The Art of Illustration - Charles Haddon Spurgeon

THE ART OF ILLUSTRATION BY C. H. SPURGEON

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The lectures in this volume were originally delivered to the students of the Pastors' College, Metropolitan Tabernacle, London, England. It is the first of his unfinished books to be published, and one to which he had himself given the title, "The Art of Illustration."

Of the five lectures included in this volume, the first two were revised during Mr. Spurgeon's lifetime. Two were partially revised by him before being redelivered to a later company of students than those who had heard them for the first time.

The remaining lecture was printed substantially as it was taken by the reporter; only such verbal corrections having been made as were absolutely necessary to insure accuracy of statement. Mr. Spurgeon has said of his lectures to his students: "I am as much at home with my young brethren as in the bosom of my family, and therefore speak without restraint. I do not offer that which has cost me nothing, for I have done my best, and taken abundant pains. Therefore, with clear conscience, I place my work at the service of my brethren, especially hoping to have a careful reading from young preachers, whose profiting has been my principal aim." W. B. K.

CONTENTS

See Spurgeon's Illustration Collection - Alphabetized A-Z

LECTURE I. ILLUSTRATIONS IN PREACHING.

The topic now before us is the use of illustrations in our sermons. Perhaps we shall best subserve our purpose by working out an illustration in the present address; for there is no better way of teaching the art of pottery than by making a pot. Quaint Thomas Fuller says, "Reasons are the pillars of the fabric of a sermon; but similitudes are the windows which give the best lights." The comparison is happy and suggestive, and we will build up our discourse under its direction.

The chief reason for the construction of windows in a house is, as Fuller says, *to let in light*. Parables, similes, and metaphors have that effect; and hence we use them to *illustrate* our subject, or, in other words, to "*brighten it with light*," for that is Dr. Johnson's literal rendering of the word *illustrate*. Often when didactic speech fails to enlighten our hearers we may make them see our meaning by opening a window and letting in the pleasant light of[8] analogy. Our Saviour, who is the light of the world, took care to fill his speech with similitudes, so that the common people heard him gladly; his example stamps with high authority the practice of illuminating heavenly instruction with comparisons and similes. To every preacher of righteousness as well as to Noah, wisdom gives the command, "A window shalt thou make in the ark." You may build up laborious definitions and explanations and yet leave your hearers in the dark as to your meaning; but a thoroughly suitable metaphor will wonderfully clear the sense. The pictures in an illustrated paper give us a far better idea of the scenery which they represent than could be conveyed to us by the best descriptive letterpress; and it is much the same with scriptural teaching: abstract truth comes before us so much more vividly when a concrete example is given, or the doctrine itself is clothed in figurative language. There should, if possible, be at least one good metaphor in the shortest address; as Ezekiel, in his vision of the temple, saw that even to the little chambers there were windows suitable to their size. If we are faithful to the spirit of the gospel we labor to make things plain: it is our study to be simple and to be understood by the most illiterate of our hearers; let us, then, set forth many a[9] metaphor and parable before the people. He wrote wisely who said, "The world below me is a glass in which I may see the world above. The works of God are the shepherd's calendar and the plowman's alphabet." Having nothing to conceal, we have no ambition to be obscure. Lycophron declared that he would hang himself upon a tree if he found a person who could understand his poem entitled "The Prophecy of Cassandra." Happily no one arose to drive him to such a misuse of timber. We think we could find brethren in the ministry who might safely run the same risk in connection with their sermons. Still have we among us those who are like Heraclitus, who was called "the Dark Doctor" because his language was beyond all comprehension. Certain mystical discourses are so dense that if light were admitted into them it would be

extinguished like a torch in the Grotta del Cane: they are made up of the palpably obscure and the inexplicably involved, and all hope of understanding them may be abandoned. This style of oratory we do not cultivate. We are of the same mind as Joshua Shute, who said: "That sermon has most learning in it that has most plainness. Hence it is that a great scholar was wont to say, 'Lord, give me learning enough, that I may preach plain enough.'"

Windows greatly add to the pleasure and agreeableness of a habitation, and so do *illustrations make a sermon pleasurable and interesting*. A building without windows would be a prison rather than a house, for it would be quite dark, and no one would care to take it upon lease; and, in the same way, a discourse without a parable is prosy and dull, and involves a grievous weariness of the flesh. The preacher in Solomon's Ecclesiastes "sought to find out acceptable words," or, as the Hebrew has it, "words of delight": surely, figures and comparisons are delectable to our hearers. Let us not deny them the salt of parable with the meat of doctrine. Our congregations hear us with pleasure when we give them a fair measure of imagery: when an anecdote is being told they rest, take breath, and give play to their imaginations, and thus prepare themselves for the sterner work which lies before them in listening to our profounder expositions. Riding in a third-class carriage some years ago in the eastern counties, we had been for a long time without a lamp; and when a traveler lighted a candle, it was pleasant to see how all eyes turned that way, and rejoiced in the light: such is frequently the effect of an apt simile in the midst of a sermon; it lights up the whole matter, and gladdens every heart. Even the[11] little children open their eyes and ears, and a smile brightens up their faces as we tell a story; for they, too, rejoice in the light which streams in through our windows. We dare say they often wish that the sermon were all illustrations, even as the boy desired to have a cake made all of plums; but that must not be: there is a happy medium, and we must keep to it by making our discourse pleasant hearing, but not a mere pastime. No reason exists why the preaching of the gospel should be a miserable operation either to the speaker or to the hearer. Pleasantly profitable let all our sermons be. A house must not have thick walls without openings, neither must a discourse be all made up of solid slabs of doctrine without a window of comparison or a lattice of poetry; if so, our hearers will gradually forsake us, and prefer to stay at home and read their favorite authors, whose lively tropes and vivid images afford more pleasure to their minds.

Every architect will tell you that he looks upon his windows as *an opportunity for introducing ornament into his design*. A pile may be massive, but it cannot be pleasing if it is not broken up with windows and other details. The palace of the popes at Avignon is an immense structure; but the external win[12]dows are so few that it has all the aspect of a colossal prison, and suggests nothing of what a palace should be. Sermons need to be broken up, varied, decorated, and enlivened; and nothing can do this so well as the introduction of types, emblems, and instances. Of course, ornament is not the main point to be considered; but still many little excellences go to make up perfection, and this is one of the many, and therefore it should not be overlooked. When Wisdom built her house she hewed out her seven pillars, for glory and for beauty, as well as for the support of the structure; and shall we think that any rough hovel is good enough for the beauty of holiness to dwell in? Certainly a gracious discourse is none the better for being bereft of every grace of language. Meretricious ornament we deprecate, but an appropriate beauty of speech we cultivate. Truth is a king's daughter, and her raiment should be of wrought gold; her house is a palace, and it should be adorned with "windows of agate and gates of carbuncle."

Illustrations tend to enliven an audience and quicken attention. Windows, when they will open—which, alas! is not often the case in our places of worship—are a great blessing by refreshing and reviving the audience with a little pure air, and arousing the poor mor[13]tals who are rendered sleepy by the stagnant atmosphere. A window should, according to its name, be a wind-door, through which a breath of air may visit the audience; even so, an original figure, a noble image, a quaint comparison, a rich allegory, should open upon our hearers a breeze of happy thought, which will pass over them like life-giving breath, arousing them from their apathy, and quickening their faculties to receive the truth. Those who are accustomed to the soporific sermonizings of certain dignified divines would marvel greatly if they could see the enthusiasm and lively delight with which congregations listen to speech through which there flows a quiet current of happy, natural illustration. Arid as a desert are many volumes of discourses which are to be met with upon the booksellers' dust-covered shelves; but if in the course of a thousand paragraphs they contain a single simile, it is as an oasis in the Sahara, and serves to keep the reader's soul alive. In fashioning a discourse think little of the bookworm, which will be sure of its portion of meat however dry your doctrine, but have pity upon those hungering ones immediately around you who must find life through your sermon or they will never find it at all. If some of your hearers sleep on they will of[14] necessity wake up in eternal perdition, for they hear no other helpful voice.

While we thus commend illustrations for necessary uses, it must be remembered that they are not the strength of a sermon any more than a window is the strength of a house; and for this reason, among others, *they should not be too numerous*. Too many openings for light may seriously detract from the stability of a building. We have known sermons so full of metaphors that they became weak, and we had almost said *crazy*, structures. Sermons must not be nosegays of flowers, but sheaves of wheat. Very beautiful sermons are generally very useless ones. To aim at elegance is to court failure. It is possible to have too much of a good thing: a glass house is not the most comfortable of abodes, and besides other objectionable qualities it has the great fault of being sadly tempting to stone-throwers. When a critical adversary attacks our metaphors he generally makes short work of them. To friendly minds images are arguments, but to opponents they are opportunities for attack; the enemy climbs up by the window.

Comparisons are swords with two edges which cut both ways; and frequently what seems a sharp and telling illustration may be wittily turned against you, so as to cause a[15] laugh at your expense: therefore do not rely upon your metaphors and parables. Even a second-rate man may defend himself from a superior mind if he can dexterously turn his assailant's gun upon himself. Here is an instance which concerns myself, and I give it for that reason, since these lectures have all along been autobiographical. I give a cutting from one of our religious papers: "Mr. Beecher was neatly tripped up in 'The Sword and the Trowel.' In his 'Lectures on Preaching' he asserts that Mr. Spurgeon has succeeded 'in spite of his Calvinism'; adding the remark that 'the camel does not travel any better, nor is it any more useful, because of the hump on its back.' The illustration is not a felicitous one, for Mr. Spurgeon thus retorts: 'Naturalists assure us the camel's hump is of great importance in the eyes of the Arabs, who judge of the condition of their beasts by the size, shape, and firmness of their humps. The camel feeds upon his hump when he traverses the wilderness, so that in proportion as the animal travels over the sandy wastes, and suffers from privation and fatigue, the mass diminishes; and he is not fit for a long journey till the hump has regained its proportions. Calvinism, then, is the spiritual meat which enables a man to labor on in the ways of Chris[16]tian service; and, though ridiculed as a hump by those who are only lookers-on, those who traverse the weary paths of a wilderness experience know too well its value to be willing to part with it, even if a Beecher's splendid talents could be given in exchange.'"

Illustrate, by all means, but do not let the sermon be all illustrations, or it will be only suitable for an assembly of simpletons. A volume is all the better for engravings, but a scrap-book which is all woodcuts is usually intended for the use of little children. Our house should be built up with the substantial masonry of doctrine, upon the deep foundation of inspiration; its pillars should be of solid scriptural argument, and every stone of truth should be carefully laid in its place; and then the windows should be ranged in due order, "three rows" if we will: "light against light," like the house of the forest of Lebanon. But a house is not erected for the sake of the windows, nor may a sermon be arranged with the view of fitting in a favorite apologue. A window is merely a convenience subordinate to the entire design, and so is the best illustration. We shall be foolish indeed if we compose a discourse to display a metaphor; as foolish as if an architect should build a cathedral with the view of exhibiting a [17]stained-glass window. We are not sent into the world to build a Crystal Palace in which to set out works of art and elegancies of fashion; but as wise master-builders we are to edify a spiritual house for the divine inhabiting. Our building is intended to last, and is meant for every-day use, and hence it must not be all crystal and color. We miss our way altogether, as gospel ministers, if we aim at flash and finery.

It is impossible to lay down a rule as to how much adornment shall be found in each discourse: every man must judge for himself in that matter. True taste in dress could not be readily defined, yet every one knows what it is; and there is a literary and spiritual taste which should be displayed in the measuring out of tropes and figures in every public speech. "*Ne quid nimis*" is a good caution: do not be too eager to garnish and adorn. Some men seem never to have enough of metaphors: each one of their sentences must be a flower. They compass sea and land to find a fresh piece of colored glass for their windows, and they break down the walls of their discourses to let in superfluous ornaments, till their productions rather resemble a fantastic grotto than a house to dwell in. They are grievously in error if they think that thus they manifest their own wisdom, or benefit[18] their hearers. I could almost wish for a return of the window-tax if it would check these poetical brethren. The law, I believe, allowed eight windows free from duty, and we might also exempt "a few, that is eight" metaphors from criticism; but more than that ought to pay heavily. Flowers upon the table at a banquet are well enough; but as nobody can live upon bouquets, they will become objects of contempt if they are set before us in lieu of substantial viands. The difference between a little salt with your meat and being compelled to empty the salt-cellar is clear to all; and we could wish that those who pour out so many symbols, emblems, figures, and devices would remember that nausea in oratory is not more agreeable than in food. Enough is as good as a feast; and too many pretty things may be a greater evil than none at all.

It is a suggestive fact that the tendency to abound in metaphor and illustration becomes weaker as men grow older and wiser. Perhaps this may, in a measure, be ascribed to the decay of their imagination; but it also occurs at the same time as the ripening of their understanding. Some may have to use fewer figures of necessity, because they do not come to them as aforetime; but this is not always the case.[19] I know that men who still possess great facility in imagery find it less needful to employ that faculty now than in their earlier days, for they have the ear of the people, and they are solemnly resolved to fill that ear with instruction as condensed as they can make it. When you begin with a people who have not heard the gospel, and whose attention you have to win, you can hardly go too far in the use of figure and metaphor. Our Lord Jesus Christ used very much of it; indeed, "without a parable spake he not unto them"; because they were not educated up to the point at which they could profitably hear pure didactic truth. It is noticeable that after the Holy Ghost had been given, fewer parables were used, and the saints were more plainly taught of God. When Paul spoke or wrote to the churches in his epistles he employed few parables, because he addressed those who were advanced in grace and willing to learn. As Christian minds made progress the style of their teachers became less figurative, and more plainly doctrinal. We seldom see engravings in the classics of the college; these are reserved for the spelling-books of the dame-school. This should teach us wisdom, and suggest that we are to be bound by no hard and fast rules, but should[20] use more or less of any mode of teaching according to our own condition and that of our people.

Illustrations should really cast light upon the subject in hand, otherwise they are sham windows, and all shams are an abomination.

When the window-tax was still in force many people in country houses closed half their lights by plastering them up, and then they had the plaster painted to look like panes; so that there was still the appearance of a window, though no sunlight could enter. Well do I remember the dark rooms in my grandfather's parsonage, and my wonder that men should have to pay for the light of the sun. Blind windows are fit emblems of illustrations which illustrate nothing, and need themselves to be explained. Grandiloquence is never more characteristic than in its figures; there it disports itself in a very carnival of bombast. We could quote several fine specimens of sublime spread-eagleism and magnificent nonsense.

A piece of high-flown oratory sheds light upon nothing, and does not in the faintest degree enable us to understand the reasons. The object of language of this kind is not to instruct the hearer, but to dazzle him, and, if possible, to impress him with the idea that his minister is a wonderful orator. He who con[21]descends to use clap-trap of any kind deserves to be debarred the pulpit for the term of his natural life. Let your figures of speech really represent and explain your meaning, or else they are dumb idols, which ought not to be set up in the house of the Lord.

It may be well to note that *illustrations should not be too prominent*, or, to pursue our figure, they should not be painted windows, attracting attention to themselves rather than letting in the clear light of day. I am not pronouncing any judgment upon windows adorned with "glass of various colors which shine like meadows decked in the flowers of spring"; I am looking only to my illustration. Our figures are meant not so much to be seen as to be seen through. If you take the hearer's mind away from the subject by exciting his admiration of your own skill in imagery, you are doing evil rather than good. I saw in one of our exhibitions a portrait of a king; but the artist had surrounded his majesty with a bower of flowers so exquisitely painted that every one's eye was taken away from the royal figure. All the resources of the painter's art had been lavished upon the accessories, and the result was that the portrait, which should have been all in all, had fallen into a secondary [22]place. This was surely an error in portrait-painting, even though it might be a success in art. We have to set forth Christ before the people, "evidently crucified among them," and the loveliest emblem or the most charming image which calls the mind away from our divine subject is to be conscientiously forsworn. Jesus must be all in all: his gospel must be the beginning and end of all our discoursing; parable and poesy must be under his feet, and eloquence must wait upon him as his servant. Never by any possibility must the minister's speech become a rival to his subject; that were to dishonor Christ, and not to glorify him. Hence the caution that the illustrations be not too conspicuous.

Out of this last observation comes the further remark that *illustrations are best when they are natural and grow out of the subject* They should be like those well-arranged windows which are evidently part of the plan of a structure, and not inserted as an afterthought, or for mere adornment. The cathedral of Milan inspires my mind with extreme admiration; it always appears to me as if it must have grown out of the earth like a colossal tree, or rather like a forest of marble. From its base to its loftiest pinnacle every detail is a natural outgrowth, a portion of a well-developed whole, [23]essential to the main idea; indeed, part and parcel of it. Such should a sermon be; its exordium, divisions, arguments, appeals, and metaphors should all spring out of itself; nothing should be out of living relation to the rest; it should seem as if nothing could be added without being an excrescence, and nothing taken away without inflicting damage. There should be flowers in a sermon, but the bulk of them should be the flowers of the soil; not dainty exotics, evidently imported with much care from a distant land, but the natural upspringing of a life natural to the holy ground on which the preacher stands. Figures of speech should be congruous with the matter of the discourse; a rose upon an oak would be out of place, and a lily springing from a poplar would be unnatural: everything should be of a piece and have a manifest relationship to the rest. Occasionally a little barbaric splendor may be allowed, after the manner of Thomas Adams and Jeremy Taylor and other masters in Israel, who adorn truth with rare gems and gold of Ophir, fetched from far. Yet I would have you note what Dr. Hamilton says of Taylor, for it is a warning to those who aim at winning the ear of the multitude: "Thoughts, epithets, incidents, images came trooping round with irrepressible [24]profusion, and they were all so apt and beautiful that it was hard to send any of them away. And so he tried to find a place and use for all—for 'flowers and wings of butterflies,' as well as 'wheat'; and if he could not fabricate links of his logical chain out of 'the little rings of the vine' and 'the locks of a new-weaned boy,' he could at least decorate his subject with exquisite adornments. The passages from his loved Austin and Chrysostom, and not less beloved Seneca and Plutarch, the scholar knows how to pardon. The squirrel is not more tempted to carry nuts to his hoard than the bookish author is tempted to transfer to his own pages fine passages from his favorite authors. Alas! he little knows how flat and meaningless they are to those who have not traversed the same walks, and shared the delight with which he found great spoil. To him each polished shell recalls its autumnal tale of woods, and groves, and sunshine showering through the yellow leaves; but to the quaint collection 'the general public' very much prefer a pint of filberts from a huckster's barrow." No illustrations are half so telling as those which are taken from familiar objects. Many fair flowers grow in foreign lands, but those are dearest to the heart which bloom at our own cottage door.

[25]*Elaboration into minute points is not commendable* when we are using figures. The best light comes in through the clearest glass: too much paint keeps out the sun. God's altar of old was to be made of earth, or of unhewn stone, "for," said the Word, "if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it" (Ex. xx. 25). A labored, artificial style, upon which the graver's tool has left abundant marks, is more consistent with human pleadings in courts of law, or in the forum, or in the senate, than with prophetic utterances delivered in the name of God and for the promotion of his glory. Our Lord's parables were as simple as tales for children, and as naturally beautiful as the lilies which sprang up in the valleys where he taught the people. He borrowed no legend from the Talmud,

nor fairy tale from Persia, neither fetched he his emblems from beyond the sea; but he dwelt among his own people, and talked of common things in homely style, as never man spake before, and yet as any observant man should speak. His parables were like himself and his surroundings, and were never strained, fantastic, pedantic, or artificial. Let us imitate him, for we shall never find a model more complete, or more suitable for the present age. Opening our eyes, we shall discover abundant imagery all [26]around. As it is written, "The word is nigh thee," so also is the analogy of that word near at hand:

"All things around me, whate'er they be,
That I meet as the chance may come.
Have a voice and a speech in them all—
Birds that hover and bees that hum;
The beast of the field or the stall;
The trees, leaves, rushes, and grasses;
The rivulet running away;
The bird of the air as it passes,
Or the mountains that motionless stay;
And yet those immovable masses
Keep changing, as dreams do, all day."[1]

There will be little need to borrow from the recondite mysteries of human art, nor to go deep into the theories of science; for in nature golden illustrations lie upon the surface, and the purest is that which is uppermost and most readily discerned. Of natural history in all its branches we may well say, "The gold of that land is good": the illustrations furnished by every-day phenomena seen by the plowman and the wagoner are the very best which earth can yield. An illustration is not like a prophet, for it has most honor in its own country; and those who have oftenest [27]seen the object are those who are most gratified by the figure drawn from it.

I trust that it is scarcely necessary to add that *illustrations must never be low or mean*. They may not be high-flown, but they should always be in good taste. They may be homely, and yet chastely beautiful; but rough and coarse they should never be. A house is dishonored by having dirty windows, cobwebbed and begrimed, patched with brown paper, or stuffed up with rags: such windows are the insignia of a hovel rather than a house. About our illustrations there must never be even the slightest trace of anything that would shock the most delicate modesty. We like not that window out of which Jezebel is looking. Like the bells upon the horses, our lightest expressions must be holiness unto the Lord. Of that which suggests the groveling and the base we may say with the Apostle, "Let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints." All our windows should open toward Jerusalem, and none toward Sodom. We will gather our flowers always and only from Emmanuel's land, and Jesus himself shall be their savor and sweetness, so that when he lingers at the lattice to hear us speak of himself he may say, "Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb: honey and milk are under thy tongue." [28]That which grows beyond the border of purity and good repute must never be bound up in our garlands, nor placed among the decorations of our discourses. That which would be exceedingly clever and telling in a stump orator's speech, or in a cheap-jack's harangue, would be disgusting from a minister of the gospel. Time was when we could have found far too many specimens of censurable coarseness, but it would be ungenerous to mention them now that such things are on all hands condemned.

Gentlemen, take care that your windows are not broken, or even cracked: in other words, *guard against confused metaphors and limping illustrations*. Sir Boyle Roche is generally credited with some of the finest specimens of metaphorical conglomerate. We should imagine that the passage is mythical in which he is represented as saying, "I smell a rat; I see it floating in the air; I'll nip it in the bud." Minor blunderings are frequent enough in the speech of our own countrymen. An excellent temperance advocate exclaimed, "Comrades, let us be up and doing! Let us take our axes on our shoulders, and plow the waste places till the good ship Temperance sails gaily over the land." We well remember, years ago, hearing a fervent Irish clergyman exclaim, "Garibaldi, [29]sir, he is far too great a man to play second fiddle to such a wretched luminary as Victor Emmanuel." It was at a public meeting, and therefore we were bound to be proper; but it would have been a great relief to our soul if we might have indulged in a hearty laugh at the spectacle of Garibaldi with a fiddle, playing to a luminary; for a certain nursery rhyme jingled in our ears, and sorely tried our gravity. A poetic friend thus encouragingly addresses us:

"March on, however rough the road,
Though foes obstruct thy way,
Deaf to *the barking curs that would*
Ensnare thy feet astray."

The other evening a brother expressed his desire that we might "all be winners of souls, and bring the Lord's blood-bought jewels to cast their crowns at his feet." The words had such a pious ring about them that the audience did not observe the fractured state of the expression. One of your own number hoped "that every student might be enabled to sound the gospel trumpet with such a clear and certain sound *that the blind might see*." Perhaps he meant that they should open their eyes with astonishment at the terrific

blast; but the figure would have been more congruous if he [30]had said "that the deaf should hear." A Scotch writer, in referring to a proposal to use an organ in divine service, says: "Nothing will *stem this avalanche* of will-worship and gross sin but the *falling back on the Word of God*."

The *Daily News*, in reviewing a book written by an eminent minister, complained that his metaphors were apt to be a little unmanageable, as when he spoke of something which had remained a secret until a strangely potent key was inserted among the hidden wards of the parental heart, and a rude wrench flung wide the floodgates and set free the imprisoned stream. However, there is no wonder that ordinary mortals commit blunders in figurative speech, when even his late Infallible Holiness Pius IX. said of Mr. Gladstone that he "had suddenly come forward like a viper assailing the bark of St. Peter." A viper assailing a bark is rather too much for the most accommodating imagination, although some minds are ready for any marvels.

