

there, it becomes a home for our hearts. "I go to prepare a place for you"—a place where desire and thought may walk unterrified and undoubting even now, and where we ourselves may abide when our time comes, nor shrink from the light nor be oppressed by the glory.

"My knowledge of that life is small,
The eye of faith is dim,
But 'tis enough that Christ knows all,
And I shall be with Him."

Into that solemn world we shall all pass. We can choose whether we shall go to it as to our long-sought home, to find in it Him who is our life; or whether we shall go reluctant and afraid, leaving all for which we have cared, and going to Him whom we have neglected and that which we have feared. Christ will be manifested, and we shall see Him. We can choose whether it will be to us the joy of beholding the soul of our soul, the friend long-loved when dimly seen from afar; or whether it shall be the vision of a face that will stiffen us to stone and stab us with its light. We must make our choice. If we give our hearts to Him, and by faith unite ourselves with Him, then, "when He shall appear, we shall have boldness, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming."

ALEXANDER MACLAREN.

THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH.

III. VISION OF THE CANDLESTICK.—ZECH. iv.

THE preceding vision was meant to convey to the Jews the assurance that their high priest Joshua was re-instated as the religious head of the nation; this vision was meant to give a similar assurance regarding Zerubbabel, their civil head. The people might well be in doubt and despondency

regarding him. He was apparently no David. He was not the man for a great emergency, however he might have acquitted himself in quiet times as a kind of lay figure on a throne. Born a captive, the son of a captive, he seemed to have inherited or acquired something of the craven spirit of the slave. He had a great opportunity, such an opportunity as enables a man of force to make a mark in history, but the opportunity was too great for one of his calibre. And naturally enough his own feeling of insufficiency infected the people with timidity and doubtfulness. They began to wonder whether he was recognised by God as David's heir; whether they could ever prosper under him. The Persian monarch had recognised his rank, but would God any longer make use of David's line as a channel of blessing to men, after the kings of Judah had so shamefully abused their position? As yet no success had attended his efforts. For nearly twenty years he had been baffled even in his attempt to build the Temple. Ought not this to be interpreted as meaning that God had disowned him?

In these circumstances this vision is given to Zechariah that Zerubbabel and the people may receive the assurance that he is as truly God's anointed king, endowed with power from God to do His work, as ever any of his forefathers had been. This assurance is conveyed in a twofold form, by word and by vision.

In express terms Zechariah is assured that failure and impotence would not throughout characterize the government of Zerubbabel. What he had begun, he would also finish. The great and central task of rebuilding the Temple would be accomplished. "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundations of this house; his hands shall also finish it." The stone destined to top and complete the building, and which had probably been lying for years in the hewer's shed, would at last be brought forth with shouts of triumph both from the builders and the assembled crowds.

The enthusiasm of the people would be kindled by seeing their old temple restored, their fears would all be forgotten, and the air would ring with invocations of blessing. This enthusiasm would culminate when Zerubbabel with plummet and square, trowel and mallet, fixed in its place the topstone, and prayed that the seven eyes, representing God's perfect providence, would watch over it.

This carried with it a rebuke to those who, as the prophet says, "despised the day of small things," the people who cannot believe that a seed will ever become a tree. The old men who had seen the former temple were not slow to show their contempt for the new building. With the pardonable admiration of the institutions and ways of their youth, which characterizes old men, they tottered round among the builders and told them what a different kind of look things had when they were young. They wept over the fallen state of the Temple. But their weeping was ill-timed, inconsiderate, and disheartening. The confidence of youth is often blamed, but it is needed to bear up against the depreciation of the present which is dinned into their ears by those who can see no good in anything but that in which they were the chief actors. But to despise the day of small things is to secure that we shall never glory in a day of great things. For the path to what is great lies through what is small. We ourselves do not come into the world full-grown; neither does anything else. It is God's law to produce great things by degrees, by growth from what is small. And if we throw away the seed because it is so small, and decline to have anything to do with what is not great and conspicuous, we lose our opportunity. It is by doing the little things that lie to our hand that we sow for ourselves all that is greatest and happiest in eternity. "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much;" and will have opportunity of showing it.

