

LESSONS
FROM
NATURE

AND THE
SPIRIT'S
REVELATION
OF THE THINGS
CONCERNING
THE CHRIST

NATURE presents an ample field for observation and study. In its developments are exhibited evidences of an intelligence, a wisdom, a power of superior order. It is a tablet on which are recorded the doings of a Being mighty, good and wise. It is a book in which all may read, and from which all may gather food for thought and contemplation. The wandering savage, roving wild among his native hills, sees with awe a Creator around him, and in every twig and flower views the hand of a superior wisdom.

To the enquiring observer, the smallest object of creation presents as many objects of wonder and admiration as the noblest and most imposing works of nature. He sees in every spear of grass by the wayside much that is truly wonderful, and worthy of investigation. Throughout all he traces the work of the same Omnipotent hand — the same wisdom and power are manifest. The study of nature elevates man's thoughts, and enforces the conviction that he is a finite and dependent being. Yet its teachings, powerful as they are, are lost upon a large majority of mankind. Absorbed in the trifling, unprofitable and too often debasing pursuits of the world, they are prone to look far beneath, and are not sensible of the beauties and benefits which are exhibited in the works of their Creator. Truly, "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). And behold, in your ignorance of yourself and a want of interest in the beauties of creation, a proof of this affecting truth.

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LESSONS FROM NATURE



AND THE SPIRIT'S REVELATION OF THE THINGS
CONCERNING THE CHRIST

FOREWORD

IN the limitless expanse of nature, there are divine lessons designed to help the believer to understand the wisdom of the Almighty, and to draw personal exhortations to faithfulness. This has been the experience of thoughtful worshippers in past times, as it can be in the present. Job reflected upon the wonders of creation, and, in the midst of his terrible anguish, expressed his faith in God, and saw in His handiwork the evidence of his ultimate salvation. The sweet Psalmist of Israel meditated upon the starry heavens as he sat with his flocks on the hills of Bethlehem. He later put into poetry some of his observations, as he watched the mighty hand of Yahweh at work to control and guide the tremendous orbs of the heavens, and the perfect balance of nature on earth. He allowed the evident work of the Almighty Hand of God to similarly direct his heart, so that it remained in harmony with that of the Creator. His son Solomon later reflected upon things great and small, and set into proverbs an extensive knowledge of the natural, and was guided by inspiration to draw spiritual parallels therefrom.

As worshippers of the Creator, we can similarly profit from the careful consideration of the Hand of Nature. The Spirit invites us to “look at the heavens and the earth” which the Creator made, and to contemplate the great work performed for our salvation.

In this volume we have endeavored to provide an encouragement to wander along the pathway of reflective meditation upon things spiritual. It is based upon the original work written in article form by *Sis. Alice Hopkins*. She employs a delightful style of writing, not altogether familiar in these modern days when authors are encouraged to use the short direct phrase, to economise on expression, and to avoid the voluminous style of former times. But we have retained her unique style, believing that readers will find a special delight in the meditative approach employed. At the same time we have corrected the original text in certain places, and have brought the articles into a form agreeable to the purpose of this book, adding matter where appropriate.

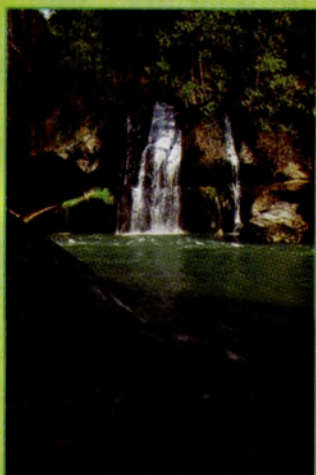
We hope it will provide many enjoyable hours of delightful and meditative reading. Since each chapter is complete in itself, the reader can select any one and enjoy a fifteen minute contemplative reading. Not only will this provide an outline of the beauties of the divine handiwork, but draw the mind to reflect upon the spiritual principles therein.

We have produced this volume at the request of a number of brethren and sisters, and are pleased that it will continue the expressions of a thoughtful and spiritual insight into the world around about. And further: it may cause the heart to reflect upon the divine goodness, and anticipate the glory yet to be revealed when the glorious Son of God will bring both mankind and the earth itself into harmony with the Creator. To that end this volume is presented to the reader.

— G. E. Mansfield,
Logos Publications, 1997.

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*Come to the woodlands,
Come, hie away with me,
Through lovely glens and valleys
Our joyous paths shall ebb.
We'll climb the sunlit mountains,
We'll linger in the dell,
And quench our thirst with water
From out the crystal well.
Across the vernal hillside,
Our grateful songs shall ring,
As we behold sweet Nature,
And God in everything.
The deep truths of the Spirit
Revealed in Christ our Lord,
Through fair, and living symbols
Will constant joy afford
Then leave the sordid problems
That mar the bliss of life—
The meaner moods and passions,
The jealousies and strife:
Away from all the turmoil,
Come, estimate the worth
Of things that are eternal
Pertaining to this earth.*

*Alice H. Hopkins.
England — May 1920*

Chapter One

GOD AND NATURE

*Father and Friend, Thy light, Thy love,
Beaming through all Thy works we see;
Thy glory gilds the heavens above,
And all the earth is full of Thee.*

IN the Gospel according to John it is testified that Jesus said to his disciples: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He shall guide you into all the truth: for He shall not speak from Himself: but what things soever He shall hear, these shall He speak: and He shall declare unto you the things that are to come. He shall glorify me: for He shall take of mine, and shall declare it unto you. All things whatever the Father hath made are mine: therefore, said I, that He taketh of mine and shall declare it unto you" (16:12-15). "The Spirit of Truth which proceedeth from the Father, He shall bear witness of me" (15:26). "He shall teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you" (14:26). This was realised on the day of Pentecost, when the apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit, which equipped them for their two-fold mission of preaching the Gospel and healing the sick.

When we consider with what confidence they went forth, and with what boldness they proclaimed the Truth, we may gain some idea of the power of that Spirit which had taken possession of them, and so deeply impressed upon their hearts and minds the eternal verities concerning the once crucified, but now risen, Christ.

This was the Spirit's revelation of the things concerning Christ in the Apostolic Age, and, judging by the numerous quotations from the Old Testament throughout the apostolic writings, we cannot fail to observe how significant were the things revealed through Moses and the Prophets by the great Illuminator of the Word.

The things concerning Christ had for many ages been revealed, though more or less dimly both in patriarchal and prophetic times; nevertheless clearly enough to cause the humble recipients thereof to rejoice in the truth conveyed, for Christ informed the Jews: "Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it and was glad" (John 8:56). It is to some of these foreshadowings, the truths gathered from the writings of Moses and the Prophets, given in types and figures concerning the Christ, that I desire to call attention in these articles.

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Had not the Eternal Spirit been pleased to manifest His will and purpose concerning His Son in types and shadows, through Moses and the Prophets, the Book so precious to all God's dear children, their daily meditation and delight, would be reduced to bare history, and its marvellous treasures of research would all be lost.

There is something gloriously fascinating to the imaginative mind in the formation and character of the Holy Scriptures. Fields of wonders, deep mines of wealth, joys unspeakable, glories indescribable, and love surpassing human knowledge are all opened up before the mind of the earnest student of the divine Word. Truths hidden from the wise and prudent of this world are available to the humble and contrite of heart in this wonderful volume we call "*The Bible.*" And let us thank God that it is no longer chained to the lectern of some out-of-the-way temple dedicated to one of the so-called saints of apostate christendom, but that it may accompany us in our country rambles, or be studied in peace and quietness at our own fireside. Yes, God has indeed taken of the things of Christ, and by His Spirit shown them even unto us, believers in the Truth, in this far off day of Gentile domination. We have a full record, a complete revelation in the written Word; and, may each avail themselves of the blessing. If some of these glorious things are more clearly seen and more firmly grasped by the comments in this volume, the feeble endeavours of the writer will not have been in vain.



I do not ask you to take your places before me on the uninviting seats of a bare-looking classroom, or to burden you with difficult words and dry speeches to achieve this desirable end, but rather that you should imagine yourselves in company with one who has a very deep admiration for all that is pure, noble and lovely, sitting sometimes beneath the ceaseless swaying boughs of the great trees, while the soft, welcome breeze fans our faces into freshness and vigour; or together wending our way blithesomely along the rugged, weedy path that follows the winding course of the ebbing waters of the river as it moves onward, ever onward toward the ocean.

But perchance you may think I am forcing myself upon you rather abruptly, and would be more satisfied had I introduced myself to you in a more becoming manner before claiming this confidential friendship. I would ask you to picture to yourselves a very ordinary individual who makes no pretensions to learning or cleverness, but rejoices in the fact of being recognised as a child of God, although a most unworthy one; nevertheless one who has learned to look unto Him who sits above the glory-covered Mercy Seat, in the heavens not made with hands, and cry, *Abba, Father*, being confident of acceptance through the merits

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of the Perfect Intercessor and Elder Brother, Christ Jesus. One who believes that the community of those of like precious faith with the early believers is indeed the Father's House, and is ever glad to join in the worship of the one true God, the glorious Creator and Giver of every good and perfect gift. One who looks upon and embraces all nature in the compass of the Father's garden, knowing that the earth and its fulness are the Lord's; yea, that He claims the cattle upon a thousand hills, regards the tiniest fledgling as it falls to the ground, and is capable of gathering up the waters in the hollow of His hand. Though pained often at the knowledge of what sin has accomplished, we still look forward in hope to the day when the curse shall be removed and the earth be filled with the glory of the Lord.

Here, then, are my credentials in brief, and now I will invite you to come with me and I will endeavour to do you good.

I acknowledge with heartfelt gratitude the labours of those to whose works I have had recourse, and which have enabled me to gather together much that I trust will prove interesting and instructive. Most of these labourers are now sleeping in the dust of the earth, awaiting the day when they shall stand in their lot to receive the due reward for all their labours.

And now among the overwhelming variety of wonders with which the world of nature literally teems, what shall be the first choice portion to select for our opening topic? Hills and vales, fields and flowers... all convey some wonderful lessons, telling us that the Hand that formed them is divine. The words chosen for the title of this simple work at once divert our attention from present surroundings, lifting us, as it were, out of ourselves, and carrying us far from the humdrum monotony of city life, set us down in the midst of all that is truly lovely and lovable, inviting us to look around, and then beyond the present to the glorious future.

In these days of turmoil and strife, of care and anxieties, when the horrors and din of war and its accompanying evils are rampant and so near our doors, and the cry of the fatherless and widows falls pathetically on our ears, how refreshing and strengthening is the recollection that it is only "till he come," and that our Lord has definitely stated, "I am coming soon" (Gk. Rev. 22). We need constantly to lift up our heads and be on the watchtower of expectancy; for, "Ye know not in what hour your Lord may return." And Jesus said, "Blessed are those servants who are found watching."

As this is the day of worldwide perplexity, let us take heed that we do not allow ourselves to be led away by the faithless multitude to do evil, or even to think evil of our God and Father in heaven who is working all things for our eternal good.

"I would have you without anxiety," said the Master, so let us endeavour to

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show, by our calmness and reliance upon God's arm of strength, that we do really believe in Him and trust His Word. And what better remedy could we find for all our forebodings, misgivings and vexations, than a contemplation of the future? Some have referred to the earth as a waste howling wilderness, basing their statement doubtless on the words of Moses concerning Israel's wilderness wanderings. But are we justified in so doing? Nay, are we so sightless, so ungrateful, as to deem it so, after looking upon earth's natural loveliness? Let us guard against such a cramped, narrow-minded estimate of God's goodness towards us, and rather study to lay hold of the immensity of His wisdom and unbounded love. Can we not breathe freely the sentiments of the hymn which begins:

"My God, I thank Thee, who hast made the earth so bright, So full of splendour and of joy, beauty and light; So many glorious things are here noble and right."

If we view things from the workshop standpoint, we shall undoubtedly be disappointed, or if we limit the earth to the confines of the factory walls — the area of smoke and sulphur fumes, the rattle and ceaseless whirl of machinery, spanned dingy time-begrimed rafters, and rusty, half-glazed windows — or should we mount to the topmost story of the city garret, where we probably discover the wan, slender, ill-clad figure of the seamstress, who in the dim light stitches for dear life, to enable her to eke together a miserable pittance, that she may maintain a mere existence for herself and puny offspring, and from thence gaze down upon the hurrying, bustling throng below, in the eager pursuits of daily vocations, and there give our verdict — what will be the result? If we complainingly take up this position, and in this attitude view life upon the earth, we must also ask ourselves the question, are these the works of the Lord, and is this His doing? There can only be one answer. It is all of man, the outcome of the uncontrolled reasonings and working of the mind of the flesh. The more we see of earth's natural beauty the more lovely will it appear, and we shall rest fully assured that when the curses are



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removed, and death deprived of its power to rob us of our dearest and best, it will form a most desirable dwelling-place for the sons of God.

Glorious indeed will it be, with unlimited strength and perfect capacity for the appreciation of what is truly good, to traverse earth's delightful regions, and look with immortal eyes upon her emerald pastures, far-spreading woodlands and her lichen and heath-clad hills, interspersed with vine, or ivy-covered cottages, where the happy, peaceful inhabitants may sit under the shade of their own vine or willow, and none shall dare to make them afraid.

How sweet to roam the flowery lanes in company with those who have learned to know the Lord, and can sing the new song, and to commune one with another of the goodness of our God, His wonderful condescension, tender mercies, and lovingkindness! In His holy presence there will be fulness of joy, and at His right hand pleasures for evermore. Oh! to pass through the fair fields of waving, golden corn; to see the clean, healthy cattle, the noble beasts whose ferocity has all vanished, for the little children may caress them unharmed. When the countenance of youth and age wears a look of gladness and deep satisfaction, and every one speaks in honour of the Immortal King. Think of the stern, silent grandeur of the great mountains standing out boldly against the azure sunlit skies, in contrast to the rich, peaceful vales below, in verdure clad, and ringing again with the music of bright plumaged, happy birds, while here and there we catch the glitter of clear, silvery streams, which water the valleys as they glide onward to the sea.

Think, too, of the lovely glens and dales, and the craggy rocks over which the sparkling foaming torrent leaps and bounds. What an inexhaustible wealth of beauty lies around such regions, even at present. Can we imagine the picture when, "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree, and the wilderness, and the solitary or parched land, shall be glad: and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose?" When the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the deaf made to hear, the dumb are able to sing, and the lame leap as a hart. When in the wilderness waters break out and streams in the desert, and the glowing sand becomes a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water. There are some who declare it does not signify where we spend eternity, whether upon this earth or beyond the starry skies; but I would not miss the pleasure or the consolation derived from the contemplation of certain and perfect felicity upon this lovely earth for a thousand vain speculations about shining harps and golden streets in heaven. Let us be glad and rejoice in the fact that as truly as the heaven, even the heaven of heavens, is the Lord's, the earth He hath given to the children of men, with the promise that it shall abide for ever, the eternal inheritance of all the meek, who in sincerity follow the once despised Jesus of Nazareth, the future Lord and King over all

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the earth.

All nature is God's handiwork, freely bestowed for our gratification and benefit, uplifting us to a higher level and filling us with noble aspirations, besides revealing, as nothing else can, the beneficent character of the unseen Creator. But nature alone will not teach us to know God, neither does it reveal His will and purpose with the earth.

Apart from God's own revelation of Himself in His written Word, we should be in total ignorance of this. We must know God through His Word, which is able to make wise unto salvation.

God and His works are separate, though all His works are in Him. Men may suppose it is possible to commune with God in nature, assuming that His voice may be heard in the song of the birds, the rustling leaves, the murmuring breeze, or the noise of mighty thunders, and upon these grounds have neglected His Book. We may trace the marks of His wisdom, and see evidences of wonderful power in the constitution of nature, but God Himself, is far above, out of reach.

It is right and profitable we should contemplate the wisdom and goodness of His works, but we must remember that none but God Himself can satisfy the deep longing of the heart, to which nature can never respond. The knowledge that God has come near this sin-stricken world in the person of His own dear Son is that which inspires us with hope, and encourages us to draw near unto Him. Nature suggest an almighty, self-existent Being, capable of first fashioning, and then regulating and maintaining, in the most marvellous order, the things produced. By having recourse to the Word, we find that it is none but the fool who says in his heart, "There is no God."

It is a mistaken idea, also, to imagine, as some do, that the world was made out of nothing, for in the beginning there was God, and all things are out of Him. He is the source and foundation of power, and "of Him and through Him and to Him are all things: to whom be glory for ever" (Rom. 11:3; 1Cor. 8:6). From the character and arrangement of these wonderful works we may recognise that the Creator is all-wise and loving. Are we surprised then, that He who made the world and all things therein should use His own handiwork as figures, in making clear to the children of men His divine purpose? Remove from the Bible, from cover to cover, all the references to nature it contains, whether intended to be taken literally or figuratively, and "all scripture given by inspiration of God" would become an indescribable mutilation. What shall we conclude then? That the great Father who made us all, understands us altogether, and has spoken to us through His Word, as we are capable of receiving His message, teaching us the deep and glorious things of truth from objects which appeal to us most forcibly. And shall we not show our appreciation thereof by a full and wholehearted acceptance of the truths thus revealed?

Chapter Two

LIGHT AND DARKNESS

*Sun of our life, Thy quickening ray
Shed on our path the glow of day;
Star of our hope, Thy softened light
Cheers the long watches of the night.*

WHEN the eternal Spirit was about to refashion the earth, in order that it might be replenished and bring forth abundantly everything that could be pronounced “very good,” the first marvel produced was *Light*. Light is the first essential to life and happiness. Without it there would be impenetrable darkness. “Light is the result of force causing the waves of the ether to vibrate with an almost infinite rapidity,” says one writer, and how great is that force we can measure by the fact that light travels round the earth eight times in a single second.

In Gen. 1:2 we read that “the Spirit of God moved upon the waters,” and this is explained to mean, not only “moved,” but “kept moving.” It was the introduction and continuation of force. And then comes the result of foresight. Beyond this I shall not attempt to define Light. Enough for us to know that it is the means which enables us to see, the very counterpart of darkness.

In the beginning God fixed the dividing line between light and darkness, calling the light “day” and the darkness “night.” Some dispute the order in which the history of the creation is given in Genesis. Let us be assured that God made no mistake in placing light before the sun, or animals before man, and all true science is in harmony with the inspired Word. Although the Bible is not intended to teach science, its Author, knowing all things, would not, and could not, cause to be written what was scientifically erroneous.

Light before the sun was a great stumbling block for some people for a long time, but it has now disappeared. It is known now that there is other light besides sunlight; and as a proof of this we may think of God dwelling in Light. Gen. 1:16 was supposed to state that the earth was made before the sun and moon, but the word “made” means “show,” or “appoint”, and does not preclude the existence long beforehand of the sun and moon. Professor Guyot, we are told, after getting all the available books on geology, biology, and astronomy, tabulated his results, and found with amazement the exact order of Genesis 1.

The apostle John informs us that “God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all” (1John 1:5). The first light that illuminated earth’s chaos radiated forth from

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Him, and from that moment became a settled law of nature. The Psalmist beautifully expresses it in these words: "O Lord my God, Thou art very great: Thou art clothed with majesty and honour: who coverest Thyself with light as with a garment; who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain" (Psa. 104:1-2), and also read Isaiah 40:22. The Hebrew word *dok* does not mean "curtain," but "thinness." This has been a difficulty with many, and some have imagined that the heavens were stretched out like an immense roll of fine cloth.

The *Douay* version renders it "as nothing", and Luther has translated it "a thin skin," or "film."

Light, then, is produced by the undulations of the ether, which is the element in which all the heavenly bodies move, and the medium by which they are all connected. This ether-gauze, stretched between the heavens and the earth, exhibits the wisdom and power of God; for even the atmosphere is just right. If it were more, we should be dull and weary, and if less we could not exist. No one has ever seen the ether, or weighed it, and yet scientists are assured about its existence.

Shall we not exclaim, as we contrast the insignificance of man with the unutterable majesty of God, "When I consider Thy heavens... What is man that Thou art mindful of him?" (Psa. 8:3-4). "Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening," continues the Psalmist (Psa. 104:23), showing God's merciful provision for the wellbeing of His creatures: "For He knoweth our frame: He remembereth that we are dust" (Psa. 103:14).

Oh weary, over-wrought sons of men, it is not of our loving Father that you labour in vain, in the very fire; taking no rest and giving yourselves no time to consider the works of the Lord nor the operations of His hand, but the result of man's misjudgment and greed. May the righteous King soon return to earth and speak effectively to the restless, troubled peoples. "Peace, be still!" so that there may be a great and abiding calm.

But what spiritual lessons are to be learned from the consideration of Light? Psalm 27:9 opens with these words: "Yahweh is my light and my salvation." Here light is used as a figure of speech. God has been in the past, is now, and ever will continue, to be the light of His people.

In reference to His dealings with Israel in the past, Nehemiah says: "Yet Thou in Thy manifold mercies forsookest them not in the wilderness: the pillar of cloud departed not from over them by day, to lead them in the way, neither the pillar of fire by night, to show them light, and the way wherein they should go" (9:19, RV). And though the light has been temporarily withdrawn, and Israel now gropes in the darkness, through Isaiah comes the promise full of hope and encouragement for their future: "Yahweh shall be thine everlasting light" (60:19).

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The exiled apostle John, in Patmos, still pointing forward to this grand consummation, testifies: "Yahweh God shall give them light." God being, then, "all in all," extraneous light will be inconceivable, for no artificial light will be needed in the presence of that Spirit-illuminated company depicted in the closing chapters of the Bible. As the natural light illuminates and animates the physical earth, so light spiritual illuminates the mind, and, penetrating the very inmost being, imparts the light of life, the life of the Spirit, which is an earnest of the life unending, the life indeed. Here is something substantial on which to pin our faith, hence the expression, "With Thee is the fountain of life: in Thy light shall we see light" (Psa. 36:9), and again, "In Him was life; and the life was the light of men" (John 1:4).

Referring to the means, the channel through which the light of the Truth is conveyed to the receptive mind, the same figure is pursued. The divine Word is spoken of as a lamp to the feet, a light to our path, and we have, without doubt, as children of God, discovered, like the ancient Psalmist, that the entrance or opening out of the Word giveth light, thus affording us untold pleasure. From the divine Word we see that light is associated with truth, and darkness with sin. Through the Word we learn that God is the glorious Illuminator of His people, called out and separated from the world; that He is also the manifestation of perfect holiness, and because He is the source of light, to whom everything is transparent, any attempt at concealment is vain and sinful.

When the Lord Jesus appeared in Israel, the Light shined in the darkness, but the darkness comprehended it not. Darkened by human traditions, the people did not perceive the Light. He was, indeed, the divine Light-Bearer, typified by the seven-branched lightstand of the Holy Place, containing the holy oil, capable of producing that spiritual light which lighteth every man coming into the world; and speaking through him, the Spirit said: "I am the Light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12).

This Light penetrated to the very root of Judaism at that time, and its burning rays pieced the darkness, revealing the sins of this people in all their hideousness and deformity. Few were willing, for this reason, to come to the Light, for light ever makes manifest the deeds of darkness, and human nature for the most part is evil disposed and cannot tolerate the Spirit's searchlight. But those who allowed the Light of the Truth to shine into their hearts were privileged to become sons of God, even as many as believed into his name, and so the Light that emanated from him who declared, "I am come a Light into the world," thus came to be deposited in other lightstands, with the results recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, and commented upon in the epistles.

