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## In the Study.

### THE CHRISTIAN YEAR.

#### Epiphany.

'The glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.'—Is 60'.

1. THERE is no great word of which we have lost the use so entirely as this word 'glory.' We never employ it in conversation, we seem to have no occasion to employ it. We never come across it in our reading, unless it be in a rare poetical phrase, such as 'the glory of the sunset.' We do not hear it even from the pulpit except in the quotation of some text of the Bible.

And yet it is a very great word. In the Bible it is used with remarkable frequency and apparently in a vast variety of meanings. 'Nevertheless,' as the author of the article in the *DICTIONARY OF CHRIST AND THE GOSPELS* says, 'the underlying thought is simpler than would appear.' And he adds, 'The glory of God is His essential and unchanging Godhead as revealed to man.'

2. Mark the words 'as revealed.' The glory of God is His nature *when it is seen*. Our Lord speaks of 'the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory' (Mt 24<sup>80</sup>). When He was upon the earth His essential nature was not known. He greatly desired that it should be known, for in that lay all the hope for men. And so He prayed the Father, and said, 'Glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.' And He knew that the day was coming when it would be known—when, as He said, He would come on the clouds with power and great glory.

3. What is the 'essential nature' of God? It is goodness. We must not hesitate to use that word. We have not altogether lost the use of it yet, as we have lost the use of 'glory.' And we must not lose it. It is the very word that God Himself used when He spoke to Moses. Moses said, 'Shew me, I pray thee, thy glory.' And God answered, 'I will make all my goodness pass before thee' (Ex 33<sup>18, 19</sup>). His goodness is His essential nature, and when His goodness is *seen*, that is His glory.

4. We may see His goodness in many ways. We may see it in the earth, if we have eyes to see. When Isaiah had his vision of God's holiness, he was told that it does not require a supernatural event to see the holiness, which is another name

for the goodness, of God. The Seraphim sang their song of adoration, and said, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the fulness of the whole earth is his glory.' Our English versions translate the words of the Seraphim, 'The whole earth is full of his glory,' which is quite true, but not an accurate translation. And the accurate translation is better: 'The fulness of the whole earth is his glory.' For this earth of ours is a world on which He has lavished the riches of His nature. It is a full earth. At the return of every season we scatter a few seeds on the soil of it, and it brings forth 'some an hundred fold.' Test its inexhaustibleness, He seems to say. It is full of the goodness of God. And when you see how full it is, you see the glory of God. Its fulness is His glory.

(1) Do you remember the very first occasion on which the glory of the Lord is spoken of in the Bible? It is when the Israelites, on their way through that great and terrible wilderness, complained that they had not food enough. 'And Moses and Aaron said unto all the children of Israel, At even, then ye shall know that the Lord hath brought you out from the land of Egypt: and in the morning, then ye shall see the glory of the Lord' (Ex 16<sup>6</sup>). Well, what happened in the morning? In the morning the people rose betimes, and looked out, and behold upon the face of the wilderness lay a small round thing, small as the hoar frost on the ground. It was the manna.

Where had it come from? Some say it came from a small creeping plant that maintains a precarious existence in that very wilderness, or did so once, and that there was no miracle about it. But what do they mean by a miracle? If it was 'an edible lichen,' and if the same edible lichen is found in Arabia to this day, what then? The fulness of the whole earth is His glory. On that morning, and not before, the Israelites saw how possible it was for God, and how easy, to say to the earth, Give forth some of thy fulness that they may see how good I am. And the earth gave forth of its fulness in the form of 'a small edible lichen,' till all the Israelites ate and were filled.

(2) One day a great company of the descendants of those Israelites were gathered in another desert place, listening to the wonderful words of the Son of God. The day wore away as they listened and wondered. When evening was at hand His disciples would have sent them away that they might go into the villages and buy themselves bread, 'for we are here in a desert place.' But He said, 'Give ye them to eat.' And very soon they were all satisfying themselves with bread, five hundred of them, besides women and children, as they sat in batches, like beds of flowers, among the green grass. Where had the bread come from? It came from 'the fulness of the earth.' The five loaves which they had were capable in His hands of being turned into as many loaves as were needed, to the great joy and satisfaction of that astonished

multitude, just as the 'precious seed' which the sower goes forth with in the spring-time becomes in the autumn great sheaves of joy and thankfulness. And they who had eyes to see said afterwards, 'We beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father.'

5. But the fulness of the whole earth covers other things besides loaves of bread. When God promised to make all His goodness pass before Moses, and thus show him His glory, He added, 'And I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.' Grace and mercy belong to God's goodness, and when we come upon Him in the exercise of them we see His glory.

