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The Great Text Commentary.

PSALM IV. 6.

'Many there be that say, Who will shew us any good?
Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.'

THIS Psalm must be taken with that which precedes it. The third and the fourth are the counterpart of each other. They are written in the same circumstances. The inscription at the head of the third Psalm belongs equally to the fourth. It is a Psalm of David when he fled from Absalom, his son, taking with him his wives and their children.

David had hurried forth from the palace with a brave band of six hundred men, bare-headed and bent in his great grief, whilst the people wept aloud beside him, exceeding sorrowful, just as a greater than David went, long after, across the brook Kedron and up the Mount of Olives. At such a time is it that these words are uttered, and amid such sorrows. About them lies the desert. They have but a little band of soldiers to protect them. The sun sinks behind the hills; the gloom gathers about them; and they stand under these Syrian stars dreading lest in the darkness Absalom with his army should burst upon them.

Fugitives in the lonely wilderness, they who yesterday had all the luxuries of the palace, to-night are without a bed to lie upon, or a tent to shelter them, or food to eat. Then rings the cheery confidence of David in these brave words: 'There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us. . . . I will both lay me down in peace and sleep, for Thou, Lord, only makest me to dwell in safety.[1]

I.

THE DESIRE OF THE MANY FOR GOOD.

1. THE MANY: what multitudes of thoughts cluster around these two words! The million-peopled city, the populous town, the wide-spread country, kingdoms, empires, continents, the world, all seem to issue forth, like armies from the hundred-gated Thebes, at the mention of those two words, 'the many.' Here we see the toiling peasant and his lordly squire, the artisan and the princely merchant, the courtier and the king, the young and the old, the learned and the unlearned, all gathered within the compass of a word.[2]

Many there be who say, Who will show us any good? Yes, we can find them everywhere. We may meet them in quiet and secluded villages, where the rose and honeysuckle climb about the porch, and we may find them in dense and noisy cities, where wealth accumulates and life moves like an impetuous stream. We may encounter them in the gardened suburb and in the reeking slum, among the rich and among the poor, among the learned and the unlearned, among the old and the young. 'Many there be,' a vast disillusioned company, who have tried many ministries and 'are nothing the better, but rather the worse.'[3]

Classical story, hovering about the borderland of the supernatural in one of her wildest yet most thoughtful moods, tells of a philosopher who, on some particular occasion, was admitted to a grand merry-making of the Celestials. After proper introduction, he was informed that among the noble and majestic forms around him, there was one, and only one, earth-born like himself. He was then asked whether, on looking at them simply blazing in all the pomp of royalty, he could pick out or identify his fellow-mortal? Contrary to expectation, there was not the slightest difficulty. Though enthroned among gods, and though like them he carried a sceptre, and wore golden sandals and a purple fillet, and talked and nodded as divinely and quaffed his nectar as imposingly as the bravest—the man was instantly and unmistakably detected *by the restlessness of his eye!* That has always struck me as a profoundly melancholy and yet a triumphantly suggestive allegory. It goes down to the very roots of our moral being. What a picture—that undying disquiet on one side, and that infinite repose on the other! 'Rest!' exclaimed Peter of Russia to his jaded soldiers, 'you will have rest enough in the grave!'[4]

On one of the rocky hills that rise from the plains of South India there is a sacred shrine which is daily frequented by devotees from all parts of the country. The worshippers climb the hill under the burning noon-day sun, and take part in many of the rites by means of which they are eagerly seeking for good. Among the many 'sacred things' which impress a Western visitor to this shrine there is one which has a pathetic significance. From the hillside juts a huge rock which is believed to possess the power of bestow-

[1] M. G. Pearse, *The Gentleness of Jesus*, 17.

[2] C. H. Spurgeon, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, liv. 385.

[3] J. H. Jowett, in *Examiner*, February 15, 1906, 156.

[4] H. Griffith, in *Christian World Pulpit*, x. 262.

ing good on those who touch it. On the side of the rock there is a part which has been smoothed out by the touch of the fingers of the thousands of worshippers who have sought good in this way. The hollow in the hard stone is a silent witness to the fact that 'There be many that say, Who will show us any good?'

