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that to reach it he must look away from himself, that he was but an instrument to do the work, in the hand of a Master with Whom all things are possible. Amiel failed because "rather than be less" he "cared not to be at all." He could not bring himself to step towards his ideal of completeness—up the toilsome round after round of the ladder—he must reach the summit at a bound, or stay below altogether. The ceaseless introspection of his nature would not allow of struggles which led onward and upward; they left him ever at the place where they found him, discouraged from further effort. The actual intensity of his inner life took away his capacity for work, and the want of ambition in his character explains how it was that he received no stimulus from within. His love of duty and of God kept him pure, true, and sympathetic, but to us he must, alas! stand rather as a warning than as an example; to us who would gladly have looked to him for help along the difficult path of life, which he might so well have been able to give.

Some men must be the martyrs of thought that others may profit by their experience. But, despite its many scattered gems of thought, such a work as this is rather interesting, and sadly helpful to us as a record and illumination of the man himself, and of men of his fashion, than positively useful. In reading page upon page of weakness and of longing after the unattainable, we realize more and more that the restless turning over in our minds of our own insufficiency and wretchedness will never carry us forward towards our attainment of a high ideal. It is vigorous, honest action which ennobles a man, gives him influence over his fellows, and makes him a bulwark of strength for them to lean on. Because this was precisely what was lacking throughout Amiel's career—if career we may call it; therefore we are constrained with deep regret to write against his whole life the sad and terrible word—Failure!

ALBINIA BRODRICK.



ART. IV.—PROVERBS IV. 18.

"The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

THESE words are commonly thought to refer to the growing beauty of a good man's life. Casting about for some similitude in the rich storehouse of Nature, with which to compare it, the inspired writer bethinks him of the ever-brightening course of the sun, as he travels from his rising

till he has reached his meridian height. Like the early dawn, with a freshness, a purity, a charm, which are all its own, is the “beauty of holiness” in the new convert or the Christian child. But it is like it also in the future which awaits it, and in the promise which it contains. “It shineth more and more unto the perfect day.” Climbing slowly but surely “the steep ascent of heaven,” clouded sometimes yet pressing upwards through the cloud, and emerging from it with accumulated light, the sun pauses not on his onward way till he has reached “the steady day,” the unwavering glory of his noon-tide splendour, when he appears for a while to stand still in the midst of heaven. Such is the tenor of a good man’s life. The parable of Nature must be pursued no further. Unlike the sun, he hasteth not to go down; his “perfect day” is “steady” for ever. It is as endless as it is perfect. Or if it admits of change, it is of that change of which our Christian poet sings:

Then shall we see Thee as Thou art,
For ever fix’d in no unfruitful gaze,
But such as lifts the new-created heart,
Age after age, in worthier love and praise.¹

But true and profitable as the meaning thus elicited is, it may be doubted whether it is precisely that which the words were intended by their writer to convey. He is using the figure of a path or road to denote the course of life and conduct, throughout the whole paragraph in which this verse occurs.² In “the way of wisdom,” and in “the paths of uprightness,” into which his feet had early been led, he counsels his scholar to continue, assuring him of the safe and easy progress which will thus be secured. From the “path of the wicked” and “the way of evil men,” he earnestly dissuades him; for they who tread it are the slaves of a restless craving, an insatiable passion for mischief; and wickedness and violence becomes at length the business of their life, and the source of their maintenance. Recurring, in the verse under consideration, to “the path of the just,” he sets its growing brightness in sharp contrast against the darkness of the other path, which he had just depicted; and then concludes the paragraph with another verse, in which the true idea of that growing brightness is obviously suggested. “The way of the wicked,” so the verse runs, “is as darkness.” But why? Because of the moral turpitude which attaches to it? Because it rolls its black, polluted waters beneath mist and miasma, in contrast to the pure, sparkling, sunlit stream of a holy life? In truth it is so; but that is not the point

¹ “Christian Year.” Ascension Day.

² Verses 10-19.

which is now insisted on. “The way of the wicked is as darkness: *they know not at what they stumble.*” Obscurity, perplexity, uncertainty—it is in this that the darkness of their way, as here described, consists. However bright and inviting it may appear, as it is spread in tempting guise before unwary feet, the shadow of death will assuredly settle down upon it. A horror of great darkness will come upon those who pursue its course. They shall grope as the blind, unable to discern or avoid the perils which beset their path. For want of light they shall stumble and fall. Must not then the growing brightness of the contrasted path denote prominently, if not exclusively, in such a context, the increasing plainness with which it is discerned by him who treads it? Is it not the growth of knowledge and assurance that is mainly indicated? “If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world.” That is the path of the just. “But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.”¹ That is the way of the wicked.

