Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE LAST SERMON FOR THE YEAR.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 29TH, 1895,

DELIVERED BY

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"Give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward."—Luke xvi. 2.

THE first part of this text applies to us all; the second part will apply to each one of us before long. "Give an account of thy stewardship," is a command that may be addressed to the ungodly. They are accountable to God for all that they have, or ever have had, or ever shall have. The law of the Lord is not relaxed because they have sinned; they still remain responsible to God, even though they attempt to cast off the yoke of the Almighty. As creatures formed by the divine hand, and sustained by divine power, they are bound to serve God; and if they do not, and will not, his claims upon them do not cease, and to each of them he saith, "Give an account of thy stewardship."

This text may also be applied to the children of God, to the godly,—in a different sense, however, and after another fashion. For, first of all, the godly are God's children, they are accounted as standing in Christ. They are no longer merely God's subjects; for what they owed to God as sinners has all been discharged by Jesus Christ their Substitute and Saviour. They have, therefore, been placed on a different footing from other men; but having been saved by grace, and adopted into God's family, they have had entrusted to them talents which they are to use to his honour and glory. Being the Lord's children, and being saved, they become his servants, and as his servants they are under responsibility to God, and they will all have to give to him an account of their stewardship.

Look at Eli; I have no doubt that he was a saved man, but God made him a steward over his own family as well as a prophet to Israel, and he had to give an account of his stewardship, and because he had not been faithful in it, although he was not condemned eternally, yet

he was made most miserably to suffer when he was told that the whole of his house should be swept away, and also when he heard of the deaths of his sons, and as the direst news of all learned that the ark of God was taken by the Philistines. God visited him in his capacity of steward, made him give in his account, and awarded him in this life a heavy penalty for his unfaithfulness; and I do not doubt that many a child of God, who has been saved at the last, yet, being found unfaithful as a steward, has had to suffer much, has lost much of honour and much of fellowship with God, and much of high advancement in the way of grace which he might otherwise have obtained.

David also was another such a steward. He was not a lost soul, I have no doubt that he is among the saved and blessed saints in heaven; but as a steward he was not found faithful. You remember how grievously he sinned, and from that moment his family was full of rebellion, his kingdom was full of trouble, and he went with broken bones all the way down to his grave. Hence I may say to you, children of God, who are not under the law,—and I do not address you at all in a legal strain when I so speak to you,—you also have a stewardship. Give an account of it, or else perhaps you may be no longer spared; or, being spared, yet still you may have tokens of your Lord's displeasure, which you may carry with you even to your tomb. Thank God, you shall leave them there! But it would be more for God's glory, and for your own comfort, not to have them at all.

I desire, on this last Sabbath evening of another year, not so much to speak to you, as to get you to talk to yourselves. So, first, we will together think upon *the reasonable demand* made in our text: "Give an account of thy stewardship." Next, we will examine *some reasons why we should at once give an account of our stewardship;* and, lastly, we will consider *the weighty reason in the text*, which will come with force to each of us sooner or later: "Thou mayest be no longer steward."

I. First, then, let us consider this REASONABLE DEMAND, and let each one of us try to comply with it: "Give an account of thy stewardship." Thou man of God, thou Christless soul, thou aged man, thou young sister, "Give an account of thy stewardship."

First, give an account of the stewardship of *thy time*. How hast thou spent it? Have not many hours been allowed to run to waste, or worse than waste, in frivolity and sin? Hast thou lived as a dying man should live? Hast thou employed thine hours as remembering that they are very few, and more precious than the diamonds in an emperor's crown? What about thy time? Has there not been much of it spent in indolence, in frothy talk, or that did not minister to edification? Thou needest not accuse thyself for time spent in lawful recreation that may sustain thy body, and fit it better for the Lord's service. It is well that thou shouldst have such recreation; but how much time is utterly wasted by some people, neither used for the good of this world, nor of that which is to come, but wholly frittered away in the service of sin, and self, and Satan! Where, for instance, did some of you spend yesterday, and how did you employ its precious hours? I will but bring that one day to your remembrance: was it a well-spent day? Is that hour well spent that is passed in the company of drunkards? Call you that day well spent that is given

up to riotings, or that night that is defiled with wantonness? I charge you now to answer this question. For every moment that God has lent to you, he will ask for an account of what you did with it. There is not an hour since you began to understand right from wrong for which you will not have to give an account to God. If there were nothing but time entrusted to our stewardship, here is room, indeed, for heart searching and close reckoning.