Now we come upon God in the exercise of grace and mercy best of all in the Cross of Jesus Christ. For that Cross is His mercy and His grace in active evident exercise. Or, to take mercy and grace and express them in one word, we find in the Cross of Christ the activity of God's self-sacrificing love. We do not reach the height of the glory of God till we have reached the love of God. Is not this His nature? 'God is love.' Let us not drop goodness, but let us see to it that goodness takes exercise to keep itself warm. Let us say that the goodness of God is the love of God; and when we find the loving goodness of God going forth to men in the Cross of Christ, let us say, with the joyful surprise of the early disciples, 'We beheld his glory.'

#### First Sunday after Epiphany.

'And Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.'—Lk 2<sup>52</sup>.

From the time when Jesus at the age of twelve visited Jerusalem with His parents, there is an interval of eighteen years until the date of His baptism, during which we know next to nothing of His life. Our text informs us that He returned to Nazareth from the holy city, and was subject to His parents; from another place, where He is called 'the carpenter,' we learn that He followed that employment; from another still, we learn that His manner was on the Sabbath day to read the Scriptures in the synagogue. These are all the particulars left on record for us belonging to this period of a life more glorious, more eventful, than any other since the world began.

But Archbishop Trench has observed that the

reserve, the sacred silence of the Word is richer, fuller of meaning, more teaching than the narrative of ordinary history. In the spirit of that remark let us inquire, as far as can be done, what was the use of the early life of our Lord, and how it bore upon the later periods of His public ministry? Can we not make it strongly probable that a divine wisdom presided over this silent interval, laid up in it treasures of thought and character for His future years, and fitted Him in the stillness and lowliness of the Galilean village for the highest office that man ever filled?

Are there any who do not believe in the normal human development of the Lord Jesus? To such persons He is a simple miracle of existence; one who knew, when a child, whatever He knew when a man; one in whom there was no growth nor advance; always and equally full of God; and by consequence hiding His knowledge from the first, until the occasion came for making use of it. But this is a very false and unscriptural view. It is inconsistent with our text, which tells us that Jesus *increased in wisdom and in favour with God*. It would, in fact, make the man Jesus a mere appearance, a vehicle for concealing omniscience. It thus presents Him to us, no longer as growing and rising according to the law of incorrupt manhood, but as a prodigy, having nothing in common with man in the movements of His intellect, and therefore incapable of exercising the feelings of a human finite soul. That thus in fact the human in Christ must be destroyed is apparent. Such a view of Him gets no support from the gospel, nor from ancient faith.<sup>1</sup>

Yet when we say that our Saviour's childhood and youth were a growth or progress from lower to higher degrees of knowledge and wisdom, we do not therefore impute to Him error; for whilst simple ignorance is no sin in any child or man—unless it be of those things which all men are bound to know—error is more than this—it is a deliberate fault of judgment, and therefore sin; and in Him was no sin. On the other hand, growth in wisdom and knowledge is a kind of perfection; it is the perfection of the creature to increase in the knowledge of the Creator, to be changed from glory to glory, to advance more and more to the likeness of the unchangeable goodness.<sup>2</sup>

\* What, then, were the influences under which He grew in wisdom and was prepared for His ministry?

1. First and foremost let us place the mother and the home. These are the paramount forces in the training of a child. The mother, and not the schoolmistress, is by nature itself made the teacher of the human race. From our mothers—or from those who act a mother's part—we learn, each of us, to speak, and to walk, and to love. By her

<sup>1</sup> T. D. Woolsey, *The Religion of the Present and the Future*, 11.

<sup>2</sup> W. R. Churton, *Theological Papers and Sermons*, 179.

the first and lasting lessons are taught of obedience, of punctuality, of patience, and of trust. And, therefore, when God sent forth His Son into the world, to be born of woman, one woman was predestined for that unique honour who was pre-eminent in every feature of the saintly character. So much at least we may say, after reading what Scripture tells us of the sayings and doings of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Of the foster-father, Joseph, Scripture tells us less; we are left to infer that he was early removed by death. But in one emphatic word we are plainly told that Joseph, the husband, was a *righteous* man. The home, therefore, where our Saviour was born and nurtured was a home of simple piety towards God and man, a household where pure and gentle thoughts, honest words and deeds, generous and holy feelings lent their natural fragrance to the daily life.