But the mental vision of many who embraced their teaching became dimmed

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and sullied by impostors. Artificial light-bearers all such might be termed, for in the eyes of unstable men they glittered with a more or less degree of brilliance in their endeavour to lead away disciples from the Truth, and stamp out the True Light.

We may gather the effects of their false glamour by reading carefully the advice and warnings of the zealous Apostle to the Gentiles. "We are not as many which corrupt the word," he wrote in his letter to the ecclesia at Corinth (2Eph. 2:17). "We have... renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the Word of God deceitfully: but by the manifestation of the Truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. But if our gospel be hid or veiled, it is veiled in them that are perishing. In whom the god of this age hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ... should shine unto them" (4:1-4). And then, as if to emphasise the contrast, he continues: "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (5-6). And again, in chapter 11, referring to the same objectionable class, he writes: "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel, for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness, whose end shall be according to their works." There exists not a true and virtuous quality which has not, sometime or other, been the subject of artificiality. "Try the prophets," says John in his first epistle. The light of the Truth alone can make manifest the distinction, for often it is only by the closest scrutiny defects are discernable. Neither should we fail to give this lesson its personal application, for, said Jesus in his teaching, "The light of the body is the eye; when thine eye is single thy whole body also is full of light, but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. Take heed, therefore, whether the light that is in thee be not darkness. If thy whole body be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light" (Luke 11:34-36). If we desire to know ourselves better in order to be more pleasing unto God, we must come right up to the light, and allow its beams to shine full into our lives. It is possible to be self-satisfied if we walk at a distance, comparing our conduct and conversation with those about us, and like the self-righteous Pharisee, who boastingly said: "Lord... I am not as other men," or like the self-centered young man who answered Jesus: "All these things have I kept from my youth up. What lack I yet?" deceiving ourselves. The test is: Are we really in the light of the divine Word, living the Truth as well as believing it? Are we walking in the light even as he (our Lord) is in the light? If so, we shall have discovered long ago that "the

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heart is deceitful, above all things, and desperately wicked," and our frequent complaint will have been, "Oh wretched man that I am."

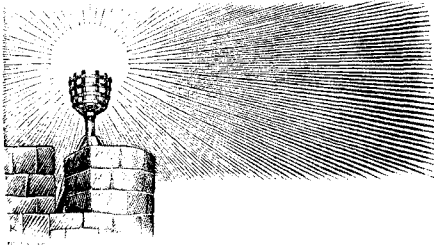
Do not be afraid of the Spirit's searchlight. Some day we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. And then? Well, if we are right with God now, it will be all right with us then; and what joy unspeakable will be ours! Let us make the Psalmist's prayer our own. "Search me, Oh God, and know my heart: try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." It was not long before the great Light once seen by them, "who sat in the region and shadow of death," was withdrawn. He who in the days of his flesh said: "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world," is now at the Father's right hand, awaiting the day when, with intensified brightness, he shall manifest himself, first to his brethren, and then to the world in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on them that know not God and obey not His Word. And then shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus will destroy with the brightness of his coming; for through the prophet Isaiah we learn that it is at a period when darkness (mental and social) covers the earth, and gross darkness the peoples, in spite of increased knowledge and much running to and fro, that the "Light" who is to enlighten the earth with his glory will be manifested; and it is to this happy time we should be looking forward.

A symbol is a form comprehending divers parts. As a whole, it is a compendious abstract of something other than itself, in a much condensed form. A symbolical representation is the act of showing, by forms or types, the real thing intended; it is the shadowy form of a true substance.

In the fourth chapter of Zechariah there is a beautiful figure bearing upon this portion of our subject. The whole symbol is an apparatus of brightness, representing the character and power destined to establish and make Jerusalem a praise in the earth. And from verse one we gather that a resurrection is necessary for the development of the things witnessed. Jeremiah prophesied: "Behold the days come, saith Yahweh, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch; and a King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment in the earth" (23:33); and Zechariah is shown that it is by the Spirit in organic manifestation that the face of the earth is to be changed. And the Lord has declared that He will not rest until this is an accomplished fact (Isa. 62:1). The power that effects this great deliverance from Gentile tyranny will be the Spirit of God in those eyes mentioned in Zech. 3:9 and 4:10. Seven represents unity, completeness and perfection.

Now Zechariah saw a seven-branched lampstand of pure gold, standing between two olive trees, a branch from each tree connected with the lampstand by a golden pipe, making two branches and two golden pipes or tubes through

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which the golden oil was conveyed from the branches to the bowl of the lampstand, for the supply of the seven lamps. By referring to the New Testament we see that the lampstand, with its bowl on the top, containing the holy anointing oil of the Spirit, with its seven pipes and

seven burners, represented God as manifested in the Lord Jesus and his brethren.

This same glorious, immortal company was seen by Ezekiel. Their appearance was like burning coals of fire, intensely brilliant and terrible; for they are all actuated in their movements by the Spirit of God, being the Spirit's embodiment by a tried and precious faith. Daniel also saw them in vision as a fiery stream, and the apostle John much later as seven lamps of fire (Rev. 4:5). The two olive trees represent natural Israel and spiritual Israel, the branches being connected with the bowl, the receptacle of the oil of grace producing gladness, by means of the pipes, so making one glorious lamp. We perceive here the great truth expressed by Jesus himself to his disciples: "Severed from me, ye can do nothing."

Let us see that we are abiding in him, the central lampstem, and drawing steadily and constantly from this inexhaustible supply, sufficient spiritual grace to enable us to keep our lamps well filled, and our light burning brightly in the surrounding darkness now, as we hope in the future, sent forth by the Lord of the whole earth, to illuminate the nations, and after the execution of these judgments written (Psa. 149:9) to shine with resplendent glory in the kingdom of our Father.

As a symbol, the lightstands which John saw are drawn from the seven-branched golden lightstand of the temple, where it stood on the south side of the holy place which would have been in darkness but for the illumination of its seven lamps of pure olive oil. It was, therefore, a light shining in a dark place, both the lightstand and the light being typical of something else. The lightstand was of pure gold. It led to the presence of God. There was no wood, representing human nature used here, for the light that comes to us is not through man; it is God's light, the divine light in the fulness of the power of this sevenfold Spirit through the prophets and apostles, through His glorious Son, and through us if we will ray forth the Truth.

Each branch was supported by the central stem, which represented Christ, the Light, and a small bowl of oil was kept burning continually. All was of one piece of beaten work of pure gold, showing that Christ and his people are one; although two households, both are united in him. Ex. 27:20 shows that it was the

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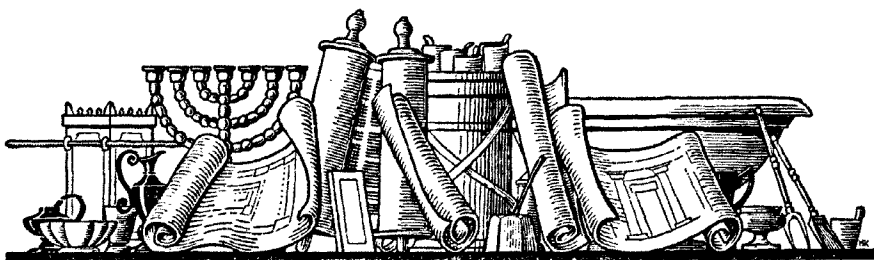
duty of the children of Israel to bring the pure olive oil beaten for the light. They were commanded to do so, that the lamp might be kept burning continually, and Aaron and his sons were to order it from evening to morning before the Lord.

What may we learn from this? That each of us must do our part in keeping the light of the Truth burning. All through the evening time of Christ's absence, until the glorious millennial morning, this Word-light must burn steadily, and we shall be held responsible for it.

To produce the oil for the light it was necessary for the olive to be beaten or bruised, reminding us of Christ, our Light, once bruised for our iniquities. We must lay to heart the important lesson. Evening and morning we must replenish our lamp with the fresh oil, pure and bruised, to obtain a fresh supply of the Light of Truth, well beaten and assimilated, that we may walk and not stumble, and that our light may shine before men.

The seven golden lampstands of Rev. 1 represented the seven ecclesias of Asia Minor. Collectively, they shone out as a bright light, each member being a vessel containing the holy oil, but the unity of this one body of light-bearers was soon broken, the lightstands were removed, and the light gradually waned, and it was not long before all the lights went out for lack of the golden oil of the Spirit. But may we not carry forward this figure and behold in Jesus, the perfect man, the seven-branched golden lightstand of the earth. How glorious then, will be the illumination for the world, when yet again, at the command of the Sovereign Creator of the new heaven and earth, there shall be "Light." Nations will then come to the Light, and Israel will behold with joy and trembling the goodness and glory of the Lord, for their eyes will be opened, "and they shall see and be enlightened." God will then cause His face to shine and lift up the light of His countenance upon His people, for Light is the beautiful symbol of His favour and blessed presence.

In the Holy of Holies the cherubic faces looked down upon the Mercy-Seat, God's typical throne in Israel, before which the High Priest presented himself on



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the occasion of the annual covering of the nation's sins. This throne was erected upon mercy, and for this reason it was the covering of the ark containing the testimony (Ex. 25:16).

Here the hope of Israel was centered, for when the cloud of glory rested above the blood-sprinkled mercy seat, God came very near to His people in the person of the High Priest, forgiving their sins, and through him pronouncing upon them His blessing of peace.

But God has hidden His face from Israel for many generations, and hence the oft-repeated petition: "Cause Thy faces to shine upon us. Arouse Thy might and come for salvation to us" (Psa. 80). The fervent prayers of many generations, "Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us" (Psa. 4:6, 80:3, 17,19), will then be abundantly answered, and the Lord will indeed bless His people and give them peace (Num. 6:26). But thanks be to God, the Light is extended far beyond Israel after the flesh. The mission of the glorified Light-bearer is twofold: He comes "as a light to lighten the Gentiles," as well as to be "the glory of his people Israel."

The glorious Light that will first be seen shining above the holy city of Jerusalem will reach to earth's remotest bounds, until the earth will shine with His glory (Eze. 43:2; Hab. 2:14). What a most delightful prospect! Who could help rejoicing in the Truth? "Light indeed is sown for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart" (Psa. 97:11). And having this desirable consummation in view, "let us cast away the works of darkness and put on the armour of light." "Let us "walk as children of light" (Eph. 5:8), having no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness... for we have been called out of darkness into His marvellous light (1Pet. 2:9).

Here is ample scope for research, for it would be impossible to exhaust all the revenues of thought arising out of such a stupendous subject.

Having given a few leading ideas, I will leave you, dear reader, to search out for yourself the many side issues, trusting to be able to direct attention to another glorious theme in my next discourse.

Chapter Three

THE FIRMAMENT

*The spacious firmament on high,
With all the blue ethereal sky,
And spangled heavens — a shining frame —
Their great Original proclaim.*

WE believe there is one Eternal Being who is self-existent, and that He is the power of the universe. That light, incorruptibility and life all concentrate in Him. He is called “the Father of glory,” because Spirit-light irradiates from His throne and pervades all space, so that none can hide from Him (Psa. 139). “By His Spirit He garnishes the heavens” (John 26:13), illuminating boundless immensity with orbs of light, teeming with life and all the marvels of His power and wisdom. There can be no mistake as to who is the creator of all these mighty wonders, for God has declared Himself the Maker of all things, and there is abundance of evidence in the Scriptures.

“By the word of Yahweh were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth,” says the Psalmist (Psa. 33:6); and Job is very emphatic when he testifies that, “He (Elohim) alone spreadeth out the heavens, doing great things past finding out and wonders without number.” He has power to send forth or to restrain for He “commandeth the sun, and it riseth not, and sealeth up the stars” (9:7-10).

“I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even My hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded.” “I form the light, and create darkness” (Isaiah 45). God declares through the prophet, so that we perceive He is not only the beneficent Giver of universal Light, and that, the glittering star-bespangled heavens are His handiwork, but that darkness also comes at His behest.

That God is the author of Light is a very beautiful thought. A certain poet has exquisitely said, “The light is the shadow of God.” But in what sense is it to be understood that the Eternal Father of light and glory created darkness? Because it was essential.

In Gen. 1 we read how God said not alone, “Let there be light” (universal), but also, “Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night: and let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years... And God made (or appointed) the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: He made the stars also.” And the Psalmist says:

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“The day is Thine; the night also is Thine: Thou hast prepared the light (marg. luminary) and the sun” (74:16).

This shows that God intended night and darkness to be; so the dividing of light from the darkness in the very beginning indicates the great purpose of the ages, and becomes the basis upon which things spiritual are builded up. The dividing of time, seasons and elements are all of Him who doeth all things well, because He possesses perfect knowledge and wisdom. Thus the Psalmist exhorts us to thankfulness, saying: “O give thanks to Him who alone doeth great wonders... To Him, that by wisdom made the heavens... To Him that made great lights... the sun to rule the day... the moon and stars to rule by night” (Psa. 136). “He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down” (104:19). “Praise Him, sun and moon: praise Him, all ye stars of light” (148:3).

The small cycle of light called day, which is the root of all greater cycles, the Jews divided into twelve equal parts, and night into another twelve; and upon this principle all the time periods of the Apocalypse can be worked out proportionately; and all who are familiar with scriptural numbers recognise the significance of the figure twelve. Much might be said on this point of great importance, and also in explanation of the immensity and locality of those wonderful and exquisite orbs of light which adorn the firmament above us, information that would doubtless prove exceedingly interesting and instructive. But that is not the object of this discourse; so let it suffice here to say, that the sun is the great source of the electrical glory and power of the solar system, while the moon and the planets only become visible to us by the reflection of his beams. Unlike the sun, the moon has no light of itself; naturally speaking, it serves the same purpose as mirrors which may be seen placed outside windows, looking into narrow alleys, in order to throw the light of the sky into the rooms. As we gaze upwards to the vast ethereal expanse above us on a bright summer day, and behold the sun shining in his strength, or on a clear night, the star-jewelled firmament, with the moon enthroned in silvery glory in the midst of all the celestial splendour, our first impression is that of awe and reverence. We feel ourselves in the very presence of the Supreme Sovereign of the universe, the all-wise, all-loving and all-powerful Maker and Sustainer of all things, and, like the sweet Psalmist of old, exclaim: “What is man that Thou art mindful of him?”

It is good and profitable to turn to the divine testimony on such occasions, for words suitable to express our very deepest sense of admiration are to be found therein, as well as of humiliation. But do not let us only admire, but appreciate, and give thanks also to the Almighty Creator. Consider the immensity and wonderful character of the works of God, for these were certainly intended by the divine Author, to be investigated, admired, and

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contemplated in order that human conception might be expanded and the glory rendered which is due to God. To whatever object the attention is directed, the wisdom and perfection of the eternal Mind are manifested, whether it is the structure and functions of the human frame, the limits of our own globe, or the course of the planets running their ample round, and the bright luminaries irradiating heaven's arches.

Yet, it is, indeed, good thus to meditate, for marvellous are these works — the sun, moon and stars of divine appointment, the light and darkness, separated and ordered by perfect wisdom. But while so meditating we must strictly refrain from worshipping them. In time past many have done so, and have been led into unseemly and idolatrous practices extremely displeasing to God and most severely denounced by Him.

In Deut. 17 we see a command given to Israel against this evil, followed by the warning of the penalty of death by stoning for any who indulged in this excess, showing clearly that however glorious these orbs appear, or however strongly they appealed to the human affections or imaginations, the Creator alone must be the object of veneration. This is beautifully verified by Job when protesting his integrity before his friends in ch. 31:26-28, where he says: "If I behold the sun when it shineth, or the moon walking in brightness; and my heart hath been secretly enticed, and my mouth hath kissed my hand, this also were an iniquity to be punished by the judge: for I should have denied God." This kissing of the hand was a sign of worship among the Chaldeans, just as the crossing of the heart with the forefinger is a sign among the Roman Catholics.

As Job could not be secretly enticed to acknowledge the sun for his god, the Chaldeans became his enemies; but he knew more than his neighbours, for he had learned to look beyond the sun and moon, and to put his trust in the living God who created him. Job had no Bible, yet, but doubtless he heard and learned many things, as he says: "Wise men had been told from their fathers," for Uz was the son of Aram, the youngest son of Shem. And we are not wise if we close our eyes to all the wonders of the heavens. While not worshipping them, we may study their perfection and beauty, and learn of glories far exceeding them, portrayed in the divine Word under their symbolism.

From a very early period mankind has observed with religious awe the movements of the heavenly bodies, especially of the sun and moon, which were placed by God in the firmament to mark the seasons (Gen. 1:14). This is especially true of the moon; for we know that under the Mosaic Law the appearance of the new moon was marked by special acts of worship, and also by abstinence from labour. By the observance of these ordinances of the new moon and sabbaths, God's people were provided with the change of life and healthful recreation so necessary for the strengthening and renewing of both mental and

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bodily organism, besides having at their disposal time to reflect upon the works, wisdom and goodness of their Creator. Sometimes we forget that in the divine economy “there is a time to laugh, and a time to be sad, and even to dance for joy” (Ecc. 3).

All the great Israelitish festivals were not only holy days, but holidays, and Israel was commanded to rejoice before the Lord and remember His blessings and benefits towards them. “He hath made everything beautiful in His time,” says the wise king, with all his experience. And this is the conclusion he arrived at: “I know that there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoice and do good all his life... that he should enjoy the good of all his labour, it is the gift of God.”

Following the example of the Psalmist in considering the heavens and the ordinances of day and night, of the sun, moon and stars in their divine ordination, their perfect arrangement, and their spiritual significance, we will endeavour as far as possible to deal with them in the order given in the inspired Word, although one is so closely associated with the other that it will frequently necessitate a blending of them together or taking up one line of thought first and then retracing our steps a little, to gather up the jewels of truth we might otherwise let slip altogether.

Turning, then, from the material heavens, which are, indeed, glorious beyond description, to the consideration of their symbolism and spiritual significance, at the very outset we must observe that these heavens as well as the physical earth spanned by them, are symbolical of something far grander and more glorious than themselves. Moses informs us that in the beginning God called the firmament “heaven,” a word meaning that which is “heaved” or “lifted up” and being high above the earth it came to be taken as symbolical of all that is exalted in power and authority. This fact clearly grasped will greatly enlighten us concerning the numerous references both to heaven and earth, and the constellation thereof, in the Scriptures; for it is impossible to understand the prophecies of the Bible unless we are acquainted with their figurative language. Then we may intelligently observe the analogy between them and the natural world. Thus through the natural we are introduced to the spiritual, and discover under these figures a political universe as tangible and complete as the natural universe.

The glories of the material reflect the glories of the spiritual, the brightness of day foretelling a yet more glorious dawning, while the darkness of night foreshadows that deeper darkness of sin, judgment and death. The heavens, therefore, represent the ruling powers or governments of the world, while the earth symbolises the subjects ruled over, first politically under human constitutions, and second spiritually, under divine control. In the political

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firmament shines the sun, moon and stars of the political constitution of the world. These are subject to change, convulsions and eclipses. They may be shaken or rolled up as a scroll. This firmament may be overspread with tempest, clouds and darkness: its sun may be overshadowed or entirely hidden by intense blackness, its moon reddened with blood or partly obscured, and its stars may be withdrawn or fall to the ground. It may shine with transparent brilliance upon the peaceful earth or frown sullenly upon its trembling, astonished subjects. These heavens have suffered violence by conflict in elements; been agitated by rivalries — sometimes peaceful and at another time sending forth lightning and thunders of war — whilst hurricanes have dishevelled or swept away ruthlessly its troubled earth.

That both heavens and earth are subject to change may be seen from the fact that there have been in the past Egyptian, Idumean, Babylonian, Mosaic and Roman heavens and earth; and there are yet to be new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness, when all these past and present orders shall have vanished for ever.

Speaking prophetically of these new heavens, David says in Psalm 144: "Bow the heavens, O Lord, and come down: touch the mountains (or Gentile governments) and they shall smoke. Flash forth lightning, and scatter them." The lightning was seen by Ezekiel in his vision of the four living creatures who "ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning," all being actuated by the Spirit of God, for His divinely appointed ministers will be "as a flame of fire" (Psalm 104). They are symbolised by lightning, with their attendant thunder and voices in Rev. 4, and Psalm 97 brings before us prophetically their great work accomplished, with their results. These are the heavens that will declare God's righteousness, and then all people will see His glory, for this firmament will show forth the Creator's handiwork being His new creation in Christ Jesus.

Then our conception will be enlarged and ennobled, for we know not what awaits us in the future. God kindly veils our eyes but we shall see clearly and understand perfectly the length and breadth, the height and depth of the love of God, as well as the



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wisdom of all created, moral, intellectual and spiritual things, for the shadows will flee away before the beams of the rising Sun of that grand dawn, when there will be an apocalypse of grandeur and beauty and of glory that will make the most graphic descriptions of the prophets appear small and weak in comparison with the greatness of the glory that will fill the whole universe.

How much can we grasp of all these glories now? The meaning of eternity, the wisdom and immensity of the divine purpose, all the mysteries in the heights and depths, the marvellous order and arrangement of all things in earth and sky, in the sea or upon the land, in human life, in muscle, arteries and nerves, and the varied actions of the body, or in any of the great problems of our existence.

But this should not make us unbelieving in the many great things at present incomprehensible to us in nature, material, moral, or spiritual, but should teach us that we must not make intellects the measure of all knowledge any more than making an atlas the measure of the earth. There are many instances in which the sun, moon and stars are referred to in a figurative manner, as representative of royalties and sovereign power, and dignitaries of more or less limited degree.

In Psalm 85 we read, "Yahweh God is sun and shield." Here sun is used in the highest sense, as representing God to be the supreme source of light, and the protector of the universe. It is He alone who can lift up His hand to the heavens and say, "I created these."

The elements also are under His control; so that whether He choose to reveal His power in terrible judgments or unutterable majesty, these may be turned from their regular course at His command, and none can say, "What doest Thou?" (Isaiah 1:3; Amos 8:9; Rev. 8:9).

God does not always exercise His power as we think. The question is sometimes raised, Why did God permit His beloved and only begotten Son to suffer and die when He had the power to prevent it? The very greatness of his suffering was not because of the inability and weakness of power, but of the strength and persistency of God's love. Yes, verily, "Power belongeth unto God" but with Him also is perfect wisdom and unspeakable love.

It is He alone who can send darkness that may be felt for two, three or more days, while at the same time providing light for His own people — who has power to shroud the land in blackness more sullen than a starless night, when the world's rejected Redeemer hangs forsaken upon Golgotha's tree. This was a mighty wonder that none may dispute; for such a darkness experienced then was wholly preternatural, as may be seen from the fact that it happened at the Passover, which was celebrated only at the full moon, a time that it is impossible for the sun to be eclipsed; for natural eclipses occur only at the time of the new moon.

Think too, of that remarkable phenomena which signalised Israel's victory

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over the Amorites in the days of Joshua, when the sun stood still and the moon stayed until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. No wonder that it is recorded, "that there was no day like that before or after it, that Yahweh hearkened unto the voice of a man; for Yahweh fought for Israel."

Do not let us raise the usual objection to this and quibble about it not being in harmony with modern science, for there is no justifiable reason. The event is narrated simply as it appeared to the natural eye; and should not we, with our twentieth century enlightenment, explain it similarly were the sun to remain vertical a whole day?

