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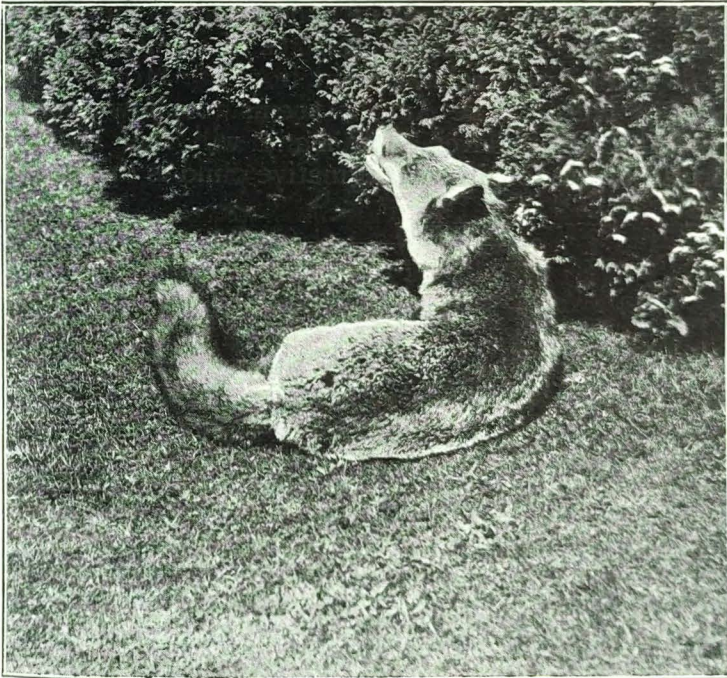
The Minimisings of Maurice

**BEING THE ADVENTURES OF A VERY
SMALL BOY AMONG VERY SMALL THINGS.**

BY

THE REV. S. N. SEDGWICK,

Author of "Petronilla," "A Daughter of the Druids," "The Romance of
Precious Bibles," "The Story of the Apocrypha" "Sermons from
Nature," etc., etc.



A FOX! YES, A REAL FOX!

P. U. O.

the true High-Priest, in contrast to the provisional and preparatory "Law." The writer has said much to us in this way before, particularly in the last three chapters of the Epistle. But he must emphasize it again, for it is the inmost purport of his whole discourse. And he must do it now with the urgency of one who has in view a real peril of apostasy. His readers are hard pressed, by persuasions and by terrors, to turn back from Christ to the Judaistic travesty of the message of the Law. He must not only tell them of the splendour of Messiah's work, but of the absolute finality of it for man's salvation. To forsake it is to "forsake their own mercy," to "turn back into perdition."

So he begins with a reminder of the incapacity of the Law to save, by pointing to the ceaseless *repetition* of the sacrificial acts. Year by year, from one Atonement Day to another, the blood-shedding, the blood-sprinkling, the propitiation, had to be done again. And year by year accordingly the worshippers were treated as "not perfect" (ver. 1)—that is to say, in the clear light of the context, they were not perfect as to reconciliation, not relieved of the burthen of guilt. The "conscience of sins" (ver. 2) haunted them still—the weary sense of an unsettled score of offences, a position precarious and unassured before the Divine Judge.

We believe—nay, with the Psalms in our hands, such Psalms as xxiii., and xxxii., and ciii., we know—that for the really contrite and loyal heart, even under the Law, there were large experiences of peace and joy. But these were not due to the sacrifices of the Tabernacle or the Temple, however divinely ordered. They were due to revelations from many quarters of the character of the Lord Jehovah, and not least, assuredly, to the conviction—how could the more deeply taught souls have helped it?—that this vast and death-dealing ceremonial had *a goal* which alone could explain it, in some transcendent climax of remission. But in itself the ritual emphasized not gladness but judgment; not love but the dread fact of guilt. And the blood of goats could not for a moment be thought of (ver. 4) as *by itself* able to make peace with God. At best, it laid stress on the need of

something which, while analogous to it on one side, should be transcendently different and greater on the other.

The priests daily (ver. 11), the high-priest yearly, as they slew the victims and burnt them, and sprinkled blood, and wafted incense, in view of Israel's tale of offences against their Divine King, were all, by their every action, prophets of that mysterious something yet to come. They "made remembrance of sins" (ver. 3), writing always anew upon the conscience of the worshipper the certainty that sin, in its form of guilt, is a tremendous reality in the court of God, that it calls importunately for propitiation, and that animal propitiations could not, by their very nature, be really propitiatory by themselves. Yet the God of Israel had commanded them; they could not be *mere* forms therefore. What could they be then but types and suggestions of a reality which should at last justify their symbolism by a victorious fulfilment? Thus was an oracle like Isa. liii. made possible. And thus, as we are taught expressly here (vers. 5-7), the oracle of Ps. xl. was made possible, in which "sacrifices and offerings," though prescribed to Israel by his King, were not "delighted in" by Him, not "willed" by Him for their own sake at all, but in which One speaks to the Eternal about another and supreme immolation, for which the speaker has "come" to present HIMSELF. "Ears hast Thou opened for me," runs the Hebrew (Ps. xl. 6). "A body hast Thou adjusted for me," was the Greek paraphrase of the Seventy followed by the holy writer here. It was as if the paraphrasts, looking onward to the Hope of Israel, would interpret and expand the thought of an uttermost *obedience*, signified by the *ear*, into the completer thought of the body of which the listening ear was part, and which should be given up wholly in sacrifice to God.¹

If this is at all the course of the writer's exposition, there is nothing arbitrary in the sequel to it. He explains the enigmatic psalm by finding in it the crucified and self-offering High-Priest of our profession. Of Him "the roll of the book" had spoken, as the supreme doer and bearer for us of the will of God. His

¹ So Kay, on this passage, in the "Speaker's Commentary."

sacred Body was the Thing indicated by the prophetic altars of Aaron. When He "offered" it, presenting it to the eternal Holiness on our behalf, when He let it be done to death because we had sinned, so that we might be accepted because it, because He, had suffered—then did He "fill" the types "full" of their true meaning, and so close their work for ever.