One of those reviews which reckon themselves to be the cream of the cream took pains to inform us that the Dean of Chichester, being the select preacher at St. Mary's, Oxford, "seized the opportunity to smite the Ritualists hip and thigh, *with great volubility and* [31]*vivacity*." Samson smote his foes with a great slaughter; but language is flexible.

These blunders are to be quoted by the page: I have given enough to let you see how readily the pitchers of metaphor may be cracked, and rendered unfit to carry our meaning. The ablest speaker may occasionally err in this direction; it is not a very serious matter, and yet, like a dead fly, it may spoil sweet ointment. A few brethren of my acquaintance are always off the lines; they muddle up every figure they touch, and as soon as they approach a metaphor we look for an accident. It might be wisdom on their part to shun all figures of speech till they know how to use them; for it is a great pity when illustrations are so confused as both to darken the sense and create diversion. Muddled metaphors are muddles indeed; let us give the people good illustrations or none at all.

LECTURE II. ANECDOTES FROM THE PULPIT.

It is pretty generally admitted that sermons may wisely be adorned with a fair share of illustrations; but anecdotes used to that end are still regarded by the prudes of the pulpit with a measure of suspicion. They will come down low enough to quote an emblem, they will deign to use poetic imagery; but they cannot stoop to tell a simple, homely story. They would probably say in confidence to their younger brethren, "Beware how you lower yourselves and your sacred office by repeating anecdotes, which are best appreciated by the vulgar and uneducated." We would not retort by exhorting all men to abound in stories, for there ought to be discrimination. It is freely admitted that there are useful and admirable styles of oratory which would be disfigured by a rustic tale; and there are honored brethren whose genius would never allow them to relate a story, for it would not appear suitable to their mode of thought. Upon these[33] we would not even by implication hint at a censure; but when we are dealing with others who seem to be somewhat, and are not what they seem, we feel no tenderness; nay, we are even moved to assail their stilted greatness. If they sneer at anecdotes, we smile at *them* and their sneers, and wish them more sense and less starch. Affectation of intellectual superiority and love of rhetorical splendor have prevented many from setting forth gospel truth in the easiest imaginable manner, namely, by analogies drawn from common events. Because they could not condescend to men of low estate, they have refrained from repeating incidents which would have accurately explained their meaning. Fearing to be thought vulgar, they have lost golden opportunities. As well might David have refused to sling one of the smooth stones at Goliath's brow because he found it in a common brook.

From individuals so lofty in their ideas nothing is likely to flow down to the masses of the people but a glacial eloquence—a river of ice. Dignity is a most poor and despicable consideration unless it be the dignity of turning many to righteousness; and yet divines who have had scarcely enough of real dignity to save themselves from contempt have swollen "huge as high Olympus" through the[34] affectation of it. A young gentleman, after delivering an elaborate discourse, was told that not more than five or six in the congregation had been able to understand him. This he accepted as a tribute to his genius; but I take leave to place him in the same class with another person who was accustomed to shake his head in the most profound manner, that he might make his prelections the more impressive; and this had some effect with the groundlings, until a shrewd Christian woman made the remark that he did shake his head certainly, but that *there was nothing in it*. Those who are too refined to be simple need to be refined again. Luther has well put it in his "Table Talk": "Cursed are all preachers that in the church aim at high and hard things; and neglecting the saving health of the poor unlearned people, seek their own honor and praise, and therefore try to please one or two great persons. *When I preach I sink myself deep down*." It may be superfluous to remind you of the oft-quoted passage from George Herbert's "Country Parson," and yet I cannot omit it, because it is so much to my mind: "The Parson also serves himself of the judgments of God, as of those of ancient times, so especially of the late ones; and those most which are nearest to his parish; for people are[35] very attentive at such discourses, and think it behooves them to be so when God is so near them, and even over their heads. Sometimes he tells them stories and sayings of others, according as his text invites him; for them also men heed, and remember better than exhortations; which, though earnest, yet often die with the sermon, especially with country people, which are thick and heavy, and

hard to raise to a point of zeal and fervency, and need a mountain of fire to kindle them, but stories and sayings they will well remember."

It ought never to be forgotten that the great God himself, when he would instruct men, employs histories and biographies. Our Bible contains doctrines, promises, and precepts; but these are not left alone—the whole book is vivified and illustrated by marvelous records of things said and done by God and by men. He who is taught of God values the sacred histories, and knows that in them there is a special fulness and forcibleness of instruction. Teachers of Scripture cannot do better than instruct their fellows after the manner of the Scriptures.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, the great teacher of teachers, did not disdain the use of anecdotes. To my mind it seems clear that certain of his parables were facts and, consequently, anec[36]dotes. May not the story of the Prodigal Son have been a literal truth? Were there not actual instances of an enemy sowing tares among the wheat? May not the rich fool who said, "Take thine ease," have been a photograph taken from life? Did not Dives and Lazarus actually figure on the stage of history? Certainly the story of those who were crushed by the fall of the tower of Siloam, and the sad tragedy of the Galileans, "whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices," were matters of current Jewish gossip, and our Lord turned both of them to good account. What HE did we need not be ashamed to do. That we may do it with all wisdom and prudence let us seek the guidance of the Divine Spirit which rested upon him so continually.

I shall make up this present address by quoting the examples of great preachers, beginning with the era of the Reformation, and following on without any very rigid chronological order down to our own day. Examples are more powerful than precepts; hence I quote them.

First, let me mention that grand old preacher, *Hugh Latimer*, the most English of all our divines, and one whose influence over our land was undoubtedly most powerful. Southey says, "Latimer more than any other man pro[37]moted the Reformation by his preaching;" and in this he echoes the more important utterance of Ridley, who wrote from his prison, "I do think that the Lord hath placed old father Latimer to be his standard-bearer in our age and country against his mortal foe, Antichrist." If you have read any of his sermons, you must have been struck with the number of his quaint stories, seasoned with a homely humor which smacks of that Leicestershire farmhouse wherein he was brought up by a father who did yeoman's service, and a mother who milked thirty kine. No doubt we may attribute to these stories the breaking down of pews by the overwhelming rush of the people to hear him, and the general interest which his sermons excited. More of such, preaching, and we should have less fear of the return of popery. The common people heard him gladly, and his lively anecdotes accounted for much of their eager attention. A few of these narratives one could hardly repeat, for the taste of our age has happily improved in delicacy; but others are most admirable and instructive. Here are two of them:

The Friar's Man and the Ten Commandments.—I will tell you now a pretty story of a friar, to refresh you withal. A limiter of the Gray Friars in the time of his limitation preached many times, and had but one ser[38]mon at all times; which sermon was of the Ten Commandments. And because this friar had preached this sermon so often, one that heard it before told the friar's servant that his master was called "Friar John Ten Commandments"; wherefore the servant showed the friar his master thereof, and advised him to preach of some other matters; for it grieved the servant to hear his master derided. Now, the friar made answer saying, "Belike, then, thou canst say the Ten Commandments well, seeing thou hast heard them so many a time." "Yea," said the servant, "I warrant you." "Let me hear them," saith the master. Then he began: "Pride, covetousness, lechery," and so numbered the deadly sins for the Ten Commandments. And so there be many at this time which be weary of the old gospel. They would fain hear some new things, they think themselves so perfect in the old, when they be no more skilful than this servant was in his Ten Commandments.

Saint Anthony and the Cobbler.—We read a pretty story of Saint Anthony, which, being in the wilderness, led there a very hard and straight life, insomuch as none at that time did the like, to whom came a voice from heaven saying, "Anthony, thou art not so perfect as is a cobbler that dwelleth at Alexandria." Anthony hearing this rose up forthwith and took his staff and went till he came to Alexandria, where he found the cobbler. The cobbler was astonished to see so reverend a father to come into his house. Then Anthony said unto him, "Come and tell me thy whole conversation and how thou spendest thy time." "Sir," said the cobbler, "as for me, good works I have none, for my life is but simple and slender. I am but a poor cobbler. In the morning when I arise I pray for the whole city wherein I dwell, especially for all such neighbors and poor friends as I have. After, I set me at my labor, where I spend the whole day in getting of my [39]living, and keep me from all falsehood, for I hate nothing so much as I do deceitfulness. Wherefore, when I make to any man a promise I keep it and do it truly, and so spend my time poorly with my wife and children, whom I teach and instruct, as far as my wit will serve me, to fear and dread God. This is the sum of my simple life."

In this story you see how God loveth those that follow their vocation and live uprightly without any falsehood in their dealing. This Anthony was a great and holy man, yet this cobbler was as much esteemed before God as he.

Let us take a long leap of about a century, and we come to*Jeremy Taylor*, another bishop, whom I mention immediately after *Latimer* because he is apparently such a contrast to that homely divine, while yet in very truth he has a measure of likeness to

him as to the point now in hand. They both rejoiced in figure and metaphor, and equally delighted in incident and narrative. True, the one would talk of John and William, and the other of Anexagoras and Scipio; but actual scenes were the delight of each. In this respect Jeremy Taylor may be said to be Latimer turned into Latin. Jeremy Taylor is as full of classical allusions as a king's palace is full of rare treasures, and his language is of the lofty order which more becomes a patrician audience than a popular assembly; but when you come to the essence of things, you see that if Latimer is homely, so also Taylor narrates incidents which are[40] *homely to him*; but his home is among philosophers of Greece and senators of Rome. This being understood, we venture to say that no one used more anecdotes than this splendid poet-preacher. His biographer truly says: "It would be hard to point out a branch of learning or of scientific pursuit to which he does not occasionally allude; or any author of eminence, either ancient or modern, with whom he does not evince himself acquainted. He more than once refers to obscure stories in ancient writers, as if they were of necessity as familiar to all his readers as to himself; as, for instance, he talks of 'poor Attillius Aviola,' and again of 'the Libyan lion that brake loose into his wilderness and killed two Roman boys.'" In all this he is eminently select and classical, and therefore I the more freely introduce him here; for there can be no reason why our anecdotes should all be rustic; we, too, may rifle the treasures of antiquity, and make the heathen contribute to the gospel, even as Hiram of Tyre served under Solomon's direction for the building of the temple of the Lord.

I am no admirer of Taylor's style in other respects, and his teaching seems to be at times semi-popish; but in this place I have only to deal with him upon one particular, and of that[41] matter he is an admirable example. He lavishes classic stories even as an Asiatic queen bedecks herself with countless pearls. Out of a sermon I extract the following, which may suffice for our purpose:

Students Progressing Backward.—Menedemus was wont to say "that the young boys that went to Athens the first year were wise men, the second year philosophers, the third orators, and the fourth were but plebeians, and understood nothing but their own ignorance." And just so it happens to some in the progresses of religion. At first they are violent and active, and then they satiate all the appetites of religion; and that which is left is that they were soon weary and sat down in displeasure, and return to the world and dwell in the business of pride or money; and by this time they understand that their religion is declined, and passed from the heats and follies of youth to the coldness and infirmities of old age.

Diogenes and the Young Man.—Diogenes once spied a young man coming out of a tavern or place of entertainment, who, perceiving himself observed by the philosopher, with some confusion stepped back again, that he might, if possible, preserve his fame with that severe person. But Diogenes told him, "*Quanto magis intraveris, tanto magis eris in caupona*" ("The more you go back the longer you are in the place where you are ashamed to be seen"). He that conceals his sin still retains that which he counts his shame and burden.

No examples will have greater weight with you than those taken from among the Puritans, in whose steps it is our desire to walk, though, alas! we follow with feeble feet. Cer[42]tain of them abounded in anecdotes and stories. *Thomas Brooks* is a signal instance of the wise and wealthy use of holy fancy. I put him first, because I reckon him to be the first in the special art which is now under consideration. He hath dust of gold; for even in the margins of his books there are sentences of exceeding preciousness, and hints at classic stories. His style is clear and full; he never so exceeds in illustration as to lose sight of his doctrine. His floods of metaphor never drown his meaning, but float it upon their surface. If you have never read his works I almost envy you the joy of entering for the first time upon his "Unsearchable Riches," trying his "Precious Remedies," tasting his "Apples of Gold," communing with his "Mute Christian," and enjoying his other masterly writings. Let me give you a taste of his quality in the way of anecdotes. Here are two brief ones; but he so abounds with them that you may readily cull scores of better ones for yourselves.

Mr. Welch Weeping.—A soul under special manifestations of love weeps that it can love Christ no more. Mr. Welch, a Suffolk minister, weeping at table, and being asked the reason of it, answered it was because he could love Christ no more. The true lovers of Christ can never rise high enough in their love to Christ. They count a little love to be no love, great love to be but little,[43] strong love to be but weak, and the highest love to be infinitely below the worth of Christ, the beauty and glory of Christ, the fulness, sweetness, and goodness of Christ. The top of their misery in this life is that they love so little though they are so much beloved.

Submissive Silence.—Such was the silence of Philip the Second, King of Spain, that when his Invincible Armada, that had been three years a-fitting, was lost, he gave command that all over Spain they should give thanks to God and the saints that it was no more grievous.

Thomas Adams, the Conforming Puritan, whose sermons are full of rugged force and profound meaning, never hesitated to insert a story when he felt that it would enforce his teaching. His starting-point is ever some Biblical sentence, or scriptural history; and this he works out with much elaboration, bringing to it all the treasures of his mind. As Stowell says, "Fables, anecdotes, classical poetry, gems from the fathers and other old writers, are scattered over almost every page." His anecdotes are usually rough-and-ready ones, and might be compared to those of Latimer, only they are not so genial; their humor is generally grim and caustic. The following may serve as fair specimens:

The Husband and His Witty Wife.—The husband told his wife that he had one ill quality—he was given to be angry without cause.

She wittily replied that she[44] would keep him from that fault, for she would give him cause enough. It is the folly of some that they will be offended without cause, to whom the world promises that they shall have causes enough—"In the world ye shall have tribulation."

The Servant at the Sermon.—It is ordinary with many to commend the lecture to others' ears, but few commend it to their own hearts. It is morally true what the *Christian Tell-Truth* relates: A servant coming from church praiseth the sermon to his master. He asks him what was the text. "Nay," quoth the servant, "it was begun before I came in." "What, then, was his conclusion?" He answered, "I came out before it was done." "But what said he in the midst?" "Indeed I was asleep in the midst." Many crowd to get into the church, but make no room for the sermon to get into them.

William Gurnall, the author of "The Christian in Complete Armor," must surely have been a relater of pertinent stories in his sermons, since even in his set and solid writings they occur. Perhaps I need not have made the distinction between his writings and his preaching, for it appears from the preface that his "Christian in Complete Armor" was preached before it was printed. In vivid imagery every page of his famous book abounds, and whenever this is the case we are sure to light upon short narratives and striking incidents. He is as profuse in illustration as either Brooks, Watson, or Swinnock. Happy Lavenham, to have been served by such a[45] pastor! By the way, this "Complete Armor" is beyond all others a preacher's book: I should think that more discourses have been suggested by it than by any other uninspired volume. I have often resorted to it when my own fire has been burning low, and I have seldom failed to find a glowing coal upon Gurnall's hearth. John Newton said that if he might read only one book beside the Bible, he would choose "The Christian in Complete Armor," and Cecil was of much the same opinion. J. C. Ryle has said of it, "You will often find in a line and a half some great truth, put so concisely, and yet so fully, that you really marvel how so much thought could be got into so few words." One or two stories from the early part of his great work must suffice for our purpose.

Bird Safe in a Man's Bosom.—A heathen could say when a bird (feared by a hawk) flew into his bosom, "I will not betray thee unto thine enemy, seeing thou comest for sanctuary unto me." How much less will God yield up a soul unto its enemy when it takes sanctuary in his name, saying, "Lord, I am hunted with such a temptation, dogged with such a lust; either thou must pardon it, or I am damned; mortify it, or I shall be a slave to it; take me into the bosom of thy love for Christ's sake; castle me in the arms of thy everlasting strength. It is in thy power to save me from or give me up into the hands of my enemy. I have no confidence in myself or any other. Into thy hands I commit my cause, my life,[46] and rely on thee." This dependence of a soul undoubtedly will awaken the almighty power of God for such a one's defense. He hath sworn the greatest oath that can come out of his blessed lips, even by himself, that such as "flee for refuge" to hope in him shall have "strong consolation" (Heb. vi. 17, 18).

The Prince with His Family in Danger.—Suppose a king's son should get out of a besieged city where he hath left his wife and children, whom he loves as his own soul, and these all ready to die by sword or famine, if supply come not the sooner. Could this prince, when arrived at his father's house, please himself with the delights of the court and forget the distress of his family? or rather would he not come post to his father, having their cries and groans always in his ears, and before he ate or drank do his errand to his father, and entreat him if he ever loved him that he would send all the force of his kingdom to raise the siege rather than any of his dear relations should perish? Surely, sirs, though Christ be in the top of his preferment and out of the storm in regard of his own person, yet his children, left behind in the midst of sin's, Satan's, and the world's batteries, are in his heart, and shall not be forgotten a moment by him. The care he takes in our business appeared in the speedy despatch he made of his spirit to his apostles' supply, which, as soon almost as he was warm in his seat at his Father's right hand, he sent, to the incomparable comfort of his apostles and us that to this day—yea, to the end of the world—do or shall believe on him.

John Flavel was greatest in metaphor and allegory; but in the matter of anecdote his preaching is a fine example. It was said of his ministry that he who was unaffected by it[47] must either have had a very soft head or a very hard heart. He had a fund of striking incidents, and a faculty of happy illustration, and as he was a man in whose manner cheerfulness was blended with solemnity, he was popular in the highest degree both at home and abroad. He sought out words which might suit the sailors of Dartmouth and farmers of Devon, and therefore he has left behind him his "Navigation Spiritualized," and his "Husbandry Spiritualized," a legacy for each of the two orders of men who plow the sea and the land. He was a man worth making a pilgrimage to hear. What a crime it was to silence his heaven-touched lips by the abominable Act of Uniformity! Instead of quoting several passages from his sermons, each one containing an anecdote, I have thought it as well to give a mass of stories as we find them in his prelections upon

Providence in Conversion.—A scrap of paper accidentally coming to view hath been used as an occasion of conversion. This was the case of a minister of Wales who had two livings but took little care of either. He, being at a fair, bought something at a peddler's standing, and rent off a leaf of Mr. Perkins' catechism to wrap it in, and reading a line or two of it, God sent it home so as it did the work.

The marriage of a godly man into a carnal family hath been ordered by Providence for the conversion and sal[48]vation of many therein. Thus we read in the life of that renowned English worthy, Mr. John Bruen, that in his second match it was agreed that he should have one year's diet in his mother-in-law's house. During his abode there that year, saith Mr. Clark, the Lord was pleased by

his means graciously to work upon her soul, as also upon his wife's sister and half-sister, their brothers, Mr. William and Mr. Thomas Fox, with one or two of the servants in that family.

Not only the reading of a book or hearing of a minister, but—which is most remarkable—the very mistake or forgetfulness of a minister hath been improved by Providence for this end and purpose. Augustine, once preaching to his congregation, forgot the argument which he first proposed, and fell upon the errors of the Manichees beside his first intention, by which discourse he converted one Firmus, his auditor, who fell down at his feet weeping and confessing he had lived a Manichee many years. Another I knew who, going to preach, took up another Bible than that he had designed, in which, not only missing his notes but the chapter also in which his text lay, was put to some loss thereby. But after a short pause he resolved to speak about any other Scripture that might be presented to him, and accordingly read the text, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise" (2 Pet. iii. 9); and though he had nothing prepared, yet the Lord helped him to speak both methodically and pertinently from it, by which discourse a gracious change was wrought upon one in the congregation, who hath since given good evidence of a sound conversion, and acknowledged this sermon to be the first and only means thereof.

George Swinnock, for some years chaplain to Hampden, had the gift of illustration largely developed, as his works prove. Some of his[49] similes are far-fetched, and the growth of knowledge has rendered certain of them obsolete; but they served his purpose, and made his teaching attractive. After deducting all his fancies, which in the present age would be judged to be strained, there remains "a rare amount of sanctified wit and wisdom"; and sparkling here and there we spy out a few telling stories, mostly of classic origin.

The Prayer of Paulinus.—It was the speech of Paulinus when his city was taken by the barbarians, "*Domine, ne excrucier ob aurum et argentum*" ("Lord, let me not be troubled for my silver and gold which I have lost, for thou art all things"). As Noah, when the whole world was overwhelmed with water, had a fair epitome of it in the ark, having all sorts of beasts and fowls there, so he that in a deluge hath God to be his God hath the original of all mercies. He who enjoyeth the ocean may rejoice, though some drops are taken from him.

Queen Elizabeth and the Milkmaid.—Queen Elizabeth envied the milkmaid when she was in prison, but had she known the glorious reign which she was to have for forty-four years she would not have repined at the poor happiness of so mean a person. Christians are too prone to envy the husks which wandering sinners fill themselves with here below; but would they set before them their glorious hopes of a heaven, how they must reign with Christ forever and ever, they would see little reason for their repining.

The Believing Child.—I have read a story of a little child about eight or nine years old, that, being extremely pinched with hunger, looked one day pitifully necessitous[50] on her mother, and said, "Mother, do you think that God will starve us?" The mother answered, "No, child; he will not." The child replied, "But if he do, yet we must love him and serve him." Here was language that spake a well-grown Christian. For, indeed, God brings us to want and misery to try us whether we love him for his own sake or for our own sakes, for those excellencies that are in him or for those mercies we have from him, to see whether we will say with the cynic to Antisthenes, "*Nullus tam durus erit baculus*," etc. ("There should be no cudgel so crabbed as to beat me from thee").

Thomas Watson was one of the many Puritan preachers who won the popular ear by their frequent illustrations. In the clear flowing stream of his teaching we find pearls of anecdote very frequently. No one ever grew weary under such pleasant yet weighty discourse as that which we find in his "Beatitudes." Let two quotations serve to show his skill:

The Vestal and the Bracelets.—Most men think because God hath blessed them with an estate therefore they are blessed. Alas! God often gives these things in anger. He loads his enemies with gold and silver: as Plutarch reports of Tarpeia, a Vestal nun, who bargained with the enemy to betray the Capitol of Rome to them in case she might have the golden bracelets on their left hands, which they promised; and being entered into the Capitol, they threw not only their bracelets but their bucklers, too, upon her, through the weight whereof she was pressed to death. God often lets men have the golden bracelets of worldly substance, the weight where[51]of sinks them into hell. Oh, let us, *superna anhelare*, get our eyes "fixed" and our hearts "united" to God the supreme good. This is to pursue blessedness as in a chase.

Hedgehog and Conies.—The Fabulist tells a story of the hedgehog that came to the cony-burrows in stormy weather and desired harbor, promising that he would be a quiet guest; but when once he had gotten entertainment he did set up his prickles, and did never leave till he had thrust the poor conies out of their burrows. So covetousness, though it hath many fair pleas to insinuate and wind itself into the heart, yet as soon as you have let it in, this thorn will never cease pricking till it hath choked all good beginnings and thrust all religion out of your hearts.

I think this must suffice to represent the men of the Puritanic period, who added to their profound theology and varied learning a zeal to be understood, and a skill in setting forth truth by the help of every-day occurrences. The age which followed them was barren of spiritual life, and was afflicted by a race of rhetorical divines, whose words had little connection with *the Word* of life. The scanty thought of the Queen Anne dignitaries needed no aid of metaphor or parable: there was nothing to explain to the people; the utmost endeavor of these divines was to hide the nakedness of their discourses with the fig-leaves of Latinized verbiage. Living preaching

was gone, spiritual life was gone, and con[52]sequently a pulpit was set up which had no voice for the common people; no voice, indeed, for anybody except the mere formalist, who is content if decorum be observed and respectability maintained. Of course, our notion of making truth clear by stories did not suit the dignified death of the period, and it was only when the dry bones began to be stirred that the popular method was again brought to the front.