But, returning to the consideration of the sun as a figure, we will select the dream of Joseph for our first illustration (Gen. 37:9). The dream is familiar to all, and the truth embedded therein also becomes evident after a little reflection. The whole is predictive of Joseph's exaltation, his father being represented by the sun, his mother by the moon, and his brethren by the stars. This is the first intimation in the Bible of sun, moon and stars being used in a symbolic manner, but in studying prophecy we cannot fail to notice how frequently this is the order.

In this use of the sun, moon and stars, as representative of individuals differing in social positions, we have the sun representing the civil, and the moon the ecclesiastical authorities of the nations, while the stars represent the lesser dignitaries. Isaiah refers to Zion's consolation in these words, "Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw herself" (60:20).

He also foretold that the political orbs of the Gentile heavens should be confounded and ashamed when the Lord shall reign in Mount Zion (24); and in Rev. 12 the imperial splendour of Rome and her ecclesiastical system of popery are brought before us very graphically under the figure of a woman clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet, while upon her head are twelve stars.

Daniel speaks of a power that cast some of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them and the Lord Jesus reproduced these words of Daniel when answering the disciples' question, "When shall these things be?" saying, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven shall be shaken" (Mat. 24). These were the lights in which there were to be great signs and fearful lights. And, finally, all the Gentile luminaries will be extinguished in the great and notable day of the Lord. It is then that the children of God are to shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father, and like the moon — a royal priestly people — adorn the unclouded firmament that will not pass away.

The glory of the Roman orb and the sun-light of its imperialism was reflected from the idol superstitions, and the moon shining in that heaven

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reflected the imperial light, and although much of its brightness and glory has been eclipsed, still it emerged again from the darkness to shine with an unclouded lustre upon a new order of things such as the natural sun never before shone upon. But these heavens are destined to be rolled up as a scroll and pass away with a great noise, never to emerge from the blackness of darkness into which they will be plunged in divine wrath. Yet not so the new heavens, for they shall declare God's righteousness (Psa. 40:6), and when the Lord has punished the host of high ones in the present existing heavenlies, and the moon is effectually confounded and the sun ashamed (Isa. 24:21), and the terrible judgments of the seventh vial have been exhausted, then will be established the heavens in which there will be "glory to God in the highest," and the brightness of this abiding glory, radiating from Zion, will enlighten the whole earth. In these heavens the Sun of righteousness will be the orb of perpetual day, and the moon and constellations will reflect his splendour.

They will, indeed, declare the glory of God, and show forth the works of His hands. Their happiness and honour will be to show forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into His marvellous light (1Peter 2:9), so that as "children of light," "day unto day will utter speech, and night unto night will show knowledge. And there will be no speech and no words, where their voice will not be heard, for their line will go out in all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world. Among them God will set a tabernacle for the sun; and He, as a bridegroom coming out of His chamber, will be joyful as a mighty man to run his course." "His going forth," says the Psalmist, is "from the end of the heavens, and there is nothing hidden from the heat thereof" (v. 19).

Thus will be established "peace on earth and glory to God in the highest," which will continue unbroken and undisturbed throughout the ages.

I have enjoyed this discourse immensely, remarks a sister, and if we had no knowledge of God's strict command against idolatry to which you have referred, I think I could hardly wonder that ignorant people worshipped the heavenly bodies. It appears that all generations and castes have sought to approach God through some striking or powerful medium. Even in apostolic times the tendency was prevalent, so that Paul definitely had to declare to the earthly believers that "there is but one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus," which we shall do well to remember.

Chapter Four

SHADOWS AND REFLECTIONS

*I know that all Thy full designs are bright,
That darkest threads grow golden in Thy hand,
That bending lines grow straight — the tangled right —
The bitter drops all sweet at Thy command.*

WHEREVER there is the most intense light, there we find near it the blackest shadow. The highest mountains project around them the broadest shadows; the greatest truths have around them the greatest darkness. We often find that the higher we ascend, not the nearer are we to the height of all. God is still above all, and greater than all. In climbing a mountain we go up so far, and then think if we only reached a little higher we should be at the top; but when we reach it we find it was a mile or more from the summit. But we see a broader horizon; the higher we rise the wider the horizon. Yet however wide the horizon, the vast, illimitable space stretches beyond. As we pause for a moment to reflect upon the infinitude of God and the nothingness of man, let us be encouraged by the fact that He is not a God afar off, but near, so near to those who trust in Him. He that regulates the stars in their courses maintains the splendour of the sun, whose eye follows Arcturus and the Pleiades through the silvery paths of stars, beholds the humblest of His creatures with equal clearness, and follows them through all the vicissitudes of life, in all the heights and depths of their experiences, as well in the shadow as in the sunshine. From the sun's rays we receive both light and heat, and these have a fertilising influence upon earth's natural productions; and all are well acquainted with the brilliance of the light and the overpowering heat of his beams, for many have severely suffered from undue exposure to them.

As the sun's rays produce varying effects upon nature, so does the light and warmth of the Truth upon the heart and mind. When the sun shines on a midsummer day it softens, by its rays, a piece of wax and hardens a piece of clay. The same sunbeam thus produces an opposite effect; but the fault is not in the ray, but in the substance worked upon. That is the secret of the change that takes place. To some the glorious gospel of the kingdom is the savour of life unto life, while to others the savour of death; so like gleams of sunshine amid banks of clouds, the Truth is shed abroad, and the beams of this heavenly light

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bring joy and hope and gladness when it reaches those who will respond favourably — for it is God's vehicle of influence upon the hearts and minds of His creatures. The hardening of the heart is the result of resisting God's law. The process God uses is simply to withdraw the influences of His love, as the sunshine is withdrawn from the earth, and it becomes cold, hard and dry. If it were desired that the earth should be turned into a mass of ice, the ocean to become solid, the rivers to become hard and glittering as steel, God would not require to bring other orbs of solid ice to it in order to congeal it by contact, but simply withhold the sweet sunshine, and it would very soon be solid. God needs not to send a hardening influence into the heart, but only to withdraw what is being abused and trampled under foot, namely, the influences of His grace, and then the most fearful calamities may follow.

The sun shining in his strength, high up in the clear azure heavens, is a picture glorious beyond description. All nature seems to revel in it. It warms and cheers the whole creation, and beautifies the complete landscape; it paints the wayside flowers with varying hues and tints, and ripens the corn and growing fruits, for it is the free gift of God to all. Truly there is nothing in the world that is not the gift of God. The sunlight which gladdens our hearts, the air we breathe, the bread we eat, the fuel garnered deep down in earth's storehouses to warm us, the succession of seasons, the living streams that fertilise the fields, the golden harvests that crown the year with plenty; all the tints of loveliness and beauty in garden, dell and woodland, together with the blessing of social life, and the wellsprings of gladness in our family associations. Yet the greatest of all gifts which come from above (James) is the imperishable gift of life in Christ Jesus.

The crowning gift of God is the gift of His only begotten Son, the gift which consecrates and sanctifies all others. As the sun glorifies with his radiance the plainest landscape, and transforms the barren rock into a pyramid of gold, so are all earthly and material blessings glorified by this best gift. Oh, the preciousness of it! Even the very outer world of nature wears a new aspect when seen through eyes enlightened by the knowledge of the Truth, and all earthly trials and discipline have a new aspect. In thinking of this our minds must naturally revert to the words of the blessing prophetically pronounced upon the son of Israel's old age: "Blessed of Yahweh be his land... for the precious things brought forth by the sun, and the precious things of the growth of the moon... and for the precious things of the earth and the fulness thereof" (Deut. 33:13-16). That is, with fruits ripened by the influence both of the sun and the moon; or with the annual and monthly productions, with such as required a revolution of the sun (or nearly so) to bring them to maturity, and such as are brought forth almost every month.

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*Blest of the Lord was Joseph's land
With sacred treasure of the dew and deep;
Blest by the moon in Nature's hour of sleep,
And by the sun with autumn's golden heap,
To fill the Reaper's hand.*

It is blessed foretaste of what will obtain in the era of the new heavens which will declare the glory of God, when the effects of the beneficent rays of the Sun of Righteousness will be seen in the abundant ingathering of the choicest fruits of the earth. "Let all that love him (their deliverer) be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might" said the prophetess (Judges 5:31), using the sun as a figure of One who rides onward in victorious majesty, and Jesus, referring to these favoured ones, says they shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. When declaring his miraculous conversion before Agrippa, Paul said: "At midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me."

We know both the physical and spiritual results of this vision. The light of the midday sun in the east is intensely brilliant, but this light was far brighter. It was the *Shekinah* glory seen by Moses in the holy mount, and which caused his face to shine so that he had to cover it with a veil when communicating God's message to the people. The same glorious light was seen above the mercy seat in the holiest of all, in the tabernacle, and as a pillar of cloud and of fire it accompanied Israel in all their wilderness journeying. On the Mount of Transfiguration three disciples, in company with their Master, were immersed in the eternal Spirit's glory cloud, and they feared as they entered into its dazzling radiance. This was the marvellous light the apostle saw encircling the risen Lord Jesus, and it caused him, and they that journeyed with him, to fall to the earth. He told them previously, in making his defence before the Jews from the castle stairs, that he could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand into Damascus (Acts 22).

The glory of the ancient *Shekinah* will illuminate the new Jerusalem with no perishable splendour in the future, and this should impart hope, joy, and encouragement to each of us, so that we may cherish the bright prospect revealed in type and figure. For when the Lord shall arise, in all His majesty of light, love and joy, His glory cloud will rest above the magnificent edifice, the Ezekiel temple, the house of prayer for all nations. And the glory will irradiate its holy chambers, and being reflected from thence, as the sunbeams are reflected from the placid crystal lake, will be the evidence of the divine Presence, and the intensity of the splendour till the earth shines with the glory. There are some things the natural eye is not strong enough to see; as the sun shining in his strength, or the angels in their brilliance. At Elisha's request, his

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servant was permitted to have his eyes opened to behold the mountains full of horses and chariots of fire round about his master, and we, although not so favoured at present, may take comfort in the assurance that these glorious ones, all unseen to us, encamp around, delivering and protecting all who trust in the Lord. There are also some things too large for the human sight, as a full perception of the purpose of God and the glories of the future age, for "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him" (1Cor. 2:9).

Some things are too small, they can only be observed with the aid of powerful magnifying glasses, whilst other things are too bright or too dark. All these are arranged by our gracious and loving Father, who withholds or permits, according to the supremacy of His wisdom, and our capacity to receive. He deals with us very gently in His love, very mercifully in His omnipotence, granting us just that which He in His great wisdom sees and deems to be best for us, leading us steadily onward and upwards, until we, who now know only in part, shall know even as we are known. "Now we see through a mirror darkly, but then face to face" (1Cor. 13:12), says the apostle Paul. This figure is drawn from the ancient mirrors that were not made of glass, but of polished metal. Naturally, the reflection could not be as perfect as a looking glass, hence the force of the apostle's words. Such a mirror is also referred to in his second letter to the Corinthians, and in James. And what an inspiring example we have in Paul of the reality of the gospel and the power of Christ crucified. Think of his zeal for the Truth, and his determination not to know anything among Jews or Gentiles save Jesus Christ and him crucified. Truly his eyes were opened in a twofold sense, and being intensely alive to the glorious privileges and responsibilities into which he had entered in this all-prevailing Name, he went forth, strong in the Faith to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ, to open many blind eyes, and turn many from darkness to the glorious light.

"We have this treasure in earthen vessels," he told some of his converts, "that the glory might be of God, and not of men." But the treasure must be first deposited there, for light does not emanate from within; thus some received the knowledge of the Truth by direct revelation from God, as did Paul, whilst others receive it through the apostle's words or writing. Sinful flesh can impart no knowledge of the glory of God, for it contains none. The true light can only be reflected after the fashion of a mirror. When light falls on a mirror then it can reflect. The heart is simply a tablet. A polished tablet is enlightened by the Truth, and the Word is engraved upon it; but a rusty, tarnished tablet otherwise. And this change is the work of the Spirit of God in Christ, which places the subject of it in the position so beautifully described by Paul in 2Cor. 3:18 — "We all, with unveiled face reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord, are

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transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit" (RV). There are transcending heights of glory as well as unfathomable depths of love in the divine scheme of our salvation. Glory that eye hath not seen, far beyond the human conception, God has reserved as the everlasting inheritance of



His people, and He has given us first in types and shadows, and then through His beloved Son, glimpses of those eternal glories of the age when He will place His tabernacle with men, and dwell with them for ever.

Doubtless each of us has tasted somewhat of the glories of this age to come, however short our experience in the Truth, if it be only those first happy moments when we rose from the waters of baptism, our conscience bearing us witness that we had become a son or daughter of God.

In the world at the foot of the mountain there is always plenty of distress and tribulation, and we are duty bound to lend a helping hand whenever the opportunity presents itself. But has it not been our blessed privilege, sometimes by faith, to ascend the glory-canopied mount with Jesus, and there behold him radiant in Spirit-light seated prospectively in majesty upon the throne of his kingdom? And although we have reluctantly had to come down again and face the hard, cold world that cast out our Lord and Master, have we not renewed our strength and confirmed our confidence in the divine purpose? Let us, then, go on from glory to glory until we stand perfected by His grace in His holy presence, go on from strength to strength until we come, immortal and glorified, unto Zion's hill.

How often we have felt when the sun shines, and there is no cloud, and all is bright behind and fair before us, that if only it would last, and remain unchanged and undimmed by any shadow, we could serve God more acceptably. But when we have quietly reflected upon the consequences, we soon come to see that it would not be the very best state for us or the atmosphere most conducive to much fruit-bearing in our lives. We are apt to forget God in such seasons of brightness and tranquility; hence it is not well for human nature to be ever basking in the sunshine of prosperity and peace, for often it is only when we are

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deprived of earth's temporal benefits that we begin to realise that this is not our rest. We are too prone to choose some pleasant and sunny spot in life, and then express our desire to abide therein and take our ease, hoping the sunshine would never be shaded. But we are disappointed, for we soon find something unforeseen occurs and upsets completely the whole of our arrangements, and we have to learn that there is no good in this world that has not its accompanying shadow of uncertainty, trouble, or evil. God teaches us by the shadows that cross our path that at present we have no abiding rest, so being dissatisfied and disturbed by events often over which we have no control, we prepare for future happiness and peace in the kingdom of God.

Human nature is such a strange mixture of good and evil, of light and shade, selfishness and sacrifice. Conscience and convenience so actuate and influence the character in turn, that God alone is wise and loving enough to deal with it and control it with severity seasoned with mercy. All the lights and shades of human nature and the character are very remarkable. At one time it is lifted up and exultant, at another time depressed and feeble. This being so, we are led to look to God for help and strength, for guidance and sympathy. For it does not require the Spirit of God to teach us to say "Thy will be done," when all is going well and we are moving in the sunshine; yet through the brightest hours, as well as in life's shady places, in times of trial and adversity, as well as in prosperity, how much grace we need to keep us in the way of right!

None of us can endure perpetual sunshine; it is too bright. We need both shadows and clouds in order to keep us where we should be — humble at the footstool of our Maker. And let us remember that the most splendid victories are set in the shadows of bitterest grief, and that noisy glamour not joyous peals drown the humble contritions and earnest pleadings of a sincere heart. Be thankful then, that we are not permitted to be always in the sunshine. God knows it is too powerful for us to endure at present. We seek the shade sometimes. Becoming prosperous in all things, temporal or spiritual, our energies would falter, and we should not be alert and watchful. So do not let the shadows frighten us. The race is not always to the swift, nor victory to the strong. And depend upon it, wherever in this world there is a shadow, there must be sunshine; and even if we are carried into the deepest valley, yea, the very valley of the shadow of death, even there the beams of the Sun of Righteousness are pouring upon it, and everything that seems to be darkest and worst in feature is the evidence really of the overruling power of the divine light.

Beneath the shadow of the cross of Jesus we learn the mystery of suffering, and may reflect upon the purpose of God concerning the redemption that is in Him. "It became Him," says Paul, declaring that it was fitting for God "for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to

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glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering” (Heb. 2:10). For, “though he was a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things, which he suffered; and being made perfect (through the suffering), he became the author of eternal salvation unto them that obey him” (ch. 5:8-9). And, for this specific reason, it pleased the Father to bruise him, and make him an offering for sin, or a sin offering. Yet, says the prophet, “He shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied... he shall prolong his days...” and justify many, as certainly as light excels shade, life triumphs over death, and honour comes after humility.

How marvellous are the works of the Lord in every detail, so freely distributed, and yet so frequently disregarded. Our very checkered experiences, are the evidences that God has not forsaken His people or left the earth just to run out its course as a watch. God gives an impulse fresh every moment to the rotation of this orb; every spring He brings out of the chaos and death of winter a new and more beautiful creation. We breathe the air quite naturally; and who pauses to consider, that without it we should be in a state of silence? If it differed much from what it is then we never should have been able to converse. All language, all communication of thought by speech, could never have existed. And what should we be without this wonderful power of speech?

One of the most useful properties of the air is to convey sound. Sound is a vibration, something like waves, carried along from one part of the air to another. What pleasure is derived from sweet, harmonious sounds? The voice of a friend, the melody of the birds, or the music of the rippling waters — how they delight the ear and bring gladness to the heart. But better still, the sound of the gospel of the grace of God as it reaches us, joyously ringing forth from God’s sounders of the Truth. The air also has an influence on the sense of sight, for if the air were taken away the eyeballs would cease to be. And think of the blessing of sight, of which some are unfortunately deprived. The understanding can more easily be reached through the eye, or through the mind’s acquaintance with the common objects of sight, and we observe how largely God draws upon His own works in nature in the illustration of His Word, as well as upon art and the world of human-life. It is by the action of the atmosphere only that the change from day to night comes on so gradually and so imperceptibly. Had we little or no atmosphere, the rising of the sun would cause a sudden change from utter darkness to the brightest noonday light, and at his setting again, we should be instantly plunged into darkness. Observe too, with how much beauty this beneficent change is accompanied. All the glowing colours which decorate the heavens at the rising and setting of the sun, the brilliant hues in which the clouds are enveloped, are all due to the atmosphere.

Colours that are most gratifying to the eye are those we are most accustomed

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to in nature, as the azure blue of the sky, or the soft green of the fields. The light is a gift from God, but the local colour can only be seen by one who looks for it long and steadily. All colours are lost in the soft blackness of a still, dark night, for in the darkness all colours are alike — and if we put out the light of the Truth, all knowledge of goodness and purity is lost. Extinguish this heavenly light, and the darkness it would leave behind would be intolerable; take away this sun, and all nature would be plunged into ceaseless night.

Referring back to the type and pattern of the divine substance, it may be well for us to observe that the laver, being made of the brass, which the women had previously used for mirrors, sets forth an important truth. In Exod. 38 it is recorded: “And he (Moses) made a laver of brass, and the foot of it brass, of the looking-glasses of the women assembling (by troops — marg.), which assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation (v. 8; 35:22). We are ever prone to be like “a man beholding his natural face in a glass (or mirror), for he beholdeth himself, and goeth away, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was” (James 1:23-24). Nature’s looking-glass can never furnish us with a clear and permanent view of our true condition. “But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed” (v. 25).

Those who have constant recourse to the Word of God, and who allow that Word to tell upon the heart and conscience, will be maintained in the holy activities of the spiritual life. The services connected with the laver teach us that there must be purification if communion with the Lord be desired, and a knowledge of the divine will and purpose revealed (1John 1:6; John 17:17). May we have that grace which will enable us to cleanse our way by taking heed to the Word (Psa. 119) so that we may know what it is to have the light of God’s countenance shining upon us and into our hearts. But do we thoroughly appreciate the height and depth of the preciousness of the glorious Word? The love and goodness of God are therein so wonderfully exhibited that it should be the supreme power of attraction in our lives. “Draw me; we will run after thee,” says the spiritual bride in Song of Solomon 1:4; and this should be the expression of each heart as we reflect upon the divine Word.



Chapter Five

THE NIGHT AND THE DAY

*The rolling sun, the changing light,
The nights and days Thy power confess;
But the blest volume Thou didst write
Reveals Thy justice and Thy grace.*

THE light of the Truth should draw us nearer and nearer to the great central Source of Light, for there must be that same productive influence at work in spiritual things as we observe in the natural. We must grow if we walk in the light of the Word, and daily be found reaching up to greater heights of virtue and joys unspeakable. The needle's point in the mariner's compass never stands still, but quivers and shakes till it comes right against the North Pole. The wise men of the East never rested till they were right against the star which appeared unto them, and the star itself never stood still till it came; and stood over the spot that marked the birthplace of the Star destined to shine more brightly than the sun in the firmament.

This heavenly Light not only reveals the benign attributes of God to us, but is the faithful mirror which alone reflects the moral face of mankind; revealing man as he was in Eden, as he is at present, and also, thanks to God, what he may be ultimately by the grace of God, when his mental disposition has been renewed, and becomes a mirror to discern and reflect the knowledge of the glory of God (Eph. 4:23).

In the scriptures, human nature everywhere, and in every age, and every clime, is reflected as in a mirror. It is a reflection of man, not as his poor erring companions would make him — an atom of the divine; an undying angelic being — but the reflection and portrait of him as sin has left him, as grace is developing him, and as he finally shall be, when the work of grace is finished in the age of glory and perfection yet future.

The Bible does not give an unreal portrait of human nature. Half a face is often a caricature, as half a truth is often a lie; but the full portrait reveals the truth concerning the past, present and future — human nature exceedingly sinful; and then hereafter, when all the dross has been severed from it, the pure gold, reflecting the bright image of Him that purified it. The very faithfulness and fulness with which the sacred writings reflect the characters they were inspired to reveal are proofs of their inspiration. We must not complain that the

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Bible reflects what is indeed true. God accomplishes His purpose in strange ways and sometimes inexplicable.

In the historical books of the Bible we learn much of human nature, in all the lights and shadows of this transitory life. The whole history of God's people is not that of life in strange circumstances, but human life in all its varying lights and shades, just as it is, so that we may take warning or encouragement as needs be.

What is it that affects the mountains so as to bathe them in the most exquisite and beautiful colouring? Is it not the mists and clouds that overshadow them? I have seen a mountain as red as a rose; and I have seen one as black and velvety as a pansy. Sometimes they are veiled in silver, with the soft feet of the flying rain upon them; and sometimes that same rain will be as a mantle of silver or as the rainbow, showing the very shadows to be an additional beauty. And so it is in human life. Sin casts a dark shadow over all human efforts and experiences, but all is softened and mellowed in the bright hope of forgiveness reflected from the eternal throne through Jesus Christ our Mediator.

Recently the whole world has been under the dark shadow of war and crime, and there are many shades of opinion as to the ultimate results of it all; for even upon the very brute creation there hangs the lingering shadow of their ancient subjection, and they suffer in consequence of the brutal character of those to whom they are often subjected. But the light of Truth reveals the peaceful mountain of the Lord's house to be established in the top of the mountains, and all nations flowing unto it, and with the eye of faith we behold Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory, and ruling in righteousness.