THE PULLEY.

When God at first made man,
Having a glasse of blessings standing by,
'Let us,' said He, 'poure on him all we can;
Let the world's riches, which dispersèd lie,
Contract into a span.'

So strength first made a way,
Then beautie flow'd, then wisdome, honour, pleasure;
When almost all was out, God made a stay,
Perceiving that, alone of all His treasure,
Rest in the bottome lay.

'For if I should,' said He,
'Bestow this jewell also on My creature,
He would adore My gifts in stead of Me,
And rest in Nature, not the God of Nature;
So both should losers be.

'Yet let him keep the rest,
But keep them with repining restlessnesse;
Let him be rich and wearie, that at least,
If goodnesse leade him not, yet wearinesse
May toss him to My breast.'

GEORGE HERBERT.

2. ANY GOOD. For the sages of all the great Oriental nations the question, What is the Supreme Good? had an all-absorbing interest, and the answers which they gave to it mightily affected not only their own lives, but the lives of millions of their countrymen. In all the Greek schools of philosophy, at least after the revolution in Greek thought which we associate with the name of Socrates, the great and dividing question in dispute among them was just this, What is the chief good? Plato and Aristotle, Epicurus and Zeno, widely as they differ in other respects, agree as to the importance to be assigned to the inquiry regarding the end of action, the end in itself, the ultimate good. Even some of the most thorough of the Greek sceptics, although sceptical as to almost all other things, were not sceptical either as to life having a chief end or as to what the end was, but recommended doubt or suspension of judgment as to other things as a means of attaining that mental peace, that imperturbability, that freedom from passion and care, which they considered to be the chief good.

But it is not the Chief Good that the many desire. They have not attained to that. Their cry is, Who will show us *any* good? For they are weary of the struggle, and they ask, What profit is in it? And there are moments in all our lives when we are disposed to say, 'Is it worth while all this strife and toil?' We look around us on the busy mass of men and women, creatures of a day, pushing, treading down the weak in their eagerness, each with his own and her own petty object in view. And we ask ourselves:

'What pleasure can we have
To war with evil? Is there any peace
In ever climbing up the climbing wave?
All things have rest, and ripen toward the grave
In silence: ripen, fall and cease:
Give us long rest, or death, dark death, or dreamful ease.'

And we use the Psalmist's words, 'Who will show us any good?'

Consider the balmy air and exquisite hues of Nature where men are not, and the poisoned waters and blackened skies where we are crowded. Look at the weariness and tedium of the few children of luxury, the monotony and privations of the countless sons of toil, at our gorgeous day-dreams and our sordid facts, our winged aspirations and paltry achievements, the high hopes which countless men remember, who are to-day mean, cynical, and self-indulgent; reckon up the frightful statistics of drink, of license, of lunacy, and of crime; gaze upon the haggard faces, the dim eyes, the wrinkled foreheads, and the bent and feeble frames which people every city in Christendom. What are we to say to all this? What kind of world is this we live in? and what words are these which inspiration has put into the lips of the wisest man—'All the rivers run to the sea, yet the sea is not full; . . . all things are full of weariness; . . . the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing; . . . behold, all is vanity, and a snatching at the wind.'

Uncertain all on earth save this,
Who wins must lose, who lives must die;
All trodden out into the dark
Alike, all vanity.[1]

[1] G. A. Chadwick, *Pilate's Gift*, 133.

The great hero of modern times, whom we used to see in our youth, the great Duke of Wellington, as one has described him, 'like an old eagle of the gods grown silver with service,' the 'hero of a hundred fights, who never lost an English gun,' did he not tell us there is little or nothing in life worth living for, but we can all of us go straight forward and do our duty? He, too, felt like all other splendid conquerors, and like his great rival Napoleon, who said that life was simply hateful to him—he, too, felt the emptiness and disappointment of the highest earthly glory.[1]

II.

Some mistaken Ways of seeking Good.