The truth, then, which this verse, if this be its right interpretation, teaches, is that the way of righteousness is the way of knowledge in the things of God; that it is on the path of the just man that the clear light of certainty, as regards religious truth, rests. He it is who is delivered from the doubt and difficulty, the anxious questioning and distracting hesitation, which destroy the peace, and paralyze the energy, and imperil the safety of unholy men. And along with this it is further asserted here, that this certainty increases with increasing holiness; that peaceful trust and calm assurance and happy confidence are ever more and more the portion of the righteous, as they “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

The world is ever ready to reverse the order which is thus insisted on, and to read the lesson backward. Give us, say they, more light, more proof, more evidence, and then we will accept your facts and follow your precepts. Give us more knowledge, and we will render more obedience. Religion, as you represent it to us, is vague and shadowy and unreal. It lies in a region which is beyond the reach of human experience and investigation. It moves in the sphere of the unknown, and, as we now persuade ourselves, of the “unknowable.”

The objection is at once unreasonable and untrue. Every science has its conditions, which it is absolutely necessary to observe if we would study it with success. And this heavenly science, the knowledge of ourselves and of God, has its con-

¹ St. John xi. 9, 10.

ditions also. And the first of these is the condition which is pointed at in the assertion, that it is *the path of the just* that is as the shining light. It is the condition which the Founder of Christianity adopts, and commits to us as a primary law of His kingdom, when He says :

If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself. ¹

He that has the will to do, "that willeth to do" ² the will of God, shall have the knowledge of God. Obedience is "the organ of spiritual knowledge." ³ There is no other way by which it can be obtained. Ask humbly, reverently, submissively, What is the will of God for me? Ask so, "Who art Thou, Lord?" if as yet thou knowest Him not. Ask so, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" so soon as He reveals Himself to thee. Be honestly desirous to do the will of God, if only you may know it, and to know it in order that you may do it. Do it, so far as you already know it, and in doing you shall come to know it more and more. Each upward step shall win for thee a clearer light; each access of light shall cheer and guide thee to yet higher attainment.

It is not always "for lack of knowledge" that souls perish. It was not ignorance that proved the ruin of Saul, the first king of Israel. What picture could be more affecting or appalling than that which the closing scenes of his life present? By what example could the truth be more forcibly illustrated that "the way of the wicked is as darkness," and that "they know not at what they stumble"? Listen to his mournful cry of desolation and despair, on the eve of that last fatal battle: "I am sore distressed, for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more neither by prophets nor by dreams." ⁴ See that majestic form that once towered proudly above the assembled tribes, the very image of a king, now smitten prostrate to the earth, by the withering sentence of impending doom. See him a helpless fugitive, defeated, wounded, undone, dying by his own hand to escape the greater ignominy of the death that threatened him. How came he there? Saul, who once was among the Prophets; Saul, on whom the Spirit of God had come and changed him into another man. It was the dark path, not of ignorance but of disobedience, that conducted him to so dark an end. Clear and unmistakable was the judgment pronounced upon his error when first he quitted for it the way of life: "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-

¹ St. John vii. 17.

² Revised Version.

³ Robertson's "Sermons," vol. ii., serm. 8. ⁴ 1 Sam. xxviii. 15.

offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.¹

It was not ignorance that hurled Judas headlong down the steep descent of hell. It was not ignorance that rendered vacant the throne, from which he by transgression fell that he might go to his own place. It was moral delinquency, forsaking the path of the just, sin cherished and indulged, not intellectual error, that wrought his ruin.

It was not ignorance that imperilled the faith of the Corinthian Church, and inclined them to deny the resurrection of the dead. They affirmed, indeed, that it was so. Because there is no resurrection, and no life after death, therefore, so their logic ran, let us make the most of this life while it lasts. "Let us eat and drink, *for* to-morrow we die." "Nay," says the Apostle, "be not deceived;" there is a sophistry here: your reasoning is fallacious. It is not really your creed that regulates your life, but your life that shapes your creed. "Evil communications corrupt good manners." You have mingled with the heathen and learned their ways. You love your sin, therefore you would fain persuade yourselves that there is no day coming when all men shall rise again with their bodies, and shall give account of their own works. That is really your error. And what, then, is the remedy? More evidence, more proof, more knowledge? Nay, not these, but a return into the way of righteousness. "Awake to righteousness, and sin not."

