of His sufferings." And the dreaded sufferings, what shall we say of them? As we look back, the verdict of our innermost hearts may become that of the saint of old, who wrote: "I was sometime in being burned: for me, I have forgot it all."

For let us take heart of grace, that when He does lead

into Gethsemane, He will always minister unto us the merciful anaesthetic of His love, and of the many prayers for us He will arouse in the many saints. So will He soothe the pain and extract the sting, and gently heal the wound, while working out the benison of His plan for our lives. Yes, assuredly, looking back on His many dealings with the soul, we shall find the joy and the gladness predominate, and that with joy we may be continually drawing water out of the wells of salvation. Truly—

“Weary the cares, the jars,  
The lets, of every day;  
Yet the heavens fill with stars  
When Christ comes on His way;  
And where He stays all joy must stay.”

. . . . .

“Here, then, and now, we offer and present unto Thee, our Lord of Glory, ourselves, our souls, our service, to be our reasonable, holy, and continual sacrifice.”

CHAPTER XIV

“THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW”

## “THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW”

### AN AVENUE TO GOD

“I walk through the valley of the shadow of death” (Psa. 28. 4).

ARE you entering, or dreading, or even passing through “the valley of the shadow?” Do you fear it may only prove “the lone pass of pain?” The Great Husbandman has scored many deep “valleys of the shadow” since the Great War. But, be comforted. Be content. Be convinced that if you are yielding to Him there will be wonderful doings in your “valley,” and all will be well, that is His will.

For in it may bloom the strangest, sweetest flowers, so rare that they are seldom found elsewhere. These flowers are wonderfully apt to take root in the hearts of pilgrims passing through. “Heart’s ease” grows well in that valley close by to “a pardoned past.” And among the other best blossoming are “a loyal will” and “passion for souls” and “prevailing prayer.” “Love to all saints,” too, you will find flourishing, and “power for service” very abundantly.

So in passing through the dreaded vale, your heart, where little of worth may have bloomed before, may here, first, literally and truly become a garden of the Lord; such a garden as “our Beloved” shall frequent with joy and great consolation. It shall become at last a vale “where blaze the unimaginable flowers” and fruits of the Spirit.

Yes, in spite of its name, “the valley of the shadow”

has a wonderful climate, as one can testify from many past and poignant yet blessed experiences. Ah, yes! it is indeed fraught with undreamed of possibilities. For when God adds His factor to our faculties, He can wonderfully mellow our hearts, and multiply our talents, and enlarge our lives. Never doubt, the valley has been planned for us, provided just for us. It is the best place for us. It is of God.

Tunnels, remember, are not put on sidings, but only on the main lines. For they are designed to lead somewhere; to emerge on other fields and grassy slopes, where still the sun shines. And just so with the valley of the shadow, which has been designed by the great Master. It always leads onwards, and it always leads upwards. It leads to God's most far-seeing plan for your promotion. This end and consummation of the valley you may certainly reach.

1. You may indeed, in this valley of the shadow be brought to make your first real contact with God. In the past you may have known of Him, have frequented His house, even have revelled in His rites, without having had any real part or lot with Him. Have you ever met the Son of God personally, as Mary, that early morning, met Him, risen in the garden? If you do not know Him thus to speak to, then you do not really know Him and His forgiveness. And so He, in kindness, may have brought you from your strait "blind alleys of death" to this "pass of pain" to secure an interview. So that in the prophetic words of the Psalmist of old, "passing through the valley of weeping" you may "make it a well" (Psa. 84. 6), and find in it the way of peace.

Perhaps through suffering He has divorced you for a time from earthly things that you may the more readily seek for heavenly riches, for abiding rest, for quiet consolation. Remember, then, that it is not learning, or wisdom, or great abilities, which can so discern Christ.

It is ardent love and simple faith. These form the “needle’s eye,” the postern in the great gates of the New Jerusalem, through which straitly you must pass to gain entrance to the Celestial City. Loads must be shed, and honours, and all pride; then as a child, with bowed head and believing heart you may stoop, and so enter into rest. It may be hard to cast away old plans, and ideals, and beliefs. You may have to cry out in the words of Augustine: “Too late I learned to love Thee!” who have for long years vainly been calling: “Lord! Lord!” to One who “never knew you.”

“Reach hither,” then, “thy finger” in childlike faith, and “behold” his hands, wounded for thee; and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into His side (John 20. 27), and be “not faithless but believing,” and so cry at last with Thomas: “My Lord and my God!”

2. But even if you really “know” Him, He may have much for you yet to learn. And He may see that in your busy life (even in His service) the dark valley is the only place where He can develop in your heart some of His rarest graces. Never forget, He is much more concerned with ourselves than with our service, and not the greatest “busyness,” but the greatest likeness to Him, pleases Him most, and will count for most.

