THE CHANGED HOME.

By James Payn and Albert Leonard.

CHAPTER II.—Continued.

One day a strange thing happened; the curate was asked out to dinner. It was only at the village doctor's, a bachelor like himself, who lived in just such another cottage as "The Laurels" (only a trifle better furnished, because he had not set up housekeeping so long), and the thought of this unwonted dissipation quite excited him. Some people dine out five times a week (including, one is sorry to say, Sundays), and at last (I am told) get a little tired of it; but Mr. Plumley had never experienced any fatigue of that nature. Moreover, Dr. Winter had asked him to meet a stranger from London, full of novel ideas, which was very kind of the Doctor, but also a little embarrassing, since the curate was conscious of having nothing to offer such a guest in the way of exchange. There had been no new ideas in Blondel Parva since Farmer Giles tried gas manufactured it on the premises and blew the roof of his house off.

The curate, arrayed in his best suit, but with a shirt frayed at the wrist and collar, felt almost like a young lady going to her first ball. What also troubled him was the very seedy appearance of his furniture, for it would be his duty to show hospitality in his turn to the intelligent stranger, and what would he think of an easy chair that had lost one of its castors, a sofa with a broken back, and a carpet full of pitfalls? It was true there was a piano, but there were several keys missing, though fortunately not the outside ones, so that it was kept looking and supposed by very good-natured people to be full of harmonies. This was a pity, because the curate was musical, and might have solaced his lonely hours with such an instrument; but to repair it would have cost money that was useful elsewhere—to persons who exactly knew what a piano was. However, he would put Colenso's arithmetic under the leg of the chair and explain to Dr Winter's friend that it was not locomotive.

The Doctor had prepared quite a luxurious dinner, and the guest, one Otto Marks, a hairy and spectacled German, who spoke the tongue of England, though like a native of some other place, was quite delightful. He had all the talk to himself, which the other two were far from grudging him. He was a metaphysician (which of itself would have been enough for them), but had an original theory of his own that not only was nothing as it seemed to be, but its very contrary. What looked black was really white, a circumstance which, if they could only have been convinced of it, would have made the prospects both of the parish doctor and the perpetual curate exceedingly encouraging. Cuthbert Plumley had never had such an evening, and when it was over scarcely knew whether he stood on his head or his heels. When the Doctor said "Good-night," he replied, "But I'm afraid it's good-morning." Whereupon Mr. Marks observed, in his guttural tongue, "That proves my theory." The curate, however, was used to late hours, because people die between 1 and 2 a. m.—then the forces of nature are weakest, and I generally sent for him to see them do it.

CHAPTER III.

It was a beautiful summer night, and, thanks to a full moon, almost as bright as day; even "The Laurels," though so modest a dwelling, looked beautiful bathed in its silver glow as the curate drew near to it. Deep as was his abstraction, for he was thinking of the discourse of the metaphysician, which, when intelligible, had interested him—he could not help noting a changed look about the little garden and lawn. It seemed to him that things had been cleared up, tidied up, as it were. He missed several heaps of rubbish, grown to be familiar sights, and he thought that the rustic tables and benches in the old summer-house had a strangely unfamiliar look about them. Once he halted and asked himself whether he had not taken the wrong path.

Bah! such nonsense! As well suppose a flock of sheep to get into the wrong fold, or a drove of cattle to wander into another barnyard, or even a flock of fowls to mistake their roosting place.

By this time he had reached the verandah, and as he stepped upon it again a strange sensation, half of wonder, half of doubt, came over him. Surely he had mistaken the house, for all the old rickety chairs were gone and there stood a row of new ones, in wicker with graceful backs and curled arms, and a handsome round table, also in wicker, such as is used for outdoor teas or fetes. Even the old door-mat, worn and ragged, with its familiar legend "Welcome" almost scratched away by the hobnails of the farmer folk, was gone, too, with all the rest, and in its stead a brand-new one, with a new "Welcome" in red woven into it, lay there before the door and seemed to invite him to step upon it and cleanse his soles of dust.

