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Poetry.

LIFE BY THE CROSS.

Blest they who seek,
While in their youth,
With spirit meek,
The way of truth,
To them the sacred Scriptures now display,
Christ as the only true and living way;
His precious blood on Calvary was given
To make them heirs of endless bliss in heaven.
And e'en on earth the child of God can trace
The glorious blessing of his Saviour's grace.

For them he bore
His Father's frown;
For them he wore
The thorny crown;
Nailed to the cross,
Endured its pain,
That his life's loss,
Might be their gain.
Then haste to choose
That better part,
Nor dare refuse
The Lord thy heart.
Lest he declare,
"I know you not,"
And deep despair
Shall be your lot.

Now look to Jesus who on Calvary died,
And trust in him ALONE who there was crucified.

Religious.

For the Christian Messenger.

THE MAMMON OF UNRIGHTEOUSNESS.

ABSTRACT OF A SERMON, BY REV. C. TUPPER.

Preached in Tremont, Aylesford, Feb. 14, 1869, at the suggestion of a friend, and published at the request of the hearers, expressed by vote.

Text: "And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the Mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations," Luke xvi. 9.

Some portions of Scripture are easily understood, and others are obscure. As in the acquisition of human learning, people evidently ought to commence with the former class, by which the way of salvation and the path of duty are made very plain. But, since "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable," and that only can profit us which we understand, it is our duty and privilege, after attaining to the indispensable knowledge of the plainer parts, to seek for an understanding of those that are more obscure. Unquestionably the text is one of that class which require careful investigation and diligent study.

In our present attempt to derive from it instruction and benefit, it may be proper, in dependence on divine aid:—

I.—To investigate the import of the text.

II.—To notice some inferences deducible.

I.—Christ represents the unjust steward, who was about to be ejected from his stewardship, as resolving to exercise kindness towards his lord's debtors, by allowing them to give their obligations for less than they owed, in order that they might be thereby induced, after his ejection, to welcome him to their houses. His master commended him, not for the discharge of duty, but "because he had done wisely," (Ver. 1-3.) A parable is not usually intended to apply in all respects. In this case it seems designed to present to us the wisdom of making a liberal use, for the good of the needy, of what is committed to our trust. We shall not thereby defraud our Master in heaven.

Mammon is a Syriac word, which signifies riches. But the phrase rendered "mammon of unrighteousness" does not necessarily denote wealth unjustly obtained.—The Most High can not approve of the use of this in any way; for He says, "I hate robbery for burnt offering." As Gill, G. Campbell, and Parkhurst remark, it may denote deceitful [i. e. worldly] riches. So in verse 11th, the equivalent phrase "unrighteous mammon," obviously means the vain riches of this world, as opposed to the "true riches"—"the unsearchable riches of Christ."

A correct and full understanding of the text must necessarily be based on the principle of the mutual recognition of the saints

in heaven. No consistent or reasonable meaning can be assigned to it without the adoption of this view; which is plainly taught in other portions of Scripture. Our Lord speaks of believers as "sitting down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven," (Matth. viii. 11.) in a manner clearly indicating that these patriarchs will be made known to them. On the mount of transfiguration, when Moses and Elijah were conversing with Christ, Peter, James, and John knew who they were, (Matth. xvii. 1-4.) The rich man recognized Lazarus after their decease, though he was himself "in hell," and the other "afar off" in Paradise, (Luke xvi. 23.)—Paul says to the Corinthian Christians, "Ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus," (2 Cor. i. 14.) From this it is evident that he anticipated with pleasure meeting these disciples when their happy spirits would be reunited with their glorified bodies at Christ's coming. The same idea is plainly expressed in the second Epistle to the Thessalonians, (ii. 19.) "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?" So also the same Apostle exhorting the Philippians to "shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life," adds, that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not . . . labored in vain," (Phil. ii. 15, 16.) He was assured that he would know when all accounts will be adjusted, who were saved at Philippi through his labors, aided by the efforts of the early converts there. (See also 2 Sam. xii. 23.)

