THE SUNDAY AT HOME

O DAY MOST CALM, MOST BRIGHT! . . .
THE WEEK WERE DARK BUT FOR THY LIGHT.—*Herbert.*

THE DALRYMPLES.

CHAPTER III.—A "SISTER" FOR HERMIONE.

A SURPRISE.

WITHIN the Hall library Mr. Dalrymple sat before a massive escritoire, writing. All things in this commodious room were massive—bookcases, chairs, couches, pictures, ornaments, above all this central table, with its multitudinous drawers and receptacles. The June sunshine blazed in through a large bow-window, falling unheeded on the silver head of the old man.

He was tall and thin, and held himself erect,

even at his desk, which after seventy-five is not usual. The silvery hair curled still about the finely-moulded head; and the clean-shaven delicate face, a uniform pale bronze in hue, was steadfastly set to the work in hand.

Mr. Dalrymple spent the greater part of his life in this room. He had been there now for hours off and on, writing letters. People said he ought to keep a secretary, and he had made the attempt, only to fail. Somehow he never could find a secretary to suit him; the reason perhaps being that he never could endure to let anybody answer his letters except himself.

"If you want a thing done, do it!" is a good piece of advice, within limits. Mr. Dalrymple carried this principle to excess.

In habits of life he was most regular. He lived by rule; rose and went to bed by rule; ate and drank by rule; worked and took recreation by rule. His was no self-indulgent existence, governed by the sway of his own desires. Always up at six o'clock, he had his morning constitutional before breakfast, except in the depth of winter; he had his ride with Hermione late in the afternoon; and each hour between had its own occupation.

He was particular and precise in his employments—not in a disagreeable or nig-nagging fashion, but certainly in characteristic modes. Every letter that he despatched left its exact copy behind, always in Mr. Dalrymple's well-formed and beautiful handwriting. A secretary might at least have copied these letters; but no, Mr. Dalrymple would do the whole himself. Every drawer and pigeon-hole in the huge writing-table had some special use assigned to it. Every paper possessed by Mr. Dalrymple could be found without fail at five minutes' notice.

Though far too well-balanced in mind and too dignified in manner ever to fall into a hurry, there could be no doubt that Mr. Dalrymple was a genuinely busy man. Absolute leisure had been with him a thing almost unknown through forty years or more. As is often the case, he worked harder and more incessantly than do, as a rule, those who possess stated employments, and who have to earn their own living. For Mr. Dalrymple was known to be a man of means, and was counted to "have plenty of time on his hands;" therefore everybody, without compunction, appealed to him. If the response was not always what the appellant wished, at least none was left without response.

He was a good old man, this gentle and stately yet prompt and resolute owner of Westford. He had served a Divine Master steadfastly through forty years. What he saw to be right he would do, no matter at what personal cost.

Busy as were his week-days, his Sundays were not idle. It was seldom that his silvery head might not have been seen in the Squire's pew, morning and evening. In the afternoon he wended his way down to the class-room of the village-school, by Hermione's side, to each a dozen big village boys great truths of God in simple words.

Certainly Gilbert Dalrymple, Squire of Westford, did not spare himself; and the religion which he acted out on Sunday was by no means laid to slumber through the week.

He had gone much into questions of the day; he had read books by men of every shade of religious opinion; he had friends, wide asunder as the poles from him and from each other in their views; yet his own quiet and simple faith in the Divine Master whom he served had lived unscathed through all oppositions, growing indeed and deepening, but keeping ever its early purity. Even those of his friends who differed most strongly from him, could not but feel the weight of that child-like trust, shown forth, not by much speech, but by a holy life.

For the trust was not in a theory, not in a doctrine, not in an idea, but in Christ—the one Perfect God-Man, our Crucified and Risen Lord. It rested mainly, not on arguments or skilled deductions, but on the written word, and on Gilbert Dalrymple's personal knowledge of that Risen Lord, who had "loved and given Himself" for him,—a knowledge which had sprung as such knowledge alone can spring, from the Master's revelation of Himself to His child.

Then, it may be asked, which comes first in order of time?—the Master's revealing, or the child's seeking?—the knowledge or the trust?

How can we tell? The hidden workings which lead to either consummation lie beyond our ken. There cannot be such knowledge without trust, or trust without such knowledge. There will not be either without the use of God's provided means; yet the means of grace are nought without the Divine outpouring into and through them. There will not be revealing without seeking; and there cannot be seeking without revealing. As each increases, the other is increased thereby. Attempting to define further, we find ourselves in a fog of terms.

As Mr. Dalrymple wrote, he lifted his eyes from time to time for a glance towards the bow-window. A small davenport stood there, and beside it a work-basket, also a lady's basket-chair. A little half-made print frock had been dropped across the arm of the chair, and a tiny silver thimble lay on the davenport.

He struck presently a small gong, and the butler appeared.

"Where is Miss Rivers?"

"I am not sure, sir. I will enquire if Miss Rivers is gone out."

Slade was a middle-aged medium-sized man. He had so quiet a step as to be suggestive of tip-toe; and no excitement ever caused him to raise his voice above the suppressed accents which he counted decorous.

"Do so," was the brief answer. "If Miss Rivers is in, ask her to come to me."

Slade vanished, and Mr. Dalrymple went on writing. As each letter came to an end, he read it through, copied it, folded it neatly, enveloped, addressed, stamped, and laid it aside; placed the copy in one drawer, and the answered letter in another drawer; then turned his attention to a fresh claimant.

Enter Slade once more.

"Well?" Mr. Dalrymple said.

"Miss Rivers was in the houses, sir, half-an-

hour since, and when she went out took the way of the shrubbery."

"Four o'clock. She will be in to afternoon tea," Mr. Dalrymple observed.

"Yes, sir," assented Slade.

"That will do," said Mr. Dalrymple. He had a dignified yet very courteous manner of speaking to his servants.

Slade stood still, an anxious line across his forehead.

"Sir, a gentleman desires to see you."

"A gentleman, eh?" Mr. Dalrymple looked up. "Who?"

"The gentleman desired me to say so much. He declined to send in any name, sir."

"What is his business?"

"He appeared to prefer telling you himself, sir."

"Ha! Somebody wanting money."

"No, I believe *not*, sir!"

Mr. Dalrymple gave the man a questioning glance, noted an anxious horizontal line, and enquired, "Do you know who it is?"

Slade was truthful. The line deepened, but he replied, "I do, sir."

"And you don't feel at liberty to tell me?"

"Sir, the gentleman desired me not."

Mr. Dalrymple's expression was curious. He said simply, "You may show the gentleman in."

Slade opened the door, and Mr. Dalrymple returned to his work. He expected an interval of two or three minutes to elapse before the caller should appear, and two or three minutes were in his estimation too valuable to be wasted in idle waiting.

He did not see a figure just outside the door, or a silencing hand raised when Slade would have spoken; nor did he see that as Slade glided out, somebody else glided in.

Five minutes or more went by, before it occurred to Mr. Dalrymple that Slade really was an unconscionable time absent. He lifted his eyes involuntarily, and they fell upon a gentleman standing in a *dégagé* attitude of careless ease, not far from the writing-table.

The sunshine was full in Mr. Dalrymple's face, while the other stood in shade. So he only rose politely, with an apologetic, "I beg your pardon. I did not hear your name announced."

"It was not. I would not let Slade speak."

The voice agitated Mr. Dalrymple strangely, for it was the voice of his only and beloved brother, dead many long years before. Harvey had inherited from the grandfather whom he had never even seen tones and tricks of speech to a singular degree. Mr. Dalrymple knew in an instant who his visitor was—would have known, had the room been pitch dark.

"Harvey, my dear fellow!" he said, when three strides had brought him round the table.

It had been a matter of doubt with Harvey what manner of welcome he might find. True, his was not a prodigal's return, since he had led a life peculiarly free from vicious indulgences. Such things were "not in his line," he would have said. He had only been unmanageably indolent, and politely persistent in having his own way. Moreover, although he undoubtedly "owed Mr. Dalrymple something," as Marjory expressed it, he was an independent man of means; and since his own father had lived till he was twenty-one, his great-uncle had never possessed any legal control over his movements.

Still, Harvey Dalrymple was the old man's heir, and was at least indebted to him for long persistent kindness and affection. If Harvey had a right to act for himself, Mr. Dalrymple had a right to be made aware of his intentions. This, which Marjory felt keenly, Harvey ought to have felt no less keenly.

Perhaps he did feel it, since he had hurried home before the end of his honeymoon, to explain and apologise; since too he certainly counted on a measure of possible annoyance.