What sort of good must the good we aim at be? Must it not be one than which there can be none higher or better; than which there can be none above or beyond; none which will satisfy human nature either more or longer? In other words, it cannot but be, if it be at all, a good which will completely meet every real want of every human being; which will correspond to every faculty and affection of human nature in every individual; which will never cease to satisfy the human soul; which will yield alike to the humblest and to the highest of the children of men a peace and happiness, a strength and joy, which nothing else can equal. Whatever cannot satisfy all men at all times, in all true respects and in all right ways, cannot be the good each one of you ought above all things to seek for.

Now, if what has just been said is correct, it is obvious that there are large classes of things in which we cannot reasonably hope to find the highest good.

1. *Material Good Things.* Let us look first at what is, perhaps, the largest class of the kind, including, as it does, everything that refers to our bodily life—all the pleasures of sense, all the beauties and bounties of nature, all merely worldly advantages. Is the chief good to be found there?

Man cannot be satisfied with material goods. He cannot be made happy according to the measure of his possession of them. It is told of Prince Bismarck that when urged to pass a certain Act on the ground that it would make dissatisfied workmen contented, he replied that he had never known a contented millionaire. Carlyle had previously declared his belief that the whole world would not satisfy the soul of one poor shoeblack, but that if he got it he would grumble over its defects, and want another. There is no observant physician or clergyman, no man who has been brought much into close contact with diverse classes of his fellow-creatures, who will not tell you that he has found most unhappy people among those who were richest in the world's goods, and wonderfully contented people among those who were exceedingly poor.

I ask you to pass with me down Hyde Park in the season when that long string of carriages is gathered there. I have only done it two or three times in the sixteen years I have been with you, but I solemnly aver (and you can trust your minister's word), and I challenge your judgment as I affirm, that never have I seen a thousand people, if they are there, look so abjectly miserable as the people that sit in their carriages, and are said to represent 'high life,' when they have been through part of a London season. Any man can see for himself that such people, instead of knowing satisfaction in the right sense of the word, are worse off than the slaves bound to the chariot wheels of a conqueror, who feel that they may be going to bondage or death. They look like, what I believe they are, the very impersonation of misery and distress.[2]

The poor body can never be satisfied here upon earth—never, never. Please to understand this. It can be brought into subjection; it can be made to act like a machine in obedience to the will, to the mind, to the purposes, and to the love of God, but it never can be satisfied, because God has ordained that the body, so long as we remain in this mortal flesh, shall be absolutely subject to corruption. 'Flesh and blood *cannot* inherit the Kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.' Therefore the poor body must always be wanting something, and to want something is to be unsatisfied; therefore my body can never be satisfied. I may satiate it by overfilling it, but that brings nothing but dissatisfaction. The body waits for the adoption, to wit, its redemption. 'In this *tabernacle* we groan, being burdened,' waiting for 'our *house* which is from heaven.'[3]

A good painter is sometimes a good preacher, and I have looked on the work of a master's hand and learned a lesson more forcibly through the eye than I might have done through the ear. Noel Paton's 'Pursuit of Pleasure' is just such a preaching picture. There floats in mid-air, almost within reach of men, a beautiful phantom. It is the goddess of pleasure—luring by her tempting

[1] F. W. Farrar, in *Christian World Pulpit*, xliii. 82.

[2] H. W. Webb-Peploe, *Calls to Holiness*, 56.

[3] H. W. Webb-Peploe, *ibid.* 68.

smiles a multitude of all sorts and conditions of men to follow where she leads. She seems to point each of her enchanted followers to whatever he wants, and to hold out the hope of his gaining it: success, if he thirsts for it, amusement, wealth, fame, luxury, glory, and whatever may administer to carnal delight. The crowds eagerly follow her, and still keep on following. But in their eager looks, in their delirium of desire, you read the fact that Pleasure is but a lying goddess, who deceives her votaries with fair promises of happiness, which are never realized. Their very pursuit of happiness reveals the fact that they are not happy. There is the miser—in vain he clutches his wealth, he presses on with eager thirst for more. The warrior—in vain he wears the insignia of martial glory, his thirst is yet insatiate, he presses on for more. The man of business—in vain does he prosper in his calling, he covets yet more prosperity. The giddy, frivolous seeker of mere amusement—in vain is she crowned with garlands of roses, the flowers are already fading. And those humble sons of toil, on the outskirts of the crowd, who cannot pursue the phantom as do others, how eagerly they gaze after her; and the aged also follow, with covetous eyes, where their feet cannot go.[1]