2. But, again, 'Jesus increased in wisdom,' through intercourse with Nature. His eyes were continually open to the glories of nature round Him, and His mind was peculiarly sensitive to the truths that nature taught. The wholesome air of the hills and fields of Galilee breathes ever in His utterance. Nor shall we wonder at it when we recall the fact that most of the life of Jesus was passed amid scenes of beauty. Nazareth itself, no doubt, was a mean enough place—a cluster of flat-roofed dwellings, steep streets, and crooked cross-ways, huddled together in an amphitheatre of chalky hills. Yet spreading all round were lands of such rich fertility that an old-time traveller likened them to Paradise. Here were green gardens and luxuriant cornfields. Here was abundance of olives and fig-trees and vines. Here, too, were streams, and variegated flowers, and herbs of sweet perfume. Above and behind the town there rose a hill, which Jesus in His youth must many a time have climbed. And from its summit one might gaze on a magnificent panorama of plain and vine-clad valley, of mountain-peak and river gorge, and the blue of a distant sea. For thirty years it was the prospect of our Lord. Upon that hill, swept by refreshing breezes—the grass beneath, the azure heights above—the Saviour felt His soul expand in sympathy with nature, in which He saw reflected—oh, so clearly—the loving-kindness of His Father's heart.

3. The silent years at Nazareth enabled Him to meditate long and deeply on the Scriptures. A striking characteristic of our Lord, from the first

moment of His public ministry onward, is His reverence for and familiarity with the Scriptures. In the wilderness the tempter is rebuked by sentences from the divine word. At the Last Supper, the words which institute the rite, take their colouring from certain most important passages in the prophets. His words of agony on the cross are in the language of the 22nd Psalm. And when the risen Lord appeared to His disciples, He 'opened their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures.'

4. Jesus, no doubt, attended regularly the ordinary worship of the synagogue, as we see Him in this day's Gospel beginning at the first opportunity to attend the great festivals in Jerusalem. The synagogue and its influences were, no doubt, closely connected with His growth in wisdom. Week by week for more than twenty years He heard the Old Testament explained during the service of God. All the tender and softening associations which belong to our memories of the religious worship of our youth belonged also to Jesus. We carry these memories with us through manhood. They tell insensibly upon our life. Great is their power to warn us in temptation, to guard us from the first approach of ill, to remind us of innocence, to keep before us an ideal of goodness, to prevent us from being wholly enslaved by the world, the flesh, and the devil.

5. Once more, 'Jesus increased in wisdom' through intercourse with men and women. Our Lord was not denied such means of self-education as companionship affords. He never ~~was~~ a solitary. He loved, indeed, the quietness of the deserts and the hills, but He also loved the breathing crowds, the eager populations of the villages and towns, the busy life of the streets. At fountain and in market-place He mingled with the people, and with searching, questioning gaze He studied them. The farmer, the slave, the officer of justice, the dealer in pearls on the sea, the long-robed Pharisee and the anxious housewife, the labourer waiting to be hired and the criminal dragging along his heavy cross—all the types He knew. And was it not fitting that He who became pre-eminently the Friend of man should first Himself have gained experience of man?

6. Lastly, He wrought with His hands. 'Is not this the carpenter?' The hands that made the heavens made ploughs and household furniture. The hands that were nailed to the cross themselves

wrought in wood. The hands that hold the sceptre of universal power plied the implements of the carpenter's trade. He worked. If you had taken Christ's hand in yours you would have found it rough with labour; and He has been depicted as a young stalwart carpenter, raising Himself for a moment from His exhausting toil at the bench; and while His feet stand deep in shavings, His figure casts behind Him the shadow of a cross. The first Adam worked upon the hard soil to till it; the second Adam laboured to keep His mother when the good Joseph died. Every morning awoke Him to toil.

It is often thought to add to a man's power among men, if he is born in a high place, and commands the respect of mankind as well by his ancestry and station, as by what he is. But the power to act upon men, so far as it depends on feeling with them, and being felt with by them, is generally abridged by position above the major part of mankind: at least, however high a man rises above his fellows, there should be a chord of common feeling, never forgotten and never extinguished sympathies between him and them, which early life on their level had kindled or strengthened. Hence it is that those monarchs who have risen from the people can know them better, and come closer to their admiration and their hearts, than such as have inherited the throne.<sup>1</sup>

### Second Sunday after Epiphany.

'Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.'—Ro 12<sup>15</sup>.

1. The power of sympathy, the genuine fellow-feeling with others is a mighty power in the world. It is the most attractive, the most truly winning of all the gifts that man can have. Regarded merely as an accomplishment, it would rank very highly, and many who would scorn to cultivate the real virtue think it incumbent on themselves as gentlemen and men of the world to learn at least to assume its appearance in society.

How many of us can look back to some times of our life when a cheering word has helped us through clouds of difficulties, when a kindly look has made the world seem brighter; surely when we think what we have gained at times from the sympathy of another, we have cause to wonder that so small a gift is ever withheld, that our fellow-men are ever left without that cup of cold water, which it costs the giver such little trouble to bring.<sup>2</sup>

2. But is it needful for the apostle to write in this wise to professed Christians? Surely the very fact that they are Christians implies that their

<sup>1</sup> T. D. Woolsey, *The Religion of the Present and the Future*, 15.