But Cuthbert Plumley passed his hand over his forehead nervously and then put out his foot as if he expected that the mat was but a figment of his imagination and would melt into nothingness when his toe touched it; but no; it never budged. Still, he seemed to think that he had better not step upon it, so he stepped over it, and then proceeded with a somewhat unsteady hand to unlock the door as softly as possible, so as not to disturb his old housekeeper. He was now inside the house, and as he stood there in the hall waiting for his eyes to become accustomed to the darkness, another curious thing impressed itself upon his senses, or rather upon his sense of smell—that indescribable but unmistakable odor of poverty was gone, and the air was heavy with the odor of flowers and with the subtle perfume which betrays the presence of a refined and cultured woman in a house. Collecting his scattered senses, he realized that the hallway was covered with some soft rug or carpet. The next move he makes he bumps against a high-backed chair, and putting out his hand to shield his face from injury, his fingers come into contact with the pins of a hatrack, and then a nearness to the click of a clock sends a creeping sensation over his skin. Where was he? None of these things had been in the hallway as he passed through it on his way to Dr. Winter's. Just then the moon shone out in fuller splendor, and a tall, black figure seemed to meet him face to face. He caught his breath and took a step backward. It was naught but a tall clock, or had the figure by some exercise of the black art been transformed into a clock?

Then the awful thought flashed through his mind that Winter's blackbearded guest was none other than Dr. Faustus himself, that this master of necromancy had put a spell upon him, that his senses were astray, that he was not himself. At that instant the tall clock chimed out the hour of 2 in soft and silvery tones.

Plumley was no coward, mild and gentle as he was, he scarcely knew what the word fear is, so plucking up resolution, he felt his way along to the entrance of this sitting-room. To his more than amazement the ill-fitting door was framed with a line of light.

"Good heavens," he thought, "can the old housekeeper be sitting up to berate me for my late hours?"

Halting for a moment, he listens, but no sound save the ticking of the tall clock disturbs the awful stillness of the place. With trembling hand he opens

HE HAD ALL THE TALK TO HIMSELF.

the door a few inches and glances in, and as he does so a smothered cry of mingled dread and wonder escapes from his lips.

There sits Jane Copcutt in an elegant easy chair, her head is slightly bowed, she is sewing by the light of a superb piano lamp, which sends its radiance down upon her fair head and face with wonderful effect. Spellbound by the beautiful vision, Plumley stands gazing upon it with parted lips and bated breath lest it should suddenly fade away. She is more beautiful, more radiant, more angelic than ever. She is the same dear, gracious, sweet-faced woman that he lost years and years ago.

But the room, too, that is all changed—all things are new and strange. His home is changed.

The old arm chair is gone and in its place a new one, very handsome, with a reading desk fixed into one arm, with candle-sticks in it. The sofa is also quite new, though its covering was of the same pattern. The walls are hung with fine engravings of various sacred objects; the carpet is a new one, and very rich and soft.

And there is a new piano, too. It stands there open, as if some one had just left it. It is of the cottage kind, but exquisitely finished. Then certain words of the German sage occurred to him. "There are some rare conditions of the human mind in which the great central fact becomes recognizable, and we see that everything is exactly its contrary:" he felt that he was now in one of these conditions. Nothing could be more contrary to his ordinary furniture than its present appearance. But instead of being pleased at this discovery, it terrified the good curate exceedingly, for it struck him that the only "condition" under which such things were possible was that of insanity, that he had in fact gone out of his mind.

Softly closing the door, he stood for a moment listening to the slow tick, tick of the tall clock, and then, as he grasped the newel post of the house, he whispered over and over to himself, "I've lost my reason; I've lost my reason."

Once he halted, thinking he would go up stairs and arouse the old housekeeper; but no, he was now fairly frightened; he did not dare go up stairs for fear he should find some other transformation had been effected. It was clear that he was the victim of a mental delusion.

The reflection that would have occurred to nine men out of ten under such circumstances—that he had drunk too much wine at dinner—never entered into the curate's mind; he had never exceeded the bound of moderation in his life, and on the present occasion distinctly remembered that he had taken but three glasses of wine. He had, however, been rather excited by the German's discourse, which might possibly—for everthing was possible save that which he saw around him—have had the effect of intoxication. He might even have mistaken somebody else's house for his own. An untenable supposition, indeed, since he had let himself in with his own key, and there was no other house in the neighborhood that resembled it; moreover, he knew the interior of all the houses in Blondel Parva, and none had furniture in the least like what he saw around him, or nearly so new.

