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In the Study.

THE CHRISTIAN YEAR.

Second Sunday after Easter.

THE MANIFESTATIONS OF THE RISEN LORD.

'To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion . . . being seen of them forty days.'—Ac 1³.

BETWEEN the rising and the ascending there were probably eleven separate appearances of the risen Jesus. Two are narrated only by St. Paul (1 Co 15), the last witness, but the first to record for us in writing the great fact. Each appearance is full of instruction and prophecy, rich with answer to the great question so many hearts are asking, 'What is He to us, what are we to Him?' Let us try to gather up some of the lessons by briefly looking at some of these recorded appearances.

The appearances of the risen Lord naturally fall into two groups—those which took place on Easter Day, and those which took place in the course of the following forty days. These seem to be generally different in scope and character. The appearances on Easter Day were mainly, we may say, directed to convey a present belief; those afterwards to indicate a future presence. At first the true personal resurrection of Christ is the one fact which is variously revealed in relation to typical forms of doubt. Afterwards the connexion between Himself and His servants is unfolded in successive charges. The teaching of the one group culminates in the words: 'Handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.' The other in the words: 'Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, . . . and, lo, I am with you all the days, even to the end of the world.'

We have, then, three recorded manifestations of the Lord Jesus, leading and outstanding, vouchsafed by Him on the day of His Resurrection. They were certainly not the only ones which that day witnessed, but they are the only ones given to us in detail; and the details are such that each has a significance all its own, while all combine in some messages of supreme import. To Mary in the garden of the sepulchre, to the two friends on the Emmaus road, to the gathered company at evening in the chamber—these are the three manifestations.

1. 'Now when Jesus was risen early the first

day of the week'—thus we read in St. Mark—'he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils.' The fact is full of meaning. The first sight of the triumphant Saviour was granted to one who had most sorely needed His help. His first words were: 'Woman, why weepest thou?' To her who loved much, much was given. The tears which veiled the Comforter, still brought Him to console. Sorrow, isolation, the memory of the cross, these commonly first bring Christ to us in His glory. In His glory, and yet we know Him not. To us, absorbed in our own grief, preoccupied with our own dreams, He seems some common man. It is not till He calls us by name, till He makes us know what we are, that we can recognize Him. And then follows the reaction. As before Mary had seen but a 'gardener,' so when one word revealed the Lord, she would have kept Him as she saw Him then: she clung to Him. But at once the tidings of separation were coupled with the removal of bereavement: 'Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.' Purely personal and earthly devotion, such as so often mars the noble records of enthusiasm, has no true place in the service of the risen Christ. Human tears indulged in hide Him. Human passion removes Him. We may not claim to retain Him for ever as He once shows Himself. He would lift us up above ourselves, and not restore only that which we cherish with imperfect affection. This is the first lesson of Christ's appearance.

We see more here than a message of sympathy to weepers. It is a parable fraught with the all-important teaching that in all ages, climes, and countries sorrow will often be found the door of faith and hope. Thus in the hour of mourning, century after century, has Jesus again and again been seen and known. The very tears which blur the vision of earthly things make more clear the lineaments of that beloved face. He lures us into the wilderness that He may speak comfortably to us (Hos 2¹⁴).¹

2. Then came the afternoon, and the Emmaus walk. Cleopas and his friend travel out to the country, and talk as they go; an uncommon thing with Orientals, who do not usually chat upon the

¹ H. A. Smith, *Things New and Old*, 36.

road; only urgent matters break their silence then. Lo, 'a Stranger joins them, courteous as a friend.' Within a few minutes He is deep in their confidence; soon He has led them into a long, continuous, detailed Bible study. They follow His guidance from Genesis to the latest pages of their ancient Scriptures. Strangely moving the exposition proves; their hearts are burning; their whole being is awakening to the mysterious, blessed glory of a foretold Sufferer who was to save and to reign through death. Then the sun sinks, and the three friends sit down to the evening meal, their eyes are opened, and lo, it is the Lord.

As we may not measure the higher life by earthly emotion, so neither may we measure it by any partial deductions from revelation. We may not hold to this or that part, but must lay ourselves open to the whole. The secret of true knowledge is the loyal desire to know. If we think Christ might have been something which it seems to us that He is not, let us listen for the still voice of God, and it may be that a vision of glory will crown a lesson of reproof and patience.¹

3. Passing over two, or perhaps three, other appearances of the Lord, which are very briefly noticed, we come to the third critical appearance on the Easter Day. The tidings that 'the Lord was risen' had already spread, and the disciples were gathered together, as it would seem, to meditate on the joyful news. 'And when the doors were shut where they were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.' Here then was a new trial of faith. Before Christ had shown Himself, so to speak, naturally, but now the miracle of His presence was obvious. Fear or reason might well suggest to those present that 'they saw a spirit.' And so Christ met the double doubt. 'Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me and see. . . . And he showed them his hands and his feet . . . and did eat before them.'

It was the springtime when He rose;
Among the lilies white and sweet
He moved, to songs of happy birds,
With nail-pierced Feet.