The illustrious *George Whitefield* stands, with Wesley, at the head of that noble army who led the Revival of the last century. It is not at this present any part of my plan to speak of his matchless eloquence, unquenchable earnestness, and incessant labor; but it is quite according to the run of my lecture to remind you of his own saying, "I use market language." He employed pure, good, flowing English; but he was as simple as if he spoke to children. Although by no means abounding in illustration, yet he always employed it when needed, and he narrated incidents with great power of action and emphasis. His stories were so told that they thrilled the people: they saw as well as heard, for each word had its proper gesture. One reason why he could be understood at so great a distance was the fact that the eye helped the ear. As[53] specimens of his anecdotes I have selected two, which follow:

The Two Chaplains.—You cannot do without the grace of God when you come to die. There was a nobleman that kept a deistical chaplain and his lady a Christian one. When he was dying he says to his chaplain, "I liked you very well when I was in health, but it is my lady's chaplain I must have when I am sick."

Never Satisfied.—My dear hearers, there is not a single soul of you all that is satisfied in your station. Is not the language of your hearts when apprentices. We think we shall do very well when journeymen; when journeymen, that we shall do very well when masters; when single, that we shall do well when married? And, to be sure, you think you shall do well when you keep a carriage. I have heard of one who began low. He first wanted a house; then, says he, "I want two, then four, then six." And when he had them he said, "I think I want nothing else." "Yes," says his friend, "you will soon want another thing; that is a hearse-and-six to carry you to your grave." And that made him tremble.

Fearing that the quotation of any more examples might prove tedious, I would only remind you that such men as Berridge, Rowland Hill, Matthew Wilks, Christmas Evans, William Jay, and others who have but lately departed from us, owed much of their attractiveness to the way in which they aroused their audiences, and flashed truth into their faces by well-chosen anecdotes. Time calls upon me to have done, and how can I come to a better[54] close than by mentioning one living man, who, above all others, has in two continents stirred the masses of the people? I refer to D. L. Moody. This admirable brother has a great aversion to the printing of his sermons; and well he may have, for he is incessantly preaching, and has no time allowed him for the preparation of fresh discourses; and therefore it would be great unwisdom on his part to print at once those addresses with which he is working through a campaign. We hope, however, that when he has done with a sermon he will never suffer it to die out, but give it to the church and to the world through the press. Our esteemed brother has a lively, telling style, and he thinks it wise frequently to fasten a nail with the hammer of anecdote. Here are three extracts from the little book entitled "Arrows and Anecdotes by D. L. Moody."

The Idiot's Mother.—I know a mother who has an idiot child. For it she gave up all society—almost everything—and devoted her whole life to it. "And now," said she, "for fourteen years I have tended it and loved it, and it does not even know me. Oh, it is breaking my heart!" Oh, how the Lord must say this of hundreds here! Jesus comes here, and goes from seat to seat asking if there is a place for him. Oh, will not some of you take him into your hearts?

Surgeon and Patient.—When I was in Belfast I knew a doctor who had a friend, a leading surgeon there[55] and he told me that the surgeon's custom was, before performing any operation, to say to the patient, "Take a good look at the wound and then fix your eyes on me, and don't take them off till I get through the operation." I thought at the time that was a good illustration. Sinner, take a good look at the wound to-night, and then fix your eyes on Christ and don't take them off. It is better to look at the remedy than at the wound.

The Roll-Call.—A soldier lay on his dying couch during our last war, and they heard him say, "Here!" They asked him what he wanted, and he put up his hand and said, "Hush! They are calling the roll of heaven, and I am answering to my name." And presently he whispered, "Here!" and he was gone.

I will weary you no longer. You may safely do what the most useful of men have done before you. Copy them not only in their use of illustration, but in their wisely keeping it in subservience to their design. They were not story-tellers, but preachers of the gospel; they did not aim at the entertainment of the people, but at their conversion. Never did they go out of their way to drag in a telling bit which they had been saving up for display, and never could any one say of their illustrations that they were

Windows that exclude the light,
And passages that lead to nothing.

Keep you the due proportion of things lest I do worse than lose my labor, by becoming the[56] cause of your presenting to the people strings of anecdotes instead of sound doctrines, for that would be as evil a thing as if you offered to hungry men flowers instead of bread, and gave to the naked gauze of gossamer instead of woolen cloth.

LECTURE III. THE USES OF ANECDOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS.

The uses of anecdotes and illustrations are manifold; but we may reduce them to seven, so far as our present purposes are concerned, not for a moment imagining that this will be a complete list.

We use them, first, *to interest the mind and secure the attention of our hearers*. We cannot endure a sleepy audience. To us, a slumbering man is no man. Sydney Smith observed that, although Eve was taken out of the side of Adam while he was asleep, it was not possible to remove sin from men's hearts in that manner. We do not agree with Hodge, the hedger and ditcher, who remarked to a Christian man with whom he was talking, "I loikes Sunday, I does; I loikes Sunday." "And what makes you like Sunday?" "Cause, you see, it's a day of rest: I goes down to the old church, I gets into a pew, and puts my legs up, and I thinks o' nothin'." It is to be feared[58] that in town as well as in country this thinking of nothing is a very usual thing. But your regard for the sacred day, and the ministry to which you are called, and the worshiping assembly, will not allow you to give your people the chance of thinking of nothing. You want to arouse every faculty in them to receive the Word of God, that it may be a blessing to them.

We want to win attention at the commencement of the service, and to hold it till the close. With this aim, many methods may be tried; but possibly none will succeed better than the introduction of an interesting story. This sets Hodge listening, and although he will miss the fresh air of the fields, and begin to feel drowsy in your stuffy chapel, another tale will stir him to renewed attention. If he hears some narrative in connection with his village or county, you will have him "all there," and you may then hope to do him good.

The anecdote in the sermon answers the purpose of an engraving in a book. Everybody knows that people are attracted by volumes with pictures in them; and that, when a child gets a book, although it may pass over the letterpress without observation, it is quite sure to pause over the woodcuts. Let us not be too great to use a method which many[59] have found successful. We must have attention. In some audiences we cannot get it if we begin with solid instruction; they are not desirous of being taught, and consequently they are not in a condition to receive the truth if we set it before them nakedly. Now for a bunch of flowers to attract these people to our table, for afterward we can feed them with the food they so much need. Just as the Salvation Army goes trumpeting and drumming through the streets to draw the people into the barracks, so may an earnest man spend the first few minutes with an unprepared congregation in waking the folks up, and enticing them to enter the inner chamber of the truth. Even this awakening prelude must have in it that which is worthy of the occasion; but if it is not up to your usual average in weight of doctrine, it may not only be excused, but commended, if it prepares the audience to receive that which is to follow. Ground-bait may catch no fish; but it answers its purpose if it brings them near the bait and the hook.

A congregation which has been well instructed, and is mainly made up of established believers, will not need to be addressed in the same style as an audience gathered fresh from the world, or a meeting of dull, formal church-goers. Your common sense will teach you to[60] suit your manner to your audience. It is possible to maintain profound and long-continued attention without the use of an illustration; I have frequently done so in the Tabernacle when it has been mainly filled with church-members; but when my own people are away, and strangers fill their places, I bring out all my store of stories, similes, and parables.

I have sometimes told anecdotes in the pulpit, and very delicate and particular people have expressed their regret and horror that I should say such things; but when I have found that God has blessed some of the illustrations I have used, I have often thought of the story of the man with a halberd, who was attacked by a nobleman's dog, and, of course, in defending himself, he killed the animal. The nobleman was very angry, and asked the man how he dared to kill the dog; and the man replied that if he had not killed it the dog would have bitten him and torn him in pieces. "Well," said the nobleman, "but you should not have struck it on the head with the halberd; why did you not hit it with the handle?" "My lord," answered the man, "so I would if it had tried to bite me with its tail." So, when I have to deal with sin, some people say, "Why don't you address it delicately? Why don't you speak to it in courtly language?" And I[61] answer, "So I would if it would bite me with its tail; but as long as ever I find that it deals roughly with me, I will deal roughly with it; and any kind of weapon that will help to slay the monster, I shall not find unfitted to my hand."

We cannot afford in these days to lose any opportunity of getting hold of the public ear. We must use every occasion that comes in our way, and every tool that is likely to help us in our work; and we must rouse up all our faculties, and put forth all our energies, if that by any means we may get the people to heed that which they are so slow to regard, the great story of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come. We shall need to read much, and to study hard, or else we shall not be able to influence our day and generation for good. I believe that the greatest industry is necessary to make a thoroughly efficient preacher, and the best natural ability, too; and it is my firm conviction that, when you have the best natural ability, you must supplement it with the greatest imaginable industry, if you are really to do much service for God among this crooked and perverse generation.

The fool in Scotland who got into the pulpit before the preacher arrived was requested by the minister to come down. "Nay, nay,"

an[62]swered the man, "you come up, too, for it will take both of us to move this stiff-necked generation." It will certainly take all the wisdom that we can obtain to move the people among whom our lot is cast; and if we do not use every lawful means of interesting the minds of our hearers, we shall find that they will be like a certain other congregation, in which the people were all asleep except one poor idiot. The minister woke them up, and tried to reprove them by saying, "There, you were all asleep except poor Jock the idiot;" but his rebuke was cut short by Jock, who exclaimed, "And if I had not been an idiot, I should have been asleep too."

I will leave the moral of that well-known story to speak for itself, and will pass on to my second point, which is, that the use of anecdotes and illustrations *renders our preaching lifelike and vivid*. This is a most important matter. Of all things that we have to avoid, one of the most essential is that of giving our people the idea, when we are preaching, that we are acting a part. Everything theatrical in the pulpit, either in tone, manner, or anything else, I loathe from my very soul. Just go into the pulpit and talk to the people as you would in the kitchen, or the drawing-room, and say what you have to tell them in[63] your ordinary tone of voice. Let me conjure you, by everything that is good, to throw away all stilted styles of speech, and anything approaching affectation. Nothing can succeed with the masses except naturalness and simplicity. Why, some ministers cannot even give out a hymn in a natural manner! "Let us sing to the praise and glory of God" (spoken in the tone that is sometimes heard in churches or chapels)—who would ever think of speaking like that at the tea-table? "I shall be greatly obliged if you will kindly give me another cup of tea" (spoken in the same unnatural way)—you would never think of giving any tea to a man who talked like that; and if we preach in that stupid style, the people will not believe what we say; they will think it is our business, our occupation, and that we are doing the whole thing in a professional manner. We must shake off professionalism of every kind, as Paul shook off the viper into the fire; and we must speak as God has ordained that we should speak, and not by any strange, out-of-the-way, new-fangled method of pulpit oratory.

Our Lord's teaching was amazingly lifelike and vivid; it was the setting out of truth before the eye, not as a flat picture, but as in a stereoscope, making it stand up, with all its[64] lines and angles of beauty in lifelike reality. That was a fine living sermon when he took a little child, and set him in the midst of the disciples; and that was another powerful discourse when he preached about abstaining from carking cares, and stooped down and plucked a lily (as I suppose he did) and said, "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin." I can readily suppose that some ravens were flying just over his head, and that he pointed to them, and said, "Consider the ravens; for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them." There was a lifelikeness; you see, a vividness, about the whole thing. We cannot always literally imitate our Lord, as we have mostly to preach in places of worship. It is a blessing that we have so many houses of prayer, and I thank God that there are so many of them springing up all around us; yet I should praise the Lord still more if half the ministers who preach in our various buildings were made to turn out of them, and to speak for their Master in the highways and byways, and anywhere that the people would go to listen to them. We are to go out into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature—not to stop in our chapels waiting for every crea[65]ture to come in to hear what we have to say. A sportsman who should sit at his parlor window, with his gun loaded all ready for shooting partridges, would probably not make up a very heavy bag of game. No; he must put on his buskins, and tramp off over the fields, and then he will get a shot at the birds he is seeking. So must we do, brethren; we must always have our buskins ready for field work, and be ever on the watch for opportunities of going out among the souls of men, that we may bring them back as trophies of the power of the gospel we have to proclaim.

It might not be wise for us to try to make our sermons lifelike and vivid in the style in which quaint old Matthew Wilks sometimes did; as when, one Sabbath morning, he took into the pulpit a little box, and after a while, opened it, and displayed to the congregation a small pair of scales, and then, turning over the leaves of the Bible with great deliberation, held up the balances, and announced as his text, "Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting." I think, however, that was puerile rather than powerful. I like Matthew Wilks better when, on another occasion, his text being, "See that ye walk circumspectly," he commenced by saying, "Did you ever see a tom-cat walking on the top of a[66] high wall that was covered with bits of broken glass bottles? If so, you had just then an accurate illustration of what is meant by the injunction, 'See that ye walk circumspectly.'" There is the case, too, of good "Father Taylor," who, preaching in the streets in one of the towns of California, stood on the top of a whisky-barrel. By way of illustration, he stamped his foot on the cask and said, "This barrel is like man's heart, full of evil stuff; and there are some people who say that if sin is within you, it may just as well come out." "No," said the speaker, "it is not so; now here is this whisky that is in the barrel under my foot: it is a bad thing; it is a damnable thing; it is a devilish thing; but as long as it is kept tightly bunged up in the barrel, it certainly will not do the hurt that it will if it is taken over to the liquor-bar, and sold out to the drunkards of the neighborhood, sending them home to beat their wives or kill their children. So, if you keep your sins in your own heart, they will be evil and devilish, and God will damn you for them; but they will not do so much hurt to other people, at any rate, as if they are seen in public." Stamping his foot again on the barrel, the preacher said, "Suppose you try to pass this cask over the boundaries of the country, and the custom-house[67] officer comes and demands the duty upon its contents. You say that you will not let any of the whisky get out; but the officer tells you that he cannot allow it to pass. So, if it were possible for us to abstain from outward sin, yet, since the heart is full of all manner of evil, it would be impossible for us to pass the frontiers of heaven, and to be found in that holy and happy place." That I thought to be somewhat of a lifelike illustration, and a capital way of teaching truth, although I should not like always to have a whisky-barrel for a pulpit, for fear the head might fall in, and I might fall in, too.

I should not recommend any of you to be so lifelike in your ministry as that notable French priest, who, addressing his congregation, said, "As to the Magdalenes and those who commit the sins of the flesh, such persons are very common; they abound even in this church; and I am going to throw this mass-book at a woman who is a Magdalene," whereupon all the women in the place bent down their heads. So the priest said, "No, surely you are not all Magdalenes; I hardly thought that was the case; but you see how your sin finds you out!" Nor should I even recommend you to follow the example of the clergyman, who, when a collection was to be made[68] for lighting and warming the church, after he had preached some time, blew out the candles on both sides of the pulpit, saying that the collection was for the lights and the fires, and he did not require any light, for he did not read his sermon, "but," he added, "when Roger gives out the psalm presently, you will want a light to see your books; so the candles are for yourselves. And as for the stove, I do not need its heat, for my exercise in preaching is sufficient to keep me warm; therefore you see that the collection is wholly for yourselves on this occasion. Nobody can say that the clergy are collecting for themselves this time, for on this Sunday it is wholly for your own selves." I thought the man was a fool for making such remarks, though I find that his conduct has been referred to as being a very excellent instance of boldness in preaching.

There is a story told about myself, which, like very many of the tales told about me, is a*story* in two senses. It is said that in order to show the way in which men backslide, I once slid down the banisters of the pulpit. I only mention this, in passing, because it is a remarkable fact that, at the time the story was told, my pulpit was fixed in the wall, and there was no banister, so that the reverend fool (which he would have been if he had done[69] what people said) could not have performed the antic if he had been inclined to attempt it. But the anecdote, although it is not true, serves all the purposes of the lifelikeness I have tried to describe.

You probably recollect the instance of Whitefield depicting the blind man, with his dog, walking on the brink of a precipice, and his foot almost slipping over the edge. The preacher's description was so graphic, and the illustration so vivid and lifelike, that Lord Chesterfield sprang up and exclaimed, "Good God, he's gone!" but Whitefield answered, "No, my lord, he is not quite gone; let us hope that he may yet be saved." Then he went on to speak of the blind man as being led by his reason, which is only like a dog, showing that a man led only by reason is ready to fall into hell. How vividly one would see the love of money set forth in the story told by our venerable friend, Mr. Rogers, of a man who, when he lay a-dying, would put his money in his mouth because he loved it so and wanted to take some of it with him! How strikingly is the non-utility of worldly wealth, as a comfort to us in our last days, brought before us by the narrative in which good Jeremiah Burroughes speaks of a miser who had his money-bags laid near his hand on his dying-bed! He[70] kept taking them up, and saying, "Must I leave you? Must I leave you? Have I lived all these years for you, and now must I leave you?" And so he died. There is a tale told of another, who had many pains in his death, and especially the great pain of a disturbed conscience. He also had his money-bags brought, one by one, with his mortgages, and bonds, and deeds, and putting them near his heart, he sighed, and said, "These won't do; these won't do; these won't do; take them away! What poor things they all are when I most need comfort in my dying moments!"

How distinctly love to Christ is brought out in the story of John Lambert, fastened to the stake, and burning to death, yet clapping his hands as he was burning, and crying out, "None but Christ! None but Christ!" until his nether extremities were burned, and he fell from the chains into the fire, still exclaiming in the midst of the flames, "None but Christ! None but Christ!" How clearly the truth stands out before you when you hear such stories as these! You can realize it almost as well as if the incident happened before your eyes. How well you can see the folly of misunderstanding between Christians in Mr. Jay's story of two men who were walking from opposite directions on a foggy night![71] Each saw what he thought was a terrible monster moving toward him, and making his heart beat with terror; as they came nearer to each other, they found that the dreadful monsters were brothers. So, men of different denominations are often afraid of one another; but when they get close to each other, and know each other's hearts, they find out that they are brethren after all. The story of the negro and his master well illustrates the need of beginning at the beginning in heavenly things, and not meddling with the deeper points of our holy religion till we have learned its elements thoroughly. A poor negro was laboring hard to bring his master to a knowledge of the truth, and was urging him to exercise faith in Christ, when he excused himself because he could not understand the doctrine of election. "Ah! Massa," said the negro, "don't you know what comes before de Epistle to de Romans? You must read de Book de right way; de doctrine ob election is in Romans, and dere is Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, first. You are only in Matthew yet; dat is about repentance; and when you get to John, you will read where de Lord Jesus Christ said dat God so loved de world, dat he gave his only begotten Son, dat whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but hab everlasting[72] life." So, brethren, you can say to your hearers, "You will do better by reading the four Gospels first than by beginning to read in Romans; first study Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and then you can go on to the Epistles."

But I must not keep on giving you illustrations, because so many will suggest themselves. I have given you sufficient to show that they do make our preaching vivid and lifelike; therefore, the more you have of them, the better. At the same time, gentlemen, I must warn you against the danger of having too many anecdotes in any one sermon. You ought, perhaps, to have a dish of salad on the table; but if you ask your friends to dinner, and give them nothing but salad, they will not fare very well, and will not care to come to your house again.

Thirdly, anecdotes and illustrations may be used *to explain either doctrines or duties to dull understandings* They may, in fact, be the very best form of exposition. A preacher should instance, and illustrate, and exemplify his subject, so that his hearers may have real acquaintance with the matter he is bringing before them. If a man attempted to give me a description of a piece of machinery, he would [73]possibly fail to make me comprehend what it was like; but if he will have the goodness to let me see a drawing of the various sections, and then of the whole machine, I will, somehow or other, by hook or by crook, make out how it works. The pictorial representation of a thing is always a much more powerful means of instruction than any mere verbal description ever could be. It is just in this way that anecdotes and illustrations are so helpful to our hearers. For instance, take this anecdote as illustrating the text, "Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret." A little boy used to go up into a hay-loft to pray; but he found that, sometimes, persons came up and disturbed him; therefore, the next time he climbed into the loft, he pulled the ladder up after him. Telling this story, you might explain how the boy thus entered into his closet and shut the door. The meaning is not so much the literal entrance into a closet, or the shutting of the door, as the getting away from earthly sources of distraction, pulling up the ladder after us, and keeping out anything that might come in to hinder our secret devotions. I wish we could always pull the ladder up after us when we retire for private prayer; but many things [74]try to climb that ladder. The devil himself will come up to disturb us if he can; and he can get into the hay-loft without any ladder.

What a capital exposition of the fifth commandment was that which was given by Corporal Trim, when he was asked, "What dost thou mean by honoring thy father and thy mother?" and he answered, "Please, your honor, it is allowing them a shilling a week out of my pay when they grow old." That was an admirable explanation of the meaning of the text. Then, if you are trying to show how we are to be doers of the Word, and not hearers only, there is a story of a woman who, when asked by the minister what he had said on Sunday, replied that she did not remember the sermon; but it had touched her conscience, for when she got home she burned her bushel, which was short measure. There is another story which also goes to show that the gospel may be useful even to hearers who forget what they have heard. A woman is called upon by her minister on the Monday, and he finds her washing wool in a sieve, holding it under the pump. He asks her, "How did you enjoy last Sabbath's discourses?" and she says that they did her much good. "Well, what was the text?" She does not recollect. "What was the subject?" "Ah, sir, it is quite gone from [75]me!" says the poor woman. Does she remember any of the remarks that were made? No, they are all gone. "Well, then, Mary," says the minister, "it could not have done you much good." Oh! but it had done her a great deal of good; and she explained it to him by saying, "I will tell you, sir, how it is; I put this wool in the sieve under the pump, I pump on it, and all the water runs through the sieve, but then it washes the wool. So it is with your sermon; it comes into my heart, and then it runs right through my poor memory, which is like a sieve, but it washes em clean, sir." You might talk for a long while about the cleansing and sanctifying power of the Word, and it would not make such an impression upon your hearers as that simple story would.

What finer exposition of the text, "Weep with them that weep," can you have than this pretty anecdote? "Mother," said little Annie, "I cannot make out why poor Widow Brown likes me to go in to see her; she says I do comfort her so; but, mother, I cannot say anything to comfort her, and as soon as she begins crying, I put my arms round her neck, and I cry too, and she says that that comforts her." And so it does; that is the very essence of the comfort, the sympathy, the fellow-feeling [76]that moved the little girl to weep with the weeping widow. Mr. Hervey thus illustrates the great truth of the different appearance of sin to the eye of God and the eye of man. He says that you may take a small insect, and with the tiniest needle make a puncture in it so minute that you can scarcely see it with the naked eye; but when you look at it through a microscope, you see an enormous rent, out of which there flows a purple stream, making the creature seem to you as though it had been smitten with the ax that killeth an ox. It is but a defect of our vision that we cannot see things correctly; but the microscope reveals them as they really are. Thus you may explain to your hearers how God's microscopic eye sees sin in its true aspects. Suppose that you wanted to set forth the character of Caleb, who followed the Lord fully; it would greatly help many of your people if you said that the name Caleb signifies a dog, and then showed how a dog follows his master. There is his owner on horseback, riding along the miry roads; but the dog keeps as close to him as he can, no matter how much mud and dirt are splashed upon him, and not heeding the kicks he might get from the horse's heels. Even so should we follow the Lord. If you wish to exemplify the shortness of time, you might [77]bring in the poor seamstress, with her little piece of candle, stitching away to get her work done before the light went out.

Many preachers find the greatest difficulty in getting suitable metaphors to set forth simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. There is a capital anecdote of an idiot who was asked by the minister, who was trying to instruct him, whether he had a soul. To the utter consternation of his kind teacher, he replied, "No, I have no soul." The preacher said he was greatly surprised, after he had been taught for years, that he did not know better than that; but the poor fellow thus explained himself, "I had a soul once, but I lost it; and Jesus Christ came and found it, and now I let him keep it, for it is his, it does not belong to me any longer." That is a fine picture of the way of salvation by simple faith in the substitution of the Lord Jesus Christ; and the smallest child in the congregation might be able to understand it through the story of the poor idiot.

Fourthly, *there is a kind of reasoning in anecdotes and illustrations*, which is very clear to illogical minds; and many of our hearers, unfortunately, have such minds, yet they can understand illustrative instances and stubborn [78]facts. Truthful anecdotes are facts, and facts are stubborn things. Instances, when sufficiently multiplied, as we know by the inductive philosophy, prove a point. Two

instances may not prove it; but twenty may prove it to a demonstration. Take the very important matter of answers to prayer. You can prove that God answers prayer by quoting anecdote after anecdote, that you know to be authentic, of instances in which God has really heard and answered prayer. Take that capital little book by Mr. Prime on the "Power of Prayer"; there I believe you have the truth upon this subject demonstrated as clearly as you could have it in any proposition in Euclid. I think that, if such a number of facts could be instanced in connection with any question relating to geology or astronomy, the point would be regarded as settled. The writer brings such abundant proofs of God's having heard prayer, that even men who reject inspiration ought, at least, to acknowledge that this is a marvelous phenomenon for which they cannot account by any other explanation than the one which proclaims that there is a God who sitteth in heaven, and who hath respect unto the cry of his people upon the earth.