These assurances were embodied in a vision full of instruction for all time. Among the various appointments of the original Tabernacle constructed by Moses, a conspicuous place was given to a massive lampstand, which had seven lamps, not branching out horizontally but rising in one perpendicular plane. The sanctuary was a tent without windows, and light was required. But the purpose of the candlestick was not solely to give light. Like everything else in the Tabernacle it was symbolical. And it is not difficult to discern what it was meant to symbolise. Light is the natural emblem of knowledge. We speak of the mind being enlightened or illuminated. As it is light which enables the bodily eye to see things clearly, so it is knowledge or information which enables the mind to apprehend things. The light which filled the Tabernacle or house of God was symbolical of the knowledge of God. And as this knowledge of God is maintained in the world by the instrumentality of the Church, the Church is symbolized by the candlestick which serves to hold the lights. When John in the Apocalypse saw a vision with similar symbolism, it was thus interpreted to him: "the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches." It is the Church which by its purity of life and teaching is to impart to men the knowledge of God.

But whence is this light derived? The light which illuminated the Tabernacle, was not a natural but an artificial light, fed by an oil for which the prescription was given from above, and which it was sacrilege to use for ordinary purposes. And this was plainly meant to convey the idea that the light which served to carry on God's service was a light fed from a supernatural source. Some free-thinking Jew might with much plausibility have said, Why should not God be worshipped under the glorious canopy of heaven with the brilliance of His own sun to symbolize the clear light that He delights in; why are we to worship

Him in a close stifling tent into which no sun ever penetrates, and which must be illumined by a hot artificial light? Let us come out into the free air of heaven and worship God as He is revealed in nature. But those who saw more deeply would say, The sun, just because its light is a part of our natural inheritance, is not an adequate symbol of a light which certainly does not shine upon all men alike. It is not that order of nature in which all men live that teaches them to know God. Nature misleads quite as often as it suggests right views of God. We see in nature what might well make us think of God as either impotent or cruel. "I have long ago found out," says a recent student of nature, "how little I can discover about God's absolute love or absolute righteousness from a universe in which everything is eternally eating everything else. . . . Infinite creative fancy it reveals, but nothing else." It is with a sense of unutterable satisfaction we turn from nature to Him who says, "I am the Light of the world." And it is because there is in Christ that which human nature, as we know it, could not have produced, that He is a light to men. It is not a natural but an artificial and supernatural light which best symbolizes that which brings to us the power of seeing God.

To a Jewish mind, then, filled with this symbolism, the vision of the candlestick with its lights fed from a sufficient source, signified that the Church of God was still to be maintained in full efficiency, and was to prove a light to the world and a glory to God. When Zechariah walked about the ruined town; when he saw the empty houses with grass growing in the doorways and birds nesting in the best rooms; when he saw the blackened walls of the old temple, and the new walls barely above ground and left now for years without a stone added, pools of water where the altar should have stood, and the wind blowing through the space which the holy of holies should occupy, he might

well think the glory was for ever departed, that the Church of God had proved a failure, that there was no revelation, no care of God for men, no true knowledge of the unseen, but each man left to guess as he could and worship what he pleased. But when he saw this clear waking vision of the golden candlestick in all its former splendour, the persuasion was ineradicably wrought in his mind that this vision was from God, and that God therefore saw no reason to despair of His Church, but was even now providing for its re-establishment in all its former glory. Zechariah had shared in the prevailing despondency. He did not see what good could be accomplished by men of so little pith as Zerubbabel and the rest. He saw how easily they had been cowed by the Samaritans. He had watched them narrowly for years; he had taken their measure, and he despaired of them as the root or beginning of any noble undertaking or any fruitful work. Such men could never shine as lights in the world. Such feeble, incompetent persons could only bring disgrace upon religion.

But it was now made clear to Zechariah's mind that he had been wrong, not perhaps in his judgment of his contemporaries, but in forgetting one Contemporary of whom he had made no account. "Not by might, nor by power"—so far he was right, there was neither might nor power—"but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." He is reminded of the source of the Church's light, and it is revealed to him that the oil which feeds this light—the Spirit, that is, which produces right action and God-glorifying results in men—flows from an inexhaustible source beyond the light itself; so that you cannot ever measure the light by looking at the wick or at the amount of oil each bowl can contain, but only by looking at the source whence the oil is supplied. Now, in this vision, with immense significance, the oil was seen to be derived from two *living* olive trees growing beside the candlestick—obviously to teach Zechariah that

though the bowls might be very small, the supply out of which the bowls could be refilled was inexhaustibly large, a living fountain of oil.