He passed where fields of living green
Were growing to the Harvest day;
To reap the harvest of His pain
He went His way.

¹ B. F. Westcott, *Village Sermons*, 151.

And hearts by death made desolate,
When He said 'peace,' leaped at the word;
And eyes despair had dulled, looked up
And saw the Lord.

Then faith and hope were born anew;
And weeping sorrow learned to sing;
And over every graveyard breathed
The breath of Spring.²

Third Sunday after Easter.

THE MANIFESTATIONS OF THE RISEN LORD AFTER EASTER.

'To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion . . . being seen of them forty days.'—Ac 1³.

For a whole week, it seems, the disciples were left to ponder on what they had seen and heard without further manifestations of Christ. He was with them, doubtless, as He is with us, though they knew it not. Then after eight days as they were together 'when the doors were shut,' He again appeared among them.

1. There was one of the eleven absent when the Lord first visited the little band, one who, when Jesus bent His steps towards Jerusalem for His last passion, had bravely said, 'Let us also go, that we may die with him' (Jn 11¹⁶). Thomas heard from his companions the story of the opened, vanquished grave; yet he refused to believe. He was clearly unreasonable; he had for this fact of resurrection the same evidence as that on which men act in every circumstance of life, the testimony of witnesses whom he had known and trusted long respecting facts which they themselves had quite recently directly seen and heard. The Scriptures he acknowledged, and the exposition at Emmaus must have been reported to him; yet is he obstinate: 'I will not believe.' Our experience of human nature would lead us to expect that his brethren would have little patience with such obduracy and suspicion. In cases such as that the very Church has not been slow to repel and excommunicate; it has too often been cruelly intolerant of less unreasonable doubt. But we seek not now the teaching of man, nor of the Church; we ask a lesson from our Lord. He knows the human heart; He knows how imperious are the demands of reason, how hard is the voice of pride. True, Thomas was, as thousands since have been and are, in reason's name unreasonable; yet was

² W. W. Sidey.

he not refused, but met, more than *met*, for Christ went all the way to satisfy and clear his doubts. The pierced hands are spread before him; he is bidden not see only, but touch; the wounded side awaits the reaching forth of the proving hand. And, behold, the last convinced is the first confessor of the fulness of gospel truth. No word is added, nor can the faith of the ages add a word, to the adoring cry of Thomas, 'My Lord and my God!'

Then it was that those words followed which contain the great lesson of this scene for us—words which gave comfort to the last moments of one of the noblest of Englishmen—words which may speak joy to us for whom too often the light of heaven seems darkened and the glory of Easter dimmed: 'Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.' In closest connexion with the most gracious revelation of Christ, it is written for all ages that the truest communication with Him is not with the hand which feels or the eye which sees, but with the heart which loves and worships.¹

2. After these things Jesus showed Himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias. All was uncertain; they were waiting for definite instructions; but meanwhile they were not willing to idle away their time. 'I go a-fishing,' said Peter; 'we also go with thee,' said the others. They went at it with a will, throwing their whole heart into it, persevering through all the night though they caught nothing. Then Jesus appeared to them on the shore. It was the contemplative Apostle who first saw Him, and the impulsive Apostle who was the first to go to Him, and the result of the appearance was that their toil was crowned with success, and they enjoyed afterwards a time of privilege and refreshing with their Master on the shore.

I am glad that Christ did not appear only in the garden, and the closed room, and lonely mountain-top. I am glad that He appeared also to these fishermen when they were doing with all their might their ordinary everyday work. It is an assurance to us that the common round, the daily task, may prove indeed to us

A road
To bring us daily nearer God.

It says to each one of us:

See Him in the street; serve Him in the shop;
Sow with Him thy wheat; house for Him thy crop;
Sail with Him at sea; work with Him on land;
Tell Him faithfully all that Thou hast planned.²

¹ B. F. Westcott, *Village Sermons*, 153.

² A. M. Mackay.

3. On the Mount in Galilee—the Mount, we may believe, which was already hallowed by many lessons of divine love—Christ met the great body of His disciples, and, declaring the fulness of His power in heaven and earth, charged them to teach all nations. And as it was not on apostles only that He breathed the gift of the Holy Spirit, so neither was it to the apostles only that this charge was given. 'Ye have an unction from the Holy One.' 'Ye are a royal priesthood.' The charge is for us—for all of us according to our special place and duty; and not the charge only, but the accompanying promise, which no age can exhaust, no faithlessness annul: 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.'

It was on this occasion that in the quiet assurance of His authority He said, 'All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.' All power—they had seen His power in many a glorious proof over sickness and devils and death, over winds and waves; they had seen Him put forth an authority over sin itself. Now was given to Him a yet greater power that stretched away limitless and infinite. All power in heaven—it hung over them; His was the throne on high and the angels excelling in strength waited His bidding. All power upon earth—it spread away beneath them, over Roman dominion, and Greek intellect, and all Israel; over the sea and its ships; over isles afar off and the ends of the earth. All then was His; all armies and the kings, all learning and the mighty men, all beauty and love, and the forces of the earth were His. All power—the merchants and their money; the workmen and their handicraft; all art and science. And in keeping with the power is the grandeur of the commission which He gives them: 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.'³

Fourth Sunday after Easter.

