

are unloving. He says "abideth," because he is speaking to Christians, who as such must already have love to God in them. His argument rests upon the necessary connexion between love to God and brotherly love. It is not till further on (iv. 12, 16, 20) that he makes this connexion expressly prominent; but here he already assumes it as universally acknowledged.

Ver. 18. The apostle's thought now takes a hortatory turn: let us consider our own interest so sincerely, that we be not satisfied with the word of love. To the *word* John, as Lücke correctly observes, adds the *tongue*, in order to indicate that it is love which is merely seeming that he opposes to love in truth. The two separate members of the antithesis (love in *deed* and in *truth*) are related to one another thus: it is in active love that real, genuine love shows itself. Genuine love is the general idea, the opposite of spurious, seeming love; active love is the opposite of mere love in words. Whoever knows anything of love should also know that it is involved in its very nature to be the surrender of the whole man, that it is the

interest of love to impart itself wholly. And yet in our loving we are always seeking to deduct as much as possible from the wholeness of our impartation. This, however, is at the most a mere being willing to love; and in the use of the word "love," which is so much abused, we should be more precise. If anything whatever is no mere word, but feeling and impulse, and therefore also deed, it is love. Love in mere words is not love of a sorry kind, but spurious love. It is certainly a question whether we can do much or little to make our love active. But a case, in which we could do nothing whatever, will not occur. No work of love is a small one; and the deed, which in itself is insignificant, becomes through love something great to him for whom it is done. Out of the small deeds of love there will very soon arise a great and influential work of love. And herein there is manifest a great wisdom on the part of God in our training, that He assigns us at least small works of love. In connexion with great works of love we should easily become vain.

## Incidents and Emblems.

BY THE REV. ALEXANDER CUMMING, FORFAR.

### Vapours.

WE all recognise the unequalled charm of the midnight sky under all conditions, stormy or serene. Every man, with a soul in him, finds that, standing out under the midnight sky, he has dormant chords awakened within him,—sympathies with the wide, many-voiced nature-spirit, bringing him into living touch with things far removed in space and time. Power, beauty, and mystery are gathered round him, blending their influence in all the sounds and silences. Occasionally, however, incidents occur which impinge more sharply on the mind, recalling it from mere vague and wandering reveries. A shower of meteors, or the streaming course of some solitary brilliant, at once puts us on the alert, and concentrates and braces our faculties. A similar effect was produced by the following incident, which may be worth mentioning. The night was bright and windy; dark rags of vapour were blown across the moon, with the familiar effect of the queenly planet

seeming to plunge onward in buoyant triumph over repeated waves of obstruction. Away in the north-west was a vast bank of black cloud steadily approaching. It seemed deep and broad enough to quench the clearest moonlight. Bed-time being fully come, one felt inclined to retire before the beauty of the night was entirely blotted out. Still, the humanities of the hour held one in something of the suspense or compassionate interest that watches a bright, brave spirit about to sink in the gloom of overwhelming calamity. The threatening mass drew on, and then this beautiful sight appeared; instead of the moon being lost in darkness, there was seen a great, solid shield of silver, and in its centre the full-orbed luminary herself in exquisite brightness and beauty.

The general analogy was obvious. We are, most of us, familiar with the effect of a good man, still more, perhaps, a good woman, reduced to very humble conditions. Surroundings which before

had seemed sordid and unlovely acquired almost a winsomeness from the new presence among them ; a flavour and appearance homely still, no doubt, but kindly and attractive ; while the central object gained a new charm, partly from a certain subdued and patient graciousness, partly because, instead of shining among others of kindred excellence, it filled with its own beautiful light the dark things around it.

That was the general suggestion,—then followed the more particular. We had never seen a lovelier sight in the heavens than that magnificent shield, with its brilliant centre ; and it was all because the dark clouds had come. Then the thought naturally occurred, may not that be the reason why the blessed God sends dark clouds into our life,—not to quench its brightness, nor only to chasten and refine the hidden life within ; but to *show* the power and beauty, acting on dark surroundings, of true grace and love in the heart ? We need not trouble ourselves with dreary apprehensions of the clouds that may gather upon our life. Still, with many of us, threatenings of their approach are obtruded on the mind. In such cases we have two things to do ; as a matter of faith, to trust our heavenly Father that they will be occasions and elements of grace and beauty, and not mere blights of disaster ; and then, as a matter of duty, suppose they come, we have to ask, Are they to quench our brightness, or are we to illumine their darkness ? Are they to be mere scars and blotches on our life, or are they to be an extended radiance, a wider shining forth of gracious meekness, purity, and gentleness ? What we saw that night was not a mere silver lining, or a faint gleam behind the cloud ; the cloud itself was made a luminary ; a great shield of clear, silvery light. So we find in stories of the battlefield incidents of great danger, and yet because of the brave men engaged, what remains in our memory is not the ghastliness of deadly peril, but the splendour of daring heroism by which it was met and transformed. And, similarly, in Christian men and Christian homes, we have seen the first impression made on us of sordid want or bitter calamity, transfigured into the clear radiance of loving acquiescence, cheerful trust in God, and patient gentleness toward men. In Thy light we shall see light.