<sup>2</sup> M. Creighton, *The Claims of the Common Life*, 21.

sympathies are rich and ample, stretching across the whole field of man's complex life! And yet it is true to-day, as in the days of the apostle, that there are many Christians whose sympathies are poverty-stricken and scanty. No mourner would ever dream of going to them for sympathetic tears; no child would ever leap toward them for sympathetic joy.

There is a type of piety which is hard, and dry, and severe; it has no gracious tears, it never breaks into winning smiles; it neither laughs nor cries; it is unresponsive. And this type of piety is always in peril of growing harder with the years. It shrinks and becomes more and more exclusive, more and more self-centred, more and more self-contained. The few feelers which it originally possessed are drawn in one by one, or they become benumbed and atrophied; and in later years the entire life is lived in most unbeautiful detachment.<sup>3</sup>

3. Yet the duty of sympathy is bound up with the whole Christian conception of life. It does not depend on the authority of this or that 'text'; it springs directly from our intimate relation to mankind revealed to us in Christ. A Christian without sympathy is like fire without light and heat, a moral impossibility. We say nothing of the *measure* of sympathy of which each individual is capable; that often depends upon the constitution of the individual. Some are deficient in power of imagination; it is difficult for them to realize the experiences, whether joyful or sorrowful, of others; but such persons find the same difficulty in recalling and realizing anew their own experiences in the past. Some, again, feel less acutely than others, are less excitable, and are consequently less easily moved, either by their own joys and sorrows or by those of others. Perhaps the standard of capacity is here in our hand. Do we share the joys and sorrows of others, not perhaps as vividly and intensely as we should feel them were they our own, but as vividly and intensely as a recent similar experience of our own would affect us? But if we have *no* sympathy at all with others, then we are falling short of our duty, we are deficient in the marks of a healthy spiritual life. 'Bear ye one another's burdens,' said the apostle, 'and so fulfil the law of Christ.' 'He that loveth God,' says another apostle, 'let him love his brother also.'

We must learn from experience—our own experience and the experience of other men—how much God trusts to the ministry of human sympathy for the restoration and healing

<sup>3</sup> J. H. Jowett, in *The British Congregationalist*, Feb. 21, 1907, p. 180.

of broken, wounded souls. Every miracle of repair that sympathy works is His call to us to suffer with them that suffer, to weep with them that weep. 'When Christian had travelled in this disconsolate condition some considerable time, he thought he heard the voice of a man, as going before him, saying, "Though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I will fear none ill, for thou art with me." Then was he glad, because he gathered from thence that some who feared God were in this valley as well as himself.' That is what sympathy can do for suffering; it is a light in the dark throat of the pass, the voice of a friend in the solitude that wasteth at noonday.<sup>1</sup>

4. The word sympathy is too commonly used only for feeling with the grief of others, as though that were the only occasion to call out our hearts. No, here as in all parts of human nature there must be no one-sided development, he who would do real good to his fellows must not be content with serving only the hospitals of human souls, he must not reserve his tenderness only for woe, or part with his kindness only to tears. Does thy brother need thy help on the bed of sickness or in the moments when his heart is wrung by agony, more than he does when the laugh is loud around him and high spirits are rising higher, and excitement is beginning to affect his moral balance? Surely then, too, the kindly look of a true friend, the gentle warning of a trusted companion, is as much needed as in any other emergency of his life.

Joy sympathy is of finer substance than sorrow sympathy. There are many who are touched by another's sorrows who are quite unmoved by his joys. They can 'cloud over' at the story of his grief; they do not shine at the recital of his triumphs. They can play at funerals; they have no taste for weddings. They can moan, but they cannot sing. Their joy-bell is very rusty and creaky, while their passing-bell is in excellent order. All this means that the joy in human life is enormously impoverished. We do not go out of ourselves; we stay too much at home. We have no splendid correspondences with our fellows, and we do not warm ourselves at their fires. We just dig down into our own hearts for our joy, or we cultivate a little garden patch of our own affairs, and we don't seek our delight in a wider public good. Our quest is confined to self, and does not cover our brother. And so our joy is not 'full.'<sup>2</sup>

### Third Sunday after Epiphany.

'And it shall come to pass that, before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.'—Is 65<sup>24</sup>.

That is God's promise in regard to prayer. Is it our experience? Have we found that we had

<sup>1</sup> G. Jackson, *Memoranda Paulina*, 171.

<sup>2</sup> J. H. Jowett, in *The British Congregationalist*, Feb. 21, 1907, p. 180.

scarcely uttered our request when it was granted? We have not. And the reason lies, not in God, and not always in the kind of request that we make. It nearly always lies in ourselves. Not what we ask but what we are—that determines God's silence.

Look at Christ on earth. Three times He had requests made to Him, and each time He refused to answer. The men were His judges—Caiaphas, Pilate, Herod. Why did He not answer them?