I have heard of some persons who have had objections to labor for the conversion of their[79]children, on the ground that God would save his own without any effort on our part. I remember making one man wince who held this view, by telling him of a father who would never teach his child to pray, or have him instructed even as to the meaning of prayer. He thought it was wrong, and that such work ought to be left to God's Holy Spirit. The boy fell down and broke his leg, and had to have it taken off; and all the while the surgeon was amputating it the boy was cursing and swearing in the most frightful manner. The good surgeon said to the father, "You see, you would not teach your boy to pray, but the devil evidently had no objection to teach him to swear." That is the mischief of it; if we do not try our best to bring our children to Christ, there is another who will do his worst to drag them down to hell. A mother once said to her sick son, who was about to die, and was in a dreadful state of mind, "My boy, I am sorry you are in such trouble; I am sure I never taught you any hurt." "No, mother," he answered, "but you never taught me any good; and therefore there was room for all sorts of evil to get into me." All these stories will be to many people the very best kind of argument that you could possibly use with them. You bring to them facts, and these [80]facts reach their conscience, even though it is embedded in several inches of callousness.

I do not know of any reasoning that would explain the need of submission to the will of God better than the telling of the story, which Mr. Gilpin gives us in his Life, of his being called in to pray with a woman whose boy was very ill. The good man asked that God would, if it were his will, restore the dear child to life and health, when the mother interrupted him, and said, "No, I cannot agree to such a prayer as that; I cannot put it in that shape; it must be God's will to restore him. I cannot bear that my child should die; pray that he may live whether it is God's will or not." He answered, "Woman, I cannot pray that prayer, but it is answered; your child will recover, but you will live to rue the day that you made such a request." Twenty years after, there was a woman carried away in a fainting fit from under a drop at Tyburn, for her son had lived long enough to bring himself to the gallows by his crimes. The mother's wicked prayer had been heard, and God had answered it. So, if you want to prove the power of the gospel, do not go on expending words to no purpose, but tell the stories of cases you have met with that illustrate the truth you are enforcing, for such anecdotes will convince your [81]hearers as no other kind of reasoning can. I think that is clear enough to every one of you.

Anecdotes are useful, also, because they often appeal very forcibly to human nature. In order to rebuke those who profane the Sabbath, tell the story of the gentleman who had seven sovereigns, and who met with a poor fellow, to whom he gave six out of the seven, and then the wicked wretch turned round and robbed him of the seventh. How clearly that sets forth the ingratitude of our sinful race in depriving God of that one day out of the seven which he has set apart for his own service! This story appeals to nature, too. Two or three boys come round one of their companions, and they say to him, "Let us go and get some cherries out of your father's garden." "No," he replies, "I cannot steal, and my father does not wish those cherries to be picked." "Oh, but then your father is so kind, and he never beats you!" "Ah, I know that is true!" answers the boy, "and that is the very reason why I would not steal his cherries." This would show that the grace and goodness of God do not lead his children to licentiousness; but, on the contrary, they restrain them from sin. This story, also, appeals to human nature, and shows that the fathers of the church are not always to be [82]depended upon as fountains of authority. A nobleman had heard of a certain very old man, who lived in a village, and he sought out and found him, and ascertained that he was seventy years of age. He was talking with him, supposing him to be the oldest inhabitant, when the man said, "Oh, no, sir, I am not the oldest; I am not the father of the village; there is an older one—my father—who is still alive." So, I have heard of some who have said that they turned away from "the fathers" of the church to the very old fathers, that is, away from what are commonly called "the patristic fathers," back to the apostles, who are the true fathers and grandfathers of the Christian Church.

Sometimes anecdotes have force in them on account of their appealing to the sense of the ludicrous. Of course, I must be very careful here, for it is a sort of tradition of the fathers that it is wrong to laugh on Sundays. The eleventh commandment is, that we are to love one another, and then, according to some people, the twelfth is, "Thou shalt pull a long face on Sunday." I must confess that I would rather hear people laugh than I would see them asleep in the house of God; and I would rather get the truth into them through the medium of ridicule than I would have the [83]truth neglected, or leave the people to perish through lack of reception of the truth. I do believe in my heart that there may be as much holiness in a laugh as in a cry; and that, sometimes, to laugh is the better thing of the two, for I may weep, and be murmuring, and repining, and thinking all sorts of bitter thoughts against God; while, at another time, I may laugh the laugh of sarcasm against sin, and so evince a holy earnestness in the defense of the truth. I do not know why ridicule is to be given up to Satan as a weapon to be used against us, and not to be employed by us as a weapon against him. I will

venture to affirm that the Reformation owed almost as much to the sense of the ridiculous in human nature as to anything else, and that those humorous squibs and caricatures that were issued by the friends of Luther, did more to open the eyes of Germany to the abominations of the priesthood than the more solid and ponderous arguments against Romanism. I know no reason why we should not, on suitable occasions, try the same style of reasoning. "It is a dangerous weapon," it will be said, "and many men will cut their fingers with it." Well, that is their own lookout; but I do not know why we should be so particular about their cutting their fingers, if they can, at the same time, cut [84]the throat of sin, and do serious damage to the great adversary of souls.

Here is a story that I should not mind telling on a Sunday for the benefit of certain people who are good at hearing sermons and attending prayer-meetings, but who are very bad hands at business. They never work on Sundays because they never work on any day of the week; they forget that part of the commandment which says, "Six days shalt thou labor," which is just as binding as the other part, "The seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work." To these people who never labor because they are so heavenly-minded, I would tell the story of a certain monk, who entered a monastery, but who would not work in the fields, or the garden, or at making clothes, or anything else, because, as he told the superior, he was a spiritually-minded monk. He wondered, when the dinner-hour approached, that there came to him no summons from the refectory. So he went down to the prior, and said, "Don't the brethren eat here? Are you not going to have any dinner?" The prior said, "We do, because we are carnal; but you are so spiritual that you do not work, and therefore you do not require to eat; that is why we did not call you. The law of this [85]monastery is, that if any man will not work, neither shall he eat."

That is a good story of the boy in Italy who had his Testament seized, and who said to the *gendarme*, "Why do you seize this book? Is it a bad book?" "Yes," was the answer. "Are you sure the book is bad?" he inquired; and again the reply was, "Yes." "Then why do you not seize the Author of it if it is a bad book?" That was a fine piece of sarcasm at those who had a hatred of the Scriptures, and yet professed to have love to Christ. That is another good story of our friend the Irishman, who, when he was asked by the priest what warrant an ignorant man such as he was had for reading the Bible, said, "Truth, but I have a search-warrant; for it says, 'Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.'"

This story would not be amiss, I think, as a sort of ridiculous argument showing what power the gospel ought to have over the human mind. Dr. Moffat tells us of a certain Kaffir, who came to him one day, saying that the New Testament, which the missionary had given him a week before, had spoiled his dog. The man said that his dog had been a very good hunting-dog, but that he had torn the [86]Testament to pieces, and eaten it up, and now he was quite spoiled. "Never mind," said Dr. Moffat, "I will give you another Testament." "Oh!" said the man, "it is not that that troubles me, I do not mind the dog spoiling the book, for I could buy another; but the book has spoiled the dog." "How is that?" inquired the missionary; and the Kaffir replied, "The dog will be of no use to me now, because he has eaten the Word of God, and that will make him love his enemies, so that he will be of no good for hunting." The man supposed that not even a dog could receive the New Testament without being sweetened in temper thereby; that is, in truth, what ought to be the case with all who feed upon the gospel of Christ. I should not hesitate to tell that story after Dr. Moffat, and I should, of course, use it to show that, when a man has received the truth as it is in Jesus, there ought to be a great change in him, and he ought never to be of any use to his old master again.

When the priests were trying to pervert the natives of Tahiti to Romanism, they had a fine picture which they hoped would convince the people of the excellence of the Church of Rome. There were certain dead logs of wood: whom were they to represent? They were the heretics, who were to go into the fire. And who [87]were these small branches of the tree? They were the faithful. Who were the larger ones? They were the priests. And who were the next? They were the cardinals. And who was the trunk of the tree? Oh, that was the pope! And the root, whom did that set forth? Oh, the root was Jesus Christ! So the poor natives said, "Well, we do not know anything about the trunk or the branches; but we have got the root, and we mean to stick to that, and not give it up." If we have the root, if we have Christ, we may laugh to scorn all the pretensions and delusions of men.

These stories may make us laugh, but they may also smite error right through the heart, and lay it dead; and they may, therefore, lawfully be used as weapons with which we may go forth to fight the Lord's battles.

Fifthly, another use of anecdotes and illustrations lies in the fact that *they help the memory to grasp the truth*. There is a story told—though I will not vouch for the truth of it—of a certain countryman, who had been persuaded by some one that all Londoners were thieves; and, therefore, on coming to London for the first time, he tried to secure his watch by putting it into his waistcoat pocket, and then covering it all over with fish-hooks. "Now," [88]he thought, "if any gentleman tries to get my watch, he will remember it." The story says that, as he was walking along, he desired to know the time himself, and put his own hand into his pocket, forgetting all about the fish-hooks. The effect produced upon him can better be imagined than described. Now, it seems to me that a sermon should always be like that countryman's pocket, full of fish-hooks, so that, if anybody comes in to listen to it, he will get some forget-me-not, some remembrancer, fastened in his ear, and, it may be, in his heart and conscience. Let him drop in just at the end of the discourse, there should be something at the close that will strike and stick. As when we walk in our farmer friends' fields there are certain burrs that are sure to cling to our clothes; and, rush as we may, some of the relics of the fields remain upon our garments; so there ought to be some burr in every sermon that will stick to those who hear it.

What do you remember best in the discourses you heard years ago? I will venture to say that it is some anecdote that the preacher related. It may possibly be some pithy sentence; but it is more probable that it is some striking story which was told in the course of the sermon. Rowland Hill, a little while before he died, was visiting an old friend, [89]who said to him, "Mr. Hill, it is now sixty-five years since I first heard you preach; but I remember your text, and a part of your sermon." "Well," asked the preacher, "what part of the sermon do you recollect?" His friend answered, "You said that some people, when they went to hear a sermon, were very squeamish about the delivery of the preacher. Then you said, 'Supposing you went to hear the will of one of your relatives read, and you were expecting a legacy from him; you would hardly think of criticizing the manner in which the lawyer read the will; but you would be all attention to hear whether anything was left to you, and if so, how much; and that is the way to hear the gospel.'" Now, the man would not have recollected that for sixty-five years if Mr. Hill had not put the matter in that illustrative form. If he had said, "Dear friends, you must listen to the gospel for its own sake, and not merely for the charms of the preacher's oratory, or those delightful soaring periods which gratify your ears," if he had put it in the very pretty manner in which some people can do the thing, I will be bound to say that the man would have remembered it as long as a duck recollects the last time it went into the water, and no longer; for it would have been so common to have spoken in that way; [90]but putting the truth in the striking manner that he did, it was remembered for sixty-five years.

A gentleman related the following anecdote, which just answers the purpose I have in view, so I will pass it on to you. He said: "When I was a boy, I used to hear the story of a tailor who lived to a great age, and became very wealthy, so that he was an object of envy to all who knew him. His life, as all lives will, drew to a close; but before he passed away, feeling some desire to benefit the members of his craft, he gave out word that, on a certain day, he would be happy to communicate to all the tailors of the neighborhood the secret by which they might become wealthy. A great number of knights of the thimble came, and while they waited in anxious silence to hear the important revelation, he was raised up in his bed, and with his expiring breath uttered this short sentence, *'Always put a knot in your thread*'" That is why I recommend you, brethren, to use anecdotes and illustrations, because they put knots in the thread of your discourse. What is the use of pulling the end of your thread through the material on which you are working? Yet, has it not been the case with very many of the sermons to which we have listened, or the discourses [91]we have ourselves delivered? The bulk of what we have heard has just gone through our minds without leaving any lasting impression, and all we recollect is some anecdote that was told by the preacher.

There is an authenticated case of a man being converted by a sermon eighty-five years after he had heard it preached. Mr. Flavel, at the close of a discourse, instead of pronouncing the usual benediction, stood up, and said, "How can I dismiss you with a blessing, for many of you are 'Anathema Maranatha,' because you love not the Lord Jesus Christ?" A lad of fifteen heard that remarkable utterance; and eighty-five years afterward, sitting under a hedge, the whole scene came vividly before him as if it had been but the day before; and it pleased God to bless Mr. Flavel's words to his conversion, and he lived three years longer to bear good testimony that he had felt the power of the truth in his heart.

Sixthly, anecdotes and illustrations are useful because *they frequently arouse the feelings*. They will not do this, however, if you tell the same stories over and over again ever so many times. I recollect, when I first heard that wonderful story about "There is another man," I cried a good deal over it. Poor soul, just rescued, [92]half-dead, with only a few rags on him, and yet he said, "There is another man," needing to be saved. The second time I heard the story, I liked it, but I did not think it was quite so new as at first; and the third time I heard it, I thought that I never wanted to hear it again. I do not know how many times I have heard it since; but I can always tell when it is coming out. The brother draws himself up, and looks wonderfully solemn, and in a sepulchral tone says, "There is another man," and I think to myself, "Yes, and I wish there had not been," for I have heard that story till I am sick and tired of it. Even a good anecdote may get so hackneyed that there is no force in it, and no use in retailing it any longer.

Still, a live illustration is better for appealing to the feelings of an audience than any amount of description could possibly be. What we want in these times is not to listen to long prelections upon some dry subject, but to hear something practical, something matter-of-fact, that comes home to our every-day reasoning; and when we get this then our hearts are soon stirred.

I have no doubt that the sight of a death-bed would move men much more than that admirable work called "Drelincourt on Death," [93]a book which, I should think, nobody has ever been able to read through. There may have been instances of persons who have attempted it; but I believe that, long before they have reached the latter end, they have been in a state of asphyxia or coma, and have been obliged to be rubbed with hot flannels; and the book has had to be removed to a distance before they could recover. If you have not read "Drelincourt on Death," I believe I know what you have read—that is, the ghost story that is stitched in at the end of the book. The work would not sell, the whole impression was upon the shelves of the bookseller, when Defoe wrote the fiction entitled, "A True Relation of the Apparition of Mrs. Veal, after her Death, to Mrs. Bargrave," in which "Drelincourt on Death" is recommended by the apparition as the best book on the subject. This story had not a vestige or shadow of truth in it, it was all a piece of imagination; but it was put in at the end of the book, and then the whole edition was speedily cleared out, and more were wanted. It may be something like that very often with your sermons; only you must tell the people of what has actually occurred, and so you will retain their attention and reach their hearts.

Many have been moved to self-sacrifice by [94]the story of the Moravians in South Africa who saw a large inclosed space of ground, in which there were persons rotting away with leprosy, some without arms and some without legs; and these Moravians could not preach to the poor lepers without going in there themselves for life to rot with them, and they did so. Two more of the same noble band of brethren sold themselves into slavery in the West Indies, in order that they might be allowed to preach to the slaves. When you can give such instances as these of missionary disinterestedness and devotedness, it will do more to arouse a spirit of enthusiasm for foreign missions than all your closely reasoned arguments could possibly do.

Who has not heard and felt the force of the story of the two miners, when the fuse was burning, and only one could escape, and the Christian man cried out to his unconverted companion, "Escape for your life, because, if you die, you are lost; but if I die, it is all right with me; so you go."

The fool's plan, too, I have sometimes used as a striking illustration. There was a little boat which got wrecked, and the man in it was trying to swim to shore, but the current was too strong for him. After he had been drowned an hour, a man said, "I could have [95]saved him;" and when they asked him how he could have saved him, he described a plan that seemed to be most excellent and feasible, by which the man might, no doubt, have been saved; but then, unfortunately, by that time he was drowned! So, there are some who are always wise just too late, some who may have to say to themselves, when such and such a one is gone the way of all living, "What might I not have done for him if I had but taken him in time?" Brethren, let that anecdote be a reminder to us all that we should seek to be wise in winning souls before it is too late to rescue them from everlasting destruction.

Seventhly, and lastly, anecdotes and illustrations are exceedingly useful because *they catch the ear of the utterly careless*. Something is wanted in every sermon for this class of people; and an anecdote is well calculated to catch the ear of the thoughtless and the ungodly. We really desire their salvation, and we would bait our trap in any way possible by which we might catch them for Christ. We cannot expect our young people to come and listen to learned doctrinal disquisitions that are not at all embellished with anything that interests their immature minds. Nay, even [96]grown-up people, after the toils of the week, some of them busy till early on the Sunday morning, cannot be expected to attend to long prosaic discourses which are not broken by a single anecdote.

Oh, dear, dear, dear! How I do pity those unpractical brethren who do not seem to know to whom they are preaching! "Ah," said a brother once, "whenever I preach, I do not know where to look, and so I look up at the ventilator!" Now, there is not anybody up in the ventilator; there cannot be supposed to be anybody there, unless the angels of heaven are listening there to hear the words of truth. A minister should not preach *before* the people, but he should preach right *at* them; let him look straight at them; if he can, let him search them through and through, and take stock of them, as it were, and see what they are like, and then suit his message to them.

I have often seen some poor fellow standing in the aisle at the Tabernacle. Why, he looks just like a sparrow that has got into a church and cannot get out again! He cannot make out what sort of service it is; he begins to count how many people sit in the front row in the gallery, and all kinds of ideas pass through his mind. Now I want to attract his attention; how shall I do it? If I quote a text of [97]Scripture, he may not know what it means, and may not be interested in it. Shall I put a bit of Latin into the sermon, or quote the original Hebrew or Greek of my text? That will not do for such a man. What shall I do? Ah, I know a story that will, I believe, just fit him! Out it comes, and the man does not look up at the gallery any more; but he is wondering whatever the preacher is at. Something is said that so exactly suits his case that he begins to ask himself who has been telling the minister about him, and he thinks, "Why, I know; my wife comes to hear this man sometimes, so she has been telling him all about me!" Then he feels curious to hear more, and while he is looking up at the preacher, and listening to the truth that is being proclaimed, the first gleam of light on divine things dawns upon him; but if we had kept on with our regular discourse, and had not gone out of our way, what might have become of that man I cannot tell. "They say I ramble," said Rowland Hill, in a sermon I have been reading this afternoon; "they say I ramble, but it is because you ramble, and I am obliged to ramble after you. They say I do not stick to my subject; but, thank God, I always stick to my object, which is, the winning of your souls, and bringing you to the cross of Jesus Christ!"

[98]Mr. Bertram aptly illustrates the way in which men are engrossed in worldly cares by telling the story of the captain of a whaling ship, whom he tried to interest in the things of God, and who said, "It is no use, sir; your conversation will not have any effect upon me. I cannot hear what you are saying, or understand the subject you are talking about. I left my home to try to catch whales; I have been a year and nine months looking for whales, sir, and I have not caught a whale yet. I have been plowing the deep in search of whales; when I go to bed I dream of whales; and when I get up in the morning, I wonder if there will be any whales caught that day; there is a whale in my heart, sir, a whale in my brain, and it is of no use for you to talk to me about anything else but whales." So, your people have their business in their heads and in their hearts; they want to make a fortune and retire; or else they have a family of children to bring up, and Susan must be married, and John must be got into a situation, and it is no use for you to talk to them about the things of God unless you can drive away the whales that keep floundering and splashing about.

There is a merchant, perhaps, who has just thought of some bad bill; or another has[99]looked across the building and noticed a piece of ribbon of a particular color, and he thinks, "Yes, I ought to have had a larger stock of that kind of thing, I see that it is getting

fashionable!" or it may be that one of the hearers has caught sight of his neighbor, and he thinks he must pay him a visit on the morrow; and so people's thoughts are occupied with all sorts of subjects besides that of which the preacher is speaking. You ask me how I know that this is the case. Well, I know because I have been guilty of the same offense myself; I find this occur when I am listening to another brother preaching. I do not think, when I am preaching, that I get on very well; but sometimes, when I go into the country, and take the morning and evening services, and then hear some one else in the afternoon, I think, "Well, really, when I was up there, I thought I was a stick: but *now*! I only wish I had my turn again!" Now, this is very wrong, to let such thoughts come into our minds; but, as we are all very apt to wander, the preacher should carry anecdotes and illustrations into the pulpit, and use them as nails to fasten the people's attention to the subject of his sermon.

Mr. Paxton Hood once said in a lecture that I heard him deliver, "Some preachers expect[100]too much of their hearers; they take a number of truths into the pulpit as a man might carry up a box of nails; and then, supposing the congregation to be posts, they take out a nail, and expect it to get into the post by itself. Now, that is not the way to do it. You must take your nail, hold it up against the post, hammer it in, and then clinch it on the other side; and then it is that you may expect the great Master of assemblies to fasten the nails so that they will not fall out." We must try thus to get the truth into the people, for it will never get in of itself; and we must remember that the hearts of our hearers are not open, like a church door, so that the truth may go in, and take its place, and sit upon its throne to be worshiped there. No, we have often to break open the doors with great effort, and to thrust the truth into places where it will not at first be a welcome guest, but where, afterward, the better it is known, the more it will be loved.

Illustrations and anecdotes will greatly help to make a way for the truth to enter; and they will do it by catching the ear of the careless and the inattentive. We must try to be like Mr. Whitefield, of whom a shipbuilder said, "When I have been to hear anybody else preach, I have always been able to lay down [101]a ship from stem to stern; but when I listen to Mr. Whitefield, I cannot even lay the keel." And another, a weaver, said, "I have often, when I have been in church, calculated how many looms the place would hold; but when I listen to that man, I forget my weaving altogether." You must endeavor, brethren, to make your people forget matters relating to this world by interweaving the whole of divine truth with the passing things of every day, and this you will do by a judicious use of anecdotes and illustrations.

Now, gentlemen, these seven reasons—that they interest the mind and secure the attention of our hearers, that they render the teaching vivid and lifelike, that they explain some difficult passages to dull understandings, that they help the reasoning faculties of certain minds, that they aid the memory, that they arouse the feelings, and that they catch the ear of the careless—have reconciled me for many a day to the use of anecdotes and illustrations, and I think it is very likely that they will reconcile you to the use of them, too.

At the same time, I must repeat what I before said: we must take care that we do not let our anecdotes and illustrations be like empty casks that carry nothing. We must not have [102]it truthfully said of our sermons, as was said by a certain lady who, after having heard a clergyman preach, was asked what she thought of the sermon, and whether there was not much spirit in it. "Oh, yes!" she replied, "it was all spirit; there was no body to it at all." There must be some "body" in every discourse, some really sound doctrine, some suitable instruction for our hearers to carry home; not merely stories to amuse them, but solid truth to be received in the heart, and wrought out in the life. If this be so with your sermons, my dear brethren, I shall not have spoken to you in vain upon the uses of anecdotes and illustrations.

LECTURE IV. WHERE CAN WE FIND ANECDOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS?

Dear brethren: After my last lecture to you, upon the uses of anecdotes and illustrations, you are probably quite ready to employ them in your discourses; but some of you may ask, "Where can we get them?" At the very beginning of this afternoon's talk, let me say that *nobody need make anecdotes* in order to interest a congregation. I have heard of one who called to see a minister on a Friday, and he was told by the servant that her master could not be seen, for he was up in his study "making anecdotes." That kind of work will not do for a Christian minister. I would also bid you beware of the many common anecdotes, which are often repeated, but which I half suspect could not be proved to be matters of fact. Whenever I have the slightest suspicion about the truth of a story, I drop it at once; and I think that every one else should do the same. So long as the anecdotes are[104] current, and are generally believed, and provided they can be used for a profitable purpose, I believe they may be told, without any affirmation as to their truthfulness being made in a court of justice; but the moment any doubt comes across the mind of the preacher as to whether the tale is at least founded on fact, I think he had better look for something else, for he has the whole world to go to as a storehouse of illustration.

