

Christiana and Mercy tell the story of their setting out, but without any new features. The of the last verse of the 100th Psalm is in exactly the same form as we use it to-day.

'S. and H.'s version appeared in 1562, and for more than two centuries it was the only or chief metrical provision of the Church of England. Since 1700 or so it has been called the "Old Version" to distinguish it from Tate and Brady's collection.

'Of the S. and H. version Fuller said that its authors' "piety was better than their poetry, and they had drunk more of Jordan than of Helicon"; and Campbell observed "that they with the best intentions and the worst taste degraded the spirit of Hebrew psalmody by flat and homely phraseology, and, mistaking vulgarity for simplicity, turned into bathos what they found sublime." But Keble and others have valued their work for its fidelity to the original, and their version continued to be used in many places far into the nineteenth century.'

Cf. also Milton's and George Herbert's versions of Psalm 23.

Interpreter speaks more than he did to Christian, but his speech is more conventional and tends to prosiness and excessive quotation of passages of Scripture which are not always remarkable for their relevancy. With the women his manner is caressing and fatherly, and he calls them 'sweet-heart' or 'my darlings.' Supper ended, the night's rest follows, though Mercy has little sleep for joy of her assurance. In the morning there is the garden bath in the open air, after which they are sealed in the forehead and endued with robes of white linen. Great-heart is introduced as their conductor for the next stage—a Puritan divine and soldier, who fitly represents the Church Militant in its defending power. As they set out, Christiana sings, but her song is no improvement on Christian's poorest efforts.

The Great Text Commentary.

THE GREAT TEXTS OF THE PSALMS.

PSALM CXXVI. 6.

**'Though he goeth on his way weeping, bearing forth the seed;
He shall come again with joy, bringing his sheaves with him.'**

THIS Psalm should be read in conjunction with Ps 137. The two Psalms are as pendant pictures; they show us the beginning and the end of Israel's bondage in Babylon, and suggest to us the history of their intervening life. The Babylonian captivity fell upon the Jews with paralyzing force. They could but 'sit down and weep by the rivers of Babylon'; 'hanging their harps upon the willows,' and with their hands fallen listless by their side, they remembered Zion, and wept. But while they wept they toiled; they sowed, and strangers gathered in the fruit. At length their own harvest came; God turned their captivity as He sent the rain-streams upon the barren south lands. He had watched their patient toil, their sorrowful fidelity; and after many years He gave them their reward. Deliverance came to them from the ruler of Babylon himself; they returned to their own land with the good wishes and the sympathies of their taskmasters. Then were they

'like them that dream'; they could scarcely believe the unexpected blessing that had befallen them. 'Their mouth was filled with laughter, and their tongue with singing.' Their heathen captors shared their gladness; they, too, rejoiced that Jehovah had visited His people, saying, 'The Lord hath done great things for them.' The Lord hath done great things for us, responded the joyous freedmen, 'The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad.' They had gone, they had gone, weeping, bearing their seed basket; they came, they came, rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them.

A few years ago, a severe drought occurred in South Africa. For many months the sun blazed from a cloudless sky and scorched every blade of grass. The time for sowing came, and every passing cloud was eagerly scanned in hope of rain, but not a drop fell. Clouds appeared at intervals that gave much promise, but the withering north wind sprang up and scattered them. Consternation could be seen on many faces when the time for sowing was over: for it meant a year of gnawing hunger for their families.

On one of my many rides in the Somerville Mission district, I passed a man one day trying to cultivate a patch of land with a hoe. In conversation he told me he was sowing the last grains of maize he had, and that his hungry children had been crying for them that morning.

The year following the drought a plentiful rain fell, and gave the people a record harvest. Truly that sower sowed in tears, but reaped in joy. He went on his way weeping, bearing forth the seed; and came again with joy, bringing his sheaves with him.¹

I.

Sowing has to be with weeping.