1. Take Pilate first. Pilate was an irreligious man. Once when some disturbance took place among certain Galileans in the Temple, Pilate sent soldiers right into the Temple, who slew some of the men there, and their blood mingled with their sacrifices. Only an irreligious man could have done that.

But he was superstitious, as all irreligious men are. It is the way human nature takes its revenge. For we are made for God, and if we refuse to worship Him we are sure to worship some of His creatures. One day, while Pilate was examining Jesus, a message came from his wife: 'Have thou nothing to do with that righteous man; for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.' Think of a judge sitting on the bench influenced in his judgment by a message like that! But Pilate's wife knew Pilate. A little later the Jews warned Pilate that Jesus called Himself a King. Pilate smiled. But when they said that He made Himself the Son of God, Pilate 'was the more afraid; and he entered into the palace again, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? *But Jesus gave him no answer.*'

2. Take Caiaphas next. Unlike Pilate, Caiaphas was a religious man. He was the religious Head of the most religious people that the world has ever seen. As High Priest he entered into the Holy of Holies, with the blood of sprinkling, which he sprinkled on the mercy-seat, for his own sins and for the sins of the people. As he returned the people waited for him and he blessed them in the name of Jehovah.

But Caiaphas was a hypocrite. That is to say, his religion had no influence on his life. It was all on the outside: it never affected his will. He was selfish, and all the show of religiousness which he had to go through did not make him one whit less selfish.

One day news was brought to him that a man had been raised from the dead by Jesus a few miles

from Jerusalem. Caiaphas called together the Council. As they debated what was to be done— for there was some danger that the people would take Jesus and make Him their King, and then the Romans would hold Caiaphas and the Council responsible for the rebellion—Caiaphas rose and said, 'Ye know nothing at all, nor do ye take account that it is expedient for you that one man should die.' And from that time they watched until they got their opportunity.

When Jesus was brought before Caiaphas, he had already resolved to condemn Him to death, and his witnesses were at hand. But they did not agree well, and Caiaphas took the matter into his own hands. He 'stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee? *But he held his peace, and answered nothing.*'

3. Take Herod last. Unlike Pilate, Herod was a religious man, and unlike Caiaphas he was really a religious man. All the Herods had an interest in religion. It is doubtful if they would have been able to keep their thrones but for that, for they were not Jews at all, but Edomites. This Herod, called Antipas, had clearly a genuine interest in religion, though no doubt it was a religion that we should not much appreciate. He heard that a great preacher was in his neighbourhood, John the Baptist. He invited him to his palace and gave him a chapel to preach in. He went often himself to hear him, and we are told that 'he did many things' which John bade him do—a good test of a hearer's sincerity.

There was one thing, however, which he would not do. He was guilty of a sin, and he would not give it up. He was living with his brother Philip's wife. And because he would not give up that sin Herod lost his interest in religion and all the joy of doing things for God. It was a gross sin, but it does not take a gross sin to destroy a man's religious life. A little sin will do it if he persists in it. The day was not far off when Herod had to give an order to the executioner to take off the head of the preacher whom he had often heard with so much pleasure.

By and by Herod went up to Jerusalem to the Passover. It was the Passover to which Jesus had gone up to die. As He was being tried by Pilate some one remarked that he belonged to Galilee, of which Herod was king. Pilate jumped at the relief. He sent Him across to Herod for trial.

Herod was glad when he heard that Jesus was coming. He had been anxious for a long time to see Him. When he first heard of Him, he had said a very strange thing. He said, 'It is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead.' No doubt he often regretted his rash speech; but a man's conscience is sure, sooner or later, to make a fool of him, if he outrages it.

But now Jesus was coming to him. Herod hoped to hear Him speak. Perhaps he might again thrill under His words as he had done under the preaching of John the Baptist. 'And he questioned him in many words; *but he answered him nothing.*'

### Virginibus Puerisque..

#### I.

NEW YEAR 1919.

Cared for.

'And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not.'  
—Is 42<sup>10</sup>.

THERE were quite a number of young folks in the night train from London on the first Friday of August. They seemed to be nearly all asleep. One little girl woke up with a start about six o'clock in the morning. She could see nothing but what seemed to her great hills all round about. 'Oh, mother,' she cried, 'how have we come here? Was the driver awake all the time? And the guard? And the man who punches the tickets? Everything is so different. Those hills look as if people could build a whole new, big city like London upon them. You could climb up to heaven by them; couldn't you, Mummie?' While the little girl had been sleeping, quite a company of people—the driver, the guard, and the stoker—had been awake and working, so that she and all the other children might have a safe journey. Mothers too had been on the watch most of the time. Even if they did go to sleep for a few minutes, they often woke up to tuck in the wraps about their little ones.

