

Correspondence.

THE FINITE AND THE INFINITE.

Wide as the step from the Finite to the Infinite really is, our thoughts often follow the former to a point where the boundary seems so dim that we hardly know where the region of the one is left, and that of the other entered.

These reflections were suggested by a statement upon which my eye just now fell, respecting the total mass of material in our globe—this mere fraction of the known part of the universe.

Popular chronology gives us, fractions apart, six thousand years as the present age of the world. Allowing this, and supposing the task to have been commenced at the moment of creation, and incessantly continued, at the rate just mentioned, there would be at this moment, less than two hundred billions (189,216,000,000) of the count complete.

And yet this estimate covers only earth—a speck in the finite universe—little more than a speck even in our solar system. The estimated number of tons in the latter exceeds two octillions, an amount against which the sextillions of like weight in the earth are but a feather in the balance.

And this whole solar system—what is it but another feather beside the known part of the universe? and then—wonder on wonder!—all this last is probably a still lighter feather in comparison with the vast creations to us unknown—fields of unrevealed marvels of which science can only dream.

All this is finite. It has limits, and it is subject to the laws of computation, but not for us now. So far as our present thought can reach, all boundaries are past, and contemplation is lost among eternal reckonings. To us the finite has become practically the infinite.

Our souls, with all the powers they boast, are in the boundless prospect lost.

Still somewhere in that now shadowy realm, there is a line of demarcation between the finite and the infinite, which is not only real, but broad and deeply marked. It is only to our short vision that the passage from one to the other is like the dissolving view, where no one can tell the moment when one picture melts into the other.

and him who hath measured them in the hollow of his hand; the lower heavens, and him who hath meted them out with a span; the dust of the earth, and him who hath comprehended it in a measure; the mountains, and him who hath weighed them in scales; the stars, and him who hath brought out their host by number, and called them all by names, by the greatness of his might.

The most important relations of moral agents are to these solemn mysteries of the infinite. Among them their most eventful destinies lie. The nature in which man is created—mortal, and yet immortal—reaches across from the finite to the infinite, but its secure fastenings are only to the latter.

The thought has its lessons—such as the crazy wickedness of the sinner's controversy with God; the meanness of that grovelling life which is expended on the word, thoughtless of the gain or loss of the glorious heaven; and the foolishness of purchasing a few hours of corrupt delight at the expense of a sweet and holy immortality.

It is surprising how much the Bible makes of Jesus. He is the all in all of that holy book. Indeed it was given to reveal Jesus to us. That is its great object. Hence there is scarcely anything in the word of God but directly or indirectly points to Jesus.

Take Jesus out of the Bible, and it deserves not the name. It would merely be a Bible—not THE BIBLE. Take Jesus out of the Bible, and like a world, without a sun, it is dark indeed, darkness itself; and in vain do we look anywhere else for light. Take Jesus out of the Bible, and earth itself will be enveloped in eternal, starless, hopeless night.

In the Bible Jesus is the sun, filling it with light. In the pulpit he fills the preaching with light; and in our hearts, he fills us with light. In proportion as we have Christ, we have "no darkness at all."

The only darkness which troubles and endangers the soul, is in consequence of not having clear views of him. See Jesus; see him as it is your privilege to see him, and you can have no darkness. As well might the man who is looking at the blazing noonday sun expect to have darkness, as he who is looking to Jesus. He says, "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

There is no want of our souls, but is met in Jesus. Are we

"All unrighteousness, and vile, and full of sin;" he is "made to us of God righteousness."

He is Jehovah tsidkenu—"the Lord our righteousness." Are we in darkness? He is our strength. "Hangs my helpless soul on thee," and while hanging there it is perfectly strong. Have we fearful, strong and subtle enemies? He is our protector, fortress, high tower, rock, refuge, deliverer, Saviour. And so I might go over all the wants and the woes of humanity, and Christ is the antidote.

"All my capacious powers can wish, In thee doth richly meet."

JAMES KERR.

RIGHTEOUS PEACE.

[We have been furnished with a manuscript copy of the last part of the timely and patriotic discourse, preached by Rev. H. A. NELSON, D. D., pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, St. Louis, Missouri, on the occasion of the late National Fast, August 5, 1864, from Isaiah xxxii, 17:

"And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever."

We commence at the point where the discourse takes up the Christian view of the proper conditions of peace.]

On what conditions—in what way—have we scriptural reason to think that our sovereign God is willing to give us peace?