Even apart from the news of his marriage, he looked for something of coolness. He knew that the eight years' absence had given displeasure, and it had not occurred to him that sorrow might have been so much stronger than displeasure as to render joy at his coming the predominant sensation.

Whatever kind of reception he had pictured to himself as probable, he certainly had not pictured this—the old man's two hands clasping his in a fervent grasp, the stately grey head bent and trembling.

"My dear dear fellow!" came again, and then, "I must sit down."

"You are not well," Harvey said involuntarily.

"Nothing, nothing—only the suddenness. Yes, quite well; it is nothing."

"I ought to have given warning. How thoughtless of me!" said Harvey, really contrite. "This way, uncle"—and he guided Mr. Dalrymple's uncertain steps to an armchair. "I am sorry to have startled you so much."

Mr. Dalrymple motioned him to a second chair close by. Harvey obeyed the gesture, and watched in grave silence the lessening tremulousness.

"Hermione has not mentioned your health in writing," he said at length.

"Nothing whatever is wrong with my health, nothing whatever," Mr. Dalrymple declared almost testily. The very idea seemed to act as a tonic, and he sat upright, looked braced. "No, I am only getting old; and there is no cure for old age. But you have been much in my mind lately. I have purposed to write pressing for your return."

"One hardly realises how the years fly," Harvey remarked, a little constrainedly.

"You think not. Perhaps, at your age. But it is enough to have you here at last! Your coming removes a load from my mind. There is much to see to, much to arrange. And you have come home, I trust, weary of wandering."

"Like a vagabond, according to Sutton," observed Harvey, with a forced laugh.

"But you have had enough; you will stay at home now," urged Mr. Dalrymple, when Harvey would fain have evaded the question.

"I am afraid—not long. I have engagements," Harvey said hesitatingly. He could not resolve to speak yet of two nights only.

"Well, a few weeks will settle things, perhaps. We shall see. And when you go, it will not be for eight years again!"

"I hope not, indeed. It ought not to have been," Harvey said, touched with the gentle rebuke.

"You have not seen Hermione yet?"

"No; I am told that she has fulfilled her childish promise of prettiness."

"More—more than fulfilled it. My child is very lovely, Harvey—a strangely favoured being; and I am favoured in her. God has been very good to me." He gazed earnestly at the young man. "When you see Hermione you will understand. She is all sweetness—to me, a being without fault. I never have to blame my Hermione; for I find nothing to blame. Yet she is natural, simple, girl-like; no forced hot-house plant. I do not fear to say too much of her, for indeed she surpasses all I could say. She is the sunshine of my old age. All who know her love her, as she well deserves to be loved. I trust you will appreciate what she is. My heart's dearest hope for years has been that you——"

Harvey could not let this go on. He broke in abruptly—

"Hermione and I are old friends. She has always been my little sister."

Mr. Dalrymple shook his head.

"Second-cousins only—no, no! I could wish a nearer——"

"And I hope nothing will ever break through that tie," continued Harvey, with haste. "By-the-by, I have not told you yet my chief item of news. What will Hermione say to me for giving her a new cousin—a sister, if she will have me for her brother still?"

The word was repeated mechanically—"A sister!"

A minute of dead silence followed; then—"You mean—that you are engaged?"

"I have been married for more than three weeks."

To this no answer came. Silence reigned.

CHAPTER IV.—AFTER EIGHT YEARS.

"I OUGHT to have written, of course," Harvey went on. "But you know how one puts off. It was a rather sudden affair, just at last. Perhaps too I had a fancy that I would prefer to come and tell you in person."

Still silence.

"Julia is an orphan. She has only one sister—a widow, with a little child. I have left them together at Paris; but, of course——"

Continued silence.

"I am afraid it must seem unkind not to have communicated with you beforehand, only——"

Another break. Harvey was at a loss how to carry on his remarks in the face of this persistent irresponsiveness. Though he would not say a word that was not true, he did not wish to confess that he had purposely abstained from appealing to Mr. Dalrymple, until he should have put it out of Mr. Dalrymple's power to interfere. Purposely, after a fashion. Harvey was more apt to drift in the wake of his own desires, than to follow out resolutely a certain line of action determined on by himself. Also, he undoubtedly was a procrastinator in the letter-writing line. But beneath the usual putting-off, in this case there had been a more than usual willingness to yield to the temptation.

"Mrs. Trevor is the sister—Francesca Trevor. Badly off, I am sorry to say. That was one reason why I thought—why delay seemed unadvisable. Julia was dependent on Mrs. Trevor, and, of course, a young widow——"

Harvey came to another stop. It was evident that Mr. Dalrymple had ceased to listen. He leant back in his chair listlessly, a pallid and even shrunken look replacing the bronzed hue of health. None but himself could know how sharply fell this blow, dispelling a long-cherished dream.

For years Gilbert Dalrymple had dwelt upon the dream, till it had grown into an almost certainty for the future. He had spoken of it to his friends, till there were few in Westford, besides Hermione, quite ignorant of his desire. He had, of course, been aware of the possibility that either Hermione or Harvey might fail to care for the other; but he had not realised it. He had scarcely allowed it, and all difficulties had gone down in imagination before his intense longing that Hermione Rivers, the darling of his old age, should possess, through marriage, the estate from which she was cut off by entail.

And now, this hope was utterly at an end!

Mr. Dalrymple was not angry with his great-nephew—not nearly so angry as was Marjory Fitzalan. It did not come upon him as a matter for displeasure. That which had so grieved Marjory—the slight conveyed to himself in Harvey's silence—scarcely weighed at all; for it was lost in the sharper trouble of his slain desire. Westford never could belong to Hermione! There lay the real grief.

It was not anger with Harvey which kept him silent and pale. Rather, he was displeased with himself, distressed at the strength and stiffness of his own will shown by this test. He was used to take all that came to him in life, direct from the Hand of God, very much ignoring second causes; and the disappointment which had now fallen came, like everything else, from God. Yet Gilbert Dalrymple's whole being rose in fierce protest against it, because he craved his own way in life for his darling, not God's way.

Seventy-six years old, and his will not yet subdued! Shame, shame! he told himself. This it was which bent the silver head, and silenced speech, which kept him from even hearing Harvey's lame semi-excuses. It did not trouble him, as Harvey had expected, that the wife brought no money with her. He was thinking other thoughts.

Harvey made no further attempt to gain his attention; and prolonged silence effected that which words had failed to effect. Mr. Dalrymple came back to the consciousness of the present. He looked at Harvey, then at his watch, and stood up slowly, laying a hand on the mantelpiece, as if for support. Harvey could not help thinking how the old man had aged in these few years. Yet he had not thought so on his first entrance.

"Past tea-time. Hermione will be waiting for us," Mr. Dalrymple said absently.

"I shall not be sorry for a cup of tea, after my walk from the station," remarked Harvey.

"True—yes—I had forgotten." Mr. Dalrymple spoke vaguely, his hand on the mantelpiece still. "Yes, we will go. There was something else which I had to say; but——"

"Time enough, isn't there?" Harvey asked in a cheerful manner. He did not wish to have it supposed that he knew or guessed aught of what had been passing in the other's mind. "I want to make Hermione's acquaintance. She must have grown out of all knowledge."

Mr. Dalrymple's eyes were fixed upon Harvey.

"Yes; it is about Hermione," he said with earnestness. "Things have been deferred too long. It has seemed to me—perhaps—that there might be no occasion to—but I will have no more delay. I should wish to look into certain business matters with you."

"Certainly. Another day," suggested Harvey. "I think you are fatigued this afternoon; hardly up to business."

"I have done nothing to cause fatigue." Mr. Dalrymple spoke decisively, yet as he crossed the room, leading the way, Harvey noted a certain unsteadiness.

Slade stood in the hall, apparently on the watch.

"Has Miss Rivers returned?" asked Mr. Dalrymple.

"Miss Rivers is in the drawing-room, sir——" Slade stopped, evidently impressed by his master's unwonted paleness.

"Well?" Mr. Dalrymple said.

"Sir, I informed Miss Rivers that you were engaged; and Miss Rivers desired me to let you know, when the interview should be over, that she is waiting tea for you."

Mr. Dalrymple said, "Right," mechanically; and Slade opened the drawing-room door.

"Grandfather! Oh, I am so glad. I was afraid from what Slade said——"

Hermione saw the stranger, and paused; then, with a pretty hesitating air, she came forward.

There were three windows on one side of the room, and a glass door at the farther end, leading into a spacious conservatory, whence came a blaze of geranium-scarlet to the eye. Near this door a basket-table held cups and saucers of Crown Derby china, a cosy of Indian embroidery hiding the teapot.

