divine right not to *have* something, but to *be* something. Every privilege is a penalty. Every right is a duty. Every gift is a responsibility.

Through the whole of life the principle runs. Unbelief has sometimes sneered at the Bible view of God's favouritism. The sneer has force, but in a vastly different line. Election, which is a fact of life, is a privilege, and it is therefore a penalty. It is a fearful thing to be God's favourite. To be chosen of God is a terror—and a glory. "Seemeth it but a small thing unto you that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel to bring you near to Himself?"

HUGH BLACK.

THE IMPLICIT PROMISE OF PERFECTION.

"The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me: Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever. Forsake not the work of Thine own hands."—*Ps.* cxxxviii. 8.

THE chapel of San Lorenzo at Florence contains the monuments which Michael Angelo executed in memory of his princely patrons. On one of these marvellous tombs the sculptor has carved two reclining figures, to represent respectively the Night and the Day. Night is personified as a woman sunk in uneasy slumber. Day is portrayed in the shape of a man, who lifts himself in disturbed awakening. But this latter figure has never been finished. The limbs are partly chiselled, but the head and face are merely blocked out of the marble. Some interruption stayed the master's hand, and he left his work there imperfect and incomplete.

Now that half-finished statue in San Lorenzo is a parable of our human nature. There is the same strange pathetic sense of incompleteness, the same dumb prophecy of a perfection intended and required. The earnest expectation of the sculptor's ideal lies there, waiting to be manifest. That figure, which seems struggling to free itself from its stony shroud, if it could speak, would surely break out with St. Paul's longing: "Ah! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" One could imagine the spirit of the mighty artist to be still haunting the silent chapel, drawn there by some mute reproach from those marble lips, beseeching him to perfect that which concerned them, to forsake not the work of his own hands.

The frame and fabric of mortal things are stamped with a like incompleteness. God's unfinished work is here—around us and within us—a wonderful fragment, full of the hint and hope of what He meant it to be. And His will, though it can be resisted, is never relinquished. An earthly artist may be hindered by sickness or mischance; sometimes he flings down his tools helplessly, in disgust at his own impotence; sooner or later Death cuts short his task. But the heavenly Worker fainteth not, neither is weary. His patience is like His mercy, it endureth for ever; and He has eternity to finish in. The character of God is the pivot on which this argument hinges: because He is what He is, therefore the fragment which He has begun becomes the prophecy of some better thing in which He shall make it perfect. Even in this fleshly prison we bear about the signature of a Divine ideal, the blurred outline of immortality. If we are Christians, we carry in our souls some tokens of what God is already doing in us to fulfil His design. And these things become the earnest of their own inheritance.

We should despair of the Christian life, if it were to be always the chequered struggle that it often is now, with our best vows broken, and our purest motives tainted, and our love of God Himself an infinite longing rather than an infinite satisfaction. These very imperfections speak the promise that God will at last make them perfect. Our very struggle is prophetic of its final victory. Our very shame and horror of evil are a pledge of robes to be one day washed white. Our hunger and thirst after righteousness may certify us that He who inspires it shall Himself satisfy it, when we awake with His likeness.

The day is coming when we Christians shall have done with failure and disappointment; we shall have conquered our last temptation, we shall be delivered from our last sin. "As it was in the beginning, so it never more shall be." We shall hunger no more neither thirst any more. Weariness, and doubt, and remorse, and pain, and parting, will all be over and gone. Now we know in part, and we prophesy in part. When that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away. And "ye shall be perfect"—O unspeakable promise—"even as your Father in heaven is perfect."

T. H. Darlow.