

THE GOSPEL MAGAZINE

"COMFORT YE, COMFORT YE MY PEOPLE, SAITH YOUR GOD."
"ENDEAVOURING TO KEEP THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT IN THE BOND OF PEACE."
"JESUS CHRIST, THE SAME YESTERDAY, AND TO-DAY, AND FOR EVER."

No. 920, }
NEW SERIES. }

MARCH-APRIL 1943.

{ No. 2120,
OLD SERIES. }

The Family Portion :

OR, WORDS OF SPIRITUAL CAUTION, COUNSEL, AND COMFORT.

"Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."—2 CORINTHIANS i. 4.

THE LORD GOD OF ELIJAH.

"Where is the Lord God of Elijah?"—II KINGS ii. 14.

ELISHA the prophet, who asked this question, had just witnessed two remarkable exhibitions of Divine power. He had gone with Elijah from Gilgal to Bethel, from Bethel to Jericho, and from Jericho to Jordan. On reaching the Jordan Elijah took his mantle, wrapped it together and smote the waters "and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground." Then, as they still went on and talked, "Behold there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven." It was the LORD Who took up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind. It was the same LORD Who parted the waters of Jordan when Elijah smote them with his mantle. Elisha was now endowed with a double portion of Elijah's spirit. Accordingly he took Elijah's mantle that had fallen from him, and he too smote the waters of Jordan, and as he did so he said "Where is the LORD GOD of Elijah?" "And," we read, "when he also had smitten the waters, they parted hither and thither: and Elisha went over."

The question which Elisha asked was based on the two exhibitions of Divine power which he had just witnessed, and it was an appeal for a further exhibition of Divine power. In effect he said, Let the same power be put forth in my case as was put forth in the case of Elijah. May the same attributes be brought into exercise for me as were brought into exercise for him. The words therefore refer to the past, as well as being an invocation for the present.

We do well to think of the exhibitions of the Divine attributes in connection with the ministry of Elijah.

1. First, *we may note that the LORD GOD of Elijah is a God of judgment.*

The GOD of Elijah is a GOD Who takes note of sin. He takes note of personal sins, and of national sins, and sooner or later he visits judgment upon the guilty. Ahab was the king of Israel in Elijah's time. He reigned twenty-two years and he did evil in the sight of the LORD above all that were before him. It was a light thing in his eyes to walk in the sins of Jeroboam in the worship of the calves at Bethel and Dan. He took to wife a wicked woman, Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal the king of the Zidonians, and he went and served Baal and worshipped him. He "did more to provoke the LORD GOD of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him." There was none like him "which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD, Whom Jezebel his wife stirred up. And he did very abominably in following idols, according to all things as did the Amorites, whom the LORD cast out before the children of Israel" (I Kings xvi. 30-33; xxi. 25, 26). Under Ahab's rule idolatry thrived amongst GOD's ancient people, so that Elijah said, "The Children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, thrown down Thine altars, and slain Thy prophets with the sword" (I Kings xix. 10).

At last the LORD GOD of Elijah dealt with Ahab and the nation in terrible judgment. Famine is one of his four sore judgments, and Elijah was Divinely bidden to tell Ahab that there would be neither dew nor rain these years. "The heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land" (Luke iv. 25). The cause of this Divine judgment was kingly and national sin. Yet there was no repentance. Ahab blamed Elijah and said "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" Elijah rightly answered, "I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim." It was Ahab's idolatry and the consequent idolatry of the nation that brought upon them Divine judgment. "The LORD is a GOD of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed" (I Sam. ii. 3). He knows the sins of kings and nations, and though He may bear long with them, He eventually visits terrible judgments upon them. His Word declares that, "though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished" (Prov. xi. 21). The whole world just now is suffering from a terrible war. People ask "Why does GOD allow

war ? ” The LORD GOD of Elijah not only *allows* war, but He *sends* it. He sends the sword, the famine and the pestilence because of human sin (see Ezek. xiv. 13, 21). It is our national and personal sins which have brought upon the nations the awful sufferings of this terrible war. O that we were led to humble ourselves before Him and to repent of our manifold transgressions and our mighty sins.

2. Secondly, *the LORD GOD of Elijah is a GOD of mercy.*

Though He visits terrible judgments at times, yet He is “merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth” (Exod. xxxiv. 6). “He will not always chide: neither will He keep His anger for ever” (Psalm ciii. 9). “He delighteth in mercy” (Micah vii. 18). Despite Israel’s sin they were His chosen people. Hence He did not wholly abandon them. In mercy He sent Elijah to them to ask them, “How long halt ye between two opinions ? ” and to demonstrate to them that He was the true GOD, because He was able to answer by fire. This extracted from the people the confession “The LORD, He is the GOD; the LORD, He is the GOD.” Then in answer to Elijah’s prayer “the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain” (I Kings xviii. 21, 39, 42-45). Thus the drought and famine came to an end, and the LORD GOD of Elijah was shown to be a GOD of mercy. How true is this in the history of every member of the LORD’S family. “The mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him.” “As the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him” (Psalm ciii. 11, 17). So also is His mercy extended to nations. How great have been His mercies towards our nation and all the nations of the earth. While we feel that He is a GOD of judgment, let us not forget that the LORD GOD of Elijah is a GOD of mercy. Despite all our national and personal sins His mercies have abounded.

3. Thirdly, *the LORD GOD of Elijah is a GOD of grace.*

The apostasy from GOD was so universal that Elijah thought he was the only true servant of GOD in the land. “I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life to take it away.” But what saith the answer of GOD unto him? “I have reserved to Myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal” (Rom. xi. 3, 4). How came it that in those apostate times there were hidden away in the nation seven thousand who still remained true to the LORD GOD of Elijah? Surely the answer is that the GOD of Elijah was a GOD of grace. He, through His infinite and unmerited grace, had by the power of His Spirit reserved

out of the nation seven thousand who owned Him as the only living and true GOD, and who refused to worship any other GOD but the LORD GOD of Elijah. Such reservation was due, as the Apostle teaches, to the election of grace (Rom. xi. 5, 6). GOD's electing love had called, justified, and saved a few out of the nation from the prevalent apostasy. By the grace of GOD they were what they were. What an encouragement this is. However great the apostasy from GOD and His truth He still has a remnant whom He calls by His grace. Yet the path of Elijah was a lonely one. Few there were who were saved in his day, and few are the saved in these days of growing apostasy. Our LORD teaches us to expect this. "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life *and few there be that find it.*" On the other hand, "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, *and many there be which go in thereat*" (Matt. vii. 13, 14). The number of real pilgrims to Zion seems to be getting fewer. Comparatively speaking, churches and chapels are empty, and even all those who attend them are not genuine believers in the LORD JESUS CHRIST. There are few who are out and out on the LORD's side, few who come out fully from the world and are separate from its evil ways. The way to heaven is really not popular, but how blessed, universally blessed are they who, through infinite grace, are walking therein. What joy to have real Christian fellowship with such. They fear the LORD and think upon His name, and He hearkens to their conversation and intends to manifest them as His, in the day when He makes up His Jewels (see Malachi iii. 16-18). Truly the LORD GOD of Elijah is a GOD of grace.

4. Fourthly, *the LORD GOD of Elijah is a GOD of providence.*

This is clearly seen in the history of GOD's dealings with Elijah. When the judgment of GOD was visited upon the nation GOD was graciously mindful of His servant. There was danger that the famine might seriously affect him, but "the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear Him, upon them that hope in His mercy, to deliver their soul from death, and *to keep them alive in famine*" (Psalm xxxiii. 18, 19). Accordingly the LORD said to Elijah "Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there." How true it is that "Omnipotence hath servants everywhere." There is no limit to His resources. Who would have thought that the LORD would have used the ravens to feed Elijah? But so it was. "The ravens brought him bread and flesh in the

morning, and bread and flesh in the evening." The LORD is the great Food Controller and He requires no coupons to be produced. But the brook eventually dried up. What was Elijah to do now? Again the LORD appeared and said, "I have commanded a widow woman to sustain thee." But she had only "a handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse." How could she sustain the prophet? There are no difficulties with the LORD GOD of Elijah. "Thus saith the LORD GOD of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth." But later on Jezebel threatens Elijah's life, and he fled into the wilderness, and, in despair, he sat down and requested that the LORD would take away his life. Exhausted he lay down and slept under a juniper tree. What about his food now in a wilderness? There is no promise of help by means of ravens or by means of a poor widow woman. Still his needs are wonderfully supplied. "Behold an angel touched him and said unto him, Arise and eat. And he looked, and, behold, there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again. "But the Angel of the LORD (the second person in the Trinity) came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee. And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of GOD." (I Kings xix. 2-8). What sympathy, what tenderness and what provision are here manifested for GOD's persecuted, despairing, and tired servant. What a GOD of Elijah was the LORD GOD of Elijah. What a GOD of providence He was to him.