"Shall I be recognised? Don't introduce me," Harvey had said outside, and Mr. Dalrymple complied, though he scarcely seemed to hear the words. He crossed slowly to a favourite arm-chair, absorbed and silent still.

Harvey's first glance was one of pure curiosity. He had at once to confess to himself that neither Sutton, Marjory, nor his great-uncle had been guilty of exaggeration. No tamer adjective than "lovely" would do to describe the girl coming to meet him.

She was only nineteen, not very tall, but slightly over middle height, and looking taller from her slenderness. The simple white dress was unrelieved by any colour, except that of a blue enamel brooch. The attractiveness, about which none who knew her failed to speak, dwelt more in expression than in outline, more in manner than in form.

Harvey cast his recollections back to the child of eight years earlier, and marvelled.

There was a radiant happiness about her. She seemed to be one whose life hitherto had passed without a shadow. Marjory Fitzalan's face carried already the traces of long battling and pain; but Hermione's bore no such sign.

She gave one glance at her grandfather, one glance at Harvey, then drew near, her lips parted.

"Don't you know me, Hermione?" asked Harvey, and she sprang to greet him with a flash of delight.

"Oh, I knew, I knew!" she cried. "I was sure it must be Harvey himself! I knew you would come. I am so glad."

"And you will be my little sister still, after all these years?" he asked, holding her hands in brotherly fashion.

"Why, Harvey, as if anything could ever alter that!" she cried.

Passing Thoughts on my Life.

BY A LADY OF EIGHTY.

ALL my duties trivial seem;
I have energies, I deem;
What I would be, oft I dream.

Yet I cannot see my way
From this spot whereon I stay,
So hope fadeth day by day.

Then a Voice says at my side,
"Let My conduct be thy guide"
('Twas His Voice, the Crucified).

"Law and prophets to fulfil
Was My life devoted still,
For I came to do His will.

"What that will?—the Scripture saith:
Thirty years of Nazareth—
Three years public work,—then death.

"Thirty years unknown I trod
Galilee's sequestered sod;
But My life was known to God.

"Daily work at Joseph's call,
Daily life with duties small,—
Yet was I the Lord of all!

"And these hands the world that made,
Cheerfully at lowliest trade
Wrought, and Joseph's will obeyed.

"Daughter, if thy life be true,
Thou a blessed work shalt do,
Though unknown to mortal view.

"All thy quiet life I know,
For I planned it long ago—
Wouldst thou that it were not so?

"I have given all for thee,
Live thy quiet life for Me,
So shall it transfigured be."

Now on these sweet words I rest
And have ceased my anxious quest,
For the Master knoweth best.

M. T.

THE SUNDAY IN AMERICA.

NEW ENGLAND Puritanism is an historic phrase. It represents something very sacred and noble, and even heroic and sublime. This is true, notwithstanding errors by defect and from excess, such as are inseparable from human affairs. Witlings have ridiculed and scoffers have misrepresented the repose and the sanctity of the New England Sabbath of former times. Absurd stories have been invented and circulated respecting alleged gloom, sourness and severity. To attempt to refute these in the present day would be to slay the slain. The fact abides that the devout pioneers of more than two centuries ago, who went forth at the call of conscience, not knowing whither they went, established a pious home in the wilderness, and laid broad, deep, and solid foundations for the future. What America now is, in the Christian sense, is the work of the Pilgrim Fathers and of the Puritans. They honoured God and reverenced His day, and He abundantly blessed them and their posterity. Their memory will never die, while virtue, courage, and faith endure.

It is true that great changes have come over the population of the New England States. An incessant stream of emigrants from almost every country in Europe has poured in upon those shores during the last forty or fifty years. Americans themselves have become alarmed, and are discussing plans to check the flowing tide. But many millions have already entered, and are located within the borders. There are nearly twice as many Irish, and persons of Irish descent, as remain in the Emerald Isle. Several millions of Germans have gone to America to stay. It is only just to add that they become, for the most part, excellent citizens. Then there are hundreds of thousands who have settled there within a few decades from France, Italy, Hungary, Poland, Scandinavia, Croatia, and even from Russia. Many of these are questionable additions. They are not likely to adopt the tone of the country, or to blend with its national character. Even the German and the Irish elements—numerically by far the largest—are not an unmixed blessing.

One matter that causes solicitude among reflecting and serious persons is the change that has been wrought with regard to the observance of the Lord's Day. This is the case not only in such states as Massachusetts and Connecticut, but everywhere, to a varying but appreciable extent. The spirit of enterprise has constrained large numbers of the descendants of the early settlers of New England to go West. Many farms that had been in the possession of the same families for generations, have been sold to strangers and foreigners. The operatives in the cotton and other mills are now mostly French Canadians. Even in the renowned city of Boston, one third of the people are aliens. A much larger proportion obtains in the city of New York, which is cosmopolitan rather than American. Chicago is said to have a population of more than 900,000, three-fourths of whom are of foreign extraction. In Wisconsin and Minnesota there are large settlements from Norway and Sweden. Illinois and Iowa abound with Germans. Most of these are naturalized, and they are industrious, frugal, and law abiding. They give no trouble to the land of their adoption; to which they are proud to belong.

Yet it is the opinion of those competent to judge, that to this enormous immigration from abroad, is mainly due the great change that has indisputably taken place in the observance of Sunday in America. Without indulging in sweeping and unwarrantable generalisations, a few instances may be given which are typical. In the great city of New York, with its teeming population, the attendance at public worship is small in proportion. How to reach the masses in the crowded tenement-houses in the back streets down town, is a problem that exercises and pains many earnest Christians. Even the respectable and wealthy classes occasion much concern. Central Park is thronged on Sunday afternoon. The resorts on the Hudson River and along the coast in the Bay attract many thousands. The city of Philadelphia, with all its Quaker traditions, though more orderly, has its beer-gardens on the river Delaware and in other places, where crowds of people are to be seen every Sunday. In theory, and according to law, the liquor saloons are supposed to be closed, but they carry on a brisk trade without molestation. In Chicago, it is the custom to produce new plays on the Sunday; the theatres being open and attracting the largest audiences of the week. There, and in nearly every great city, including New York and Boston, most of the newspapers issue Sunday editions. This custom began in the time of the Civil War, when people were keenly anxious for intelligence; and it has never been abandoned.

These instances are not exceptional. The facts stated apply more or less to every large city and town. It may be suggested that this has not a little to do with the proverbial restlessness and nervousness of the American character. Climatic reasons have, of course, to be considered. Much is due, also, to the tension under which business is carried on. Every one seems eager and in a hurry. There is an absence of repose. High-pressure seems the universal law. But all this renders it the more necessary to regard Sunday as a time for rest and change of thought. Most certainly if there be one nation which, more than another, needs the blessed calm of that day, it is America. On the lowest as well as on the highest grounds, it is a matter of profound concern that business and pleasure so largely intermingle; leaving to their votaries neither the time nor the inclination for ennobling spiritual pursuits. By way of contrast, Toronto may be mentioned. There is not, perhaps, a

more orderly and peaceful city. Liquor saloons have to close at six o'clock on Saturday evening, and they are not allowed to open again until Monday morning. Tramcars do not run, and few private vehicles are seen in the streets. Public opinion requires this; and the majority rule.

It must not be inferred that the Christian sentiment of the United States is feeble or lethargic. An immense amount of earnest work is being successfully carried on. Vast sums are contributed for the sustenance of an able ministry, for home evangelization, and for missionary enterprise. The clergy of all denominations are zealous, fully qualified, and active. Many of them are known and esteemed throughout Christendom. They and their people are doing a noble work and are deserving of all honour. They are placed in circumstances of exceptional difficulty, and they have to adapt their machinery to novel conditions. Not one word of reproach is intended. Their devotedness and generosity are cordially recognised. Of suitable appliances, in buildings and in literature, there is no lack. The adjuncts to the church edifices, as a rule, are convenient and comfortable. The "church parlours," as they are termed, are carpeted, well-lit, warmed, and furnished with an organ or a piano, or with both. They are fitted with needful appliances for social gatherings, which often take place in the winter, in addition to the regular week-night services. "Sewing circles," and other gatherings of ladies, find suitable rooms for their accommodation. A study for the pastor is usually provided and handsomely equipped, where he can be seen at stated hours, or where he can pursue his work at his own convenience. The large room for the Sunday School, with separate class-rooms for senior classes and provision for the library, are, generally speaking, more commodious and pleasant than is the case in the old country. Even in small village churches there is an air of quiet comfort which is very attractive. The floor is usually carpeted, and there is some attempt—often very effective—at adornment of the walls and windows. Perhaps it may be added, in no spirit of censoriousness, that in great cities the tendency is to go to extremes in ornate and even gorgeous churches. An outlay of thirty or forty thousand pounds, and sometimes of double that large sum, appears excessive and unwarrantable, even in a country of plethoric wealth and where munificent donors abound.