Have you noticed that His promises of “rewards” for service refer to His Millennial Kingdom, and that nothing of the sort is said about the eternal state? Where, then, is His guerdon for faithfulness, for service, for “filling up that which is behind” of His sufferings? Where, but in a greater capacity to enjoy Him. True, all hearts will be full to overflow in that celestial state, but will the penitent thief have as great a capacity to enjoy God as “the apostle of the Gentiles?” As with the manna, each had according to his eating, and each was satisfied; so in eternity, each according to His growth in grace, will be

able to enjoy God. May we then cry with Jabez: "O! that Thou wouldst enlarge my coasts!"

And I would tell you that such a "valley" for learning of God emerges constantly on the breezy uplands of the Delectable Mountains, so happily named "Heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 2. 6). There your views of God and of His Christ will be clarified, as you catch something of the celestial viewpoint, and you begin to know at last a little "as you are known." There, too, you may nightly watch the westward sweep of the starry host, and most perceptibly realise the hastening, the near approach of that great day. True, in these climes you may sometimes walk alone, for the mountain peak is not thronged. And it may cost, at times; "If any man in any way would be the one man, he shall be so to his cost!" Yet Christ can make it a perpetual "Emmaus walk," and so kindle a burning in your heart that you will not longer desire the stifling crowd. O, indeed it is true:

"He walks in glory on the hills,  
Yet longs for men to join Him there!"

3. Or the "valley" may be the pass into new and blessed plains and fields of service. Not a few of us have found it the most direct route to the foreign mission field, with its abounding joy and hundredfold consolations and compensations. For those who so go out in His Name, supposing all things but loss, enter a charmed circle and soon discover that though "blood is thicker than water, and earthly ties are most dear, yet the blood of Christ forges stronger, closer, more enduring bonds than any earthly ties. Their's being "the sacrificial blest employ, that gives to take, that pours out to enjoy," they soon discover that in "losing" all they have really found, as predicted, "brethren and sisters and mothers," as well as welcoming homes and wide-opened hearts on every hand.

And they come in for a legacy of prayer, which it is worth going to the mission field alone to inherit.

Thus we realise that He has given us “the valley of trouble for a door of hope” (Hosea 2. 15), as we wonderfully step out into ardent service, and that we have never really begun to live until we have so begun to serve. And you? If you have “great possessions” or greater expectations in wealth, or in talents, or in loved ones; ah, do not grudge them to Him who gave them all. Yield all. Give all. Multiply them all by casting them all at His feet! For always remember:

“Every thorn upon His brow  
Makes thee more and more His slave.”

4. Finally, the valley of the shadow may lead abruptly upwards at its head, up, right up to the throne of God; to that “far countree” which is called Emmanuel’s land. There it is fair. If that is really His plan for you, happy indeed is your lot. Even for apostolic Paul, with his supreme abilities, his labouring mightily in the Spirit, such an ascent was yet “very far better,” to be at last and at once in the immediate presence.

And for the one who is left? We must cry by faith: “Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him!” However irreparable may seem the loss, so that nothing apparently can compensate for it, we must believe that the Divine Alchemist is planning to transmute the suffering into fuller richer life, and deeper blessing, and our greatest gain. So that seen from the Divine perspective of the eternal future, we shall look back and thank Him for what has seemed only disaster. It is a blessed thing to be able to look past all the avoidable second causes which come crowding to mind, right back to God, the great first Cause, and to know that nothing can come to us but through the hands which are ever the hands of love. For those

hands which bore the pain of the nails of Calvary, are wondrous skilful in taking out the sting, and He will cause a richer, diviner flood of life to suffuse the heart that at present is somewhat dumb with pain.

Therefore, whatever turn the valley takes—into Christ, or up to the “Heavenly places,” or forth to the heathen, or up to God—let us always remember the Divine Husbandman purposes a harvest. Meanwhile, His reassurance still stands sure: “It is good that a man should both hope, and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord” (Lam. 3. 26). “For I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance.”

CHAPTER XV

“COME, LABOUR ON”

“WHO FOLLOWS IN THEIR TRAIN?”

Across the heavens Christ trailed  
His crimson cross,  
His bow beneficent set in the sky,  
His guerdon through the ages, that the dross  
Of hearts deep-dyed He now could purify.

He called for partners in  
This strife with sin.  
A paltry few, weak men, of faith sublime,  
Set forth against the world, the world to win,  
With joyful tears and toil, to every clime.

Their pains, their blood, how meet!  
Like corn of wheat,  
Into far distant fields, in graves untold,  
Had fallen, loss apparently complete.  
Their silent deaths have reaped a thousandfold!

Their mantle fell unto  
A gathering few,  
Who sowed, in naked faith, as seed, the Word  
Omnipotent, man's hearts to make anew—  
Watered with tears and prayers and hope deferred.

Lo! from their crucible,  
A miracle!  
The stony hearts, the sterile soil, the blight  
Of centuries and continents, overnight  
Blossomed and fructified in God's clear light.

For as we rose from prayer,  
Beyond compare,  
Most moving was the suppliant array;  
A thousand thousand voices thronged the air:  
“Where is the Bread of Life, long kept away?  
What is the azure hope of ‘that great day’?”

