

## The World's Epoch-Makers.

FIVE volumes of this series have already been published and mentioned. Two more are just out. Of the five already issued, the most interesting is Professor Lindsay's *Luther*. It is enough of itself to give the series a name. It is a master's masterpiece. It proves that books as well as lives may 'in short measures perfect be.'

The new volumes are *Francis and Dominic and the Mendicant Orders*, by Professor Herkless (crown 8vo, pp. 237, 3s.); and *Savonarola*, by Dr. G. M'Hardy (crown 8vo, pp. 283, 3s.). Dr. M'Hardy's *Savonarola* will be read first. There is no 'epoch-maker' in all the long array that so touches the universal human heart. There is room, too, for a good short biography. For want of it, many have taken to Villari's ponderous volumes and read them through. But even after Villari this biography will find a place. Dr. M'Hardy is both just and sympathetic. His sympathy enables him to understand Savonarola, his justice enables

him to understand his adversaries. But the chief merit of the book is its proportion. The great men and events are most conspicuous, the rest come in as colour and shade; and yet the least are real and distinct.

Professor Herkless has had a movement to write about rather than a man. He has conceived his duty to lie in the epoch rather than the epoch-maker. It is true that he has two notable men to handle, and he has not despised the picturesque that so readily arranges itself around them. He has given us a biography in brief both of St. Francis and of St. Dominic. But it is Mendicancy that is his subject; the Mendicant Orders have received the most thorough investigation. For the accomplishment of such a task, Professor Herkless is specially fitted. He spares no pains to get at the truth, even on the most intricate, even on the most tawdry matters of doctrine or practice. And when he has obtained a clear understanding, he spares no pains to set it clearly before his readers. His words may be unadorned, but they are unmistakable.

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## The Way of Life.

BY THE LATE REV. W. A. GRAY, ELGIN.

THE common way of interpreting the words, 'Go thou thy way,' is to refer them to Daniel's dismissal to death. 'Depart,' they are supposed to mean, 'thy work is over, thy time is done; take thy journey across the dim borderland that separates between seen and unseen, temporal and eternal; go thy way, and may the valley be bright, the passage be easy, the entrance be full.' One might draw various good lessons from this reading. But it labours under a fatal objection. It implies that the end is immediate, just overshadowing, just impending. Whereas the end is future. 'Go thy way,' says the speaker, 'until the end.' The way, then, that Daniel must go is the way of life, not the way of death, life with its business, life with its duties, life with its work. Death and the things that follow death, these come afterwards.

Such then is the meaning we adopt,—let us see

'But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.'—Dan. xii. 13.

how it fits in with the case of Daniel. What a wonderful career had Daniel's been! From being cup-bearer to the Babylonish king, he had mounted to be liberator of God's people and recipient of God's revelations. But in both aspects now his work was complete. There were no more people to be liberated. There were no more revelations to be received. There were just two things which Daniel in all probability desired. One was to return with the people to Jerusalem, to see their good, and rejoice with them in their great joy. It could not well have been otherwise. Daniel at the return to Canaan, like Moses at the entrance, must have longed and prayed to go over and see the good land beyond Jordan. 'Nay' is the answer of God. 'I have another place for thee, I have another task for thee. As cup-bearer in Babylon thou didst begin, and notwithstanding all that has happened in the interval, as cup-

bearer, or at any rate as state official, thou shalt end. Back then to the king's service! Back to the king's business! Arrange in his household. Advise in his court. You best please God, you best serve His people, by acting and by living thus. Return to your post then, and where life occupies you, there let death find you, waiting, working, ready. Go thy way till the end be.'

And does this seem a downcome for a history such as Daniel's? To be relegated to the old position, the old level, the old routine, after a record so brilliant, a course so august, does this seem a downcome? There is no downcome in following the path and performing the task that Providence has marked out. For the man that does that, in contentment, submission, and patience, there is an honourable destiny and a sure reward. Is there not something sublime in the figure of Daniel at this point, as he consents to renounce the patriot's ambition, deny himself the patriot's wish, and stay in heathen Babylon, while the Jews—his much-loved kinsmen—repeopled ancient Zion? How great his unselfishness! How signal his surrender! How ready his obedience to God! There is a moral nobility in Daniel's attitude, in thus agreeing to take the commonplace road and accept the commonplace fate, which, after all that had come and gone, presents an aspect of heroism. That then was one wish. Daniel desired to return with his people to Jerusalem. God said 'No' to it. 'Go thy way, the way of appointed service, of quiet and undemonstrative work.'