It is the same truth which is taught in our great English allegory. When Christian and his companion, allured by the tempting path that opened before them, turned aside from the King's highway, "the way of holiness," then it was that they came within the grim portals of Doubting Castle, and fell under the cruel despotism of Giant Despair.

But if it thus be true that "the way of the wicked is as darkness," and "the path of the just" the only path of light and peace; it is also true that on that path, as it proceeds, a growing brightness rests. It "shineth more and more unto the perfect day." That increasing light is vouchsafed to those who live up to the light which they already possess, has always been a law of the Kingdom of Heaven. It was so at its first introduction. Simeon was "just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel," and to him in that path of justice and devoutness the longed-for consolation came. Cornelius had taken the first step out of darkness into light, by relinquishing heathenism when the pure truth of Judaism was offered for

¹ 1 Sam. xv. 22.

his acceptance. Walking by that light in the path of righteousness, fearing God with all his house, and giving much alms to the people of Israel, while he prayed to God always, he came to the full light of the Gospel of Christ. The treasurer of the Ethiopian Queen, in the ordinances of that far-off temple at Jerusalem, and in the study of the written Word, was seeking anxiously for greater light than he already possessed. And for him the veil was taken away in Christ, and the true light shone upon him as he went rejoicing on his homeward way. The Apostle of Light himself walked first by the light of Moses and the law, then rejoiced for a season in the greater light of him who was "the lamp that burneth and shineth,"¹ and so emerged finally into the perfect day of the Sun of Righteousness.

It was so then, and it is so still.

The traveller has missed his way, and wanders benighted on the lonely wold or the bleak hillside. His feet now sink in the treacherous morass, now tremble on the verge of the beetling precipice. Bewildered and dismayed, with exhausted strength and failing courage, he is fain to relinquish the hopeless struggle, and, for fear of death, to lay him down to die. Suddenly there darts upon his eyes a ray of light, faint indeed, and coming from afar, but, unlike those earth-born meteors which lured him to destruction, pure and calm as the dayspring, and shining with a steady and unwavering beam. And as he gazes upon it, and hope begins to revive in him beneath its gentle influence, a still small voice, that seems to travel down the track of that light, falls persuasive and reassuring upon his ear, and says, "I am the Light of the world ; he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Encouraged by that Voice, attracted by that Light, he nerves himself to fresh effort. Springing up, he plants his foot securely on the firm path which the guiding ray reveals to him. The first step only is at first made plain to him ; but in taking that, the next step opens up before him. Onward ever, step by step, the path itself still brightening, though cloud and mist sweep across it ever and anon, and impenetrable darkness surround it on every side ; the accents more clear, and the Presence felt more and more rejoiced in, though rebuke be sometimes mingled with invitation, and warning with encouragement, that Voice and that Light still lead him on. Onward ever do they lead him and ever upward, till at last they land him safely in the Home of Everlasting Light and Love, from which they proceeded ; till his feet are standing within the portals of that

¹ St. John v. 35. Revised Version.

City of which it written, "It hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the Light thereof." "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

T. T. PEROWNE.



ART. V.—NOTES OF A MISSION TOUR IN THE UNITED STATES.

MORE than sixteen years have passed away since the memorable "Twelve Days' Mission," held in London in the winter of 1869, inaugurated the work of parochial Missions in the Church of England, and, as with a trumpet-voice, heard all over the kingdom, called the attention of Churchmen to the importance and necessity of making from time to time special and well-organized efforts to rouse our sleeping millions from the lethargy of spiritual death. The results of that original effort, very imperfect as was its conduct, and very limited its immediate apparent effect, were such as to astonish even those who had hoped much from the enterprise. At first there was a great outcry against the movement, coming from most opposite quarters. Stout Protestants lustily inveighed against the thing as the last and cleverest stroke of Ritualistic Jesuitry. Strong Churchmen condemned it with equal warmth as an audacious attempt to introduce Methodism into the sober system of the Anglican Communion. It usually augurs well for a thing when extreme men of opposite parties advocate it, but it also augurs well for a thing when extreme men of opposite parties decry it; for men are usually much more likely to be right in what they affirm than in what they deny; and every good thing as it arises must pass through its *minority period*, in which it will meet with but scant respect from things established and mature amongst which it has dared to intrude, without humbly asking them to permit it to exist. Years must generally pass before it comes of age and is able to speak for itself, to the edification of those who contemned it.

But in spite of this double attack, the early Mission movement soon began to show signs of being an infant Hercules, quite capable of taking care of itself, and of dealing summarily with the snakes of slander and prejudice that were writhing everywhere around its cradle. A year had scarcely passed away before Missions, and frequently general Missions, were