To-day heralds of peace  
Have no release  
From multitudes who call, and call in vain.  
The day long dreamed has come. Yet shall you cease  
To thrust the labourers out, to ease men's pain,  
Lone, overwhelmed? Who follows in their train?

## “COME, LABOUR ON”

(John 11. 38)

1. Lazarus was plainly dead; nay, had been dead four days. He had even now passed into a state of corruption. That was the problem that faced the Saviour after his hot walk from beyond Jordan. Can you not see Him with the attendant disciples, the attendant multitude! There stands the Saviour of the world, in all the majesty of His Person, “stands and stretches out His hands.” He, the brightness of His Father’s glory, “the express image of His Person,” stands waiting to be gracious, waiting to do the mighty work for which He had come. Yes, He was ready and waiting; and more, He was longing to work the miracle that would bring such joy. For with a sublime touch the inspired Word tells how His heart was overflowed in love and sympathy to that lowly family when “Jesus wept.”

So there you have the two chief personages of a scene that typifies the life giving work He came to earth to do. But, alas, there was an obstacle that seemed insuperable. The dead man was there, needing, O how greatly, a speedy miracle. The wonder-working Saviour was there, longing, oh, how deeply, to work that miracle, but the grave was “a cave, and a stone lay upon it.” That stone intervened between the dead and the living, between the sinner and the Saviour. And, with reverence we say it, He could not, would not remove. That was not His work. For one of the mysteries of godliness is the self-appointed limit He has set to His own activities. He will not break open a door, a heart. He knocks, He pleads,

He waits. He will not force His pardon and peace and power on those who reject Him. So now the stone is the sole obstacle that hinders.

Then with pointed emphasis He cries: "Take ye away the stone!" Of course at a word from Him it would have faded into thin air, or have fallen at His feet. But that word He would not speak. It was their work, not His, the taking away the stone. They must do it before He could intervene on behalf of the dead. "Take ye away the stone."

Truly to-day men are needy enough, and as truly God is mighty enough; but between the two, hindering many a blessing, keeping many a soul in the darkness of death, stands many a stone of stumbling.

Ah! friends, we cry to God to work, when it is for us to work first. We cry to Him to unleash His power, when it is for us to do all in our power, by prayer and confession, to put away sin from our hearts, our churches; to lay aside the weights the church so often carries that we so often carry; to abandon all unholy alliances with the world, and live more like the pilgrims and strangers we are called of God to be; to show more signs of spiritual life in the midst of spiritual death. Here are some of the stones that stumble, that obstruct, that condemn. Too often the Church is full of unconverted Church members, mere gravestones that fill the Church when they should be in the cemetery. And men wonder and grieve that the Church has lost power, that the Gospel seems impotent. Yet after eighteen centuries the Saviour's power is undiminished, His lustre is undimmed, His love is undaunted. But He waits to work, as He waited then, and cries again: "Take ye away the stone."

2. And now the stone is removed; the last real obstacle is gone. For death is no obstacle to the Prince of Life. And, ah, how willing He is to work, how glad to at last

be free to intervene, for He cries: "Father, I thank Thee."

"And when He had thus said, He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth!" Ah, wonderful Lord! Never man spake like Thee. Here, in the presence of such love and power, we are hushed and dumb, we bow and worship. Thou art the Lord, that is Thy Name, and Thy glory Thou can'st not, wilt not give to another. For this is indeed Thy Divine prerogative, having given Thine own life, now to give life to those long dead in sin. To whom else should men go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.

How many, many times we have seen Him work just such a miracle in heathen lands, when the stones of stumbling have been removed. How often one's heart has been hushed, one's breathing stilled, as, one by one, cannibals and savages have bowed the knee and the heart, have "kissed the Son," and in reverent, simple faith have claimed His great deliverance from death. And as He did His mighty deed, and gave life to the dead we seem to hear His cry: "Lazarus, come forth."

Yet how different a gospel is preached to-day in many pulpits reared in His Name. "Man needs no new birth, no further life; already He is divine." So men lay impious hands upon the ark of God, and seek in human impotence to counterfeit the work of Divine Omnipotence. Be not deceived. The day shall declare it, that great day when with infinite pain yet with infinite justice, the world's Saviour will have become its judge, to proclaim the solemn final, "I never knew you," to all who will not come unto Him that they might have life.

3. So the stone having been removed, the Lord of Glory has spoken the word of life. Haltingly, blindly Lazarus comes forth, alive, but not yet free. He cannot be left thus, as are so many converts. Again there is a call for human service. "Loose him," he cried, "and let him

go." For the man had life, but had not liberty, and truly typifies the spiritual state of multitudes of the redeemed.

How much loosing is needful in the homelands to-day amongst true believers. Even so it is among converts in the mission field, until heathen chiefs protest: "Your God is too 'shy.' Why does He take away so much; all our dances and all our devils? Why do you make the way so hard?" And we have often told them how when horses are hard to catch they are let loose in the fields wearing a halter, from which a long rope trails, so that it is easy to walk up quietly behind, seize the rope, and so secure the horse before he is aware of it. Even so the sins and habits and superstitions that so often cling, even to true believers, are just so many halters, convenient to the adversary, of which he makes full use, and from which they must be freed. Oh! may there be many able ministers of the Word who shall seek in the Spirit's power to loose His people from these habitual halters, so that in place of being led into captivity by the evil one, Christ may lead His people always in triumph, and so that, in place of grave clothes He may give them robes of righteousness.