If you want to interest your congregation, and keep up their attention, you can find anecdotes and illustrations in many channels, like golden grains glistening among the mountain streams. For instance, there is *current history*. You may take up the daily newspaper, and find illustrations there. In my little book, "The Bible and the Newspaper," I have given specimens of how this may be done; and

when I was preparing the present lecture, I took up a newspaper to see if I could find an illustration in it, and I soon found one. There was an account of a man at Wandsworth, who was discovered, with a gun and a dog, trespassing on some gentleman's preserves, and he said that he was only looking for mushrooms! Can you imagine what the gun and the dog had to do with mushrooms? [105]However, the keeper felt in the man's pocket, and laying hold of something soft, asked, "What is this!" "Oh," said the poacher, "it is only a rabbit!" When it was suggested to him that the creature's ears were too long for a rabbit, he said that it was only a leveret, whereas it proved to be a very fine and plump hare. The man then said that he had found the hare lying near some mushrooms, but his intention was to get the mushrooms only! Now, that is a capital illustration. As soon as ever you lay hold of a man, and begin to accuse him of sin, he says, "Sin, sir! Oh, dear, no! I was only doing a very proper thing, just what I have a perfect right to do; I was looking for mushrooms; I was not poaching!" You press him a little more closely, and try to bring him to conviction of sin; and then he says, "Well, perhaps it was hardly the thing, it may have been a little amiss; but it was only a rabbit!" When the man cannot any longer deny that he is guilty of sin, he says that it was only a very little one; and it is long before you can get him to admit that sin is exceeding sinful; indeed, no human power can ever produce genuine conviction in the heart of a single sinner; it must be the work of the Holy Spirit.

I also read in the same newspaper of a calamitous [106]shipwreck caused through the lack of lights. You could easily turn that incident to account by using it to illustrate the destruction of souls through the want of a knowledge of Christ. I have no doubt, if you were to take up any of this morning's daily papers, you would very readily find an abundance of illustrations. Mr. Newman Hall, in addressing us once, said that every Christian minister ought to read regularly his Bible and *The Times* newspaper. I should imagine from the usual mode of his address that he does so himself. Whether you read that particular paper or any other, you should somehow keep yourselves well stored with illustrations taken from the ordinary transactions going on round about you. I pity even a Sunday-school teacher, much more a minister of the gospel, who could not make use of such incidents as the terrible burning of the church at Santiago, the great fire at London Bridge, the entrance into London of the Princess Alexandra, the taking of the census; and, indeed, anything that attracts public attention. There is in all these events an illustration, a simile, an allegory, which may point a moral and adorn a tale.

You may sometimes adapt *local history* to the illustration of your subject. When a minister [107]is preaching in any particular district he will often find it best to catch the ears of the people, and engross their attention, by relating some anecdote that relates to the place where they live. Whenever I can, I get the histories of various counties; for, having to go into all sorts of country towns and villages to preach, I find that there is a great deal of useful material to be dug out of even dull, dry, topographical books. They begin, perhaps, with the name of John Smith, laborer, the man who keeps the parish register, and winds up the parish clock, and makes mouse-traps, and catches rats, and does fifty other useful things; but if you have the patience to read on, you will find much information that you could get nowhere else, and you will probably meet with many incidents and anecdotes that you can use as illustrations of the truth you are seeking to set forth.

Preaching at Winslow, in Buckinghamshire, it would not be at all amiss to introduce the incident of good Benjamin Keach, the pastor of the Baptist church in that town, standing in the pillory in the market-place in the year 1664, "for writing, printing, and publishing a schismatical book entitled, 'The Child's Instructor; or, a New and Easy Primmer.'" I do not think, however, that if I were preaching [108]at Wapping I should call the people "*Wapping* sinners," as Rowland Hill is said to have done, when he told them that "Christ could save old sinners, great sinners, yea, even Wapping sinners!" At Craven Chapel it would be most appropriate to tell the story of Lord Craven, who was packing up his goods to go into the country at the time of the Great Plague of London, when his servant said to him, "My lord, does your God live only in the country?" "No," replied Lord Craven, "he is here as well as there." "Well, then," said the servant, "if I were your lordship, I think I would stop here; you will be as safe in the city as in the country;" and Lord Craven did stop there, relying upon the good providence of God.

Besides this, brethren, you have the marvelous storehouse of *ancient and modern history*—Roman, Greek, and English—with which, of course, you are seeking to become well acquainted. Who can possibly read the old classic tales without feeling his soul on fire? As you rise from their perusal, you will not merely be familiar with the events which happened in "the brave days of old," but you will have learned many lessons that may be of service in your preaching to-day. For instance, there is the story of Phidias and the statue of [109]the god which he had carved. After he had finished it, he had chiseled in the corner, in small letters, the word "Phidias," and it was objected that the statue could not be worshiped as a god, nor considered sacred, while it bore the sculptor's name. It was even seriously questioned whether Phidias should not be stoned to death because he had so desecrated the statue. How could he dare, they asked, to put his own name on the image of a god? So, some of us are very apt to want to put our little names down at the bottom of any work which we have done for God, that we may be remembered, whereas we ought rather to upbraid ourselves for wishing to have any of the credit of that which God the Holy Ghost enables us to do.

Then there is that other story of an ancient sculptor, who was about to put the image of a god into a heathen temple, although he had not finished that portion of the statue which was to be embedded in the wall. The priest demurred, and declared that the statue was not completed. The sculptor said, "That part of the god will never be seen, for it will be built into the wall." "The gods can see in the wall," answered the priest. In like manner, the most private parts of our life—those secret matters that can never reach the

human [110]eye—are still under the ken of the Almighty, and ought to be attended to with the greatest care. It is not sufficient for us to maintain our public reputation among our fellow-creatures, for our God can see in the wall; he notices our coldness in the closet of communion, and he perceives our faults and failures in the family.

Trying once to set forth how the Lord Jesus Christ delights in his people because they are his own handiwork, I found a classic story of Cyrus extremely useful. When showing a foreign ambassador round his garden, Cyrus said to him, "You cannot possibly take such an interest in these flowers and trees as I do, for I laid out the whole garden myself, and every plant here I planted with my own hand. I have watered them, and I have seen them grow, I have been a husbandman to them, and therefore I love them far better than you can." So, the Lord Jesus Christ loves the fair garden of his church, because he laid it all out, and planted it with his own gracious hand, and he has watched over every plant, and nourished and cherished it.

The days of the Crusaders are a peculiarly rich period for noble stories that will make good illustrations. We read that the soldiers of Godfrey de Bouillon, when they came within [111]sight of the city of Jerusalem, were so charmed with the view that they fell on their faces, and then rose to their feet, and clapped their hands, and made the mountains ring with their shouts of joy. Thus, when we get within sight of the New Jerusalem, our happy home on high, whose name is ever dear to us, we will make our dying-chamber ring with hallelujahs, and even the angels shall hear our songs of praise and thanksgiving. It is also recorded, concerning this same Godfrey, that, when he had entered Jerusalem at the head of his victorious army, he refused to wear the crown with which his soldiers wanted to deck his brow. "For," said he, "why should I wear a crown of gold in the city where my Lord wore a crown of thorns!" This is a good lesson for us to learn for ourselves, and to teach to our people. In the world where Christ was despised and rejected of men, it would be unseemly for a Christian to be seeking to win earthly honors, or ambitiously hunting after fame. The disciple must not think of being above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord.

Then you might easily make an illustration out of that romantic story, which may or may not be true, of Queen Eleanor sucking the poison out of her husband's wounded arm. [112]Many of us, I trust, would be willing, as it were, to suck out all the slander and venom from the arm of Christ's church, and to bear any amount of suffering ourselves, so long as the church itself might escape and live. Would not any one of you, my brethren, gladly put his lips to the envenomed wounds of the church to-day, and suffer even unto death, sooner than let the doctrines of Christ be impugned, and the cause of God be dishonored?

What a fine field of illustration lies open to you in*religious history*! It is difficult to tell where to begin digging in this mine of precious treasure. The story of Luther and the Jew might be used to set forth the evil of sin, and how to avoid it. A Jew was seeking an opportunity of stabbing the Reformer; but Luther received a portrait of the would-be murderer, so that, wherever he went, he was on his guard against the assassin. Using this fact himself as an illustration, Luther said: "God knows that there are sins that would destroy us, and he has therefore given us portraits of them in his Word, so that, wherever we see them, we may say, 'That is a sin that would stab me; I must beware of that evil thing, and keep out of its way.'"

Stout Hugh Latimer, in that famous story [113]of an incident in his trial before several bishops, brings out very clearly the omnipresence and omniscience of God, and the care that we ought to exercise in the presence of One who can read our most secret thoughts and imaginations. He says: "I was once in examination before five or six bishops, where I had much trouble; thrice every week I came to examinations, and many traps and snares were laid to get something.... At last I was brought forth to be examined in a chamber hung with arras, where I was wont to be examined; but now at this time the chamber was somewhat altered. For whereas, before, there was wont always to be a fire in the chimney, now the fire was taken away, and arras hung over the chimney, and the table stood near the fireplace. There was, among the bishops who examined me, one with whom I had been very familiar, and took him for my great friend, an aged man, and he sat next to the table's end. Then, among all other questions, he put forth a very subtle and crafty one, and such a one, indeed, as I could not think so great danger in. And when I should make answer, 'I pray you, Mr. Latimer,' said one, 'speak out; I am very thick of hearing, and there may be many that sit far off.' I marveled at this, that I was bid to speak out, [114]and began to suspect, and give an ear to the chimney; and there I heard a pen writing in the chimney behind the cloth. They had appointed one there to write all mine answers, for they made sure that I should not start from them; and there was no starting from them. God was my good Lord, and gave me answer, else I could never have escaped." Preaching, some years afterward, Latimer himself told the story, and applied the illustration. "My hearer," said he, "there is a recording pen always at work behind the arras, taking down all thou sayest, and noting all thou doest: therefore be thou careful that thy words and acts are worthy of record in God's Book of Remembrance."

You might aptly illustrate the doctrine of God's special providential care of his servants by relating the story of John Knox, who, one evening, refused to sit in his usual seat, though he did not know any particular reason for so acting. No one was allowed to occupy that chair, and during the evening a shot came in through the window, and struck a candlestick that stood immediately opposite where John Knox would have been sitting if he had taken his accustomed place. There is also the case of the godly minister, who, in escaping from his persecutors, went into a hay-loft, and hid [115]himself in the hay. The soldiers went into the place, pricking and thrusting with their swords and bayonets, and the good man even felt the cold steel touch the sole of his foot, and the scratch which was made remained for years: yet his enemies did not discover him. Afterward a hen came and laid an egg every day hard by the

place where he was hidden, and so he was sustained as well as preserved until it was safe for him to leave his hiding-place. It was either the same minister, or one of his persecuted brethren, who was providentially protected by such a humble agent as a spider. This is the story as I have read it: "Receiving friendly warning of an intended attempt to apprehend him, and finding men were on his track, he took refuge in a malt-house, and crept into the empty kiln, where he lay down. Immediately after, he saw a spider lower itself across the narrow entrance by which he had got in, thus fixing the first line of what was soon wrought into a large and beautiful web. The weaver and the web, placed directly between him and the light, were very conspicuous. He was so much struck with the skill and diligence of the spider, and so much absorbed in watching her work, that he forgot his own danger. By the time the network was completed, crossing and re-crossing [116]the mouth of the kiln in every direction, his pursuers came into the malt-house to search for him. He noted their steps, and listened to their cruel words while they looked about. Then they came close to the kiln, and he overheard one say to another, 'It's no use to look in *there*; the old villain can never be there: *look at that spider's web; he could never have got in there without breaking it*.' Without further search they went to seek elsewhere, and he escaped safely out of their hands."

There is another story I have somewhere met with, of a prisoner, during the American war, who was put into a cell in which there was a little slit, through which a soldier's eye always watched him day and night. Whatever the prisoner did, whether he ate, or drank, or slept, the sentinel's eye was perpetually gazing at him; and the thought of it, he said, was perfectly dreadful to him, it almost drove him mad; he could not bear the idea of having that man's eye always scrutinizing him. He could scarcely sleep; his very breathing became a misery, because, turn which way he would, he could never escape from the gaze of that soldier's eye. That story might be used as an illustration of the fact that God's omniscient eye is always looking at every one of us.

I remember making two or three of my congregation[117]speak out pretty loudly by telling them this story, which I read in a tract. I suppose it may be true; I receive it as reliable, and I wish I could tell it as it is printed. A Christian minister, residing near the backwoods, took a walk one evening for silent meditation. He went much farther than he intended, and, missing the track, wandered away into the woods. He kept on, endeavoring to find the road to his home; but failed to do so. He was afraid that he would have to spend the night in some tree; but suddenly, as he was going forward, he saw the glimmer of lights in the distance, and therefore pressed on, hoping to find shelter in a friendly cottage. A strange sight met his gaze; a meeting was being held in a clearing in the middle of the woods, the place being lit up with blazing pine-torches. He thought, "Well, here are some Christian people met to worship God; I am glad that what I thought was an awkward mistake in losing my way has brought me here; I may, perhaps, both do good and get good."

To his horror, however, he found that it was an atheistical gathering, and that the speakers were venting their blasphemous thoughts against God with very great boldness and determination. The minister sat [118]down full of grief. A young man declared that he did not believe in the existence of God, and dared Jehovah to destroy him then and there if there was such a God. The good man's heart was meditating how he ought to reply, but his tongue seemed to cleave to the roof of his mouth; and the infidel orator sat down amid loud acclamations of admiration and approval. Our friend did not wish to be a craven, or to hold back in the day of battle, and therefore he was almost inclined to rise and speak, when a hale, burly man, who had passed the meridian of life, but who was still exceedingly vigorous, and seemed a strong, muscular clearer of the backwoods, rose and said, "I should like to speak if you will give me a hearing. I am not going to say anything about the topic which has been discussed by the orator who has just sat down; I am only going to tell you a fact: will you hear me?" "Yes, yes," they shouted; it was a free discussion, so they would hear him, especially as he was not going to controvert. "A week ago," he began, "I was working up yonder, on the river's bank, felling trees. You know the rapids down below. Well, while I was at my employment, at some little distance from them, I heard cries and shrieks, mingled with prayers to God for help. I ran down to [119]the water's edge, for I guessed what was the matter. There I saw a young man, who could not manage his boat; the current was getting the mastery of him, and he was drifting down the stream, and ere long, unless some one had interposed, he would most certainly have been swept over the falls, and carried down to a dreadful death. I saw that young man kneel down in the boat, and pray to the Most High God, by the love of Christ, and by his precious blood, to save him. He confessed that he had been an infidel; but said that, if he might but be delivered this once, he would declare his belief in God. I at once sprang into the river. My arms are not very weak, I think, though they are not so strong as they used to be. I managed to get into the boat, turned her round, brought her to the shore, and so I saved that young man's life; and that young man is the one who has just sat down, and who has been denying the existence of God, and daring the Most High to destroy him!" Of course I used that story to show that it was an easy thing to brag and boast about holding infidel sentiments in a place of safety; but that, when men come into peril of their lives, then they talk in a very different fashion.

There is a capital story, which exemplifies the need of going up to the house of God, not[120]merely to listen to the preacher, but to seek the Lord. A certain lady had gone to the communion in a Scotch church, and had greatly enjoyed the service. When she reached her home, she inquired who the preacher was, and she was informed that it was Mr. Ebenezer Erskine. The lady said that she would go again, the next Sabbath, to hear him. She went, but she was not profited in the least; the sermon did not seem to have any unction or power about it. She went to Mr. Erskine, and told him of her experience at the two services. "Ah, madam," said he, "the first Sabbath you came to meet the Lord Jesus Christ, and you had a blessing; but the second Sabbath you came to hear

Ebenezer Erskine, and you had no blessing, and you had no right to expect any." You see, brethren, a preacher might talk to the people, in general terms, about coming to worship God, and not merely to hear the minister, yet no effect might be produced by his words, for there might not be anything sufficiently striking to remain in the memory; but after such an anecdote as this one about Mr. Erskine and the lady, who could forget the lesson that was intended to be taught?

Well, now, supposing that you have exhausted all the illustrations to be found in[121]current history, in local history, in ancient and modern history, and in religious history—which I do not think you will do unless you are yourselves exhausted—you may then turn to *natural history*, where you will find illustrations and anecdotes in great abundance; and you need never feel any qualms of conscience about using the facts of nature to illustrate the truths of Scripture, because there is a sound philosophy to support the use of such illustrations. It is a fact that can easily be accounted for, that people will more readily receive the truth of revelation if you link it with some kindred truth in natural history, or anything that is visible to the eye, than if you give them a bare statement of the doctrine itself. Besides, there is this important fact that must not be forgotten: the God who is the Author of revelation is also the Author of creation, and providence, and history, and everything else from which you ought to draw your illustrations. When you use natural history to illustrate the Scriptures, you are only explaining one of God's books by another volume that he has written.

It is just as if you had before you two works by one author, who had, in the first place, written a book for children; and then, in the second place, had prepared a volume of more [122]profound instruction for persons of riper years and higher culture. At times, when you found obscure and difficult passages in the work meant for the more advanced scholars, you would refer to the little book which was intended for the younger folk, and you would say, "We know that this means so-and-so, because that is how the matter is explained in the book for beginners." So creation, providence, and history are all books which God has written for those to read who have eyes, written for those who have ears to hear his voice in them, written even for carnal men to read, that they may see something of God therein. But the other glorious Book is written for you who are taught of God, and made spiritual and holy. Oftentimes, by turning to the primer, you will get something out of that simple narrative which will elucidate and illustrate the more difficult classic, for that is what the Word of God is to you.

There is a certain type of thought which God has followed in all things. What he made with his Word has a similarity to the Word itself by which he made it; and the visible is the symbol of the invisible, because the same thought of God runs through it all. There is a touch of the divine finger in all that God has made; so that the things which are [123]apparent to our senses have certain resemblances to the things which do not appear. That which can be seen, and tasted, and touched, and handled is meant to be to us the outward and visible sign of a something which we find in the Word of God, and in our spiritual experience, which is the inward and the spiritual grace; so that there is nothing forced and unnatural in bringing nature to illustrate grace; it was ordained of God for that very purpose. Range over the whole of creation for your similes; do not confine yourself to any particular branch of natural history. The congregation of one very learned doctor complained that he gave them spiders continuously by way of illustration. It would be better to give the people a spider or two occasionally, and then to vary the instruction by stories, and anecdotes, and similes, and metaphors drawn from geology, astronomy, botany, or any of the other sciences which will help to shed a side-light upon the Scriptures.

If you keep your eyes open, you will not see even a dog following his master, nor a mouse peeping up from his hole, nor will you hear even a gentle scratching behind the wainscot without getting something to weave into your sermons if your faculties are all on the alert. When you go home to-night, and sit by your [124]fireside, you ought not to be able to take up your domestic cat without finding that which will furnish you with an illustration. How soft are pussy's pads, and yet, in a moment, if she is angered, how sharp will be her claws! How like to temptation, soft and gentle when first it cometh to us, but how deadly, how damnable the wounds it causeth ere long!

I recollect using, with very considerable effect in a sermon, an incident that occurred in my own garden. There was a dog which was in the habit of coming through the fence and scratching in my flower beds, to the manifest spoiling of the gardener's toil and temper. Walking in the garden one Saturday afternoon, and preparing my sermon for the following day, I saw the four-footed creature—rather a scurvy specimen, by the by—and having a walking-stick in my hand, I threw it at him with all my might, at the same time giving him some good advice about going home. Now, what should my canine friend do but turn round, pick up the stick in his mouth, and bring it, and lay it down at my feet, wagging his tail all the while in expectation of my thanks and kind words? Of course, you do not suppose that I kicked him, or threw the stick at him any more. I felt quite ashamed of myself, and I told him that he was [125]welcome to stay as long as he liked, and to come as often as he pleased. There was an instance of the power of non-resistance, submission, patience, and trust, in overcoming even righteous anger. I used that illustration in preaching the next day, and I did not feel that I had at all degraded myself by telling the story.

Most of us have read Alphonse Karr's book, "A Tour Round my Garden." Why does not somebody write "A Tour Round my Dining-Table," or, "A Tour Round my Kitchen"? I believe a most interesting volume of the kind might be written by any man who had his eyes open to see the analogies of nature. I remember that, one day, when I lived in Cambridge, I wanted a sermon very badly; and I could not fix upon a subject, when, all at once, I noticed a number of birds on the slates of the opposite house. As I looked closely at

them, I saw that there was a canary, which had escaped from somebody's house, and a lot of sparrows had surrounded it, and kept pecking at it. There was my text at once: "Mine heritage is unto me as a speckled bird, the birds round about are against her."

Once more, brethren, if you cannot find illustrations in natural history, or any of the[126]other histories I have mentioned, *find them anywhere*. Anything that occurs around you, if you have but brains in your head, will be of service to you; but if you are really to interest and profit your congregations, you will need to keep your eyes open, and to use all the powers with which the Lord has endowed you. If you do so, you will find that, in simply walking through the streets, something or other will suggest a passage of Scripture, or will help you, when you have chosen your text, to open it up to the people so as really to arrest their attention, and convey the truth to their minds and hearts.

For instance, the snow to-day covered all the ground, and the black soil looked fair and white. It is thus with some men under transient reformations; they look as holy, and as heavenly, and as pure as though they were saints; but when the sun of trial arises, and a little heat of temptation cometh upon them, how soon do they reveal their true blackness, and all their surface goodliness melteth away!

The whole world is hung round by God with pictures; and the preacher has only to take them down, one by one, and hold them up before his congregation, and he will be sure to enlist their interest in the subject he is seeking to illustrate. But he must have his own eyes [127]open, or he will not see these pictures. Solomon said, "The wise man's eyes are in his head," and addressing such a man, he wrote, "Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee." Why does he speak of seeing with the eyelids? I think he means that the eyelids are to shut in what the eyes have perceived. You know that there is all the difference in the world between a man with eyes and one with no eyes. One sits down by a stream, and sees much to interest and instruct him; but another, at the same place, is like the gentleman of whom Wordsworth wrote:

A primrose by a river's brim
A Yellow primrose was to him,
And it was nothing more.

If you find any difficulty in illustrating your subject, I should strongly recommend you to *try to teach children* whenever you can get an opportunity of doing so. I do not know a better way of schooling your own mind to the use of illustrations than frequently to take a class in the Sunday-school, or to give addresses to the scholars as often as you can; because, if you do not illustrate *there*, you will have your lesson or your address illustrated for you very strikingly. You will find that the children [128]will do it by their general worry and inattention, or by their talk and play. I used to have a class of boys when I was a Sunday-school teacher, and if I was ever a little dull, they began to make wheels of themselves, twisting round on the forms on which they sat. That was a very plain intimation to me that I must give them an illustration or an anecdote; and I learned to tell stories partly by being obliged to tell them. One boy whom I had in the class used to say to me, "This is very dull, teacher; can't you pitch us a yarn?" Of course he was a naughty boy, and you may suppose that he went to the bad when he grew up, though I am not at all sure that he did; but I used to try and pitch him the yarn that he wanted in order to get his attention again. And I dare say that some of our hearers, if they were allowed to speak out during the sermon, would ask us to pitch them a yarn—that is, to give them something to interest them. I believe that one of the best things you can do to teach either the old or the young is to give them plenty of anecdotes and illustrations.

I think it would be very useful to some of you who are not yet adepts at the art of illustration if you were to *read hooks in which there* [129]*is an abundance of metaphor, simile, and emblem*. I am not going fully into that subject on this occasion, because this lecture is only preliminary to the next two that I hope to deliver, in which I will try to give you a list of cyclopedias of anecdotes and illustrations, and books of fables, emblems, and parables; but I advise you to study such works as Gurnall's "Christian in Complete Armor," or Matthew Henry's "Commentary," with the distinct view of noticing all the illustrations, emblems, metaphors, and similes that you can find. I should even select *non*-comparisons; I like Keach's "Metaphors," where he points out the disparity between the type and the Antitype. Sometimes, the contrasts between different persons or objects will be as instructive as their resemblances.