Another picture is connected with Geneva. We had strolled down the river-side, and then, turning back to look toward the town, our eye was caught

at once by the soaring summit of the great mountain. It was a splendid exhibition of majesty and pureness. But across the stainless beauty lay a huge, irregular bar of black. We questioned, for a little, whether the snows above the unsightly bar were not an illusion, the real height of the mountain being measured by the black line. Presently, however, the bar grew fainter, and ere long entirely disappeared. It had been but a vapour and vanished, leaving untarnished and unbroken the noblest symbol we had seen of the sublime and the beautiful. Here was an obvious enough illustration of the clouds of detraction passing away from noble souls, whose fair fame slanderers have tried to disfigure, and whose stature they have hoped to reduce by their calumnies. Here, too, we may find an illustration of certain views promulgated with regard to the Bible. We acknowledge gratefully many and great benefits derived from the searching intelligence of modern criticism. But certain of the "results" claimed are mere black bars of transitory vapour. They are discomfiting to some good people ; for even when our feet are on the solid ground, the walking is uneasy while the vapours are in force. But the hill remains ; the vapours disappear. We need not suppose that God's holy mount is to crumble down to an ant-hill because the whiff of excited discussion has blown some clouds across.

Still we are reminded of other hills and their vapours. The first time I saw Ben Cruachan it was so girdled with layers of mist as to appear of quite fantastic proportions. Next morning in the clear sunshine it was hardly to be recognised as the same hill. But there was the Ben strong, bright, and beautiful, and, as now seen, far fitter for its place. Now one cannot help feeling that certain Commentaries, and popular fancies and traditions, have girdled the Scriptures also with wreaths of mist, which give the sacred writings a fantastic appearance, quite unlike their true character. Not a little of what passes current as Bible teaching is mere vapour exhaled from poets and rhetoricians, ecclesiastical and other. And, curiously enough, it is often these accretions which good people are most unwilling to resign. The only time I saw Cader Idris it had a weird and terrible impressiveness from the bulk and the lurid frown of the thunder-cloud in which it was enveloped. I have never since then seen, or wished to see, Cader Idris, fearing to be disappointed by its appearance

when no longer wrapped in that dread magnificence of gloom. Now I suspect that many good people treat the Bible in the same fashion. They dread to see the hill without the vapour, lest it should seem too insignificant in its own true dimensions, not considering that we climb better and gain an immeasurably finer view in a clear atmosphere.

It is true that vapours, of which the critics themselves have quite plenty, have also their excellent uses; they often act as magnifying-glasses to weak eyes, enabling them to see what to them would otherwise be invisible. It may seem a trifle bizarre to classify together, as beneficial agencies in this way, hymns and *heresies*. To old stagers of the straitest sect, like myself, heresies have the bitterness of the east wind, disturbing the health and comfort of the Church; hymns have more of the genial South, whose warm breath hastens the growth, encouraging and diffusing the fragrance of the garden of the Lord and of the trees of His planting. Of the two influences the hymn is, for the most part, considered decidedly the more respectable. They have relationships between them by marriage; but they are scarcely on speaking terms. Their difference in social rank is very much owing to the company in which they are found. Heresy, not for the sake of what it positively holds, but for what it seems to oppose, has many friends who are no friends to the truth, and thus it often gets a worse name than it deserves. On the other hand, the hymn, however uncertain its orthodoxy, is credited with warmth of heart and earnestness of aspiration; it seems to speak, not of a vain intellect idly splitting straws, or hunting out needless difficulties, but of a soul eagerly thirsting after what is most lofty and pure.

Still though the heresy does in a combative way what is accomplished by the hymn in a much more gracious manner, the two are fellow-labourers in a good work. No doubt, there are heresies which betray the wanton will, and an intellect too erratic and vagrant in useless speculation. But there are others, I would hope the majority, which are honest endeavours to extricate a great truth from undeserved obscurity. They may be one-sided; even a trifle intolerant. Well, I have known devout, warm-hearted young Christians who have grasped one side of a truth, the side that has touched and quickened *them*; and who are jealous even of the other sides which make the complete and well-balanced whole. To

their mind *balancing* seems equivalent to neutralising, and the aim at completeness is regarded as a cold, intellectual process which quenches the fire of the living truth. With them, the *right* whole or completeness is but exclusive adherence to the side which has attracted themselves. Now many heretics are to be judged on the same principle. They have found a truth that they can stand by. And think how much even one solid living truth is, and must be, to an earnest soul who has been harassed by endless doubts, or depressed by seeing nothing but the hollow and dead formulæ of truth! He has not come to the end of things yet, and may, in the meantime, be one-sided and intolerant, inclined to assail too bitterly other sides and aspects of the truth, among which, of course, we may find the particular side that has been of special value to ourselves. Still he does this good, he acts as a lens to make largely conspicuous the side of truth he has found, which may have been too much overlooked.