1. All men are in a sense sowers. Every thought harboured in the brain is the seed-corn of action, and every act the germ of habit. Each man is daily sowing the seeds of his own character and destiny. And if we view men less as individuals than as members of society, we know well that as long as the subtle and mysterious force which we call influence flows out from us, every word of a man's lips and every act of his life which others may hear and see, are as seeds dropped into the social soil.

But the disciple of Christ is a sower in a deeper sense than this. To him has been entrusted by his Master the 'precious seed' of the Kingdom, and he goes forth from day to day to sow, not by accident or involuntarily, but with a set and deliberate purpose in life, the seeds which will bear a golden harvest in eternity. Filled with the Spirit of Christ, he sows the seeds of love in a world torn with bitter animosities and deadly hate. Seeds of kindness, seeds of sympathy, seeds of gentleness—these are the grain he scatters in the furrows of life.

Nor are these the only seeds the Master has entrusted to His followers. They possess the truth; they know its power; they love it, and love to scatter it in the great field of humanity. And 'precious seed,' too, is the truth they sow; precious because it is to hungry souls what bread is to their bodies—the staff of life; precious because it tells of a priceless Saviour; precious because it brings home to men the inestimable benefits of His Cross and Passion; precious because it clothes their barren lives with holy fruitfulness; precious because it opens before their eyes the gates of glory, and enables them to see their destiny of joy in the presence of the King.

An old woman in Glasgow was seen by a policeman picking up something from time to time in the street and dropping what she found into her apron. The policeman's curiosity was aroused, and he asked her to show him what her apron contained. She hesitated a moment, and then exposed an apronful of broken bits of glass. 'What do you

want with those things?' he asked, thinking she was a little crazy. 'I'm only taking them out of the way of the bairnies' feet,' she answered.²

2. But, while each of us is a sower, that is not the particular thought of this verse. The principle lying in the text is this, that as long as the sowing time lasts, be it ever so short or ever so long, the sower is a mourner. How near that conception comes to our Saviour's benediction, 'Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.' The Christian conception of this mourning, however, goes deeper than that of the Old Testament; yet even for the Psalmist this principle contained two important elements. One was this: He saw that wherever there was a true man, or a true nation in the world, it would have to overcome the determined opposition of the world forces. The world could not understand the secret of its life, but would seek to crush it out with violence and scorn, and drive it into the desert places of solitude and grief. The other element that entered into the ancient idea was, that so long as the Kingdom of God was delayed and the harvest of Zion's glory did not come, the low estate of the Messianic Kingdom would be a constant source of poignant grief to the earnest soul.

The true man to-day is in some sense like 'the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,' and the burden of the world's sin and the world's sorrows rests upon his heart. The Cross of Christ has made sin exceedingly sinful, so that the sin in our own hearts and in the world has become a burden of sorrow. No less has the Cross revealed the worth of the human spirit, and made the Christian life quiver in sympathy with the woes of a fallen world. So the sower of good seed, from the Son of Man to His humblest follower, may be described in the words of this passage, 'He goeth on his way weeping, bearing forth the seed.'

When I consider Life and its few years—
A wisp of fog betwixt us and the sun;
A call to battle, and the battle done
Ere the last echo dies within our ears;
A rose choked in the grass; an hour of fears;
The gusts that past a darkening shore do beat;
The burst of music down an unlistening street—
I wonder at the idleness of tears.
Ye old, old dead, and ye of yesternight,
Chieftains and bards, and keepers of the sheep,
By every cup of sorrow that you had,
Loose me from tears, and make me see aright
How each hath back what once he stayed to weep;
Homer his sight, David his little lad!³

¹ Dundas L. Erskine.

² G. A. Sowter, *Sowing and Reaping*, 4.

³ Lizette Wordsworth Reese, in *Scribner's Magazine*.