Note in this graphic narrative how large a share in the miracle Christ yields to the disciples. They are to roll away the stone. They are to loose the man and let him go. All that He can He gives them. Thus, with kingly generosity, He who might have done it all with a word, a gesture, who might have given the priceless boon of this service to adoring angels, loads favour upon favour upon the doubting disciples, as He promotes them partners in His redemptive work. Ah! surely this is the crowning glory of the Gospel, that we are not only saved from sin, but that we are saved unto service.

Think, how, grave eyed and tender, He must have watched the disciples straining at the stone, must have approved them as they loosed his grave clothes from off

the man. Yet just so, from His Father's right hand in glory He looks down tenderly to-day; just so He watches with love the feeblest efforts in His service. And never was the call to that service so pressing, so urgent as to-day. All over the mission field, where Christ has been set forth as Saviour of the World, He has begun to draw men unto Him; so that there comes an increasing, ever swelling cry from the tombs of heathendom, from ungarnered multitudes of men, who wait to be loosed from their sins, but who too often die, waiting, for men are "slow and late."

You see then your calling, brethren; we are saved, not that we should watch others serve, not that we should leave it to others to "take the prey," but that each, the mightiest and the feeblest, should humbly become partakers of His toil, His tears, His sufferings, that in the end we might be counted worthy to become partakers also of His glory.

"Come, labour on!

No time for rest till glows the western sky,  
While the long shadows on our pathway lie,  
And a glad sound comes with the setting sun,  
'Servants, well done.'

"Come, labour on!

The toil is arduous, but reward is sure.  
Blessed are those who to the end endure;  
How full their joy, how deep their rest shall be,  
O Lord, with Thee!"

CHAPTER XVI

“NO GREATER JOY”

"GREATER WORKS THAN THESE SHALL YE DO!"

EMMANUEL, prisoned in our dull human frame,  
Was yet irradiated with heavenly dower;  
Never in vain the halt, the blind, the lame  
Invoked His healing power.

But His costliest benison, O dark dismay!  
The pardon He yearned above all to bestow,  
The hearts of men clothed in huts of clay  
Mostly disdain to know.

Men thronged Him for perishing bread, for perishing sight;  
E'en for their dead they besought His magic touch;  
But for healing of soul, for heavenly light  
They did not hunger much.

So, sadly, He passed on His shining way,  
Until sin's entail on the Cross He broke.  
His mightiest power He could scarce display;  
"He healed a few sick folk!"

But the night ere He died, He revealed to the few  
The far reaching testament of His love.  
"Greater than Mine are the works ye shall do  
When I reach My Father above!"

"Greater in depth your works through the Spirit may be;  
For where I have touched and reached the bodies of men,  
Ye, through His quickening power, may prayerfully  
Reach to the hearts of them!"

"Greater in time; for Lazarus sleeps again  
Under the silent sod. The Judaeen sun  
Looks down on the graves of those I healed of pain,  
Where My mightiest works were done!"

"But ye may awake from the vigils of the dead,  
Doom-destined souls, to share all Heaven with Me.  
Your works may endure when suns and moons have fled,  
Through a timeless eternity.

"Greater in sphere. For prisoned in Palestine,  
Never in Corinth or Rome, man's second birth  
I might proclaim. But ye shall take of Mine  
Unto the ends of the earth!"

Will you live your life for the things that pass, that pall?  
Here is your heritage, sons of men who are sons of God!  
Out of the outer darkness I hear the dead call,  
And I hear the cry of your Lord!

## “NO GREATER JOY”

“I HAVE no greater joy,” wrote the aged apostle of love, at the close of his long life spent in the summer of Christ’s service—“I have no greater joy,” he wrote, “than to hear that my children walk in the truth.” And life in Christ holds many deepest, most sacred joys, in the mission field; yet is there any to surpass the joy (humbly following apostolic precedent) of hearing and finding that Christ’s and our children “walk in the truth?”

It has been most truly said that griefs shared are griefs divided; whereas joys shared are joys multiplied. So one cannot but wish to share with others of the Lord’s people this deepest joy of knowing that in increasing numbers His children in the Solomons “walk in the truth.”

For this rejoicing has been given to our little company of missionaries in a larger measure than perhaps ever before and a large share of it is due to fervent prayer in the homelands. New tribes and new villages are continually being reached and won to allegiance to Christ; the Lord is “adding to the Church, day by day, those being saved,” so that more than seven thousand natives in about a hundred and eighty villages are now sincerely “obedient to the faith.”