5. Finally, *we may say that the LORD GOD of Elijah is a GOD of power.*

He has power to withhold the rain, power to chastise a sinning nation, power to accompany mercy with judgment, power to show grace to the objects of His electing love, power to provide for His needy people. He had power to raise the widow's son to life, and to translate Elijah by a whirlwind into heaven. Nothing is too hard for Him. He can still show mercy to nations and deliver them from the sorrows and woes of war, famine and pestilence. He can save His elect in spite of the power of the world, the flesh and the devil. He can provide for His people when provision seems impossible. With the LORD GOD of Elijah nothing is impossible. Do we ask, "Where is the LORD GOD of Elijah?" He is just where He always has been. He is on the throne, doing according to His

will, ruling and controlling all things after the counsel of His Own will. He is still a GOD of judgment ; of mercy, of grace, and of providence. He is still the GOD of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. He is also the GOD of all the believing people of GOD. He has said of them " I will be their GOD, and they shall be My people" (II Cor. vi. 16). Be it ours then to look up to Him and to trust in Him. Be it ours in reference to our personal and our national needs to say, " Behold the LORD GOD of Elijah is our salvation ; we will trust and not be afraid."

*Whittington Vicarage,
Stoke Ferry, King's Lynn.*

THE EDITOR
(*Thomas Houghton*).

MEN OF FIFTY YEARS AGO AND OF TO-DAY.

WHILE men believed in God, they spent their time in a manner that was ennobling and uplifting. They were out to improve their minds. They read the best books they could find and their conversation had reference to theology, politics and other matters which called for the exercise of intelligence. And when I say this I am thinking not only of certain classes or of townspeople only. It was true in general, and of the country as well as of the town. Is there anything which is more tragic than to compare and to contrast the average man of, say, fifty years ago and the corresponding man of to-day ? The modern man lives on newspapers and periodicals, repeats the views of others without thinking for himself, and spends his time listening to the wireless or sitting in a cinema. In his talks and discussions, he is interested chiefly in sport and gambling. Even his interest in politics had so degenerated and he had become so apathetic that he allowed himself to be governed for years by the dullest and most supine politicians that this country has ever known. Indeed, a good case can be made for saying that it was the slothfulness and love of ease and pleasure which characterized the majority of our people that accounted most directly for the present war. Crimes committed on the Continent which would have aroused the whole country fifty and sixty years ago were allowed to pass almost without a comment, leave alone a mighty protest. Intellectually as well as morally, we have been witnessing a sad decline, a decline that is the invariable consequent of worshipping and serving " the creature rather than the Creator, Who is blessed for ever."—*The Plight of Man and the Power of God*, by Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, p. 57.

Wayside Notes.

GERMANY'S SPIRITUAL CONDITION ABOUT ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO.

THE description which Dr. F. W. Krummacher gives of Germany's spiritual condition so impressed us that we have copied it out as our *Wayside Note* for our present issue. Our own spiritual condition is such that we surely need to pause and consider our ways. May Dr. Krummacher's words be a warning and a means of blessing to ourselves.

Dr. F. W. Krummacher was one of the most eloquent and influential preachers in Germany in the nineteenth century. Dr. Shaff says of him that he "fought the good fight of the evangelical faith against prevailing rationalism and infidelity." In 1819 he became assistant pastor of the Reformed congregation of Frankfurt and remained there till 1823. In 1825 he removed to Barmen in the Wupperthal. Here at a week-day evening service he delivered his LECTURES ON ELIJAH AND ELISHA, and crowded congregations listened to them. Later from 1847 to 1853 he preached in Berlin the Gospel of repentance and faith UNDAUNTED BY THE WIDE DIFFUSION OF RATIONALISM. His sermons on Elijah are before us, and we were much struck by his references to the then spiritual state of Germany. In his sermon on the Hidden Church he says, "If all that appears to be divine life were really such; and if all were evangelists, who in modern times are preaching, not for the truth, but against it; if they were men of God, led and gifted by the Spirit of God, and bowed the knee in truth to the exalted Redeemer; if all the multitudes, who in every place crowd into the places of worship, really said in their hearts, 'Come, let us return to the Lord'; if the thousands, who in Bible and missionary associations, labour in building the ark, all came into this ark themselves—nay, if even all whom we see writing for meetings of edification and prayer, could be regarded as true worshippers, then might we indeed say something good of our times, though much would still remain to be wished for. But of what use is it to deceive ourselves? *Things are far from being what their appearance would indicate.* Alas, many things which, from a distance, look beautiful, are found, when more closely examined, to be full of deformities, if not mere phantoms of what they seemed to be. Yet, supposing we could

regard all who have the show of piety as real Christians, how few would even these be, compared with the number of those all around us, who openly show themselves to be unbelievers !

INFIDELITY AND APOSTASY.

The prevailing spirit of our times is that of infidelity and apostasy—a spirit of pretended illumination, but, in reality, of the blindest presumption—a spirit of opposition to the plain Word of God, and of arbitrary determination upon good and evil—a spirit of idolatrous exaltation of mere natural reason above the revealed wisdom of God. Among the great mass of nominal Christians, both of the learned sort and of the illiterate, it has long been taken for granted, that the doctrine of our

NATIVE CORRUPTION

is a gloomy fancy, and that of

SALVATION BY THE BLOOD AND RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST

an antiquated and bygone notion. It is held, that the miserable tinsel of exterior decorum, the mere flimsy garniture of selfishness, is quite sufficient to satisfy God ; and *that a Divine Mediator is not at all necessary to the salvation of men.* Many have long agreed, that the dogmas of a few conceited philosophers, so called, are more to be trusted than the truth of God delivered by Christ and His Apostles ; and that such faith as that of Paul, Peter, or John, is insufferable in the present day, as being absurd, mystical, and unworthy of any maturely instructed mind—yea, that it ought to be banished from the earth, even by persecution, if no other means will suffice. Such is the

PREVAILING SPIRIT

of our modern Christendom, which, with some, is disguised by a Christian profession ; whilst with others it has shamelessly cast off all disguise. It is found in every district, and in all ranks of society, and is taught in by far the greater part of our schools and nurseries. Millions of men baptized in the name of Christ, lie at the feet of this impious lying spirit. If you travel through the country, in whatever direction, you find it discovering itself in every company, at public tables, and in private families. Go from one church to another, and you will almost everywhere find that this spirit of seduction is the preacher and expositor. Inspect a multitude of our modern

HYMN BOOKS AND CATECHISMS

and instead of the Spirit of God, this spirit of darkness in the garb

of religion will confront you ; yes, and in a very large number of our places of education, this spirit is the Moloch to which our

YOUTH AND CHILDREN

are sacrificed. Yes, my brethren, a review of the Christian world in the present day, is enough to make every pious spirit shudder.

THE SPIRIT OF ANTICHRIST

is prevailing in the world to such an extent as it has never done heretofore ; and it is almost time to join in with the complaint of the Psalmist, ' Help, Lord ; for the godly man ceaseth ; for the faithful fail from the children of men ' ! (Psalm xii. 1). (*Elijah the Tishbite*. pp. 151 to 153).

We now give a quotation from the sermon entitled *Renewed Mission*. Dr. Krummacher says, " Brethren, who knows what our own Churches have still to experience ? We are at present evidently under Divine forbearance ; can any one of us say how long it will last ? It cannot be expressed, how much mercy has already been expended upon us. Yet how many are there, who really thank God, and are heartily devoted to His service ? Suppose the Lord were suddenly to remove all His true children from the midst of us, and leave the impenitent to themselves—would our population suffer a very perceptible decrease ? Or is it not the case with ourselves, as it is everywhere else ; that the little flock of Israel amongst the Canaanites is like a drop in the ocean, and like the little stars, which, in a tempestuous night, twinkle only here and there among the black and stormy clouds. *Are not a great part of our people dead*, though many of them hear the sound of the word of life ? This is very awful ! For years together they have assembled in our congregations, but they seem only less and less sensible of the value of revealed truth. They have no hunger and thirst after it ; no relish for it. Neither the thunder of the law, nor the sound of its trumpet, has any effect upon them ; nor does the sweet melody of Divine grace, and of the promises of God, melt their hardened and worldly hearts. Many of our people are lukewarm and neither for nor against—neither cold nor hot ; they hear the words of Christ, but they do them not. Surely, if they continue in this state, He will reject them with abhorrence. A great part of our people praise Christ and the world with the same breath ; they bow themselves before God and mammon in the same ceremony. They desire to be merry with the children of this world, and to be blessed with the children of God ; they wish to possess Christ, but will not, for His

sake, part with the world. Such is by far the majority of persons amongst us ; whether high or low, rich or poor. *What will be the consequence of all this ?* May the Lord have mercy upon us ! For, if we go on in this way, nothing but evil can be prophesied concerning us ! The patience of God has an object, but we are defeating it. Who knows, whether it may not soon be said to some angel in heaven, 'Go now, and appoint this or that man for an Hazael ; and let this deceiver, or that son of deceit, be placed over such and such a church !' Who knows, whether the preachers, who now stand in your pulpits, may not be the last who shall ever offer (proclaim) the Gospel of peace to our unthankful churches, and whether the destroyers are not already training under the hand of Satan, and only wait for our departure to take possession of our places with the torch of the false prophet in their hand, kindled from the bottomless pit ! Perhaps, in a few years, *all faithful preaching amongst you will be at an end* ; the people will have become foolish and dissolute ; the Lord's flock will be taken away, and His fire extinguished to the very last spark. And when the righteous are removed from amongst us, and no holy hands bear up the ark any longer, its overthrow and ruin must be the result. 'Oh that thou hadst known, even thou in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace !' Yet forty years, and perhaps our Ninevehs will be overthrown ; and wherever 'the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together !' Awake, therefore, and sit down in sackcloth and in ashes ; let every one turn himself from his evil way, and from the iniquity of his hands. Who can tell if God will not turn and repent, and turn away from His fierce anger that we perish not !" (*Elijah the Tishbite*, pp. 146, 147).