The story is told of a young man who exclaimed, 'If I were lucky enough to call this estate my own, I should then indeed be a happy fellow!' 'And then?' said his friend. 'Why, then, I would pull down the old place, and build a grand mansion in its stead; I would keep the best stocked cellar of wine, the finest horses and dogs in the country.' 'And then?' 'Then I would hunt, and ride, and smoke, and drink, and dance, and keep open house, and enjoy life to the full.' 'And then?' 'Why, then, I suppose, like other people, I should grow old, and not care so much for these things.' 'And then?' 'Why, then, I suppose I should leave all these pleasant things, and well—yes, I should die.' 'And then?' 'Oh, have done with your "and thens." Good-bye.' Some years after he met his acquaintance again, and said, 'God bless you. I owe my happiness to you.' 'How is that?' 'To the two words in season you addressed to me some years ago—"*And then.*" They opened my eyes to the folly of my low ambition, to the emptiness and vanity of all mean and selfish pleasures and earthly aims, which entirely leave out of sight God and eternity.'[2]

2. *Intellectual Good Things.* We cannot find, then, the chief good among the objects of sense. Shall we find it within the sphere of mere intellect—in the acquisition of knowledge, the pursuit of truth, the culture of our mental faculties?

Now, undoubtedly, those who do seek for it here seek it in a higher and purer, and therefore likelier, region than those whose souls remain always among material things. They are certainly in less danger of utterly degrading themselves. But will they find what they seek? Is the chief good really where they look for it? I answer, No. And for such reasons as the following:—

(1) A very small portion of our race has adequate opportunities for mental culture, and a still smaller portion of it possesses the faculties required for success in intellectual pursuits. There are few so circumstanced as to be able to spend their lives in the search after truth or in the attainment of artistic skill. Originality of thought is a very rare endowment. It requires an amount of labour of which few are capable to become even merely learned in any considerable department of knowledge, and in the course of the labour, how often must a mass of rubbish be gathered which is just as worthless as cartloads of material dross?

(2) Again, it is easily possible, and very common, greatly to exaggerate the satisfaction to be found in intellectual pursuits. There are eulogies of these pursuits which might lead you to suppose that students of all kinds, scientists and artists, must lead quite Elysian lives. Most certainly such is not the case. Students in general find it difficult enough to secure an ordinary pass or an average position through a process of preparation far from wholly delectable. And to reach greater eminence means, not less assuredly, more pain rather than more pleasure. I doubt if Mr. Ruskin found as much enjoyment in penning those wonderful and beautiful sentences which only he could write, as his readers have found in them. We may be certain that he would have been the first to condemn himself if they had not cost him more toil and trouble than his readers imagined. No thoroughly honest intellectual work can fail to be largely painful work. Those who engage in it must expect to live laborious days, and perhaps to spend sleepless nights, and to find the greater portion of their time as devoid of agreeable emotion, as painful and fatiguing, as little satisfying as, say, even a life of business.

(3) But further, and this is perhaps the most decisive consideration, the intellect is not what is highest in human nature, nor is its culture an end in itself. The intellect is entitled to take precedence of the body. To be intelligent, thoughtful, wise, is better than to be handsome, strong, or wealthy. But you cannot be truly intelligent, thoughtful, and wise, without acknowledging that to be good, pure-hearted, generous, self-denying, faithful to the obligations of duty, is nobler

[1] J. B. French, in *Christian World Pulpit*, iii. 31.
[2] H. Adler, *Anglo-Jewish Memories*, 161.

and better than to have learning, or science, or culture. A man may, indeed, be perfectly justified in devoting himself mainly to the prosecution of scientific researches, or to the writing of books; but it can only be on the ground that he is honestly convinced that he can thereby do more good, benefit his fellow-men, and glorify God more, than if he, with his special aptitudes and acquisitions, employed himself otherwise. This is equivalent to saying that just as the body is inferior to the intellect, and bodily pleasure to mental intelligence, so is intellect itself inferior to conscience, and all its endowments and acquisitions, all learning, science, and culture, to virtue and duty.