One other criticism may be offered, in the kindest spirit. The bane of excessive sectarianism is often seen in small towns and villages. In the midst of a population of five hundred or a thousand, it is not uncommon to have several churches where scope exists only for one, or at the utmost for two. The consequence is that a number of small, weak, struggling, religious communities, are called into existence, the ministers of which hardly know how to live. In the many new settlements which have sprung up like mushrooms in the West, there has been a rivalry amounting to a mania in establishing churches and missions. The cost of the erection and the support of worship mainly devolved upon the home mission boards of the various denominations. A marvellous spirit of generosity has been evoked, and the motive is beyond all praise. Wealthy churches and individual donors in the Eastern and Middle States have contributed enormous sums for this purpose, and are continuing to do so. But it is unquestionable that no small portion of the money is wasted upon places which are already supplied with the means of grace. The little "garden walled around" might, with advantage, form part of a much larger religious plantation. This could be worked far more efficiently and economically, and it would soon become self-supporting, and help to send the Gospel to regions beyond. Leading members of different denominations perceive and deplore the evil. Conferences have been held between representatives of various communions having charge of the work of church extension. At present, no effectual remedy has been devised, although in certain cases an honourable understanding has been reached that the body first on the ground in a new region shall be left in undisturbed possession during the formative period. The hope is cherished that a spirit of Christian brotherhood and chivalry will in the near future prevent such foolish rivalry with its inevitable waste of power and money.

The custom of elaborate musical celebrations largely prevails in the city churches of every order, not alone on the great festivals of Christmas and Easter, but more or less throughout the year. Some persons might say that undue attention is paid to this part of Divine worship, and that excessive expense is incurred. Certainly high salaries are paid to organists and to professional singers. To secure their services there is often a rivalry among the music committees of various churches. From six to twelve hundred pounds a year are disbursed in this way in fashionable and wealthy churches. Quartette choirs are the rage, and a leading soprano or tenor can command a higher salary than many a hard-working clergyman in England. It is not uncommon to overhear the remark, "Let us go and hear So-and-so sing." On special occasions, announcements are given in the newspapers of the music to be sung and played. Careful rehearsals are gone through, so that the programme may be rendered with skill and effect. Here are some instances, taken at random. In one church, after an organ prelude, Gadsby's anthem, "Sing, O daughter of Zion," was rendered, followed by Schumann's "Hark! what mean those holy voices?" a solo from Schubert, "Great is Jehovah the Lord," another anthem by Hopkins, and three hymns, also sung by the choir. In a second church there were anthems by Goss, Stainer, Tours, and Farmer. As musical displays these were faultlessly rendered. A similar remark may be made of this part of the usual Sunday service in the principal churches, irrespective of denomination in all large cities. Where so much is paid, people naturally want to obtain as much as possible for their money. Hence it has come to pass that good, hearty, congregational singing is seldom heard in fashionable and wealthy churches. Beautiful and

familiar hymns, such as "Rock of Ages," or "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds," are often sung by the quartette choir to some florid music containing fugues, solos, and duets; the people sitting and listening to the vicarious psalmody, each piece of which, thus rendered, costs them from twenty to forty shillings. Besides the hymns, two or three elaborate anthems or oratorio selections are performed to exhibit the qualities of the choir. In many churches it is the custom for the congregation to join only in the closing hymn. An English minister recently conducted the worship and preached in a large church in an American city. He was informed that the evening service should not exceed an hour. The organist first played a prelude, lasting six minutes. The choir then sang an anthem that absorbed seven minutes. Three hymns, two of which the choir had wholly to themselves, occupied fifteen minutes in all. Hence the minister had exactly thirty-two minutes for his part of the service, including two prayers, a Scripture lesson, and sermon. In justice it shall be added that his labours, though brief, were generously recompensed. He received for his thirty-two minutes at night, and for fifty minutes in the morning, an honorarium of ten pounds, besides being quartered from Saturday to Monday in a sumptuous suite of rooms at an hotel.

INDEPENDENT WORK FOR THE BLIND.

THE cry of the blind is now for work and not pity. They have been taught, and perhaps a little over-taught, to be as self-reliant as if they were sighted. Their complaint too often is, that when they are educated and capable of earning their living they can get no work to do. Even the blind chair-mender, and mat or basket manufacturer, finds that his sighted brother supersedes him, not because the work is so well done, but because it is done on the very doorstep of the employer, who not unnaturally will not take more trouble than he can help. Yet it is a little trouble that is wanted, as well as some self-denial. People who really wish to help the blind must take them by the hand and give them a lift into occupation. They are quite as independent as their more fortunate brethren; they would fain live without charity; but "How are we to do it?" they ask. It is very sad to hear their plaints, and they are often much depressed by feeling that they are shelved to make way for those blessed with sight.

Not long since a poor fellow was complaining of this to a friend, afflicted like himself. She wrote to the Gardner's trust, received a grant of ten pounds, and he was set up in a small shop, where he is now earning a respectable livelihood. If the dispensers of Mr. Gardner's munificent gift had effected no more than this, they would have done much; for it is not mere pensions of so many shillings per week that the blind demand, but the power of independence. Many are the petitions and preachments put forth by laity and clergy, but their cry still is, Let them employ us. In spite of college and school, and the almost superhuman efforts of teachers and taught, are there many of the ministers of the Gospel who will have a blind organist, or parents who will engage a blind teacher, or firm who will pay a blind tuner? And music is the backbone, so to say, of the blind. It is sad to learn that many a promising musician and even scholar is reduced to hawk his harmonium from street to street, for lack of regular occupation, while others earn a precarious living by frequenting taverns or servants' halls to play dance music for their occupants. We know of such, some of whom are adepts in their art. Great efforts are not unsuccessfully made to supply the energy which as a rule the blind lack, owing to that physical defect which makes them nervous by nature. "We don't want to be thought blind," said one to us, declining the aid of a stick. He was one of the musicians reduced to itinerate from country music-hall to tavern-parlour. And he was capable of better things.

There is at this moment a member of our "Library for the Blind," who has lost not only sight, but speech and hearing. He is, or was, at the Deaf and Dumb Asylum at Swansea. He writes constantly to our blind librarian for books in Braille, and his last demand is that the New Version of the Holy Scriptures, shall be printed in that type. "How has he been taught?" is the question of the librarian. "How, indeed?" we echo. But if patience has performed this divine work, little short of miraculous—those gifted with all their senses should certainly strive to aid such as are deficient, in their endeavours after self-support.

"There is nothing I could not do; but I will not live on charity," says one. "My work is equal to that done by sighted people, why therefore should it be considered charity to employ me? People pay me the value of it, and say 'Oh, it is such a charity!'"

Who is not conscious of occasional acts of benevolence performed after this sort? We hug ourselves in our good deeds, not perceiving that self is at the bottom of them. Root out the self, and then you can encourage independence even in the street hawker by giving him a fair price for his wares. But, especially, if the opportunity offers, assist the blind in their increasing desire to earn a livelihood for themselves, and not to rely on extraneous aid for it.

As Christianity moves all-too-slowly onwards, we hear of wonderful efforts made in far-off lands

BLIND.

From a Sketch taken in Cairo.

by men and women of our own blest nation for the amelioration of suffering. Medical missions are effecting what nothing else could do, for, alas, we too often reach the soul through the body, and amongst those most benefited by them are the partially or wholly blind. In Cairo where ophthalmia prevails, how the patients crowd about the doctor for relief, and travel where you will, in any quarter of the globe, the blind beggar haunts your steps. In China he has lately been taught to read, and now the Christian blind act as missionaries by sitting by the wayside and attracting their possibly heathen brethren by passages of Scripture. The Bible makes all the world kin, and we travel in imagination from the old man who reads aloud its precious promises here in England, to his fellows who give them forth in China. They have the Scriptures in Moon or Braille spread across their knees; they read them by touch not sight; it matters not what the language, since they are read, and the blind have the blessed privilege of knowing that there is One who will some day remove the veil from their vision and say, in His own inspired words, "Let there be light."