The above extracts spoken of Germany a little more than a hundred years ago might quite suitably be spoken to our own land in these days of increasing apostasy from the old truths. May God use them as a means of blessing to many of His people to-day. It is solemnly true that all is not right with the professing church, composed as it is of many denominations, at the present time. "Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD. Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens" (Lamentations iii. 40, 41).

"Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins" (Isiah lviii. 1).

THE EDITOR.

Pilgrim Papers.

WELLSPRINGS.

THE LATE BENJAMIN FIRMINER, ESQ.

"The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance"—(PS. cxii. 6).

"The memory of the just is blessed"—(PROV. x. 7).

It is therefore, with these precious Scriptures before me, that I attempt to venture upon the sacred ground of writing in affectionate and grateful remembrance of our late beloved friend. Truly, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of" him (Phil. 1, 3) and hope to cherish sacred memories of that choice saint as long as memory lasts. If ever a child of God proved how "our steps are ordered" by Him and "He delighteth in our way" and in answering prayer, the subject of this found it even so in that peaceful Sabbath morn in June 1932, when for the first time dear Mr. Firminer and the writer met, under remarkable and wholly unexpected circumstances. That was the first of many after sacred meetings of fellowship in the Gospel, and blessedly did it prove the truth of the believer's confession, "I believe in the communion of saints." What sacred, fragrant and grateful memories are bound up in that spiritual intercourse with that man of God! What real and sacred utterances fell from his lips, as his heart overflowed with the love of Christ! The sweet sacredness of that sublime hymn of Hart's, "Lamb of God, our souls adore Thee," as he repeated it on that first meeting with "R" has never lost its savour. Later, I learned that his three favourite hymns were that one, also "Come, Thou Fount of every blessing," and "Awake sweet gratitude and sing." With the precious inexhaustible WORD of God, Hawker's Portions; Joseph Irons' Sermons, and *The Gospel Magazine* our dear friend was always at home.

Mr. Firminer was full of kindly acts and considerate thoughtfulness for others. He was so unselfish and so practical in his kindnesses. Thus it was that he enabled me to attend the services at Woolton Mount during my annual visits to Bournemouth, for as long as he was able to drive there on the Sabbath mornings. It was he who all so unostentatiously took such a practical and generous part when a lady of the congregation commenced a garden sale of work for the A.P.F.S., which annually saw him with his cheery presence and very tangible help at the back of it all, but never allowing his left hand to know what his right hand did.

I recall on one of those sunny happy afternoons as we sat at tea on the lawn, he took my Bible after hallowed conversation and marked those verses in the 145th Psalm which so wondrously set forth the greatness and goodness of our God. Thus He is "great"

(3) "gracious" (8), "good" (9), "upholdeth" (14), "satisfieth" (16), "righteous" (17), "nigh" (18), "will hear" (19), "preserveth" (20).

Those gatherings stand out in grateful remembrance. They were sacred meetings in that restful garden on that one day of the year, with members of the One Family and with those who came from time to time to open the Sale, and amongst them the beloved Editor of this Magazine, the late and present Secretaries of the Society, Mr. Light and other ministers of the Gospel and friends near and from a distance.

It is sweet also to recall some of the sacred interviews in the lovely grounds of his Hotel, where he had for long years resided since the death of his wife and marriages of his daughters, and how often he found his way up to the restful garden where I stayed annually.

Once I found him in his "favourite corner" on a sheltered verandah overlooking beautiful sweeping lawns and flower beds and majestic trees, with the blue sea in the distance. He enlarged upon the Holy Scriptures upon which his heart had been pondering; spoke of the depths of God's judgments, His ways past finding out, and then of the inexpressible Love of Jesus. On another occasion I found him in the "Rose Garden," and after admiring the beauties of nature around us and watching his favourite little sparrows and finches at his feet looking up with expectancy for the crumbled biscuit which would be sure to be found in his pocket for them, he would get away to the Word, and tell of some special help given for his soul's comfort and edification. It would be upon some blessing received after reading "Hawker's Portion" and how he had been "lost in wonder, love and praise" in the meditation; or enquiring into some depth that couched beneath in a precious Scripture which had arrested his attention, and in the contemplation of "the exceeding riches of His grace" to one who felt himself to be less than the least of all. Our dear friend bore the marks of a truly meek and quiet spirit. He was gentle and loving as a little child, and yet was always worth hearing; for from his lips fell many gracious utterances which bespoke a deep spiritual experience. He had a winsome way with him which attracted the admiration of many with whom he had of necessity to come in contact. But although thrown in that way with many a worldling, he never lost sight of his high and holy calling and ever endeavoured to speak to the glory of his God. His many letters, so long as he was able to continue them, were fragrant with the Name of the Beloved of his soul. Thus, "I read in our Calendar, The Fiery Trial, and I could not get away from the idea that I was soon to pass through one," he wrote. "As far as providential trial is concerned, it has partly been and is being realized, but so long as I am kept looking up unto Jesus, I am feeling I shall not be consumed. He has kept me hitherto, and I am persuaded will (notwithstanding my many

doubts) keep me all my journey through. *What a great mercy to have our God to fly to in all times of need!*"

And again. "He weakeneth my strength by the way. I found those words very sweet and applicable, but He knoweth all about me and my desire is to know no will but His, although I would love to have more power attaching to the reading of His Word and a feeling of more nearness to Him." . . . "I do trust you are experiencing a great nearness to your Heavenly Father," he wrote on one occasion, "that His Spirit is much with you, for this I know would satisfy your longing desires to be found in Him. Sometimes I have seasons of great happiness and then it all departs, but I am supported by the blessed fact, *not finally*—" Once again, in referring to his daily reading from Hawker, he wrote, "I was greatly comforted by this morning's Portion after feeling very depressed at the condition of our National affairs; it seemed to lift me up and make me to feel my dependence must be wholly on my God and *there I want to be!*" In requesting me to read two of his beloved minister's (J. Irons') sermons, "Participation" and "Faultless," he wrote, "Those two words have been fastened on my mind and have been a great feast to my soul. They are full of Majestic Divinity . . . May the Holy Ghost bless them to you."

I might say here, as to his frequent reference to "Irons' Sermons," that the writer, like dear Mr. Firminger, was brought up, so to speak, upon the line of teaching by that great champion of Truth and master in Israel. Mr. Firminger's father was a constant member of Grove Chapel, Camberwell, and the late beloved George Cowell was "born again" under his ministry so that the name of Joseph Irons as a family friend and Pastor was a household word with us and his printed sermons very highly esteemed.

Again Mr. F. writes, "What I want to feel is more power, more power from the Lord, so that I may realize a little of the sweetness of His Word and a drawing nearer to Him. I have been privileged to have had several 'liftings up' of late. Oh! the mercy of having a God to flee to in time of trouble! Those texts in Ps. 4. 4; Prov. iii. 24; and Ps. iv. 8, were much blessed to me recently," when referring to the terrors by night and dangers which were just then so heavily visiting us. But now for our beloved friend, all these things are for ever past. He knows no longer any rude alarm; no suffering body; no weakening strength; no accompanying weaknesses of advanced old age; no assaults of Satan; no fears; no more sorrows, pains, nor tears. In its fulness he is enjoying that "Everlasting Kindness" to which hymn he once referred me, founded on Isa. 54. 8, and is "satisfied." To a mutual friend we shall ever be indebted, who in a very marked and tender Providence was led to visit our dear Mr. Firminger during his last few days upon earth. Mrs. Warde's words shall tell the sweet and sacred story of the last utterances of that saint on the confines of glory. On her arrival she was grievously surprised to learn that our dear

friend was staying in bed from a severe chill, and that her visit must be very brief in consequence of his weak state. He spoke of his eyesight as fast failing him, and that he could not see to read his Portion. "But," he remarked, "it is all well and it is all in the Lord's hands—I have no wish to complain. He has preserved it to me all these years and I am glad I read when I could. I am not troubled, because I cannot now read, my trouble is because it does not cause me concern." When Mrs. W. remarked that if the Lord had given him resignation to His Will, he need not feel concern about the loss of it," to which he quickly replied "but you see we have such a subtle enemy and we *must* beware of him, he is such a strong and mighty foe, and it might be *his* work that I have no concern; he does so try to get at me, but I tell him I know he is strong, but my God is mightier than he." On enquiring if there was anything he would like her to read, at first he refused owing to his great deafness; but in a few minutes he pointed to a letter lying on his table unopened, and wished to hear it. It was from a friend, who passed on to him how Hebrews xiii. 8 had been given as her own personal motto for the New Year; that Hawker's Portion opened with the same text and that the first Calendar opened (his gift to her) had the same precious words, wherewith to begin the New Year, even "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and to-day and for ever." A three-fold cord indeed! which cheered the dying saint. Mr. Firminger was very weak, but as reluctant to part with his visitor. There was something he wanted to say, but his mind "becomes blank" he remarked. Recovering in a few minutes he said, "with much emphasis we *must* give God *all* the glory: we don't want to; we want to keep back part for ourselves, but it won't do; He *will* have, He *must* have it all. We *must* be humbled more before Him for our sins."