When Pitt was Prime Minister with an irresistible majority, he replied to a friend who wished him a happy year: 'It has need to be more so than the last, for in that I cannot remember a single happy day.' When the star of Napoleon was blazing in the very zenith, before the empire had become either a defeat or a satiety, he complained that the silver veil through which we look out upon life in youth thickens as we proceed, until all things are well-nigh black. The verdict of the poets is known. Even the sane and brave-hearted Wordsworth confesses a misgiving, a fear that

Poets in their youth begin with gladness,
But thereof comes in the end despondency and madness.[1]

III.

Satisfaction found in God.

Where shall we find the answer to the cry, Who will show us any good? Not in the objects of mere sense or of mere intellect, not even in devotion to the welfare of man if divorced from the service of God. Not in these can the human heart completely rest, but only in what will fully respond to its deepest want, its central and most comprehensive affection, its very life; only in an unalterable and undying, a pure, holy, and all-controlling love, the love of a Person; of the holiest and best Person the human heart can love, and who will not fail to return its love or to give it the consciousness thereof; the love of God, the Author of all things, and our gracious Heavenly Father; of God, who is Love, Infinite Love. 'Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.'

'Play us a tune on the fiddle, father.'

'Ay, do, husband. That helps you often in your writing.'

Lysimachus brought him the fiddle, and Triplet essayed a merry tune, but it came out so doleful, that he shook his head, and laid down the instrument. Music must be in the heart, or it will come out of the fingers—notes, not music.

'No,' said he; 'let us be serious and finish this comedy slap off. Perhaps it hitches because I forgot to invoke the comic muse. She must be a black-hearted jade, if she doesn't come with merry notions to a poor devil, starving in the midst of his hungry little ones.'

'We are past help from heathen goddesses,' said the woman. 'We must pray to Heaven to look down upon us and our children.'

The man looked up with a very bad expression on his countenance.

'You forget,' said he sullenly, 'our street is very narrow, and the opposite houses are very high.'

'James!'

'How can Heaven be expected to see what honest folk endure in so dark a hole as this?' cried the man fiercely.

'James,' said the woman, with fear and sorrow, 'what words are these?'

The man rose, and flung his pen upon the floor.

'Have we given honesty a fair trial—yes or no?'

'No!' said the woman, without a moment's hesitation; 'not till we die, as we have lived. Heaven is higher than the sky; children,' said she, lest perchance her husband's words should have harmed their young souls—'the sky is above the earth, and Heaven is higher than the sky; and Heaven is just.'[2]

1. Let us mark the initial word, 'Lord.' There is no beating about the bush, no perilous circumlocution; the Psalmist at once, in the opening word of his response, unfolds a forgotten world, and brings to view the ultimate secret of a satisfied life. There is something almost approaching shock in the abrupt introduction of the sacred name. There is no preparatory expedient leading to the unveiling. It is sheer and immediate! I think that the abruptness itself would be part of the saving ministry. It suddenly brought upon the field the forgotten Factor. Here is a man given up to the making of money. His eyes are concentrated upon the doings of a muckrake, and while he is bent in labour, he is weary and irritable in spirit. Dissatisfaction dogs his steps, and the more he gains the greater his hunger. Or here is a man who is given up to the pursuit of fame. He tacks and trims in every current, and he assiduously seeks to gain public favour. He gains it and loses it, and his heart sinks into the abyss of a soaking cynicism. Or take a man who is given up to any form of lust, and who, because of the vicious

[1] G. A. Chadwick, *Pilate's Gift*, 131.