The plain answer comes from our text, that the only peace which He can bestow, as a blessing, is a peace which is the work and the effect of righteousness.

mean that we ought to desire such an actual settlement of the questions in controversy as will be right—not simply that we ought to desire and pray, that in the struggle which is going on, God will cause the party which is contending for the right to prevail against the party which is contending for the wrong—Himself deciding, with infallible judgment, which is the right, and which is the wrong.

We mean all this, indeed, but we mean more also. We may not indulge the thought that such a termination of the pending struggle will, of itself, remove or abolish all causes of strife among us, and secure our permanent tranquility.

The question, whether our national Union shall be preserved or broken up, whether we shall hereafter be one nation or many, may be thus decided; we pray that it may be; we believe that it will be, but that decision would not, by itself alone, give us the peace, and quietness, and assurance, which we want.

Those who maintain that our Union ought to be broken up—that it will be safer for the liberties of Americans, and for the interests of mankind, to have several nations divide this vast territory and these immense resources among them—can hardly think that the mere attainment of that result—the establishment of two or more separate and independent governments here, recognizing each other, and having treaty-defined boundaries, would alone secure that those nations would dwell in peace with one another. It is very greatly because, in view of the known proclivities of human nature, and the manifest occasions for collision between such powers, secure and permanent peace seems impossible, that we cannot entertain the proposal for such dividing of our country.

That prevalent righteousness which alone secures peace within a community, or between nations, is not yet in fact realized, in any of our communities, sufficiently to render it wise or safe for us to be indifferent to those things which increase and multiply the difficulties in the way of its cultivation and exercise.

We believe, that righteousness requires that this armed conflict shall result favorably to the preservation of the Union, in the firm establishment of one national government, exercising irresistible and at length unresisted sway over all this wide land. In the language of Congress, we "humbly believe that it is His will that our place should be maintained as an united people among the family of nations." I trust that we shall hold this belief in due submission to God, with a due sense of our fallibility, and so that we can this day, in deepest sincerity; "implore Him to enlighten the mind of the Nation to know and do His will." Yet this is our belief, a belief which has upheld us under the agonizing labor, and losses, and sorrows of these three doleful years, and which we do confidently expect to be justified by the final issue of the conflict.

For this we now solemnly and reverently await God's decisive arbitration, and we have no need to deny that we should be unspcakably disappointed by finding His decision contrary to this belief. But we must not imagine that the issue which we desire and expect (because we believe it to be right) of this conflict of belligerent powers, will alone secure permanent tranquility throughout all our borders. The one nation formed by the union of so many States, the one people constituting so vast a Republic; must be more thoroughly pervaded by the principle and the spirit of righteousness than we have reason to claim, that it yet has been—more so, perhaps, than any great nation ever yet was—to secure us against serious and fearful interruptions of our tranquility. It behooves us to pray very earnestly, this day, and every day, that God will make the chastisement of this war efficacious in giving the principle and the spirit of righteousness decisive ascendancy in the heart of this Nation; and we may be entirely sure that only thus can peace come with any good assurance of permanence.

It is now a widely prevalent opinion, that the existing war cannot be brought to an end, without the complete "abolishment" of slavery. Therefore the whole power of the Government is now directed against slavery. It was not so in the beginning. Avowedly, it was not so. Actually, it was not so. Honesty and sincerity, in the mind and intention of the people and of their rulers representing them, it was not so. Slavery was recognized, generally, almost unanimously, as a State institution, subject to control and disposal by State authorities, and however objectionable to the conscientious judgment of the Nation, not liable to be removed by any constitutional exercise of national power. So recognized, and so content to remain within its constitutional safeguards; it was free to continue, and work out its own political and social problems within those States.

But having grown too arrogant thus to limit itself, it has by its own aggressions, its own violence, its own rebellion, broken down all those safeguards; defied the nation to a contest of sheer force; and compelled the nation to choose between destroying it and being destroyed by it.

I allude to this, not for the purpose of justifying the nation in the choice which it has made, and to which, by its representatives, (its President and its Congress) it has so fully committed itself. I assume that you are familiar and satisfied with this obvious justification. But I refer to it for the purpose of calling your attention to God's marvellous use of men's madness, to break a bond which prevented a mighty national government from doing essential justice towards a numerous portion of its subjects. This nation had no right under the provisions of its constitution to apply the just elementary principles of that constitution to some millions of

men, a rapidly increasing multitude, every one of whom was stripped of all the most valuable rights which to us that constitution guarantees; and held under the arbitrary and irresponsible control of men who have shown that they chiefly valued the constitution, on account of the guarantees which they interpreted it to give to a system of oppression so opposite to its declared purposes and its pervading spirit.