The eye is the symbol of intelligence, for "the light of the body is the eye," said Jesus. The word "eye" in the Hebrew also means "fountain," because tears are welled up from the eye, as water from a fountain or spring. Sight helps the mind to grasp certain facts, and to retain them in the memory. The significance of the transfiguration was deeply impressed upon the minds of the three disciples of Jesus in this manner; for Peter, when alluding to it in his epistle, says "we were eye-witnesses of his majesty." On the mount of transfiguration both the raiment and the countenance of Jesus were changed.

White being the emblem of perfect purity and righteousness, it is frequently mentioned in connection with the characteristics of Christ, and his saints when glorified. Some colours awaken cheerfulness, hope and joy; they are symbols of brightness and immortality, as amber — burning, glowing radiant; some invite to repose and quietness, as blue — cleansing and healing; and emerald green — freshness and restfulness; whilst others excite within us ideas of grandeur and royal splendour — as gold. The beauty of colours diminishes in proportion as

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they are more or less affected by shade; their greatest lustre being in their principal lights; but, as that light will appear the brightest which is surrounded by the greatest quantity of shade, so that colour in like manner will possess superior lustre which is contrasted with shadows of the greatest depths. The great central light of the new heavens will be Jesus Christ our Lord. All other lights will be more or less shaded on account of the excellent glory, and the rulers of that age will be distinguished by varying degrees of brilliance. If we think of our own common experience in life, do we not realise that the dark shadows of indifference and self-indulgence in some only serve to make the nobler virtues in others more prominent. Even the darkest shadows that cross life's pathway are wisely intended to produce a similar and beneficent effect upon the characters of those whom God has called to be "lights in the world," so that we may fully endorse the words of the writer of that beautiful hymn we sometimes sing:

*I thank Thee Lord, that all my joy is touched with pain;
That shadows fall on brightest hours, that thorns remain;
That present bliss may be my guide, and not my chain.*

Colours are given to various objects by the absorption or reflection of certain rays. A red object is red because it absorbs into itself the rest of the primary colours and reflects the red. Another object is violet, because it reflects only the violet rays. A black object is black because it absorbs all the colours; while a white object reflects all the colours. So let us endeavour to live in the pure atmosphere of the Word, reflecting all the virtues and grace of the Holy Spirit; being influenced by the True Light. While not all glowing with the same hue, or representing the Truth in precisely the same colouring, we shall find how naturally and beautifully all unite in making one perfect whole, as the rainbow which embraces all the colours, and is blended into one glorious arch.

Whenever we see the bow in the cloud on a rainy day our minds naturally go back to the days of Noah, and we recall the history of the flood, and the promise made to this "preacher of righteousness." But do not miss the lessons it is or was intended to impart, for just as the rainbow that spanned Ararat was to Noah the irresistible proof that no flood should again overflow the earth, so all the promises of the Bible, both Israel's restoration and the gathering together of the saints, like the sunbeams refracted and reflected by the shower drops, are the pledges that when these are fulfilled God will no more scatter or forsake His inheritance (Isaiah 54:2). There can be no bow except there is rain, and therefore the bow in the cloud should not only remind us of the promise made but we should behold in it the beautiful symbol of the Day of Christ, when God's covenant of the hidden period or the millennium shall be fulfilled.

In nature the rainbow is evolved by the action of showery vapour upon the

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sun's rays, which in passing through the aqueous globules are refracted, and form an arch upon that part of the cloud opposite to the sun, glowing with all the colours of the prismatic or solar spectrum. The rainbow is never seen except when the sun is shining, and when rain is falling between the observer and that part of the horizon where the bow is seen. We must not lose sight of these facts in considering the rainbow as a symbol; for as sun, light, rain and cloud are elements necessary to the production of the natural bow, the same spiritual elements are essential to the manifestation of those who will encircle the throne of Christ in glory.

Ezekiel's vision of the rainbow encircled throne, with all its brightness and dazzling glory, prefigures this most blessed day. It is termed a "Day of Rain," for there can be no bow without such a day. The phrase implies the existence of a "dry day" or time; and this is certainly the character of the time in which we are living as well as of all time in which God's people are dispersed and downtrodden. As in nature, so is it in grace; everything at present is dry and parched, and we look and prayerfully await the Day of Rain, when "he (the Christ), shall come down as showers upon the mown grass," and both satisfy and fertilise the earth (Isaiah 57).

John informs us that the rainbow encircling the throne was like unto an emerald (ch. 4); but so long as the Sun of Righteousness is absent the Bow cannot be seen; neither can the light irradiating from Him be reflected to the world, for he is the Light of Life, and the glory and power thereof. This Bow is the symbol of the brightest and clearest sunshine following upon the lightning, thunders and voices, representing the great judgments from the throne; for this glorious "Ruler of the Day" will arise and shine forth upon the tender grass, and the effect will be that the knowledge of the glory of the Lord will be diffused to the ends of the earth. The whole symbol is that of glory and blessedness, and being compared to an emerald, the colour of fresh, springing grass, is the beautiful type of the life-imparting and fertilising influences of the rain.

All the glittering lights in the high priestly breast-plate displayed the colours of the rainbow; as will all the precious stones of the foundation of the Holy City, which, blended, become one pure white, radiant light.

In all these beautiful symbolisms the rainbow arches over all the Spirit-filled host, represented by the pillar of cloud between the cherubim, reflecting the light of the divine countenance. It is a most fitting emblem that above all this grandeur there should be the token of the covenant; for it centralises the whole of God's plan of salvation. The sun to shine, the drops of water to reflect, and the red, yellow and blue of the rainbow, indicating the three stages in the perfecting of man. The red as representing his sinful nature, the yellow — his trial of faith, and the blue — cleansing from all unrighteousness.

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There is a very deep significance in the scriptural use of colours. The various coverings and curtains pertaining to the tabernacle; the holy garments worn by the High Priest; the elements used in connection with the sacrifices; and the temple services, were all made with the greatest skill and precision, according to the prescribed pattern. All find their antitype in Christ and his brethren, the fine twined linen representing purity and righteousness; blue — first cleansing, then healing; purple — the flesh of human nature; and scarlet — the sin thereof. All these were worked into the Christ Life like a beautiful pattern, with the gold, the symbol of tried and precious faith.

As the union of all the colours makes white, so the blending of all life's joys and ills, its lights and shades, its discipline and correction, will finally produce that perfection of character well pleasing in the sight of God; and at length we shall discern that during the days of our probation all things were working together for our ultimate good, so that we might be presented to the Eternal Father without spot or blemish in Christ the righteous One.

The whiteness of the sun's light is emblematic of that which is pre-eminently the attribute of Christ, and it is testified, "he shall bring forth Thy righteousness as the light" and then shall all who have washed their robes and made them white in the all-atoning blood of the Lamb participate in the beautiful whiteness of immortality and life, in fulfilment of the Redeemer's promise: "They shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy."

Then again the atmosphere is the agent by whose means we receive not only light but heat. Both consist in the communication of motion from the sun; certain vibrations produce light, while others produce heat. But all the bodies do not allow heat and light rays to pass through them. Had the earth been surrounded by glass, for instance, instead of air, we should have received all the light that proceeds from the sun, but none of its heat. Hence, when the Sun of Righteousness arises, he will not shine forth in stern, austere lustre, but with healing in his beams (Mal. 4:2). The air also reflects light in all directions, for it is transparent like glass; yet it allows radiant heat to pass freely. Besides the dry air there is a quantity of vapour of water in the atmosphere, which is invisible except when detected in dew or ice. It is this vapour which forms clouds, tempering the extreme heat and dazzling light of the sun's direct rays. What is the truth concealed under this figure? God tempers all His judgments with mercy. He not only shows us the power of His hand, but the love of His heart, and draws us near unto Himself in Jesus, the Son of His love, and we are attracted by the warmth and influence of this beautiful light. He allows us to behold the majesty of His might softened in the love of Jesus, and although we know that God is Great, we also realise that He is Love. The sunshine that fills the eye and gives joy to the heart, when it is guarded against injury, with all that

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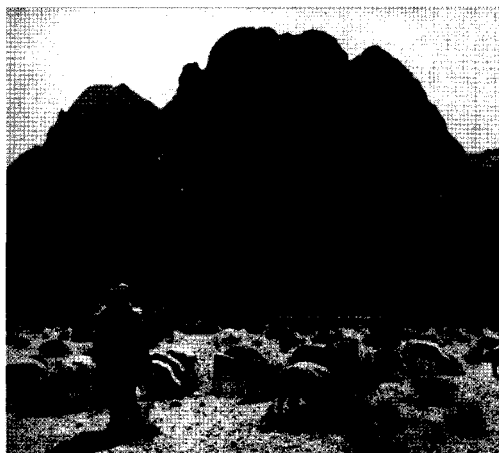
is fair and beautiful, would, in an unwatchful moment, fall upon the eye with such power as to utterly destroy it. All sight cannot endure the same degree of heat or light; what is good for one may be fatal to another, and there is no power that has within it a great blessing that has not the accompanying possibility of a very great trouble. The lesson is obvious that we must use thankfully and intelligently the gifts of God and the grace at our disposal for faithful service.

The ark was a blessing at the Jordan, but the cause of trouble in the house of Dagon; the cloud that was dark to Pharaoh was bright and glorious to Israel. Christ, who is a stumbling-block to the Jews, becomes precious to the enlightened Gentile; and the same Word which is a light to the believer's path condemns the disobedient or self-righteous sinner.

To the one it is the atmosphere of all-embracing love, to the other consuming fire. There are showers of grace that sparkle with all the lights of glory, falling upon those who wait upon Yahweh, while streams of bitterness and anguish descend upon those that reject Him and despise His Word.

As there is no human being that can endure the full power of the sun, so none can see the face of the Eternal Father and live. This fact is exemplified in a

unique incident in the life of the ancient lawgiver, Moses. Try and grasp the situation and picture the scene. Moses, the meek man, standing in the presence of the glorious Name-Bearer, speaking face to face as no other mortal had ever done. This was not the Eternal Creator Himself, but His representative to man, for He dwells in light unapproachable. What had already been revealed to God's servant of the future glory had filled him with hope and



inspired him with confidence and a desire to know more of the divine purpose. And being thus encouraged he is emboldened to make a further request. He knew from what had been shown to him that a Great One was to come, and so he pleads, "If I have found grace in Thy sight, show me now Thy ways" (Ex. 33:13). Show me the pattern of the things to come; let me see more of the glorious plan. And the Lord said, "There is a place by Me, and thou shalt stand upon the rock. And... while My glory passeth by... I will... cover thee with Mine hand... My face shall not be seen." And what was he permitted to see? The

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shadow of Christ who is the perfection of the Father's glory. If he had seen His face, he would have seen all God's purpose plainly, which not being His intention for man at that time, Moses' eyes were holden.

"The law was the shadow of good things to come," says the apostle (Heb. 10:1). A shadow is a plane projection in darkened outline of the form and relative proportions of a body placed in front of the light. Such was the relation of the Mosaic law to Christ. Every shadow is produced by light and substance. There must be a body from which the shadow springs and derives its form, and there must be light shining on the body to cause the shadow. Now, where do we find the body or substance in relation to the divine? In Col. 2:17, Paul supplies the answer, "The body is of Christ." The law made nothing perfect. In all its minute details it was but a foreshadowing of heavenly things. It was a pattern, and system of figurative righteousness which represented a system of real righteousness. Again, in Eph. 1:23, we read, "Christ is the head over all things to the ecclesia, which is his body." He is the "head," the "body," and the fulness represented by the Urim and the Thummim on the high priest's breast-plate. And where is the light shining on this body of Christ? Paul tells us in 2Cor. 4:6. The light being in the face of Jesus Christ, he must therefore be looking for the joy set before him, so that his face was illuminated by the glory of God into which he looked. He must therefore be looking to it, having the shadow behind him (Heb. 12:2). That which was behind him was the form of knowledge and of the Truth, which form led the mind up to the focal point where the light and the shadow meet.

The Lord Jesus was then standing with his face to the day of his glory, looking forward to the multitudinous manifestation of the sons of God in glory. The effulgence of God's face was not to be seen but by the Son, and afterward by those to whom the Son revealed Him. Such, then, is the Body, and God is the Light; He is also the beginning and the end — the All in all; the shadow and the substance are His; and when we reflect on these things we should see Him in all. Oh, the unfathomable wisdom of God! The unsearchable riches of Christ! What joys await the multitude of the redeemed of all ages, kindreds, nations and tongues, when the kingdom and throne covenanted to David's greater Son is established, when immortal and glorified, and clothed in Spirit-Light, in all its beautiful sevenfold unity, in all its transparent, radiant whiteness, they encircle the glorified Redeemer and reflect his glory over all the earth.

May we be found worthy to share in this better life, when there will no more shadows; the life which in itself will be one bright and beautiful memorial of mercies without number and blessings without end.



Chapter Six

THE MOON AND STARS

*Sun, moon and stars, Thy love attest
In every golden ray,
Love draws the curtain of the night,
And love brings back the day.*

WE have already considered one of God's wonderful methods of restraining His full power and glory in the past. Now we will take one instance, prophetic of the withholding, as well as the gradation of the unfolding thereof, in the future.

The divine Word reveals glories upon glories reserved for the saints in Christ in the Ages to come, of which "the separate place" in the Ezekiel Temple may be typical (ch. 41:12), as no doors are mentioned, and nothing more is said about it. The closing chapters of the Revelation portray the glory of the millennium — the seventh thousand years — and although unspeakably glorious, the glory of the eternal beyond will far excel even this; for, as Paul informs us in 1Cor. 15, "when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto Him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all," and this is the grand climax of the work of redemption.

Verse five in the fourteenth chapter of Zechariah, reads: "Yahweh my God shall come and all the saints with thee, and it shall be in that day there shall be no brightness, the splendid drawing in. And it shall be one day that shall be known by Yahweh, not day nor night, but it shall be in time of evening, there shall be brightness." This proper rendering of this passage given by Dr. Thomas is much more impressive than the Authorised Version, and shows that, after the execution of the judgments written (Psa. 149:9), the saints will shine as the sun, but they will not manifest all their brightness, although immortal and deathless, until the great work of cleansing and purifying the polluted atmosphere, in which the Gentile luminaries exist, is accomplished. Then their brilliance will shine forth.

The word "saints" in the Hebrew is *yekaroth*, and means "splendid, shining or glorious ones." It is explained to be the same word used for gems, precious stones or stars. Thus the verse in Zechariah should read "Yahweh my Elohim and the splendid ones coming in," or "He who shall be my mighty ones, or righteous governors, shall come in, all the saints with Thee, And... there shall be no brightness, the splendid ones drawing in... it shall be one day known to the

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Lord. At evening there shall be light," or brightness.

Eventide is the time in which the work of judgment is accomplished; the eventide that precedes the glorious day of peace and sabbath rest. This immortal splendour constitutes the saints, "the Urim" or "lights" — the gems or precious stones through which the brightness of the Spirit enlightens the nations when the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day there shall be one Lord and His name one (v. 9).

This is the "Holy One" referred to in Deut. 33:8-9. All the glittering brilliance as well as the perfection of beauty and holiness are centred in "the man Christ Jesus" who regarded not the inclinations of the flesh, but was "obedient unto death, even the death on the cross."

As yet there has stood up no such personage to meet the divine requirements (Ezra 2:63). The subject of all this grandeur is seated on the right hand of the Majesty on high; when he comes at the Father's behest, to enter into his possessions, all the brightness of the kingly glory as well as all the high priestly honours will be conferred upon him. "And we shall be like him" (1John 3:2), if found worthy, for "we shall see him as he is."

But there is yet another lesson of practical importance to be learned from the study of the spacious firmament above us. The sun is the greatest of all the lights, the most glorious and useful of all the lamps of the heavens. Not only a noble instance of the Creator's wisdom, power and goodness, but of invaluable blessedness to all creation. As a symbol, representing God as the "Light of lights," the Source of all beneficent power and strength, and Christ, as the ruler of the millennial Day, both glorious and powerful, dispensing light, health, happiness and joy all over the earth.

The moon is a lesser light, and yet is reckoned one of the great lights, because, though in regard of its magnitude and borrowed light it is inferior to many of the stars, yet by virtue of its office as ruler of the night, and in respect of its usefulness to the earth, it is more excellent than they. Let us recollect that those are most valuable who are the most serviceable, and those are the greatest lights who not necessarily possess the best gifts, but who humbly and faithfully do the most good with what they have.

If we cannot be the light that illuminates the wide world by its splendour, we may be the salt, that quiet, unseen, and unfelt condition that keeps it from corruption. If we cannot shine on a lofty hill, we need not put our light under a bushel. A kind word, a sympathising look, is just the beautiful expression in our lives of our thankfulness to God.

The useful, not the great — the thing that never dies.

The silent toil that is not lost — set these before thine eyes.

There will be love and gratitude within the heart that recognises God in

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every nook and turning of its daily history, prompting both hands and feet to perform many lowly deeds of loving service. There will be expressions in sacrifices and liberality, that speak more eloquently than words, and appear more beautiful than the noblest creation of the chisel — the eloquence of a quiet, holy, consistent, loving life.

It has already been remarked that the moon represents the ecclesiastical authorities in association with the political sun of both Jewish and Gentile heavens. But there is a still higher significance attached to the moon as a symbol, and this beautiful figure is not strained or forced in any way, but taken quite naturally by the Spirit as representing the Bride of Christ — the ecclesia. The light of the moon being borrowed, she reflects only the light of the sun; so the ecclesia likewise has no glory of her own, she shines in the reflected light of Christ her lord, who is the Sun of Righteousness. Both are referred to in the Song of Solomon (ch. 6:10).

At present they are as represented in the early part of the first chapter of Genesis, prior to the fourth day; and although both are obscured from the natural gaze, yet both exist; and the very fact of their existence has a beneficent effect upon the earth. For, think of the influence of the Name of Jesus, and the seasonable effects of the Truth. Both are awaiting the time divinely appointed to arise and be manifested in unparalleled glory to the world, as on the fourth day of creation, the heavenly bodies were “positioned” for the work designed for them by the Creator.

The Psalmist testifies: “He appointeth the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down” and it is nearly two thousand years since the Sun of Righteousness forsook the horizon of the Jewish world. But it is also recorded in Psalm 74, “The day is Thine; the night also is Thine. Thou preparest for the light and the sun.” Night time has a place in the purpose of God. By the darkness we are led to appreciate the light, and look forward to the dawn of day. During the dark night of sorrow we look and watch for that glorious Day of promise, which we may see, by the signs around us, is more and more clearly looming into view.

Our present dispensation is the night season, but this very night season foreshadows the dispensation of light and glory; it betokens the coming of morn — it ushers in the bright and cloudless millennium. Ah, well may we enquire: “What of the night? Watchman, what hour of the night is it?” Is it the second, third, or the fourth watch, when the first struggling beams of the rising sun begin to appear? The watchman replies: “The morning cometh.” There will be day, but also the night cometh, for the darkness will get darker before that morning dawns. And if you would enquire into the future for your own satisfaction, enquire at the oracle that never fails to answer any difficulty (Isa. 8:20).

As in nature so in the spiritual, it is while the sun is invisible to human sight

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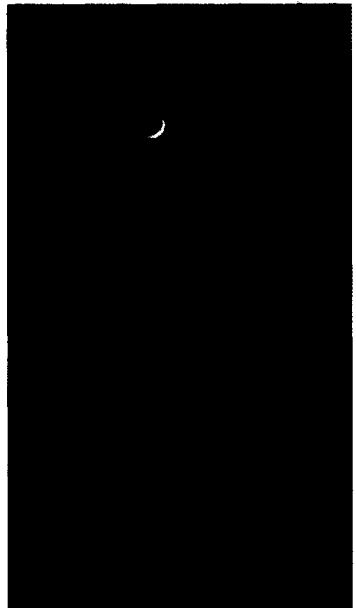
that the moon lights up the darkness, for God has appointed her the lesser light to rule the night.

How beautiful is the sky on a clear moonlight night! No artist can get the sweet shades exactly perfect; their beauty is overpowering. When we look upwards and behold the fair canopy of heaven, we feel that God never created anything more lovely — it is perfect. What a glorious sight is the moon shining on the deep, dark waters of the ocean; but how infinitely more beautiful is the light of the Truth shedding its silvery beams over the darker sea of nations, and dispelling the dense gloom. The light of the moon is not powerful like the sun, yet her clear, steady light has guided many a storm-tossed mariner to the desired haven. In this sense the ecclesia may be said to rule the night. All will agree that the constituents of Christ's mystical Bride, as each severally rays forth the light of the Truth, and collectively upholds the same, have not only a privileged but a dignified position in the world.

The knowledge of the Truth elevates, while it does not puff up with pride. Hence the Bride of Christ rules by love, by gentle and effective persuasiveness. She invites with true womanly tenderness, but does not command or compel; and it is the noblest and most sincere, yet the humblest of earth's sons and daughters that are attracted by her light. Her absent Lord, whom she beholds by faith, dwelling in the Light unapproachable, whose glorious rays, all unseen through the mists of Gentile superstitions and ignorance, streaming down upon her, is the cause of her steady shining throughout this dark night of sin and sorrow.

For the most part men have eyes that see not the reflective glory of the moon; they perceive not the beauty of the Truth, their eyes being steadily fixed on the mammon of unrighteousness, present aggrandisement, and the popularity which proceeds from friendly association with this present arrangement of affairs. They are content to grovel among the dust, mire and dirt of the world, in the vain anticipation of some day becoming both wealthy and happy. They have therefore no desire, no time to look upon, and no inclination to observe intelligently God's own appointed light shining in the ever increasing darkness of Gentile night.

Some have given an occasional glance, but



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directly some cloud of difficulty obscures their vision, they have contemptuously turned away to go along still groping in the dark. A few indeed have availed themselves of the blessings of her beneficent shining, and become constituents of this Bride, and are themselves endeavouring to dispel the surrounding darkness. Well then may the ecclesia — the Bride of Christ — be compared to the moon. Her influence is enduring and effective, although there is no display of burning, fiery brilliance — but rather subdued calmness, that purity and tranquility, which is consistent, and in harmony with the Spirit's teaching that "the servant of Yahweh must not strive, but be gentle unto all," and so "her lamp goeth not out by night" (Pro. 31:18). And when the morning dawns and the heavenly Bridegroom comes out of his chamber, rejoicing as a strong man to run his course; then her full glory will be disclosed.

The Light of Truth departs from those lands, communities and individuals who abuse or misuse it. As the ark (1Sam. 4), it may change its locality, for it is movable; but, as in the case of the seven ecclesias of Asia Minor, it will triumph in the end, and finally fill all the earth. The true ecclesia, like the moon, may be eclipsed, but it is only for a little while: like the moon, she will emerge from the eclipse more beautiful than when she came under its shadow. In the days of the apostles she shone out with clear, silvery brightness, marking a new era in the history of God's chosen people.

Since then her light has been more or less obscured by mists of indifference, and now, having nearly fulfilled her appointed times, the night grows darker, even approaching unto blackness — for the darkest hour is that preceding the dawn. The number of the elect almost made up, the last touch of light will soon be added that completes her fulness. And, as her Sun arises to set no more, she likewise will retain her reflective effulgence, and no more wane or be obscured.

In the Holy City "there will be no night," as if to intimate that a moral splendour will irradiate it in the future, so rich and so perfect that neither the noonday light nor the moon's silvery beauty will be needed; and that both at length will be lost and merged in the glory of God, just as the stars are lost in the brightness of the sun's rising.