[2] Charles Reade, *Peg Woffington*, chap. viii. 'Temple Classics' edition, p. 112.

tyranny, shrivels up in spirit and becomes morally pinched and lean. If we could listen to the secret cries of all these disappointed souls, we should hear again the wail of the olden days, 'Who will show us any good?' And the only effective response to the bitter cry would be immediately to introduce upon the field of their vision the forgotten Presence of the Almighty. 'Lord!' We lose much by dealing with any meaner term and upon any lower plane. All secondary expedients will be ineffective; the only solution of the depressing problem is to lift the eyes of the vanquished unto the hills.[1]

Not long ago, in the Atlantic, a passenger-ship caught fire. Perhaps there is no more awful moment, no scene more wildly heart-rending, than that which occurs when there seems no choice save of death in the scorching flame or in the heaving waters. But instantly, without a tremor in his accents, without a pause in his swift masterful decision, the voice of the captain rang across the tumult, inspiring into the crew a manly decision and a manly discipline, and into the terrified passengers confidence and hope. The heroic soul of that one man so prevailed over the terror and the tumult that he brought the ship to haven without the loss of a single life, though the ship became little better than a charred house; and when he was asked whence he derived that sovereign calm in the hour of peril, he replied in those words: 'The night before the disaster I had been reading the Bible in my cabin, and I came upon these words: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour." Those words,' he said, 'flashed strongly into my memory when the cry of "Fire!" arose, and I did not feel one single throb of terror nor, one instant, loss of hope.'[2]

2. This satisfaction is called the uplifting of the light of God's countenance. It was common among the Hebrews to speak of a person's countenance as low or fallen when he was grieved or angry, and as lifted up when he was pleased and happy. We hold down our face when we are dejected, we hold it up when we are glad. So, also, a radiant or shining countenance stands opposed to a dark or gloomy one. The lights of the countenance, the eyes, sparkle in the one case and are dull in the other. The two emblems are combined in the request to God to lift up the light of His countenance on us. The thought is, 'Look on us with a happy, shining face—with the happy, shining face with which Thou didst look on our Elder Brother, when Thy voice was heard from the clouds, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."'

The secret of all restful and contented life is not found in the pursuit of a thing, but in glorious fellowship with a Person. It is in the favour and communion of the Almighty that we find the secret of 'good.' When the Lord lets the 'light of His countenance' fall upon us, that is to say, when He countenances our doings, and gives us the assurance of His approval, life is never wanting in strength and assurance and rest. When 'the light of His countenance' shines upon my mind, the shadows of fear and anxiety and error flee away. When 'the light of His countenance' falls upon my heart, the evil things that thrive in the darkness are scared by the shining. If one lifts up a stone in a meadow and lets in the light, the vermin which worked in the darkness are seen speeding away. When 'the light of His countenance' falls upon my work, my daily task is transfigured, and even difficulties, steep and precipitous, lose their ominous aspect, and appear like mountain summits in the sunshine. The Psalmist therefore offers this prayer, the answer to which will bring the satisfaction for which the suppliants plead. In the gift of Divine light and favour we obtain the secret of an assured peace.

'Shall I stay with you all the night?' said the brother of Bishop Ridley to him on the morning before his death at the stake. 'No, brother,' said the good bishop; 'I mean to lie down and to sleep as gently as ever I did'; and so the good bishop slept, oblivious of the fiery death which awaited him a few hours thence. These men did not ask, 'Who will show us any good?' They had found good. They had 'seen the King in His beauty'; He had lifted up 'the light of His countenance upon them.'

3. *This Good is near.*—The good of God's uplifted countenance is universally accessible to such as seek it in earnest. Did it require much worldly wealth, or distinguished worldly honour, comparatively few could ever hope to reach it. Happily, it depends on nothing outside of us; but on walking humbly with God, and striving to live in fellowship with the All-loving Father, who is always nearer to us than the air we breathe, or the blood which runs in our veins, and is ever ready to smile upon and to bless us! It is heart-sickness from which we are suffering; and for it

[1] J. H. Jowett, in *Examiner*, February 15, 1906, 156.
[2] F. W. Farrar, in *Christian World Pulpit*, xliii. 81.

there is no cure except in the consciousness of living under God's Eye-shine! That is to health of soul, all and far more than all, sunlight is to vegetation.