THE PROMISE OF THE FATHER.

'And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me.'—Ac 1⁴.

The period of the Church year through which we are now passing, between Ascension Day and Whitsunday, has been known as Expectation Week, the week of waiting; and the name was, no doubt, given with allusion to the words of the text. For ten days after their Lord had ascended up into heaven the disciples waited at Jerusalem.

What did they wait for? 'Wait,' Jesus says, 'for the promise of the Father.' Their minds, as they heard His words, must have gone back to those

³ M. G. Pearse, *The Gospel for the Day*, 143.

wonderful discourses of His in the week of His Passion, and to the promises which He then connected with the Father. 'I will pray the Father,' He had said to them, 'and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of Truth; . . . he shall teach you all things.' And so it was for the coming of the Spirit of Truth they were to wait.

1. The Spirit of God had not been absent at any time from the Church of their fathers. There could be no Church, worthy of the name, without the Holy Ghost. We find David again and again praying, 'take not thy Holy Spirit from me'—'uphold me with thy free Spirit'—'thy Spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness.' But then, the Spirit's presence with the Church had from the beginning only been in virtue of Christ's prospective obedience unto death; now that He had died, finishing the work of redemption, the Holy Ghost was to be given on a scale so new, given so much more copiously and extensively, that we find those remarkable words in one of the Gospels, 'This spake he of the Spirit which they that believe on him should receive; for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.' 'He commanded them that they should wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me.'

Isaac Barrow writes with his accustomed condensation: 'God, for promoting our Saviour's honour, and for the glory of His undertaking, had in His wisdom determined that so incomparably excellent a gift should be the reward of His obedience, the consequence of His triumph, the effect of His intercession above, an ornament of His royal state, a pledge of His princely munificence: it was reserved as a most rich and majestic gratuity, fit to be conferred at His coronation, then when He solemnly was inaugurated to sovereign dignity, and invested with power superlative.'¹

2. But why does Christ call this emphatically, 'the promise of the Father,' as if He had never given another promise beside? and so in Luke, 'Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you.' Undoubtedly the expression points, in general, to the large and central place which the promise of the Holy Ghost had occupied in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, the Father's word. It was the promise of the Father in a very eminent manner in those Scriptures, wherever treating of the times of Christ and of the gospel. Thus, 'It shall come to pass in the last days that I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh'—'I will pour water

upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring; and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water-courses'—'I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him.'

But the expression tells also of the peculiar preciousness, and all-comprehensive character, of the promise of the Holy Ghost—as inclusive in fact of all the Father's promises and gifts together, flowing in the channel of the Mediator's death. It was the promise of the Father, as if He had never given another beside, because it carried every other along with it. All that the Church needs—for example, for the work of the ministry, ordinary and extraordinary—is embraced in the promise of the Holy Ghost. And all things needed by an individual soul are in the same promise. Life from the dead is in it; union to Christ by faith is in it; hence, in effect, forgiveness, justification, is in it; repentance is in it; holiness, prayer, grace, glory—'the promise of the Father'—all-precious, all-comprehensive.

Who of us is not seeking fuller, richer personal knowledge of God and of His Holy Spirit's working? Who of us does not long to be more sure of Christ as Saviour and Lord, more sure of the things which are unseen and eternal? We sometimes look up with straining eyes and ears, but the heavens are as brass above us. What can we do? One thing it is clear we cannot do. We cannot force or manufacture spiritual experience any more than the disciples could by themselves obtain the Spirit which only God could bestow. Like them, we must 'wait for the promise of the Father.' But like them we must learn, if we would go on from strength to strength, that waiting is no mere idle, listless dreaming or gazing up into heaven, but rather the maintenance of the attitude, the making of the atmosphere, in which alone the still small voice of the Spirit of God may reach our consciences, and strengthen our wills, and purify our affections, and inspire our souls. Remember the first believers in those anxious, waiting days. They held together in the brotherhood and unity of the Christian fellowship. They continued with one accord in prayer and supplication. They did the obvious task which lay nearest to their hands, trustfully seeking their Master's guidance. These were the conditions in which the gracious promise of the Father was fulfilled in the coming of the Spirit, and it is in some such conditions as these that we must seek to wait for the growing and deepening experiences which the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, may bring to us. For 'though the vision tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not tarry.'²

² W. J. F. Robberds, in *The Guardian*, June 2, 1911, p. 762.

¹ D. M. McIntyre, *The Upper Room Company*, 74.

Fifth Sunday after Easter.

REVIVAL.

'O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years.'—Hab 3².

What are some of the elements in the revival which we need?