The hymn again has the drawback of cultivating in excess the emotional element; presenting as almost, if not altogether, the whole of religion, what is not even the chief part. Still the hymn has this among other good effects, it emphasises the importance of the emotional element in the religious life. For the emotional element is so much of an essential that without it religious thought is apt to be as sawdust instead of bread to the hungry soul; and is apt, too, to fail of quickening in us the home ties that bind us in brotherhood to one another and sonship to God. I am not confounding the emotions with the affections; but where are the home affections without the emotional element?

We may conclude with this little scene, though its vapours were not of the material kind. A weary wanderer coming up from the Brander Pass, and somewhat oppressed by its sterile grandeur, turned into a lonely little Highland church. The Fast-Day service was drawing to a close, the last psalm being sung. If all Highland psalmody is like the singing in that little church, it deserves to be carefully cherished in some safe storehouse of quaint and precious curiosities. There was a weird, plaintive, most touching strain in that music, that made one forget or abhor all the frivolities of human life, and the vain conceits of art. But its pathetic pauses and cadences, following the grim impression made by the Pass, plunged

one's unaccustomed spirit into an abyss of melancholy. Presently the service was over; the people dispersed, and two or three earnest, genial, Christian men waited for some words of brotherly converse and kindly farewell. Then one or two of them embarked in a small boat which was to bear them to the head of Loch Etive, to conduct another service. Miles away, gleaming in the evening light, one could see the white walls of the meeting-place. It was certainly a very humble and liliputian representation of heaven. Still as the boat moved steadily on over the calm waters, and in the golden glow of the sunset, I could not help envying my friends, who seemed like happy souls borne along in the light of the Father's countenance to a happy ending in holy converse, remote from the dark passes and dusty ways and toils of this poor world. We who were left behind turned, the one to his quiet manse, the other to pursue his pilgrimage, with his heart feeling some pang of separation, and the dreariness of the miles that lay before him of lonely journeying. It is so that we part with those who leave us for the better land. And what of those of whom we are bereft? Do they become at once forgetful of us, and entirely engrossed with the new scenes on which they have entered? The bride may have a tear on her cheek even as she drives from her old home, though she be with the husband of her choice, and is making

for the new home which she has often thought of with delight; and yet no wrong is done to the husband or the new home. And may not our beloved part from us also with the tears of pain from the separation? And are not these the tears which the heavenly Father wipes from all faces in the eternal home—not by plunging the mind in absolute oblivion of the past, nor by so fascinating it with the new scenes and interests as to make it indifferent to the past; but by giving it so much clearer view and richer experience of God's perfect goodness that, however tender the recollections of those left behind, its view of their pilgrimage will not be so much of the rough roads and mountain passes they have to encounter, as of the tender hand and loving eye by which they are ever guarded? From its new experience the liberated soul will understand better than we can do how even the roughest experiences work out the higher good; and may have found, too, how much of the finest and best of the heavenly life is due to the very hardness of this life's discipline—not from contrast only, but, like finely tempered steel, as a wisely wrought out result. If the dwellers in the Father's house find themselves owing much to what once seemed severe training, they may feel more congratulation than sorrow when they see even their dearest prepared by similar means for an equal happiness.

## The Hampton Lectures of 1892.

BY THE REV. D. MATHESON, M.A., PUTNEY.

*Some Lights of Science on the Faith* (Hampton Lectures for 1892). By Alfred Barry, D.D., D.C.L., Canon of Windsor, late Primate of Australia. London: Longmans, Green, & Co. Pp. 348. 12s. 6d. 1893.

THE relations of science to faith form a perennial subject of interest. Even the present generation has witnessed great changes in the drift of public opinion on both sides, and any fresh contribution to the discussion will certainly prove acceptable to earnest seekers after truth. Canon Barry has attempted a somewhat cyclopædic treatment of the whole subject. It therefore goes almost without saying that he finds himself more at his ease in some departments than in others. But he forestalls all criticism of this aspect of his work by

repeated assurances that there are great dangers in the present tendency to over-specialising, and that if his wider view loses something in minute mechanical accuracy, it gains much in comprehensiveness and in grasp of the real results of much study. The sciences which the learned lecturer chooses are biology (heredity and evolution), physics (the unity and the vastness of the universe), economics (socialism or individualism), and, finally, historic and literary criticism (miracle, inspiration).

The amount of learning which even the least satisfactory of the lectures displays is very considerable. Without pretence to any "over-specialising," we are disposed to estimate the biological