(1) 'They that sow in tears. . . . He goeth on his way weeping'—these are not the few who have been haunted by apparent failure, or beset with outwardly painful conditions of service. They are not those who have walked in the shadow of a lost leader, or toiled in the grey loneliness of a lost comrade or of a brother proved untrue. For apparent failure, outward difficulty and loneliness, often as we may have to face them, are, after all, only the accidents of Godward toil. And if the bearer of seed for God's great harvest should go forth to find no experience of these things, still, if he is to do any real work in the fields of the Lord, he must go forth weeping. He must sow in tears.

(2) The tears that are the pledge of harvest are not called to the eyes by ridicule or opposition. They are not the tears of disappointment, vexation, or impotence. They are tears that dim the eyes of them that see visions, and gather in the heart of them that dream dreams. To see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and the blindness of the world's heart to that glory; to see unveiled the beauty that should be, and, unveiled too, the shame that is; to have a spiritual nature that thrills at the touch of the perfect love and life, and responds to every note of pain borne in upon it from the murmurous trouble of the world,—this is to have inward fitness for the high work of the Kingdom.

'I have suffered too, my dear . . . but I knew you would come back. . . . And to-day, Henry, in the anthem, when they sang it, "When the Lord turned the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream," I thought, yes, like them that dream—them that dream. And then it went, "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy; and he that goeth forth and weepeth, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him"; I looked up from the book, and saw you. I was not surprised when I saw you. I knew you would come, my dear, and saw the golden sunshine round your head. . . . Now—now you are come again, bringing your sheaves with you, my dear.' She burst into a wild flood of weeping as she spoke; she laughed and sobbed on the young man's heart, crying out wildly, 'Bringing your sheaves with you—your sheaves with you!'¹

3. *It is his tears that cause him to go forth.* It is his sorrow that will not let him rest. True pity is a mighty motive. When the real abiding pathos of life has gripped a man's heart, you will find him afraid doing the work of the Lord.

If there had not been the sowing in Gethsemane,

and on Calvary, the after-joy could never have been a hope in Christ's heart. Into the kingdom of His joy He, too, passes through tribulation. He went forth weeping—a man of sorrows—smitten, afflicted: He went forth carrying His precious burden—the seed of the world's life, His life, and death, and resurrection—His truth, and love, and holiness. He went forth offering Himself as seed. For He was Himself the seed out of which redemption was to spring for men. And for this seed, as for the seed of the commonest herb that grows, He recognized and honoured the law, 'Except a corn of wheat die, it abideth alone.' He went forth on His sublime enterprise—the work of redemption—sowing the world's heart with the blood of His own.

4. No man ever wept like this and went not forth, but some go forth who have not wept. And they go forth to certain failure. They mishandle life, and with good intent do harm. But that is not the worst thing to be said about these toilers without tears. It is not that they touch life so unskilfully, but they touch so little of it. It is only through his tears that a man sees what his work is and where it lies. Tearless eyes are purblind. We have yet much to learn about the real needs of the world. So many try very earnestly to deal with situations they have never yet really seen. For the uplifting of men, and for the great social task of this our day, we need ideas, and enthusiasm, and all sorts of resource; but most of all, and first of all, we need vision. And the man who goes farthest, and sees most, and does most, is 'he that goeth forth and weepeth.'

The captivity had done great things for the Jews, and had brought them within measurable distance of achievements of spiritual splendour. Every one is agreed that during the captivity the Jews grew in spiritual conception and force and power as they had never grown in their history previously. When their external prosperity was taken away from them, when the hostile world closed around them, their inner life began to flourish and grow like Lebanon. Read the wonderful post-exilic prophecies in the second part of the Book of Isaiah; read the wonderful post-exilic Psalms, and you will see that they reveal a marvellous spiritual development, that they bear testimony to an unparalleled ascent of the people to a nobler standpoint, and if they did not rise later to the height of their new possibilities, yet out of them came the Christ, the Saviour of the world; and from their midst sprang the first apostles, who turned the world upside down. Ancient and modern experience agree that the inner life of man is often developed and spiritualized by adversity.²

¹ Thackeray, *Esmond*, Bk. II. chap. vi.