The passing of these years from 1914 till now has been for you boys and girls just like a long night journey. Although for the greater part of the time you felt quite comfortable, now and then there came ugly jolts which you did not like; they brought you unpleasant nightmares. But somehow you always managed to fall asleep again. Now, on this New Year's Sunday of 1919, you are wide awake. Are you not? 'How changed things

ate,' you said that week in early November: 'The nights are no longer dark, boys send up fireworks and nobody finds fault with them. Will it always be so?'

1. God has indeed been very good to you boys and girls of this country in letting you dream away what have been years of sorrow and anxiety to many. Think of it; all the time there were dear ones fighting, even giving their lives that you might be led into the light and peace of this New Year. It was not possible for the Belgian children, and many of the boys and girls of France, to forget things as it was for you. They were frightened always. But to-day they welcome 1919 with you. You can scarcely grasp what peace means to them. They are amazed as they strain their eyes and look first to one side and then to another. It is as if they looked out on a great tract of country where not only new cities but a new world might be built.

There is a novel by a writer called Mark Rutherford. It is called *The Revolution in Tanner's Lane*. He tells of how the boys of a certain tiny hamlet would, on a holiday, trudge the three dusty miles down the lane from the village to the coach road and back again just for the delight of reading the wondrous words 'To LONDON,' 'To YORK,' on the finger-post at the end of the lane. It was a glance into something great beyond speech to the boys of Cowfold, just as it was to the little girl when she saw the Scottish hills from the railway train. Or, better still, one is reminded of the historic occasion described by Keats in one of his Sonnets. Some of you must have read it at school. He is writing of what he felt when he first looked into the translation of Homer made by an English poet called Chapman:

Then felt I like some watcher of the skies  
When a new planet swims into his ken;  
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes  
He star'd at the Pacific—and all his men  
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise—  
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

2. But neither you nor the little French and Belgian children must remain standing silent in wonder. To-day, you are hand in hand not only with them but with your sisters and brothers of Serbia, Italy, America, our own Canada, Australia, and other countries. It is for you to make up your minds to get ready to do your share in the making

of the new world in which we trust peace is at last to reign. It is a big prospect. You each have a part to play. And God will help you to do it aright if you ask Him. Standing on the threshold of the wonderful New Year 1919 resolve that with God's help you will live to carry out what your fathers and brothers have fought and given their lives for. Thinking of how you were protected during those sad years brought to my mind part of a little poem I read not long ago. Remember the soldiers as you listen.

I build a strong tower for the Children, the  
Children,  
With moat and portcullis I keep it still,  
The foe clangs without, but within it the  
Children  
Sleep soundly and sweetly till cock crow shrill.

I wage a holy war for the Children, the Children,  
My hand against the world that they may live,  
I am cunning and crafty as the fox for her  
children,  
Wise as the serpent lest the Children grieve.

Unless the Lord build it, the house for the  
Children,  
Unless He be with me my labour's vain,  
He has thought it, and planned it, the fold for  
the Children,  
Where the lambs are folded without fear or  
stain.

I fight the holy fight for the Children, the  
Children,  
The Sons of God, glorious, sit down at my  
board,  
Though foes hem us in, shall I fear for the  
Children,  
Fighting the strong fight in the Name of the  
Lord?

'I will bring the blind by a way that they knew  
not; I will lead them in paths that they have not  
known: I will make darkness light before them,  
and crooked things straight. These things will I  
do unto them, and not forsake them.' It was God  
Himself who led on the soldier boys, and took  
care of them.

## II.

### The Banner of Victory.

'In the name of our God we will set up our banners.'—  
Ps 20<sup>b</sup>.

On the day the Armistice was signed by  
Germany, I walked down the streets of one of our



big cities, and what do you think I saw?—Well, just what you might have seen in any of the cities or towns of England that day—crowds of boys and girls shouting and singing and waving flags. Most of the people I met were smiling, but the boys and girls were the happiest of all as they waved their banners of victory. It was the greatest day in their lives.

Now, boys and girls, what you did that day I want you to do always. I want you always to carry a Banner of Victory, and the other name of that Banner is the Banner of Righteousness.

The Psalm from which our text is taken might be called the National Anthem of Israel. It used to be sung before the Israelites went out to battle. Now the Israelites were God's chosen people. When they fought they felt that it was God's battles they were fighting. So when they went forth to battle it was in His name they set up their banners, and then they felt sure of victory.

Now the Banner of Righteousness has God's name on it, and that means two things. It means first that *we are fighting for Him*, and second that *He is fighting for us*.

1. It means that *we are fighting for Him*. All those who fight for right within and without are fighting for God. But why should we fight for right? I want to give you three reasons.

(1) The first is that any one who is not to be on the side of right is to be quite out of it. It is going to be the fashion, as it never was before, to champion right and justice. But that is a poor reason. I will give you a better.