In narrating the order of the lights appointed for the adornment of the natural firmament, the inspired historian mentions the stars in such a separate and distinct manner that fully justifies a separate consideration of them. "He made the stars also" recorded Moses in Gen. 1, and the apostle Paul says in 1Cor. 15, "There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory." And then he makes a comparison. "So also is the resurrection of the dead."

This illustrates the glory of the risen Saints. And what a blessed and joyous faith is ours if we can see the light of the Resurrection Morn reflected in the

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glory of the moon, and the glory of the stars — in each returning day, and each fresh opening spring. Joyous because of the fact that he who holds the keys of death and the grave is the “Resurrection and the Life,” with whom we have entered into Covenant relationship, so that whether we sleep or wake we are his. These orbs are each regarded distinctively for a specific reason. If we compare the heavenly aspect on a bright starry night with that in which the moon is visible we shall feel amply satisfied that there is another glory of the stars.

It is recorded in Gen. 15 that the Lord brought Abraham forth abroad, and said, “Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and He said unto him, “So shall thy seed be.” If we were introduced for the first time on a frosty night to a starry sky, and we were never to see it again, no doubt the splendour of such a magnificent sight would never be forgotten. There could be indeed nothing more beautiful or grand or suitable to set forth, in more prominent and brilliant colours, the greatness and majesty of God than the starry sky, when those sentinel stars which we behold, and which are but as outstanding lights in the vast multitudes that fill infinite space, and that appear, to give us an idea of the yet greater, brighter and more multitudinous host that now lie asleep waiting for the trumpet voice to call them forth to shine as the stars in the Father’s kingdom.

Abraham was commanded to gaze upon such a magnificent sky, and he would learn that his descendants in faith and obedience would not only be numerous but glorious also. Perhaps the stars are nearest in approach to the infinite in number, because we cannot perceive any space where there are not some of them; and this promise to Abraham can only be fulfilled in the words of the apostle: “I saw a multitude which no man could number” like the stars in the firmament (Rev. 14).

The separate glory of the stars is that they differ one from another. There is always an additional splendour in variety, and this diversity becomes a symbol of the order and degrees of divine Rulership in the kingdom of God. They that turn many to righteousness will shine as the stars for ever and ever, for the millennium and the beyond. The stars are a symbol of peerless lustre and exaltation to the power and glory that awaits the faithful, unwearied labourer in the service of the Truth in the future Age.

It is quite usual to speak of a distinguished personage as a star, and both the sacred writings and profane history fully endorse the statement. In the Scriptures the title “Sons of God” is conferred upon certain of Adam’s race under specified conditions, and these place them in the same order of intelligences as the angels. All such are termed “morning stars.” That is, Sons of the Dawn or Sons of God.

In the Book of Symbols we read of a woman who had the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown, or wreath, of twelve stars. These are explained

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to be the twelve imperial supreme pontiffs of the Roman Heaven — the twelve emperors, who ruled with undivided authority, assuming the surname of Caesar. They were the most conspicuous stars of the Roman Firmament — stars which excelled all others in the glory of their position, for there were none brighter in the political astronomy of the State. In the millennial heavens there will be One Star more prominent than all others — “The Bright and Morning Star.” The Star which the Spirit compelled Balaam to predict would “come out of Jacob” (Num. 24:17). The mighty conqueror and divine ruler among many distinguished ones, destined to smite the princes of Moab and destroy all the children of Sheth.

But in the material firmament there are not only fixed and prominent stars outshining their fair companions, but falling and shooting stars, and these are also used as symbols in the Book of Books. The Bright Star of the East — the Star of Bethlehem — guided the wise men to the humble birthplace of the Saviour. The very expression, “his star,” shows that it was no ordinary star. The natural interpretation of the text clearly implies a supernatural appearance of a meteoric character. One commentator explained: “Some singular movements of the planets are stated to have occurred about the time of the Saviour’s birth, caused by the conjunction of the planets Jupiter, Saturn and Mars. When the same conjunction occurred in the year 1603-4, it was accompanied by the appearance of a very large and brilliant star, which, after shining for a whole year, gradually disappeared. It may have been some such strange appearance in the heavens that attracted the eyes of the wise men; but as the narrative implies, a visible movement of the star, its appearance, disappearance, and re-appearance, cannot be explained by a reference to the conjunction of the planets, but was of an altogether supernatural character.

Occasionally in the natural heavens we witness a grand display of shooting stars. We may have watched with silent awe their meteoric motions. These have no steady light like the fixed stars, but they shoot forth out of the starry sphere and change their positions or fall into oblivion. Hence they are made to represent the erratic and transitory character of the lights in the political firmament as proved from historical facts; and Jude uses them as a figure of inconsistent professors, styling them “wandering stars.” Isaiah referred to the princes of Aaron and David’s houses as stars (ch. 14), over which the king of Babylon and his dignitaries sought to exalt themselves, and in Rev. 8, a destructive power is represented under the figure of a great star in heaven, burning as it were a lamp.

In *Eureka*, vol. 3, Dr. Thomas explains the symbol: “A star sometimes signifies a destroying power. The word is also put for that which is inconsistent, or meteoric in its motions. Hence in Jude such stars are styled ‘wandering’ or ‘shooting stars.’ In symbolic style, ‘a great star blazing as it were a torch’ signifies no good to those upon whom it is said to fall. Its effect must be

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conflagrating and deadly. An ordinary, or literal, blazing torch could be extinguished by falling into water; but we know that certain bodies cast into that fluid will set it on fire, and convert it into a solution that would be fatal to the drinker. There is therefore a decorum, or fitness, in the language of the vision, which is now known to be founded in the nature of things.

“Mr. Cunninghame has therefore well remarked that the language of symbols is not of arbitrary or uncertain signification, but is interpretable on fixed principles, to ascertain and define which is the first duty of a commentator, as the judicial application of that language to the events of history is the second. “A shooting star was, in antiquity, the appropriate image of a powerful and successful invader from a distant country.”

“The more I read this wonderful book” (*The Apocalypse*), says another commentator, “the more I am convinced that the precision of the phraseology is little short of mathematical accuracy. The language seems highly adorned, but the ornaments are not redundancies: they are not of that sort that the proposition would remain the same if the epithets were expunged. And in passages which may be similar there is never the smallest variation of style, but it points to some thing of diversity, either in the subject or the predicate.” With this notion of the style of the *Apocalypse*, I think it of importance to remark the falling stars of the third and fifth trumpets fall ‘from heaven’ or ‘out of the sky’ but are not said to be of ‘the stars of heaven,’ which are seen to fall in ch. 6. But, further, that which falls ‘from heaven or ‘out of the sky’ upon the sounding of the third trumpet is a ‘great star, burning as it were a lamp’ (*Eureka*, vol. 3, pp. 58-59). In the Greek it bears a name carrying the idea of a meteor of a particular sort. From Pliny’s description, it is evident that *lampas* was a sort of meteor which is commonly called “shooting star.” It was of that sort in which a large ball, appearing first in time, and foremost in the direction of the motion, draws a long train of bright sparks after it. Such exactly was the meteor in the vision. “The most remarkable circumstances in these shooting stars are these: (1) They have no appropriate place in the starry heavens, but are engendered in the lower regions of the earth’s atmosphere; (2) They shine by a native light; but (3) are visible only while they fall. (4) The motion is rapid; (5) the duration brief; (6) The brightness, while it lasts, intense; (7) the extinction instantaneous; (8) And when the light is extinguished, nothing remains: the body which emitted the light is nowhere to be found.” The great astronomer, Laplace, states that in his searching throughout the sky, he has traced stars which first begin to burn, then turn a red heat, then a white heat, and ultimately disappear from their orbits.

Each circumstance before us characterises the meteoric element of all ages and classes. These have no place in the abiding firmament. However intense their brightness, it is short in duration, and their end sudden. The falling of a

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great star blazing like a torch out of the heaven, then, was symbolical of a great destroying power, issuing forth from a lower region of the political aerial progressing by its native force, with rapid, but brief, yet intense motion, coming suddenly to the end of its career, and leaving nothing but smoking desolation as the memorial of its presence. The great star was called by the Greeks "the Apsinthian," to designate the region out of which heaven he fell blazing upon the third of the rivers. As revealed in the Apocalypse these thirds of the heaven have relation to the thirds of the earth, or Roman Orb, in the days of the emperors, and cannot be dealt with here. A shooting star, generally, projects itself obliquely; so, when this great star fell out of its own appropriate heavenly into "the waters" under the neighbouring third, whose heavenly bodies were doomed shortly to be eclipsed, it fell from the Illyrian heavenly section of "the whole heaven" into the rivers under the Italian third. And when it had accomplished its dreadful work and scorching ravages, meteor-like it suddenly became extinct. We have to bear in mind that the Apocalypse is not a revelation of natural appearances or extraordinary phenomena in earth, sea and sky, but a representation by sign of things extant in the apostle John's day.

The nature of symbolic writings requires that the signs and the things signified be analogous, but different, as all have doubtless observed, for no one who studies the Scriptures intelligently would look above for the falling of the stars. God's signs are in the political universe, although these are in a sense analogous to the material, having earth, sea and sky, in which are set its greater and lesser lights and constellations.

To a wicked and adulterous generation no sign could be given, but there are ample signs to help and encourage the earnest seeker after the Truth. As the moon represents the Body of Christ collectively, so do the stars their individuality. The free gift of Life is for all in Christ who walk worthily, but the distinguishing honours are reserved as rewards for those whose works, after having been tried in the fire, survive the test, and come forth as the gold, silver and precious stones.

Yes, there is divine wisdom underlying the very expression, "He made the stars also." In Gen. 1:16, they are spoken of as they appear to vulgar eyes without distinguishing between the planets and fixed stars, or according to their number, nature, place, magnitude, motions, or influences, for the Scriptures were written not to gratify curiosity and to make us astronomers, but to lead us to God and to make us saints. These lights are said to rule: they are deputy governors, for they are mentioned as sharers in the rulership of the night (Psalm 136:9). "He telleth the number of the stars and calleth them all by name," says the sweet Psalmist (Psalm 147:4). "Yahweh knoweth them that are His," and not one of His precious jewels will be overlooked in the great day of reckoning.

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Each will have their assigned position in the abiding heavens. God's Israel was to be as numerous as the stars, and out of these illustrious ones was to arise a star of unparalleled splendour — "the Bright and Morning Star."

Nothing more is intended in Gen. 1 than that the moon and the stars were God's ordinances to give light by night (Psalm 8:3; Jer. 31:35), and yet we cannot fail to recognise their significance as divine symbols. As often as we behold God's faithful witnesses in the firmament, let us call to mind these things and recollect the glorious covenants made with Noah, Abraham, and David; knowing how certain is their fulfilment. Speaking of the stability and durability of the things covenanted to David, the Spirit says in Psalm 89:36, 37 (RV): "His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before Me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as the faithful witness in the sky." And in reference to the effects produced by the beneficent government of the earth's future Sovereign, both high and low, "shall fear him while the sun endureth and as long as the moon, throughout all generations." "In his days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace till the moon be no more" (Psalm 72).

After a thousand years of this divine administration of righteous laws and attendant blessedness such delightful conditions will prevail that there will be no need for mediatorship, when all earth's glorified inhabitants will be sinless and immortal. All nations then submerged into one world-wide empire will serve one king: and in his name ascribe all honour, majesty, and power to the Eternal Father benign and glorious. "His name shall continue for ever," as bright and enduring as the sun, and "men shall be blessed in him, yea, all shall call him blessed."

Seeing, therefore that God has called us out of darkness into His marvellous light, to be joint-heirs with Christ now, and in the glorious day of promise, called us to share with him the blessedness and honour of this unspeakably glorious age, may we be diligent and earnest in our preparation for it, and by His grace be found worthy of such holy and lofty positions. Let us ever remember that the best and most honourable way of ruling is by giving light and doing good, and those who live useful lives command the greatest respect even now. Therefore, let us be up and doing, for the night is far spent, the day is at hand, and the bright, immortal Star of our hope will soon appear.

Chapter Seven

CHANGING ELEMENTS

*Through waves and clouds and storms
He gently clears the way.
Wait thou His time — thy darkest night
Shall end in brightest day.*

HITHERTO we have been journeying beneath bright sunny skies by day and fair silvery moonbeams at night, with that additional lustre of the glittering stars. Thus far our general outlook has been one of unsurpassing beauty, glory and brightness. But now the changing scene as it gradually unfolds before us, while none the less glorious, is effulgent with majesty and terribleness, for not only does the firmament declare the glory of God, but frequently suggests the ideas of majesty and omnipotent power. The aspect of the heavens, either material or symbolical, are not at all times clear, serene and placid, but varied and changeful.

Change is inevitable in the natural and also in the spiritual, wonderfully arranged and marvellously maintained for the ultimate purpose of God. Change is the natural sequence to all terrestrial things. Times, seasons, customs, elements, all change, not forgetting how frail and changeable is mortal man. How truly has it been said that "man is like a shadow. He walketh in a vain show. He heapeth up riches and cannot tell who shall gather them. He is like the chaff which the wind scattereth and it is gone." Yes,

*"Change is our portion now, soon fades the summer sky,
The landscape droops in autumn sere,
And spring flowers bloom and die."*

It is well we should recognise the wisdom of these transitory conditions, lest we should charge God foolishly as an unjust despot. If our experience were that of unchanging bliss and prosperity, of tranquillity and equanimity; if our life-skies were always fair and unclouded, our sense of appreciation would be seriously diminished. We should become so thoroughly preoccupied and selfish, so well satisfied with our present environment, as to grow entirely complacent and indifferent regarding our future well-being.

Thus life's changes are wisely intended to accomplish in us and for us a desirable end, so that come what may, and whatever our changing portion now, we may be fully assured that;

*"Unchanging is Yahweh's Word
I will be with thee, saith Yahweh."*

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“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them; while the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain,” is good advice to be well acted upon. Cheerfully should we lay up ourselves in order to help others according to our ability and opportunities. Life and its comforts are desirable, and let us enjoy them; but also remember that trouble, death and judgment will surely succeed them and manifest the emptiness and insufficiency of all temporal pleasures or profit. Hence the things of the spirit concerning the Christ are not only associated with light, love and purity, although such are leading essentials, but also with trial and indignation, with judgment and justice. We must recollect that as the starry firmament declares the glory of God, so do the “stormy winds fulfil His word” (Psa. 148:8), and we have to learn that

*“God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.
Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill
He treasures up His bright designs,
And works His sovereign will.
Then fearful saints, fresh courage take
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy and will break
In blessings on your head.”*

Have we not often found this to be so? The calamity that we anticipate, the trouble we felt sure would overwhelm us, and the trial that would defeat and crush us, our many forebodings of coming evil, pass over our horizon as gentle as a fleecy cloud, or as softly as a ripple on the pool. The clouds we so much dread are but the springs of the consolation that are to cheer and sustain us. Our chequered experience is good for us, and if we try and realise that all comes from God, we shall allow all to have the beneficent effect of moulding and shaping our character according to the divine pattern. Shall we not receive good and also evil at the hand of God? But let us ever remember that God is above the storm, and be assured that the dark cloud that contains the trouble also holds in its fleecy folds the light and comfort, the sunshine of love, to warm and to cheer us on our way, and if we will only look away from the trouble we shall see the omnipotent Arm outstretched to help and to deliver, so that we may not be hurled into destruction or sink beneath the billows of distress.

Some of us know from experience what it is to be on the ocean in a gale or in

CHANGING ELEMENTS

a tempestuous storm. Sometimes we have seen a wave coming, curling its edge almost up to the sky, and our impression has been that the poor little craft must go down below it. But by a beautiful law imbedded in nature the wave curled round and round till it has quietly crept away beneath the bow of the vessel, while she gracefully mounted over it and reached almost a great calm.

It is so with all those waves and billows that we dread in the future. When we come to the trouble we shall find that God is there with us then as in the past, and neither the wind nor the waves can frighten us if our trust is in Him. The blessings come, not always in the form we in our ignorance had mapped out, not in the time or under the circumstances we attempted to dictate to God it should be, but far better.

The blessings we sought for from the heart descends in due time, and the clouds that we think charged with wrath and lightning and thunder are found to have been charged with blessings as they burst upon our heads. The angry winds that we think may drive us to despair are wafting us nearer the desired haven. We anticipate that happy day which will explain all God's dealings with us; the mysterious present, with all its afflictions, conflicts, and tears, its hostile blows and apparently unanswered prayers, their issue and their ending amid the splendour and glories of eternal day. The whole earth shall be filled with the glory of God, the whole ocean covered with His presence; and the louder the storm, the blacker the night, the more terrible the convulsion, the nearer are we to that peaceful and permanent scene where there will be no more sorrow, tears, wars nor death, but the Prince of Peace shall reign over all the earth then at peace with God, and all its nations at peace with each other.

Difficulties will beset our path, for there are none without. It would be just as unlikely to find a person without a shadow in the sunshine as to find one individual in the world without trials and difficulties. But neither grief nor losses should be allowed to interfere with our duty to God and our neighbour. Even in the valley of the shadow of death we must not sorrow as those who have no hope. Let us, rejoicing in the mercy and trusting in the goodness of Him who doeth all things well, and changes not, build ourselves up for those important duties, and those solemn obligations, those larger responsibilities which open out to every enlightened believer's mind, through prayer and study of the one and only Book which is calculated to impart true comfort and courage to the heart, and which embraces all the heights and depths of human nature.

This Holy Book goes to the very roots of our bitterest needs and our darkest sorrows. It speaks in accents that are divine about the only things that are of real importance at last to all, for the Bible belongs to those elemental things, like bread and wine, like the sky and the ocean, like the kisses of little children, and tears shed at the graveside, which can never grow stale, obsolete, or out of date,

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because they are the common heritage of mankind. If we are guided by the counsel of God, we shall stimulate all those noble feelings and aspirations befitting the believer and put them to good account, using them for the noblest and most enduring end.

Although our lot is changing, yet we are not left as a piece of driftwood, tossed by the waves and borne by the currents anywhere. God orders our lives for some beneficent end, of mercy and love. We must remember our calling and live in it, making the most of it. We must be content to fill a little place if it is our proper place, and do all the good we can; but let us be sure that it is our place, so that we do not hide our light under a bushel, thinking we were never intended to shine. How many of God's children, endowed with His richest gifts and blessings are content to bury them in the dust of cowardice and unbelief, and waste all their precious opportunities.

Nature teaches us that every creature is fitted to the elements in which it moves. The fish for water, the bird for the air, the oxen for browsing in the meadows, and the camel for traversing the desert. Each has its organisation adapted to the end of its existence. "Ye are not of the world," said Jesus, "but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." When a servant of Christ goes out into the world and associates himself with worldly companions, and follows their pursuits and pleasures, he has got out of his natural element. He needs helping speedily back into his proper sphere, just as if we saw a sheep in a stream we should at once try to save it, or a beautiful bird in a ditch, we should know instantly that this was not its native element, and endeavour to rescue it. We should snatch them from the dangerous position, as Jude intimates, while hating the garments spotted by contamination with the unclean world. Happy are they who live in the favour of Him in whom there is not a shadow of change, for even earthly honours are fleeting and subject to continual changes, and much more uncertain are worldly aims and pleasure. However bright and tempting let us keep clear of these, and with greater earnestness endeavour to follow on in the narrow though more difficult path, leading at length to life unending.

While we have been resting here beneath the welcome shade of these fine old oaks the air has become close and sultry. Stillness prevails, silence reigns, broken only by the shrill chattering of the birds as they flutter from bough to bough, restless and agitated; and the lowing of the cattle across the meadows as they are lazily wending their ways towards us, seemingly urging us, by an occasional bellow and whisk of their tails, to move along and make room for them under the clustering trees.

What wonderful instinct these noble, gentle creatures exhibit, and in how many ways they may be examples to humanity. In the eleventh chapter of

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Leviticus there is recorded for our learning that God divided the animals for the well-being of Israel. But long before this, He had made a distinction between the clean and the unclean as is shown in Gen. 7:1-5. The real importance of these things to us is their significance in the substance which is of Christ. Leviticus 11:3 states: "Whatsoever parteth the hoof and is clovenfooted, and cheweth the cud among the beasts, that shall ye eat." What can this mean? Well, we see a cow and we observe that its ruminating process is going on nearly all the time. Concerning the things of the Spirit we perceive that the Word of God is the food that the antitypical clean animal feeds upon, and from which he draws life, sustenance and strength. In its very chiefest order it is symbolised by the 'Bread of Life,' as Jesus said to his disciples, "He that eateth of this bread shall live for ever" (John 6), and "he that eateth me (the living Bread), even he shall live by me." This eating as well as the drinking referred to, is intellectual and ensures a mutual indwelling between Christ and the believer. "My words," said Jesus again (v. 63), "are spirit, and they are life" — that is, "clean food." It quickens; makes alive. It is upon this holy food that the enlightened believer who has got into Christ feeds, and thus enjoys the divine indwelling presence, for in reading and ruminating, and, meditatively do they walk in the ways of the Lord. And, furthermore, they are sure-footed in difficult paths, which is intimated by the parting of the hoof. They turn not aside, like the sow, to wallow at any and every unclean thing.

The believer who feeds constantly upon the Word is pure in the doctrine, and contends earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. These must stand or fall together, for we notice a peculiar distinction between cows and swine; although both are cloven-footed, both do not chew the cud, and so there is a remarkable difference in the two classes of individuals under consideration. There is firmness and stability on the one hand, a looseness and flippancy on the other. It will not answer the divine purpose if we only use the Word as a cudgel, as an intellectual weapon. This would only be representing the clean animal in one respect. If we have been separated and made "clean through the Word," we must refrain from all that is unwholesome and adulterated, and follow him only who was "holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners," and be as "sheep among wolves" (Mat. 10:16).

But this is not all. The truth embodied in this beautiful law is here exemplified before our eyes as we watch the cattle rising from the soft green grass. The clean animals always rise in a kneeling position. So likewise all who are clean through the Word will always be found on their knees every morning, remembering to thank God for the mercies of the past night, for this is the distinguishing feature of their character and bearing in His sight. That trait marks them off from the thoughtless and ungodly world with whom they will

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not associate themselves. Let us recollect that those who ascend the hill of the Lord must have "clean hands and a pure heart." Clean hands means a clean character, which brings strength and peace; as we also read in another place: "He that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger," and it is such only who are to receive the blessing of the Lord.

But what a change has come over the sky while we have been talking. The hot sun seems like an immense revolving diamond, set in a yellow casket, and the atmosphere has become most oppressive. Not a leaf is stirring on the great trees spreading above us. Now and again there is a sudden sound, as of some wild bird or insect darting homeward to their nest or hole in the ground, for nature has taught the very beasts and reptiles to shut themselves up in the dens and thickets at the sign of an approaching storm. When God sends the showers of His mighty rain, said one of Job's friends, "then the beasts go into coverts and remain in their dens" (ch. 37:8). "There shall be a pavilion for a shadow in the day time from the heat, for a refuge, and a covert from the storm and from rain," says the Spirit through Isaiah (ch. 4:6), referring to the time when Jerusalem shall be cleansed and made holy. And over her assemblies will then be seen a cloud of smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night, for over all the glory shall be spread a canopy. Thus the divine glory will be displayed for guidance, refreshment and protection.