When you have read the book once, and tried to mark all the figures, go through it again, and note all the illustrations you missed in your first reading. You will probably have missed many; and you will be surprised to find that there are *illustrations even in the words themselves*. How frequently a word is itself a picture! Some of the most expressive words that are found in human language are like rich gems, which have passed before your eye very often, but you have not had time to handle or [130]to value them. In your second examination of the book, you will notice, perhaps, what eluded you the first time, and you will find many illustrations which are merely hinted at, instead of being given at length. Do as I have recommended with a great many books. Get copies that you can afford to mark with a colored pencil, so that you will be sure to see the illustrations readily; or put them down in one of your note-books.

I am sure that those brethren who begin early to keep a record of such things act wisely. The commonplace-books of the old Puritans were invaluable to them. They would never have been able to have compiled such marvelous works as they did if they had not been careful in collecting and arranging their matter under different heads; and thus, all that they had ever read upon any subject

was embalmed and preserved, and they could readily refer to any point that they might require, and refresh their memories and verify their quotations. Some of us, who are very busy, may be excused from that task; we must do the best we can; but some of you, who go to smaller charges, in the country especially, ought to keep a commonplace-book, or else I am afraid you will get to be very commonplace yourselves.

[131]Your selection of similes, metaphors, parables, and emblems will not be complete unless you also *search the Scriptures to find the illustrations that are recorded there*. Biblical allusions are the most effective methods of illustrating and enforcing the truths of the gospel; and the preacher who is familiar with his Bible will never be at a loss for an instance of that which "is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." The Lord must have meant us thus to use his Word, otherwise he would not have given us, in the Old Testament, such a number of types and symbols of truths, to be afterward more fully revealed under the gospel dispensation.

Such a collection of illustrations as I have suggested will come very handy to you in future days, and you will be reminded, by the comparisons and figures used by others, to make comparisons and figures for yourself. Familiarity with anything makes us *au fait* at it; we can learn to do almost anything by practice. I suppose that I could, by degrees, learn to make a tub if I spent my time with a man engaged in that business. I should know how to put the staves and the hoops if I stayed long enough in the cooper's yard; and I have no doubt that any of you could learn anything [132]you desired provided you had sufficient time and opportunity. So, if you search for illustrations, you will learn to make them for yourselves.

That brings me to my last point. I began this lecture by warning you against the practice of making anecdotes; I close it by advising you often to *set yourself the task of making illustrations*. Try to make comparisons from the things round about you. I think it would be well, sometimes, to shut the door of your study, and say to yourself, "I will not go out of this room until I have made at least half a dozen good illustrations." The Chinese say that the intellect lies in the stomach, and that the affections are there too. I think they are right on the latter point, because, you know, if you are ever very fond of anybody—your wife, for instance—you say that you could eat her; and you also say that such and such a person is very sweet. So, too, the intellect may lie in the stomach; and consequently, when you have been shut in for two or three hours, and begin to want your dinner or tea, you may be quickened into the making of the six illustrations I have mentioned as a minimum. Your study would be a veritable prison if you could not make as many useful comparisons [133]as that from the different objects in the room. I should say that a prison itself would furnish suggestions for making many metaphors. I do not wish you to go to prison for that purpose; but if you ever do get there, you ought to be able to learn how to preach in an interesting manner upon such a passage as this—"Bring my soul out of prison;" or this, "He was there in the prison. But the Lord was with Joseph."

If you cannot get your brains to work in the house, you might take a walk, and say to yourself, "I will wander over the fields, or I will get into the garden, or I will stroll in the wood, and see if I cannot find some illustration or other." You might even go and look in at a shop-window, and see if there are not some illustrations to be discovered there. Or you might stand still a little while, and hear what people say as they go by; or stop where there is a little knot of idlers, and try to hear what they are talking about, and see what symbol you can make out of it. You should also spend as much time as you can visiting the sick; that will be a most profitable thing to do, for in that sacred service you will have many opportunities of getting illustrations from the tried children of God as you hear their varied experiences. It is wonderful what pages of a new [134]cyclopedia of illustrative teaching you might find written out with indelible ink if you went visiting the sick, or even in talking with children. Many of them will say things that you will be able to quote with good effect in your sermons. At any rate, do make up your mind that you will attract and interest the people by the way in which you set the gospel before them. Half the battle lies in making the attempt, in coming to this determined resolution, "God helping me, I will teach the people by parables, by similes, by illustrations, by anything that will be helpful to them; and I will seek to be a thoroughly interesting preacher of the Word."

I earnestly hope you will practise the art of making illustrations. I will try to prepare a little set of exercises for you to do week by week. I shall give you some subject and some object, between which there is a likeness; and I shall get you to try to see the resemblance, and to find out what comparisons can be instituted between them. I shall also, if I can, give you some subject without an object, and then say to you, "Illustrate that; tell us, for instance, what virtue is like." Or, sometimes, I may give you the object without the subject, thus—"A diamond; how will you use that as an illustration?" Then, sometimes, I may [135]give you neither the subject nor the object, but just say, "Bring me an illustration." I think we might, in this way, make a set of exercises which would be very useful to you all.

The way to get a mind worth having is to get one well stored with things worth keeping. Of course, the man who has the most illustrations in his head will be the one who will use the most illustrations in his discourses. There are some preachers who have the bump of illustration fully developed; they are sure to illustrate their subject, they cannot help it. There are some men who always see "likes"; they catch a comparison long before others see it. If any of you say that you are not good at illustrating, I reply, "My brother, you must try to grow horns if you have not any on your head." You may never be able to develop any vast amount of imagination or fancy if you do not possess it at the first—just as it is hard to make a cheese out of a millstone—but by diligent attention to this

matter you may improve upon what you now are. I do believe that some fellows have a depression in their craniums where there ought to be a bump. I knew a young man, who tried hard to get into this college; but he never saw how to join things together unless he tied them by their tails. He brought out a book; and when I read it, I [136]found at once that it was full of my stories and illustrations; that is to say, every illustration or story in the book was one that I had used, but there was not one of them that was related as it ought to have been. This man had so told the story that it was not there at all; the very point which I had brought out he had carefully omitted, and every bit of it was told correctly except the one thing that was the essence of the whole. Of course, I was glad that I did not have that brother in the college; he might have been an ornament to us by his deficiencies, but we can do without such ornaments, indeed, we have had enough of them already.

Finally, dear brethren, do try with all your might to get the power to see a parable, a simile, an illustration, wherever it is to be seen; for to a great extent this is one of the most important qualifications of the man who is to be a public speaker, and especially of the man who is to be an efficient preacher of the gospel of Christ. If the Lord Jesus made such frequent use of parables, it must be right for us to do the same.

LECTURE V. THE SCIENCES AS SOURCES OF ILLUSTRATION.

Astronomy.

I propose, brethren, if I am able to do it—and I am somewhat dubious upon that point—to give you a set of lectures at intervals upon The Various Sciences as Sources of Illustration. It seems to me that every student for the Christian ministry ought to know at least something of every science; he should intermeddle with every form of knowledge that may be useful in his life's work. God has made all things that are in the world to be our teachers, and there is something to be learned from every one of them; and as he would never be a thorough student who did not attend all classes at which he was expected to be present, so he who does not learn from all things that God has made will never gather all the food that his soul needs, nor will he be likely to attain to that perfection of mental[138] manhood which will enable him to be a fully equipped teacher of others.

I shall commence with the science of Astronomy; and you will, at the beginning, understand that I am not going to deliver an astronomical lecture, nor to mention all the grand facts and details of that fascinating science; but I intend simply to use *astronomy as one of the many fields of illustration that the Lord has provided for us*. Let me say, however, that the science itself is one which ought to receive much attention from all of us. It relates to many of the greatest wonders in nature, and its effect upon the mind is truly marvelous. The themes on which astronomy discourses are so grand, the wonders disclosed by the telescope are so sublime, that, very often, minds that have been unable to receive knowledge through other channels have become remarkably receptive while they have been studying this science. There is an instance of a brother who was one of the students in this college, and who seemed to be a dreadful dolt; we really thought he never would learn anything, and that we should have to give him up in despair. But I introduced to him a little book called "The Young Astronomer"; and he afterward said that, as he read it, he felt just as if something [139]had cracked inside his head, or as if some string had been snapped. He had laid hold of such enlarged thoughts that I believe his cranium did actually experience an expansion which it ought to have undergone in his childhood, and which it did undergo by the marvelous force of the thoughts suggested by the study of even the elements of astronomical science.

This science ought to be the special delight of ministers of the gospel, for surely it brings us into closer connection with God than almost any other science does. It has been said that an undevout astronomer is mad. I should say that an undevout man of any sort is mad—with the worst form of madness; but, certainly, he who has become acquainted with the stars in the heavens, and who yet has not found out the great Father of lights, the Lord who made them all, must be stricken with a dire madness. Notwithstanding all his learning, he must be afflicted with a mental incapacity which places him almost below the level of the beasts that perish.

Kepler, the great mathematical astronomer, who has so well explained many of the laws which govern the universe, closes one of his books—his "Harmonics"—with this reverent and devout expression of his feelings: "I give [140]thee thanks, Lord and Creator, that thou hast given me joy through thy creation; for I have been ravished with the work of thy hands. I have revealed unto mankind the glory of thy works, as far as my limited spirit could conceive their infinitude. Should I have brought forward anything that is unworthy of thee, or should I have sought my own fame, be graciously pleased to forgive me." And you know how the mighty Newton, a very prince among the sons of men, was continually driven to his knees as he looked upward to the skies, and discovered fresh wonders in the starry heavens. Therefore, the science which tends to bring men to bow in humility before the Lord should always be a favorite study with us whose business it is to inculcate reverence for God in all who come under our influence.

The science of astronomy would never have become available to us in many of its remarkable details if it had not been for the discovery or invention of the *telescope*. Truth is great, but it does not savingly affect us till we become personally acquainted with it. The knowledge of the gospel, as it is revealed to us in the Word of God, makes it true to us; and oftentimes the Bible is to us what

the telescope is to the astronomer. The Scriptures do not make the [141]truth; but they reveal it in a way in which our poor, feeble intellect, when enlightened by the Holy Spirit, is able to behold and comprehend it.

From a book[2] to which I am indebted for many quotations in this lecture, I learn that the telescope was discovered in this singular manner: "A maker of spectacles at Middleburg stumbled upon the discovery owing to his children directing his attention to the enlarged appearance of the weathercock of a church, as accidentally seen through two spectacle-glasses, held between the fingers some distance apart. This was one of childhood's inadvertent acts; and seldom has there been a parallel example of mighty results springing out of such a trivial circumstance. It is strange to reflect upon the playful pranks of boyhood being connected in their issue, and at no distant date, with enlarging the known bounds of the planetary system, resolving the nebula of Orion, and revealing the richness of the firmament." In a similar way, a simple incident has often been the means of revealing to men the wonders of divine grace. What a certain individual only meant to be trifling with divine things, God has overruled for his soul's salvation. [142]He stepped in to hear a sermon as he might have gone to the theater to see a play; but God's Spirit carried the truth to his heart, and revealed to him the deep things of the kingdom, and his own personal interest in them.

I think that incident of the discovery of the telescope might be usefully employed as an illustration of the connection between little causes and great results, showing how the providence of God is continually making small things to be the means of bringing about wonderful and important revolutions. It may often happen that what seems to us to be a matter of pure accident, with nothing at all notable about it, may really have the effect of changing the entire current of our life, and it may be influential also in turning the lives of many others in quite a new direction.

When once the telescope had been discovered, then the numbers and position and movements of the stars became increasingly visible, until at the present time we are able to study the wonders of the stellar sky, and continually to learn more and more of the marvels that are there displayed by the hand of God. The telescope has revealed to us much more of the sun, and the moon, and the stars than we could ever have discovered without [143]its aid. Dr. Livingstone, on account of his frequently using the sextant when he was traveling in Africa, was spoken of by the natives as the white man who could bring down the sun, and carry it under his arm. That is what the telescope has done for us, and that is what faith in the gospel has done for us in the spiritual heavens; it has brought down to us the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and given us the high eternal things to be our present possession and our perpetual joy.

Thus, you see, the telescope itself may be made to furnish us with many valuable illustrations. We may also turn to good account the lessons to be learned by the study of the stars for the purpose of navigation. The mariner, crossing the trackless sea, by taking astronomical observations, can steer himself with accuracy to his desired haven. Captain Basil Hall tells us, in the book I have previously mentioned, that "he once sailed from San Blas, on the West Coast of Mexico; and, after a voyage of eight thousand miles, occupying eighty-nine days, he arrived off Rio de Janeiro, having in this interval passed through the Pacific Ocean, rounded Cape Horn, and crossed the South Atlantic, without making land, or seeing a single sail except an American whaler. [144]When within a week's sail of Rio, he set seriously about determining, by lunar observations, the position of his ship, and then steered his course by those common principles of navigation which may be safely employed for short distances between one known station and another. Having arrived within what he considered, from his computations, fifteen or twenty miles of the coast, he hove to, at four o'clock in the morning, to await the break of day, and then bore up, proceeding cautiously on account of a thick fog. As this cleared away, the crew had the satisfaction of seeing the great Sugar-Loaf Rock, which stands on one side of the harbor's mouth, so nearly right ahead that they had not to alter their course above a point in order to hit the entrance of the port. This was the first land they had seen for nearly three months, after crossing so many seas, and being set backward and forward by innumerable currents and foul winds. The effect upon all on board was electric; and, giving way to their admiration, the sailors greeted the commander with a hearty cheer."

In a similar manner, we also sail by guidance from the heavenly bodies, and we have for a long season no sight of land, and sometimes do not even see a passing sail; and yet, if we take our observations correctly, and follow the [145]track which they point out, we shall have the great blessing, when we are about to finish our voyage, of seeing, not the great Sugar-Loaf Rock, but the Fair Haven of Glory right straight before us. We shall not have to alter our course even a single point; and, as we sail into the heavenly harbor, what songs of joy will we raise, not in glorification of our own skill, but in praise of the wondrous Captain and Pilot who has guided us over life's stormy sea, and enabled us to sail in safety even where we could not see our way!

Kepler makes a wise remark, when speaking about the mathematical system by which the course of a star could be predicted. After describing the result of his observations, and declaring his firm belief that the will of the Lord is the supreme power in the laws of nature, he says: "But if there be any man who is too dull to receive this science, I advise that, leaving the school of astronomy, he follow his own path, and desist from this wandering through the universe; and, lifting up his natural eyes, with which he alone can see, pour himself out in his own heart, in praise of God the Creator; being certain that he gives no less worship to God than the astronomer, to whom God has given to see more clearly with his inward eye, and who, for what he has himself [146]discovered, both can and will glorify God."

That is, I think, a very beautiful illustration of what you may say to any poor illiterate man in your congregation: "Well, my friend, if you cannot comprehend this system of theology which I have explained to you, if these doctrines seem to you to be utterly incomprehensible, if you cannot follow me in my criticism upon the Greek text, if you cannot quite catch the poetical idea that I tried to give you just now, which is so charming to my own mind, nevertheless, if you know no more than that your Bible is true, that you yourself are a sinner, and that Jesus Christ is your Saviour, go on your way, and worship and adore, and think of God as you are able to do. Never mind about the astronomers, and the telescopes, and the stars, and the sun, and the moon; worship the Lord in your own fashion. Altogether apart from my theological knowledge, and my explanation of the doctrines revealed in the Scriptures, the Bible itself, and the precious truth you have received into your own soul, through the teaching of the Holy Spirit, will be quite enough to make you an acceptable worshiper of the Most High God."

I suppose you are all aware that among the old systems of astronomy was one which placed[147]the earth in the center, and made the sun, and the moon, and the stars revolve around it. "Its three fundamental principles were the immobility of the earth, its central position, and the daily revolution of all the heavenly bodies around it in circular orbits."

Now, in a similar fashion, there is a way of making a system of theology of which man is the center, by which it is implied that Christ and his atoning sacrifice are only made for man's sake, and that the Holy Spirit is merely a great Worker on man's behalf, and that even the great and glorious Father is to be viewed simply as existing for the sake of making man happy. Well, that may be the system of theology adopted by some; but, brethren, we must not fall into that error, for, just as the earth is not the center of the universe, so man is not the grandest of all beings. God has been pleased highly to exalt man; but we must remember how the psalmist speaks of him: "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou has ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him; and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" In another place, David says, "Lord, what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him! or the son of man, that thou makest account of him! Man is like to vanity: [148]his days are as a shadow that passeth away." Man cannot be the center of the theological universe; he is altogether too insignificant a being to occupy such a position, and the scheme of redemption must exist for some other end than that of merely making man happy, or even of making him holy. The salvation of man must surely be first of all for the glory of God; and you have discovered the right form of Christian doctrine when you have found the system that has God in the center, ruling and controlling according to the good pleasure of his will. Do not dwarf man so as to make it appear that God has no care for him; for if you do that, you slander God. Give to man the position that God has assigned to him; by doing so, you will have a system of theology in which all the truths of revelation and experience will move in glorious order and harmony around the great central orb, the Divine Sovereign Ruler of the universe, God over all, blessed forever.

You may, however, any one of you, make another mistake by imagining yourself to be the center of a system. That foolish notion is a good illustration, I think. There are some men whose fundamental principles are, first of all, their own immobility: what they are, they always are to be, and they are right, and [149]no one can stir them; secondly, their position is central, for them suns rise and set, and moons do wax and wane. For them their wives exist; for them their children are born; for them everything is placed where it appears in God's universe; and they judge all things according to this one rule, "How will it benefit *me*?" That is the beginning and the end of their grand system, and they expect the daily revolution, if not of all the heavenly bodies, certainly of all the earthly bodies around them. The sun, the moon, and the eleven stars are to make obeisance to them. Well, brethren, that is an exploded theory so far as the earth is concerned, and there is no truth in such a notion with reference to ourselves. We may cherish the erroneous idea; but the general public will not, and the sooner the grace of God expels it from us, the better, so that we may take our proper position in a far higher system than any of which we can ever be the center.

The Sun, then, not the earth, is the center of the solar system; which system, mark you, is probably only one little insignificant corner of the universe, although it includes such a vast space that if I could give you the actual figures you would not be able to form the [150]slightest idea of what they really represented. Yet that tremendous system, compared with the whole of God's universe, may be only like a single grain of dust on the sea-shore, and there may be myriads upon myriads of systems, some of which are made up of innumerable systems as large as ours, and the great sun himself may only be a planet revolving round a greater sun, and this world only a little satellite to the sun, never yet observed by the astronomers who, it may be, live in that remoter sun still farther off. It is a marvelous universe that God has made; and however much of it we may have seen, we must never imagine that we have discovered more than a very small portion of the worlds upon worlds that God has created.

The earth, and all the planets, and all the solid matter of the universe, are controlled, as you know, by the force of attraction. We are kept in our place in the world, in going round the sun, by two forces, the one called centripetal, which draws us toward the sun, and the other called centrifugal, which is generally illustrated by the tendency of drops of water on a trundled mop to fly off at a tangent from the circle they are describing.

Now, I believe that, in like manner, there are two forces which are ever at work upon[151]all of us, the one which draws us toward God, and the other which drives us away from him, and we are thus kept in the circle of life; but, for my part, I shall be very glad when I can pass out of that circle, and get away from the influence of the centrifugal force. I believe that, the moment I do so—as

soon as ever the attraction which draws me away from God is gone—I shall be with him in heaven; that I do not doubt. Directly one or other of the two forces which influence human life shall be exhausted, we shall have either to drift away into the far-off space, through the centrifugal force—which God forbid!—or else we shall fly at once into the central orb, by the centripetal force, and the sooner that glorious end of life comes, the better will it be for us. With Augustine, I would say, "All things are drawn to their own center. Be thou the Center of my heart, O God, my Light, my only Love!"

The sun himself is an enormous body; he has been measured, but I think I will not burden you with the figures, since they will convey to you no adequate idea of his actual size. Suffice it to say that, if the earth and the moon were put inside the sun, there would be abundance of room for them to go on revolving in their orbits just as they are now doing; and there would be no fear of their knocking [152]against that external crust of the sun which would represent to them the heavens.

It takes about eight minutes for light to reach us from the sun. We may judge of the pace at which that light comes when we reflect that a cannon-ball, rushing with the swiftest possible velocity, would take seven years to get there, and that a train, traveling at the rate of thirty miles an hour, and never stopping for refreshments, would require more than three hundred and fifty years before it would reach the terminus. You may thus form some slight idea of the distance that we are from the sun; and this, I think, furnishes us with a good illustration of faith. There is no man who can know, except by faith, that the sun exists. That he did exist eight minutes ago, I know, for here is a ray of light that has just come from him, and told me that; but I cannot be sure that he is existing at this moment. There are some of the fixed stars, that are at such a vast distance from the earth, that a ray of light from them takes hundreds of years to reach us; and, for aught we know, they may have been extinct long ago. Yet we still put them down in our chart of the heavens, and we can only keep them there by faith, for as, "through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God," so it is only [153]by faith that we can know that any of them now exist. When we come to examine the matter closely, we find that our eyesight, and all our faculties and senses, are not sufficient to give us positive conviction with regard to these heavenly bodies; and therefore we still have to exercise faith; so is it to a high degree in spiritual affairs, we walk by faith, not by sight.

That the sun has spots upon his face, is a fact which everybody notices. Just so; and if you are suns, and are never so bright, yet if you have any spots upon you, you will find that people will be very quick to notice them, and to call attention to them. There is often much more talk about the sun's spots than there is about his luminous surface; and, after the same fashion, more will be said about any spots and imperfections that men may discover in our character than about any excellences that they may see in us. It was for some time asserted that there were no spots or specks whatever on the sun. Many astronomers, with the aid of the telescope, as well as without it, discovered these blemishes and patches on the face of the sun; but they were assured by men who ought to have known—namely, by the reverend fathers of the church, that it was impossible that there could be anything of [154]the kind. The book I have previously quoted says: "Upon Scheiner, a German Jesuit, reporting the evidence of his senses to his provincial superior, the latter positively refused to believe him. 'I have read,' said he, 'Aristotle's writings from end to end many times, and I can assure you that I have nowhere found in them anything similar to what you mention. Go, my son, and tranquilize yourself: be assured that what you take for spots in the sun are the faults of your glasses, or of your eyes.'" So, brethren, we know the force of bigotry, and how men will not see what is perfectly plain to us, and how, even when facts are brought before them, they cannot be made to believe in them, but will attribute them to anything but that which is the real truth. I am afraid that the Word of God itself has often been treated just in that way. Truths that are positively and plainly revealed there are stoutly denied, because they do not happen to fit in with the preconceived theories of unbelievers.

There have been a great many attempts to explain what the spots upon the sun really are. One theory is, that the solar orb is surrounded by a luminous atmosphere, and that the spots are open spaces in that atmosphere through which we see the solid surface of the sun. I [155]cannot see any reason why that theory should not be the truth; and, if it be so, it seems to me to explain the first chapter of Genesis, where we are told that God created the light on the first day, though he did not make the sun until the fourth day. Did he not make the light first, and then take the sun, which otherwise might have been a dark world, and put the light on it as a luminous atmosphere? The two things certainly might very well fit in with each other; and if these spots are really openings in the luminous atmosphere through which we see the dark surface of the sun, they are admirable illustrations of the spots that men see in us. We are clothed with holiness as with a garment of light; but every now and then there is a rift through which observers can see down into the dark body of natural depravity that still is in the very best of us.

It is a dangerous thing to look at the sun with unprotected eyes. Some have ventured to look at it with glasses that have no coloring in them, and they have been struck blind. There have been several instances of persons who have inadvertently neglected to use a proper kind of glass before turning the telescope to the sun, and so have been blinded. This is an illustration of our need of a Mediator, and of how necessary it is to see God [156]through the medium of Christ Jesus our Lord; else might the excessive glory of the Deity utterly destroy the faculty of seeing God at all.