1. A deeper penitence is one. We want and require more consciousness of sin, and more sense of shame and guilt because of sin. 'Think,' Mr. Cyril Bardsley says, 'of a walk with Christ through our streets, of a talk with Christ about the public-houses and the people we meet and the posters we see. Think of Christ having in His hands all the papers from the bookstalls. Think of Him in our churches, and outside our churches in our Christian homes on His own day; in our factories and shops; in the luxurious houses of the rich, and in the squalid houses of the poor.' We must be brought to view these things through His eyes, until we are utterly humbled because of our slothful acquiescence in them and our cowardly failure to protest against them. We have not been His witnesses, and He has not been able to use us. The first ingredient in revival is sorrow for our silence, our slumber, our pusillanimity, and our sin.

2. A firmer belief is a second element. In epochs of genuine spiritual awakening neglected truth leaps to the forefront, and is grasped with new intelligence and more questionless decision. Perhaps, as at the Reformation, the truth of the soul's immediate access to God. Or, as in William Carey's day, the truth of Christ's kingdom over the wide world. Or the truth of holiness through simple and continuous faith, which to many in more recent years has been like a revelation from heaven itself. It is a great experience when truth ceases to be something which we take for granted; when, instead, it becomes something *living and active*, which vibrates through us like a passion, and dominates all our thinking and willing and doing. What if, in our time, one mighty conviction which we must have restirred in our too slack and easy souls is that of the Majesty and Sovereignty of God? Would it not bring us a reverence, an awe, and a discipline, which we have largely lost, and which it is essential that we should recover? 'O Lord,' let us cry, 'give us a firmer belief.'

3. A third element in revival is a completer unworldliness. There is no sanctity in asceti-

cism, no superior holiness in withdrawal from the common lot. But the followers of One whom love led to become poor—

Our God who on a tree
His blood did spill,
Only to purchase our goodwill—

have assuredly no right to prize their comforts more than they prize perishing men, or to hoard and keep that which they should be laying out for the furtherance of His cause. Long ago, Wicliff's Poor Preachers carried the evangel through England. Long ago, the Poor Men of Lyons ushered in the spring in southern France and in the valleys of the Alps. We want to be rebaptized into a similar detachment from earthly gains and goods.

4. And a braver enthusiasm is yet another element. Our religion is too prosaic. It will not depart from the traditions of the fathers. It is guided by the stereotyped patterns shaped and fixed for it by the majority. Sir George Trevelyan writes a very noble account of a thrilling episode in the Indian Mutiny—the defence for ten long days before relief came, by a mere handful of Europeans and loyal Sikhs, against thousands of rebel Sepoys, of the little house at Arrah. When he has told the splendid story, he goes on, 'There are moments when it is good to turn from the perusal of the share list to the contemplation of this spirit, which is prepared to dare all and endure all.' It is a spirit which is lacking in too many Christians—the frankness and the fortitude which keep Christ's flag flying in the teeth of the crowd. We are afraid to enter on untried paths, to break away from customary pieties, and to do anything original and difficult for His sake. We should 'scorn the consequence,' and we should adventure more.¹

Ascension Day.

WITH CHRIST.

'Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ.'—Phil. i. 23.

When our friends leave the world, we know not the place where they go. We can turn our eyes to no spot in the universe and say they are there. Nor is our ignorance here of any moment. It is unimportant what region of space contains them. Whilst we know not to what place they go, we know what is infinitely more interesting, to what

¹ A. Smellie, *The Well by the Way*.

beings they go. We know not where heaven is, but we know Whom it contains, and this knowledge opens to us an infinite field for contemplation and delight.

1. They go to Christ. The New Testament always speaks of Jesus as existing now in the spiritual world; and Paul tells us that it is the happiness of the holy, when absent from the body, to be present with the Lord. Here is one great fact in regard to futurity. The good, on leaving us here, meet their Saviour; and this view alone assures us of their unutterable happiness. In this world they had cherished acquaintance with Jesus through the records of the Evangelists. They had followed Him through His eventful life with veneration and love, had treasured in their memories His words, works, and life-giving promises, and, by receiving His Spirit, had learned something of the virtues and happiness of a higher world. Now they meet Him, they see Him. He is no longer a faint object to their mind, obscured by distance and by the mists of sense and the world. He is present to them, and more intimately present than we are to each other. Of this we are sure; for whilst the precise mode of our future existence is unknown, we do know that spiritual beings in that higher state must approach and commune with each other more and more intimately in proportion to their progress.