Israel of old marched through the desert with the bright burning pillar above them, supposed to extend a mile upwards into the sky, and to be able to cover by its length and breadth the whole mass of the moving exiles, who had their faces toward the Promised Land. During night it would be one vast blazing column of intense splendour, but during the day it was one dark cloud of smoke, and wherever it stood there the people rested (Num. 9:23). The cloud was all bright to Israel by night, but all blackness to Pharaoh. Thus it became the protection and covert and the shelter of God's people. In the future, when they are settled in their own land, there shall return this brightness, and upon all the glory there shall be a covering or defence. The idea is that the enemy shall not touch them, and that no frost, rain, storm or wind shall smite them, for "there shall be a pavilion for a shadow in the day time from the heat, and for a covert from the storm and from rain" (v.6).

The pillar of glory concealed in the cloud rested over the place where the Word lay enshrined, and so in Christ, the glory of the Father, the law and the testimony were deposited. At the time appointed, the glory of the Father abode in him, and there did the Lord meet with Israel, for the light, glory, covering, and salvation of Israel were all centred in him. But before this blessed state predicted by the prophet can obtain a great work has to be accomplished. Before these glorious designs can ripen, multitudes must be given up to destruction, and

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no place can protect sinners from the wrath of God. Isaiah further testifies: "Behold, Yahweh rideth upon a swift cloud," coming speedily and irresistibly to execute fearful judgments. Israel has forsaken God, their Protector, and now they wander through the wilderness of the peoples, unsheltered, until He who scattered them in His wrath will regather them in tender mercy.

The very atmosphere at the present moment reminds us of another prophetic utterance by the same inspired writer (ch. 18:3). Wonderful words still pointing forward to the day of Christ's manifestation in glory. "For so Yahweh said unto me, I will be still and I will consider in My dwelling place, when there is clear heat in sunshine, like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest." It is while the Lord's servants are in the attitude of awaiting orders from the throne to come up against the enemy in the hour of Judgment (Rev. 14) that the political expanse is like the physical firmament before the outburst of a storm, as still as "dry heat impending lightning." And it is during this sultriness, unfanned by the breeze that the Lord is in His dwelling place as an ensign on the mountains, awaiting the result of the manifestation to the world.

While this electrical silence and restfulness is pervading the atmosphere the good news of the kingdom and glory soon to be established will be heralded among the nations. Thus will be exhibited the mercy and goodness of the Lord in calling the people to repentance, and inviting them through faithful messengers to be at peace with Him, and so become partakers of the blessedness and life of the Age, before it is too late. The tempest bursts upon them with all its vengeful fury and destructiveness.

But look yonder! A little cloud is sailing along high up in the heavens, fleecy white and so transparent that the bright sapphire above it is clearly visible. "A cloud as big as a man's hand," remarks one of our company, carrying us back in thought to the days of the wicked king Ahab, and Elijah, the prophet of the Lord, and we recall the momentous words of the apostle James that "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Elijah was a man of like passions, or nature, with ourselves, and he prayed. We know well the result of that prayer, and there is much heart-searching in regard to our individual experience of prayer, and the issues accruing therefrom. Oh! for praying Christadelphians, whose effectual fervent prayers today ascend as the sweet incense before the throne of grace, and bring down rich showers of blessings upon themselves and their fellow servants.

"Call upon Me...and I will answer," is the all-embracing invitation. "Ask, and ye shall receive," the blessed assurance. And so for our comfort and encouragement, as well as for our edification, it is recorded that Elijah prayed, and God condescended to meet the request of His humble servant, so as to withhold the rain for three successive seasons, and again at his request to send

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an abundance. Thus we perceive how God rewards all earnest, disinterested petitions and honours the faith of those who dare to take Him at His word. All God's illustrious ones of old, and of the present, are all men and women of much prayer. Hannah prayed and God entrusted her with a worthy son. Daniel prayed and was delivered from the den of lions. The disciples of Jesus prayed, and Peter was miraculously released from the dungeon; and of the Master it is testified that "in the days of his flesh, having offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save him from death was heard in that he feared" (Heb. 5:7).

And who can measure the power and influence of fervent believing prayer? We complain of our inability to accomplish this or that in the Lord's service, forgetting that

*Where half the breath thus vainly spent
To God in supplication sent,
Our cheerful song would often be
See what the Lord hath done for me!*

God is glorified when we draw heavily upon His greatness and freely receive supplies of grace from the immensity of His rich and inexhaustible store. So let us ask great things of God and expect great things from Him.

But we often ask and receive not, and the reason is evident. We ask amiss. It is some dark cloud of unbelief that hinders, or the sin that doth so easily beset us, that needs to be more severely checked and overcome. For it is only when there is nothing between us and the just Rewarder of prayer, when we are abiding in Him and His Word abides in us, that blessings come. We must fulfil the conditions; we must both live and walk in the light, with no earth-born cloud between us and the great benign Father, with whom there is no shadow caused by turning, and from whom cometh every good and perfect gift.

There must be affinity before we can succeed in prayer, for if we ask anything according to His will, however unlikely the subject may appear from a human standpoint, we shall receive the expected results.

And now the little cloud is being chased by others more dark and heavy in appearance, for the wind is beginning to stir, massing the clouds above and driving dust over the green banks and hedges bordering the lanes. Some imagine and insist that there are only clouds of condensed vapour in existence; but we must needs bear in mind, as we proceed, that this is a delusion, and recollect that there are some clouds more glorious, and others more offensive, than the vapoury elements and yet as real as they. There are constantly hovering above and around us the dark clouds of sin, of sorrow and perplexity, which call forth clouds of thoughts in regard to the manner of our enduring or disposing of them. And so for our encouragement the apostle says in Heb. 12: "Seeing we are also

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compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses (as well as the clouds of difficulties), let us lay aside every weight...and run with patience.”

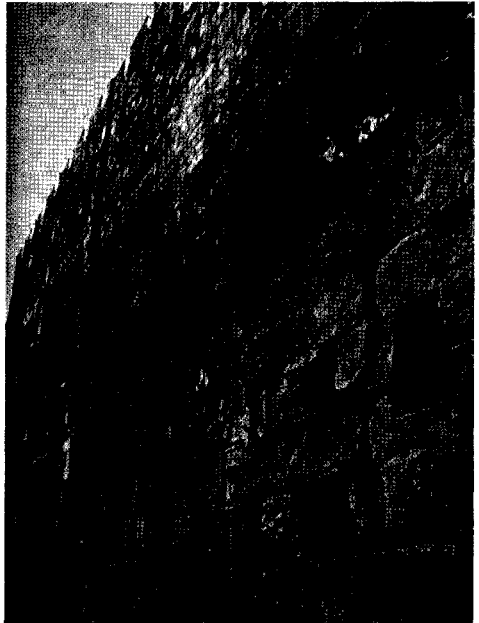
No clouds can separate us from God but the black sullen clouds of sin, and rightly has the poet said —

*Our midnight, is Thy smile withdrawn,
Our noontide, is Thy gracious dawn;
Our rainbow arch, Thy mercy's sign,
All, save the clouds of sin, are Thine.*

But the heavens are growing black with threatening clouds, and signs of a rapidly approaching tempest; so, like the birds and beasts, we must seek a sheltering place before we are overtaken. “The fear of Yahweh, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil, that is understanding,” explains the wise preacher. But many will remain ignorant and careless in the dark and tempestuous day looming in the near future, heedless of their danger and too absorbed in their worldly pursuits to observe the gathering clouds of judicial wrath. Their worldly wisdom has energised them to labour persistently regardless of the vapoury elements of the physical atmosphere; to accumulate riches in abundance that quickly perish; and their mental vision is blinded thus to the stern realities of death and the impending judgments.

How confidently, then, may those rest assured of protection who have fled for refuge, and have laid hold firmly of the anchor sure and steadfast within the veil (Heb. 6:19). And how gladly will they avail themselves of that ark of safety provided by the great Father, under whose shadow they have come to trust. Then, if never before, will they fully realise that “The name of Yahweh is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it and is safe.” To all such will be extended the unspeakable comforting invitation, “Come, my people, hide yourselves for a little while, until the indignation be overpast” (Isa. 24:20).

We choose the narrow path

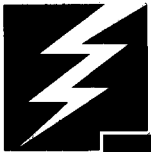


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across the fields towards yonder thatched cottage in hope of being befriended and sheltered. The owner of this picturesque country homestead is standing on the threshold, watching the gathering clouds. Like most home-bred and born country farmers, he is a good weather prophet who openly prides himself that he is seldom mistaken in the movement of the elements and signs in the heavens. He predicts a severe tempest, accompanied with a heavy downpour of rain, and invites us to step within and bide awhile. As we do so we call to mind those stern words of rebuke addressed to a similar class in the days of Christ, who appeared to be well acquainted with the signs of the physical firmament, but exceedingly dense and entirely indifferent to the signs of the times. The wisest with respect to temporal concerns are often quite blind with respect to what is plain but spiritual. What amazing blindness and obstinacy was exhibited by those who failed, in the face of so much evidence, to recognise in Christ the Messiah, in whom the ancient prophecies are fulfilled.

But we are soon resting in the clean, spacious apartment termed the parlour, complimenting ourselves upon being thus favoured, and grateful to our host for the timely refuge and the courtesy shown towards us. And now that we are comfortably settled, how may we profitably employ the time of waiting? How best occupy both minds and voices until the advancing storm has spent itself? Already we hear the rumble of distant thunder, and the rain is descending upon the dry, parched, and thirsty land. Welcome rain! Every heated water-globule, as it drops to the earth, conducts the electrical fluid also to the ground, as alike does each leaf upon the bowing trees, as well as every blade of grass spread over the meadows and hills. Therefore, if we would escape its mighty power we must obey and not disregard these marvellous laws of nature. We follow wisely the example of the Psalmist, who resolved, under all life's varying conditions, to be occupied with the inspired Word, for these holy oracles afford copious ground for seasonable meditation. And, like the well-informed Israelites we betake

ourselves to the law and to the prophets, believing the same divine injunction, to "talk of them" not only "by the way," but while "sitting in the house," as binding upon all true believers in Christ, who is the grand theme throughout. And truly there is much profitable instruction to be gained from thoughtful observation and comparison of the changing elements that have interrupted our ramble for the present, beneath warm sunlit skies.



Chapter Eight

THUNDER AND LIGHTNING

*Let all the world rejoice! The great Yahweh reigns,
The thunders are His awful voice.*

*Our life His will ordains,
The glories of His name — the lightning, floods, and hail proclaim.*

IN praising God for His judgments, for His saving benefits, and for His victorious salvation, the prophet Isaiah gives us a very notable proof of God's drawing upon His own works in nature to illustrate "His strange work" in securing ultimate peace and goodwill, upon earth. In chapter 25, he says, "O Yahweh, Thou art my God; I will praise Thy Name, for Thou hast done wonderful things, even counsels of old, in faithfulness and truth... Thou hast been a stronghold to the poor... a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall. As the heat in a dry place shalt Thou bring down the noise of strangers; as the heat by the shadow of a cloud, the song of the terrible ones shall be brought low." And as the result of this, "in this mountain shall Yahweh of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things... And He will destroy... the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations." This work will be accomplished when the Lord returns with clouds (Rev. 1:7), and will result in Zion becoming a saved city, and the Worker thereof being her "salvation" (v. 9).

All the desolations God makes in the cities of the nations are executed in the fulfilment of His Word, and all enemies of God's people will be obliged to acknowledge His Almighty power and strict justice. And as God has formerly protected and comforted His people when assaulted and distressed, so will He undertake for them then.

A storm of unequalled violence and magnitude is about to surprise the inhabitants of the earth. "Upon the wicked Yahweh will rain snares: fire and brimstone and burning wind shall be the portion of their cup. For Yahweh is righteous: He loveth the righteous deeds" (Psa. 11:6-7, RV). How terrible is the vengeance that awaits the ungodly who despise God's law and turn their backs upon His dear Son! And what favours will be extended to all who fear His Name! Who can harm them if God is on their side? And what knowledge, skill, strength and activity will be granted them? What courage, success and victory will be theirs; and what exalted positions will be allotted them by the living, all

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powerful God of their salvation?

With what firm faith may all such expect the Lord's perfecting of all the grace and glory concerning them both now and in the future. God is infinite in wisdom and knowledge, and orders and disposes all things at His pleasure. He manages the thunders, winds and rain. How great is the God whose eyes behold all, whose power effects all, and whose purpose fixes all things. Let us learn the wisdom that comes from above, and which is manifested in fearing the Lord and departing from evil. The day is coming when the Lord will arise to shake terribly the earth, and "the elements shall melt with fervent heat" (2Pet. 3:12). Then all the wicked, as stubble, will be consumed.

A vivid flash of brilliant forked lightning illuminates all within doors and without, and is quickly followed by a terrific peal of thunder which makes us stare blankly at one another a few seconds and then bow our heads in awe.

Being satisfied and not a little relieved to discover ourselves still safe and sound, our thoughts naturally are for those less fortunate than ourselves, in the fields and lanes unprotected. We listen as the disturbed elements sonorously rumble and roll along the vast blackened canopy of the heavens, and the wind moans in the eaves, and among the sobbing trees, and we catch the sound of the heavy dragging of wagon wheels, clumsily jolting over the stony road. Forgetting ourselves we peer through the little window half-covered with rambling roses and honeysuckle, while our host hastens to the door to see what service he may render to the wayfarers. The driver had been forewarned by the clearness and quiescence of the atmosphere preceding the outburst, and was prepared for the inclement weather, for he appeared nearly hidden in thick sacking, while the moving tarpaulin at the nether-end of the wagon reveals another man whom we learn, is having both lift and shelter on his way to a neighbouring village.

"It's an orfil timpist," explains the first man in his distinct accent, backing his horse and wagon under the spacious shed adjoining the cottage without hesitancy, at the kindly request of our host. "There be lots o' damage done, to say nothin' of the loss o' lives. That last clap o' thunder fitched the chimney off a roof yonder, and a couple o' fine milking cows are lying stiff under the trees up the lane." But everybody knows that these devastations accompany all big storms, and the good of them is to clear the air and save us from suffocation and there is not a soul living that can stop it when it comes.

Yes truly, all nations have observed that the electrical fluid of lightning is an irresistible agent, destroying life, tearing towers and castles, rending the strongest oaks and clearing the most solid rocks: and the most enlightened nations have justly considered it an especial manifestation of the power and sovereignty of God. We cannot plumb Omnipotence, but we can look above and

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see the wondrous orbs, the immense rolling planets, the brilliant lightnings, eclipses and meteors; we may glance around and mark the effects of the mighty tempests and storms, thunders, tornadoes and earthquakes, and these are all proofs of the divine power — exhibitions of what Omnipotence is capable of ordering and maintaining.

The driver will not accept the generous offer to step indoors himself, preferring to “stay nigh his horse and watch the heavens,” but begs a shelter for the stranger accompanying him, still in the wagon. It is then we have a very welcome surprise, for after a short intercourse with the fresh arrival, we discover him to be not only a warm-hearted, congenial companion, but a brother beloved in the bonds of the Truth and in the Hope of Israel — an angel unawares, whom God has sent among us to help, to comfort, and to cheer us by the way. We do not recognise the name he mentions, and at first there is some querying in undertones in regard to whose side he belongs, but he calmly assures us that he is on the Lord’s side; and we being fully convinced of the fact, and also firmly believing ourselves to be in the same happy position, all seeming differences are speedily dismissed from our minds, and we seek to edify and strengthen one another in the things relating to our most holy faith.

Another flash of lightning and almost simultaneously another heavy peal of thunder, accompanied by a heavier torrent of rain, makes some among us rather nervous and excited, and several crouch into corners burying their faces in their hands. A few are inclined to be impatient at their fears and trembling, but our brother reminds us of the apostle’s advice, that “we who are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak and not to please ourselves. “How marvellous is the lightning,” exclaims a young sister. “I have never quite clearly understood what causes it, but I believe it is closely associated with the electricity in the atmosphere and the meeting of the clouds, and I think it is the Psalmist who says, “God maketh lightnings for the rain” and Job speaks of Him making “a decree for the rain.” I have no doubt these ancient writers were equal to our twentieth century scientists, were the meteorology of their words explained, for men today appear to have rather strange and contradictory notions on many points, respecting the causes of natural phenomena, by all accounts. “Yes in fact, even Job was far in advance of any modern scientist, and for this reason, that the truths to which he gives expression were dictated by the overruling influences of the spirit of the unerring Creator of all things,” replies our brother. “And there is such a wonderful order and precision in the divine arrangement of all things, besides Omnipotent Power behind them, supplying the force and inexhaustible energy, causing all to work harmoniously with the Master Mind and Will.

The study of Nature is most profitable and ennobling to the senses, and many are the spiritual lessons also to be gathered therefrom. Consider how the watery

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vapour is rising from the ocean's breast every moment of the day and of the night — rising in such volume and with such regularity as no engines ever invented by man could produce — and there we are face to face with one of the mightiest problems of the age. In the upper sky the cold air gathers this vapour in its powerful embrace and the harvest of the sea is thus reaped. Again, the watery vapour is condensed and is changed into a multitude of little globules having air inside and water vapour outside. Just as Job explains in ch. 36:26 and onwards. "He (God) maketh small, or 'draweth up' the drops of water: they pour down rain according to the vapour thereof: which the clouds pour down and distil or drop upon man abundantly." Yea, he enquires, "can any understand the spreading of the clouds or the thunderings of His pavilion? Behold He spreadeth the cloud of His light... He covereth His hands with the lightning and giveth it a charge that it strike the mark. The noise thereof telleth concerning it, the cattle also concerning the storm that cometh up." Thus the clouds are formed, but if they remained still in their position they would empty themselves into the sea and the thirsty land would be left unsatisfied. So God has provided for all this, and "He bringeth the winds out of His treasures" (Psa. 135:7) and they are united to the cloud chariots and are borne in silent majesty, or driven by tempest, towards the mountain bound coast.

But if the clouds were only driven along by the winds and still retained their accumulated vapour, the parched earth would receive no benefit: and so a most marvellous thing happens. "He maketh lightnings for the rain." Notice the precise order of the inspired testimony, "He causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth: He maketh lightnings for the rain: He bringeth forth the wind out of His treasures."

Lightning is what is scientifically termed electricity in the luminous excitation, but scripturally, it is part of the "free spirit" of God, while thunder is the sound produced by the electrical condensation of the constituents of the air. The free oxygen and hydrogen floating in the air are electrically combined and therefore caused to occupy less space than before, and so giving out lightning and forming a void space into which the surrounding air rushes, causing a



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loud report. Hence, thunder is an appropriate symbol for that operation by which the temporary constituents of the political air are condensed into one dominion under the glorious luminary of the New Heavens.

There is one kind of electricity in this cloud and the opposite kind in that which meets it, and these coming in contact produce the lightning flash. The shock masses the globules together, and thus the rain is precipitated, refreshing and fertilising the waiting earth.

Job also declares (ch. 32:11): "By watering He wearieth the thick cloud: He scattereth His bright cloud." It is well known that rain falls copiously in thunderstorms. The flash is first seen, the clap is next heard, and last, the rain descends, although in fact they all take place at the same time, but the lightning traverses all space in an unperceivable duration of time, while sound is propagated at the rate of 1,142 feet (348 metres) in a second, and rain travels still more slowly, and will fall sooner or later according to the weight of the drops, and the distance of the clouds.

As water is composed of two elastic airs or gases, the electric spark of lightning passing through the atmosphere, ignites. By the lightning of thunder God causes it to rain upon the earth. How expressive are the words of the Psalmist when he says, "Sing unto Yahweh with thanksgiving... who covereth the heavens with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth" (Psa. 147:8).

There is one kind of lightning in the cloud, and another in the mountain peak and again, there is the flash, the shock and the shower. Then the torrents foam and leap, the springs of the valleys overflow, and the rivers pass out once more from the place of their birth (Ecc. 1:7), gathering fulness as they flow, and sweep back again to the ocean in their old majestic depth and breadth. Thus "He watereth the hills from His chambers: the earth is satisfied with the fruit of Thy works (Psa. 104:13).

What loving consideration is shown in all God's workmanship! He makes the clouds to be fountains to the earth, and veils the majesty of His throne. "We walk by faith and not by sight" for the eternal verities are beyond human



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perception and understanding; and “eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him” (1Cor. 2:9).

At the right hand of the Majesty is seated One, whom not having seen, we nevertheless have learned to love, and we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, because when he comes again, we shall see him, and be made like him, for “we shall see him as he is” (1Jn. 3:2). Yet we are not left to stumble in the darkness even now, for God has not left us without witnesses as even His mighty and glorious works declare. Still “the voice of Yahweh is upon the waters: the God of glory thundereth...” and, “The voice of Yahweh is full of majesty” (Psa. 29) if we only have ears to hear. And in His Son we behold much of the Father’s glory, for “he is the impress of His substance” (Heb. 1:4).

It is well we should seriously consider the operations of His hands, as Job was invited to do, when addressed out of the whirlwind by the Almighty. Think how little we know or understand of the most obvious of them! If called upon to answer the questions put to Job, our intellects would be sorely tested, and all pride of learning abased. “Knowest thou how God lays His orders, or impresses His powerful influence upon His terrible work? or how He makes the rainbow light of the transparent cloud to shine? Canst thou tell how, in His marvellous wisdom He hangeth the clouds in the air, as if balanced by one another? Dost thou know how thy garments wax warm when the earth is calmed by the southern sun and the pleasant gale? Hast thou assisted God in changing and clearing the sky after rain? and in making it to stand fast by its own strength, as a mirror, in which we may behold His adorable wisdom, power, goodness and glory?” If any attempt to describe His excellencies, they will be quite confounded by the dazzling glory of the divine power. Men cannot even look upon the bright shining of the sun in the sky, when the wind has dispelled every cloud. The glancing sun shines clearly by the purifying north winds: and upon God is a robe of terrible majesty.

We cannot comprehend His essence, perfection, purposes and works. His power is infinite, but He will not afflict His people in strict judgment or severity of justice. We should therefore stand in awe of Him, for He regards none who are wise in their own conceits or who dare contend with their Maker or presume to censure His proceeding (Job 37:15). “Hear attentively the roaring noise of Yahweh’s voice and the breathing murmur that proceeds from His lips.” We read at the beginning of this same chapter: “By His providence He guides the forcible straight darting of the thunderbolts along the whole extent of the sky, and makes the blazing flash of lightning to fly over the confines of the earth. After the blazing flash the noise roars. He thunders with the voice of His majesty: nor will He restrain the storm and rain when the roaring of His thunder

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is heard.”

By thundering, the mighty God produces many marvellous effects. He does many things in nature which we cannot comprehend. At His command the snow falls, as also the gentle showers, the deluging rains, the impetuous showers and the tempestuous storms.

The whirlwind is generated in the moist clouds of the south as in a chamber, and cold proceeds from scattering north winds. By God’s will and appointment the forest is produced, and the rivers are congealed that they cannot flow. As by pouring down continual showers He wearieth the thick cloud, so His clear brightness dispels it; and by His light He disperses the transparent duskiness of the sky. While the clouds are carried hither and thither at His pleasure, on every side He holds the reins of their motions, that He may accomplish His own purposes by them all over the world. Again in ch. 38:21, Yahweh enquires, “Dost thou by thy great experience and long observation, Job, fully understand the orderly turns of light and darkness, day and night? or canst thou direct their motions in a proper manner?” (v. 24). “How is the light of the sun, moon and stars so equally and so widely diffused? How is the way prepared for the overflowing rains or for the lightning and thunder? And how are the motions so regularly directed? Canst thou just by a call bring down an abundance of rain or make the thunder to dart forth its flames over thine head? Canst thou direct the random darting of thunder and lightning to strike as regularly as if it had solid wisdom and distinct perception?”