Again, reluctant to allow his friend to leave and while she would gladly have stayed, but feared to intrude upon his weak state, he again held her hand as he said, "I know now what I wanted to tell you. It was a beautiful thought on prayer." Then very slowly, but with a sweet smile lighting up his face he repeated "It is the *inbreathing* of the Holy Spirit into the soul which causes *outbreathings* of our desires to God," adding "isn't that a beautiful way of expressing prayer? You take it home with you and digest it and the Lord help you."

Two days later when Mrs. Warde was again permitted just to see him, the dear aged saint had sadly and visibly changed—suffering much and was much weaker. But he at once dismissed the subject of the temporal for the eternal and remarked with great emphasis "You know we do not think seriously enough about religion; it is a serious business and a most solemn matter," and in spite of his short breathing and troublesome cough, he continued, "Have you ever thought of this? *There will be a new Heaven*"? and then he paused and added with great emphasis *and a new Earth*. Can you

conceive it? I cannot!" Seeing he was becoming very exhausted Mrs. Warde just asked him if he felt he was not alone and could feel the Everlasting Arms underneath? and he replied, "No, I am not alone," and with much feeling he followed on—"I am upheld by His power; Safe in His keeping; nothing, nothing can remove me from this safety." Taking her hand and looking steadfastly at her he again repeated, "We must give God all the Glory," and with much tenderness "The Lord be with you; bless, guard, guide, direct and counsel you." Those were the last words which fell from our beloved friend's lips to her who will ever treasure up the memory of those two sacred visits to his dying bed. Dear Mr. Firminger passed away gently next morning at the advanced age of 95 years. He was conscious to within three minutes of his end, and that "end" was the beginning of eternal bliss, joy, peace, and satisfaction, and praise to Him to Whom he owed *all* his salvation.

The language of his ever beloved, revered Pastor may well close these remarks. Mr. Irons was preaching from Philippians iii. 8. "Yea, doubtless and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for Whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dross that *I may win Christ and be found in Him.*" and he soliloquized in blank verse as was a frequent custom with him:

"Do not I see, my precious Lord, the vacant place,
The empty seat, the unused crown, the smiling look,
That waits to welcome me at last within the veil?
Do not I hear Thee say, 'Stand back, ye angel ranks,
And let this ransom'd heir of glory enter in?
I loved him, taught him how to love My Name, and now,
He shall be thron'd with Me in endless bliss on high'."

(J. Irons)

The sacred Scriptures which head this sacred meditation may well close it: "The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance."

"The memory of the just (justified in Christ Jesus) is blessed."

R.

"The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him." (II Chron. xvi. 9).

O let my heart be perfect with Thee,
Like a clear pool, like a pure flame,
Reflecting Thine image, adoring Thy Name—
So let my heart be perfect with Thee!

Shew Thyself strong, O Saviour, for me.
Here where I need Thee, now when I cry,
Thou on Whose promise alone I rely—
Shew Thyself strong, O Saviour, for me!

BISHOP F. HOUGHTON.

Sermons and Notes of Sermons.

GRACE ABOUNDING.

SUBSTANCE OF A SERMON PREACHED BY THE REV. JAMES ORMISTON, AT ST. MARY-LE-PORT CHURCH, BRISTOL.

"She loved much."—LUKE vii. part of v. 47.

MOST of my hearers are familiar with the narrative from which these words are taken. A precious record it is of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and a lovely example moreover of the footsteps of the flock in seeking their Shepherd's face, sitting at the Shepherd's feet, willing to bear, willing to do, if only He *Who has done all* may be glorified. *"She loved much."* And who was she? We turn back to the narrative in the 36th verse: "And one of the Pharisees desired Him that He would eat with him. And He went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat." The Lord never avoided the sinner, even the ignorant sinner, but oh, how He unfolded His Own gracious thoughts and His heart of love to seeking sinners. Here is this Pharisee, an ignorant sinner—still the Lord responds to his invitation to eat bread with him and He goes into his house and sits down. Dear friends, it was not the meat of the Pharisee's board that Jesus desired. He had other meat to eat of which this Pharisee knew nothing, for the Lord knowing the end from the beginning knew of the coming of this sinner in the 37th verse: "Behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house"—"Behold, a woman," a sinner, a seeking sinner, a coming sinner, she hears, she knows that Jesus is there, and *not* the presence of the Pharisee but of his Guest she seeks. And it is said of her that she brought with her an alabaster box of ointment, that she stood at the feet of the Lord, at His feet as He reclined at table. She did not seek His face otherwise than this. She betook herself to the lowest place. She stood there as the servant, and one whose service was not of the mere hands but of the heart. "She stood at His feet behind Him weeping." And why did she? "And began to wash His feet with tears." Again I ask, why did she? "And did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed His feet with the ointment." Do not confound this anointing, dear friends, with the later anointing which, you will remember, took place at Bethany a few days before His death. This took place two years before that later anointing which was an anointing unto His burial. Not so this.

"Now when the Pharisee saw it," the word "*it*" is in italics, that is, when he saw the whole proceeding, "he spake within himself, This man, if He were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is." Thus this Pharisee sat in judgment first upon the Lord, and then upon this broken-hearted sinner. "If

He were a prophet—and I conclude He is not a prophet because He receives such a sinner as I know this woman to be." The Pharisee considered that Jesus degraded Himself and lowered Himself in His professed office of a prophet or teacher by suffering this woman so much as to touch His feet. You see how far false religion is capable of misleading a man. This was a Pharisee, one of those Jews who were more punctilious than the rest in their observance of forms and religious ceremonies of the Temple, not only, mark, nor chiefly, which God had enjoined but that which the tradition of men had further added to God's ritual. This man sat in secret, silent judgment on the Lord, for it is recorded here by the Holy Ghost that he said these things "within himself." He knew not that the Searcher of hearts was sitting in judgment on him. "This Man, if He were a prophet, would know," and *He did know*, "who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth Him"; and *He did know*, "for she is a sinner." Yes, a greater sinner than the Pharisee thought her to be; and in her own sight an unspeakably greater sinner than the Pharisee thought her to be. Yet she comes, and yet He receives her. Not a word, you mark, passes her lips, and thus far not a word from Jesus Himself. Whether He granted her so much as a look I know not, there is not the record of any sign of approval having been manifested by the Lord to this poor woman who appears to have occupied a place at His feet for a considerable time, for subsequently in speaking to the Pharisee (verse 44) He says: "Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest Me no water for My feet; but she has washed My feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest Me no kiss; but this woman," mark this, "*since the time I came in*, hath not ceased to kiss My feet." And she continued in her work of grateful love. She never ceased the work to which she put her hand at the outset until Jesus gave her the recognition and granted her the approval which to her poor heart was salvation itself.

"Jesus answering" said to Simon (v. 40)—now Simon had not spoken. No audible words are necessary in order to convey knowledge to Him to Whom all hearts are open. Every one of us here present this morning, let us remember it, has a heart which lies open, lies manifested to the all-searching eye of Him Whose eyes, the Holy Book says, are as "a flame of fire." And I cannot pass by without remarking upon the forbearance of the Lord, and the long-suffering of Jesus that He should have borne thus in silence all He knew to be going on in the heart of this proud one. But the Lord can afford to wait, He can afford to fulfil His Own pleasure in His Own season inasmuch as nothing can disappoint Him of His expectation. Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors; the one owed him five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when *they had nothing* to pay, he frankly—freely—forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him most?

Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And He turned to the woman and said unto Simon—He is speaking to Simon while His eye rested, for the first time, I think, on the worshipper at His feet. Very lovely is it, dear friends, when the Lord takes the place of the Shield or Defender of the weak who trust in Him as this woman did. Her hope centred entirely, absorbingly, in Jesus. She did not go, you see, to Peter, or John, or James, or Philip, or any of the Lord's followers, in her distress; she went to the Great Physician, the Shepherd and Bishop of her soul. She had been a wandering sheep, she did not love the fold, she found her delight in the world, and the things that it loves, the world that lieth in the wicked one, but the Shepherd sought that sheep and that sheep was made willing in the day of His seeking and finding. *The Lord is ever first* in this matter of saving sinners. He went, I repeat it, into this Pharisee's house with a full foreknowledge of this woman's case, of this woman's coming, of this woman's worship, for I shall claim her as a true-hearted worshipper because she was a broken-hearted suppliant, with a full foreknowledge of her desires, went with a fixed, eternal, covenant purpose in His heart to gratify that desire. "Seest thou this woman?" He does not ask Simon as though He were in doubt that Simon had seen her. He knew Simon could see her, knew, too, Simon's reasoning of heart about her, but, dear friends, the Lord in dealing with the children of men deals with them in wondrous compassion and forbearance and condescension, and so He came down and took this low place in beginning His lofty address in the unfoldings of the Gospel of His grace. Then He charged home upon the conscience of the Pharisee his utter neglect, and put His stamp of loving, tender approval on the service of this poor sinner who had stood at His feet weeping all the way through. "My head with oil thou didst not anoint; but this woman hath anointed My feet with ointment." Yes, His foot is a dust-covered foot, the feet of that Great Shepherd who went about seeking, as this woman knew, His lost sheep, and she would say within her heart, Those feet, those weary feet, have borne Him hither to meet me. Because she did not worship His feet; it was left to the Church of Rome to worship idolatrously members of the Christ that never lived—she worshipped the living Christ, and the present Christ, and a Christ of sufficiency that she would need Him to be to meet her uttermost case. Yes, she was one of the uttermost, the outermost, and knew it. She bowed there in her work of love and He accepted it. "Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins which are many, *are forgiven*"—words which she heard, words at which, I think, she joyously trembled, could they be true? Could this be the outcome of all that had passed, that He Who had power on earth to forgive sins, Who then alone had that power and Who has retained it ever since to this very moment, delegating it to none, said "Her sins which are many, *are forgiven*"? He does not extenuate her life; He does not apologise for her sins, but with a perfect knowledge

of their number and of their nature, He declared them to be many, *and yet forgiven*. Look, dear friends, carefully at the words because they are words of living truth and not words of mere historical moment found in a narrative of a bygone age, they are words of truth to-day, words of Divine truth just now, and they are true in the case of each uttermost sinner who like this needy one comes unto the footstool of the Divine mercy in the day of need and casts himself solely upon what Jesus is; that is it, *upon what Jesus is*, leaves all the wretchedness and the ruin and the corruption and the vileness and the hell-deservedness and nakedness before His eye. She has no word of explanation to offer, no blame to lay at the door of others. She knew herself to be a chief sinner and she had good reason for believing that This was the only Saviour of such. And she was not disappointed, was she, dear friends, in the result? She heard the lips that never lied declare "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven." Have we all heard like words from the same lips? "*For she loved much.*" The Lord knew the measure of her sin, and He knew the measure of her love and He sets the one, you see, against the other, not by way of atonement, not as in any sense an equivalent for that forgiveness, the mercy of the pardon He vouchsafed her, but He calls Simon's attention to the evidence of how much this woman could see in her heart had been forgiven her. I repeat, she knew better than Simon how great a sinner she was, and now she has heard how great a Saviour she has and her whole heart is poured out in love at His feet. But I think there is something almost higher in a way of grace than even that, because she thus began to pour out her heart's love before she heard from His lips her sins were forgiven, before she heard from His lips one word. May she not have been one on the fringe of the crowd that often gathered round the Great Préacher of God's one way of Salvation? May she not have heard such self-same words as these addressed to the Pharisees, Verily I say unto you, the publicans and harlots go into the Kingdom of God before you? I know not, but I say this seems to me a possibility that she may have heard the Word at His lips Who spake as none other man had ever been known to speak the things of God. He could say to His hearers, I am the Truth, no man ever came to the Father but by Me. No man will ever dare to utter words like those He uttered again and again. What was it that constrained her to obtain that alabaster box of ointment but some prevenient observation of God's dealings with her? She did not enter the house of the Pharisee as a stout-hearted sinner, but she came as a poor sinner, and as one who knew more than all the world besides the poverty of a sinner and the utter dependence of her soul upon the freeness of the grace of the Lord Jesus. She came as she was. She brought all her character with her, all her antecedents, there they were as she stood at His feet and wept. That is in the footsteps of the flock. How many of us have traversed this way? See how the Lord has treasured the record of this seeking

sinners's success. For hundreds of years the God of the Bible has kept this page intact, and we can read it this morning as living truth, as fresh as ever, as suitable as ever, precisely fitting in where the seeking sinner would have it fit in, namely, in his own case. And this is the great point, Does it fit my case? Do I claim fellowship with her in her sinnership, first in her seeking the Saviour, next in the joy of her soul, and last, as the word goes forth from the lips of the Great Redeemer, Sins many, sins forgiven, love great, obedience prompt, simple and childlike. These are the marks, may the Lord indelibly impress them upon our heart, for Christ's sake.

ELECTING GRACE.

"I have chosen you out of the world"—(JOHN XV. 19).

HERE is distinguishing Grace and discriminating regard; for some are made the special objects of divine affection. Do not be afraid to dwell upon this high doctrine of Election. When your mind is most heavy and depressed, you will find it to be a bottle of richest cordial. Those who doubt the doctrines of Grace, or who cast them into the shade, miss the richest clusters of Eshcol; they lose the wines on the lees well refined, the fat things full of marrow, there is no balm in Gilead comparable to it.

If the honey in Jonathan's wood, when but touched, enlightened the eyes, this is honey which will enlighten your heart to love and learn the mysteries of the Kingdom of God. Eat, and fear not a surfeit, live upon this choice dainty, and fear not that it will be too delicate a diet. Meat from the King's table will hurt none of His courtiers. Desire to have your mind enlarged, that you may comprehend more and more the eternal, everlasting, discriminating love of God. When you have mounted as high as Election, tarry on its sister mount, the Covenant of Grace. Covenant engagements are the munitions of stupendous rock behind which we lie entrenched. Covenant engagements with the surety, Christ Jesus, are the quiet resting-places of trembling spirits.

"His Oath, His Covenant, His Blood, support me in the raging flood; When every earthly prop gives way, this still is all my strength and stay."

If Jesus undertook to bring me to glory and if the Father promised that He would give me to the Son to be a part of the infinite reward of the travail of His soul, then, my soul, till God Himself shall be unfaithful, till Jesus shall cease to be the Truth, thou art safe. When David danced before the ark, he told Michael that Election made him do so. Come, my soul, exult before the God of Grace and leap for joy of heart.

C. H. SPURGEON.

Our Young Folks' Page.

RICH IN FAITH.

FROM the torn-out pages of an old magazine given me by a kind friend comes a delightful story of two French ladies in the early years of the last century ; my part in the story is merely to re-write it and to give names to the chief persons. At the time then to which I refer, there was an English lady called Miss Elliott living in Normandy, and devoting her time and her means to Christian work among the French poor. One day she went into a little shop, and whilst resting there began to talk with the mistress of the shop about religion. Mademoiselle was a Roman Catholic, of course, but she was a kindly, honest woman, and after a few minutes' talk, she said she wished Miss Elliott could get to know two old friends of hers, for she was sure they were of the same religion. "Where do they live?" asked Miss Elliott. "I don't know as I can tell you," replied Mademoiselle; "I've hardly been outside the shop the last seven years, not since I broke my leg; but I used to go to see them, and I'm pretty sure they're still in the same place. "Don't they ever go by?" "Hardly ever, ma'am, only to try to sell the bits of lace they make." "And haven't they any friends?" "No, indeed they haven't, there's no one to say a good word for them, let alone do them a kind turn." Miss Elliott was surprised, and asked what the old ladies had done to make themselves so disliked. "Why, you see, ma'am, they're heretics, and the priest says nobody must have anything to do with them. They've been excommunicated these years past, and he says he won't even bury them when they're dead. But they're ever so devout in their own religion, and they talk just like you do—that's why I thought to tell you about them."

Miss Elliott was greatly interested by what she heard, and she made several attempts to discover the old ladies, two sisters. But her search was in vain, until one day she was chatting with someone else in the same neighbourhood, who was able to give her exact directions. Climbing a flight of steps, she found herself at the gate of a most desolate piece of garden, in the midst of which stood a tumble-down hut, almost falling to pieces from age and lack of mending. Here she found the two old ladies, Sophie and Louise, both very infirm and bent. Everything was as poor as it could be. There was scarcely anything in the place but a bed, a three-legged table, and two or three chairs. But as soon as Miss Elliott began to talk with the ladies of this hovel, she found to her astonishment and delight that both of them were richly instructed in Scripture and the things of God, and most eager to welcome her as a sister in the faith.