But we must return to our text, and the point whence we started. As a blind friend said but yesterday: "It is of small use to take a child from amongst the poor, educate him as a gentleman, teach him some art, and then leave him to make his own way." He must be helped up the first rungs of the ladder, and not left to stumble back almost before he has set foot on them. His craving for reading is being gratified, and he will soon have a first-class monthly magazine, thanks to the indefatigable exertions of ladies who have been long "prickers in Braille" for him. But he wants still more, and craves, we repeat, not for charity but independence.

ANNE BEALE.

THE LATE BISHOP STEERE.

AMONG the missionary bishops of the Church of England who have lived or died for Africa, the name of Edward Steere will now occupy a prominent place; and his biography[1] by the Rev. R. M. Heanley of Queen's College, Oxford, is a book that should not be overlooked by those who are interested in the condition and evangelization of the Dark Continent.

The son of a lawyer, and born in London in 1828, Edward Steere from an early age showed great strength of mind as well as a disposition to undertake work among the poor. He was called to the Bar in 1850, and had chambers in Chancery Lane; but the studies of the profession which he soon relinquished, were never so much to his taste as theology and philosophy. He thus spent much of his time in the British Museum reading-room, or at the archbishops' library at Lambeth. He was not a mere bookworm, because he read earnestly for a purpose, and he possessed the faculty of retaining what he read. In London, and also at Tamworth, he lived for some years as a philanthropist. In September, 1856, he was ordained deacon, and became curate of King's Kerswell, Devonshire; and on Trinity Sunday, two years later, he succeeded to full charge of the Lincolnshire parish of Skegness, which was not then the watering-place it has since become, but a small straggling village. While here he married Miss Mary Brown, of King's Kerswell. In the fall of 1859 he became rector of Little Steeping, Lincolnshire, an out-of-the-way place, eight miles inland, of such primitive ways and ideas that strangers were regarded as "foreigners."

While at Little Steeping, in 1862, Dr. Steere had his attention directed to the Universities' Mission in Africa in consequence of the disastrous news that was then received, and in an unexpected manner he soon afterwards found himself on the way to the scenes where war, famine, and pestilence were afflicting both natives and English alike. The missionary bishop of Central Africa, Dr. Mackenzie, was no more; and when it was proposed that the see should be offered to the Rev. W. G. Tozer, of Burgh-cum-Winthorpe, Dr. Steere fell in with a sudden suggestion that he should accompany the new bishop to his vast but interesting diocese "to take care of him." Dr. Tozer was consecrated at Westminster early in 1863, and soon after joined Dr. Steere and several others at Cape Town.

On proceeding to Mazar, on the Zambesi river, and the mission station at Chibisa's, it was found that one disaster had followed another; two valuable English agents, and one the surgeon of the station, having being carried off by death. The general outlook at that time was about as gloomy as it could be; for in addition to the loss of Mr. Scudamore and Dr. Dickinson, many others were disabled. "Mr. Proctor and Mr. Rowley were both so reduced by sickness as to render their leaving the country immediately a matter of absolute necessity. Adams and Blair, the two mechanics, had also suffered much, the former having had upwards of one hundred attacks of fever in less than three years. Mr. Waller was the only one of the party who was in fair health. The land was desolated by war and famine, hundreds and hundreds had died of starvation, sheep and goats were not to be had nearer than Tete, and Dr. Livingstone was going out of the country; what should be done for the best?"

[1] Published by George Bell & Sons, York Street, Covent Garden.

The missionaries decided on removing to a healthier station in the Morumbala Mountains; but after a few months' experience in this part of Africa, the party returned to Zanzibar to make that place the base of operation. We are told that "when, twenty-two years afterwards, this country was re-opened by the Mission, the graves of its pioneers were all found to be carefully tended and kept free from overgrowth by the loving hands of the natives." The aim was by slow but sure means, by the Christian training of young Africans, to carry the Gospel into the interior. Thus in after days Bishop Steere never liked to regard Zanzibar as his permanent head-quarters. "Please God," he would say, "we will build our cathedral on the shores of the Nyassa some day." Though he did not live to realize this hope, as a translator of the Scriptures he laid a splendid foundation for others to work upon.

Bishop Tozer and his helpers were not the first Christian missionaries to settle in Zanzibar; for Dr. Krapf, as agent of the Church Missionary Society, was found there in 1844, and besides producing a grammar and dictionary of the coast language, he translated nearly the whole of the New Testament and the Prayer-book. Unfortunately, however, the learned pioneer, whose labours were saddened by the death of his wife, erected a monument of industry without preparing the way for the diffusion of the Scriptures. "All the Europeans told us that Dr. Krapf's books were of no use at all, and indeed, we found them of very little help," wrote Dr. Steere. "Not because he had misconceived the language, but because he had been to some extent misled by a pedantic clique of so-called learned men in Mombas, who induced him to accept as pure Swahili an over-refined kind of dialect, scarcely or not at all intelligible to the mass of the nation, and further, because of a singularly confused style of writing and spelling, so that their works were of scarcely any use to a mere beginner." It was to this laborious work of translation that Dr. Steere devoted his rare gifts; and after five years' labour the Gospel of St. Matthew was ready for the press.

Zanzibar seems to have been well fitted for a base of operation. The island is about twice the size of the Isle of Wight, and it is less than thirty miles from the mainland. It is more than the capital of Eastern Africa, "it is the only really large town and great centre of trade for all that immense coast, 2000 miles in extent, and the vast countries which lie behind it." Another great advantage is that Swahili, the dialect of the city, "being the official and trade language, is everywhere more or less understood" all over that part of the continent, where the trading stations are so distant one from another that a merchant will be many years completing the round. Zanzibar itself is not a healthy place; but it would be far better than it is if more attention was given to sanitation and common-sense methods of building. There are stone houses, but the greater number are mud-huts thatched with cocoa-nut leaves, and the thoroughfares are generally too narrow for vehicles.

Though not legal according to a treaty with England, the slave-trade in its worst phases was then rampant at Zanzibar, the Sultan deriving part of his revenue from this source; and he even gave the missionaries a selection of slave boys who were of course trained for missionary work among the unhappy natives. In the eyes of the Bishop and Dr. Steere, such "black little boys" were the missionaries of the future, and thus the hope of the country. At first the lads expected to be eaten by their masters rather than educated; and they were not a little astonished when they found that white men could be kind to them.

After about four years of labour, Dr. Steere would have returned to England in 1866; but he remained in charge at Zanzibar when the ill-health of Dr. Tozer obliged the Bishop to take a homeward voyage. During this memorable time he did work in more than one department which is destined to abide. By working hard at the language he prepared himself for later achievements; and he established that station in the mainland in the Usambara country, which now represents one of the greatest successes of the Universities' Mission. Though at first suspicious, the king soon learned to set the highest value on the Christian pioneers.

In 1869 Dr. Steere was again in his parish of Little Steeping "in the enjoyment of first-rate health." While the Bible Society was printing a Gospel in Swahili, Dr. Steere was arranging "a very copious" native vocabulary. What was ultimately achieved may be inferred from the biographer's words: "When the language of a country is still in flux, it will settle down and gravitate round the translation of the Bible. Therefore, humanly speaking, the lines of the Swahili language are laid down for ever by Dr. Steere's Biblical work. The Swahili language can now be acquired by any person of ordinary intelligence who will master the handbook and dictionary brought out by Dr. Steere, and since enlarged by Mr. Madan upon whom his linguistic mantle seems to have fallen." Writing of Dr. Steere's labours at a later date, Sir Bartle Frere also remarked: "He has furnished any one who can read English with the means of thoroughly mastering Swahili, the most generally useful of East African languages, and greatly facilitated the acquisition of three others commonly spoken by slaves. Very excellent work in their languages and in English, is turned out at the Mission press, the whole being composed, set up, and printed by negro lads and young men." It is not surprising to find that a man with such capacities and such predilections was really more at home in Africa than in England. When news came of an epidemic of cholera which killed 10,000 people at Zanzibar, Dr. Steere was again attracted thither, and landed once more on the island early in 1872. Soon afterwards the old slave-market at Zanzibar was purchased, and Christ Church erected on its site—a notable transformation, for this was really the closing of the last of the world's open marts for traffic in

human beings. The theological college and boys' school at Kiungani had about sixty inmates; and there were other stations both at Shangani and Magila more or less prosperous. Disasters had been repaired, and great difficulties had been overcome; so that when Dr. Tozer resigned, and a successor was needed, all eyes were turned towards Dr. Steere as best fitted to occupy the vacant see. "Were I pope or emperor of Zanzibar, I should disregard his refusal and nominate him," said Sir Bartle Frere. Ultimately, Dr. Steere was consecrated at Westminster in August, 1874.