As it is not requisite to enlarge farther on a point so plain, we may now proceed to the enquiry. What is meant by the expression, "When ye fail?" At the close of this present life our stewardship will cease. Moreover, the word (*eklepto*), rendered "fail," sometimes denotes failing by death. In the account of the decease of Abraham, (Genesis xxv. 8.) the Hebrew word rendered "Gave up the ghost," is in the Septuagint translated by the Greek word *eklepto*.

The purport of the text, when examined and compared with other parts of Scripture, appears to be, "Make such liberal use of your earthly riches, which are deceitful and vain, by relieving the needy, that when your stewardship shall cease, and you fail by death, the recipients of your bounty may welcome you into everlasting habitations in heaven."

That Jesus was inculcating beneficence toward the needy, is evident from two additional considerations presented in the context. We are informed, (ver. 14th.) that "The Pharisees, who were covetous, heard all these things, and they derided him."—It is manifest that they understood Him in this sense; and their covetous hearts were filled with opposition, which was evinced by derision. Our Lord proceeded to enforce the duty which he had been enjoining by adducing a lamentable instance of the effect resulting from the neglect of it, (Ver. 19-26.) Poor Lazarus, for whom the rich man might have provided all that would tend to promote his comfort, without the slightest inconvenience to himself, appears to have been but scantily supplied even with crumbs falling from the table, as he was desiring to be fed with them, died first, and entered into rest. When the rich man died in his sins, and "in hell lifted his eyes," he was reminded (ver. 25.) of his cruel neglect. Had he, in the exercise of an operative faith, generously provided for the comfort of the beggar, doubtless Lazarus would have met him at the gates of Paradise, to welcome him, with open arms and a grateful heart, into the mansions of endless glory. The fearful contrast to this, here presented by Christ, furnishes an impressive caution against the adoption of a course adverse to that enjoined by Him.

Having considered the import of the text we may now proceed to notice:—

II.—Some inferences deducible.

1. The relieving of the needy, "especially those who are of the household of faith," is a very important duty. The in-

culcating of this was evidently the principal object of our Lord in the discourse recorded in Luke xvi. In the text he urged it from a consideration of the rich blessings that will result to those who wisely and cheerfully perform it. He also enjoins it in many other places, as, "Give to him that asketh thee—give to the poor," &c., (Matth. v. 42, xix. 21. Luke vi. 38, xi. 41.) Though Jesus and His apostles were poor, as to this world's goods, yet, besides relieving the needy by miracle, they were unquestionably accustomed to give to the poor; for when He said to Judas, "That thou doest do quickly," some of the disciples thought—of course because it was a customary thing—that He bade him "Give something to the poor," (John xiii. 27-29.)

Throughout the sacred Scriptures, in passages too numerous to be cited here, this duty is enjoined. It is not only incumbent on the wealthy to give, but also on those whose means are quite limited. Our Lord commended the poor widow for giving "all her living," (Mark xii. 41-44.) So Paul, commending the liberality of the Churches of Macedonia toward the destitute in other Churches, even while they were themselves in "deep poverty," remarks, "If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not," (2 Cor. viii. 1-4, 12.) It was not enjoined as a duty to provide for the indolent; for it was laid down as a rule, "That if any would not work, neither should he eat;" (2 Thes. iii. 10.) but believers were required to support the weak," (1 Thes. v. 14.—Acts xx. 35.)

2. The discharge of this duty is peculiarly acceptable to God. It must not be imagined for a moment that the salvation of the soul is to be obtained by acts of kindness to the needy. Paul has cautioned us against this dangerous error by declaring, in express terms, "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor . . . and have not charity"—the love of God received through faith in Christ—"it profiteth me nothing," (1 Cor. xiii. 3.) No fact is stated more plainly in Scripture than that salvation is wholly of grace, in all respects. (See Rom. iv. 16, xi. 6. Eph. ii. 4-9.)—But the same inspired writer who imparts these instructions, says also, "To do good and to communicate, forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased;" and again, "God loveth a cheerful giver," (Heb. xiii. 16, vi. 10. 2 Cor. ix. 7.)

3. Liberality to the needy is attended with special blessings. Thus it is written, "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that which withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself." And also, "He that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth to the Lord; and that which he hath given will He pay him again," (Prov. xi. 24, 25, xix. 17.) The Psalmist says, "Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. . . . He shall be blessed upon the earth. . . . The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing," (Ps. xli. 1-3.)