Yet, more vital than any of these, more essential to the future is the fact that the infant churches, as a whole, are really prospering. Some, it is true, are not growing in knowledge as we would desire, because the only teachers we have been able so far to supply know so little them-

selves. Yet most of the converts are continuing "steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine," and this "patient continuance in well doing" is working out its own reward in a stability and a maturity that age alone can give. Thus, not only are we continually reaching out into the "regions beyond," but the heart of the mission, the older established Churches, are mainly sound and zealous in the faith.

Life on the "Evangel." In the constant visitation of out-stations in the "Evangel," which one has lived upon, and navigated for seventeen years, it is a continual pleasure to meet the dear people in their crowded leaf churches, and together to renew the blest bonds of fellowship in the Gospel. We have many radiant evenings, too, when the poop is packed with eager listeners. Men, women, and children, they crowd off to the ship after dark, the boats plying to and fro from the shore, laden down to the gunwale with eager excited passengers. The evening meeting on board is one of the most appreciated features of the ship's visit, and is a great cheer and encouragement to isolated schools and teachers.

It is hard to end the singing on such evenings, the people are so eager for more, and to learn new hymns, and the incandescent lights on the poop give a splendid light. Then at the close, with the water gently lapping the ship's sides from the cool land breeze, nightly one has sought to minister the life-giving words to Him who in olden times "went into a ship and sat," and so taught. Often indeed has it been blessedly evident that "Jesus Himself drew near!"

"The family of God." It is a continual cheer to remember the oneness of such gatherings, the family feeling, the loyalty and love the people show to those whose happy privilege it has been to live and labour among them. Except in one isolated district, where

native leadership has led the people astray, there are the most happy and cordial relations between us and the converts. This would seem only natural, for in most cases we have watched and helped them one by one to break away from devil worshipping, to place themselves under God's care and instruction. There is no trace nor likelihood of that nationalistic spirit which is such a problem in lands like India and Egypt. In how many places, but a few years ago we "fought with men and beasts," as we sought out the heathen in each lagoon and bay, and sought with prayer for an entrance for the Gospel! Yet the cannibals who then began to make their first contact with God, are now "brothers beloved" whom it is a continual joy to revisit. And with all humility, much indeed of the Apostle Paul's language and love to his converts seems the natural artless language of our own hearts as we pray for "our children" whom "we have begotten in our bonds" in the Gospel.

Yet one feels that as yet we are only on the fringe of what God is preparing to do. After seventeen years proving the Lord's deliverances in the islands, years during which He has been continually opening some new door and holding it open, one feels more than ever that we must become the most confirmed optimists; we must still further enlarge our expectations. One feels more and more convinced that His love "unconquered and unconfined" is yet going to do "greater works than these."

Giving "gifts unto men." Splendour and glory are His now, and having "led captivity captive," He still waits to give "gifts unto men." Yet there is the other side. That He may work more of His wonders, more men will have to give more "gifts unto God" if His work is not to be curtailed. It is impossible to continuously enter His open doors and to minister the Word to growing

thousands of saints without expenditure continuously increasing. "The silver and the gold is Mine," He reminds us. Yet it is held in trust by His stewards, and we cannot be silent as to the steady growth of the work, and as to the privilege of those spiritual investments which yield a thousandfold. Yet, looking past the human element, thank God, it is supremely true that "into life's future, fearless we may gaze, for, Jesus Thou art with us all the days." And our resources are still as great as the promises of God.

And you? What real share have you in such a work of the Holy Ghost? "Take My yoke upon you," once spake our blest Emmanuel, "and ye shall find rest unto your souls." There is, of course, the rest given ("I will give you rest") from the knowledge of sins forgiven. But there is a fuller, deeper rest which must be found, and which is worth all the world for the finding. It is the "rest" of the yoke, the "rest" of service. It is one of God's strangest paradoxes that a yoke can give rest, that the "bonds" of the Gospel can be the truest freedom. Can you afford to ignore, to abandon, the "rest" of the yoke in this day of the world's unrest? Is your life to be continually impoverished from knowing few "bonds" in the Gospel? Is your life ever to "abide alone" through having small share in "bringing back the King?"

Perhaps men do not realise how great is the privilege of work in the mission field. In the homelands the "minister" of the Word often touches but the outer circle, the fringe of men's lives. He is often only one of the many forces moulding the lives of his hearers, sometimes one of the feeblest. Here, from the nature of the case, the missionary is the centre of most of his people's activities in life. Nearly all the new possibilities of the future for the convert are focused on the missionary and his message,

and his Lord. He lives indeed in the centre of his people's lives. It is no light privilege thus to be the spiritual focus of a thousand hearts, as is the case with many of our fellow-workers. And I think it makes one life count for more than it usually does in the homelands. Yet in all this, those at home can have a very large and certain share. And such continual progress as we rejoice in is only possible because many are giving themselves to the work, giving themselves in prayer and in substance.

For history and experience teach us that such apostolic conditions will not continue of themselves. There must always be the sustained “fight of faith” if the enemy is not to come in like a flood. “Where there is no ox, the crib is clean,” and the spiritual care of these growing thousands of converts can only be faced as increasing volumes of prayer ascend to God, that they may retain their “first love,” and that at His near appearing they may be presented to Him as “a chaste virgin.”