He returned to Zanzibar early in the following year, and at once distinguished himself by the vigour with which he superintended the mission, doing himself some of the most heroic work. The most notable exploit of this time was the walk to Nyassaland which the Bishop successfully completed. The return journey seems to have occupied thirty-one days "twenty-five of which were full days of marching, and the remaining six, days of resting and buying of food." During this remarkable expedition he very considerably extended his knowledge of the country, besides learning more about the horrors of the slave-trade than ever he had learned before. Thus he "met nine caravans representing from 1500 to 2000 slaves and possibly some 10,000 for the whole year." By the roadside they would come upon negroes lying on the ground, murdered and left behind by their captors because they were too weak or ailing to be remunerative. "Surely if there can be a holy war it would be one against a traffic which bears such fruits as these," wrote Dr. Steere, and all will agree with him. Many passages occur which vividly reveal the horrible wickedness of such a traffic. It is said, for example, that "the country through which the bishop passed has been the scene of terrible destruction during the last twenty years, and whole nations have practically disappeared." Then it is added,—"Old traders say that the road from Kilwa to the Nyassa used to lie entirely through an inhabited country, where food of all sorts was fabulously abundant." There is no prescription so rapid and certain as the slave trade for reducing a rich and prosperous country to a desert.

In an ample letter, printed in the biography, Archdeacon Maples gives a well-drawn word portrait of Bishop Steere from which we can realise what the man was like in every-day life, and at his work. While residing at the boys' school at Kiungani in 1876 he conducted services on Sundays and Thursdays at the town house. He spent much time at the printing office, looking after the proofs of his translations, and even in doing humbler work. By way of recreation in the evening, he would inspect the work done during the day by the builders who were erecting a church.

The extensive reading of former years was not kept up; but "though in later years he read little," it is said, "he never seemed to be behind the thought and ideas of the age, for lack of what new books could tell him." In reference to an excursion into the country, it is said: "In the villages where we stopped for the night, he preached informally to a throng of people who came to stare at us, admirably adapting to their dull apprehensions, such truths about God and the soul as were best calculated to set them thinking, and to rouse their consciences."

By way of relief from the work of translation he would teach the natives a better mode of thatching, thus showing wonderful aptitude for doing any kind of work. And yet Dr. Steere's own estimate of himself was, "I am no missionary in the real sense of the word. A missionary is one who has the power of bringing souls one after another to Christ . . . of creating in them a sense of their own true need. I can't do that." It is good for the best of men to realise their dependence and limitations, but probably, in this matter, like many another earnest labourer, he only saw "in part." He was a man whom all could not but admire, even while differing from him. When among the natives his knowledge of every-day things seemed to be fully utilised. Thus, when he undertook the memorable journey to found the freed Slave Settlement at Masasi, "he showed the natives how to build; with his own hand he laid out the gardens, measured the roads, planted the first trees, planned out the houses, varying his labours with incessant interviews with chiefs, visitings, parleyings, instructions, making friends everywhere, and imbuing all around with the same spirit and energy which he was himself throwing into the work." He also claimed the credit of being the first to penetrate into Uganda. Speaking in the Senate House at Cambridge, Dr. Livingstone had said, "I shall return to Africa and die there; but I leave it with you to see that the door I have opened for Christianity and civilization shall never be closed." It was Dr. Steere's ambition to carry out the desire of the great pioneer; and no opportunity of perfecting himself in the work was ever allowed to pass. One tells how, when on a visit to England in 1877, the bishop learned all that could be taught respecting musketry in an hour—very useful knowledge to an African traveller; while he was an equally apt learner in an English brickfield, whither he went to learn all about mixing and forming the clay.

In 1878 the Universities' Mission outgrew its income; and in the year following the translation of the New Testament, and its printing at the native press took place. Of course work like this was assisted by the British and Foreign Bible Society; and it was after a journey across the mainland in 1880 that Dr. Steere received a letter from the late Earl of Shaftesbury asking his acceptance of a Vice-Presidentship of the Society. "If I can be in any way of use to the Society," was his answer, "I have long wished to do what I could for its cause. My only hesitation lies in the fact that the obligation is all on one side, and that side mine. I would gladly assist by money gifts, or personal advocacy if I could, but I am here in no position to do either. I feel that our work must be all unsound without a vernacular Bible, and this the Society has made possible to us."

The mode of life of the missionaries at Zanzibar is described by a friend who visited the city in 1880: "The mission-house is just what it ought to be, open to every one, a bed always ready. If any one likes to come out and share a meal with them, the bishop welcomes them most heartily, but they must take them as they are. They live very simply, and have nothing in the way of luxuries. Wine and beer you never see on the table; they are all teetotalers." The daily life of all was after this pattern; and those worked best who caught Dr. Steere's spirit. He was wont to say: "Nothing that is worth doing is ever accomplished unless you go on at it after it has begun to become a bore." And again: "If you only hold on long enough you'll do something." "It's the one who holds out longest who wins."

Those who think that Mohammedanism elevates, will find it plainly disproved in the working of the Universities' Mission, and in the experience of the missionaries. With its licentiousness, drunkenness, and slavery, Islam—as seen in the light of Dr. Steere's labours—would seem to be a thoroughly degraded and degrading system, with no redeeming features worthy of being taken into account.

The Universities' Mission differs from some similar enterprises in not paying stipends to its members, who are, however, supplied with all necessaries. As regards the every-day life at Zanzibar, we are told: "The bishop, the archdeacon, the richest men and women amongst us, all eat at the same table, and lodge in rooms furnished on the same scale with the poorest. Everything like distance or separation is carefully avoided, with our black as well as with our white fellow-workers, and the community of feeling thus engendered is the greatest safeguard we can have against selfishness and private ends."

Dr. Steere visited England in 1882, for necessary rest and change, and there found ample occupation in furthering the aims of the mission. In returning to his post he was delayed at Aden, and nine hot and stifling days apparently sufficed to undo the good he had gained. Scarcely had he resumed his duties at Zanzibar when he was stricken down by death. He had said good night on retiring to his room, with the bright kind look that was usual. In the morning his friends waited for him, but he never came; they broke open the door of his chamber and found he had died in his sleep. So passed away one of the ablest of African missionaries. There were aspects of his teaching which must be held open to objection, but none could question his self-sacrificing devotion. Masculine sense and practical piety were united in him, with rare faculties of service. G. H. P.

Things New and Old.

An Epiphany Sermon by Savonarola.—Savonarola surpassed himself in expounding the gospel of the Epiphany; and this sermon was not only full of feeling and imagination but also constructed with the greatest skill . . . . "Behold the wise men, behold the Chaldeans; behold those that were not born among Christians; behold those that were not baptized; behold those that were not instructed in the law of the gospel; behold these that did not receive the numerous sacraments of the Church; behold those that heard not the voices of preachers.

"*Behold the wise men of the East,* from the midst of a perverse and evil nation, from distant and remote regions; shrinking from no expense, from no weariness, from no danger. *They came.* And when was it that they came? When all the world was full of idolatry; when men bowed down before stocks and stones, when the earth was full of darkness and gloom, and all men full of iniquity . . . . When was it that they came? When Christ was a babe, when He lay upon straw, when He showed naught but weakness, when He had as yet done no miracles . . . . *We beheld His star in the East,* the star that announced His coming.

"Behold, they saw His star, but no other miracle; they beheld not the blind restored to sight, nor the dead raised, nor any other visible thing. *And we come to worship Him.* We have made a great journey only to worship the footprints of the Babe. If only we may see Him, may adore Him, may touch Him, if only we may lay our gifts before Him, we deem ourselves blessed. We have forsaken our country, have forsaken our families, have forsaken our friends, have forsaken our kingdoms, have forsaken our great riches; we have come from a distant land, through many dangers, and with much speed, and solely to worship Him. This is sufficient for us, this is more to us than our very life . . . . What then shall we say to these things, my brethren? What, by our faith, shall we say? O living faith! O highest charity! See ye then how great was the perfidy of Judæans, how great the hardness of their hearts, since neither by miracles, nor by prophecies, nor by this voice, were they moved!

"But why have we directed our sermon against the men of Judæa, and not rather against ourselves? . . . . Why dost thou see the mote in thy brother's eye, yet cannot see the beam in thine own? Behold, the Lord Jesus is no longer a babe in the manger, but is great in heaven.

"Already hath He preached and performed miracles, hath been crucified, hath risen again, and now sitteth at the right hand of the Father, hath sent His Holy Spirit down upon the earth, hath sent the apostles, hath subjugated the nations . . . . Already the kingdom of heaven is everywhere; behold, its door is opened unto ye; the Lord hath led the way, and the apostles and martyrs have followed Him.

