No. 152.

On the question

"Are there few that be saved?"
Luke XIII. 23, 24. — "Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able."

The disposition which prompted the question in this passage, is one of the most common among mankind; and taken in connexion with the answer given to it by x, it may afford a very interesting topic of instruction. We are not told on what occasion the question was proposed. As it stands in the history, there is no circumstance which seems to have suggested it; though undoubtedly it arose naturally in the course of conversation. It is presented to us, as an insulated selection from the instructions of x, secondly, doubtless for its importance as its striking effect; and as such we shall now consider it.

1. We will see what instruction may be drawn from
the question itself: "Are there few that be saved?" On the first reading, one is apt to suppose that this refers immediately to the final salvation of the soul. But probably the person who posed the question, had no such thought in his mind. The word "saved," has a variety of meanings. Sometimes it is used to signify the deliverance of the body, sometimes it expresses the condition of those who are in a state of security of any kind whatever. By a transfer of one from one thing to another, it came to mean among the Jews the favored objects of the Mosaic kingdom, understanding by that of course a temporal kingdom. In this sense it was probably used in the question before us, so that the answer might perhaps be thus expressed: "Are there few that shall live in the bounties of the 'Mosaic kingdom'?" Or, according to a distinguished critic (Hamack's Bible), the sense of the question is this: Shall the system of religion, ty on contrary to the spirit of it, proceed as the world have a circle which is confined within narrow limits? shall few or many receive it? In one of these, in some kind of sense it is undoubtedly to be understood, in its original use & connession: though we may apply it in the popular meaning at the present day with perfect propriety. I have made these remarks only to remind you, that it is always important to discriminate between the original & the modern meaning of every expression. Between the sense, in which the writer used his words, & the sense in which we use the same words...

But, what may have been the particular idea with the mind of the person who posed the question, it is the part of the question itself, with which we are principally concerned, if we are to derive instruction. There is much of that curious playing bigotry, & hearken to ask: "Are there few that be saved?" a disposition to calculate the chances of salvation for others, to make out an estimate of the number of those who may be supported to be candidates for the favor of God. There is a spirit of mediocrity in religion, as well as in the common concerns of life, if though God has favored abroad his benevolence & the offers of his mercy, vast is deep, as ocean waves, yet men would fain confine them to a small stream, flowing in a narrow channel, giving refreshing & gay refreshment to a few favored individuals. There is an unwonted...
to share in common the best blessings of God. In such minds, even heaven itself would have few charms, were it not excellent to be the appropriate & exclusive residence of their souls. They are altogether like themselves. It is a sad thing, to say such things, like so when earthly existence is but a short day, rain & ill weather, full of care & gays, while we are travelling to an unknown, or at least uncertain, & the way, by the way, who shall say they shall be dealt unto from his favors, when one accurs there, that we should look to each other with threats, yearning looks, that the smile of one shall rest not, but his pain on others. Of what concern is it to us what for or many be said? Why should we waste our time in idle conjectures about a thing on which we cannot know if we would, or do not know if we could? The same prevailing sensibility, disposition, which spreads so much misery & distress through society, produces the same bitter fruits in religion. The miseries over his treasures, powerful secure the wealth of the world to himself. Yes, the religious bigot would have appropriate seduction to himself & his party. In both it is the same grasping, cordial disposition. The same love of accumulating & keeping good things. The enemies of good men grow good & evil men good & evil men.