But there was another thing which Daniel wished, and the thing I refer to was this. He had not only parted with his kinsmen, and seen them return without him, he had received an announcement in figure of their future history. It was not all clear, this announcement, very far from it. It was mysterious, it was vague. One thing alone was clear, one thing alone was certain. The future was to be a time of trial, a time of temptation. In many ways the future was to be a time of distress. Daniel wished to know the meaning. He wished to know the termination. He was curious. He was anxious. He was perplexed. 'No' is the answer of Jehovah again, 'follow thou thine own path. And follow it not only independent of thy people's company, but independent of thy people's future. Leave problems alone. Put difficulties to the side. It is not for

you to know the times and the seasons. The secret things belong to the Lord, the revealed things to you—for you to accept, and for you to practise. And the main revealed thing is this, your duty to the king's interests, your engagement in the king's service, till the call comes to stop. Will you have this question answered? Will you have that riddle solved? Desist from them all. Be satisfied with the fact that your own weal is cared for. Be satisfied with the fact that your own safety is ensured. Go thou thy way till the end be. All will be well when that comes. Thou shalt rest and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.'

And now I think we are in a position to understand the drift of the text, which has its complete fulfilment, not in time but eternity. It is a word with a special application to those that are downcast, downcast because of doubt, downcast because of fear. And we may look at it as conveying the following three truths:—

I. First, *for every doubter his path*—'Go thou thy way.'

II. Second, *for every path its term*—'Go thou thy way till the end be.'

III. Third, *for every term its issues*—one sooner, 'Thou shalt rest'; the other later, 'and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.' Is not the chain just this,—duty, death, the intermediate state, the Resurrection, with all that the Resurrection signifies, and all that the Resurrection bestows.

1. For every doubting disciple his path—'Go thou thy way.' I mean a way he should follow independent of his doubts. All else may be dim, but that should be clear. All else may be puzzling, but that should be plain. What, my brother, my sister, is your doubt? Certain I am there is no doubt so dense, no doubt so staggering, but there is something that falls to you, in the midst of it, of daily obedience to be rendered, of daily duty to be done. And if the doubt is to be lessened, if the doubt is to disappear, it is to the obedience you must give heed, it is to the duty you must turn. How apt are we all to put the speculative before the practical, things to be argued before things to be done, to the loss of our Christian comfort, to the breaking up of our Christian peace. Mysteries! we are compassed with mysteries. And men brood on these mysteries, they vex themselves with these mysteries, they allow these mysteries to divert

them from plain daily duty, seclude them from plain daily work. What is it, then, in your case that clouds your spirit, that shakes your faith?

Perhaps *the dealings of God with the world*. His slowness in upholding the right, his slackness in visiting the wrong. Nay, find *your* path first, before you impeach or find fault with God's. And having found it, follow it. 'Go thou thy way.'

*Or is it the dealings of God with the Church?* His delay in blessing its efforts, His tardiness in promoting its ends. But first find your path before you cavil at God's. And having found it, follow it. 'Go thou thy way.'

*Or is it the dealings of God with yourself?* Here, too, the question rises. Why has He clouded your prospects? Why has He embittered your lot? Why has He emptied your home? Why has He imposed this trial? Why has He taken away that joy? Why has He suffered you to pray, and denied you the thing that you pray for? Why has He suffered you to strive, and denied you the thing striven for? Cease to murmur. Cease to pry. Persevere with your appointed task-work. Fulfil your appointed destiny. Find your own path first before you act critic of God's. And having found it, follow it. 'Go thou thy way.'

What that way may be depends upon circumstances, depends upon character. It may be a public way, leading you through the world's crowds, or it may be a private way, leading you through the world's solitudes. It may be a way of busy activity, or it may be a way of silent endurance. It may be a way of labour for the Church, or a way of sacrifice for the family, or a way of industry for one's fellow-men, in the exercise of an earthly calling, in the prosecution of an earthly trade. One thing is certain. Every disciple has a way, his way, her way,—his and hers in a sense in which it is no other person's, with possibilities of usefulness, with means of well-doing, that are unshared by their neighbours, but remain individual, distinctive, and their own. Never let the problems that surround you, whether of providence, or experience, or doctrine, detach you from present, plain, clamant duty. God will give light upon other things in His own time, in His own way. Wait for Him. Trust in Him. Cast your care on Him. And meanwhile calmly, expectantly, perseveringly, go thou thy way.

2. That is my first thought—for every doubting

disciple his path. Now take another—for *every path its term*. 'Go thou thy way,' it is said, 'till the end be.' What is the end? It is the end which men call death. Ah, yes; many and varied as the roads are, they all lead up to the same gate. Many and varied as the streams are, they all discharge themselves in the same sea. It is appointed for all men to die.