"But thou art slothful, and all labour is a burden to thee, and thou wilt not follow the footsteps of Christ. Behold, each day avarice grows, the whirlpool of usury is widened, lust hath contaminated all things, and pride soareth to the clouds.

"Ye are children of the devil, and ye seek to do the will of your father. Oh! well might it be said of ye, in the words of the Bible—'Behold, I go unto a people which knoweth Me not, and called not upon My name; daily have I stretched forth My hands to an unbelieving people, which walketh in the way of perdition, a people which provoketh Me to anger."

This description of the wise men coming from distant lands, and through many perils, to seek the infant Jesus, while Christians remain indifferent to Christ the Man, even when He has risen to the splendour of His glory, and opens His arms invitingly to them, was undoubtedly one of the appeals that acted most magically upon the people, and the whole sermon was one of the best Savonarola ever gave.—From *The Life and Times of Girolamo Savonarola, by Professor Villari.* A *new and admirable edition of which just issued (Fisher Unwin) will be welcomed by many readers.*

The Royal Law.

CHAPTER II.—ALECK'S MOTHER.

ALECK'S mother was wending her way slowly down the garden, with a handsome grey-hound by her side, when the smothered sobs broke in upon the sweet harmony around her. She paused in a little alarm, until she remembered that her boy was happy and away on the river with his young companions; she listened in silence, and again the sobs were repeated. Her quick ear caught the sound and knew the spot from whence it came, and in less than a minute she was kneeling near the quivering boy, and found that it was Paul.

"Paul, my dear," she said kindly, "what is it? Why are you crying, can I help you?" she feared his uncle had been severe with him, and her motherly feelings were roused. She pressed her lips to his brow and begged him to tell her what distressed him; her voice soothed and comforted the little fellow, but no persuasion could make him tell her the cause of his tears; he had a boy's dread of meanness, and his generous spirit would not let him complain of Aleck. A red flush mounted to his cheek, and there was a shy look in the deep brown eyes which were fixed upon her face.

"I don't feel," he said, in a low husky voice, "that I can tell you; I would really rather not."

And when Mrs. Vincent saw the wistful expression she ceased to urge him. "Very well, dear," she answered pleasantly, "then let us talk about something else; and I won't bother you any more." She found his spirits were at the lowest ebb, and with the hope of cheering him, she began to tell of the party of young fishermen who had rowed their boat out so early that morning, little dreaming that she was touching the sore spot in his breast.

She drew him nearer while she talked; "I wonder why Aleck did not take you with them?" Mrs. Vincent's tone was a questioning one, but Paul half turned away his head and made no answer. "It was thoughtless of Aleck," she continued, "you would have enjoyed a day on the river, but perhaps the boat was full."

"It was," Paul answered bravely, "the gardener told me so."

"Well! I think they might have found room for you!" and there was a mixture of pity and doubt in her heart as she spoke: A thought had entered her mind, which she would like to have put away; a thought which connected the boy's trouble with the fishing expedition; also her eyes fell on the piece of line which Paul was still twisting in his fingers.

"Did Aleck ask you to go with him?" she asked presently.

Paul's eyes filled with tears and his lips quivered, but he made no reply; the pressure of the disappointment was felt again, and he would have given anything not to tell; he did not want her to know how hard he found it to bear, and the sensitive heart would like to have screened Aleck. But Mrs. Vincent raised the drooping head with her hand, and said again: "Answer me, Paul, I wish to know." The dim suspicion had flashed suddenly into belief.

"Please don't," he faltered, as he hid his face out of sight again; "please don't ask; he didn't mean it; he only forgot me."

Then Mrs. Vincent knew the whole truth; her son's heedless selfishness burst upon her all at once, but she would not burden the troubled spirit of the boy beside her by asking him any more questions.

"It's nothing to cry about, I know," Paul said, choking down the sobs as he spoke, "and it doesn't matter now."

But Aleck's mother felt that there was a great deal to cry about, and her face wore a sad expression as she looked at Paul.

"Tell me, Paul," she said, after a minute's silence, "why you did not wish to tell of Aleck; he has treated you very badly."

"Oh! it's all right now," he said, lifting his dark eyes to hers; "I am not going to bother any more;" and the round little fist soon rubbed all the tears away.

"I should like to know," she said gently.

Paul crept closer to her side, the tone of her voice showed him that his trouble was understood; after a slight hesitation he said shyly, with the crimson mounting to his cheeks—"I think it was really, because of the Royal Law, don't you see?"

"Not quite," she said, trying to smile down upon him, and kissing away the pucker from the wrinkled brow, for she wanted him to recover the brightness he had lost.

"Well, this is what I mean," and he put his hand in his pocket to find his treasure. "You won't laugh at me," he asked pleadingly, as he drew the Testament from its hiding place. Nothing but his love for his mother and her favourite words would have betrayed him into this self-revelation. With his thumb he turned the pages rapidly over, and put the book in Mrs. Vincent's hand.

She read the verse slowly and half-aloud, "If ye fulfil the royal law according to Scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well."

The words did not seem very simple, but the boy knew what they meant. He watched the expression of her face closely, and when Mrs. Vincent caught the anxious glance, she laid her hand tenderly on the curly head. Many acts of kindness and self-denial which Paul had done for Aleck, sprang up in her mind, and she read them in a new light which gave them a fresh meaning.

"Yes, dear," she answered, "I quite understand; and I am sure God meant us to be loving and unselfish, one with another. When did you learn about the royal law?"

"Mother taught me," he said wistfully, "ever so long ago. I mean"—and then his courage failed, and the words died on his lips; he had never had any one to talk to about her since she left him.

Mrs. Vincent felt very sad as she looked at him; she was realising for the first time how lonely the poor little heart had been.

"But were you old enough," she asked gently, "to understand what your mother meant?"

"I remember what she used to say about it, and she wrote the words in my Testament. Look here."

And he pointed to the beginning. On the fly-leaf, Mrs. Vincent found traced in delicate letters the name "Mary Stafford," and underneath, was written in fresher ink, and in a round childish hand, "Paul's dear mother;" then in the corner there was the Royal Law.

"She wrote that," he said, pointing to the name and verse, and a half smile rested on his lips as he bent to look at it.

"Tell me what she said about it, Paul?"

"Oh, I don't think I can say it out," he replied; "but I know mother wants me to try and keep it. She said it was to do to others as I would like them to do to me."

And this is what he has done to-day with regard to Aleck, thought Mrs. Vincent, but aloud she said—

"Yes, that is it, dear; the royal law is the law of love, and God who gave it to us wants us to love Him, and please and serve Him by being kind and unselfish to those we meet with, like the Lord Jesus. We find it very hard sometimes to give up our own way and will, but when we do it makes us happier."

Paul gazed earnestly into her face while she was speaking.

"Mother told me so," he said, "she always made things so easy for me, and I tried so hard not to forget after she died. I used to lie in the fields and think, and think about her, and the talks we had together, and it seemed to make the loneliness easier to bear. I was so happy at home with mother, then when I came to uncle's, there didn't seem any one to care for me."

The big tears glistened in his eyes, and there was a tremble in his voice, he tried hard to smile—he didn't want Mrs. Vincent to think he was always crying—but it was only a little struggling attempt which soon died away.

Mrs. Vincent's heart was full of tender feeling for the boy; she drew his head down on her breast, and said, in the tone Aleck always loved to hear, "Will you let me try and be a little bit to you, darling, what she was? I think God sent me to you to-day."

Paul nestled closer to her, and looking up with a happier expression he said eagerly, "Please do; that is just what I want." And he laid his soft round cheek caressingly near the hand which rested on his shoulder.

And then Mrs. Vincent talked to him very lovingly about the Home where father and mother lived in perfect happiness, and where he would see them again one day, never to be parted any more. And Paul grew happier as he listened; encouraged to have some one to talk with, whose sympathy he was sure of, he forgot his shyness, and the next half hour was spent in chattering to his willing listener about his early home.

Mrs. Vincent felt very full of regrets; she never knew before that the motherless boy was yearning in his loneliness for some one to be kind to him. She remembered the time when she was young and impulsive, when the want of love would have killed her, and for a few minutes she was a little happy laughing girl again, back in the meads and fields where she and her brothers used to play, gathering cowslips, singing merry songs, and listening to the cuckoo bird. And then she realised the lonely condition of Paul, and every tender instinct awoke within her, and she felt she could love him dearly; she looked at him with a new kind of interest, and resolved—with a quiet prayer for help—to strive in the future to prevent him from missing, as far as she was able, a mother's love.