To complete the vision another essential feature was added. The prophet's attention is directed to two tubes or spouts which communicate between the trees and the lamp-bowls, and are said to be the two "oily ones," or "sons of oil," that stand by the Lord of the whole earth. To a mind like Zechariah's, living in a world of symbol, these sons of oil would at once suggest the two great offices to which men were consecrated by anointing, the kingly and the priestly. These offices were at present in a depressed and despised condition, but assurance was now given that God still held them in honour, and would through them communicate to men all that was needed for a brilliantly effective and exemplary life. Joshua, the high priest, and Zerubbabel, the king, in the exercise of their high and influential functions would still be the medium through which God would bring Himself into human life.

The translation of this vision into terms which show how closely it concerns ourselves is no difficult task. We need the vision as much as Zechariah needed it. There is much open to our consideration which tends to suggest thoughts as gloomy as those which darkened the hopes of Zechariah. Learning as we do to take our own measure, we become convinced of our littleness, of our incapacity to shine, our inability to remove ignorance, our helplessness in presence of surrounding and oppressive darkness. We live alongside of persons whose vices are quite well known to us, and they seem in no way the better for us, in no way struck by our virtues. We recognise that if the remainder of our life is to be as defective in high motive and as unprofitable in result as the past has been, the image of a brilliant light is no fit image for our life. The world derides the pretensions of the Church, makes merry over her decay, mocks her

small achievements; and however unreasonable it is to do so, it is still possible.

When discouraged by the ridicule or silent contempt of men, when we see how little they take the Church's force into account, when it is treated as Greece or Montenegro is treated by the first-rate powers of Europe, and when, worst of all, we become profoundly convinced of our blundering methods, of our beating the air, of the feeble and inefficient assaults we make upon the dense masses of evil around us, of our waste of time in polishing and adorning weapons which are then carefully hung up as trophies and are never used in actual warfare, when saddened and disheartened by our own incompetence and futility, this vision recalls us to a reasonable ground for more hopeful thoughts. For all the work required from us there is an un failing supply of grace. It is not the lamp that has to produce the oil; it has not to make the most of one supply, but there is a constant flow into it from without. And we are not called upon to create a holy spirit for ourselves, nor have we to maintain a loving and serviceable disposition upon the unused drops of past experience which may yet be squeezed out by a lively memory. Holiness sufficient for all moral beings exists in God. There is that in Him which can sustain in goodness the spirit of each. The Holy Spirit is equal to all demands that can be made upon Him. The Holy Spirit is God; so that as there is in God life enough for all creatures, a strength sufficient to maintain in being all that is, so there is in God a holiness sufficient for the need of all. There is strength and grace enough in God to carry through the whole work that this world requires. In God there is patience, love, wisdom, sacrifice; in a word, goodness enough for the overcoming of all evil. And this goodness is communicable.

This goodness is communicable, and it is through Christ it is communicated. When we translate into New Testa-

ment language what Zechariah says of the "oily ones," we gather that the Church now is supplied with oil to burn and shine withal through the kingly and priestly offices of Christ. And translating this technical language again into the language of living fact, we are brought face to face with the truth that each man receives the spirit of Christ and is enabled to live as Christ lived in the service of men and to the glory of God, in so far as He submits himself to Christ's rule and is truly reconciled to God through Christ. The lights of the vision burned brightly when the tubes connecting them with the olive trees were kept clear and clean; and we receive spirit enough for all that is required of us when we practically recognise Christ as our King and Priest, when we keep ourselves in a real and spiritual connexion with Him. If we wish to shine so as to help and guide others, if we see the need of being and doing more than hitherto, then what we must in the first place do, is to allow ourselves to be so swayed by Christ as to be drawn into true sympathy with the Father and to be possessed by Christ's views of life and by His disposition. In point of fact it is thus we receive the Spirit of God. Let a man recognise what life is given him for, let him recognise how far short his life has been from accomplishing the great objects of life, let him in the shame of having been found unworthy of the trust God has given him and in the consciousness of having defiled and unfitted himself for God's service, turn to God for pardon, cleansing and strength; let him see the possibilities of good that remain to him, let the idea of a life spent for God and for good possess him, and let him believe Christ's offer to give him such a life; and that man will receive the very strength he needs and will yet shine with the light of Christ.