The happiness of the Saviour, in receiving to a higher life a human being who had been redeemed, purified, inspired with immortal goodness by His influence, we can but imperfectly comprehend. You can conceive what would be your feelings, on welcoming to shore your best friend, who had been tossed on a perilous sea; but the raptures of earthly reunion are faint compared with the happiness of Jesus in receiving the spirit for which He died, and which under His guidance has passed with an improving virtue through a world of sore temptation. We on earth meet, after our long separations, to suffer as well as enjoy, and soon to part again. Jesus meets those who ascend from earth to Heaven with the consciousness that their trial is past, their race is run, that death is conquered. With His far-reaching, prophetic eye He sees them entering a career of joy and glory never to end. And His benevolent welcome is expressed with a power which belongs only to the utterance of Heaven, and which communicates to them an immediate, confiding, overflowing joy.¹

2. But our friends go from earth not only to receive a joyful welcome and assurance of eternal love from the Lord. There is a still higher view. They are brought by this new intercourse to a new

¹ *Channing.*

comprehension of His mind, and to a new reception of His spirit. It is, indeed, a happiness to know that we are objects of interest and love to an illustrious being; but it is a greater happiness to know deeply the sublime and beautiful character of this Being, to sympathize with Him, to enter into His vast thoughts and pure designs, and to become associated with Him in the great ends for which He lives. Even here, in our infant and dim state of being, we learn enough of Jesus, of His divine philanthropy triumphant over injuries and agonies, to thrill us with affectionate admiration. But those in heaven look into His soul as we have never done. They approach it as we cannot approach the soul of the most confiding friend; and this nearness to the mind of Jesus awakens in themselves a power of love and virtue which they little suspected during their earthly being.

3. The good, on approaching Jesus, will not only sympathize with His spirit, but will become joint workers, active, efficient ministers in accomplishing His great work of spreading virtue and happiness. We must never think of heaven as a state of inactive contemplation or of unproductive feeling. Even here on earth the influence of Christ's character is seen in awakening an active, self-sacrificing goodness. It sends the true disciples to the abodes of the suffering. It binds them by new ties to their race. It gives them a new consciousness of being created for a ministry of beneficence; and can they, when they approach more nearly this divine Philanthropist, and learn, by a new alliance with Him, the fulness of His love, can they fail to consecrate themselves to His work and to kindred labours with an energy of will unknown on earth? In truth, our sympathy with Christ could not be perfect did we not act with Him. Nothing so unites beings as co-operation in the same glorious cause, and to this union with Christ the excellent above are received.

4. Those who go there from among us must retain the deepest interest in this world. Their ties to those they have left are not dissolved, but only refined. On this point, indeed, we do not need the evidence of revelation; we want no other evidence than the essential principles and laws of the soul. If the future state is to be an improvement on the present, if intellect is to be invigorated and love expanded there, then memory, the fundamental power of the intellect, must act with new energy on the past, and all the benevolent affections

which have been cherished here must be quickened into a higher life. To suppose the present state blotted out hereafter from the mind would be to destroy its use, would cut off all connexion between the two worlds, and would subvert responsibility; for how can retribution be awarded for a forgotten existence? No; we must carry the present with us, whether we enter the world of happiness or the world of woe. The good will indeed form new, holier, stronger ties above; but, under the expanding influence of that better world, the human heart will be capacious enough to retain the old whilst it receives the new, to remember its birthplace with tenderness whilst enjoying a maturer and happier being.

When I remember that the heirs of heaven go to Jesus Christ, the great lover of the human family, who dwelt here, suffered here, who moistened our earth with His tears and blood, who has gone not to break off but to continue and perfect His beneficent labours for mankind, whose mind never for a moment turns from our race, whose interest in the progress of His truth and the salvation of the tempted soul has been growing more and more intense ever since He left our world, and who has thus bound up our race with His very being—when I think of all this, I am sure that they cannot forget our world. Could we hear them, I believe they would tell us that they never truly loved the race before; never before knew what it is to sympathize with human sorrow, to rejoice in human virtue, to mourn for human guilt. A new fountain of love to man is opened within them. They now see what before dimly gleamed on them, the capacities, the mysteries of the human soul. The significance of that word Immortality is now apprehended, and every being destined to it rises into unutterable importance. They love human nature as never before, and human friends are prized as above all price.¹

Virginibus Puerisque.

MAY.

Bird-nesting.

'If a bird's nest chance to be before thee in the way in any tree, or on the ground, whether they be young ones or eggs, and the dam sitting upon the young, or upon the eggs, thou shalt not take the dam with the young: but thou shalt in any wise let the dam go, and take the young to thee; that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days.'—Dt 22^{6, 7}.

I know that you think of the Children of Israel as having lived far back in the dim ages. You are right in doing so. But here is one of the commandments which God gave to them—a little one about a bird's nest. The words of it make us feel that

¹ *Channing.*

those wanderers were just big boys and girls, with the same inclinations as you and I have.

1. We learn from the words that the birds that flew about the Israelites as they journeyed were, in many cases, birds such as those we have now. The people must have been robbing their nests too, else we should not have had this verse at all. Naturally enough, in their wanderings, they occasionally came upon a nest by the wayside—some of you here may have happened upon one belonging to a lapwing in a hollow by the side of a marsh. Then, of course, there were birds that sang from the tree-tops, just as they sing to you and me. I believe that some of the men would even make friends with the birds; and that their journeys were happier because they could listen to their singing.