"Give an account of thy stewardship," next, as to *thy talents*. We all vary in our natural gifts and in our acquirements; one has the tongue of eloquence, another has the pen of a ready writer, and a third has the artistic eye that discerns beauty; but, whichever of these gifts we may have, they belong to God, and ought to be used in his service. Some have only such gifts as qualify them to earn their daily bread by manual labour; they have but little mental power, yet for that little they must give an account, and also for the physical strength with which God has blessed them. There is no person here without a talent of some sort or other, there is no one individual here without some form of power either given by nature or acquired by education. We are all endowed in some degree or other, and we must each one give an account for that talent. What an account must some give, who have been endowed with ten talents, but have wasted them all! What must be the account rendered by a Napoleon? What must be the reckoning given in by a Voltaire, with all the splendour of his intellect laid at the feet of Satan, and desecrated to the damnation of mankind? Yet, while you think of these great ones of the earth, do not forget yourselves. What has been your special gift? You can speak well enough in some companies; have you ever spoken for Christ? You can write well, you judge that you have no mean gift in that direction; has your pen never written a line that will bring your fellow-men to the service of the Saviour? What! having ten talents, are they all wrapped up in napkins, or all used for self, and none employed for God, for holiness, for truth, for righteousness? How sternly does the command come to you, "Give an account of thy stewardship;" yet I am afraid that we cannot any of us give an account of our talents without fear and trembling.

Next, give an account of *thy substance*. We vary greatly as to our temporal circumstances. I suppose there are a few present to whom God has entrusted great wealth, more to whom he has given considerable substance, and that to most of us he has given somewhat more than is absolutely necessary for our actual wants; but whether it is much or little, we must give an account for it all. I do not know what some rich professors will have to say concerning that which they give to the cause of God. It is no tithe of their substance; nay, it is, as it were, but the cheese-parings, and the candle-ends, and these they only give for the sake of appearance, because it would not look respectable if they were altogether to withhold them. The church's coffers could never be so empty as they are if it were not that some of the stewards in the church are not faithful to their trust. It is very sad to think of some of the great men in our own country, who have incomes which, in a single month, would furnish a competent support for an entire family during their whole lives. I wonder what sort of

reckoning theirs will be when they have to give an account of hundreds of thousands or even millions of pounds. With some of them, all that they can say will be, "So much lost on the race-course, so much spent upon a paramour, so much paid for diamonds, so much squandered in this form of waste, and so much in that." But for the poor and needy, who are perishing in our streets, the multitudes who crave even necessary bread, some of them have done nothing at all. There are grand exceptions, names that shall live as long as philanthropy is prized amongst mankind; but the exceptions are so terribly few, that when the rich men of England are indicted at the bar of God, as they certainly will be, the account of their stewardship will be a truly terrible one. Yet what are you, and what am I, to judge thus, if we cannot say that we have been faithful with our little? I ask you if you have, and I pray you to make a reckoning in your mind now of your stewardship of the gold, or the silver, or the copper, with which God has entrusted you.

We must give an account, in the next place, of *our influence.* Everybody has some kind of influence. The mother who never leaves the nursery has a wondrous influence over those little children of hers, though no neighbour feels the force of her influence, and no one but her own little ones is affected by her faithfulness. And who knows but that she is pressing to her bosom, perhaps a Whitefield, who will thunder out the gospel through the length and breadth of the land; or perhaps, on the other hand, an infidel, whose dreadful blasphemies shall ruin multitudes? There is an influence that the mother has for which she must give an account to God. And the father's influence,—oh! fathers, you cannot shake off your obligations to your children by sending them to school, whether to a Sunday-school or a boarding-school. They are your children, and you must give an account of your stewardship concerning your own offspring. Ay, and even the nurse girl, though she seems of small note in the commonwealth, yet she also has an influence over her little charge, which she must use for Christ. Not only he who thrills a senate with his oratory, but he also who speaks a word from the carpenter's bench, each has his influence, and each must use it, and give an account of it; not merely the man who, by refusing to lend his millions, could prevent the horrors of war, but the man who with a smile might help to laugh at sin, or with a word of rebuke might show that he abhorred it. There is no one of you without influence, and I ask you now how you have used it. Has it always been on the side of the Lord? "Give an account of thy stewardship," for that influence will not always last.