Ah, canst thou tell how a single thought is formed? No, no, a thousand times, no. But God can. Oh, the infinite wisdom, power and wonderful condescension in One so high above all human comprehension! How wise and how kind is God our Father in heaven. Should we not as trusting little ones place our hands in His and walk humbly and cheerfully in the pathway He marks out for us?



Chapter Nine

THE STORM

*The calm, the breeze, the gale, the storm,
that pass from land to land,
All, all are Thine,
are held within the hollow of Thy hand.*

THE awful grandeur and terribleness of the storm enables us to realise somewhat the greatness of Omnipotence; and the stoutest hearts cannot help being deeply impressed and humiliated thereby. We are not surprised that a hardened Pharaoh should implore Israel's deliverer to entreat the Lord to take away the mighty thunders and hail, for such a tempest as that experienced in Egypt would be truly appalling; for we read that "Yahweh sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran down unto the earth" (Exod. 9:23). There was hail and fire flashing continually amidst, a type of the great hail to descend upon the Lord's enemies in the near future. Referring to this dreadful tempest the Psalmist prophetically says, "He bowed the heavens also and came down: and thick darkness was under His feet... He made darkness His hiding-place... and thick clouds of the skies. At the brightness before Him, His thick clouds passed, hail-stones and coals of fire. Yahweh thundered in the heavens, and the Most High uttered His voice... and He sent out His arrows and scattered them, yea, lightnings manifold and discomfited them" (Psa. 18:9-14).

Isaiah also testifies "Yahweh shall cause His glorious voice to be heard, and shall show the lighting down of His arm, with the indignation of His anger, and the flame of a devouring fire, crashing and tempest and hail stones" (30:30). The enemy to be beaten down by these living all-powerful hail-stones, is the Gog of Ezekiel, the Fourth Beast of Daniel and the Eighth Head in alliance with the Ten Horns of John's vision. The hail-stones are an element in the lighting down of His arm: "there shall be an overwhelming shower." We read in Ezekiel 13: "Ye, O great hail-stones, shall fall: and a stormy wind shall rend the wall" daubed with untempered mortar.

Instead of being joined together in the bonds of the Truth, the twelve tribes of Israel were built up by falsehood, and therefore prophesied out of their own hearts (v. 17), and Ezekiel is commanded to tell them what shall befall them under the Chaldean power.

A hail-shower is the enemy of the men upon whom it descends, for hail is figurative of weapons of destruction, and not literal frozen rain in these

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prophecies, as will be noticed from Rev. 16:21. Then, Isaiah 26 speaks of hailstones operating conspicuously in demolishing walls daubed with untempered mortar and for sweeping away the refuge of lies. This power to descend upon men in that day, is the power of the heavens, the Spirit-compressed, so to speak, into “spiritual bodies” to beat down the latter-day Assyrian.

In this storm there will be hailstones and coals of fire. Ezekiel informs us (chs. 1 and 10) that “out of the fire went forth lightning.” This lightning is also figurative. It “will strike and not miss the mark” for “the living creatures ran and returned as a flash of lightning,” as quick, accurate, and effective as the electrical sparks of the physical atmosphere.

Another vivid flash, immediately followed by a deafening peal of thunder reveals that the immense reservoir is directly overhead, and is soon confirmed by a renewed downpour of hail and then rain: while simultaneously there is a loud crackling of splintering wood and a large oak is divided asunder and felled to the ground in the field opposite the cottage — and again we are filled with awe and trembling.

“Yahweh on thy right hand shall strike through kings: in the day of His wrath... He shall bruise the head over many nations” (Psa. 110:5-6), continues our brother in a subdued tone after a short silence. God’s work in that day will be grand and marvellous: “the nations shall see and be confounded at all their might: they shall lay their hand upon their mouth... they shall move out of their holes like worms of the earth: they shall be afraid of Yahweh our God” who will be manifested in Christ (Mic. 7:16-17), and fear because of Him. He will execute judgment upon the nations such as they have not heard of before (ch. 5:15). For, as it has been, so will it be in the future: God’s judgments are irresistible, and men shall hide in the dust, and call upon the rocks to cover them, for fear of Yahweh, and for the glory of His majesty. “The lofty looks of man shall be humbled... and Yahweh alone shall be exalted in that day. For the day of Yahweh of hosts shall be upon everyone that is proud and lofty, and upon everyone that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low: And upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan... when He ariseth to shake terribly the earth” (Isa. 2:10-19).

Then it is that the Lord’s servants will be able to look up and say, “God is our refuge and strength... therefore we will not fear, though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea... Yahweh of hosts is with us: the God of Jacob is our refuge. Come, behold the works of Yahweh, what desolations He hath made in the earth. He maketh the wars to cease unto the ends of the earth: He burneth the chariots in the fire” (Psa. 46).

And all this will be accomplished through the lightning, thunder and voices

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proceeding from His throne as we learn from Rev. 4:5. Daniel describes the these saints as “a fiery stream” and refers to their number as “thousand thousands, and tens of thousands.” When the great work is put in operation in the war of the great day of God Almighty (Rev. 16:14) as a fiery stream and as lightning flashing forth from the throne of David’s greater Son, they will run and return, echoing their thunders and voices from one end of the earth to the other, and will not rest until there is established universal peace. Then the lightning of civil discord and revolution — the thunder of international wars, whose echoes have reverberated through the political expanse, and the hot thunderbolts of the drastic operations of the great men of the earth to usurp authority over the weak — will cease. The great tempest of righteous indignation will be expended: all the dismal foreboding war-clouds, social upheavals, deluging rains of pestilence and the destructive hail of vengeance will be dispelled and dispersed; and then the glorious sun will shine forth in the new heavens, and gladden the lovely, purified and replenished earth. Then the burning displeasure of Yahweh will not only be turned away from God’s ancient people, the Jews, but from all the world.

“Yahweh is angry with the wicked every day” and His judgments are just. It is not until His judgments are exercised, that people will recognise His hand, and acknowledge His supreme justice and power.

The terrible storm visited upon the Egyptians in all its destructive severity many centuries ago, bears but a faint resemblance of that ready to burst in great fury upon the nations who forget God. And God, who is just as well as loving, will render to everyone according to their deeds — to the unprofitable servants will it be a day of calamity as well as for the nations regardless of His law. God will bare His holy arm in the sight of all the nations, and they shall learn that He is the Sovereign Ruler in heaven and in earth.

The plague of hail which overtook the Egyptians must have been most incredible of the plagues to them for in Egypt there falls no rain, the want being supplied by dews, and by the overflowing of the Nile. The people must have perceived that these fearful events were particularly aimed at them, especially as they were very superstitious, and there was singular propriety in their being punished by fire and water, for they were guilty of the grossest idolatry towards these elements. Both fire and water are used in God’s methods of punishment, but as previously, neither can harm His people preserved by His power.

Fire, literal and symbolical, will be elements largely employed in the final overthrow of the wicked, for they will be fuel for the burning. It will have an unlimited effect upon the vessels of wrath, befitted for destruction. The artillery of the nations will provide plenty of the literal fire, and the spiritual will be copiously supplied from the judicial Throne. Isaiah says, “The people shall be as

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the burning of lime, and as thorns cut up shall they be burned in the fire” (ch. 33:10-17). This is explained by Dr. Thomas to be the “lake of fire,” for symbolically, “fire from heaven,” such as we read in Revelation, represents vengeance, wrath and punishment with complete destruction. The worshippers of the Beast are to be tormented with fire and brimstone (Rev. 19:10). This is a symbol of the judicial punishment of a class defined, and not eternal torments for the wicked of all ages: indeed, the Sodomites are given by Jude as an example of those set apart for suffering “the vengeance of eternal fire” although “overthrown as in a moment, and no hands stayed on her” (Lam. 4:6).

Isaiah says again, “Behold, the name of Yahweh cometh from far, His anger burning... His lips are full of indignation and His tongue as a devouring fire: and His breath as an overflowing stream shall reach to the neck, to scatter the nations with the fan of destruction” (ch. 30:27). And in Rev. 1, the multitudinous Son of Man is represented as having “eyes as a flame of fire,” an indication of intelligence in wrathful activity, for there is nothing beneficent in the symbolism of flame.

Dathan and Abiram are examples of divine wrath, whilst Daniel’s three companions were miraculously preserved, that the fire had no power over them, not even to singe a hair of their heads, nor leave its smell upon them. Commenting upon the first-named, the Psalmist says, “A fire kindled in their company: the flame burned up the wicked.” And in the following words the overthrow of the kingdoms of men in the near future is foretold through Isaiah. “The Light of Israel shall be for a fire and His Holy One for a flame: and it shall burn and devour his thorns and his briers in one day” (ch. 10:16-21).

The hell that some have imagined has existed from the time of the Fall and destined to continue with unabating fury, and burning flames of brimstone throughout eternity, is no part of the divine catalogue. There will soon dawn the beneficent Day when all pain and suffering will be eliminated, and finally, both death and hell will be committed to the irresistible power of the “lake of fire” which consummates all things offensive, and pain and anguish, sorrow and death will be no more. A literal lake is a tract of standing water, but the lake into which the Beast and the False Prophet are to be cast, is of fire: a tract of land in a state of conflagration. Hence this lake represents all that country upon which exists the secular and ecclesiastical constitution of the inhabitants of the Beast and the False Prophet. To cast such into a lake of fire is to kindle an intense conflagration in the territory of their dominion, which is not extinguished or quenched, until they are consumed.

This fiery lake is referred to by the Lord Jesus in Matthew 25. It is prepared for the Devil and his angels — that system of iniquity co-existent with the time of the end, all of which has its origin enrooted in rebellious human nature. These

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are the fuel for the fire, or "Tophet ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared; Yahweh hath made it deep and large; the pile thereof is fire and much wood: the breath of Yahweh, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it" (Isa. 30:33).

But the things represented in these symbols, are not only wood and fire, for the apostle Paul reminds us in 1Corinthians 3, that there are two classes of saints in Christ, who are to appear before his Judgment Seat; the one consisting of the "called, chosen and faithful," or "the gold, silver and precious stones" which are made manifest as such in the day when things are revealed by fire. These are fire-proof: but the other class — the "wood, hay and stubble," being "the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers... and all liars," are fuel to be consumed in the lake of fire. Peter's words are very significant. Literally translated they are "the earth being stored with fire is reserved unto judgment and perdition of ungodly men" (2Peter 3).

We have no evidence that Peter studied science, and yet what he stated is scientifically true and without the technical terms of science being complete. In all probability the earth itself is merely a crust or shell and its interior one vast ocean of liquid lava, or molten, surging fire. It has been discovered that for every forty feet (12.2 metres) bored into the earth's surface the Fahrenheit thermometer rises one degree; and if it were possible to bore down into sixty miles (96.5 kilometres) everything that we know — iron, gold, silver, granite — would all be melted and become liquid through the action of the heat that is there. "It is a very sobering thought," says one writer, "that our earth is simply a shell, 8,000 miles (12,870 kilometres) in diameter; and of the 8,000 miles, more than 7,800 miles (12,550 kilometres) are one vast concave, filled with liquid fire; and it has been supposed, and not unlikely, that the volcanoes are to the earth what the safety valve is to a steam boiler — the means of escape of the pressure, lest the whole be rent into atoms and everyone perish in it." If this be so, the reason why our earth is preserved, and will be, for it is to "abide for ever" (Ecc. 1), is not the genius nor the excellence of man, but the wisdom and power of God, "in whom we live and move and have our being." Therefore we must be convinced that this prophecy is of divine inspiration and certain of fulfilment, although not to be understood literally. The "elements" will melt, not blaze or be burnt up, but the things on the earth — all that is opposed to God and His holy laws — will be burnt and there will be a transforming and rectifying of all things in the air and in the sky, whilst the earth will be made new, beautified and replenished materially and spiritually with all that is worthy of the eternal Creator, and the everlasting happiness of His ransomed creation. So it is expressly stated that the earth will not be annihilated. Chemistry tells us that we are conversant with change and structure, but never with annihilation. The flax

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that grows in the field, is dried and its threads, or filaments, are made into hemp; that hemp is refined and purified and made into linen; the linen is bleached, and when worn out is cast aside; afterwards it is pounded into fragments in the paper mill and becomes paper. It is merely a change of condition; not annihilation.

Peter's words are taken by some to mean that literally the imprisoned fire will be let loose and all the earth be burned up with the elements melting with fervent heat, but Peter is most accurate in the phrase he employs. If it were not specifically stated that the earth abideth for ever, we might be persuaded from this passage that it is destined to meet with a terrible catastrophe and eventually pass away altogether.

Peter uses the words "the elements shall melt with fervent heat" intelligently, for if he had said, "they shall be burned," scientific men would have said he was ignorant of science. We know the elements are subject to melting. Gold has been melted; granite is the result of intense heat putting it into a molten state; and iron and other metals are easily melted. When we consider this we see the truth and accuracy of the whole statement of Scripture, and we also recollect that it is testified that "our God is a consuming fire." "Fire," says the old proverb, "is a good servant, but a bad master," and on account of this irresistible force many superstitious and ignorant people have been led to worship it. But we worship not the fire, but Him of whom it is the chosen symbol, and from whom proceeds that divine, irresistible essence known as "Holy Spirit," because fire is the purest of all created things, as well as the most powerful, and it speaks to us of One who is Light and Truth, the perfection of purity and power.

When we search the secrets of nature and study the virtues and evils of these elements we can trace divine wisdom in each. Sinai's thunders, lightning, fire and smoke, were intended to awaken the attention of Israel to the hearing of the Law, and the thick cloud signified the invisible, awful and incomprehensible nature of God, and the past obscurity of the dispensation of the covenant of grace.

The same elements can be directed for blessing or destructiveness in the Hand of Omnipotence. The lightning of heaven can be conducted quietly from the angry cloud into the peaceful bosom of its depository — the earth; or its power can be made to convey messages, kind words, cabinet secrets, national facts, phenomena and occurrences from capital to capital, across broad continents, in spite of deep seas, till man at last has, in this one thing, been entrusted with a portion of that power, which is the very power of Deity, who is able to make the brilliant lightning His messenger.

But if this lightning is not received as it should be, we have the results in shattered walls, crumbling edifices and even death. So all God's gifts are the greatest possibilities for good or evil, and the intelligent use of them makes all

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the difference, as also their powerful effects will be upon mankind.

Alas, at the end, many will find that the Light with which they have trifled and despised, will burst into dramatic lightning they cannot resist, when the Son of Man shall come in the clouds of heaven, as the lightning shineth from east to west, and all flesh gather before him. He came once as the gentle Light of Truth, not as the Lightning of Judgment. He came in the day of grace, not in the day of assize and power, but soon "the glory of Yahweh will be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together."

How suggestive of all this is the natural storm that is now over us as we await in the house, and we think how incomprehensible are the spreadings of the thick clouds across the face of the heavens and the crashing of the thunder of His cloudy dwelling; for "He dwelleth in the thick darkness."

How marvellously He extends the flashing lightning all over the sky, which the Master uses as a beautiful figure of his manifestation to the world. "for as the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west, even so shall the coming of the Son of Man be." God makes it penetrate to the depths or veils it with the rainy waters. By such mighty thunders, lightning and rain, sometimes He punishes men for their sins, and uses them as symbols of His righteous judgment in the future. By His hollow clouds He conceals the thundering flash as well as the bright and scorching sun, and restrains it by their interposing influence: thus showing His methods of concealing the full glories of His kingdom for a better day. He is absolute sovereign, working all things according to His divine will, and in the glory of His works we must discern the perfection of His character. The throne we recognise to be so high, we know to be also the "throne of grace."

When the Lord Jesus comes with the angels of his power, with mighty spirit-flaming swords to take vengeance upon his enemies, none will be able to stay the hot thunderbolts of divine wrath, or extinguish the devouring fire issuing forth from his presence; and truly it is testified that, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31; 12:29). But, as a wall of fire (for protection) will He be round about His people, and the glory in their midst (Zech. 2:5).

There are fiery trials of more or less magnitude and intensity through which all the servants of God must pass, but he that endureth to the end whose works stand the test of the purifying furnace, will be saved, for the fire of divine wrath falls only upon the wicked for whom it is reserved — those who have wilfully rebelled against God. And even in the very heat of our afflictions comes the sweet message to all Israel, both natural and spiritual, "when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame (of judgment) kindle upon thee" (Isa. 43:2). The great Controller of the elements is able to

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keep us in safety, and when He has tried us, we shall "come forth as the gold." The three young Hebrews cast into the sevenfold heated furnace of Babylon, are an example of this Almighty keeping, wherein a great lesson is illustrated. It is the contract between physical and moral law.

We have many instances of God's reversing physical laws: when the waters have not drowned, the fire has not consumed, the poison has not destroyed. But there is not a single instance on record, of God's reversing a moral law. The moral law is — "The soul that sinneth it shall die." And, "He that doeth these things shall live by them." These cannot be reversed or repealed: literally, for whilst "heaven and earth might pass away," and all the laws of our physical and mundane economy may be reversed, but "one jot or one tittle shall not pass away" from God's promises, or from His moral law "until all these things be fulfilled," says an eminent writer.

How much of God's ways are to be learned from the works of Nature; in the forms of the clouds, the mighty hail, and the varying changes and forms of the weather. If all His creatures thus fulfilled His will, how lovely, how peaceful all lives would be! Yea, how truly blessed.



Chapter Ten

RAIN

*The former and the latter rain,
The summer sun and air,
The green ear, and the golden grain,
All Thine, are ours by prayer.
Thine too by right, and ours by grace,
This wondrous growth unseen,
The hopes that soothe, the fears that brace,
The love that shines serene.*

RAIN is still falling steadily and persistently although the thunder and lightning have ceased, with the exception of an occasional flash and the distant rumble, so that we are still confined indoors. “Prisoners of hope,” in a double sense, for how many of the ordinary commonplace circumstances of human life have their counterpart in the divine relationship of things.

Some are without God, and therefore without hope in the world — a truly deplorable condition! But with us hope burns brightly in each breast, and faith gives substance to the things for which we hope. Is it not the assured expectation, and the conviction of things unseen? A confident anticipation — a full persuasion of events not seen, yet to be realised in God’s own good time. The patient waiting for the accomplishment of the things of the Spirit, has been from early times a matter of hope; and faith has strengthened and brightened the hope which burned in the hearts of many who died, not having received the anticipated blessings.

In the apostolic epistles hope is given a very prominent place, and the believers are exhorted to exercise much patience.

Even in Paul’s day some had grown impatient of the coming of the Lord and had to be reminded that the “Lord is not slack concerning His promise... but long suffering, not willing that any should perish,” and that before the divine programme could be completed, and the glorification of Christ and his saints together be accomplished, the consummation of the apostasy, under the Man of Sin, must be finished, desirable as other events might appear to them. So Paul’s message to the ecclesia at Thessalonica was that their hearts might be directed into the love of God and into the patient waiting for Christ (2Thes. 3:5).

In another epistle he links faith and hope with the greatest of all gifts — Love. And why? Faith leads on to victory over inordinate desires and finally overcomes the world in the fullest, completest sense, and hope braces us up for

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the good fight, it makes not ashamed because by it the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, and love brings us near to God — for “God is Love.”

So we wait in patience (recognising patience as a standard virtue) for the Day when the heavenly Bridegroom returns with the invitation to “Rise up and come away...for the rain is over and gone” (Song 2:11) and, “Yahweh is good to them that wait for Him.” “It is good that a man should hope and quietly wait for the salvation of Yahweh” (Lam. 3:22-26), says the prophet. But we must rouse ourselves up from all deadness, slothfulness, and present security, disentangling ourselves from the enticing snares of the world and our own fleshly desires, and exercise our faith in the most active manner, laying aside all impediments to the most delightful fellowship with him even now, if we would be ready to rise with alacrity and freedom when he calls. We should hold the things of the world very loosely, so that we may drop them without regret at the first whisper of his welcome voice.

But as already stated, it is raining outside; still raining! And because we suffer temporary inconvenience thereby, we are apt to speak disparagingly of the rain, as something extremely unpleasant and inconvenient, over which we have no control and are therefore compelled ungraciously to endure. If we fully realised its blessedness, we should be far more appreciative, and not undervalue its worth.

When we consider the dry, parched land previous to this storm, our grateful hearts and voices must re-echo the Psalmist's words: “Thou visitest the earth and waterest it, Thou greatly enrichest it” (Psa. 65:9). “Thou waterest her furrows abundantly. Thou makest it soft with showers; Thou blessest the springing thereof” (RV). And who else could perform such a miracle? “Are there any among the vanities of the nations that can cause rain?” enquires the prophet. We answer no, none but the Almighty Creator of all these things can (Jer. 14:22). He “that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: Yahweh is His name” (Amos 5:9). “He giveth rain upon the earth, and sendeth waters upon the fields (Job 5:10). Sending it down upon the wilderness where no man dwells.”

Observe how the earth drinks in the sweet rain, as it falls from heaven and is thereby refreshed and fertilised.

In ancient times the blessing of rain was conditional upon Israel's obedience to God's laws (Lev. 26:4), and will yet again characterise His favour or displeasure toward the nations, who will be instructed to come up to Jerusalem, the world metropolis, to “worship the king, Yahweh of Hosts, and to visit His temple.”

In the days of his flesh Jesus showed how the impartiality of God's goodness to all mankind was exhibited by rain descending upon the just and the unjust.

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Paul refers to it as a veritable witness to the existence of God himself, as well as proving His attributes (Acts 14:17).

Some of the most striking features of the benign reign of Christ are given under the symbolism of rain, and the prophets associated with this element some of the most beautiful promises concerning him. Seasons of blessed refreshment and of sweet gentle influence of the divine spirit are portrayed in figure, by the vitalising effects of the rain, and to prove the immutability of His word, God has placed on record that "as the rain cometh down... from heaven and returneth thither, but watereth the earth and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall My word be that goeth forth out of My mouth, it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please and it shall prosper whereto I sent it" (Isa. 55:10-11). Then follows one of the loveliest pictures of joy and peace and gladness that could possibly be imagined: "Ye shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace: the mountains and hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands." Literal trees do not clap their hands, neither do mountains sing, so that we perceive the whole to be prophetic of that glad time when Israel and the nations shall rejoice together; even when all nations shall be blessed in Abraham and his Seed, the Christ, in "the day of rain" referred to by Ezekiel. This will be the "third day" in which Israel is raised up, to live in Yahweh's sight, whose "going forth is prepared as the morning: and He shall come unto them as the rain, as the latter and former rain that watereth the earth" (Hosea 6:2). All this in harmony with the Psalmist's testimony, "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass, and as showers that water the earth" (Psa. 72:6), showing the genial, refreshing and fertilising character of the administration of human affairs in the hands of Christ. And because of the great things He will do for them, the children of Zion are encouraged to rejoice in the Lord their God (revealed in Christ) "for He giveth you the former rain in just measure," or "on account of righteousness, and causeth to come down for you the rain, the former rain (in the seventh month) and the latter rain in the first month" (Joel 2:23).