Still in the extremity of his amazement, and having no other explanation of the phenomenon, he actually stepped off the veranda and walked out upon the lawn with intent to regard it from the outside to make sure of its identity. In doing this he closed the door, forgetting that he had placed the key on that new table in the hallway and thereby shut himself out. Inconvenient as was the incident, he was not altogether sorry that it had happened. He had no desire to re-enter his changed home; it seemed to him that that way madness lay; it, indeed, it had not already seized him. As to anything supernatural having taken place, he never even thought of it. His mind was too cultured, his soul was too pure to admit the supposition—familiar as it is in some circles—that the spirit world concerns itself with knocks and taps, and the shifting of household furniture. No; what was wrong must be with his own brain—an appalling thought, indeed. The thought of the prayer of a certain good man: "Take my life, but, great heaven, spare my reason."

After all, his best and only known adviser was the Doctor. But as he turned his face that way the strange idea came to him that if madness it was he might as well get all the comfort out of this sudden and incomprehensible loss of reason. He would turn back, make his way around to the sitting-room window and take one more look at that lovely vision, which, pray God, had not flown. No; there sat the angelic visitant to his humble home, the soft light still resting upon her brown hair, her fair hands pursuing their silent labor just as he had seen her through the half-opened door a few moments before. Here he stood for a long while, so it seemed to him, drinking in the lovely vision, like the freed captive drinks in the air, the sunshine and the soft breeze so long unfelt by his brow. Suddenly turning away Plumley broke almost into a run along the path leading to Dr. Winter's, but the cool night air strengthens and steadies him, he turns back. He cannot bring himself to leave the house which shelters that head so dear to him, even if it only be a vision.

Around and around "The Laurels" he wanders, but every time he comes opposite to the window of the sitting room some strange influence keeps him from approaching it again. His feet seem nailed to the ground every time he attempts to step out of the path. This new and mysterious sensation, apparently the result of some hypnotic influence, again turns his thoughts to the black-bearded and spectacled German, whose muffled guttural tones ring in his ears, and whose nervous, explosive manner comes vividly back to him.

"Was not this German professor an adept in the hypnotic art? Has he not a spell upon me? Am I not a subject of his, moved by his will, swayed by his thought, influenced by his mind?"

Such were the questions which Plumley now propounded to himself. At last he seemed to have hit upon the explanation of the mystery. But, anyway, sleep was impossible, and besides he had locked himself out of his house. He would return to Dr. Winter's and consult him.

As he turned again toward the path leading to Winter's house, the tall clock, real or phantom, standing in his hallway chimed out in its silver tones. Plumley uttered an exclamation of horror and broke into a run. A deep sense of relief came over him as he caught a glimpse through the trees of a light in Dr. Winter's sitting-room. Of all persons on the earth's surface doctors are the most careless of their own health, though so full of good advice for every one else's people; even the German, after his fourteenth pipe, had gone to bed; but the Doctor was still smoking and reading a work upon the digestive organs with an appendix against tobacco.

At the curate's gentle tap on the pane he opened the door.

"What, you back, Plumley; what is the matter with you?" His trained eye at once perceived that the other's visit had a personal object. In as few words as possible the curate gasped out what had occurred. "My impression is," he ended, "that I have lost my wits, Winter."

"I have heard a good many people say that of you, was the other's quiet reply. "A man who gives all his goods to feed the poor, and never thinks of himself has, of course, they say, a screw loose somewhere. It's natural enough. Still"—seeing how the poor curate's face fell—"that is not my opinion. You are only a monomaniac, my dear fellow. And as to what has so disturbed you, I can explain it in two minutes. The people who say these things of you have a very great respect for your character, and almost the whole parish have clubbed together to show it. 'The Laurels' have been newly furnished for you by a general subscription. They thought it would be a nice surprise for you to get the things put in while you were from home, and as the only chance of this was my little dinner to-night, they took advantage of the opportunity. I promised to keep you here till midnight, but our metaphysical friend retained you two hours later."