² J. Thomas.

II.

Reaping is to be with rejoicing.

1. They that sow in tears—in tears, vexed, disappointed, saddened, doubtful, wearying—shall reap in joy, shall doubtless come again with joy, and bring their sheaves home. God will not forget, forsake His heritage; He will bring all to pass; there will be fulfilment.

What does the Psalm say? He who wrote it is a Jew who has come back to Palestine with that colony of faithful men, who after the edict of Cyrus reoccupied the old home and rebuilt its walls and roofs and temple. Something has brought to his mind that day of wonder, the return of Israel from exile. A day of wonder indeed. An impossible bliss had fallen on them, too blessed, too marvellous for heart to credit: their astonished eyes swam as in a blessed dream: laughter ran from their joy-shaken hearts, song from their raptured lips: like voices in a dream came to them the speech of heathen neighbours watching them in their glad delirium: 'The Lord of this captive folk has done great things for them.' 'Yea, indeed,' cries the Psalmist, looking back from his quiet hour of sober certainty upon that far-back hour of miracle, 'indeed, the Lord has done great things for us: glad are we.' But there the strain changes softly from a wild joy to a wistful, 'Turn our captivity, O Lord, as the rivers in the south. Turn again our captivity. Bring back the many, many of Israel who still abide in the far heathen lands; bring them back to swell the ranks of these few, all too few, of Israel, scattered sparingly in the vacant land, half-lost among the vales and hill-tops, where once they dwelt a mighty people. Bring back, bring back our sons and daughters; let the stream of life flow again with broad current in its ancient stream-bed; fill up again our wasted, empty land, O Lord, and all-fulfil the promise Thou hast fulfilled but half.' Then pensively he closes, 'So it will be: it will be so. There is fulfilment for men's hopes, spite of doubt and sorrow. He that to-day goes casting seed with tears of disappointment at the barrenness of an unkindly soil, will doubtless come again some day in joy, and with the sheaves of his harvest in his bosom.' So spoke this old singer of Israel concerning the hopes of men and the fulfilment of hopes; so he spoke his thanksgiving for the years past, his faith for the years to be.

Always in my own ears has rung a saying of one of our wisest, who, speaking of some such things as are now in our minds, said to me, 'We know not what fulfilment is.' Aye, we do not know. And therefore perhaps our lives are fulfilled when most we think they have missed fulfilment. God does know what fulfilment is. He knows what our powers were meant for, what the use is upon earth of each of us, something probably very different from what our self-conceit, or else our self-distrust, pictured as the proper use of our particular life. Well, to that use we may have been put, although our own dreams of usefulness are left so unfulfilled. We come again from life's harvesting with a very sober, unexultant joy; but perhaps we are wrong in this want of joy; perhaps the sheaves are there, only in God's bosom, not ours.¹

(1) No hour's fight was ever worth fighting if it was fought for the sake of the hour. The moments are ever challenging the eternal, the swift and busy hours fling their gauntlets at the feet of the ageless things. The real battle of life is never between yesterday and to-day; it is always between to-day and Forever. To isolate an experience is to misinterpret it. We may even completely classify experiences and yet completely misunderstand experience. To understand life at all we must get beyond the incidental and the alternating. Life is not a series of events charged with elements of contrast, contradiction, or surprise. It is a deep, coherent, and unflinching process. And one feels that it was something more than the chance of the moment that led the singer of old to weave the tears and the rejoicings of men's lives into a figure of speech that stands for unity of process, even the figure of the harvest.

(2) The sweep of golden grain is not some arbitrary compensation for the life of the seed cast so lavishly into the ground, and bidding the test of darkness and cold. It is the very seed itself fulfilled of all its being. Even so it is with the sorrows of these hearts of ours and the joy unto which God bringeth us. He does not fling us a few glad hours to atone for the hours wherein we have suffered adversity. There is a deep sense in which the joys of life are its ripened sorrows.