Yes, that work was now *for ever* closed by the attainment of its goal. Moreover, *His* work of sacrifice and of offering, of suffering and of presentation, was for ever finished also. This is the burthen and message of the whole passage (vers. 11-18). "Once for all" (ἐφάπαξ), "once for ever," the holy Body has been offered (ver. 10). "He offered one sacrifice for sins in perpetuity," εἰς τὸ διηνεκές (ver. 12). And therefore, not only for the priests of the old rite, but for the High-Priest of the heavenly order, "there is no more offering for sin" (ver. 18).

And why? Because, for the new Israel, for the chosen people of faith (ver. 39), the supreme sacrifice and offering has done its work. It has "sanctified" them (vers. 10, 29); that is to say, it has hallowed them into God's accepted possession by its reconciling and redeeming efficacy. For its virtue does much more than rescue; it annexes and appropriates what it saves. It has "perfected" them (ver. 14); that is to say, it has set them effectually in that position of complete "peace with God" which guilt while still unsettled makes impossible. It has "put them among the children," within the home circle of Divine love. It has done this "in perpetuity," εἰς τὸ διηνεκές (ver. 14); that is to say, they will never, to the very last, need anything but that sacrifice and offering to be the cause and the warrant of their place within that home. "Their sins and their iniquities" their reconciled Father "will never remember any more" against them (ver. 17), in the sense that the Sacrifice once presented on their behalf will be before Him every moment in the person of the Self-Sacrificer who sits beside Him, "appearing for us." They are the Israel of the great New Covenant. And that Covenant, as we have already remembered (viii. 7-13), provides for the spiritual transformation of the wills of the covenanters;

the law of their God shall be "written on" their very minds—that is to say, they shall will His will as their own. But such a "writing" demands, by the very nature of things, that *first*—not last—there should be an absolute remission. For without it there could not be inward peace, nor therefore filial and paternal harmony. So, for this deep mass of reasons, the new Israelites are *first* wholly accepted for the sake of their self-offered High-Priest, that *then* they may be wholly transformed by His power, working in His peace, within themselves.

The great closing paragraphs of the chapter (vers. 19-39) are one long application of this sublime finality of the one offering, and this presentness of our complete acceptance. First, the new Israelite, his "heart sprinkled from an evil conscience" (ver. 22)—released, that is to say, by the applied Sacrifice from the haunting sense of guilt—and having his "body washed with pure water," the baptismal sign and seal of the covenant blessing, is *to behave as what he is*—the child at home. That home is the Holy Place; it is the very presence of his God; but *it is home*. He is to pass into that sanctuary, along the pathway traced by the blessed blood, not hesitating, but with the "boldness" of an absolute reliance, perfectly free while perfectly and wonderingly humbled; "with a true heart, in fullness, in full assurance, of faith" (ver. 22). He is to hold fast his avowal of assurance, and meanwhile he is to animate the brethren round him to a holy rivalry (ver. 24) of love and zeal. He is to maintain all possible worshipping union with them, in the dawning light of the promised return of the now enthroned High-Priest (ver. 25).

Then, further, the new Israelite is to cherish the grace of godly fear. The "boldness" of the loyal child is to go along with the clear recollection that outside the holy home there lies only "a wilderness of woe." To leave it, to turn back from it, to be a renegade from covenant joys, is no mere exchange of the best for the less good. It means multiplied and capital rebellion. No legal shadow-sacrifices will shelter now the soul that forsakes the eternal High-Priest and casts His Self-sacrifice

aside. To do that is to set out towards a hopeless retribution, towards the fire of judgment, the vengeance of the living God (vers. 26-31).

With tender urgency he pleads for fresh memories and fresh resolves (vers. 32-35). He recalls to them days, not long ago, when they had borne shame and loss, "a conflict of sufferings," fellowship with outcast and imprisoned saints, spoiling of their own possessions—all made more than bearable by the joy of their wonderful "enlightenment" (ver. 32). Let them do so still, in full view of the coming crown. Let them grasp afresh the glorious privilege of "boldness" (ver. 35), reaffirming to themselves with strong assurance that they are "sanctified," "perfected," at home with God in Christ. Let them rise up and go on in that noble "patience" (ver. 36) which "suffers and is strong." It is only "a very little while" before the High-Priest will reappear. And the "faith" which takes Him at His word will, as the prophet witnesses (Hab. ii. 4), bridge that little while with a "life" which cannot die. To "shrink back," as the same seer in the same breath warns us, is to lose the smile of God in a final ruin. But that, for us, cannot be; we, in His mercy, relying upon the faithful Promiser, attain "the saving of the soul."

Now, as then, the tenth chapter of the Hebrews points with a golden rod to the one path of life, peace, and perseverance to the end. "Rejoice in the Lord; *for you it is safe*" (Phil. iii. 1). The "boldness" of a meek assurance of a present and a great salvation is the way for us, as it was the way of old, which leads through holiness to heaven.