"But, Doctor," gasped Plumley, "you have not told me all—or rather I've not told you all—the vision—"

"Is not a vision at all, my dear Plumley," remarked Dr. Winter, calmly, "but genuine reality. That lady seated in your work room is Jane Copcutt, come back to you after all these years, to undo the wrong she wrought. Sit down and let me tell you all about it."

Plumley attempted to obey, but he dropped heavily into the easy chair which Dr. Winter had drawn for him. He had fainted. Winter knew that this was the best thing for him to do, and leisurely applied some restorative. Then, as the curate came to himself, he handed him a glass of wine.

"Come, come," said Winter, in a kindly tone, "there's nothing to cry about"—for Plumley was now sobbing like a child. "Jane never married Hargreaves. She fell ill, very ill, and her life was saved by some power stronger than medicine. The physician in charge then assured her father that her health would never again be robust, and that to consummate the marriage would mean her death. Meantime Copcutt's business affairs took a turn for the better, but as it was necessary to take Jane to the south of France, he resolved to sell out his business and devote himself to her entirely. It was several years before Jane had recovered her health completely, and then it fell to her lot to pay back to her father some of the tender care she had received from him. For ten long years she devoted her life to him, his good angel and his comforter. Copcutt died a year ago, and six months ago Jane wrote to me. She is a fellow conspirator of mine. It will soon be daybreak, and then, if you like it, we'll walk over to 'The Laurels' and take breakfast with its future mistress."

[THE END.]

MRS. FATENA, wife of the new Minister from Japan, finds one practical fault with the American style of women's dress. She has found that she can not sit on the floor in it with either grace or comfort.

IT seems that the good points of some people have all been broken off.

TALMAGE'S SERMON.

AN ELOQUENT DISCOURSE BY THE BROOKLYN PREACHER.

A Comparison of Wisdom with the Most Precious Stone—The Value of Religion—Words of Solomon—Contrasts Brought Out by the Text.

Rubies Surpassed.

The subject of Dr. Talmage's sermon last Sunday was, "Rubies Surpassed," and the text Proverbs viii, 11, "Wisdom is better than rubies."

You have all seen the precious stone commonly called the ruby, it is of deep red color. The Bible makes much of it. It glowed in the first row of the high priest's breastplate. Under another name it burns in the wall of Heaven. Jeremiah compares the rubby cheek of the Nazarites to the ruby. Ezekiel points it out in the robes of the king of Tyre. Four times does Solomon use it as a symbol by which to extol wisdom or religion, always setting its value as better than rubies.

Qualities of the Ruby.

The world does not agree as to how the precious stones were formed. The ancients thought that amber was made of drops of perspiration of the goddess Ge. The thunderstone was supposed to have drooped from a stormcloud. The emerald was said to have been made of the firefly. The lapis lazuli was thought to have been born of the cry of an indian giant. And modern mineralogists say that the precious stones were made of gases and liquids. To me the rubby seems like a spark from the anvil of the setting sun.

The home of the genuine ruby is Burmah, and sixty miles from its capital, where lives and reigns the ruler, called "Lord of the Rubies." Under a careful governmental guard are these valuable mines of ruby kept. Rarely has any foreigner visited them. When a ruby of large value was discovered, it was brought forth with elaborate ceremony, a procession was formed, and, with all bannered pomp, military guard, and princely attendants, the gem was brought to the king's palace.

Of great value is the ruby, much more so than diamond, as lapidaries and jewelers will tell you. An expert on this subject writes, "A ruby of perfect color weighing five carats is worth at the present day ten times as much as a diamond of equal weight." It was a disaster when Charles the Bold lost the ruby he was wearing at the battle of Grandson. It was a great affluence when Rudolph II. of Austria inherited a ruby from his sister, the Queen dowager. It was thought to have had much to do with the victory of Henry V. as he wore it into the battle of Agincourt.

It is the pride of the Russian court to own the largest ruby of all the world, presented by Gustavus III. to the Russian Empress. Wondrous ruby! It has electric characteristics, and there are lightnings compressed in its double six sided prisms. What shall I call it? Heart of coral? Is it petrified blood! In all the world there is only one thing more valuable, and my text makes the comparison, "Wisdom is better than rubies."