"The Lord Jesus said, It is more blessed to give than to receive, (Acts xx. 35.) Hence it appears that the recipients of kindness do indeed enjoy a blessing; but that of the donors is greater. How consoling it must have been to Job, when reduced to poverty, and in deep affliction and unjustly charged with oppressing the needy, to have it in his power to reply in truth, "The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me; and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. . . . I was a father to the poor: and the cause which I knew not I searched out!" (Job xxix. 13-16.)

But, besides the Divine blessing bestowed on those who freely devote a good portion of their substance to acts of beneficence toward the destitute, and the consolation enjoyed by them in this life, they will "be recompensed at the resurrection of the just," (Luke xiv. 13, 14.) In that great day, when the bodies of the saints, fashioned like Christ's glorious body, will be reunited with their happy spirits, the ador-

able Redeemer will recognize every act of benevolence done to His needy disciples, (who had previously welcomed their benefactors into "everlasting mansions," as done to himself, (Matth. xxv. 31-40. John v. 28, 29.)

4. As it is an important duty, and a special privilege, literally to feed the needy, it is still more so to communicate the bread of life to those who are perishing through want of it. With reference to the communicating of spiritual blessings our Lord says, "Freely ye have received, freely give." The command to "preach the gospel to every creature," though addressed primarily to the Apostles, is evidently incumbent, in its measure, on all the disciples of Christ. They are required to "hold forth the word of life," and to be "always abounding in the work of the Lord."—(Phil. ii. 15, 16. 1 Cor. xv. 58.) So the first Christians, when "scattered abroad" by persecution, went every where preaching the word," (Acts viii. 4.) As "they that turn many to righteousness will shine as the stars for ever and ever," so the humblest individual who is the means of the conversion of one sinner, will thence have abundant cause of present and future joy, (Dan. xii. 3. Jas. v. 19, 20.) In connection with constant personal efforts, and earnest prayers for the spread and success of the gospel, we should freely impart of our worldly substance to aid in sending it to the destitute. When Paul was laboring in Thessalonica, where there were not then believers able to support him, the Christians in Philippi repeatedly sent him supplies; and he tells them that in so doing they "had done well," (Phil. iv. 14, 16.) So John commends the "well beloved Gaius" for aiding the servants of Christ who "for His name's sake went forth taking nothing of the Gentiles," (3 John 5-8.) If we cannot go and labor for Jesus and for souls in distant lands, it is obviously our duty and privilege to sustain those that do labor there. In this case both parties are fellow workers; and they may anticipate a joyful meeting in heaven with the happy converts brought to the knowledge of Christ through their joint labors.

In conclusion may be noticed the folly of those who are so intent on accumulating wealth, either for their own pleasure, or to enrich their children, that they refuse or neglect to engage in works of beneficence. If it be for the latter object, it may be reasonably expected that the riches laid up for their children will be the means as is often the case, of involving them in strife, litigation, and helpless indigence, and of rendering them dissipated, and wretched both in time and eternity. If for the former, they have great reason to fear, that their final portion will be with the "rich man in torments." How lamentable will be their condition when they shall see the patriarchs and prophets, with the poor and despised disciples of Christ, in the kingdom of God, while they themselves are cast out into outer darkness, where "there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth!" (Matth. viii. 12, xxv. 41-46. Luke xiii. 28, 29. James v. 1-3.)

In pleasing contrast to these doleful results of covetousness, they do indeed act "wisely" who, in the exercise of a grateful and operative faith in the Divine Redeemer, and from sincere love to Him, His cause, and His people, as good stewards communicate freely of their worldly substance for objects of beneficence, and so promote the welfare of their fellow men, and the best interests of their own families, and through grace "lay up for themselves treasure in heaven," where they will joyfully meet the happy recipients of their bounty, who will gladly welcome them to the abodes of everlasting bliss.

WEALTH seems to be like a serpent, which will twist around the hand and bite; unless one knows how to lay hold of it without danger, by the point of the tail.—And riches, wriggling either in an experienced or an inexperienced grasp, are dexterous at adhering and biting; unless one, despising them, use them skilfully, so as to crush the creature by the charm of the Word, and himself escape unscathed.