A holy urgency. Now may God give us all something of the holy urgency of the Saviour. For, being made man among us, He could only spare three short years to work His wonders, to speak His words, to propound His parables. He left “yet many things unsaid,” for He could not bear to tarry longer. For Him the Syrian sky was as blue, and all nature as beautiful, as for other men. Yet, “I have a baptism to be baptised of,” He reminded them, and so passed along the dusty road to Jerusalem. He had promised men so much and so long, and He longed to perform His promise, and to buy their peace and pardon. “How am I straitened!” He cried, as He hastened on to the Cross. Nor could He rest till the world's redemption was accomplished. And now? Now He has called upon us to take up the ministry He abandoned for the Cross, and to do “greater things than these.” There is a “holy

calling" for some of us which is supremely worth while,  
for it is worth all. It is to you He looks, as He looked  
of old, when:

“With loving words He took  
The hearts of men in thrall;  
And with a golden look  
Welcomed them at His call,  
To give their love, their strength, their all.”

CHAPTER XVII

“PRAYING ALSO FOR US”

## “PRAYING ALSO FOR US”

THE voice said, Pray...What shall I pray? Yes, what shall you ask for us in the mission field? What benison, what benediction would you bestow on isolated missionaries through your prayers? We on the field know that life in the homelands is so full, so overfull, of duties and distractions that prayer is scarce, and very precious, and needs to be conserved and rightly directed, that it may produce the greatest results. What then shall you pray for us?

Why, there is nothing more profitable, more priceless that you can ask for us, than that, in spite of physical weariness, and “often infirmities,” and the care of many churches among multiplying converts, we may be enabled to remain upon our knees. For there is a praying in detail that has got to be done if the infant churches are to grow and prosper. And that detailed praying can only be done by those on the field. Only we can know the names, the lives, the temptations of the converts. Only we have seen the little churches nestling in the hidden bays, or perched upon the mountains. Only we can follow the hundreds of teachers in detail, in life, in mind, and can know and prayerfully meet the sudden perils and crises of the churches. And we? We fall asleep upon our knees! To our shame, often “He cometh and findeth” us asleep. (True, there are worse places to sleep, and I am sure the sleep of weariness will never invalidate true praying.) Yet we would not shirk this most fruitful, most essential service, nor seek to abandon it to others. For “prayer must ever be primarily;” all other service,

even in the field, is but secondary. But we earnestly desire, "through your prayers, and the supply of the spirit," that we might be given enough spiritual energy to "make full proof" of this most vital ministry.

But we need your help. For "who is sufficient for these things?" For effectual praying is no pastime. It will ever be arduous, it must ever be toilsome. "Virtue" must go out, and much spiritual energy. For there must needs be something of that "resisting unto blood" in this "striving against sin" and the powers of darkness, if we are to "turn the battle at the gate." And more, for our own soul's welfare and development we need to be instant, urgent in prayer. For prayer so wonderfully enriches all other activities. And "if any will not work neither shall he eat," is true also of this "work" of prayer. If there is not in our lives that quality of urgency which must find an outlet in the "conflict" of prayer, then neither shall we know the rarest, richest fruits of God, of the Spirit. It is your prayers which can best strengthen us to fulfil this unique service.

And your prayers can make our prayers specially cogent and powerful. It is an accepted fact that the effectual preaching of the Gospel owes its convincing effect largely to the concentrated prayers of many saints. So, many prayers, focused on a preacher, gives his words and preaching ministry a supernatural and extraordinary power not his own. Yet, though not generally realised, this is even more true of the prayer ministry of the one prayed for. There is a cumulative effect in prayer. To produce an electric spark, a low tension current of electricity is passed through a "coil," and induces in the coil a high tension current of electricity of great intensity, which is used to flame out and set on fire the gas of ordinary motor cars. The low tension current is thus concentrated, focused, as it were, to produce through the instrument,

the coil, a flaming spark. And I believe the same effect is literally true of your prayers for us, unworthy though we be in ourselves. Many prayers, so focused on one life (as is often the great privilege of the missionary or preacher), may reissue for his life in prayers of greater intensity, which will be able to set on fire many hearts, and be greatly used of God.

This cumulative, intensive effect is true of all who are much prayed for. In this compound ministry, each has his own appointed function. But as it is only the “low tension” prayers of many saints focused on one life which make possible the “high tension” preaching which is “mighty” to the conversion of many souls, even so it is only similar prayers, focused on one life which make possible the “high tension” prayers which set hearts and villages on fire. Thus each supplies the lack of the other, another blessed instance of that compacting of the body of Christ which “every joint supplieth.” Only so can we explain the many wonderful and circumstantial answers to our poor prayers, on subjects quite unknown to the church at home, which constantly rejoice our hearts and send us afresh to our knees.

So when you seek God’s face for us, above all ask that we may be enabled to pray and to go on praying. You can ask nothing more profitable, more potent. Pray that the Spirit may so store our hearts with blessed urgings, and “groanings which cannot be uttered,” that relief must be found in persistent, unwearying prayer. Pray that we may indeed be “straitened” in spirit, till this exacting ministry be accomplished. So most surely will Christ’s Church be edified and His coming hastened.