But it is impossible to compare two things together unless there are some points of similarity as well as of difference. I am glad there is nothing lacking in the ruby. The ruby is more beautiful in the night and under the lamplight than by day. It is preferred for evening adornment. How the rubies glow and burn and flash as the lights lift the darkness! Catharine of Aragon had on her finger a ruby that fairly lanterned the night.

Sir John Mandeville, the celebrated traveler of 400 years ago, said that the Emperor of China had a ruby that made the night as bright as day. The probability is that Solomon, under some of the lamps that illumined his cedar palace by night, noticed the peculiar glow of the ruby as it looked in the hilt of a sword, or hung in some fold of the upholstery, or beautified the lip of some chalice, while he was thinking at the same time of the excellency of our holy religion as chiefly seen in the night of trouble, and he cries out, "Wisdom is better than rubies."

What the World Needs.

Oh, yes, it is a good thing to have religion while the sun of prosperity rides high and everything is brilliant in fortune, in health, in worldly favor. Yet you can at such time hardly tell how much of it is natural exuberance and how much of it is the grace of God. But let the sun set, and the shadows avalanche the plain, and the thick darkness of sickness or poverty or persecution or mental exhaustion fill the soul and fill the house and fill the world; then you sit down by the lamp of God's word, and under its light the consolations of the gospel come out; the peace of God which passeth all understanding appears. You never fully appreciated their power until in the deep night of trouble the Divine Lamp revealed their exquisiteness. Pearls and amethysts for the day, but rubies for the night.

All of the books of the Bible attempt in some way the assuagement of misfortune. Of the 150 psalms of David at least ninety allude to trouble. There are sighings in every wind and tears in every brook, and pangs in every heart. It was originally proposed to call the President's residence at Washington "The Palace" or "the Executive Mansion," but after it was destroyed in the war of 1814 and rebuilt it was painted white to cover up the marks of the smoke and fire that had blackened the stone walls. Hence it was called "The White House." Most of the things now white with attractiveness were once black with disaster.

What the world most needs is the consolatory, and here it comes, our holy religion, with both hands full of anodynes and sedatives and balsams, as in Daniel's time to stop mouths leonine; as in Shadrach's time to cool blast furnaces; as in Ezekiel's time to console captivity; as in St. John's time to unroll an apocalypse over rocky desolations. Hear its soothing voice as it declares: "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." "The mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but my loving kindness shall not depart from you." "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat, for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall lead to living fountains of water, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

The most wholesome thing on earth is trouble, if met in Christian spirit. To make Paul what he was it took shipwreck, and whipping on the bare back, and penitentiary, and pursuit of wild mobs, and the sword of decapitation. To make David what he was it took all that Ahithophel and Saul and Absalom and Goliath and all the Philistine hosts could do against him. It took Robert Chambers' malformation of feet to make him the literary conqueror.

It was bereavement that brought William Haworth of Wesley's time from wickedness to an evangelism that won many thousands for Heaven. The world would never have known what heroic stuff Ridley was made of had not the fires been kindled around his feet, and not liking their slow work he cried: "I cannot burn. Let the fire come to me. I cannot burn." Thank God there are gems that unfold their best glories under the lamplight! Thank God for the ruby!

Solomon Was Right.

Moreover, I am sure that Solomon was right in saying that religion or wisdom is better than rubies, from the fact that a thing is worth what it will fetch. Religion will fetch. Religion will fetch solid happiness, and the ruby will not. In all your observation did you ever find a person thoroughly felicitated by an incrustment of jewels? As you know more of yourself than any one else, are you happier now with worldly adornments and successes than before you won them? Does the piece that cost you hundreds and thousands of dollars on your wall bring you as much satisfaction as the engraving that at the expense of $5 was hung upon the wall when you first began to keep house?

Do all the cutlery and rare plate that glitter on your extension dining table, surrounded by flattering guests, contain more of real bliss than the plain ware of your first table, at which sat only two? Does a wardrobe crowded with costly attire give you more satisfaction than your first clothes closet with its four or five pegs? Did not the plain ring set on the third finger of your left hand on the day of your betrothal give more gladness than the ruby that is now enthroned on the third finger of your right hand?

If in this journey of life we have learned anything, we have learned that this world neither with its emoluments nor gains can satisfy the soul.

Martyrs to Duty.

