

Four hundred years after the Lord was crucified, St. Augustine lay dying in N. Africa, ⁱⁿ that that which was one of the finest most highly civilized advanced sections of the Roman Empire. And the Vandals had broken ~~t~~ into the land and as Augustine lay dying behind those strong walls of Hippo, one of the three cities that the Vandals had not yet conquered, as he lay there for a month dying, you could hear the cries and shrieks of the people outside the city as the Vandals were burning and pillaging and destroying and torturing all around him. If you had said to Augustine then, the Lord will not come for another 1500 years, I am sure Augustine would have said, What a crazy, foolish idea! Civilization is collapsing around us! The Roman empire is being broken into by the Vandals, and the others. They are destroying everything! Civilization is ending; surely the Lord whom we thought would come in the first century, ^{or} ~~and~~ certainly in the second, ^{certainly} ~~certainly~~ He won't delay much longer now! But there were some centuries in which Europe lay in a very uncivilized and unprogressive situation, and then gradually it came out of that situation and gradually there developed ^{at least} ~~there~~ a standard/of material welfare that was way ahead of anything the world had ever seen or dreamed of. Today there are many who will tell you, The way things are developing the Lord must ~~surely~~ come this year or next year, or at least within this century. And I hope they are right. I hope the ^{He} day will come very soon. But we have no more right to be certain he is coming soon than we had in the days of Augustine in 400 A.D. If He does not come soon, we have a duty as the Lord said, to look at the signs of the times, and see what is actually ahead and be prepared for it, and when we look at what appears to be on the horizon it does not look very good. In 1912 civilization, the standard of material happiness which had been attained would seem to us today to be very very primitive because we have advanced ^{materially} ~~materially~~ perhaps as much from 1912 until today as we did in all history up until 1912. But to the people in those days 1912 seemed the very acme of material progress, of peace,