

## Incidents and Emblems.

BY THE REV. WILLIAM A. GRAY, AUTHOR OF "THE SHADOW OF THE HAND."

**Songs in the Prison-House.**—Once when in Bergen, I called for some Norwegian friends who lived in the suburbs of the town, in a villa on a hill overhanging the Leper Hospital. The visit over, I left the garden, bright with the June roses, lanced with the red rays of the setting sun, and echoing to the voices of happy children, and rejoined the highway close beside the bare, unlovely pile. There, in the hospital grounds, just where the trees were thickest, was a round garden table, and beside it a group of the patients, their faces bandaged to hide the ghastly wounds, and stanch the oozing blood. And one of them was singing. It was not a sweet voice, for it came from a leper's throat, but there was something in its hoarse, rough chime that arrested one. What was he singing, for surely the strain was familiar?

"Safe in the arms of Jesus,  
Safe on His gentle breast;  
There, by His love o'ershaded,  
Sweetly my soul shall rest."

Thus he chanted,—the poor leper whose form no human arms would enfold, whose face no human lips would kiss. Then he paused, and began again. What was it this time, for surely, again, the strain seemed familiar?

"Oh, bliss of the purified, bliss of the free,  
I plunge in the crimson tide opened for me."

Thus he renewed his song, he whose disease no earthly skill could cure, whose foulness no earthly fountain could cleanse. Do you remember the words of the old Scotch ballad,—somehow they always come up to me when recalling the incident,—"Werena' my heart licht, I would dee"? Is that too secular? Then take other and grander words, "Unless Thy law had been my delight, I should have perished in mine affliction." It is when one is face to face with mysteries of pain and of sorrow such as these, and finds that the sufferers are not only able to bear them, but rejoice and give thanks in the midst of them, that one understands the meaning of the words, "Everlasting consolation and good hope through Christ." So God giveth songs in the night, and in the deepest, darkest dungeons of the house of

our pilgrimage can fill the heart with joy and the tongue with melody, till the earthly house is dissolved, and we enter the building of God, eternal in the heavens, where the sorrow vanishes and only the song remains.

**Carpe Horam.**—In fresco painting it is necessary to throw on the colours while the plaster to be decorated is damp. The rule is, "Work while the moisture remains"; hence the need in this particular branch of art of a definite plan of well-mixed colours, and of a swift and steady hand. The principle has a wider application. There are times when human character is especially susceptible to impression, such as the period of early youth, the occasion of a great sorrow, a great joy, or a great change,—times when the influence you exert will be received readily and sink deeply. Would you stamp lives and hearts around you with the beauty of heavenly patterns, make them glow with the hues of heavenly grace? Be sure of your plan, have your materials ready, and paint while the plaster is wet.

**Light comes to those who wait.**—I had once an experience in the Alps which has always remained in my memory as an illustration of this. It was a visit to a glacier-grotto, reached by a winding tunnel bored through the solid ice. As we penetrated into the chilly depths, away from the outside sunshine that flooded valley and peak, the light became dimmer and dimmer, and when we stood in the narrow chamber at the end of the passage, the darkness was black as pitch. "Wait," said the guide, "and in five minutes you will see light clearly." We waited, and it was just as he had told us. Yet no lamp was lit, no match was struck. What happened was this: as the eye got accustomed to its new surroundings, the atmosphere gradually brightened, the walls and the roof of the grotto glimmered into pure translucent green, and in the clear soft light that encircled us we could recognise the faces of our companions, and read the smallest type in our guide-books. Is there not a parable here? Sometimes, by a sudden providence that changes the conditions of our life,

God brings us into "strait places," and turns the brightness of day into the darkness of night. We are baffled and bewildered; what to do and where to turn we know not, in the unfamiliar gloom of our new situation. But the message is, "Be patient." Things are not so dark as we think them. In a little we shall get light—light even if we have not liberty, and discover we have companionship with us in the trial, the companionship of our brethren in whom the "same afflictions are accomplished"; while the promises and the precepts of our guide-book become legible and lustrous as before.

**Creation and the Cross—The Angel of the Sabbath.**—When in Venice a good many years ago, I was privileged to meet the late Mr. Bunney, R.A., the friend and *collaborateur* of Ruskin, and to have a long and interesting talk with him about the art-treasures with which the city abounds. I found him to be a man of fine Christian spirit, deeply imbued with a reverence for the religious side of the ancient designs he made it his business to study. He spent three days a week in St. Mark's, and gave special attention to the mosaics, not only as a subject of artistic interest, but a magazine of theological truth. Two things I remember him pointing out to me. One was, that in the dome that is devoted to scenes from the creation, the Creator is represented, not as is often the case in later and coarser art, as the First Person of the Trinity, but as the Second, a youthful figure, grasping the cross, or at any rate with the cross not far off, sometimes outlined in a shadow, and sometimes suggested in the trunk and branches of a tree. The conception not only

lends itself better to art, it is also in accordance with Scripture,—“God’s Son by Whom also He made the world.” A curious fact is, that in one, though only in one, of the scenes, the cross is omitted. It is the scene in which God is depicted as looking forth on the finished creation, and seeing it to be very good; as if the old artist’s thought were, that in the joy of completed work, the shadow had for the moment departed, the tragedy, of which the cross was the symbol, passed temporarily out of sight. Still more beautiful is the other piece of symbolism to which Mr. Bunney directed my attention. The Deity is represented on a throne, with a procession of angels in front. Six have already passed, but the seventh is kneeling before the throne, while He who sits on it grasps the cross in one hand, and lays the other hand on the angel’s head. So, “God blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.” The illustration might be easily pursued. From that time to this the Angel of the Sabbath has been going her gracious rounds. It is true, she has changed her place, and, passing on to the front, leads the sisterhood of the days. But she still has the dew of God’s blessing on her hair. She still sheds the fragrance of His ivory palaces from her wings. She still brings the treasures of His bounty in her lap. Let us hail her as anointed with the oil of gladness above her companions, and open our homes and our hearts to her visits. As Herbert has it quaintly—

“Thou art a day of mirth:  
And where the week-days trail on ground,  
Thy flight is higher, as thy birth:  
O let me take thee at the bound,  
Leaping with thee from sev’n to sev’n,  
Till that we both, being tossed from earth,  
Fly hand in hand to heaven.”

## Short Expository Papers.

### Isaiah xiii. 2-xiv. 23, and Zephaniah.

THE part of Isaiah being studied by members of the “Guild” extends to the end of chapter xxxiv. It is well known that the remainder of the book is thought by most critics to belong to a later period. But also within the first section are several passages which are supposed from internal evidence to belong to a time later than that of the historical Isaiah. These passages are as

follows:—Chaps. xiii.–xiv., xxi., xxiv.–xxvii., and xxxiv.–xxxv.

Zephaniah flourished some two or three reigns later than the Isaiah of Hezekiah’s time. It is therefore natural that we should expect to find many echoes of Isaiah’s prophecies in the Book of Zephaniah. This we find to be the case; but the remarkable fact is that when Zephaniah echoes the thought or the language of Isaiah, it is nearly always the passages which, though included in the