In the early part of Mr. Moody's evangelistic work he was stopping once in a home in the West, and saw there a bright boy about thirteen years old. He did not bear the name of the family he was living with, and yet he was treated like one of the family. Mr. Moody asked the lady of the house who he was, and she said, 'He is the son of a missionary; his parents couldn't educate their children in

¹ J. H. Skrine.

India, so they came back here. But they had learned the language of India, and they did not feel that it was right for them to stay. Finally the husband said, "You stay here and educate the children, and I will go back." The mother said, "No, God has used me there with you, and we will go together." "But," the father said, "you can't give up those children. You have never been separated from them since they were born. You can't leave them in this country." She said, "I can do it for Christ, if He wants me to." They made it a matter of prayer, and put a notice in the papers that they were going to leave their children, asking Christian people to take and educate them.¹

This lady saw the notice and wrote that she would take one child and bring it up for Christ's sake. She said in telling about it: "His mother came and stayed a week, and observed everything. She watched the order and discipline in my family, and after she was convinced that it was a safe place to leave her boy in, she fixed the day of departure. My room was adjoining hers, and when the time came to start I heard her pray, "Lord Jesus, help me now. I need Thee. Help me to give up this dear boy without a tear, that I may leave him with a smile. The last time he sees me I don't want him to see a tear in my eye. O God, help me, and give me strength." Then, she said, that mother came down and took her boy to her bosom, hugged him and kissed him with a smile on her face—not a tear—and left.

Some years after, Mr. Moody was preaching in Hartford, and found a young man who was in the habit of picking up the rough boys of the streets and bringing them to his meetings. He would sit with them around him, and, after the sermon, with great tenderness and skill, he would lead them to Christ. It pleased Mr. Moody very much, and he asked who he was. They told him his name, and said that he was in the theological seminary. He found that he was one of those five sons, and all of them were devout Christians, and were preparing themselves to return to India to take up the work that their father and mother had left.¹

¹ L. A. Banks.

Our field is the world ; whether sowing or reaping,
Or gleaning the handfuls that others have passed,
Or waiting the growth of the seed that with weeping
On rocky and desolate plains we have cast ;
Yet each for his toiling and each for his mourning,
'Shall one day rejoice when the harvest is done ;
And know in the flush of Eternity's dawning
That the toil, the reward, and the glory are one.

2. It may be that we do not see a man's tears
There will be a smile in his eyes and, maybe,
a song on his lips. For the sorrow and the joy of
service dwell side by side in a man's life. Indeed,
they often seem to him but one thing. It were
a mistake to refer the whole meaning of the words
about a man's coming 'again with rejoicing,
bringing his sheaves with him,' to some far day
when the reapers of God shall gather the last great
harvest of the world. Through his tears the sower
sees the harvest. Through all his life there rings
many a sweet prophetic echo of the harvest home :

Went ye not forth with prayer?
Then ye went not forth in vain ;
'The Sower, the Son of Man,' was there,
And His was that precious grain.

Ye may not see the bud,
The first sweet signs of Spring,
The first slow drops of the quickening shower
On the dry hard ground that ring.

But the harvest-home ye'll keep,
The summer of life ye'll share ;
When they that sow, and they that reap,
Rejoice together *there*.

Illustrations of Spiritual Truths from Gibbon's 'Decline and Fall.'

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(Continued from vol. xxii. p. 461.)

VOL. ii. p. 127. 'In a small town of Phrygia . . . the magistrates and the body of the people had embraced the Christian faith: and as some resistance might be apprehended to the execution of the edict [of Diocletian], the governor of the province was supported by a numerous detachment of legionaries. On their approval the citizens threw themselves

into the church, with the resolution either of defending by arms that sacred edifice or of perishing in its ruins. They indignantly rejected the notice and permission which was given them to retire, till the soldiers, provoked by their obstinate refusal, set fire to the building on all sides, and consumed, by this extraordinary kind of martyrdom, a