Lastly, may one thankfully testify on behalf of many that your prayer-labour is “not in vain in the Lord,” and that constantly the remembrance of the prayers of those in the homelands is the greatest cheer and encouragement

to the isolated missionary when "troubled on every side." How many times we are only "led in triumph" through "strong crying" in quiet rooms in the homelands, when, unnoticed by the world there rises the continual incense of many heart-meant prayers, and the throne of grace is besieged by those who will not let God go until He bless us. So then may each of us in this most blessed partnership be faithful and fruitful, and "abounding" in the ministry God has committed unto each.

Here, then, is a grateful, personal testimony to the abounding power of prayer in the world's harvest field. Thank God, to-day, in many districts in the Solomons (as in many other fruitful mission fields), where, unchallenged for centuries, "other gods have had dominion" over the teeming thousands, there is arising a challenging, arresting cry: "Behold the Lamb of God!" And many is the man who has thus looked upon the Son of God, and because "his heart was in his eyes," even as he looked, he believed and was redeemed. It has been our constant privilege to watch many such looks among thousands of converts in the Solomons, the past seventeen years, as one by one they have made their first personal contact with God. How one wishes that many in the homelands could go with us to their villages, where none but Christians are allowed to live, could hear their fervent prayers and praises, and watch their shining faces! A voyage round on the "Evangel" as she makes her way from island to island and from harbour to harbour, into lagoons and creeks and bays, in each place to find a happy welcoming little band of Christians, or some busy isolated missionary, is the only way to really realise the depth and extent of the work, and only "that great day" can at all declare what God hath wrought. It is a sight for tired eyes, a tonic most healthful to any hearts somewhat disheartened by the spiritual indifference of the masses at home.

But this cure of souls is no sinecure. As numbers steadily increase, it means more spiritual burdens to be borne, and as in many mission fields, we dare only go on, steadily, yearly, enlarging our commitments, undertaking the reaching of more tribes, the teaching of more villages, the feeding of more immortal souls, as more are joined to us in prayer, for this most fruitful ministry. There are indeed many adversaries and drawbacks, yet it is a happy fact that the Master can and does, in such service, make very many ordinary days to become extraordinary, by the sober intoxication of the heavenly wine. God's ravens fly in unexpected places, and as one and another helper is added unto us, for the growing needs and increasing responsibilities, may you who may join our company, as a living partner; you who give, and you who pray, and you who work, may the water abundantly become wine also in your life.

What then are the obligations of such service? It is men of vision, of faith, of persistence, who are needed to direct by prayer the Christward sweep of this escaping host. "Seers of faith!" Those are the men we seek:

"A quiet look they wear,  
But O! their eyes are bright,  
For what they dream they dare.  
Such dreams are God's delight."

"Look to the heathen without Christ, and you will find an altar," wrote Bishop Hill, running his short race in deadly West Africa, "and may God help you to be a sacrifice!" That is one aspect of Christ's service overseas. Yet ever remember such service is not a fast. In very truth, with His hundredfold compensations, God makes it a feast! And "you must be very much in love with sorrow," as Jeremy Taylor wrote, if in these times of world travail and sorrow, and spiritual indifference in the homelands, you neglect the call, and miss the joy,

the starry eyes, that come so constantly in such service in the foreign field. For here among the heathen is the sphere where, if you are wise to your eternal interests, you will have an ever increasing stake and investment; where you will long to come and pour out your gifts, your prayers, yourself, for the souls that thirst for the living water, and for the One who still thirsts for the souls of men.

And now as this little book goes out to many homes and hearts, we can turn back to the blessed business of hoisting the happy sails and guiding the ship which bears about continually "the rich and precious jewelle of God's holy Worde," as the Geneva Bible so feelingly puts it. And we go, thanking God upon every remembrance of the valued fellowship of the many saints who are of our company in this celestial enterprise. And as we cannot really and fully follow Christ unless we are prepared to go to the ends of the earth (for that is where in spirit He is going), so we thank God that He has given the super-sight of faith to so many dear friends whose hearts and love and prayer overflow to even this remotest corner of the field, there to become sharers in "the gold of the heavenly ophir."

And now, O God, do Thou shed Thy mighty Self abroad in all our hearts, that we, being illuminated by Thy Holy Spirit, may have the mind of Jesus Christ, in seeking out those "other sheep" whom He would beget into His own mystical body. And grant us all an abundant entrance into glory. Amen.

## CHANGE OF ADDRESS

The Address of Miss FLORENCE S. H. YOUNG is  
S. S. E. MISSION  
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A NUMBER of the chapters in this volume appeared first in Dr. NORTHCOTE DECK's quarterly illustrated report of the mission work in the Solomon Islands. A copy of the report will be sent post free for one year on receipt of name and address and 1/6, by Miss F. S. H. YOUNG, S.S.E. Mission, 17 Martin Place, Sydney, Australia.