Only in war could the nation have the right to apply its power to the rectification of this monstrous wrong—only in a war in which slavery should be identified with the nation's enemy—only in a war in which slavery should be the nation's enemy, would the nation have the right to smite it down with the blows of its power. This conjuncture was brought about by the desperate, yet deliberate, methodical, calculating and persistent phreny of rebellion—persistent against the paternal, forbearing, patient remonstrances of a most long-suffering government.

I desire you to consider whether God has not had reference, in all this marvellous ordering, to the rescue of those enslaved millions from a thralldom which we were forbidden to interfere, more prominently than some of you have believed? It required a formidable progress of rebellion and imminent peril of the republic to bring up the people to this resolve: "We will destroy slavery rather than let our union be destroyed," though this was no more than we had far more promptly said of our property and of our lives. Is it not becoming evident that God, in the meanwhile, was saying, "I will destroy slavery, even if it should be necessary to destroy the Union with it; I will no longer endure that stench in my nostrils; I will no longer wait while the cry of those enslaved millions comes up in mine ears, mingling, in harsh dissonance, with the prayers, and religious praises, and glad shoutings in honor of liberty, from that favored nation. I will come down and deliver the bondmen?"

In so far as we were legally restrained from setting the enslaved at liberty, and were simply obedient to our consciences in refraining from all attempts to do so, we were right, and may properly rejoice in it as honorable to our government and people. Herein we do "rejoice—yes, and will rejoice." Yet I think that we have occasion seriously to inquire whether in all the past, or whether even now, we have cared, or do care, as much as we ought—as much as God does—for the human rights of those who have hitherto been held in slavery. We are coming, perhaps have come, to hate slavery bitterly enough, as the recognized enemy of our nationality, the audacious assailant of our Union, the ruthless destroyer of our peace, and desolator of our homes. God forbid that we should be selfish in this. We may be. Do we even yet hate slavery, with proportionate earnestness, on account of the immeasurably worse wrongs it was persistently doing to the slaves?

You have listened till your flesh trembled and your heart sickened to the experiences of Libby Prison—the weariness, the discomfort, the insulting espionage, the arbitrary tyranny, to which our brave and patient soldiers are subjected; and have looked, with his eyes, down through that hole in the floor, on those hoary-headed, pale and haggard men, lifting up their bony hands to him, and pleading with their hoarse; cracked voices for "crumbs." You have shuddered at the remorseless cruelty, which nailed a plank over that hole, closed that door of mercy, which watched against the surreptitious conveyance to those starving men of the fragments which our ill-fed brothers would spare from their scanty rations; which, at length, determined not to be thus thwarted, led away those venerable martyrs of patriotism to some deeper, darker, hopeless prison-house!

Where else should such barbarities be possible but in that city which has so long been the renowned mart of a slave-trade more cruel and more infamous than was ever carried on in Dahomey? more cruel, inasmuch as its victims were of far more refined sensibility; more infamous, as it was in the midst of high civilization, and under the full light of Christ's Gospel.

Libby Prison has been known to us only three years, but all our lives long the slave-markets of Richmond have been known to travelers. Some of you may perhaps have visited them. If not, you have probably heard men describe them, as I have. Large companies of children, clean, and bright, and gaily apparelled—sturdy men, with muscles well developed and fit for profitable labor; women brawny and muscular and coarse, able to work with the men in cotton-field, or rice-swamp, or sugar-house—more comely women and maidens, eligible as handmaids to serve in the parlors and chambers of gentility—women, sometimes, too beautiful, too delicate, to be designed for coarse labor or for menial service, doomed to a nameless servitude.

There is no more doubt of these things than of the horrors of Libby Prison. Many a time have women stood on the auction-block in Richmond, before a cold and bargaining crowd, obliged to submit without visible resentment to tenderness and insults from which they shrank as would any of my female hearers, insults such as no man could offer you, in the midst of any company of men, without peril of his life.

My hearer, if compelled to choose between having your father or brother starve in Libby Prison, and having your mother or sister sold on a Richmond auction-block, what would your choice be? Yet, have you felt, or do you feel as deeply, do you care as much for the wrong that has been so long and so systematically practiced and legalized against those weak and helpless victims as for these more recent outrages?

What I wish you to consider is, whether God does not regard the essential wrong of both with equal, because disinterested, aversion; and whether, now that He has taken in hand to deal with us, He will ever let us escape the judgments which are upon us, by consenting to bind ourselves anew to the defence of those enormities.

They were all legal once—and all this mighty nation was bound with strong legal obligation to protect them against any uprising of their victims with all its military power. But now the military power of this nation concentrates its most terrible forces there, to crush that which it once defended, now fully revealed as the nation's deadliest foe.