We may use this subject then, first, for rebuke, and second, for encouragement. It is for our rebuke, when we despair of success in any good project; when in view of our

own deficiencies we reckon on failure even at the very time when we seem to be aiming at success. Indolence, timidity, unbelief, selfishness, all shelter themselves under this acknowledged inability. There are malingerers in every good work as well as in war. We see well enough what needs to be done, but we are not the people to do it. We have not position, we have not means, we have not mental capacity, we have not stability of purpose, we have not presence of mind, we have not readiness of speech, we have not health, we have not ability to organize. We look in despair at the deepseated sores of society, and for all that we do these sores may deepen daily. It is a pity things are as they are; it is a pity so many in this prosperous land should starve, should grow up knowing nothing but vice; the biggest problems of a healthy social state have yet to be solved; but what can *we* do? Our whole past life tells us we are feeble. "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit," this is the uniform answer to all such apologies, which the Lord of hosts gives.

There is also encouragement in the vision. God is our unfailling source of grace. What is right to be done and ought to be done, God has provided us with the means of doing. He does not expect lamps to burn without oil. He sends none of us a warring on his own charges. If it is our duty to do good, then we can do it, for God is with us a living source of good purpose and of perseverance. Many need this encouragement. There are those who singly or in combination are engaged in some labour or enterprise, whose object it is, not to make money nor to bring themselves into good repute, but to improve the character or condition of some of their fellow-citizens. Such persons cannot forecast the future without foreseeing serious obstacles, prejudices, counter-interests, selfish contentment with things as they are, "the blind opposition of the ignorant, the bitter opposition of the vicious;" and

above all they foresee the probability of their own patience failing, or of their wisdom proving insufficient. Or there are parents who are perplexed by the way their children are growing up; they feel the extreme difficulty of influencing them as they would wish, the impossibility of securing that they shall turn out just as they would desire. Or there are persons whose domestic life has long been of a distressing kind, and who are always looking forward to the time when at length their temper must give way, their forbearance come to an end, their determination to live on the highest principles fail them. To such persons this vision says: There is no necessity for any such spiritual catastrophe; there will always be grace enough for you. It may be through weariness and pain, through disappointment and anxiety your path is to lie, but through it all you can come victorious. Provision sufficient is already made for you. All of us, looking forward and seeing how much we have to pass through before our probation is over, recognising what an unlimited capacity for blundering and evil-doing there is in us, may very naturally fear that we shall yet do more harm than good in the world, and permanently injure those whom we fain would help. To us all comes this serious assurance that nothing will be required of us for which strength will not be given; that between us and the inexhaustible spring of goodness there is an open communication; that if it is impossible for God to fail in goodness of will and of energy, it is as impossible that He should withhold the communication of this goodness from any one who is confronted by duty and who is willing to fulfil God's purposes by using God's help,

That there is an ever springing source of goodness, an ever renewed supply of moral life, this is the gladdening truth the vision calls us to remember. There is, we know, a sufficient source of physical life which upholds the universe and is not burdened; which continually, in every place,

and exuberantly, brings forth life in inconceivably various forms ; a source of life which seems rather to grow and expand than to be wearied. So there is a source of spiritual life, a force sufficient to uphold us all in righteousness of life and in eternal vigour of spirit ; a force which to all eternity can give birth to new and varied forms of heroic, godly, and holy living ; a force ever pressing forwards to find utterance and expression through all moral beings, and capable of making every human action as perfect, as beautiful, and infinitely more significant than the forms of physical life we see around us. If the flowers profusely scattered by every wayside are perfect in beauty, if the frame and constitution of man and of the animals are continually surprising us by some newly discovered and exquisite arrangement of parts, we may reasonably suppose that there is as rich a fountain of moral and spiritual life. Nay, "the youths shall faint and be weary,"—the physical life shall fail—"but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength ; they shall mount up with wings as eagles ; they shall run and not weary ; and they shall walk and not faint."

MARCUS DODS.

FRANZ DELITZSCH.

IF a brilliant career as an academic teacher, a fertile literary faculty, and a long life of conspicuous devotion to Christian work, both practical and scientific, are any title to honour, the subject of this sketch will be cheerfully accorded a distinguished place among the men of his time. Franz Delitzsch is a household name with students of Scripture all the world over. To many it is a name to conjure with. The ideal writer, if we accept Joubert's definition, is the man whose mind is always loftier than