The effect of the sun upon the earth, I shall not dwell upon now, as that may rather concern another branch of science than astronomy. It will suffice to say that living plants will sometimes grow without the sun, as you may have seen them in a dark cellar;

but how blanched they are when existing under such circumstances! What must have been the pleasure with which Humboldt entered into the great subterranean cave called the Cueva del Guacharo, in the district of Caraccas! It is a cavern inhabited by nocturnal, fruit-eating birds, and this was what the great naturalist saw: "Seeds, carried in by the birds to their young, and dropped, had sprung up, producing tall, blanched, spectral stalks, covered with half-formed leaves; but it was impossible to recognize the species from the change in form, color, and aspect, which the absence of light had occasioned. The native Indians gazed upon these traces of imperfect organization with mingled curiosity and fear, as if they were pale and disfigured phantoms banished from the face of the earth."

So, brethren, think what you and I would [157]be without the light of God's countenance. Picture a church growing, as some churches do grow, without any light from heaven, a cavern full of strange birds and blanched vegetation. What a terrible place for any one to visit! There is a cave of that sort at Rome, and there are others in various parts of the earth; but woe unto those who go to live in such dismal dens!

What a wonderful effect the light of God's countenance has upon men who have the divine life in them, but who have been living in the dark! Travelers tell us that, in the vast forests of the Amazon and the Orinoco, you may sometimes see, on a grand scale, the influence of light in the coloring of the plants when the leaf-buds are developing. One says: "Clouds and rain sometimes obscure the atmosphere for several days together, and during this time the buds expand themselves into leaves. But these leaves have a pallid hue till the sun appears, when, in a few hours of clear sky and splendid sunshine, their color is changed to a vivid green. It has been related that, during twenty days of dark dull weather, the sun not once making his appearance, the leaves were expanded to their full size, but were almost white. One forenoon the sun began to shine in full brightness, when the [158]color of the forest changed so rapidly that its progress might be marked. By the middle of the afternoon, the whole, for many miles, presented the usual summer dress."

That is a beautiful illustration, it seems to me, that does not want any opening up; you can all make the application of it to the Lord Jesus for yourselves. As Dr. Watts sings—

In the darkest shades if he appear,

My dawning is begun;

He is my soul's sweet morning star,

And he my rising sun.

Then we begin to put on all sorts of beauty, as the leaves are painted by the rays of the sun. We owe every atom of color that there is in any of our virtues, and every trace of flavor that there is in any of our fruits, to those bright sunbeams that come streaming down to us from the Sun of Righteousness, who carries many other blessings besides healing beneath his wings.

The effect of the sun upon vegetation can be observed among the flowers in your own garden. Notice how they turn to him whenever they can; the sunflower, for instance, follows the sun's course as if he were himself the sun's son, and lovingly looked up to his father's face. He is very much like a sun in appearance, [159]and I think that is because he is so fond of turning to the sun. The innumerable leaves of a clover field bend toward the sun; and all plants, more or less, pay deference to the sunlight to which they are so deeply indebted. Even the plants in the hothouse, you can observe, do not grow in that direction you would expect them to do if they wanted warmth, that is, toward the stovepipe, whence the heat comes, nor even to the spot where most air is admitted; but they will always, if they possibly can, send out their branches and their flowers toward the sun. That is how we ought to grow toward the Sun of Righteousness; it is for our soul's health that we should turn our faces toward the Sun, as Daniel prayed with his windows open toward Jerusalem. Where Jesus is, there is our Sun; toward him let us constantly incline our whole being.

Not very long ago I met with the following remarkable instance of the power of rays of light transmitted from the sun: some divers were working at Plymouth Breakwater; they were down in the diving-bell, thirty feet below the surface of the water; but a convex glass, in the upper part of the bell, concentrated the sun's rays full upon them, and burned their caps. As I read this story, I thought it was a capital illustration of the power there is in the gospel [160]of our Lord Jesus Christ. Some of our hearers are fully thirty feet under the waters of sin, if they are not even deeper down than that; but, by the grace of God, we will yet make them feel the blessed burning power of the truths we preach, even if we do not succeed in setting them all on fire with this powerful glass. Perhaps, when you were a boy, you had a burning-glass, and when you were out with a friend who did not know what you had in your pocket, while he was sitting very quietly by your side, you took out your glass, and held it for a few seconds over the back of his hand until he felt something rather hot just there. I like the man who, in preaching, concentrates the rays of the gospel on a sinner till he burns him. Do not scatter the beams of light; you can turn the glass so as to diffuse the rays instead of concentrating them; but the best way of preaching is to focus Jesus Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, right on a sinner's heart. It is the best way in the world to get at him; and if he is thirty feet under the water, this burning-glass will enable you to reach him; only mind that you do not use your own candle instead of the Sun, for that will not answer the same purpose.

Sometimes the sun suffers eclipse, as you know. The moon intrudes between us and [161]the sun, and then we cannot see the great orb of day. I suppose we have all seen one total eclipse, and we may see another. It is a very interesting sight; but it appears to me that people take a great deal more notice of the sun when he is eclipsed than they do when he is shining clearly. They do not stand looking at him, day after day, when he is pouring forth his bright beams in unclouded glory; but as soon as ever he is eclipsed, then they are out in their thousands, with their glasses, and every little boy in the street has a fragment of smoked glass through which he watches the eclipse of the sun.

Thus, brethren, I do not believe that our Lord Jesus Christ ever receives so much attention from men as when he is set forth as the suffering Saviour, evidently crucified among them. When the great eclipse passed over the Sun of Righteousness, then all eyes were fixed upon him, and well they might be. Do not fail to tell your hearers continually about that awful eclipse on Calvary; but mind that you also tell them all the effects of that eclipse, and that there will be no repetition of that stupendous event.

Lo! the sun's eclipse is o'er;

Lo! he sets in blood no more.

[162]Speaking of eclipses reminds me that there is, in the book I have mentioned, a striking description of one given by a correspondent who wrote to the astronomer Halley. He took his stand at Haradow Hill, close to the east end of the avenue of Stonehenge, a very capital place for observation, and there he watched the eclipse. He says of it: "We were now enveloped in a total and palpable darkness, if I may be allowed the expression. It came on rapidly, but I watched so attentively that I could perceive its progress. It came upon us like a great black cloak thrown over us, or like a curtain drawn from that side. The horses we held by the bridle seemed deeply struck by it, and pressed closely to us with marks of extreme surprise. As well as I could perceive, the countenances of my friends wore a horrible aspect. It was not without an involuntary exclamation of wonder that I looked around me at this moment. It was the most awful sight I had ever beheld in my life."

So, I suppose, it must be in the spiritual realm. When the Sun of this great world suffered eclipse, then were all men in darkness; and when any dishonor comes upon the cross of Christ, or upon Christ himself, then is each Christian himself in darkness of a horrible [163]kind. He cannot be in the light if his Lord and Master is in the shade.

One observer describes what he saw in Austria, where, it appears, all the people made the eclipse a time for keeping holiday, and turned out together on the plain with various modes of observing the wonderful sight. This writer says: "The phenomenon, in its magnificence, had triumphed over the petulance of youth, over the levity which some persons assume as a sign of superiority, over the noisy indifference of which soldiers usually make profession. A profound stillness also reigned in the air; the birds had ceased to sing." The more curious thing is that, in London, after an eclipse, when the cocks found that the sun shone out again, they all began crowing as though they joyfully thought that the daylight had broken through the gloom of night.

Yet this wonderful phenomenon does not appear to have always attracted the attention of all persons who might have witnessed it. History says that, at one time, there was a battle being fought, I think, in Greece, and, during its progress, there came on a total eclipse of the sun; but the warriors went on fighting all the same, indeed, they never noticed the extraordinary occurrence. That shows us [164]how strong passions may make us forget surrounding circumstances, and it also teaches us how a man's engagements on earth may make him oblivious of all that is transpiring in the heavens. We read, just now, of how those horses, that were standing idly on Salisbury Plain, trembled during the eclipse; but another writer tells us that the horses in Italy, that were busily occupied in drawing the carriages, do not appear to have taken the slightest notice of the phenomenon, but to have gone on their way the same as usual. Thus, the engagements of a worldly man are often so engrossing in their character that they prevent him from feeling those emotions which are felt by other men whose minds are more at liberty to meditate upon them.

I met with a very pretty story concerning an eclipse, which you will probably like to hear. A poor little girl, belonging to the commune of Sièyes, in the Lower Alps, was tending her flock on the mountain-side at six o'clock on a bright summer morning. The sun had risen, and was dissipating the vapors of the night, and every one thought that there would be a glorious, unclouded day; but gradually the light darkened until the sun had wholly disappeared, and a black orb took the place of the glowing disk, while the air became chill, and a [165]mysterious gloom pervaded the whole region. The little child was so terrified by the circumstance, which was certainly unusual, that she began to weep, and cried out loudly for help. Her parents, and other friends, who came at her call, did not know anything about an eclipse, so they were also astounded and alarmed; but they tried to comfort her as best they could. After a short time, the darkness passed away from the face of the sun, and it shone out as before, and then the little girl cried aloud, in the *patois* of the district, "O beautiful sun!" and well she might. When I read the story, I thought that, when my heart had suffered eclipse, and the presence of Christ had gone for a while, and then had come back again, how beautiful the Sun seemed to me, even more bright and fair than before the temporary darkness. Jesus seemed to shine on me with a brighter light than ever before, and my soul cried out in an ecstasy of delight, "O beautiful Sun of Righteousness!"

That story must, I think, close our illustrations derived from the sun; for we want also to learn all we can from his planets, and if we intend to pay a visit to them all, we shall have to travel far, and to travel fast, too.

[166]The nearest planet that revolves around the sun is Mercury, which is about 37,000,000 miles from the great luminary. Mercury, therefore, receives a far greater allowance of light and heat from the sun than comes to us upon the earth. It is believed that, even at the poles of Mercury, water would always boil; that is to say, if the planet is constituted at all as this world is. None of us could possibly live there; but that is no reason why other people should not, for God could make some of his creatures to live in the fire just as well as he could make others to live out of it. I have no doubt that, if there are inhabitants there, they enjoy the heat. In a spiritual sense, at any rate, we know that men who live near to Jesus dwell in the divine flame of love.

Mercury is a comparatively small planet; its diameter is about 2960 miles, while that of the earth is 7975. Mercury rushes round the sun in eighty-eight days, traveling at the rate of nearly 110,000 miles in an hour, while the earth traverses only 65,000 miles in the same time. Fancy crossing the Atlantic in about two or three minutes! It is an instance of the wisdom of God that Mercury appears to be the densest of the planets. You see, that part of a machine in which there is the most rapid whirl, and the greatest wear and tear, ought [167]to be made of the strongest material; and Mercury is made very strong in order to bear the enormous strain of its swift motion, and the great heat to which it is subjected.

This is an illustration of how God fits every man for his place; if he means me to be Mercury—the messenger of the gods, as the ancients called him—and to travel swiftly, he will give me a strength proportioned to my day. In the formation of every planet, adapting it to its peculiar position, there is a wonderful proof of the power and forethought of God; and in a similar manner does he fit human beings for the sphere they are each called to occupy.

I like to see in Mercury a picture of the child of God who is full of grace. Mercury is always near the sun; indeed, so near that it is itself very seldom seen. I think Copernicus said that he never did see it, although he had long watched for it with great care, and he deeply regretted that he had to die without having ever seen this planet. Others have observed it, and it has been quite a treat for them to be able to watch its revolutions.

Mercury is usually lost in the rays of the sun; and that is where you and I ought to be, so close to Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, in our life and in our preaching, that the people [168]who are trying to observe our movements can scarcely see us at all. Paul's motto must be ours—"Not I, but Christ."

Mercury, also, in consequence of being so near the sun, is apparently the least understood of any of the planets. It has, perhaps, given more trouble to the astronomers than any other member of the heavenly family; they have paid great attention to it, and tried to find out all about it; but they have had a very difficult task, for it is generally lost in the solar glory, and never seen in a dark portion of the heavens. So, I believe, brethren, that the nearer we live to Christ, the greater mystery shall we be to all mankind. The more we are lost in his brightness, the less will they be able to understand us.

If we were always what we should be, men would see in us an illustration of the text, "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Like Mercury, we ought also to be so active in our appointed orbit that we should not give observers time to watch us in any one position; and next, we should be so absorbed in the glory of Christ's presence, that they would not be able to perceive us.

When Mercury is seen from the earth, it is never visible in its brightness, for its face is always turned toward the sun. I am afraid [169]that, whenever any of us are seen very much, we usually appear only as black spots; when the preacher is very prominent in a sermon, there is always a darkness. I like gospel preaching to be all Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, and no black spot at all; nothing of ourselves, but all of the Lord Jesus. If there are any inhabitants of Mercury, the sun must appear to them four or five times as large as he does to us; the brightness would be insufferable to our eyes. It would be a very splendid sight if one could gaze upon it; and thus, the nearer you get to Christ, the more you see of him, and the more he grows in your esteem.

The next planet to Mercury is Venus; it is about 66,000,000 miles from the sun, and is a little smaller than the earth, its diameter being 7510 miles, compared with our 7975. Venus goes round the sun in 225 days, traveling at the rate of 80,000 miles an hour. When the Copernican system of astronomy was fairly launched upon the world, one of the objections to it was stated thus: "It is clear that Venus does not go round the sun, because, if it does, it must present the same aspect as the moon—namely, it must sometimes be a crescent, at other times a half-moon, or it must assume the [170]form known as *gibbous*, and sometimes it must appear as a complete circle. But," said the objector, pointing to Venus, "she is always the same size; look at her, she is not at all like the moon." This was a difficulty that some of the earlier astronomers could not explain; but when Galileo was able to turn his newly made telescope to the planet, what did he discover? Why, that Venus does pass through similar phases to those of the moon! We cannot always see the whole of it enlightened, yet I suppose it is true that the light of Venus always appears about the same to us. You will perceive in a moment why that is; when the planet's face is turned toward us, it is at the greatest distance from the earth; consequently, the light that reaches us is no more than when it is closer, but has its face at least partly turned away from us. To my mind, the two facts are perfectly reconcilable; and so is it, I believe, with some of the doctrines of grace that perplex certain people.

They say, "How do you make these two things agree?" I reply, "I do not know that I am bound to prove how they agree. If God had told me I would tell you; but as he has not done so, I must leave the matter where the Bible leaves it." I may not have discovered the explanation of any apparent difference between the two truths, and yet, [171]for all that, the two things may be perfectly consistent with each other.

Venus is both the morning star and "the star of the evening, beautiful star." It has been called Lucifer, and Phosphorus, the light-bringer, and also Hesperus, the vesper star. You perhaps remember how Milton, in "Paradise Lost," refers to this double character and office of Venus:

Fairest of stars! last in the train of night,

If better thou belong not to the dawn;

Sure pledge of day, that crown'st the smiling morn

With thy bright circlet: praise him in thy sphere,

While day arises, that sweet hour of prime.

Our Lord Jesus Christ calls himself "the bright and morning star." Whenever he comes into the soul, he is the sure harbinger of that everlasting light which shall go no more down forever. Now that Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness, has gone from the gaze of man, you and I must be like evening stars, keeping as close as we can to the great central Sun, and letting the world know what Jesus was like by our resemblance to him. Did he not say to his disciples, "Ye are the light of the world"?

The next little planet that goes round the sun is The Earth. Its distance from the sun [172]varies from about ninety-two to ninety-five millions of miles. Do not be discouraged, gentlemen, in your hopes of reaching the sun, because you are nothing like so far away as the inhabitants of Saturn; if there are any residents there, they are about ten times as far from the sun as we are. Still, I do not suppose you will ever take a seat in Sol's fiery chariot; at least not in your present embodied state; it is far too warm a place for you to be at home there. The earth is somewhat larger than Venus, and it takes much longer to go round the sun; it is twelve months on its journey, or, speaking exactly, 365 days, 6 hours, 9 minutes, and 10 seconds. This world is a slow-going concern; and I am afraid it is less to the glory of God than any other world that he has made. I have not seen it from a distance; but I should suspect that it never shines anything like so brightly as Venus; for, through sin, a cloud of darkness has enveloped it. I suppose that, in the millennial days, the curtain will be drawn back, and a light will be thrown upon the earth, and that it will then shine to the glory of God like its sister stars that have never lost their pristine brightness. I think there have been some curtains drawn up already; every sermon, full of Christ, that we preach, rolls away some of the mists and fogs from the surface of the [173]planet; at any rate, morally and spiritually, if not naturally.

Still, brethren, though the earth travels slowly, when compared with Mercury and Venus, yet, as Galileo said, it does move, and at a pretty good rate, too. I dare say, if you were to walk for twenty minutes, and you knew nothing about the speed at which the earth is traveling, you would be surprised if I assured you that you had in that short space of time gone more than 20,000 miles; but it would be a fact. This book, which has already given us much useful information, says: "It is a truly astonishing thought that, 'awake, asleep, at home, abroad,' we are constantly carried round with the terrestrial mass, at the rate of eleven miles a minute, and are, at the same time, traveling with it in space with a velocity of sixty-six thousand miles an hour. Thus, during the twenty minutes consumed in walking a mile from our thresholds, we are silently conveyed more than twenty thousand miles from one portion of space to another; and, during a night of eight hours' rest, or tossing to and fro, we are unconsciously translated through an extent equal to twice the distance of the lunar world."

We do not take any notice of this movement, and so it is that little things, which are near[174]and tangible, often seem more notable than great things which are more remote. This world impresses many men with far greater force than the world to come has ever done, because they look only upon the things that are seen and temporal. "But," perhaps you say, "we do not feel ourselves moving." No, but you are moving, although you are not conscious of it. So, I think that, sometimes, when a believer in Christ does not feel himself advancing in divine things, he need not fret on that account; I am not certain that those who imagine themselves to be growing spiritually are really doing so. Perhaps they are only growing a cancer somewhere; and its deadly fibers make them fancy there is a growth within them. Alas! so there is; but it is a growth unto destruction.

When a man thinks that he is a full-grown Christian, he reminds me of a poor boy whom I used to see. He had such a splendid head for his body that he had often to lay it on a pillow, for it was too weighty for his shoulders to carry, and his mother told me that, when he tried to stand up, he often tumbled down, over-balanced by his heavy head. There are some people who appear to grow very fast, but they have water on the brain, and are out of due proportion; but he who truly grows in grace [175]does not say, "Dear me! I can feel that I am growing; bless the Lord! Let's sing a hymn, 'I'm a-growing! I'm a-growing!'" I have sometimes felt that I was growing smaller, brethren; I think that is very possible, and a good thing, too. If we are very great in our own estimation, it is because we

have a number of cancers, or foul gatherings, that need to be lanced, so as to let out the bad matter that causes us to boast of our bigness.

It is a good thing that we do not feel ourselves moving, for, as I before reminded you, we walk by faith, not by sight. Yet I know that we are moving, and I am persuaded that I shall return, as nearly as the earth's revolution permits, to this exact spot this day twelve-month. If they are looking down at me from Saturn, they will spy me out somewhere near this same place, unless the Lord should come in the meantime, or he should call me up to be with him.

If we did feel the world move, it would probably be because there was some obstruction in the heavenly road; but we go on so softly, and gently, and quietly that we do not perceive it. I believe that growth in grace is very much after the same fashion. A babe grows, and yet does not know that he grows; the seed unconsciously grows in the earth, and so we [176]are developing in the divine life until we come to the fulness of the stature of men in Christ Jesus.

Waiting upon the earth is The Moon. In addition to her duty as one of the planets revolving round the sun, she has the task of attending upon the earth, doing much useful service for it, and at night lighting it with her great reflector-lamp, according to the allowance of oil she has available for shedding her beams upon us. The moon also operates upon the earth by her powers of attraction; and as the water is the more mobile part of our planet, the moon draws it toward herself, so making the tides; and those tides help to keep the whole world in healthful motion; they are a sort of life-blood to it.

The moon undergoes eclipse, sometimes very frequently, and a great deal more often than the sun; and this phenomenon has occasioned much terror. Among some tribes, an eclipse of the moon is an occasion for the greatest possible grief. Sir R. Schomberg thus describes a total lunar eclipse in San Domingo: "I stood alone upon the flat roof of the house which I inhabited, watching the progress of the eclipse. I pictured in imagination the lively and extraordinary scene which I once [177]witnessed in the interior of Guiana, among the untutored and superstitious Indians, how they rushed out of their huts when the first news of the eclipse came, gibbered in their tongue, and, with violent gesticulations, threw up their clenched fists toward the moon. When, as on this occasion, the disk was perfectly eclipsed, they broke out in moanings, and sullenly squatted upon the ground, hiding their faces between their hands. The females remained, during this strange scene, within their huts. When, shining like a sparkling diamond, the first portion of the moon, that had disencumbered itself from the shadow, became visible, all eyes were turned toward it. They spoke to each other with subdued voices; but their observations became louder and louder, and they quitted their stooping position as the light increased. When the bright disk announced that the monster which wanted to stifle the Queen of Night had been overcome, the great joy of the Indians was expressed in that peculiar whoop which, in the stillness of the night, may be heard for a great distance."

Want of faith causes the most extraordinary fear, and produces the most ridiculous action. A man who believes that the moon, though temporarily hidden, will shine forth again, looks upon an eclipse as a curious phenomenon [178]worthy of his attention, and full of interest; but the man who really fears that God is blowing out the light of the moon, and that he shall never see its bright rays any more, feels in a state of terrible distress. Perhaps he will act as the Hindus and some of the Africans do during an eclipse: they beat old drums, and blow bullocks' horns, and make all manner of frightful noises, to cause the dragon who is supposed to have swallowed the moon to vomit it up again. That is their theory of an eclipse, and they act accordingly; but once know the truth, and know especially the glorious truth that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to his purpose," and we shall not be afraid of any dragon swallowing the moon, nor of anything else that the fears of men have made them imagine. If we are ignorant of the truth, every event that occurs, which may be readily enough accounted for from God's point of view, may cause the utmost terror, and drive us, perhaps, into the wildest follies.

The next planet to the earth is Mars; fiery Mars, generally shining with a ruddy light. It used to be thought that the color of Mars's "blood-red shield" was caused by the absorption of the solar rays; but this idea has been [179]refuted, and it is now believed to be due to the color of its soil. According to the former idea, an angry man, who is like Mars, the god of war, must be one who has absorbed all other colors for his own use, and only shows the red rays to others; while the more modern notion, that the soil of the planet gives it its distinctive color, teaches us that, where there is a fiery nature, there will be a warlike exhibition of it unless it is restrained by grace. Mars is about 140,000,000 miles from the sun; it is much smaller than our earth, its equatorial diameter being 4363 miles. Traveling at the rate of 53,600 miles an hour, it takes 687 days to complete its revolution round the sun.

Between the orbits of Mars and Jupiter there is a wide zone, in which, for many centuries, no planets were visible; but the astronomers said within themselves, "There must surely be something or other between Mars and Jupiter." They could not find any great planets; but as telescopes became larger and more powerful, they observed that there was a great number of Asteroids or Planetoids, as some term them. I do not know how many there are, for they are like some of our brethren's families, they are daily increasing. Some hundreds of them have already been discovered; [180]and by the aid of telescopic photography, we may expect to hear of the finding of many more. The first asteroid was identified on the first day of the present century, and was named Ceres. Many of them have been called by female mythological names, I suppose because they are the smaller planets, and it is considered gallant to give them ladies' names. They appear to vary from about 20 to 200 miles in diameter; and many have

thought that they are the fragments of some planet that once revolved between Mars and Jupiter, but that has been blown up, and gone to pieces in a general wreck.

Those meteoric stones, which sometimes fall to the earth, but which much more frequently, at certain seasons of the year, are seen shooting across the midnight sky, may also be fragments of the aforesaid world which has perished. At all events, since the fathers fell asleep, all things have not continued as they were; there have been changes in the starry world to let men know that other changes will yet come. These blocks of meteoric matter are flying through space, and when they get within the range of our atmosphere, there is an opposing medium, they have to drive through it at an enormous rapidity, and so they become burning hot, and thus they become visible. And, in like manner, [181]I believe that there are plenty of good men in the world who are invisible till they get to be opposed, and being opposed, and having the love of God driving them on with tremendous momentum, they become red-hot with holy fervor, they overcome all opposition, and then they become visible to the eye of mankind. For my part, I rather like to pass through an opposing medium. I think that we all want to travel in that kind of atmosphere just to give us the sacred friction that will fully develop the powers with which we have been intrusted. If God has given us force, it is not at all a bad thing for us to be put where there is opposition, because we shall not be stopped by it, but shall by that very process be made to shine all the brighter as lights in the world.