I would that those who govern and those who constitute that rebel power might see the madness of their warfare, and timely abandon it; that, in the language of the Congressional resolution, God "in His infinite goodness would soften their hearts, enlighten their minds, and quicken their consciences, that they may lay down their arms, and not be utterly destroyed."

Whether, thus, or by persistent siege, or irresistible assault, or awful undermining, our army shall possess Richmond, I would hope that there may be no wanton or needless destruction of any innocent structures—but I do most devoutly pray that before the leaves shall fall from the forests, there may not, in Libby Prison nor in any slave-market of Richmond, be left one stone upon another.

Now that the rebellion has given us the right to destroy slavery, releasing us from our old bond to "let it alone"—now, that God's providence has set it before us so manifestly, to be destroyed, and has put weapons in our hands wherewith He so evidently commands us to destroy it—are we devoutly obeying, solemnly recognizing our national power as God's avenger and deliverer of these victims of oppression?

Is there not even danger that the nation, weary of the war, and longing for the return of peace, will seek for peace by again yielding up the slaves to their oppressors, and repairing the chain, every link and rivet of which the war has weakened and loosened? As we would have a righteous peace, let us pray God this day to keep us from this temptation.

An occasion has lately been furnished to our President, to declare, on what terms he will listen, in behalf of the nation, to overtures of peace from the nation's enemies. "THE INTEGRITY OF THE UNION AND THE ABANDONMENT OF SLAVERY," is the President's concise reply "To all whom it may concern."

He is censured by some for not announcing the former of these as the sole condition. You all know how long he did so, and how earnestly and patiently he labored to induce the rebellious people to accept peace on that sole condition. You have not forgotten how, after a year and a half of bloody war, during all which that sole condition of peace was constantly offered by every official word and act of the Government, the President proclaimed to all in rebellion that, for yet one hundred days, the opportunity should continue for their return to loyalty, retaining their ancient constitutional control over slavery in their respective States, and the entire responsibility concerning it. They scorned the offer and despised the opportunity. Then went forth the word of the President, proclaiming liberty through the borders of rebellion, and solemnly pledging the whole power of the nation to maintain that liberty. Now, when he is asked for the conditions of peace, he cannot forget that the word of the nation, through him, its representative, has been thus solemnly pledged, and can never be broken without grievous dishonor, and awful criminality.

God grant that neither President nor people may ever forget or disregard so obvious, so elementary righteousness. God forbid that, after all which our country will have suffered in this war, we should close it with a peace which should leave three or four millions of re-enslaved men and women, to clank their manacles toward Heaven, and draw down its avenging lightnings upon a perjured nation.

I have made use of this recent incident, for the purpose of illustrating my idea of the indispensable importance of having careful and conscientious regard for righteousness, in all our efforts to obtain, and in all our prayers for, the blessing of peace. Particularly do I desire you to consider the necessity of regarding the obligations of righteousness towards the weak—towards those who have long been under oppression—who have no means and no forces wherewith to effect their own deliverance, or to arrest and indicate their own claims and rights. God is especially the helper and avenger of such. So His written word declares—so His providence in all human history, testifies—and I do think that He is now giving a most signal instance of this. I do solemnly believe, that, in this war, God is especially revealing Himself as the avenger and deliverer of those millions who were held in slavery in our land. So believing, there is nothing I more earnestly desire for my country than that she may promptly, obediently, and decisively take and hold her place on God's side, in this great matter, which He has so sternly taken in hand; for I am sure, that if our country shall be blinded or seduced to take her stand against God, He will, with the rod of judgment which is already lifted, dash her in pieces like a potter's vessel.

I have made so prominent, in this discourse, the one great enormity of slavery—not because I deem it the only sin of our nation, nor because I think that those most directly connected with it are sinners before God more than all others; but because it does appear plain to me, that it is especially this sin, on account of which God is now dealing with us, and to the practical measures and sacrifices for the

removal of which he is now summoning us. I believe that all parts of the nation are involved together in this guilt; for although we had not the political right to use the national power for its removal, it was not necessary for us to use the national power, and to direct the national policy for its encouragement and growth and extension, nor to let its spirit pervade and pervert our political movements, and our social usages, and our habits of thought and speech, and our religious associations; and I do think that the guilt of so doing is upon us as a people. It is a sin, in which virtually, by co-operation, or by consent, or by indulging in themselves and countenancing in others, the vitalizing spirit of it, almost all the people have participated.