We might pass on to consider all the other things that God has entrusted to us, but time would fail us; so I will remind you, my dear friends, with much affection, that the account which you will have to render, and which I ask you to render now, is *not an account concerning other people.* Oh, how nice it would be if we had to do that! would it not? With what gusto some would undertake the task if they had to give in a report upon other people's characters! How easily each of us can play the detective upon our fellows! How ready we are to say of this man, "Oh, yes! he gives away a good deal of

money, but it is only out of ostentation," or of that woman, "Yes, she appears to be a Christian, but you do not know her private life," or of that minister of the gospel, "Yes, he is very zealous; but he makes a good thing out of his ministry." We like thus to reckon up our fellow-creatures, and our arithmetic is wonderfully accurate, at least, so we think; but when other people cast us up according to the same rule, the arithmetic seems terribly out of order, and we cannot believe it to be right. Ah! but at the great judgment we shall not be asked to give an account for others, neither will I ask any of you now to be thinking about the conduct of others. What if others are worse than you are, does that make you the better, or the less guilty? What if others are not all they seem to be, perhaps neither are you; at any rate, their hypocrisy shall not make your pretence to be true. Judge yourselves, that ye be not judged. Let each man thrust the lancet into his own wound, and see to the affairs of his own soul, for each one must give account of himself to God.

Remember, too, that *you are not called upon to give an account to others.* Alas! there are many people who seem to live only that they may win the esteem of their fellows. There is somebody to whom we look up; if we do but have that somebody's smile, we think all is well. Perhaps some here are broken-hearted because that smile has vanished, and they have been misjudged and unjustly condemned. It is a small matter to be judged of man's judgment; and who is he that judges another man's servant? To his own Master the servant shall stand or fall, and not to this interloping judge. My dear friends, when the opinion of one leans this way, and of another goes the other way, when we see public opinion to be as restless and changing as the vane upon the church steeple, swinging round with every wind that blows, we may well bid defiance to it all, and thank God that the last bar is not swayed by the follies of the times, and that the Great Judge will not give his verdict according to the whimsies of an hour, but according to the rule of absolute equity. Yet remember that, if it be hard to be judged of man, it will be sterner still to be judged of God. If, weighed even in the balances of men, some of us are found wanting, how shall we bear to be put into the unerring scales adjusted by the divine hand, to be adjudged by him who cannot err, and to have our destiny fixed for all eternity, either in heaven or in hell? Recollect this, my dear hearer, and be ready to give an account of thy stewardship, not to thy fellow-creature, but to the great Creator and Judge of all.

Remember also, dear friends, that the account to be rendered will be from every man, *from every man personally concerning himself;* and whatever another man's account may be, it will not affect him. Some men will not have been any better than others of you have been; yet if you perish as they perish, a numerous company will not make hell any the cooler. If some men shall have been worse than others of you have been, it certainly will not diminish your punishment if you know that their doom is heavier than your own. Forget, for a while, that there are any other men in the world, and stand individually and separately before those awful eyes which are searching you through and through, for God will judge each of you as if there were

no other men to judge, and read your inmost heart, as if he had not another object to look upon. Give an account, then, of thy stewardship. God grant us grace to give, on each of these separate items that I have mentioned, an honest statement not only to our own conscience, but to him who is the Judge of all!

II. Now for a few minutes let us examine SOME REASONS WHY WE SHOULD AT ONCE GIVE AN ACCOUNT OF OUR STEWARDSHIP.

It was a maxim of Pythagoras that each of his disciples should, every eventide, give in a record of the actions of the day. I think it is well to do so; for we cannot too often take a retrospect of the past. But since, perhaps, some of you may have been lax in this duty, let me remind you that *we have come, as it were, to the eventide of the year*, and it seems to be most suitable that, before we cross into another year of grace, we should in our heart and conscience take stock, and give an account of our stewardship. Sit down a while, pilgrim; sit down a while. Here is the milestone marked with the end of another year; sit down upon it, put thine hand to thy brow and think, and lay thine hand upon thy heart, and search and see what is there. This last Sabbath evening in the year is a most fitting time for giving in this account, and I ask you to use it in making up the account which you have to present before God; and if you feel unwilling to do it, I shall the more earnestly press you to do it. There are no persons who so dislike to look into their account-books as those who are insolvent. Those who keep no books, when they come before the court, are understood to be rogues of the first water; and men who keep no mental memoranda of the past, and bring up no recollections with regard to their sins, having tried to forget them all, may depend upon it that they are deceiving themselves. If you dare not search your hearts, I am afraid there is a reason for that fear, and that above all others you ought to be diligent in this search.