Their history was a remarkable one. Before the Revolution, they had belonged to some Benedictine order of the Romanists, and had been led to study the Scriptures, especially the prophetic parts. They believed that the Revolutionaries, by destroying the churches, had fulfilled Daniel's prophecy about setting up "the abomination of desolation"; and therefore they thought it was their duty to cut themselves off from the nominal church, and separate themselves till Christ should return once more to earth. Having lost all their property in the Revolution, they had been for more than thirty years living as best they could on the profits from their pillow-lace; but as together they could never manage to make more than *six sous* a day, you can imagine their poverty. For more than thirty years nothing new had been bought between them, and now at eighty and eighty-two Sophie and Louise were wearing clothes that were so patched that it was quite impossible to tell what the original fabric had been! The one pair of scissors was sixty years old; and if such a thing as a pin were mislaid, they searched high and low until they found it. Bread was what they lived on chiefly, with vegetables very occasionally; and they had no sort of fire at all. In such a state as this, can you imagine being contented? But Louise and Sophie were not merely content; they were positively happy! It seemed as if the promise of God, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" was in their case literally fulfilled; for dwelling constantly on the Word of God and especially on the grand prophecies of Christ's future reign, they lived in a state of carefree happiness, looking for the blessed hope.

Miss Elliott was greatly taken with the two old sisters, and she set about easing their worst hardships, by sending them fuel and warm blankets. But she felt it would be wrong not to respect their independence, so she let them go on making their bits of lace, and often spent hours reading the Bible to them. This she found was the greatest kindness she could do them, for they could both work at once, instead of working and reading in turn. As she grew to know them better, she found that in some points they were very ignorant, and still clung to some of the superstitious beliefs of the church which had excommunicated them; and when told of one or another spiritually-minded Christian in the Reformed Churches, they would exclaim with surprise, "Why, she must be one of us!"

It is many years now since the sisters (and their English friend too) must have passed into the presence of their Saviour, there to know even as they are known. Poor and despised as Sophie and Louise were on earth, the Lord knew them for His; He cared for them and cherished them when they had no earthly friend or helper; and I expect one reason why He brought Miss Elliott to minister to them at last was that the story might be written for our learning.

DAMARIS.

"FRUIT IN OLD AGE."

PSALM 92, verses 13 and 14 tell us that "Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing." A design for their so flourishing is given in verse 15 "to shew that the Lord is upright." His uprightness was shown when Isaac was born to Abraham and Sarah in their old age—i.e., His faithfulness to His promise. When or if His saints still in their old age bring forth the fruit of the Spirit, whether in the lovely intangibles of Galatians v, or in the visible fruit of good works, it is entirely because the Lord, having so ordained in His own purposes, has done as He said and has wrought in them after His counsel and promise to Christ—He has done as He has said. Fruit ever reflects on conditions and care outside itself. The trees of the Lord's right hand planting are not left to themselves, either for better or worse as time will unfold: but, when they still bring forth fruit, all the credit, as we say in natural things, all the praise is to His Name and glory. Thus the psalmist knew that the Lord was upright when for instance He spake the words of his song "in the day that the Lord had delivered him out of the hands of all his enemies and out of the hand of Saul." "He is my Rock and there is no unrighteousness in Him." What a strong, blessed conclusion. All had been well. God's way was perfect, and all was for the joy and salvation of the poor dependent. I was thinking that Moses brought forth fruit in his old age when he spake the words of his song in the ears of all Israel—fruit in every verse. "We are able," the hungry multitude might say, "to find texts, if ye on your part can provide preachers to preach from them," as Rabshakeh said about the two thousand Assyrian horses, with the challenge to Hezekiah to find riders. Jonathan Edwards of America in the 18th century once preached from the verse in Moses' song: "their foot shall slide in due time" (Deut. xxxii. 35). There was a very large congregation, and he preached to them as if they were all lost souls, except possibly the two or three on whom God would be pleased to have mercy. It was a time of great awakening. The word went to the hearts of very many of them in the life-giving authority of the Spirit of the Lord.

It might be noticed perhaps that in all the Lord's songs the theme is the existence of enemies, the persistence of conflict and the certainty of victory. Moses, Hannah, David, Mary, Zechariah all tell of powers of opposition real and long, and of the overcoming and the peace that mark the end of the Lord. "Our feet," may Israel now say, "are at length guided into peace" perfect and eternal. In the meantime the Lord eats of the pleasant fruits that His own husbandry ripens in their season, the work of His Spirit. Amongst them are contrition, repentance, hope in God, and patient waiting for Him, a sense of need and of innate unbelief, endurance and

prayer. Probably the thief on the cross never arrived at what is called "old age," but he was a plant in the garden of God, and brought forth the richest of fruit when he said, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom."

FOLLOWER-ON.

A GODLY FARMER AND HIS HARVEST.

AN esteemed reader of this Magazine who has known the Magazine from childhood, whose dear mother loved it, and who himself values it very highly, wrote to us in January of this year and referred to the Lord's encouragement in regard to his harvest. He says, "May I tell you the wonderful story of my harvest this last summer? It was such a task to face, 470 acres of corn, with my staff of mostly old men and boys. Glory to God He has helped me, and in no small measure through yourself, to look to Him as our Father. So in prayer I took my task to Him. As the weather was very stormy, I continued cutting every possible day until the 470 acres were cut, and did not stop to carry any, putting my faith in Him that we should be able to carry. The weather took up, and in the next three weeks we carried the lot in very good condition. People around cannot understand how it was done. All glory to God. I never saw men work like they did, and I never heard a miss word from any one. The three reapers cut the lot without any great trouble.

Needless to say we took our rest on His day, and only worked two hours overtime each night, and until tea time on Saturdays, so that we could all be at home to put things forward for Sunday."

(We are very thankful to have this testimony. It clearly teaches us that if in all our undertakings we prayerfully trust in God, He will stand by us and will fulfil the assurance of His Own word—"Them that honour Me, I will honour" (I Samuel ii. 30). In these solemn times there is increasing need for the Lord's people to honour His Name, His Word, and His Day.—THE EDITOR).

ENCOURAGEMENTS.

A KIND reader in Yeovil writes: "A few years ago I gave a *Gospel Magazine* to an elderly Christian lady, and a few days after I asked her if she had read it. 'Yes,' she said, and I asked her what she thought of it, and her answer was, '*It's Cream*.'"

So now, Sir, at the close of another year I wish to thank you and those who have contributed to the *Gospel Magazine* for another 12 months' cream, and I would like to say I have derived much spiritual sustenance therefrom. May our Heavenly Father bless you and your helpers richly in all things."

FOLLOWING DIVINE LEADING.

" PHILIP, though called away from a sphere of labour in which he was Divinely owned, to go on a desert track, and without any further information, 'was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision'. One soul thereby gained to Christ was his reward: many others, it may be, were gathered in through him; but of this no trace remains in history. Yet, doubtless, in the eye of Heaven, that service was of more importance than any which he might have rendered to the cause of Christ by remaining in Samaria. And since the good that the servants of Christ are to do depends not so much on the largeness of the field, or its apparently promising character, as on the Master's countenance in their work, they will do well to ensure this first, by studying to know His will in all their movements following simply the manifest leadings of His providence and the guidance of His Spirit."—REV. DAVID BROWN, D.D.

EXCESS OF APPAREL.

LET us learn to know ourselves, and not to despise others. Let us remember that we stand all before the majesty of Almighty God, Who shall judge us by His Holy Word, wherein He forbiddeth excess, not only to men, but also to women: so that none can excuse themselves, of what estate or condition soever they be . . . Let us take unto us simplicity, chastity and comeliness, submitting our necks to the sweet yoke of Christ . . . But it will be here objected and said of some nice and vain women, that all which we do in painting our faces, in dyeing our hair, in embalming our bodies, in decking us with gay apparel, is to please our husbands, to delight his eyes, and to retain his love toward us. O vain excuse, and most shameful answer, to the reproach of thy husband. What couldest thou more say to set out his foolishness, than to charge him to be pleased and delighted with the devil's tire? Who can paint her face, and curl her hair, and change it into an unnatural colour, but therein doth work reproof to her Maker, Who made her, as though she could make herself more comely than God hath appointed the measure of her beauty? What do these women but go about to reform that which God hath made, not knowing that all things natural is the work of God, and things disguised and unnatural be the works of the devil; and as though a wise and a Christian husband should delight to see his wife in such painted and flourished visions?—*An Homily against Excess of Apparel*, written in the 16th century.

To believe that the government is not on the puny shoulders of a mere man but on Almighty God, is a source of courage when circumstances provide none.—*J. H. Gosden*.

Protestant Beacon.

ROME'S MARIOLATRY.