(2) And that is that *we owe it to the men who laid down their lives for us*. They died for us and for the cause of righteousness, but they left their work unfinished. I don't suppose there is a boy here who hasn't regretted that he wasn't old enough to go and fight. But boys, there is something for you to do too. You can live for the cause they died for. You can take up the task they laid down. You can fill the blank—you and you alone. Will you do it? Will you stand for all that is brave, and true, and honourable, and pure?

(3) That brings me to the third reason—*because the country, the world, is looking to the boys and girls to build it up again*. And you can never have a good world without good people in it.

Boys and girls, have you realized how tremendous it is to be alive to-day, how stupendous it is just to

be a boy or a girl? I would give a gold mine to be a boy or a girl just now. You are standing not only at the beginning of a New Year, but at the beginning of a new era, and what sort of era it is going to be depends largely upon you. What kind of world are you going to make, boys and girls? We are waiting to see?

2. But there is one thing we must not forget, for if we forget it our Banner of Victory may turn into a Banner of Defeat. If God's name is on our banner then it means that *He is fighting for us*. He is fighting for us when we are fighting for Him, and that means that we are under His protection and can suffer no harm.

Once during a time of martial law in Havana there was a street row and a man was shot. Every one ran away except one Englishman who had nothing to do with the row. As he was on the spot he was arrested. Somebody was found to swear that he was guilty, and he was sentenced to be shot the following morning. Now news of what had happened came to the ears of the British Consul, and the next day he went to the place of execution and claimed the man as a British subject. The officer in command of the firing party showed his orders and said he could not release his prisoner. Then the Consul asked permission to shake hands with the condemned man before he was shot. This the officer granted, and the Consul walked up, drew a Union Jack out of his pocket and threw it round the Englishman. 'Now,' he said, 'shoot if you dare!' The officer could not shoot through the flag without insulting the British nation, so he applied for instructions to the Governor, and the prisoner's innocence was soon proved.

There is a verse in the Song of Songs which contains these words, 'His banner over me was love.' If God's love is all round us and over us then no enemy can really harm us. We may bear the scars of many a tough fight, but we shall win through in the end.

### III.

'The onyx stone.'—Gn 2<sup>12</sup>.

How many precious stones do you know? Count and see. I expect all of you know a diamond and a ruby, an emerald and a sapphire, an amethyst and a turquoise. That makes six. How many precious stones do you think the Bible knows? Nineteen! And if we add what we may call 'the precious stones of the sea,' the

pearl and the coral, that makes the list total twenty-one.

You will find most of these precious stones in three great lists. The first list is in the twenty-eighth chapter of the Book of Exodus, and it is repeated in the thirty-ninth chapter. That list is a description of the twelve jewels which Aaron the first Jewish high priest wore on his breastplate. There were four rows of stones, three in each row, and each stone had the name of a tribe engraved on it. When Aaron went into the Holy Place to intercede with God for the people he put on this wonderful breastplate. He carried, as it were, the names of the tribes on his heart when he entered the presence of God. And as the light of the Holy Place fell on the twelve jewels they flashed and glowed as if they were living.

The second list you will find in the twenty-eighth chapter of Ezekiel; the stones mentioned there are those worn by the king of Tyre. There are nine of them, and you will notice that they are all stones that were mentioned in the first list, though the order is different. Between the time of the first list and the second, nine hundred years had passed. Seven hundred years after the second list a third list appeared. You will find it in the twenty-first chapter of Revelation. The stones spoken of there are the twelve foundation-stones of the New Jerusalem, the City of God which is to be, and which John the Apostle saw in a vision. If you read over that list you will notice that eight of the stones we have already met, and four are strangers. The four new stones have names which look hard to spell and difficult to pronounce. Try them. Chalcedony, Sardonyx, Chrysolite, Chrysoprase.

Besides these three lists you will find the names of jewels scattered through many pages of the Bible. You see the Jews were an Eastern people, and Eastern nations set greater store by gems than we do. You have only to look at the picture of an Indian Prince with his magnificent strings of pearls and his jewelled sword and his turban clasped with an enormous emerald—you have only to look at him to see how much jewels mean to those in the East. An Eastern counts them his most cherished possession. Instead of putting his money in the bank he buys jewels. He thinks of them as living. He believes that they bring to their wearer health, wealth, happiness, strength, long life, and fame. He fondly hopes that they

will keep away from him evil and misfortune. He even imagines they will wash away sin.

We don't go so far as our Eastern brothers, but still we too love jewels. We admire their wonderful colour and their fascinating sparkle, and we like to hear the many stories that are told of them. Let us see if they have any special message to give to us.