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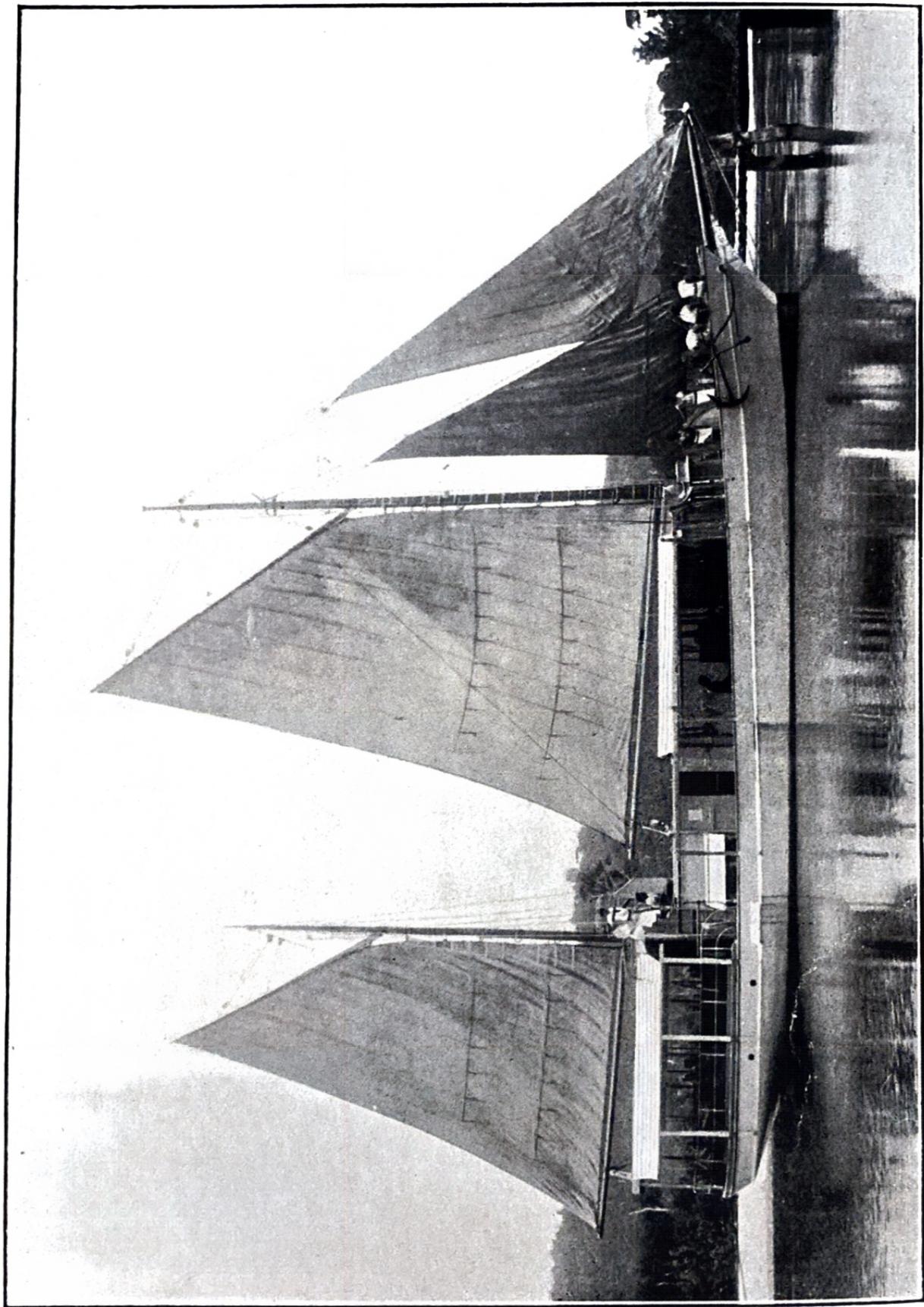
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**Mission Founded in Solomon Islands:** Two years before this deportation a branch of the work was opened in the Solomon Islands in 1904 in order to shepherd the large number of converts gained in Queensland, and to carry the Gospel to those who were still in gross heathen darkness.

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**Baptisms:** 3716 converts have been baptised in the islands, in addition to the 2484 baptised in Queensland, making a total up till 30th November, 1924, of 6200 baptisms. Between 300 and 400 converts are baptised annually.

**Direction:** The work is under the direction of the Hon. Sec. and Founder, Miss FLORENCE YOUNG, assisted by advisory councils in Sydney, Australia, and Dunedin and Auckland, New Zealand. There is also an **Island Council**, consisting of Dr. Northcote Deck, Miss K. Deck, Mr. Peters, and Mr. M'Bride.

**Support:** The mission is evangelical and unsectarian in character, most of the missionaries being drawn from Australia and New Zealand. The mission is supported by the free will offerings of the Lord's people. The printed and illustrated quarterly mission paper, written by Dr. Northcote Deck, will be sent for a year to any address upon receipt of eighteenpence or fifty cents by Miss Young.

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