not render this own happiness so much, while his own bow shares in the same happiness. Yet the bright can think only of the blessings, rewards of religion, comparatively diminished in excellence, if he be not confined within the circle of his own circle. It is far to remark, that this exclusive despotism has been a feature in the principle conduct of religions, to an extent that there have been an enemy to consider it as a lesson to the world. As the guardian of a particular sect, instead of being universal, I am the dominion of a particular sect, instead of being universal. And so it was with the ancient and respectable,L. N. F. I. B. and all others. They deemed themselves enlightened & dignified with the denial of a few only, not of the multitude. If we were full well, that in more particulars, did the gentleman's office give so much offence to our own countryperson, as making a door for the light & mercy to flow in upon the whole world. They could not tolerate him, who taught them that all artificial distinctions should be broken down, that all boasted uncertainties should be swept away, that all many should come from the root from the roots, from the root, the root, from the root, should sit down in the kingdom of God. They would rather he had taken
them, there are few that be saved; so provided they themselves could constitute that few... And often it was established, the same passions with the same pride driven to prevent its blessings & advantages, or possess them from being a common good, to make of them a privilege for the few, so means of keeping it over G's heritage. The church, whose to power during the middle of the dark ages, sent itself in a thine, is imposed conditions of acceptation, or sell salvation, is made a task of favour with G's grace; then whether it should be of many, that should be saved, or the people were ground, is meant to be expressed, with all the harmful effects of this tyranny of exclusive spirit... And the same disposition may be traced, treading in a dark lane along the history of G's since, assuming rights, claiming lines, securing the blessing promises of the G's. The favor of G within narrow limits. Even in modern times it has been a question secondly discussed among them, whether the heathen could be saved, as if it could ever enter into the breast of natural evangelical man, that G could ever condemn whole nations of tribes, because of the necessity of the condition, in G. He himself has placed them, they are out of the reach of the light of G. Who could have imagined, that such a question could have been agitated among the professors of a religion, or teaching them that in every nation, in G's sight another form has the same chasism, digested itself. It has made numerous articles of faith... Long creed necessary to accept, with G's... This has endeavored to narrow the enclosure within which salvation may be obtained. Indeed it would be a task, as it is painful, to follow the manifestations of this encroachment for reasons. For various ways & on various occasions we are at times, that affirms, must mind, disposition of the very Godly man, that has to do with that reason. The answer to this question next claims our attention; yet deserves very serious attention, as it is important of stating, how he enters in at the divine gate, for many, many, shall seek to enter in, & shall not be able. In they grants the same space as compared to a path or road, to pass through the gate, & draws into this path as repents it as the great object, in which the soul must arrive... The first circumstance, of course demands no notice on this answer of it is, that it is a severe rebuke upon all cold reason, enquiries in religion. To the question, are those few that be saved? G's grace makes no reply, but directs the enquiry to a much higher another object, to the necessity of peace.
nal emotions is personal improvement. It is as if the soul said: "your question is one, to ask this question is of no importance for you to have an answer. It is no concern of your affair. your question may or may not be answered; your great concern is that you may be saved yourselves. If for this purpose you must struggle to enter at the strict gate, you must submit to the rest not of your religion, you must discipline yourself by its precepts, and to lose all about your heart. This from this opportunity improves, but as dire instruction. We are fully taught, that the only enquiries on which our truest highest interest is laid, are those that relate to the means of acquiring the true character, that character, which shall fit us foremost glory in the kingdom of our Father. Jesus has thus set the seal of his approbation upon plain, serious, practical religion, in the midst of his contempt of sophistical questions. One cannot be seated, it is not worth the trouble of knowing, of a poor soul, of divine things, or even with the things of kings of controversy and great questions, it is plain. (strive to make as much progress as possible, during the few days one spends on earth. Let us strive to be austere, let us strive to be austere."

about the means of being better. If you have not these distinctions, all your searching of fixing on religious subjects will be useless, perhaps worse than useless. You may go far deeper into the deepest disputes, that have been confounded, shaken the church, may remain until the most majestic aid in the world, that has been confounded, enter in the most familiar reverence and peace of the secrets of the divine government. It is often afterward, days in arguing whether the heathen will be saved, whether these who differ from you will be saved. You may exhibit all this noble zeal of being forward about religion, yet if you have meanwhile been to strive to enter the narrow way of life, you will not be of the number of those who shall bear set last the suffering condition of the world. If you are tempted to write, like an such enquiries of opinion, rememb're the fate of the unprofitable question, as other, how that be saved. Think of the solemn meaning of the word, last moments, answers of Jesus, "strive to enter in at the strict gate." Time for yourselves, knowing that for yourselves, only you must answer at the last day. We were forced to consider the strict religious instruction, needed on the charge of souls, strive to entreat at the strict gate." In a short, feasible manner, this teaching
as that the life of the tree is spent in possessing evident and watchful reaction, so that it bears difficulties enough to employ all that industry of reaction. These two continuers are of great importance; those who reason with religion may require the necessity of putting forth energy to meet these. Cautions and one, are we not told that the shine life is not only the best, but the pleasantest that living is ever as bright a light? How then is this consistent with the declaration, that we must enter the state gate of the narrow way? Expressions, perhaps, that we must strive and labor, that we must confront dangers, have a conflict with difficult things in these? Indeed, it is doubtful, true, that the life of the tree is the most agreeable, that because he has habits, he sends his unbroken obedience to the laws of God. But before this habit have acquired this state of fixed character, there may be many painful struggles, many hard encounters, in his course. For the advance, because he has obedience, his degree will have an image of the most perfect felicity, in this world. How can he, who has known the curb of his will, to that shall rule the universe, be so free?
rough storms; it is smooth, level, each step informs from pain. But when we reach of the difficulties side of the true life, we meet principally with reformers there who have not grown old; they have been confirmed under the spirit of the gospel, to whom habit has not rendered the service of a easy of delightful path; who have still much to subdue, much to bear down, much to content with, before they can be regarded as having achieved the conquest. To them there is still a strict gate to be entered, a new way to be travelled, before they can reach the smooth guide road with the reward of triumphs. To him, who has but just begun to form his heart to the spirit of God, to the habits of obedience, there must be difficulties. To conflicts, as it were, happen to one, who can say in the triumphant language of Paul, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is a crown laid up for me in the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at the last day.

There is a childhood, a manhood, middle and in the last life, as well as in the natural life of man; and in the one case, as in the other, what the feebleness of the child makes it painful for him to endure as passion, the strength of the man will bear or execute without pleasure. In proportion as any one advances on the way of well doing, he will difficulties vanishing before him; if sacrifices will once thought long pain will become a source of centennial gratification. In the language of Scripture, "every valley is exalted, every mountain made low; the crooked ways become straight, the rough places plain." Still every, even the best sin, will always find imperfecting weakness enough lingering about him, to remind him that he must linger long about him to remind him that he must.