'Till the end be.' Observe there is nothing told Daniel of details. There is nothing to indicate when, or where, or how the end was to come; only the gentle reminder that it would come. Neither is there anything to indicate the when, or the where, or the how with us. Will it come in the nearness of the early future, or the distance of the far-off years? Will it come in the stir of the busy highway, or the silence of the lonely sickroom? Will it come in fever and in painfulness, or in gentleness and in calm? We cannot tell. It is useless to speculate. One thing is certain about death, and that is, that it *will* come, and that when it does come it will be an end,—'go thy way till the end be.' For thousands of times the minister has preached in the pulpit, but a time comes when he shuts the door, and never again will he enter it. For thousands of times the scholar has studied in his library, but a time comes when he lays down his books and never again will he read them. For thousands of times the physician has ministered in the sickroom, but a time comes when he descends the doorsteps, and never again will he climb them. For thousands of times the workman has wrought in the field, but a time comes when he gathers his tools, and never again will he handle them. So in an hour we think not, so sometimes in an hour we wish not, cometh the end.

The end, but an end of what kind, an end in what sense? Not an end in the sense of extinction, but an end in the sense of transition,—an end which means a beginning,—the beginning of new life, new experiences, and for those who, like Daniel, have prepared for it, new privileges and new joys.

3. And thus we come up to my third thought. We have found that for *every doubting Christian there is a way*, and that for *every way there is a term*, and we note in the next place, that for *every term are its issues*, the one being immediate—'Thou shalt rest,' the other being final, 'Thou shalt stand in thy lot at the end of the days.'

(1) First there is the immediate issue 'rest'—'thou shalt rest.' Some join the thought of rest with the thought of duty and the going of our way, the way individually appointed, and individually followed, of which we have spoken at length already. And it is true that duty means rest. Duty means rest even on this side eternity. To do the will of God, along whatever lines, in whatever spheres, this is rest. What harmony exists like the harmony of the stars in space? Each keeps its separate orbit. Each knows its separate place. It is because each hears its Maker's commandment, and each does its Maker's will. 'Go thou thy way,' He said, as He launched them from His hand at the first. And they went their way as He bade them. They are going their way still—obediently, punctually, and therefore quietly, in perfect concord and in perfect peace. Yes, there is rest even in life, rest for those who know God's will, and who do it, going, each one his way, as God has arranged.

But it is not of a rest in life that the text speaks, but a rest in death, of which the rest in life is an earnest and a foretaste. I join the word 'rest,' not with the going of one's way, but with the end that concludes that way and introduces to the deeper and sublimer rest that follows when life is over, and death is passed, and the believer is in some mysterious sense present with God.

It is a great mystery this question of the intermediate state. It has an ever-present interest. It has an ever-absorbing fascination. I do not know that we shall get farther in our discoveries of it than just the description of the text, 'Thou shalt rest.' There is rest for the body. The accidental constituents may have mouldered, but the essence and the germs are there. God watches over them where they lie. And by and by, though the time is not come yet, they shall waken at His summons, they shall start at His touch,—there is rest, we are sure, in the meantime for the body.

And there is rest, too, for the spirit. Some say the spirit, like the body, sleeps,—sleeps between death and the Resurrection. According to this view, there would be no felt space or interval at all. What is spread out into hundreds and thousands of years, while the world's history evolves itself and the world's processes go on, is contracted to the spell of a seeming moment, in which the soul falls asleep and wakes amidst

Resurrection solemnities and Resurrection awards. There is nothing inherently inconceivable in this. But it is not in conformity with feeling, and it is hardly in conformity with Scripture. If the intermediate state be a state of unconsciousness, then what did Christ mean when He said to the penitent thief, 'This day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise'? Paradise is surely not a place of insensibility—an experience to be slept through. And what did St. Paul mean when he said, 'I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better'? If the soul is unconscious, I question the betterness of being with Christ in heaven. I would rather work for Him and know it on earth. Add to these things the fact that there are allusions, more common than perhaps we think, that seem to imply that at certain times and in certain circumstances at least the saints above have a knowledge of, and take an interest in, the affairs of the world beneath. And I think we may safely dismiss the theory of unconsciousness. But if the rest is something different from the rest of unconsciousness, it is rest notwithstanding. Once, and once only, in a mysterious passage in Revelation, is there a trace of disturbance in the ranks of the ransomed brought home,—a ripple on the surface of the glassy sea. It is when the spirits of the martyred saints, as they see their brethren still suffering in the flesh, cry, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true.' And what is the answer? They are given white robes, and are told to rest awhile,—rest till the time be accomplished,—hushed and soothed and quieted, as weary children by a loving mother, who says, 'Cease your pleadings, cease your questionings, and all will yet be well.'