There is also something in the deep carmine of the ruby that suggests the sacrifice on which our whole system of religion depends. While the emerald suggests the meadows, and the sapphire the skies, and the opal the sea, the ruby suggests the blood of sacrifice. The most emphatic and startling of all colors hath the ruby. Solomon, the author of my text, knew all about the sacrifice of lamb and dove on the altars of the temple, and he knew the cleansing sacrificial blood, and what other precious stone could he so well use to symbolize it as the ruby? Red, intensely red, red as the blood of the greatest martyr of all time—Jesus—of the centuries! Drive the story of the crucifixion out of the Bible and the doctrine of the atonement out of our religion, and there would be nothing of Christianity left for our worship or our admiration.

Why should it be hard to adopt the Bible theory that our redemption was purchased by blood? What great bridge ever sprung its arches, what temple ever reared its independence, what mighty good was ever done without sacrifice of life? The great wonder of Christianity is that it unites these two cities, cost the life of the first architect. Ask the shipyards of Glasgow and New York how many carpenters went down under accidents before the steamer was launched; ask the three great transcontinental railroads how many in their construction were buried under crumbling embankments or perished under lumbers or destroyed by the powder blast.

Tabulate the statistics of how many mothers have been martyrs to the cradle of sick children. Tell us how many men sacrificed nerve and muscle and brain and life in the effort to support their households. Tell me how many men in England, in France, in Germany, in Italy, in the United States, have died for their country. Vicarious suffering is as old as the world, but the most thrilling, the most startling, the most stupendous sacrifice of all time and eternity was on a bluff back of Jerusalem when one Being took upon himself the sins, the agonies, the perdition of a world. Multitudes that no man can number between 12 o'clock of a darkened noon and 3 o'clock in the afternoon, purchasing the ransom of a ruined world.

Dive in all the seas, explore all the mines, crowbar all the mountains, view all the crowned jewels of all the emperors, and find me any gem that can so set my shuddering symbol as that martyrdom as the ruby. Mark you, there are many gems that are somewhat like the ruby. So is the carnelian, so is the garnet, so is the spinel, so is the balas, so the gems brought from among the gravels of Ceylon and New South Wales, but there is only one genuine ruby, and that is that from the mine of Burmah. And there is only one Christ, and He comes from Heaven. One Redeemer, one Ransom, one Son of God, only "one name given under heaven among men by which we can be saved."

Ten thousand times 10,000 beautiful imitations of that ruby, but only one ruby. Christ had no descendant. Christ had no counterpart. In the lifted up grandeur and glory and love and sympathy of his character he is the Incomparable, the Infinite One! "The only wise God, our Saviour." Let all hearts, all homes, all times, all eternities, bow low before Him. Let His banner be lifted in all our souls!

Price of the Gospel.

In olden times Scotland was disturbed by freebooters and pirates. To rid the seas and ports of these desperadoes, the hero William Wallace fitted out a merchant vessel, but filled with armed men and put out to sea. The pirates, with their flag inscribed of a death's head, thinking they would get an easy prize, bore down upon the Scottish merchantman, and the striped flag of Wallace boarded the craft of the pirates and put them in chains and then sailed for port under the Scotch flag flying. And so our souls, assailed of sin and death and hell, through Christ are rescued, and the black flag of sin is torn down, and the striped flag of the cross is hoisted. Blessed be God for any sign, for any signal, for any precious stone, that brings to mind the price for such a rescue!

I like the coral, for it seems the solidified foam of breakers, and I like the jasper, for it gathers seventeen colors into its bosom, and I like the jet, for it compresses the shadows of many midnights, and I like the chrysoprase because its purple is illumined with a small heaven of stars, and I like the chrysolite for its waves of color which seem on fire. But this morning nothing so inspires me as the ruby, for it depicts, it typifies, it suggests "The blood of Jesus Christ that cleanseth from all sin." Without the shedding of blood there is no remission." Yea, Solomon was right when in my text he said, "Wisdom is better than rubies."

To bring out a contrast that will illustrate my text, I put before you two last earthly scenes. The one is in a room with rubies, but no religion, and the other in a room with religion, but no rubies. You enter the first room, where an affluent and worldly man is about to quit this life. There is a ruby on the mantel, possibly among the vases. There is a ruby in the headdress of the queenly wife.