May is a specially busy time with the birds. In trees, in bushes, on house-tops, or on the ground, they have built their little homes. What wonderful architects many of them are. One bird has woven twigs together into a building like an old Gothic church; another has built his house in the shape of a bottle; while one we all love lives in a dear little house made of mud. They were very patient while they gathered their building materials; and when they selected a site for their nest, by some strange instinct they chose it as far out of the reach of boys and girls as possible. But in spite of all their wonderful wisdom, somehow—and I feel ashamed to say it—there are always boys ready to climb, and cruel enough to destroy, the little houses on which so much thoughtful care has been bestowed.

It may be that the Israelitish boys knew the little lapwings' nests, and sometimes scattered the eggs, for, when the nest is interfered with, the mother bird generally gets so frightened that she flies away. Many narrow escapes in early life may have helped to make the husband-lapwing the artful little bird he is. Peewees—as you children call them—have family tricks, which have been handed down by ancestors from one generation to another. The husband bird is the real defender of the nest. When an enemy comes near it, he practises the tricks his father taught him. Gradually moving farther and farther away from where the precious eggs are, he turns a number of somersaults, or he does other equally extraordinary things. The onlooker gets so interested that the nest is really forgotten, and the peewee's end is

gained. It may be, too, that this same experience of having to defend themselves for centuries is the explanation of their pathetic cry.

You remember Noah's clever scout bird, the dove? She, too, would be known to the Israelites. The dove has a very mournful note. No wonder. Her family has ancient legends of how large numbers of them used to be trapped and taken captive to Jerusalem and then killed. Sacrifice had no meaning to them. It was all a mystery, and they just mourned.

2. Bird-nesting is cruel. What would you think if any one were to break open the door of your home and run away with your bed? Think of your mother going out one day and coming home to find that some one had been there and stolen you away! Yet, how often does the poor mother bird come home to find all her children taken from her? There may be an unwritten law in your school which says, 'If you want a specimen egg from the nest of any bird, take one and go your way, leave the rest of the eggs with the mother bird; and in no wise interfere with the young ones.' If you rob a nest, it is a case of the strong taking advantage of the weak—a cowardly action under any circumstances—you know it is.

3. *Love* was Christ's great commandment. Love in little as well as in big things. God is great, yet He cares for the birds. 'Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing, and one of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father?'

What has the song of birds not done for many lonely people? It has even helped to lead men and women to think of God, and to desire to be like Him. We owe some of our most beautiful poems to the birds. Here is a verse from Keats' 'Nightingale.' You will notice that he remembers about the birds in the Bible.

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
 No hungry generations tread thee down;
 The voice I hear this passing night was heard
 In ancient days by emperor and clown.
 Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
 Through the sad heart of Ruth, when sick for
 home,
 She stood in tears amid the alien corn;
 The same that oft-times hath
 Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam
 Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

4. The birds have rights. Any creature that suffers has rights. Theodore Parker, the great American preacher, when a lad, saw a turtle on a log, and, with stone in hand, he crept up and was about to throw it, when he heard a voice within which made him desist. He asked his mother about it. She told him that it was the protest of the doctrine of rights—the voice of God.

I finish with a few verses written by the poet of Love, George Macdonald:

A brown bird sang on a blossomy tree,
 Sang in the moonshine, merrily,
 Three little songs, one, two, and three,
 A song for his wife, for himself, and me.

He sang for his wife, sang low, sang high,
 Filling the moonlight that filled the sky;
 'Thee, thee, I love thee, heart alive!
 Thee, thee, thee, and thy round eggs five!'

He sang to himself, 'What shall I do
 With this life that thrills me through and
 through!

Glad is so glad that it turns to ache!
 Out with it, song, or my heart will break!'

He sang to me, 'Man, do not fear
 Though the moon goes down and the dark is
 near;

Listen my song and rest thine eyes;
 Let the moon go down that the sun may rise!'

I folded me up in the heart of his tune,
 And fell asleep with the sinking moon;
 I woke with the day's first golden gleam,
 And, lo, I had dreamed a precious dream!

Paying the Fare.

'He paid the fare thereof.'—Jon 1³.

A ship bound for Tarshish, in Spain, was just weighing anchor in the harbour of Joppa, when a little flustered man, very much out of breath, tumbled on board. 'Here, my man,' said the captain, 'what do you mean by boarding my boat like this? Don't you know it costs something to go for a pleasure trip? If you want to come along you must pay the fare.' 'Certainly, certainly,' replied the little man, taking out his purse, 'I will pay whatever is just and right. Only please take me as far west as you can.' So Jonah paid the fare to Tarshish.

I want you to notice two things about this incident. First, Jonah paid the fare, and that was right. He was an honest man and paid his debts. But, second, Jonah paid the fare to go to Tarshish, and that was wrong. Shall I tell you why? Because God had told him to go to Nineveh, which was in exactly the opposite direction, and Jonah did not want to go to Nineveh. He was really trying to run away from God.

So you see it is possible to do quite right things in a way that makes them quite wrong. For instance some of you boys are keen on cricket or football, and you mean to stick in till you are captain of your eleven or of your team. Now, that is a good ambition. Cricket and football are splendid games. They will develop your muscles, they will make you quick and alert, they will help you to be manly and unselfish, and to 'play the game.' But if you run off to cricket or football when you should be tussling with the *pons asinorum* or grinding Latin verbs, then you are making a right thing wrong.

