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NOTE.—The Compiler will be grateful to friends who send corrections or additions. While the Index is proceeding, references will be given in another column on texts not yet reached, if application is made for them. If requested, other sources of information bearing upon texts or biblical subjects will also be pointed out. Any suggestion, whereby this department can be made of more practical value, will be heartily welcomed.

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The Stages of Christian Experience.

BY THE REV. GEORGE MATHESON, M.A., D.D.

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for everyone that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened."—MATT. vii. 7, 8.

THERE are three classes of minds in the religious world, three orders, into one or other of which all its votaries may be divided. The first may be called devotional minds—those who *ask* for God. They find their representative in John. They desire nothing so much as rest. They want just to lie on the bosom of the Christ unquestioning and unquestioned, to recline on the hilltop of contemplation far from the madding crowd, and commune with the Infinite Love unconscious of the strife below. The second class may be described as speculative minds—those who *seek* for God. They find their representative in Thomas. They are not in the least less earnest than the former, but they do not see their way so clearly to the contact with their object. How gladly would they, too, take the wings of a dove to fly away and be at rest, if only these wings were available to them. But between them and the blue vault of heaven there are the bars of a cage. They are imprisoned by intellectual difficulties. They see an obstacle interposed between their desire and its realisation, and they beat their wings frantically against the

bars and struggle to be free. There is a third class different from either of these, who by way of distinction may be called practical minds—those who knock at life's door. They find their representative in James. They have come to the conclusion that life is too short for sentiment, too short for speculation, too short for anything but action, that the one duty of man is to work while it is called day, and that the gospel of humanity is before all other things the gospel of service. Their watchword is "force," their ideal is Carlyle, their motto is "do," "do," "do"; they are the men who knock.

I have spoken of these as different types of mind. In truth, however, they are the stages of a single individual existence; every Christian life that would be perfected must pass in succession through each and all of them. We all begin with the devotional stage. Some of us can remember the intense fervour of our first communion. We stood upon the mountains and looked down upon the earth, and the inhabitants thereof were as grasshoppers. "What is this world to me?" we cried; "in a brief space it will be gone. Christ is coming; in a little while He will be here. A few short years, and this great scene of pageantry shall melt away. Its pleasures, its amusements, its avocations, its wars and rumours of war, its marriages and givings in marriage, its literature and commerce and art, shall vanish like