THE Roman Catholic *Universe* of November 6 informs its readers that "the Holy Father consecrated the Church and the whole world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary during his broadcast last Saturday to Portugal at the closing of the silver jubilee celebration of the last of the apparitions of our Lady at Fatima." The paper proceeds to quote the Pope's "fervent supplication to our Lady" as follows:—"Queen of the most holy Rosary, Help of Christians, Refuge of the Human Race, we suppliantly prostrate ourselves before you, confident of obtaining mercy and finding grace and opportune help in the present calamity, not because of our merits but solely because of the immense love of your maternal heart." The Pope went on to refer to his own position as our Lord's "Vicar" and proceeded to beseech Mary to obtain peace and to restrain the overflowing deluge of neo-paganism. The foregoing extract proves that Mariolatry is rampant at the centre of Roman Catholicism and that Romanists in Portugal and all over the world are encouraged by the present Pope to cry to Mary as "The Refuge of the Human Race." If this is not to dishonour the sole mediation of our Blessed Lord words have no meaning and the teaching of Scripture as to Whom we are to pray to has no weight.—*The English Churchman*, Nov. 12th, 1942.

HAS THE CHURCH A SOCIAL MISSION?

(BY THE LATE PASTOR JAMES STEPHENS, M.A.,
from "*Our Outlook*.")

A GOOD deal is heard of "the social gospel." The expression has of recent years come into somewhat common use. It is frequently referred to as something highly approvable, and indeed of the first importance. The expression does not occur in the Scriptures. We read there of "the gospel of God," "the gospel of Christ," "the gospel of your salvation," and other similar designations, but never of "the social gospel." It is claimed for it, however, that it expresses something that is inculcated in Scripture. The social gospel amounts (might one say?) to a declaration or doctrine that "the Church" is at its proper work when devoting itself to social efforts, that is, efforts for the improvement of social conditions and relations, efforts for material and political betterment of the people as a whole—for better housing, for recreations, for whatever would be secularly advantageous for the working classes or others; and efforts that might even ultimately issue in a reconstruction of the social fabric

on a Christian basis. One may say that there is no doubt of its being a worthy and even an urgent thing to labour for justice between man and man, and for the alleviation of the oppressive and harsh conditions under which so many suffer ; and that there is no doubt, further, that *Christian* men may, in not a few cases, find themselves called to take energetic part in these efforts. The question, however, which one feels forced to ask is this, Are the churches, the organised communities of believing men and women, *responsible* for bringing about the material betterment of society, or the reconstruction of society? Is this in the terms of the commission originally given them by their Lord and Head?

The Church of Christ was specially instituted to maintain the public worship of God in the world—worship “in spirit and in truth,” and in the name of Christ ; also to be a witness to the Truth, that is, the Truth as given in Holy Scripture ; also to declare the way of peace with God and the way of life and holiness ; and also to provide spiritual fellowship for its members, that is for spiritual men and women. In accomplishing these objects, room is afforded for all kinds of good work. But social work, in the comprehensive sense in which the expression “social work” is now understood was *not* laid on the churches *as* churches. Individual members of churches may, *as* individuals, recognise obligation to carry out such work, and may *as* regards the spirit and way in which they carry it out prove themselves worthy of high esteem ; but this is quite different from saying that the churches, *as churches*, that is *as* associations, are responsible for such work. One may see this more clearly by considering the case of a secular Association or Society. If we take for example the Royal Geographical Society, which was instituted specially for the furtherance of geographical knowledge and of interest in geographical subjects, it could not be held *as* blameworthy neglectful because, while attending to geographical matters, it does not undertake—let us say—poor relief or efforts for the settlement of problems of capital and labour. Such work, however urgent, does not fall within the scope of that for which it was an association instituted ; at the same time, members of the Society, while fully recognising this, might *as private individuals* or *as members of some other Society*, feel it incumbent and pressing on them to devote themselves to work quite distinct from that to which the Geographical Society, *as* a Society, is specially addicted.

It is not becoming, or indeed allowable, to speak disparagingly of those who, whether Christians or not, seek to right social wrongs, to lessen social distresses, and to promote, in a moral way, social betterment : quite otherwise. But if the churches of Christ are urged or goaded to give themselves *as* churches to this, it is only right to say that this is not, strictly, their proper work, or, in other words, that for which they were at the first instituted. If they take on themselves *as* Church Associations, responsibility for the secular reform and improvement of society, that is, of the general com-

munity, the almost certain result will be that their own proper work will be weakened, that public worship will lose in reverence and adoration and spirituality; that the preaching of the solemn verity of eternal judgment, and the indispensableness of expiation for peace with God, and the holiness of God's abundant grace, will become more feeble and more infrequent; and that revealed Truth will begin to be held with an increasingly slackened hold. Thus under the plea of bettering fellow-men—bettering them for *this* world, that whereby they might be brought into fellowship with God for time and for eternity will be likely to become less and less forceful.

While the responsibility of the churches as churches may be thus defined, yet the individual members of churches, in so far as they are true disciples of Christ, are under gracious obligation to carry out the principles of Christ in *all* relationships in which they stand, and in *all* capacities in which they are called on to act. If, for example, one who is a disciple stands to others in the relationship of parent or of teacher, or acts in the capacity of master, or of servant, or of citizen, or of magistrate, or of author, or of journalist, it behoves him to act therein on the principles, and with the considerateness, enjoined by Christ, and in constant dependence on Christ for spiritual life and power therefor. In thus approving themselves the followers of Christ, the following being genuine and intelligent, they will not fail of becoming benefactors of society and that in no mean degree.

As for the reconstruction of society, the Scriptures plainly teach that it can never be brought about by any so-called leavening process. Society, made up as it is of fallen men and women, alienated from God, and devoid (apart from faith in Christ) of spiritual life, can never develop and rise to the ideal which is in the mind of God. All development and improvement, apart from faith in Christ and subjectiveness to *Him*, leave men as far from God as ever and as opposed to His Truth.

(Jas. Stephens, M.A., from "*Our Outlook*," October, 1906.)

THE VICTOR'S BIBLE.

BEFORE going to Egypt Gen. Montgomery called all his staff officers together at the headquarters of the South-East Army, which he then commanded. Among his final words to them were: "Gentlemen, I read my Bible every day, and I recommend you to do the same."

This was stated yesterday by the Rev. A. T. R. Naylor, Assistant Chaplain-General, South-Eastern Army, at a Remembrance Day parade service at Aldershot.—*The Daily Telegraph*, Monday, November 9th, 1942.

In Memoriam.

MR. B. FIRMINGER OF BOURNEMOUTH.

A VERY touching and full account of our aged friend, Mr. B. Firminger, is given in this issue under "*Pilgrim Papers.*" He passed away on January 9th at the age of 95. We would only add that in a letter received from him, dated September 20th, 1939, our friend wrote: "The words I have chosen to be placed on my gravestone—

*"A Perfect Saviour."
"Complete in Him."*

MR. JAMES SECRETT, OF EALING.

THE news has reached us through one of our esteemed readers, that on Saturday, January 23rd, Mr. James Secrett was called Home. He had reached the age of 82, and had been Secretary and Treasurer of Brentford Strict-Baptist Church for nearly 50 years, we believe. We are informed that he was very happy in the Lord and rejoicing in the prospect before him right up to being unconscious. In the summer of 1941 we had the privilege of having tea with him at Ealing. Our contact with him led us to conclude that he was a humble believer in Christ and that he was desirous of fully fashioning his life according to the precepts of God's Word. He was a keen reader of *The Gospel Magazine*, and read every line of it. Now though "absent from the body" he is "present with the Lord." What an infinite comfort it is to godly relatives to have such a full assurance as this! The removal of loved members of the Lord's family naturally brings sorrow to the loved ones left behind, but what joy fills their hearts if convinced of the present blessedness of those whom the Lord has taken. Our tender Christian sympathy is extended to all the relatives.

"WE are all as an unclean thing" (Isaiah lxiv. 6). The believer is a new creature, he belongs to a holy generation and a peculiar people. The Spirit of God is in him, and in all respects he is far removed from the natural man; but for all that the Christian is a sinner still. He is so from the imperfection of his nature, and will continue so to the end of his earthly life . . . Every night we look in the glass we see a sinner, and had need confess, "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags."—C. H. Spurgeon.

Reviews and Notices of Books.

WE have received
 THE LURE OF ROME. By John Bond. Pp. 80. Price 6d.

Also

THE MENACE OF ROME. By W. D. McConnell, formerly
 Editor of the (R.C.) *Universe*. Pp. 48. Price 6d.

Both may be had from the Protestant Truth Society, 31 Cannon Street, London, E.C. 4.

We have also received

GUILTY CLERGY. By P. W. Petter. Pp. 96. Price 1/6.
 Forewords by the Rev. E. G. Bowring, M.A., and Mr. Newman Watts. Published by the Channel Publishers, 5 The Park, Yeovil, and may be had from the principal Protestant Societies,

THE CHRISTIAN AND FREEMASONRY. By Pastor James Payne. P. 16. Price 3d., or 2/6 per dozen. (G. H. Fromow, Sovereign Grace Advent Testimony, 9 Milnthorpe Road, Chiswick, London, W. 4.)