We are not going to take any of the lists we have mentioned, but we are going to make up a list of our own—a stone for each month. Perhaps you may have heard people talking about their birth-stone. They were going back to an idea which the old Romans had that every month of the year had its own precious stone. The Romans said that if you were born in a certain month you should wear the stone belonging to that month. It would bring you good luck. They also wore a talisman made of the stones of the month set in their proper order. Of course we are too sensible to think that merely wearing certain stones will bring us good fortune, but let us see if we cannot make a talisman of our own out of twelve of the Bible stones.

Our stone for January will not be the garnet, which is the stone the Romans chose for it, but the very first precious stone mentioned in the Bible. Look up the second chapter of Genesis. In the last three words of the twelfth verse you will find our text—'the onyx stone.'

How many of you know an onyx stone when you see it? And how many of you can tell me why it was called an onyx? Some of the bigger boys and girls who are learning Greek will be able to help here. They will tell us that the onyx stone is named after the finger-nail. There is a whitish half-moon at the base of your finger-nail, then there is a broad band of pink, and then there is, or should be, another narrow strip of white. The onyx is a banded stone, and the Greeks thought the markings on it resembled those on the human nail, so they called it the 'finger-nail' stone. The best known onyx is formed of layers of black and white, but there are onyxes of other shades besides. Many of them have a layer of red, and these are known as sardonyxes.

You must have seen an onyx many a time though you may not have recognized it. Perhaps Granny has a brooch with a beautiful head carved in white against a black background. You have

often looked at it and wondered if the jeweller glued the white carving on to the black foundation. Well, no jeweller ever glued the one to the other, the two are just one stone, and it was God who made them one ages and ages ago. That stone was once a round lump in the hollow of a volcanic rock, and somebody found it and took it to the jeweller, and he cut it, oh so carefully; and then he carved out of the white layer that tiny delicate head; and the result was Granny's brooch, which she calls her 'cameo.' That is the name given to the figure cut on the stone.

Nowadays we do not admire the onyx so tremendously. Other jewels are more fashionable. But in olden times and in Bible days the onyx was highly prized. It was found in large pieces, so large that even cups have been cut out of a single block. It was tough, yet not too hard, and so lent itself to the engraver's tools. Its coloured layers allowed him to get a striking effect.

I wonder what the onyx stone has got to say to us? If it could speak I think it would like to tell us to be sure to get ourselves well engraved. It would say: 'Boys and girls, try to be beautiful like me. You are like the lump of stone when it comes from the rock. You can be made into almost anything. It all depends on how you are cut. Are you going to let yourself be spoiled by bad cutting? Are you going to let time and chance have their way and engrave on you images faulty, or distorted, or hideous? Or do you wish to be a beautiful gem, fit for a king's wear? Then go to Christ, the best Engraver, and ask Him to take you in hand. Ask Him to do the cutting and the polishing. Ask Him to take you and make of you what He will.'

Shall I tell you the result? Christ will grave on you His own pure image, and He will make of you a gem worthy to be worn in His own crown.

## Assyro-Babylonian Astrologers and their Lore.

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THOUGH astrology in the Old Testament has no special name, astrologers are nevertheless referred to. As examples take Dn 1<sup>20</sup> 4<sup>4</sup> (in the R.V. 4<sup>7</sup>), etc.; but this is merely a provisional translation, the R.V. rendering of *ashshāph* (Bab. *asippu* = *ashiffu*) being 'magician,' a much more correct translation. In all probability, therefore, it is the word *Chaldae* (also in Dn 4<sup>4</sup>) which best expresses the idea of a student of the heavens, that being a speciality of the Chaldeans, either in the restricted tribal sense or with the wider meaning of the learned Babylonian class, skilled in predictions based upon the movements of the heavenly bodies. All the classes of scribes in Babylonia, however, must have had some knowledge of star-lore, whether for astronomical purposes or for foretelling coming events—or simply so as to communicate to their clients the interpretations of the astrological experts of the land.

As distinguished from astronomy, astrology owed its origin to the desire of people of old time to foretell the future. For the Babylonians, the heavenly bodies were not merely 'for signs, and

for seasons, and for days and years,' they were also, and especially, tokens—messages even—of the gods to men. This was doubtless more strikingly the case when comets appeared and shooting stars were seen, for these were rare events, such as would attract the attention of primitive folk like the Babylonians at the beginning of their national career. The more orderly courses of the planets ultimately became the groundwork for forecasts of the events of everyday life and mundane history, based upon the assumption that what had already happened when the sun, moon, and planets occupied certain relative positions, might be expected again under like astral conditions.

A considerable time probably elapsed before the Assyro-Babylonians realized the need of records of their observations as data for foretelling events. If astrology had its origin, as is probable, before the development of the art of writing, that art had naturally to attain sufficient perfection to enable the details to be duly set out. The date of this development may be estimated at four or five thousand years before Christ, but the earliest