Beyond the space which is occupied by the asteroids is the magnificent planet, Jupiter, the brightest star which we see, except Venus; and yet he is very, very far away. His mean distance from the sun is about 475,000,000 miles; that is, more than five times as far off as we are. Even here, we are so far away that we do not often see the sun; but Jupiter is five times as far from the sun, and it takes him 4333 days, or nearly twelve of our years, to go [182]round the great luminary, traveling at a speed of 27,180 miles an hour. The reason why Jupiter is so bright is, partly, because of his great size, for he is nearly 90,000 miles in diameter, while the earth is less than 8,000, and it may be partly because he is better constituted for reflecting, or else, at that distance, his magnitude would not avail him. And brethren, if you and I are put in difficult positions, where we seem to be unable to shine to the glory of God, we must ask the Lord specially to constitute us so that we can better reflect his brightness, and so produce as good an effect as our brethren who are placed in more favorable positions.

Jupiter is attended by four moons.[3] These satellites were discovered soon after the invention of the telescope; yet there were several persons who would not believe in their existence, and one of our excellent friends, the Jesuits, of course, was strongest in his determination that he never would, by any process, be convinced of that which others knew to be a fact. He was asked to look through a telescope in order to see that it was really so; but he declined because he said that, perhaps, if he did so, he would be obliged to believe it; [183]and as he had no desire to do so, he refused to look. Are there not some who act thus toward the truths of revelation? Some time after, the Jesuit fell under the anger of good Kepler, and being convinced that he was in the wrong, he went to the astronomer and begged his pardon. Kepler told him that he would forgive him, but he would have to inflict a penance upon him. "What will it be?" he inquired. "Why," said Kepler, "you must look through that telescope." That was the direst punishment the Jesuit could possibly receive; for, when he looked through the instrument, he was obliged to say that he did see what he had formerly denied, and he was obliged to express his conviction of the truth of the astronomer's teaching. So, sometimes, to make a man see the truth is a very severe penalty to him. If he does not want to see it, it is a good thing to compel him to look at it. There are a great many brethren, who are not Jesuits, and who yet are not anxious to know the whole truth; but I hope that you and I, brethren, will always desire to learn all that the Lord has revealed in his Word.

This was the argument of Sizzi, an astronomer of some note, who tried to prove that Jupiter's moons could not exist. I wonder whether you can see the flaw in it: "There are [184]seven windows given to animals in the domicile of the head, through which the air is admitted to the tabernacle of the body, to enlighten, to warm, and to nourish it; which windows are the principal parts of the microcosm, or little world, two nostrils, two eyes, two ears, and one mouth. So, in the heavens, as in a microcosm, or great world, there are two favorable stars, Jupiter and Venus; two unpropitious, Mars and Saturn; two luminaries, the sun and the moon; and Mercury alone undecided and indifferent, from which, and from many other phenomena of nature, such as the seven metals, etc., which it were tedious to enumerate, we gather that the number of planets is necessarily seven. Moreover, the satellites are invisible to the naked eye, and therefore can exercise no influence over the earth, and therefore would be useless, and therefore do not exist. Besides, as well the Jews and other ancient nations, as modern Europeans, have adopted the division of the week into seven days, and have named them from the seven planets. Now, if we increase the number of the planets, this whole system falls to the ground."

I think, brethren, that I have heard the same kind of argument advanced many times with reference to spiritual matters; that is, an argument from theory against fact; but facts [185]will always overturn theories all the world over, only that, sometimes, it takes a good while before the facts can be absolutely proved.

It is a singular thing, and another instance of the power and wisdom of God, that though the satellites of Jupiter are constantly being eclipsed, as is natural enough from their rapid revolutions around him, yet they are never all eclipsed at one time. One moon may be eclipsed, and perhaps another, or even three out of the four; but there is always one left shining; and, in like manner, God never takes away all the comfort of his people at once, there is always some ray of light to cheer them.

There is a great deal more to be learned from Jupiter; but having introduced you to him, I will leave you to examine him for yourselves, and to get all you can out of him.

Far, far beyond Jupiter is Saturn. That respectable planet has been very much slandered, but I am happy to inform you that he does not deserve such treatment. He is nearly 900,000,000 miles from the sun. I wonder whether any brother here, with a large mind, has any idea of what a million is; I do not suppose that he has, and I am sure that I have not. It takes a vast deal of thinking to comprehend what a million means; but to realize [186]what is meant by a million miles is altogether beyond one's mental grasp. A million pins would be something enormous; but a million miles! And here we are talking of nine hundred millions of miles; well, I give up all thought of understanding what that is so long as I am in this finite state. Why, when you speak of nine hundred millions, you might as well say nine hundred billions at once; for the one term is almost as incomprehensible as the other; and yet, please to recollect that this vast space is to our great God only a mere hand's-breadth compared with the immeasurable universe that he has created.

I said that Saturn had been greatly slandered, and so he has. You know that we have, in our English language, the word "saturnine," as a very uncomplimentary description of certain individuals. When a man is praised for being very hearty and genial, he is said to be jovial, in allusion to Jove, or Jupiter, the brightly shining planet; but a person of an opposite temperament is called saturnine, because it is supposed that Saturn is a dull planet, dreadfully dreary, and that his influences are malignant and baneful. If you have read some of the astrological books which I have had the pleasure of studying, you have there been told that, if you had been born [187]under the influence of Saturn, you might almost as well have been born under the influence of Satan, for it will come to about the same thing in the end. He is supposed to be a very slow sort of individual, his symbol is the hieroglyphic of lead; but he is really a very light and buoyant personage. His diameter is about nine times as great as that of the earth, and while in volume he is equal to 746 worlds as large as ours, his weight is equal to only 92 such globes. The densities of the planets appear to diminish according to their distance from the sun, not in regular proportion, but still very largely so; and there seems to be no reason why those which are most remote, and travel slowly, should be made so dense as those which are nearer the central orb, and revolve more quickly around him.

This useful volume, from which I have already given you several extracts, says: "Instead, therefore, of sinking like lead in the mighty waters, he would float upon the liquid, if an ocean could be found sufficiently capacious to receive him. John Goad, the well-known astro-meteorologist, declared the planet not to be such a 'plumbeous, blue-nosed fellow' as all antiquity had believed and the world still supposed. But it was the work of others to prove it. For six thousand years or [188]so Saturn concealed his personal features, interesting family, and strange appurtenances—the magnificent out-buildings of his house—from the knowledge of mankind. But he was caught at last by a little tube, pointed at him from a slope of the Apennines, the holder of which, in invading his privacy, cared not to ask leave, and deemed it no intrusion." When that "little tube" was turned upon him he was found to be a most beautiful planet, one of the most varied and most marvelous of all the planetary worlds.

Take that as an illustration of the falseness of slander, and of how some persons are very much bemired and bespattered because people do not know them. This planet, which was so despised, turned out to be a very beautiful object indeed; and, instead of being very dull, and what the word saturnine usually means, he is bright and glorious. Saturn also has no less than eight satellites to attend him; and, in addition, he has three magnificent rings, of which Tennyson has sung:

Still as, while Saturn whirls, his steadfast shade

Sleeps on his luminous rings.

Saturn has only about a hundredth part of the light from the sun as compared with what we receive; and yet, I suppose, the atmosphere [189]might be so arranged that he might have as much solar light as we have; but even if the atmosphere is of the same kind as ours, Saturn would still have as much light as we have in an ordinary London fog. I am speaking, of course, of the light from the sun; but then we cannot tell what illuminating power the Lord may have put in the planet himself; and beside that, he has his eight moons, and his three shining rings, which have a brilliance that we cannot either imagine or describe. What must it be to see a marvelous arch of light rising to a height of 37,570 miles above the planet, and having the enormous span of 170,000 miles! If you were at the equator of Saturn, you would only see the rings as a narrow band of light; but if you could journey toward the poles, you would see above you a tremendous arch, blazing with light, like some of the vast reflectors that you see hung up in large buildings where they cannot get sufficient sunlight. The reflector helps to gather up the rays of light, and throw them where they are needed; and I have no doubt that these rings act like reflectors to Saturn. It must be a wonderful world to live in if there are inhabitants there; they get compensations which fully make up for their disadvantages in being so far away from the sun. So is it in the spiritual world, [190]what the Lord withholds in one direction he makes up in another; and those who are far removed from the means of grace and Christian privileges have an inward light and joy, which others, with greater apparent advantages, might almost envy.

Journeying again in the heavens, far, far beyond Saturn, we come to Uranus, or Herschel, as it is sometimes called, after the

astronomer who discovered it in 1781. The mean distance of Uranus from the sun is believed to be about 1,754,000,000 miles; I give you the figures, but neither you nor I can have the slightest conception of the distance they represent. To an observer standing on Uranus, the sun would probably appear only as a faraway speck of light; yet the planet revolves around the sun at about 15,000 miles an hour, and occupies about eighty-four of our years in completing one journey. Uranus is said to be equal in volume to seventy-three or seventy-four earths, and to be attended by four moons. I do not know much about Uranus, therefore I do not intend to say much about him.

That may serve as an illustration of the lesson that a man had better say as little as possible concerning anything of which he knows only a little; and that is a lesson which many [191]people need to learn. For instance, there are probably more works on the Book of Revelation than upon any other part of the Scriptures, and, with the exception of just a few, they are not worth the paper on which they are printed. Then, next to the Book of Revelation, in this respect, is the Book of Daniel; and because it is so difficult to explain, many men have written upon it, but as a rule the result of their writing has been that they have only confuted and contradicted one another. Let us, brethren, preach what we know, and say nothing of that of which we are ignorant.

We have gone a long way, in imagination, in traveling to the planet Uranus; but we have not yet completed our afternoon's journey. It was observed by certain astronomers that the orbit of Uranus sometimes deviated from the course they had marked in their chart of the heavens; and this convinced them that there was another planetary body, not then discovered, which was exerting an unseen but powerful influence upon Uranus.

This fact, that these huge worlds, with so many millions of miles of space between them, do retard or accelerate one another's movements, is to me a beautiful illustration of the influence that you and I have upon our fellowmen. [192]Whether consciously or unconsciously, we either impede a man's progress in the path that leads to God, or else we quicken his march along the heavenward way. "None of us liveth to himself."

The astronomers came to the conclusion that there must be another planet, previously unknown to them, that was disturbing the motion of Uranus. Unknown to each other, an Englishman, Mr. Adams, of Cambridge, and a Frenchman, M. Leverrier, set to work to find out the position in which they expected the heavenly body to be discovered, and their calculations brought them to almost identical results. When the telescopes were pointed to that part of the heavens where the mathematical astronomers believed the planet would be found, it was at once discovered, shining with a pale and yellow light, and we now know it by the name of Neptune.

The volume before me thus speaks of the two methods of finding a planet, the one worker using the most powerful telescope, and the other making mathematical calculations: "To detect a planet by the eye, or to track it to its place by the mind, are acts as incommensurable as those of muscular and intellectual power. Recumbent on his easy-chair, the practical astronomer has but to look through [193]the cleft in his revolving cupola in order to trace the pilgrim star in its course; or, by the application of magnifying power, to expand its tiny disk, and thus transfer it from among its sidereal companions to the planetary domains. The physical astronomer, on the contrary, has no such auxiliaries: he calculates at noon, when the stars disappear under a meridian sun; he computes at midnight, when clouds and darkness shroud the heavens; and from within that cerebral dome which has no opening heavenward, and no instrument but the eye of reason, he sees in the disturbing agencies of an unseen planet, upon a planet by him equally unseen, the existence of the disturbing agent, and from the nature and amount of its action he computes its magnitude and indicates its place."

What a grand thing is reason! Far above the mere senses, and then faith is high above reason; only, in the case of the mathematical astronomer of whom we are thinking, reason was a kind of faith. He argued: "God's laws are so-and-so and so-and-so. This planet Uranus is being disturbed, some other planet must have disturbed it, so I will search and find out where he is;" and when his intricate calculations were completed, he put his finger on Neptune as readily as a detective lays his hand on a burglar, and a great deal sooner; indeed, [194]it seems to me that it is often easier to find a star than to catch a thief.

Neptune had long been shining before he was discovered and named; and you and I, brethren, may remain unknown for years, and possibly the world may never discover us; but I trust that our influence, like that of Neptune, will be felt and recognized, whether we are seen of men or only shine in solitary splendor to the glory of God.

Well, we have traveled in thought as far as Neptune, which is about 2,748,000,000 miles from the sun; and, standing there, we look over into space, and there are myriads, and myriads, and myriads of miles in which there appear to be no more planets belonging to the solar system. There may be others that have not been discovered yet; but, as far as we know, beyond Neptune there is a great gulf fixed.

There are, however, what I may call "leapers" in the system, which, without the use of a pole, are able to cross this gulf; they are The Comets. These comets are, as a rule, so thin—a mere filmy mass of vapor—that when they come flashing into our system, and rushing out again, as they do, they never disturb the motion of a planet. And there are some terrestrial [195]comets about, that I know, that go to various towns, and blaze away for a time; but they have no power to disturb the planets revolving there in their

regular course. The power of a man does not consist in rushing to and fro, like a comet, but in steadily shining year after year, like a fixed star. The astronomer Halley says: "If you were to condense a comet down to the thickness of the ordinary atmosphere, it would not fill a square inch of space." So thin is a comet that you might look through five thousand miles of it, and see just as easily as if it were not there. It is well to be transparent, brethren; but I hope you will be more substantial than most of the comets of which we have heard.

Comets come with great regularity, though they seem to be very irregular. Halley prophesied that the comet of 1682, of which little had been previously known, would return at regular intervals of about seventy-five years. He knew that he would not live to see its reappearance; but he expressed the hope that when it did return his prophecy might be remembered. Various astronomers were looking out for it, and they hoped it might arrive at the time foretold, because, otherwise, ignorant people would not believe in astronomy. But the comet came back all right; so their minds [196]were set at rest, and Halley's prediction was verified.

Among the stories concerning comet-watching, there is one that contains an illustration and a lesson also. "Messier, who had acquired the name of 'the comet-hunter,' from the number he discovered, was particularly anxious upon the occasion. Of great simplicity of character, his zeal after comets was often displayed in the oddest manner. While attending the death-bed of his wife, and necessarily absent from his observatory, the discovery of one was snatched from him by Montaigne de Limoges. This was a grievous blow. A visitor began to offer him consolation on account of his recent bereavement, when Messier, thinking only of the comet, answered, 'I had discovered twelve; alas, to be robbed of the thirteenth by that Montaigne!' But instantly recollecting himself, he exclaimed, 'Ah! cette pauvre femme!' and went on deploring wife and comet together." He evidently lived so much in the heavens that he forgot his wife; and if science can sometimes carry a man away from all the trials of this mortal life, surely our heavenly life ought to lift us up above all the distractions and cares that afflict us.

The return of a comet is frequently announced with great certainty. This paragraph[197]appeared in a newspaper: "On the whole, it may be considered as tolerably certain that the comet will become visible in every part of Europe about the latter end of August, or the beginning of September next. It will most probably be distinguishable by the naked eye, like a star of the first magnitude, but with a duller light than that of a planet, and surrounded with a pale nebulosity, which will slightly impair its splendor. On the night of the 7th of October the comet will approach the well-known constellation of the Great Bear; and between that and the 11th it will pass directly through the seven conspicuous stars of that constellation. Toward the close of November the comet will plunge among the rays of the sun and disappear, and not issue from them, on the other side, until the end of December. This prospectus of the movements of a body, invisible at the time, millions of miles away, is nearly as definite as the early advertisements of coaching between London and Edinburgh. Let us now place the observations of the eye alongside the anticipations of science, and we shall find that science has proved almost absolutely correct."

Just think of the calculations, gentlemen, that were necessary; for, though a comet does not interfere with the course of a planet, a [198]planet interferes very considerably with the course of a comet; so that, in their calculations, the astronomers had to recollect the track in which the comet would have to travel. Thinking of him as a way-worn traveler, we remember that he will have to go by Neptune's bright abode, and Neptune will be sure to give him a cup of tea; then he will journey on as far as Uranus, and put up for the night there; in the morning he will pay an early visit to Saturn, and he will stay there for breakfast; he will dine with Jupiter; by and by he will reach Mars, and there will be sure to be a row there; and he will be glad when he gets to Venus, and, of course, he will be detained by her charms. You will, therefore, very readily see, gentlemen, that the calculations as to the return of a comet are extremely difficult, and yet the astronomers do estimate the time to a nicety. This science is a very marvelous one, not only for what it reveals, but for the talent which it brings out, and the lessons it continually teaches us about the wonderful works of our great Father.

We have done with the solar system, and even with those interlopers which come to us every now and then from far remote systems, for a comet, I suppose, is only seen for a month, [199]or a week, and then sometimes does not reappear for hundreds of years. Where have they gone all that while? Well, they have gone somewhere, and they are serving the purpose of the God who made them, I dare say; but, for my own part, I would not like to be a comet in God's system. I would like to have my fixed place, and keep on shining for the Lord there. I have lived in London for a good many years, and I have seen many comets come and go during that time. Oh, the great lights I have seen rush by! They have gone off into some unknown sphere, as comets usually do. I have generally noticed that, when men are going to do so much more than everybody else, and they are so amazingly pompous over it, their history is usually pretty accurately described by that simple simile of going up like a rocket and coming down like a stick.

I do not know whether you can, in imagination, lean over the battlements of this little solar system, and see what there is beyond it. Do not narrow your minds, gentlemen, to a few hundred millions of miles! If you look out for a long way indeed, you will begin to see a star. I should only be uttering meaningless words if I told you its distance from us; yet there are others, of those that we are able to [200]see, that are almost immeasurably farther away. They have taken a deal of trouble to send us a ray of light such a vast distance, to inform us that they are getting on very well, and that, though they are at such a distance from us, they still enjoy themselves as best they can in our absence.

These stars, as the common people look at them, seem to be scattered about in the heavens, as we say, "anyhow." I always admire that charming variety; and I am thankful to God that he has not set the stars in straight lines, like rows of street-lamps. Only think, brethren, how it would be if we looked up at night, and saw the stars all arranged in rows, like pins on a paper! Bless the Lord, it is not so! He just took a handful of bright worlds, and scattered them about the sky, and they dropped into most beautiful positions, so that people say, "There is the Great Bear;" and, "That is Charles's Wain," and every countryman knows the Reaping-hook. Have you not seen it, brethren? Others say, "That is the Virgin, and that is the Ram, and that is the Bull," and so on.

I think that naming of the various constellations is very like a good deal of mystical preaching that there is nowadays. The preachers say, "That is so-and-so, and that is so-and-so." [201]Well, perhaps it is so; but I do not see it. You may imagine anything you like in the constellations of the heavens. I have pictured a fortress in the fire, and watched it being built up, and seen little soldiers come and pull it all down. You can see anything in the fire, and in the sky, and in the Bible, if you like to look for it in that way; you do not see it in reality, it is only a freak of your imagination. There are no bulls and bears in the heavens. There may be a virgin, but she is not to be worshiped as the Romanists teach. I hope you all know the pole-star; you ought also to know the pointers; they point to the pole-star, and that is just what we ought to do, to direct the poor slaves of sin and Satan to the true Star of liberty, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Then there are the Pleiades; almost anybody can tell you where they are. They are a cluster of apparently little stars, but they are intensely bright. They teach me that, if I am a very little man, I must try to be very bright; if I cannot be like Aldebaran, or some of the brightest gems of the sky, I must be as bright as I can in my own particular sphere, and be as useful there as if I were a star of the first magnitude. Then, on the other side of the globe, they look up to the Southern Cross. I [202]dare say one of our brethren from Australia will give you a private lecture upon that constellation. It is very beautiful to think of the Cross being the guide of the mariner; it is the best guide any one can have, either this side of the tropics or the other.

Besides the stars, there are vast luminous bodies which are called Nebulæ. In some parts of the heavens there are enormous masses of light-matter; they were supposed by some to be the material out of which worlds were made. These were the lumps of mortar, out of which, according to the old atheistic theory, worlds grew by some singular process of evolution; but when Herschel turned his telescope upon them, he very soon put the nose of that theory out of joint, for he discovered that these nebulæ were simply enormous masses of stars, such myriads upon myriads of miles away that, to our sight, they looked just like a little dust of light.

There are many wonderful things to be learned about the stars, to which I hope you will give your earnest attention as you have the opportunity. Among the rest is this fact, that some stars have ceased to be visible to us. Tycho Brahé said that on one occasion he found [203]a number of villagers looking up at the sky; and on asking them why they were gazing at the heavens, they told him that a new star had suddenly appeared. It shone brightly for a few months, and then vanished. Many times a starry world has seemed to turn red, as if it were on fire; it has apparently burned, and blazed away, and then disappeared. Kepler, writing concerning such a phenomenon, says: "What it may portend is hard to determine; and thus much only is certain, that it comes to tell mankind either nothing at all, or high and weighty news, quite beyond human sense and understanding." In allusion to the opinions of some, who explained the novel object by the Epicurean doctrine of a fortuitous combination of atoms, he remarks, with characteristic oddity, yet good sense, "I will tell these disputants—my opponents—not my opinion, but my wife's. Yesterday, when weary with writing, and my mind quite dusty with considering these atoms, I was called to supper, and a salad that I had asked for was set before me. 'It seems, then,' said I aloud, 'that if pewter dishes, leaves of lettuce, grains of salt, drops of water, vinegar, and oil, and slices of egg, had been flying about in the air from all eternity, it might at last happen, by chance, that there would come a salad.' 'Yes,' says [204]my wife, 'but not one so nice or well dressed as this which I have made for you.'"

So I should think; and if the fortuitous combination of atoms could not make a salad, it is not very likely that they could make a world. I once asked a man who said that the world was a fortuitous concourse of atoms, "Have you ever chanced to have no money, and to be away where you knew nobody who would give you a dinner?" He replied, "Yes, I have." "Well, then," said I, "did it ever happen to you that a fortuitous concourse of atoms made a leg of mutton for you, with some nice boiled turnips, and caper sauce, for your dinner?" "No," he said, "it has not." "Well," I answered, "a leg of mutton, at any rate, even with turnips and caper sauce included, is an easier thing to make than one of these worlds, like Jupiter or Venus."

We are told, in the Word of God, that one star differeth from another star in glory; yet one that is small may give more light to us than a larger star which is farther away. Some stars are what is called variable, they appear larger at one time than another. Algol, in the head of Medusa, is of this kind. We are told that "the star, at the brightest, appears of the second magnitude, and remains so for about two days, fourteen hours. Its light then diminishes, [205]and so rapidly that in three and a half hours it is reduced to the fourth magnitude. It wears this aspect rather more than fifteen minutes, then increases, and in three and a half hours more resumes its former appearance." I am afraid that many of us are variable stars; if we do sometimes wax dim, it will be well if we regain our brightness as quickly as Algol does. Then there are thousands of double stars. I hope that you will each get a wife who will always shine with you, and never eclipse you, for a double star may be very bright at one time, and sometimes be eclipsed altogether.

There are also triple stars, or systems, and quadruple systems, and there are, in some cases, hundreds or thousands all spinning round one another, and around their central luminaries. Wonderful combinations of glory and beauty may be seen in the stellar sky; and some of these stars are red, some blue, some yellow; all the colors of the rainbow are represented in them. It would be very wonderful to live in one of them, and to look across the sky, and see all the glories of the heavens that God has made. On the whole, however, for the present, I am quite content to abide upon this little planet, especially as I am not able to change it for another home, until God so wills it.

FOOTNOTES:

[1]Slightly altered from "Fables in Song," by Robert Lord Lytton.

[2]"The Heavens and the Earth," by Thomas Milner, M. A., F. R. G. S.

[3]In 1892 a fifth satellite was discovered through the great telescope at the Lick Observatory in California.