There is always in this world a spirit "obsessing" man, not representing the world as worse, than it is; but looking for a moment, and considers what are the motives which prompt to the rules of action that guide most men. A very, has not the sincere man a laborious task to keep himself restrained from the world? Do you not see a thousand sources of pollution spring from sending their streams through society? Some take some, in some from or other, meeting me in open account, bringing sin from ambush, getting to get the mastery over us by treachery? Is not vice presenting itself,
not be able to enter in, because they seek to do it in an
wrong way by imperfect means. When taken with regard
to the men of that day, it is as if Jesus had said: many
doubtless will wish to enter the Messiah's kingdom, but
they will come to me with erroneous views of false hopes, and
therefore they will not be able to enter in. They will expect
me to perform a supernatural miracle, if they will turn away disserted
and if I do not yield the mind to grasp the scripture. Or, it may be,
that they will endure the trials, or minus the dangers to the
my cause may expose them. From some cause like these, from fear, from disappointment, pride, or the love of ease, they will
be prevented from entering in at the strait gate, i.e., from be
coming my true disciples. Such was the meaning of the
words in their primitive application. When applied to men
relying on the present times, they may be thus understood:
many will appear to desire, i.e., perhaps, for a time, with sincerely
desire, to become tins. But as their resolution will be
weak, their hearts faint; they would like to have the
strait gate made wider; the narrow may broaden, before
they enter; they cannot consent to part with those prop
erties, or objects of affluence, with the loss which
require them to sacrifice; if they could have their favor
its natures indulged, it be trim at the same time, they
would not hesitate; but as that cannot be, we are at
able to enter the strait gate, because they have not moral
strength enough to comply with the conditions. Thus we see
that when x says, "many shall seek to be saved,
with unavoidable propensity arising from a love of our na-
ture. He does not mean to affirm, that it is naturally in-
hospitable for any to enter in at the strait gate; but that
many will make it, so by their own fault. It is a very
false view, either would represent, y.e., as having spent a
day of life, or than binding our feet in fetters, or shackles
with chains, so that we cannot enter in and walk therein.
My life under the government, i.e., a wise, just, and merciful
God, not of an arbitrary, capricious tyrant, y.e., while this is
the case, it cannot be that we should be required to do
what we are disabled from doing. God does not saddle us,
then command us to walk: He does not shunt us self in the
cabin, then bid us see; He does not direct us not to enter the
strait gate is then tell us we cannot shall not enter. No, he has placed before us eternal life, that might
rest of all objects; he has given us all the means of familiar
for obtaining that object. The prize is greater, glorious; but
not greater is more glorious than man can win; y.e., he don't
win it; on this head alone be all the sin of the condem-
nation. Never forget, then, that if we do not enter the strict gate, the pains of the blame must be all our own. God has
averted from us so much of his coming down upon us as fast to
ruin: he has left us free to stand or fall, to choose when we
will serve; to take up a part among the wretched of the be-
thy. But while we guard against all misunderstanding of
this passage, let us entertain again, also, not to forget
what it is that alone can prevent us from entering the
strict gate: it can be nothing else but our unwilling-
ness to comply with the conditions of eternal life. If those
conditions are written, obedience to the laws of God. We must
do what our religion requires us to do: we must lay upon
its altar every unhallowed passion, every impure desire, every
propensity, that would draw us downward from heaven.
We must go to God, with the humble question: what must the
law of God require me to do? what must I do to be saved?
Place me in mind of the picture of the most
submissive docility of obedience. We must give up the image
of the head, with its strength, the only heavens that I know.
accept: we must know that image of himself that be hath set, as a rich jewel, in the sun. Thus it is, this
meant. By standing to enter the strict gate; while we are on
this earth, it can never be said we shall not be able to enter.
Other, from whom we must look for
wisdom to direct, of strength to assist,
enable us, we beseech thee, to discern the
things that differ, to remember that
to fear thee:—May we never limit
the extents of thy mercy by our own mas-
sons of selfish views; may we remember
that we are all members of thy great
family: that thy kind care a parent-
al love extend over all. Teach us to
prize most highly the practical fruits
of true religion. Steer clear of foolish
questions, which engender strife:—May
we strive to enter the strict gates of
walk in the narrow path of life, that
we may be conducted to the mansions
glorious above. May we shrink from no
duties our religion may require
from us, whether to what it may call us.
May we labor with diligence, with
their assistance to break down our rebel-
his passions, to subdue perverse wills, temperance unlawful desires, temper pure gratification, remembering that none but the pure in heart shall see God.
At home, July 21st, 1822, forenoon.

At Charlestown, Mr. Walker, Dec. 23, 1822, afternoon.

At Lynn (Mr. Green), May 13, 1827, afternoon.

At home, evening lecture, Jan. 11, 1835.