Permit me to remind you that, *if all should be wrong with you, it is best for you to know it.* It is only the most reckless seaman who would rather not know whether there is a rock in the course that he is sailing. O sirs, are you like the ostrich that, having covered its head in the sand, and shut its eyes to the hunter, thinks it is all secure? I pray you, seek to know the worst of your case. It seems to me that any honest and sane man would want to do this. There is nothing a wise man hates more, when he is sick, than to have a doctor attending him, who will always, if he can, give a flattering report, but will never speak the truth about his patient. Let not your heart flatter you any longer, but say to it, "My soul, make out an honest account, see what and where thou art, and whether thou art God's servant or not, doing as God would have thee do."

Believer in Christ, it will be well for you to make out this account, because you will find that *it will help you to prize your Saviour more.* I never look into my own heart without first feeling shame, and afterwards feeling greater love to him who has eternally loved such a sinner as I am. I am sure it will drive you to your knees if you honestly search your own lives. There is enough in the history of a single week to make you prize your Redeemer more than ever, if you fully realize the guilt of that one week, and the greatness of his grace in

pardoning it. O Christian, if you would be driven nearer to your Lord, search and see, confess, repent, and seek forgiveness. Go again to the cross because you have again felt the burden of the sin that nailed your Saviour there.

And, ungodly man, I press you also to give an account of your stewardship, because, *mayhap, the same result may come to you,* if you find that you cannot give in so good an account as you thought you could when you were wrapped up in self-righteousness. Perhaps you may be alarmed and dismayed when you see the true state of the case, and it may be that God the Holy Spirit will lead you to say, "I will go to Jesus, for I am undone without him. I will hasten to his cross, for I need the pardon that his blood has bought. I will now go with the language of confession on my lips, and beseech him to accept me ere another year begins." It seems such a long time since I have talked to some of you. Tossing to and fro upon my bed, suffering great pain, I have thought that those of you to whom I have preached now these many years will have to give an account of every address that I have delivered to you, and of every exhortation with which I have plied you. I do beseech you, seek to make that account at once to your God in private, and ask him to humble you, and to draw you sweetly to trust his dear Son, that you may be saved. I cannot bear the thought that any of you should be lost. I had hoped that those who have supplied my place during my illness might perhaps have been guided to shoot the arrow more directly than I can shoot it One thing I know, there was not amongst them all, whoever they might be, one who more anxiously desired that you might find the Saviour than I do; and I do pray at this moment, since I shall never preach to you again on another Sabbath of this year, that this night may be the last one you will spend in sin, and that to-morrow may be a spiritual birthday to you, the first day in which you shall rejoice in a Saviour; nay, that this very night you may be born again, and become a new creature in Christ Jesus.

III. And now, lastly, let us consider THE REASON WHICH THE MASTER GIVES: "Give an account of thy stewardship, *for thou mayest be no longer steward.*"

This may happen in various ways. It may be that some here may live for years, and yet be no longer stewards. A preacher may be laid aside, his voice gone, his mental faculties weakened,—he is "no longer steward." One is thankful to have further opportunities of serving the Lord, and trying to bring sinners to the Saviour. O my dear brother, work for God while you can! It is one of the bitterest regrets a man can know, to lie on his bed, to be unable to speak, and to think to himself, "I wish I could preach that sermon over again. I did not drive that nail home with all the force I ought to have used; I have not been earnest enough in pleading with sinners, I have not wrestled even to agony over the salvation of their souls." It may be possible, my dear brother minister, that you and I may have twenty or thirty years of being laid aside from active service; then let us work while we can, ere the night cometh when no man can work. Brother, let us seize the oar of the lifeboat, and row out over the stormy sea, seeking to snatch the drowning ones from yonder wreck,

for the time may come when our strong right arm shall be palsied, and when we can do no more.