On the whole, then, the idea of the intermediate state is that of rest,—conscious rest, and rest in the presence of Christ, rest from sin, and rest from sorrow. It is a vast transition. It is an unspeakable change. But it is not consummation. It is not completion. It is not full and final blessedness. How can it be? The body has yet to be raised. The Church has yet to be gathered. The great world has to be perfected,—perfected morally, perfected physically, its laws subjected to Christ's rule, its very material transformed by His glory.

Does the text, brethren, say anything of this? Has it any description to give? Has it any hope to hold out? A farther and fuller blessedness,—

an ulterior and richer joy, as of some divine far-off event, towards which creation, terrestrial and celestial, is slowly, surely moving,—does the text point to this?

(2) Yes; take the last clause, when we pass from the immediate blessedness of repose to the ultimate blessedness of inheritance,—inheritance amidst Resurrection experiences, Resurrection rewards,—‘Thou shalt stand in thy lot at the end of the days.’

To exhaust or even explain the meaning of these few sublime words is beyond our capacity and beyond our time. But a hint or two may be helpful in closing. What is spoken of here is the property of the saints in the Resurrection, and three things are said of it. *It is a lot.* The imagery is borrowed from the distribution of Canaan among the tribes, to each tribe a lot. It is the idea of order. Heaven is a place of order. One house but many mansions. One feast but many seats. One temple but many stalls. One country but many lots. The idea, as I say, is the idea of order—order and appointment.

But there is more. The text speaks of *thy lot*. Ah, then, there is something more than appointment, there is peculiarity, propriety, individualism. What God chooses, He does not choose arbitrarily. What He assigns, He does not assign without a reason. He only seals, ratifies, perpetuates what we have chosen and assigned for ourselves. We shall reap just what we have sown. We shall inhabit just what we have built. Brother, do you ask, ‘What shall be *my lot* in the solemn upwinding of all things?’ I will answer the question by another, ‘What is thy way now?’ For it is the present way that makes the future lot. Again, I ask of you, ‘What is thy way?’ If it be the way of patient and quiet obedience, of repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, of fellowship with the Holy Ghost, together with such service and sacrifice as are peculiar from circumstances or character to yourself, if this be your way, then go on in it. It will lead to your lot in the end, and that lot will be very congenial and very home-like, a lot prepared by you, and a lot befitting you. But if not, if your way be the way of conscious and wilful transgression, of indulgence in

evil habit, of compliance with evil principle, of adhesion to evil company,—if this be your way, stop, brother, turn and think, lest you find at the end of the days there is a lot too for you, which your own hands have fashioned, to which your own way has led, on the left hand of the Judge.

But the text speaks of a believer, and to the believer we return. ‘Lot,’—there we said is the idea of order. ‘*Thy lot*,’—there is the idea of peculiarity, propriety. ‘Thou shalt *stand* in thy lot,’—there for one thing is the idea of confidence—the confidence of one who is accepted, the confidence of one who is triumphant, and takes the posture to which his trial and triumph entitle him, steadfastly erect, gloriously complete. Confidence,—that is one thought.

And permanency,—that is another. ‘Thou shalt *stand*,’ no one dislodging thee, no one evicting thee, no one threatening thee, through the endless ages of eternity. Of how many settlements here upon earth can the same thing be said? We take our place in these settlements, and we speak of them as our lot, saying, ‘Soul, take thine ease and be satisfied.’ But the settlement becomes unsettled. The lot is broken up. Here have we no continuing city. Our homes, our estates, they abide not. They abide not because of change. They abide not because of death. And the wind whistles, and the rain drips, and the icicles hang in many a pleasant bower where once the roses bloomed, and once the sweet birds sang. And wilt thou set thy heart upon that which fades? Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. For the world passeth away and the lust thereof. But he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever. May such be our attitude, may such be our position, as those whom no charge can impugn, no convulsion shake, no temptation overthrow, no vicissitude assail, but who stand in the end of the days—ay, and beyond the end—secure and irrevocable in their eternal lot.

So runs the text. Thou shalt go, thou shalt rest, thou shalt stand; go thy way on earth, rest in the calm of the blessed, stand in the full Resurrection glory, for ever in the body and for ever at home, together with each other, and together with the Lord.