The contents of this pamphlet were delivered as a Lecture in Caxton Hall, Westminster, on June 20th, 1939. The author begins by saying "In dealing with this subject of Freemasonry . . . our quarrel is not with masons, but only with masonry as it affects the Christian community." He feels that "if Christian people know what Freemasonry is they will turn from it." The author quotes extensively from the writings of distinguished Freemasons. He says Freemasonry is constituted in three principal degrees—Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft and Master Mason. The Founder of the Masonic Study Society (Mr. J. S. M. Ward, B.A.) has issued three handbooks, one for each of the three degrees. In the Entered Apprentice's handbook on page one there are the words :

"Bacchus died, and rose again
 On the golden Asian plain :
 Osiris rose from out the grave,
 And thereby mankind did save :
 Adonis likewise shed his blood
 By the yellow Syrian flood ;
 Zoroaster brought to birth
 Mithra from his cave of earth
 And to-day in Christian lands
 We with them can join hands."

Five pagan gods are here mentioned. Of one of them (Osiris) it is said that he rose out of the grave, and thereby mankind did save. Osiris was the chief god of the ancient Egyptians, and yet we are told that this false god rose from the grave, and by his resurrection

he therefore saved mankind. The worship of this god spread to Rome and Greece and his followers are said "to resemble in many respects the mystic fraternity now called Freemasons." (Pp. 8-10). The question might then be asked at the very outset, How can a Christian man become a Freemason when he is told on his entering that Order that "to-day in Christian lands we with them (five pagan gods) can join hands?" How can Christian men, worshippers of the true God, join hands with the false gods of the heathen? It seems that the Apron which Freemasons wear has the symbol of a serpent on it, and of the serpent Mr. Ward says "Actual worship is paid to the Serpent throughout the whole of India." (p. 9) But should Christian men wear an apron with a representation of a heathen god on it? On page 16 we read that in the "Digest of Masonic Law," G. Wingate Chase says, "The Jews, the Chinese, the Turks, each reject, either the New Testament or the Old, or both, and yet we see no good reason why they should not be masons. In fact Blue Lodge (that is American) Masonry has nothing whatever to do with the Bible; it is not founded upon the Bible. If it was, it would not be masonry." Space fails to quote more from this pamphlet. We would only say that probably many who have become Freemasons do not realize the evil principles held by many of its leading men. This is the first pamphlet we have reviewed on the subject.

EDITORIAL

RECEIVED BY THE EDITOR, WITH MANY THANKS:—MRS. WORCESTER; MISS N. BRADSHAW; MR. AND MRS. BIRD; MRS. KELK; MISS M. H. BACON; MISS A. PARKINSON; MRS. N. TONGUE; MR. W. H. GLOSSOP; MR. D. HADLEY; MR. A. GODDARD; MISS HOUGHTON; REV. A. T. HOUGHTON; MR. E. SHORT; MR. J. CORNELIUS; MR. JAMES WHITE; MR. AND MRS. KILLA; MISS E. M. PERT; MR. J. SHILES; MRS. B. C. GOSDEN; MR. E. J. POUNDS; MRS. PONTIFEX; MISS SANGAR; MR. S. C. NAISH; MR. B. S. BRUNNING; MR. W. G. SNELL; PASTOR J. KEMP; MR. J. C. DENNIS; MISS E. A. HOUGHTON; MISS R. COWELL; MRS. A. M. WILLIAMS; MRS; SEATON; MISS WORHAM; BISHOP D. A. THOMPSON; MR. B. W. DUFFIELD; MRS. S. A. TURNER; MR. N. V. ROBERTS; MR. N. V. ANSLEE; MR. W. R. SHERRIN; MR. G. P. WILTSHIRE; MR. FULLER; MR. C. R. ADAMS; MR. M. SIMMS.

Extracts from our Correspondence.

From Manitoba: "I have copies of the Magazine for several years and I read them over and over again, and I have enjoyed the one sent very much and have felt comforted. I have just passed my 80th birthday. I came to Canada over 50 years ago from London."

From Luton: "May the good and gracious Lord hear the prayers of His praying people, and cause the Magazine's circulation to be increased, and greatly bless the sweet Gospel truths spread through its pages from time to time."

From Wallington: "I am thankful that the pages of *The Gospel Magazine* continue to be supplied with Gospel food and sound teaching in these days of

abounding error. I appreciate the Magazine also because it is free from denominational bias and pique."

From Twickenham : "I have taken the Magazine in for several years now and enjoy it very much."

From Boscombe : "I am so pleased to take this opportunity of thanking you and all the writers in *The Gospel Magazine*. I think one values it more than ever now. May God bless you all."

From an aged reader : "Compassing Mercy—how many times I have read it and found comfort."

From near Norwich : "How often I have found encouragement from the Magazine in these solemn times. Copies are being ordered as Christmas gifts this year."

From California : *The Gospel Magazine* arrives regularly and is so much enjoyed from cover to cover."

From Herne Bay : "I never listen to the wireless on Sundays even though that means I must go to my own bedroom for the time. Many folk are quite obsessed by wireless."

From Brighton : "I thank you very sincerely for all the gracious counsel and precious comfort received in reading the Magazine during 1942."

The Trustees of THE GOSPEL MAGAZINE gratefully acknowledge the receipt of the following donations to the Fund :—

Mrs. N. Howick 10/-; Miss V. L. Winkworth 4/-; Miss E. M. Pert 7/6; Mr. J. Shiles 10/-; Mr. E. J. Pounds £1; Mrs. N. C. Kille 6/6; Mrs. L. A. Lock 13/-; Mr. N. V. Anstee £1/16/6; Miss U. Chew 6/6; Miss M. Hodder 4/6; An Old Age Pensioner 6/6; Mr. W. Butcher 6/6; Mrs. E. B. Cornish £2; Mrs. C. Kemp 5/-; Miss M. J. Maclean 2/6; Mr. C. A. Anderson 1/6; Miss E. A. Astbury 6/6; Mrs. Seaton 16/6; Miss F. Croft 6/6; Mrs. E. S. Pontifex £1; Mrs. J. Salmon 4/-; Miss E. M. Sangar 10/-; Mrs. E. M. Hockley £1 and 10/- for Free Distribution Fund; Mrs. J. H. Simpson 2/6; Mr. E. H. Dowland 6/6; J.C.D. £2/2/0; Mr. C. T. Appleton 6/6; Miss C. Downard £3/5/0; Miss E. S. Marriott £1/4/6; Mrs. E. Vinall 2/6; Mr. F. E. Milward 16/6; Mrs. A. M. Rayner 17/6; Miss R. Cowell £1/1/0; Miss M. Portch (per R.) 1/6; Anon. 5/-; Miss E. A. Houghton 4/6; Mrs. A. M. Williams 3/-; Bible Class Box (per Pastor J. Kemp) £1/1/0; Mrs. Kemp 10/-; Mr. W. G. Snell 10/-; C.H.S. £1; Miss S. Wingham 10/-; Miss C. A. Campbell 3/-; Mrs. A. Tyldesley 2/6; Mr. T. T. Edwards 6/6; Mrs. E. Warde 6/6; Miss S. A. Urquhart 6/-; Mrs. M. E. Lyon 16/6; Mrs. L. Buckland 3/-; Mrs. G. Leitch 1/6; Mrs. J. Mitchell 3/-; Mrs. E. Simmons 2/6; Miss A. Knott 6/6; Miss A. Hill 1/6; Mr. G. A. Knighton 4/-; Mr. N. V. Roberts 6/6; Mrs. Pontifex £5/10/0; Mrs. Oakley 1/6; Mrs. Hitchen £1; Mrs. C. J. Elgar 2/6; Mrs. G. M. Jobbins 16/6; Mr. Fuller 10/-; A.R.C.A. £5; Mr. N. Monks 2/6; Mrs. P. Wilson £3; Mrs. L. Chaplin 2/6; Mrs. M. Henshall 6/6; Mrs. R. A. Collins £1/1/0; Mr. E. Slater 6/6; Anon. (per Mr. F. E. Lee) 5/-; Mrs. A. Fowler 6/6; Miss J. J. Tallach 1/6; Miss Gassler 13/-; Mr. W. Machin 1/6; Miss E. Skull 1/6; Mr. W. H. Small 6/6; Mr. S. Biggs 7/-; Mr. F. W. Collard 7/-; Mrs. D. Wakeley £1; Mrs. D. Leckie 16/6; Miss M. Maslen 7/-; Mr. J. S. Richardson 6/6; Miss J. L. Secrett 4/-; Miss G. A. Osmotherley 1/6; Inasmuch £1; A.P. (per Miss L. Ormiston) 5/6; R.P. (per Miss M. Ormiston) 6/-; P. (per English Churchman) A Friend 2/6; Mr. and Mrs. G. Miller 3/-; Mr. J. W. Smith 1/6; Mrs. J. A. Chapman £2; Mr. and Mrs. H. Platts 6/6; Mr. and Mrs. J. Platts 6/6.