I read the other day an Eastern legend that in an interesting way illustrates this. In a long-past age there dwelt on the bank of the river Indus a farmer named El Hafed. He had fertile grain fields and a productive orchard, and dwelt contentedly with his wife and family. But one day a Persian priest happened to come that way, and, with Oriental hospitality, was invited to stay as a guest. In the course of his conversation with El Hafed, he told him of diamonds that might be found in a distant land, and how they were so precious that one of them, no bigger than his thumb, was of far greater worth than all his possessions, houses, and lands put together. El Hafed on hearing this grew discontented, and resolved to set out in search of the treasure. He sold his farm to a neighbour, left his wife and family, and wandered away into the west, through Syria and Egypt and into Europe, seeking for diamond fields. But his search was fruitless; and at last, when he had got to the furthest verge of the Mediterranean, weary and worn with travel, he sank down and died. After this, the Persian priest, journeying once more by the banks of the Indus, came again to the house in which El Hafed had lived, and was received as a guest by the neighbour who had bought it. Having received refreshments, he was resting on a couch, and, glancing idly round the room, his attention was arrested by a brilliant flash of light proceeding from a stone that lay on a shelf near him. He started up, exclaiming, 'Has El Hafed then returned, bringing with him this precious diamond, which may purchase the whole country-side?' 'No,' replied his host, 'I found that stone in the brook that runs at the foot of the garden; I did not know it was a diamond.' The priest and his entertainer rushed down to the brook, and, turning over the sands, found other stones even more precious than the one that had been already secured. And thus, as the legend in its closing verses—for it is in poetic form—says:

El Hafed's garden held within its bound
The wealth he sought afar, but never found.[1]

4. *This Good is satisfying.* What do we mean when we say that we are 'satisfied'? It is a remarkable fact that, the more simple the idea of a word, the more difficult it is to define it accurately; so much so that when you ask even a philosopher or a logician his explanation of a word in our own English tongue which we all use and understand, he appears aghast and staggered, and he will say, 'Satisfied? why, it means—satisfied.' Yes, brethren, it is just that, it means SATISFIED; do not make it less or more to-day. I stood by the bedside of one of my congregation a day or two ago, and I showed her the motto text as she lay there in the hospital, where she has gone for a very serious operation, and, as I showed her the text, she said, 'Oh, thank God, that is just for me.' 'Satisfied,' she said, 'just wanting nothing more'; and I said, 'Thank you, you have given me the definition I needed; just wanting nothing more.'

A lady connected with this congregation, when I visited her on her dying bed, said, 'Why, sir, I have been very, very rich.' She was a lady, as I knew, who had no very great income really; and I stared, and for a moment could not think what she meant. 'What is it?' I said. 'Why, sir,' she said, 'my Father has never allowed me to go out without two footmen walking behind me, never.' I said, 'Indeed, will you tell me their names?' 'Goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life—and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.'[2]

[1] J. Aitchison, *The Children's Own*, 25.
[2] H. W. Webb-Peploe, *Calls to Holiness*, 70.

A Note on Ezekiel xxxii. 17-32.

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One of the most striking and yet most characteristic passages of Ezekiel is this mock wailing for the fate of Egypt. The graphic if somewhat gruesome picture of Egypt falling into Sheol and there beholding the fallen nations of the world is a singular example of this great poet's imaginative genius.

It is usual and natural enough to compare it with Is 14[9-17], but both in their method of treatment and in their subject-matter the two passages are utterly different. In Is 14 the ghosts of extinct peoples rise to show respect to their once over-lord, and are astonished to find that the great king of Babylon is reduced to the same fate as themselves. 'Art thou also become weak as we?' (v.[10]). Here it is not the effect on the ghosts of the nations when they see the king of Egypt that is thought of, but on Pharaoh, when he beholds them