Yes, and rich professors may have to give an account of their stewardship, and be no longer stewards. There were some of that kind when the recent financial panic came; though they had much before the crash, they had nothing left afterwards, so they could be no longer stewards of the wealth that had been taken from them. It must be a cause of deep regret to men in that position if they cannot give a good account of their stewardship, because they have done but little good with their wealth while they had it; and think, sirs, you to whom God has given great possessions, how soon he may take them from you, for riches abide not for ever. Behold, they take to themselves wings, and fly away. I know of no better way of clipping their wings than by giving generously to the cause of God, and using in his service all that you can. It would be a subject for continual regret to you, I am sure, if you came down to poverty, not so much that you had descended in the social scale, for that you could bear, if it came by mere misfortune through the providence of God; but if you felt, "I did not do what I should have done when I had wealth,"—that would be the arrow which would pierce you to the heart. It may be so, dear brother, it may be so with some of you. At any rate, I feel that there are some of you who are poor because God will not lend his money where he knows that it will be locked up, and not put out to good interest in his cause. What little you have is all hidden away, so the Lord will not trust you with more; he sees you are not fit to be one of his stewards. There are some, on the other hand, whom God has entrusted with much because he sees that they use it wisely in promoting the interests of his kingdom.

But, after all, to every man, whether he be rich, or whether he be in the office of the ministry, *there may be a close of his stewardship before he dies.* The mother has her little children swept away one after another; this is the message to her, "Thou mayest be no longer steward." The teacher has his class scattered, or he is himself unable to go to the school; the word to him also is, "Thou mayest be no longer steward." The man who went to his work, who might have spoken to his fellow-workman, is removed, perhaps to another land, or he is placed in a position where his mouth is shut; now he can be no longer steward. Use all opportunities while you have them, catch them on the wing, serve God while you can to-day! to-day! to-day! to-day! Let each golden moment have its pressing service rendered unto God, lest it should be said to thee, "Thou mayest be no longer steward."

But we shall soon be no longer stewards in another sense. *The hour must come for us to die.* Out of our large congregation we have constant reminders that those who have served us as a church, and have served God faithfully in his church, cannot abide with us for ever. One or another, whom we have loved and honoured, gives in his account, and passes to his rest. So will it be in turn with the pastor, with the deacons, and with the elders. Do not put away the thought of that day, my fellow-workers, as though you were immortal. It may come to us on a sudden; no grey hairs may cover our heads, but while we are yet in the full strength of manly vigour, you or I may be called to

give in our account. What think ye? What think ye? Could you gather up your feet in the bed, and look into eternity without feeling the cold sweat of fear stand upon your brow? What think ye? Could you face the great judgment-seat, and say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day . . . . I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith"? Oh! God be praised if we are able to say that! What monuments of mercy will you and I be if we are able to say this at the close of our service, and to hear our Lord say, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

My fellow-member, by the fact that God is continually removing from us one and another, I ask you to remember that you also will soon depart. Therefore, be making up your account. Rest in Christ more confidently; love God more earnestly; serve your generation more intensely; live while you live; play not at living, but live in real earnest, and let it never be said of you that you trod so lightly on the sands of time that you left no impress there. Make your mark upon your age, and fill your appointed place as God shall help you, that when you are gathered to your fathers, you may not be forgotten, but the church may remember you because in her midst there are children born to God through your means.

As for the unconverted here, need I tell them that they must soon depart, and be no longer stewards? You must go from your business, O trader; you must go from your merchandise, O merchant; you must go from your bench, O artizan; you must go from your machine, O engineer; you must each depart, and go to that bourne from which no traveller returns. Be ye ready! Be ye ready! I will ring the alarm bell for some of you; perhaps my text is a prophecy meant for some man here, "Give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward." Thou hast had children about thee, and thou hast taught them blasphemy and drunkenness; or thou hast had workmen in thine employ, and thou hast laughed at their religion, or aided and abetted them in sin; thou hast had talent, but thou hast used that talent in the service of the evil one; thou hast had gold, but thou hast lavished it upon wantonness; now give an account of it all! Ah! sirs, you may not heed what I say; but you will have to heed what will be said to you at another time. You will see this matter in another light when the death-angel shall put his cold, freezing hand upon your shoulder, and shall say to you, "Give an account! Give an account! Give an account of your stewardship!" O Saviour, Son of God, put thy pierced hand on these blind souls, and give them light, that they may be able to render up their account with joy, and not with grief! Give them grace to believe in thy name, and trust in thine atoning sacrifice, for this is the way of salvation. O poor sinners, trust in Christ Jesus and him crucified! You cannot be saved by your stewardship, any of you; but unfaithful stewardship will ruin you. Christ crucified is your only hope of salvation. Look unto him, and live. Oh, look unto him now! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

LUKE XII. 13—44.

Verses 13, 14. *And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?*

Our Lord was a Judge and a Divider, but his sphere of action was spiritual; he did not interfere in the personal disputes of those who gathered round him.

15. *And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.*

Christ took advantage of this man's request, and made it the text for a sermon against covetousness.