I knew a boy once who could play the penny whistle to perfection. Every one was charmed with his performances; but he used to sit on the top of his summer-house tooting away when he should have been writing home exercises. He was paying the fare to go in the wrong direction.

One thing more I want you to remember. It is better to *lose* your fare than to run away from God. Jonah found that out. He never reached Tarshish. In the end of the day he went to Nineveh instead.

Let me tell you two stories which may help you to understand this.

Last century there lived in Stockholm a magnificent singer. Her name was Jenny Lind, and she was famous all the world over. Her voice was as pure and sweet as the voice of a nightingale, and she herself was as pure, and sweet, and true as her voice. Jenny was brought up on the stage. She acted first when she was only ten, and her acting came to be as famous as her singing. She always tried to lift up her profession, to make it noble and good. And yet before she was thirty she gave up acting altogether, and so cut short what her friends regarded as a splendid career. Many people were curious as to her reason for renouncing the stage. She, herself, once gave it in a few words.

A friend found her one evening, sitting on the seashore with a Bible on her knees, looking out into the glory of a sunset. And she asked the

singer the sore-vexed question: 'How was it that you ever came to abandon the stage at the very height of your success?' Quietly Madame Lind replied, 'When every day it made me think less of this'—she laid her hand on the Bible—'and nothing at all of *that*'—she pointed out to the sunset—'what else could I do?'

The other story is about a celebrated painter called Barry. When Barry was a young man living in Dublin he got mixed up with some very wild companions. One night, when he was returning from an evening's riot, a great light broke on his conscience. He saw himself as he was, and he resolved to live a better life. He saw, too, that the only way to begin was to put temptation out of his way. He must rid himself of the means which gave him the chance of these excesses. So he threw all his money into the Liffey. Thereafter he devoted himself to his profession, and lived a noble, upright life.

And so, boys and girls, it is better, infinitely better, to give up anything that comes between us and God, even though it means a big sacrifice. We shall never regret it. It is better, far better, to lose the fare than to run away from God.

The Emerald.

'The emerald.'—Ezk 28¹³.

May brings us green woods and green fields, but it brings us something greener than these—the greenest green in nature—the emerald. Somebody has called the emerald God's favourite stone, because green seems to be God's favourite colour. Did you ever think what a lot of green God has put into the world? You see God knows that green is the best colour for our eyes to rest on, so He has made it the prevailing shade. Imagine how dreadful it would be if everything now green were red! We should go mad with the glare. Or blue! We should all have the blues in a week. Or white! Our eyes would be so dazzled that they would lose their sight.

The emerald has a name not its own. Emerald means 'the rent or torn rock,' and the original owner of the name was a massive green marble veined as if it had been torn or rent asunder. In the Bible it is doubtful if the word translated emerald means exactly the same stone as our emerald. It may be rather a piece of rock crystal.

But the emerald was known in Bible days all the same, for, as long ago as one thousand six hundred and fifty years before Christ came—that is to say, about three thousand six hundred years ago—emeralds were being mined by the Egyptians on the west coast of the Red Sea. In the beginning of last century a French explorer discovered these mines, and found there the very tools which had been used by the Egyptian workmen so many years ago. Ethiopia, too, was a country from which the emerald came in ancient times.

To-day our finest emeralds come from South America. Muzo in Columbia, on the slopes of the Andes, is the name of the place. Some emeralds are found also in the Ural Mountains in Siberia, but they do not compare with their South American brothers.

When the Spaniards conquered Mexico and Peru they found an immense quantity of magnificent emeralds in the possession of the natives. These they took as spoil, and sent them home over the seas, to Spain. No doubt many of these stones are being worn in Spain at this very minute.

The Mexicans called the emerald 'Quetzalitzali'—that is to say, 'the stone of the quetzal.' The quetzal is a Mexican bird, with plumage of a brilliant green resembling the stone. Its plumes were worn as a sign of royalty by the rulers of Mexico and Central America, and because of the resemblance of colour the emerald was considered a royal stone.

There are tales of huge emeralds the size of a hen's egg, but these tales are fables, for the emerald is not a large stone. At the same time it is a very rare gem, and a specimen without a flaw is practically priceless. The emerald does not sparkle with hidden fire like the diamond. It owes its beauty to its cool depth of colour.

History tells us of some remarkable stones. In 1488 the Sultan of Turkey sent to the reigning Pope a beautiful emerald engraved with the head of Christ. Legend says that this emerald was engraved in the time of Christ by order of the Roman Emperor, Tiberius Cæsar. But that sounds too good to be true. Unfortunately all trace of this gem has been lost.

Nero the cruel had an eye-glass made out of an emerald, and through it he watched the gladiators fight in the arena at Rome.

Our own King Henry the Second had an emerald

ring which was presented to him along with Ireland. That is really why Ireland is known as 'the Emerald Isle,' though it deserves the name on account of its fresh greenness.