The simple words of the boy touched her deeply, and the Royal Law of Scripture came home to her with fresh power. She felt her life had been a selfish one, because she had spent it in dreams, and she was so wrapped up in her little son. There had always been a readiness to promote his plans, to enter into his feelings, to sympathise in his pleasures, endeavouring ever to smooth down the small difficulties in his way, and studying how to make him happy; but she had never troubled to take an interest in her little neighbour; never cared whether he shared in Aleck's enjoyments, or thought whether he were happy or miserable in the lonely old Hall; but his trustful love and ready obedience to God's command had taught her a new lesson, and she silently vowed that the "Royal Law" should find a fresh place in her daily life.

During the few minutes' silence, Paul's restless fingers had been plaiting the feathery grass, but Aleck's mother was filling all the empty places in the boy's heart. He looked up once to see if the golden sunbeams made her face look so lovely, and the searching glance made her smile; she bent down and kissed the flushed cheeks, but she did not know that in that motherly caress Paul found all that he had longed for—somebody to care for him and somebody to love. In his new-found joy, he threw back his curly head, and laughed up in her face a clear, boyish, ringing laugh.

"That's because I'm so glad," he cried; and as Mrs. Vincent rose from the grass, he caught her hand in his and danced along by her side.

"Will you come and spend the rest of the day with me, Paul?" she asked, as she gathered the sweet-smelling flowers. "You can go into Aleck's playroom after luncheon and ride his horse; you will find his tools there, too."

Paul's eyes sparkled, but there was a moment's hesitation.

"Could you spare me now?" he said, "just for a few minutes. I won't be long, but——" Again he paused.

"Of course I can, dear boy; where do you wish to go?"

"Well, you see, I brought some lunch with me, because Aleck told me to; it is in my basket near the boat-house, and I think the little cripple boy down by the river side would like to have it; there are some real nice jam pasties, and I should say he doesn't often get anything as jolly as those to eat. I can run very fast, so I shan't keep you waiting long." And before Mrs. Vincent could reply, his rapid feet were running down the gravelled paths and the thick shrubs hid him from view.

"I am not coming to you, old clump, to-day," he said, as he passed the trees in the meadow; but he stayed to twine the wreaths of roses and sprays of honeysuckle he had gathered for Doris round one of the low hanging branches, and plucked some fresh bunches to enliven the sick boy's room.

Paul found the cripple alone and in bed, his mother was out charing, and his father was on the barge up the river; the little cripple was always pleased to see Paul, and the jam pasties which he laid on a plate within his reach, looked very good and tempting. Paul felt very sorry for him, when he saw his pale wan face, and knew that he had to lie there in his helpless state, without any one to speak to.

The sun was blazing in through the window, and the torn blind could not shut out the fierce rays; the boy's head was hot, he was very thirsty, and the heat was great in the small room. After a few minutes, Paul ran to the spring to fetch him a glass of cold fresh water, which he gave him to drink.

"How kind yon are to call and see me, Master Paul."

"No, I like to come, Charlie; do you find it very dull?"

"A bit lonely before you came in, but I don't mind now," and he smiled at Paul, who was standing near his bed.

A sight of his kind little friend seemed to help him to bear his pain better; he thought Paul was always trying to do something to cheer him, when he was home for the holidays. But the days were sadly weary when he was away at school. He had not always been a cripple, but when he was quite a child, he had fallen down on a slippery place in the street and hurt his back; and now he always had to lie in bed. He was gradually wasting away. The room was quite neat and clean, but there were the signs of poverty about, and there was only some dry bread, with a few cold potatoes, near him, so Paul felt glad he had given him his lunch.

"Do you feel any better, Charlie?" he asked, looking at the wasted hand which was lying outside the coverlid.

"Worser, I think, Master Paul; I shall be real glad when all this pain is over."

"You are bad to-day," was the boy's reply; "but you know people do get better sometimes, Charlie, after all."

Charlie shook his head.

There was a very patient look on his face, but the lesson of patience had been learned amid pain and disease.

Paul's eyes were full of thought as he watched him; he had never seen Charlie so ill before; he reminded him of his mother, when she used to tell him that she was waiting for God to send for her, and that the Lord Jesus was preparing a place for her in His home.

"Shall I tell you the verse mother used to like, Charlie?" He thought he looked just as white and weak as she did.

"Ay! Master Paul."

And the little fellow repeated very slowly, the text which has given comfort to so many sorrowful hearts; "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Mother said she liked to think about the rest, because she was always so tired."

The sick boy repeated the words again to himself.

"It was kind of Him to think of the heavy laden when He said 'Come,' because they need rest most of all."

"Of course they do, Charlie;" and then in a timid voice, Paul said, "You haven't been quite so dull since you knew that He loved you, have you, Charlie?"

A faint smile flitted over the thin white face.

"Not a quarter," was the quick reply; "the long hours have been a deal better to bear; but it was you taught me about Him, Master Paul."

Paul flushed at the words.

"I think He taught you Himself, Charlie," he said softly, "just as He taught me;" and with a quick good-bye and a bright little nod as he reached the door, he lifted the latch and let himself out into the fresh air again.

He chattered very fast to Mrs. Vincent when he returned, and after luncheon he spent a long time in Aleck's play-room; but in the midst of enjoying a ride on a rocking-horse, he suddenly remembered a question he wanted to ask, so he dismounted and ran down the stairs, and with a quiet tap at the drawing-room door, waited until he was bidden to enter. He never went into his uncle's room without knocking, and it had become a habit with him.

Mrs. Vincent was seated at her work near the open window, and she greeted Paul with a smile.

"Are you tired of play?" she asked as he stood by her side, "or do you want somebody to talk to?"

"Oh! no, I'm not tired, it's jolly up there," he said, "but I just remembered something I wanted to ask you, but, perhaps, I am in the way."

"No, indeed, you are not; Aleck never feels himself in my way, and neither must you; what is it, Paul?"

"Are you mother's sister?" he asked the question a little bluntly, but there was an earnest ring in his voice.

"No, dear, she and I were not related; but your father and Aleck's father were cousins; this is why Aleck calls you cousin."

Paul's face clouded a little and he did not speak.

"Why, dear boy, are you disappointed?"

"Well, a bit," he said, "because, don't you see, I thought if you were mother's sister, you would be near to me, and then I could call you 'auntie.'"

She interrupted him, taking the dark little face in her hands, and kissing the red cheeks. But you can call me Aunt Agnes, all the same; I should prefer it to Mrs. Vincent."

"Would you," he asked joyfully, "thank you ever so much, and you don't think Aleck would mind?"

"I am sure of it, and I will try and make myself as dear to you, darling, as though I were your mother's sister; sit down on this little stool at my feet, Paul, and tell me why your mother wrote the 'Royal Law' in your Testament."

"It was to help me not to forget it," he said, laying his hand in hers, "and—because of father. Do you know why he died?"

"Yes, darling; I know how he ministered to the poor fever-stricken people, until he laid down his own life; the law of love must have been very deep in his heart, Paul." Her eyes rested tenderly on the grave little countenance while she spoke.

"Yes, that is just what mother told me; she said almost those very words to me one day."

"And it helps you, dear, to remember; doesn't it?"

"I think so," he said, "I can't recollect father, but I love to hear about him; mother said he loved God and I know she wants me to try and keep the Royal Law as he did, but I can't do anything big like that."

"Of course, you can't, darling; but Jesus will bless the smallest effort to please Him.

"Do you know the hymn, 'We are but little children weak?'"

Paul's smiling face showed that he did.

"Will you tell me the last verse?"

And, in his clear sweet voice, Paul repeated the lines:—

"There's not a child so small and weak,
But has his little cross to take;
His little work of love and praise,
That he may do for Jesus' sake."

SCRIPTURE CHARACTER.

NO. I.

1. He was born in a city which had been given to a brave soldier.
2. He was very handsome.
3. A question in three words was asked him by a woman; it was precisely the same as that which once greeted a prophet at Bethlehem.
4. He made a great feast, with captains, princes and a priest among the guests.
5. A friend of his once said to a king: "Thou lovest thine enemies and hatest thy friends."
6. He made two requests of his relations, the first of which was granted.
7. One of his brothers was defeated by the army of a "man of war."
8. Another received a present from a queen.
9. The son of a priest brought him alarming news when he expected good tidings.
10. His father lived for a time with a prophet at Naioth.
11. He went to the tabernacle, but not to worship.
12. A prophet complained of his conduct.
13. He was killed by a "man of rest."
14. At the time of his death a prophecy was fulfilled, spoken when Samuel was a child.

L. T.