So thinking, I believe we shall this day fast most acceptably unto the Lord, not by bowing down our head as a bulrush and spreading sackcloth and ashes under us, but by loosing the bands of wickedness, undoing the heavy burdens, and letting the oppressed go free—breaking every yoke, also by doaling our bread to the hungry, and bringing to our houses, these poor that are cast out, in such astonishing numbers, and such appalling want and sorrow.

Let us not weary of the toil of all this—nor grudge the cost of it—nor faint under the anguish of it—nor refuse to toil, and pray, and suffer on, even unto the appointed end, patiently, fervently, and believingly praying for peace, but only for such a peace as is the work and the effect of righteousness—praying for strength and patience to endure the war; and for courage and fortitude to carry it on, until its issue shall be in RIGHTEOUS PEACE.

WHAT SHALL WE EAT?

This is an important question in these times of high prices. Dr. Hall, in a late number of his *Journal of Health*—good authority, by the way—says the cheapest articles of food at the present prices are bread (especially corn meal), butter, molasses, beans, and rice. He shows that 25 cents worth of flour, at 8 cents per pound, contains as much nutriment as \$2.25 worth of roast beef at 25 cents per pound; and that a pint of white beans, costing 7 cents has the same amount of nutriment as 3 1/2 pounds of beef at 25 cents per pound, or, in other words, the roast beef diet is twelve times as expensive as the beans. Furthermore, a pound of Indian meal will go as far as a pound of fine flour, costing twice as much. Here are some of the common articles of food, showing the amount of nutriment contained, and the time required for digestion:

Table with 3 columns: Article, Time of digestion, Amount of nutriment. Includes items like Apples, raw (1 h. 50 m., 10 per cent), Beans, boiled (2 h. 30 m., 87 per cent), Beef, roasted (2 h. 30 m., 26 per cent), Bread, baked (3 h. 30 m., 80 per cent), Butter (3 h. 30 m., 96 per cent), Cabbage, boiled (4 h. 30 m., 7 per cent), Cucumbers, raw (2 h. 00 m., 2 per cent), Fish, boiled (2 h. 00 m., 20 per cent), Milk, fresh (2 h. 15 m., 7 per cent), Mutton, roasted (2 h. 15 m., 30 per cent), Pork, roasted (2 h. 15 m., 34 per cent), Poultry, roasted (2 h. 45 m., 27 per cent), Potatoes, boiled (2 h. 45 m., 12 per cent), Rice, boiled (1 h. 00 m., 88 per cent), Sugar (3 h. 30 m., 96 per cent), Turnips, boiled (2 h. 30 m., 4 per cent), Veal, roasted (4 h. 00 m., 25 per cent), Venison, boiled (1 h. 30 m., 22 per cent).

According to the above tables, cucumbers are of very little value, and apples, cabbages and turnips, and even potatoes, at present prices, are expensive eating. Some vegetables and fruits should, however, enter into the family consumption, even if purchased for sanitary reasons. Among those which contain the most saccharine matter, sweet potatoes, parsnips, beets, and carrots, are the most nourishing. Roast pork, besides being an expensive dish, requires too lengthy a drain upon the forces of the stomach to be a healthy article of diet.

DESERT OF SAHARA.

In his engaging description of Mesiah's kingdom, Isaiah said: "In the wilderness shall waters break out"—the joy should be as great, and the blessings as numerous and refreshing, as if running fountains should suddenly break out in the desert, and the thirsty and weary traveler should be thus unexpectedly and fully supplied. In the wilderness waters have literally broken out. Perhaps no more hopeless enterprise could be undertaken than to attempt to reclaim the great African Desert of Sahara, where no rain ever falls, and there are but occasional oases to give relief to the weary and fainting caravans that traverse it. Modern science, however, laughs at seeming impossibilities. Skillful engineers of the French army in Algiers proposed to sink Artesian wells at different points with strong confidence that thus water would be reached and forced to the surface. In 1860, five Artesian wells had been opened, around which, as vegetation thrives luxuriantly, thirty trees and palm-trees, and one thousand fruit trees were planted, and two thriving villages established. At the depth of little over five hundred feet, an underground river or lake was struck, and from two of them live fish have been thrown up, showing that there was a large body of water underneath. The French government, by this means, hopes to make the route across the desert, to Timbuctoo, fertile, and fit for travelers, and thus to bring the whole overland travel and commerce through Algeria, which will be one of the great feats of modern scientific enterprise.

CONVERSATION.—Conversation should be pleasant without coquetry, without affectation, free without insincerity, learned without conceitedness, novel without falsehood.

Though few there be that care to be virtuous, yet fewer there are that would not desire to be counted so.