Then Napoleon wore an emerald at the battle of Austerlitz. Perhaps he hoped it would bring him success, for that is said to be the gift which the emerald brings to its wearer.

There are other beliefs attached to it. It is supposed to help the memory. Does it keep it green?—I wonder. To the Eastern it is a symbol of unchanging faithfulness. That is perhaps why the Apostle John in the Book of Revelation tells us that round the throne which he saw in heaven was a rainbow like an emerald. It was there to show that God is faithful to all His promises. Strangely enough, the emerald was chosen by the Church as the Apostle John's special stone. It was supposed to represent his youth and gentleness.

Now I want you to get back to the success idea, and take as the message of the emerald, '*Make a success of your life.*'

Frankly, we don't believe that merely wearing an emerald will make anybody successful. And if the emerald could speak it would be the first to say, 'Wear me if you like. I'll do my best, but you must do your best as well.' Yes, that's it. Success does not come to you if you sit down and wait for it to arrive. You have to get up and hustle around and search for it. You have to work downright hard to find it. The royal road to success is not paved with emeralds. It is paved with the stones called 'Go ahead' and 'Stick in' and 'Hold on'—especially the last; for the most successful people are those who refuse to acknowledge that they are beaten, and hold on doggedly long after others have lost heart and given in.

There you have the recipe for *worldly success*, boys and girls. Take it if you want it, but remember that worldly success is not the most important success. It is *other-worldly success* that matters. The most successful man is not the man who heaps up the greatest wealth and owns the costliest possessions. The most successful man is the man who succeeds in growing most like Christ, the man who is bravest and purest, and strongest and gentlest, and most tender and loving and unselfish. His pockets may be pretty empty, and he may be a failure from the millionaire's point of view. But from God's point of view he is rich indeed, and he alone is the truly successful man.

Mr. Choate, who for some years was American Ambassador in London, was once interviewed by a reporter, who asked him the secret of his success. 'What do you call success?' asked Mr. Choate. 'Oh! wealth, and ease and comfort and reputation,' said the reporter. 'That

is not my idea of success,' replied the ambassador. 'Many men succeed without winning any one of these. Character is the vital thing after all.'

That was a fine answer. And that is the kind of success the emerald wishes you to win.

Moral Arguments for the Existence of God.

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SEVERAL Gifford Lecturers, including Mr. Balfour, Professors Seth, Pringle-Pattison, and Sorley, and other writers on philosophy of religion, have recently presented theistic arguments based largely on the deliverances of the moral consciousness. It would thus seem that an especial interest had grown up of late in the bearings of human morality upon the interpretation of the world as a whole, and as to the significance of man's moral status as a ground of theistic belief. As some of these new arguments differ in certain respects from moral arguments of earlier date, it will be timely to call attention to both the older and newer types of reasoning by which philosophers have sought to justify belief in God by appeal to our moral experience.

Roughly speaking, the newer type of argument resorts to the facts of morality only in the final stage of proof; it presupposes that the world embodies a purpose, and supplements the teleological argument by reading off, in terms of the moral, what the purpose of the world is. Most of the older forms of moral argument, on the other hand, inferred directly from the moral consciousness, and from its deliverances exclusively, to the existence of God. Arguments of the latter kind may be said to be more precarious and less convincing than those which have of late been forthcoming, as will perhaps be seen when we proceed to examine and compare the one type with the other.

Of the exclusively moral kind of argument, the classic example is Kant's. That philosopher held that the mere existence of morality, the sense of obligation, involved but one postulate, namely, that of freedom: 'I ought' implies 'I can.' But attainment of the highest good, which must be attainable

because it ought to be realized, involves, according to Kant, the further postulates of God and immortality; and so in our moral reason he thought he found a satisfactory ground of theistic belief. This argument, however, has several weaknesses. In the first place, it overlooks the fact that 'I ought' has two senses, one of which does not imply the 'I can' on which everything else hinges. And further, it is an inconsistent assumption on Kant's part that the highest good includes happiness and its perfect adjustment to personal desert, for the purpose of securing which Kant needed to resort to the postulation of God and an endless life. Similarly, the fact—if it be a fact—that ethics presupposes one ultimate and absolute ideal, has been used to establish the existence of God. This ideal must exist, it is argued; and as its content is neither realized nor even apprehended in any finite mind, it must therefore exist in a Supreme Mind. But ideals are valid of what exists rather than existent, and there would seem to be no more reason why the highest moral ideal should exist than why the ideal straight line of Euclid should exist; moreover, it is difficult to see what 'existence,' as applied to an ideal, could mean, except realization. Thus there does not seem to be any way of inferring directly from the validity of our moral judgments, or from the absoluteness of our moral ideals, to a necessary Divine Ground for them.

Nor do we seem to have any better case when, like Mr. Balfour, we maintain that because natural selection cannot account for our higher moral sentiments, in that they are of no utility in the struggle for existence between individuals or races, we must resort to a Divine Cause for our moral consciousness. For this reasoning overlooks the