On the finger of the dying man there is a ruby. The presence of these rubies implies opulence of all kinds. The pictures on the walls are heirlooms or the trophies of European travel. The curtains are from foreign looms. The rugs are from Damascus or Cairo. The sofas are stuffed with ease and quietude. The rocking chairs roll backward and forward on lullabies. The pillows are exquisitely embroidered. All the appointments of the room are a peroration to a successful commercial or professional life. But the man has no religion, never has had and never professed to have. There is not a Bible or one religious book in the room.

The departing man feels that his earthly career is ended, and nothing opens beyond. What he will land stepping off from this life is a mystery, or whether he will land at all, for it may be annihilation. He has no prayer to offer, and he does not know how to pray. No hope of meeting again in another state of existence. He is through with this life and is sure of no other. The ruby on the mantel and the ruby on the wasted finger of the departing one say nothing of the ransoming blood which they so mightily typify. So far as giving solace or illumination to a departing spirit, they are a dead failure. Midnight of utter hopelessness drops on all the scene.

Better Than Rubies.

Another room of mortal exit. Religion and no rubies. She never had money enough to buy one of these exquisites. Sometimes she stopped at a jeweler's show window and saw a row of them incarnadining the velvet. She had keen taste enough to appreciate those gems, but she never owned one of them. She was not jealous or unhappy because others had rubies while she had none. But she had a richer treasure and that was the peace of God that had comforted her along the way amid bereavements and temptations and persecutions and sickness and privations and trials of all sorts. Now she is going out of life.

The room is bright, not with pictures or statues, not with upholstery, not with any of the gems of mountain or of sea, but there is a strange and vivid glow in the room. Not the light of chandelier or star or noonday sun, but something that outshines all of them. It must be the presence of supernaturals. From her illuminated face I think she must hear sweet voices. Yea, she does hear sweet voices—voices departed, voices apostolic and prophetic and evangelic, but all of them overpowered by the voice of Christ, saying, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom."

From her illumined face, I think she must hear rapturous music. Yea, she does hear rapturous music, now soft as solos, now as full as orchestras; now a saintly voice alone, now the hundred and forty and four thousand in concert. From her illumined face, I think she must breathe redolence. Yea, she does inhale the aroma from off the gardens whose flowers never wither and from the blossoms of orchards, every tree of which bears twelve manner of fruit, from her illumined face, I think she must see a glorious sight. Yes, she sees the wall that has jasper at the base and amethyst at the top and blood red rubies between. Goodby, sweet soul! Why should you longer stay? Your work all done, your burdens all carried, your tears all wept! Pass up through the light! Up into the joy! Out into the grandeurs! And after you have saluted Christ and your kindred, search out nim of the palaces of Lebanon cedar and tell him that you have found to be gloriously true what thousands of years ago he asserted in this morning's text, "Wisdom is better than rubies."

In those burnished palaces of our God may we all meet. For I confess to you that my chief desire for Heaven is not the radience, or, to take the suggestion of the text, not the rubescence of the scene. My one idea of Heaven is the place to meet old friends, God, our friend, and our earthly friends already transported. Aye, to meet the millions whom I have never seen, but to whom I have administered in the gospel week by week through journalism on both sides of the sea, and throughout Christendom, and through many lands yet semibarbaric.

A Mighty Audience.

For the last twenty-three years every blast of this wind against me has multiplied my readers all the world over, and the present malignancy printed and uttered because our church is in financial struggle after having two great structures destroyed by fire and were compelled to build three large churches—I say the present outrageous attack upon me has but multiply my audience in all lands if I can keep in good humor and not fight back.

A gentleman tapped me on the shoulder summer before last on a street of Edinburgh, Scotland, and said, "I live in the Shetland Islands, North of Scotland, and I read your sermons every Sabbath to an audience of neighbors, and my brother lives in Cape Town, South Africa, and he reads them every Sabbath to an audience of his neighbors." And I hear and now say to the forty millions of the earth to whose eyes these words come, that one of my dearest anticipations is to meet them in Heaven. Ah, that will be better than rubies.

IT is awful to see some people try to laugh when they are not amused.

GIRLS borrow from each other, and boys trade.