16—19. *And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.*

Notice how fond the rich man was of the little pronouns "I" and "my." He lived only for himself, and was an embodiment of that covetousness which our Lord abhorred and denounced. What a vivid contrast there is between what the man said to himself and the Lord's message to him!

20. *But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?*

This may also be said to any one of you; where would you be if the Lord did say to you, "This night thy soul shall be required of thee"?

21—23. *So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God. And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment.*

Do not spend your care on the lower things; care most for that which is most worth caring for,—more for the body than for raiment, more for life than for meat, and consequently, more for the immortal spirit than for aught besides, and more for God even than for your own soul. Let your cares be rated acccording to their objects; to set a carking, anxious care upon the lesser things, will be folly indeed.

24. *Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls?*

It seems, then, that those that are fed by God are much better fed than those that are fed by men. The ravens know no care whatever, for God cares for them; and, if we could ever bring our hearts into such a condition that we felt that everything to do with us was in God's hand, we should enter into a blessed, hallowed freedom from care in which we should find a sweet repose of spirit.

"Beneath the spreading heavens,
No creature but is fed;
And he who feeds the ravens,
Will give his children bread."

25, 26. *And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest?*

It would be a very small matter to you if you were a foot taller, or if you were a foot shorter. It is not that the making of yourself a cubit taller or shorter would be a small thing to do, but it is a small thing in its result; it is an inconsiderable matter whether a man is tall or short. If ye, then, be not able even to reduce your stature, or to increase it, take no anxious thought about other things.

27. *Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.*

So that God cares not only for things that have necessities, as ravens have, but for things that have luxuries, as lilies have. When God does anything, he does it well. He is a grand Housekeeper; he does not measure out so many ounces of bread *per diem*, as if we were in a workhouse, but "they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." "No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." The lilies might do as well without their golden hues, they might ripen their seed without the lengthened stems that lift them where they can be observed; but God takes more care of them even than Solomon did of himself, for "Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." Now, dear children of God, if you trust your Heavenly Father, he will see that you have no cause for care. If you trust him with your souls, he will not give you a bare salvation, but a rich robe of righteousness to cover all your nakedness. When he does any work, he does it after a better fashion than the wisest of men could do it; and nature herself, working as she does for the lilies, is only God working in another way. But when God himself, without the intervention of the laws of nature, works in the kingdom of his grace, he does it perfectly, he does it gloriously.

28. *If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and to morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith?*

Your life is not like that of the grass, or the flower of the field, that fades on a summer's day. God will take care of you, and the everlasting things shall have from him a care even greater than he gives to the temporal. Yet how much God really does for flowers,—flowers that only open their cups in the morning, and shut them in death at night! How much of skill and wisdom there is even about them! Shall there not be greater skill and wisdom employed upon you who, when you have once begun to bloom in the light of God, shall go on blooming, and flowering, and shedding your perfume throughout the endless ages?

29, 30. *And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.*

For you, the immortal, the twice-born, the very body-guard of Christ, to live for such things as the men of the world live for, is to degrade the peerage of heaven, to bring those who are of the blood royal of the skies down to a gross pursuit. No; let your whole thought, and heart, and life, be spent for something higher and better than these things; and leave the lower cares with your Father.

31, 32. *But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*

When Abraham had many sons, he gave to each one of them a portion,

and sent them away; but Isaac had the family heritage. It is the same with you. The Lord may give to others more than he bestows upon you in this life, but for you he reserves the kingdom. Are you not content with that, whatever else your Father gives you or withholds from you?

33. *Sell that ye have, and give alms;*

That is to say, do not merely give a little, which you can readily spare; but sometimes even pinch yourselves to relieve the poor.

33, 34. *Provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

You are sure to live for that which is the choicest object of your love. Whatever you think to be first, will be first; and what you love in your heart, you will be sure to follow in your life.

35, 36. *Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.*

Many people are thinking just now of Christ's first advent, but this passage bids us watch for his glorious second coming.

37. *Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.*

I never read this verse without wondering at the marvellous condescension of our Lord. Even in the day of his appearing in glory, his thoughts will be more about his people than about himself: "He shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them."

38. *And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants.*

We cannot tell when he will come, but "Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching."

39—44. *And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not. Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all? And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath.*

Wonderful words! We cannot at present tell all that they mean; but, by God's grace, may they be fulfilled to us when our Lord comes to take us to himself!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—366, 365, 823.

END OF VOLUME XLI.