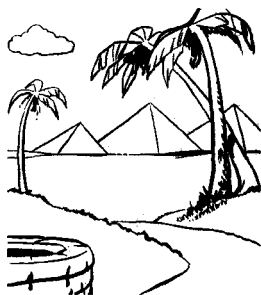
By His creative power God brought the vegetation at first to perfection without seed and without concurrence of the soil, sun, rain and any other natural cause, but since then how much depends upon these elements (Gen. 2:5-6)! In the first chapter of Joel there is a distressing picture given of the absence of the latter rain. It implies that the early rains had come, the seed sown and beginning to grow, but the latter rains in February, March and April had been withheld and all was wasted. We may gather the importance of the latter rain from the words of Job (ch. 29:22-23). "After my words they spake not again: and my speech dropped upon them. And they waited for me as for the rain: and they opened

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their mouth wide as for the latter rain.”

We must remember there are only two seasons in the Holy Land — the wet and the dry. As soon as the early rain has saturated the ground and softened it, the ploughman begins to work. Until the former rain he cannot plough nor sow the seed, and without the latter rain there can be no rich harvest, so that it is a season of great anxiety.

When exhorting Israel to obedience, Moses contrasts their previous conditions in the land of Egypt with those of the land whither they were about to enter and enjoy so many blessings. They were well acquainted with the difficulty and the laboriousness of watering the land in Egypt where rain seldom falls, so that the earth was chiefly watered by the inundation of the Nile. In order to water the grounds where the inundations do not extend, water is collected in ponds, and directed in streamlets to the different parts of the field where irrigation is necessary. It is no unusual thing in the East



to see a man with a small mattock, making a little trench for the water to run into, and as he opens the passage, the water following, he uses his foot to raise up the mould against the side of this little channel, to prevent the water from being shed unnecessarily before it reaches the place of its destination. Hence he may justly be said to water the ground with his foot, as is mentioned in Deut. 11:10.

This is incidentally mentioned by the prophet Zechariah who points out that there will be no exception made for Egypt, and no exemption from punishment in the future, if they refuse to obey the divine Law (ch. 14:18). The good land in view for Israel was “a land of hills and valleys and drinketh of the water of the rain of heaven” (Deut. 11:11). And then, perhaps the greatest blessing conceivable to mankind was promised to them consequent upon their obedience; “rain in its season,” the first or former rain, and the latter rain, that the corn, wine and oil might be gathered in, and the grass grow for the cattle. But the alternative — the shutting up of the heaven that there be no rain, is also brought vividly before them if they incurred the divine displeasure, by disregarding His Word.

In this we behold the goodness and severity of God. The allwise Dispenser of every good and perfect gift, demands obedience and respect, and if men will not submit willingly, they will be forced to bend to His sovereign decree or “perish from off the good land.” We should always work in harmony with His commands and recollect His loving kindnesses towards us. And all previous mercies should leave an impression on us, that time or age should never efface.

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“Blessings and mercies coming immediately from the hand of God as so many did in those early days must have been doubly sweet,” remarks a young friend who has accompanied us on several of our rambles through the countryside. She did not understand the Truth in its purity, and we take this opportunity to speak further to her on these matters. We should, by all means, labour to acquire a deep sense of appreciation for spiritual blessings and be careful to transmit the knowledge of them to others, for this is the surest way of perpetuating them, so that many may choose God and His inexhaustible fulness of blessings as their portion and their all.

To God, who waters the earth with rain and who causes the fountains to spring up and the rivulets to run along the streets and fields, that by plentiful crops He may enrich and bless mankind, be all honour duly given, for it is by His loving providence the full clouds empty themselves on the thirsty land (Ecc. 11:3).

“I shall appreciate the rain far more after this most interesting conversation,” says a sister in the far corner of the room. “I must confess that I have often been guilty of murmuring about the rain, but it appears we cannot think of it too highly.” True, many of us are guilty of the same idea. When the ancient lawgiver, Moses, desired to impress Israel with the beautiful effects of the soul-inspiring prophetic utterances, regarding their glorious future, he most appropriately uses these significant words: “Give ear, ye heavens, and I will speak; and let the earth hear the words of My mouth. My doctrine shall drop as the rain. My speech shall distil as the dew; as the small rain upon the tender grass and as the showers upon the herb” (Deu. 30:2). Physically, how refreshing such a pouring forth would be! And we can imagine how effectually these words would fall on the ears of the attentive assembly.

“I should be glad to hear the spiritual significance of the rain explained more fully,” replies another sister. In response, a brother suggests: “Ask ye of Yahweh rain in the time of the latter rain: even Yahweh that maketh bright clouds, of lightnings, and He shall give showers of rain; to every one grass in the field” (Zech. 10:1). Although the Lord is well acquainted with the temporal and spiritual needs of His people, He delights to hear their cry. He even waits to be gracious and whenever He is trusted wholly, will answer by opening the windows of heaven to give us showers of blessings — but in our prayers we must follow the promises and providences of God, requesting mercies both suitable and seasonable. For though God has promised plenty, we must supplicate Him for rain to effect it.

As already observed natural rain is water exhaled from the ocean and carried in vapoury clouds through the air by the winds, and thence poured out upon the earth; the object being to refresh and fertilise all nature upon which it descends.

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We are speaking now of rain in proportionate measure and not excessive as sometimes experienced. When the dry, parched ground receives the fructification of the early and latter rains which mean so much to those in the Holy Land (Jer. 3:3; 14:2-4). Hence, as the chief characteristic of the divine spirit is that of blessing, reviving and strengthening those upon whom it falls, the rain becomes a most appropriate symbol of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Our minds revert to the prophetic words by Joel, "It shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My spirit upon all flesh" (ch. 2:28), "and your sons and daughters shall prophesy." This the prophet associates with the early and latter rains in the physical arrangement of things created.

The first great outpouring of the Spirit among mankind was on the Day of Pentecost, after the smiting of the Rock, Christ Jesus (Acts 2:24). And the second is yet future. The prophet Joel foretold these two spirit-rains. The former rain of the Spirit as on Pentecost of the first month, and the latter rain on account



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of righteousness, in the seventh month. In this blessed period there will be restoration for Israel and therefore plentitude and satisfaction; for "Thus saith Yahweh that made thee (Israel)... Fear not... For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and streams upon the dry ground: I will pour My spirit upon thy seed and My blessing upon thine offspring" (Isa. 44:1-4). And with these pleasing results, "They shall spring up among the grass, as willows by the water courses. One shall say, I am Yahweh's and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall give for a title the name of Israel" (v. 5). "In the wilderness shall waters break out and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool and the thirsty land springs of water" (Isa. 35:6-7). And so "if any man thirst," said Jesus, "let him come unto me, and drink" (Jn. 7:27). Drink of the water of life — the spirit-words from my Father that I speak. Drink freely, so that out of him may flow rivers of living waters to the satisfaction of other thirsty souls. Yea, let him drink deep from the Fountain Head, and "be filled with the spirit Word" that alone will enable him to be fruitful unto every good word and work: and then he may look forward joyfully, confidently, to being immersed in the Spirit on the great final Pentecostal morn. The water of life represents the Spirit in all its relations and effects. On the Day of Pentecost a stream of this Living Water was poured out upon the apostles. This was but the earnest of a future outpouring, infinitely greater and more marvellous in its effects.

At the time of this great Pentecostal outpouring in the future, the whole multitude of believers of all ages and nationalities will be filled and saturated with the Holy Spirit, and be changed completely into Spirit-being, for, then, mortality will be swallowed up of life.

The apostle John was shown a pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal, flowing out from the throne of God and the Lamb. This transparent stream of water represents the Spirit or power of God, by which He makes glorious all things, and subdues them unto Himself. Ezekiel, Joel and Zechariah beheld living waters flowing out from Jerusalem. And when that great city becomes a quiet habitation — a tabernacle that shall not be taken down, there the glorious Lord will be to her favoured inhabitants "a place of rivers and streams," their strength and vitality (Isa. 33:20-21).

May we be among those happy, glorified recipients of such unparalleled blessedness, and be instrumental in conveying the Living Stream to all peoples, until the knowledge of the Lord — the Fountain of Living Water, shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. How delightful everything will then be. The blessings that came to Israel under the Old Mosaic dispensation will be multiplied a thousand-fold and joy will abound.

Naturally a well-watered land is productive of fruitfulness. And beautiful

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beyond description will the whole earth be when these glorious things obtain, and the Lord opens the windows of heaven and pours down all rich and pleasant benefits upon all mankind. It is now the day of perdition for want of rain. The peoples are withered and shrivelled for lack of moisture, as Isaiah foretold (ch. 40:6-8, 24), for their leaders are as “clouds without water, carried about of winds” (Jude 12) and their people as those who dream they are thirsty and drink, but awake to find their soul still languishing and faint. What a contrast is this to a later prophecy by Isaiah! Hungry and thirsty, God’s people wandered in the wilderness of old, and their soul fainted, but there is coming a day when they shall neither hunger nor thirst (ch. 49) but drink and be satisfied (ch. 65).

Amos, who was contemporary with Isaiah, refers to a famine “not of bread nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of Yahweh.” Israel also was to run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, yet not to find it (ch. 8). But when the thirsty are satisfied, what joy! what peace! The heat of trial withers empty professors, and although “all flesh is as grass” as the prophet declares (Isa. 11:6-8), there is a striking contrast between the rank, weedy, uneven grass that spreads itself naturally over all uncultivated land, and that reserved for mowing. The lesson is obvious. When the spirit of the Lord blows upon grass, representatives of nations who are “as nothing” (v. 17) will wither, and the whirlwind will take them away as stubble (v. 24). But how different with the opposite class. Although cut down by the sharp sickle of death, they will spring up again; and when the gentle refreshing showers of divine grace and life descend upon them they will appear in all their emerald greenness exceedingly lovely to behold.

The colour green has a very pleasant and restful effect upon the sight and so all nature is set in it, and the earth is carpeted with it. As water naturally has the power of influencing the shades and freshness of grass generally, so the Spirit-rain is the means of beautifying the new creation of God. Thus, the rainbow seen encircling the throne was like unto an emerald.

The living waters seen by Ezekiel came out of a holy place inaccessible to flesh and blood, and had healing properties, so that everything that came in contact with them was purified and vitalised (Eze. 47:9). Here is a combination of both literal and figurative, for the river out of the literal temple in Jerusalem that will flow forth and heal the Dead Sea, represents the mystical water of life in Christ, that heals the dead sea of nations. The Dead Sea whose waters are now so salty that nothing can live in them, are to become as productive of fish as the Mediterranean. Then at Engedi, on the banks of the Dead Sea, “fishers shall stand and spread forth their nets... and the fish shall be... exceeding many” (v. 10).

Do we not see here the symbol of the choicest fish, to be fished for by those

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incomparable “fishers of men” the companions of him who once chose humble fishermen for his friends. These living waters, gradually increasing, may be taken as a beautiful figure of God’s purifying work of grace right from the beginning. Commencing like a little streamlet, ever widening and increasing, it has been flowing on through generations past, and will continue until it reaches the mighty ocean of God’s finished work of redemption.

The living waters issuing forth from the temple at the south side of the altar, denote the purifying, refreshing and fructifying word and ordinances of the glorious gospel of the Age, accompanied by the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, and all coming through Christ and his righteousness. Their gradual increase denotes the progress of its truths and influence until the whole earth is filled with the knowledge of the Lord. Their running into the Dead Sea and quickening and producing multitudes of fish represents the Truth and its blessed influence running into Gentile lands, even unto the worst places of it, and spiritually quickening the multitudes who had been dead in trespasses and sins. Multitudes in all their diversified forms of misery and guilt will be drawn to Christ by the power of the gospel preached by divinely appointed labourers. But the obstinate and self-willed, represented by the miry places and marshes, remain unrepentant and unforgiven, are abandoned by God to their own lusts and finally suffer the punishment of the age — even eternal destruction.

Oh the wonderful gift of God, so adapted for the present and future! Did we but realise its value more vividly, the earnest, longing desires of our hearts would oftener be — so Lord, give us to drink, of this living water, even now in such abundant measure that it may indeed be in us as “a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”

Jesus said, “Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst” (John 4:14). The significance of these words is shown by further words of Jesus in ch. 6:35, “He that believeth on me shall never thirst.” Oh fainting, half-hearted, unsatisfied believer, come again to this place, and drink in more deeply of his life-giving spirit-Word, and you will be strong and joyous in his service, and then, when your Lord is enthroned on Mount Zion, you will thirst no more, but be led unto the living fountains of waters, and all tears will be wiped away. The Word of God is “a fountain of life” to those who receive it, and their pilgrimage will be cheered, refreshed and sweetened thereby. We come to the Word that we may be refreshed and satisfied with an abundant increasing and continuing supply of the blessings of heavenly grace, that they may flow out in plentiful streams of good works, for our own and other’s edification and comfort. The pleasure derived therefrom is a foretaste of the abundant and never failing satisfaction and enjoyment of God himself in Christ, in the future, and all the blessedness of that delightful Age.

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Transcendent are the glories of the millennium, for then spirit-light, honour, beauty, grandeur, wealth, safety, satisfaction and pleasure all meet together: sufficient for the complete satisfaction of the whole Israel of God. How happy will they be who enjoy these blessings with uninterrupted immortal life! In this resplendent state they will be divinely acknowledged, and illuminated with spirit-nature, will reign for ever and ever. And we may be the means of leading some into their enjoyment. The eternal well-springs of God's grace and truth waits for human agency to bring it within reach of thirsty souls, that they may drink from the unsealed pages of the inspired Word. Let us ever recollect that the resources are with God, and that this gift is free to all who will receive.

We must by all means bring some to the fountain of living waters which spring up from the Fountain Head. We must cause them to hear, taste and feel the direct lessons of the Saviour, the words full of grace and truth which fell from his lips. We must place them in the presence of the teaching which has been given for all ages by the perfect life, most human and most divine; whom no honest mind can gaze at without homage, whom no upright soul can hear and see without loving him — without becoming possessed with the longing desire to follow him and the will to serve him. "We must place the world face to face with Jesus Christ," said a prominent identity. And is he not right? For what other personage has impressed the world so deeply as Jesus of Nazareth and what life can exercise such influence for good as the Christ-life?

Let us be "helpers together," in rolling and keep rolling away the stone from the well of life, and open up channels by which the waters of this living spring may flow to those who are thirsty. Many such are spread over the barren and parched soils of Christendom, even to remotest regions, for we have no right to limit its influence or extent and we may help them if we will.

And now we take leave of our welcome timely shelter, heartily thanking our kind benefactor who has provided us this temporary respite, and exhorting him to consider wisely the simple truths of the gospel which we have not failed to place before him; for the fresh, cool wind has dispersed the clouds, the rain has ceased and once more the warm radiant beams of the sun are streaming down from heavens clear and brilliant with sapphire blueness upon the refreshed and beautiful landscape.

Chapter Eleven

FLOODS

*Like floods the angry nations rise,
And aim their rage against the skies.
Vain floods that aim their rage so high,
At Thy rebuke the billows die.*

“**F**OR this shall everyone that is godly pray unto Thee, in a time when Thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him” (Psa. 32:6).

How different is the aspect of nature after a storm! The sobbing and sighing trees are shaking their heavy shoulders to relieve themselves of their burden of water, and the sun’s bright rays are causing the hot vapours to ascend from the drenching earth. Both birds and beasts are creeping forth from their long hiding places, and the weeping wildflowers and bowing hedgerows shaken by the wind, are beginning to lift up their water-laden crests and crowns to smile at the shining bow that now spans the immense retreating storm cloud. Our hearts are brimming over with joy and thankfulness, as once more we behold the blue canopy of heaven above us, breathe the pure, invigorating air and feel the cool fresh breezes stroking our foreheads.

A blot had fallen upon the once beautiful face of Nature: but thanks be to God for the promise that the discord shall cease and glorious harmony and peace be established — the storm shall then be wiped out and all nature be more beautiful than she ever was when she first came forth in youthful beauty from the hand of her Creator. “Storms may be necessary to purify the air, but the sweet flowers do not blossom in them; controversy may be necessary to lay the foundation of the ecclesia, but it is in the calm and in the sunshine that its superstructure is best reared,” says a writer of old time. The apostle Paul was much troubled about divisions and contentions, because he knew well they were not for the upbuilding or edifying of the Body of Christ, and we know from experience how true is this. But just look how the rain has beaten and bruised these lovely delicate flowers! Rain is a most useful and necessary element, and yet even too much rain is disastrous to the flowers, the fruit and the crops; and there is danger of its destroying the most healthy plants. So likewise is unnecessary reproof and severity to the tender seedlings of the Lord’s planting. Riches and pleasures, and the healthy consistent enjoyment of them also, like the rain are good in moderation, but their excess may prove disastrous to our

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spiritual growth and perfection of character if indulged in and fervently sought.

What blessings encompass our path if we only look around. Now we have peace after the storm, rest following upon anxiety and fear; light, glory and joyousness predominating over darkness, clouds and tempest; sunshine after rain, and happy freedom in exchange for close confinement and all are blessings, calling forth from us praise and thankfulness to God. On every hand we witness the results of the previous disorderly elements. The flooded lanes and swollen river. Piles of weeds, stones and rubbish have been washed relentlessly down from the highlands and lie in heaps in the lower levels awaiting removal or decay: reminding us of that eventful time depicted by the Psalmist when the children of God will be invited to walk to and fro, and "behold the works of Yahweh, what desolations He hath made in the earth" (46:8). Then all the wicked will be destroyed and the land will be cleansed from all defilement. The almighty Bethlehem-born Ruler of all the earth will bring down the high looks of the proud and dethrone all haughty monarchs and tyrants. This is one portion of the great work he will accomplish (Isa. 17:13-14), and then, "he will speak peace to the nations, and the meek will he beautify with his salvation."

As we contemplate our previous and present experiences, we can enter somewhat into the feelings of Noah and his family when they came forth out of the ark after their long captivity. The first thing that Noah did was to build an altar to the Lord — a token of his piety and true gratitude to God; and so should we be ever mindful of His mercy and goodness toward us. We have been confined indoors only a few short hours today, but he for a lengthy period of an hundred and sixty-five days, as it appears from Gen. 7:11, 13-14 that Noah was in the ark a complete solar year. The waters had been subsiding for an hundred and fifty days when the ark rested on the mountains of Ararat.

Ararat is generally understood to be Armenia, as it is rendered elsewhere, in which there is a great chain of mountains, like the Alps or the Pyrenees, upon the highest part of which, called by some "the finger Mountain," the ark is supposed to have rested (2Kings 1:19, Isa. 37:38; Jer. 51:27). One writer says that this mountain is 17,000 feet (5,200 metres) high, its crags being covered with snow, and we are told that the waters of Noah covered the highest mountain. Noah had to wait until the dove returned with the olive leaf before he could gather any idea that the time had arrived for him to leave his divinely provided shelter and hiding place. The olive grows in much lower regions and warmer climates than snow-clad Ararat, and therefore the evidence of the olive leaf was, that the waters must have been within a few feet or yards of the ground.

The total destruction of the Adamic race in the line of Cain did not shake Noah's faith in the covenant God then made with him, and because of this, the

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Eternal Spirit communicated with him through angels, the Elohim, and assured him that "all flesh should no more be cut off by the waters of a flood; neither shall there be anymore a flood to destroy the earth" (Gen. 9:11).

Those who question the universality of the flood should look more carefully at its Hebrew history and study the various references thereto in the Old and New Testaments. Christ confirms the history of Noah and the flood when he spoke of his own arrival in the earth being as unlooked for and as destructive as the waters of Noah. The faithless times of Noah are being repeated in the practical unbelief of the business and pleasure-seeking generation contemporary with our Lord's return. And many, we fear, who profess to know and serve him are only *saying*, "Lord, lord," but not doing the will of his Father in heaven. Builders on the sand are they; hence, when the flood of judgment overtakes and sweeps down upon them as upon the house without a good, solid foundation, they must inevitably fall; and how great will be that fall!

To be approved of in that day we must now with open heart receive whatever God in His wisdom prescribes. We cannot substitute benevolence or morality for the righteousness of God (Mat. 7:22-29). It is "he that doeth the will of my Father" that will be approved, and will hear the encouraging words: "Well done, good and faithful servant."

What a comfort it must have been to Noah when the ark rested on the mountain, and he felt the solid ground beneath his feet! Perhaps at first he thought it was a rock, but a little waiting, which we all so often need, convinced him that it was a real resting place. The word for the "ark" of the Deluge is *tebah*, a different word from that used for the ark of the covenant, which is *aron*, although both are called "ark" in the English. The bottom of Noah's ark seems to have been nearly flat, the roof being sloping. It was not made to buffet the waves or to struggle with the wind but just to float upon the waters, and when the waters subsided then the flatness of its base would be a great advantage, as it would settle upon Ararat without capsizing.

It was made of gopher or cypress wood, because it has been found that cypress wood in those countries is the least liable to be worm-eaten, or to corrupt and rot by the action of wind or water. When the ark rested on Ararat, Noah sent out a raven "which went forth to and fro, until the waters dried up from off the earth" (Gen. 8:7). The raven, being a bird that feeds upon flesh and carrion, must have found plenty of food floating about on the waters, and it could have found sufficient rest on the carcasses of dead animals, often seen today after a storm or heavy rains, such as a carrion crow standing on a dead animal being borne down the rapid waters of a mountain stream. Thus it appears that the raven could have found plenty of food of the coarsest kind anywhere and everywhere it lighted, and we can easily understand how this carnivorous

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bird must have found such food, as well as a resting place, upon the waters of the flood.

But how different when Noah sent forth a dove, which feeds upon seeds and vegetables. It was compelled to return to the ark. This is perfectly natural and served to show at once what was Noah's reason for sending out the dove. It found no rest for the sole of its foot, and so returned. But the second time it was sent forth, it returned with an olive leaf in its mouth, which proved that the waters had very materially subsided.

And what is the spiritual import of this? Is it not that the raven class of individuals — the people of the world, who can feed upon anything that the world offers and affords, wherever they may settle — can find plenty of that which is congenial and agreeable to their senses, something to suit their palate and favour their characteristics, for such abounds on every side? But not so the children of God, who, like the dove, can find no rest on the waters of the world; they can neither walk, stand nor sit among the ungodly (Psa. 1:1). They would very soon perish on the high waters if they found not the olive leaf of the Truth, and so must still flee to their ark — Christ Jesus — for rest and safety.

Peter tells us that this salvation through water, of one family, besides showing the long-suffering of God toward sinners, was also the type of a greater salvation through water, even baptism: and that the same Spirit, which through Noah, warned and pleaded with "the spirits in prison" — the antediluvians, who were disobedient in the time of Noah — was in Christ, and still sought to draw men unto himself (1Pet. 3:20-21).

Our brother who has accompanied us some distance, talking with us on these matters, now takes a by-path leading to the village he was destined to reach a few hours previously. We are loathe to part with him, feeling much as Paul's friends must have done when they accompanied him to the shore, realising that probably we may see his face no more in this life, yet truly thankful to have had the unspeakable pleasure of his most helpful and refreshing presence with us for a short time: a brief foretaste of what will obtain when "all shall know Yahweh from the least unto the greatest" and will speak often one to another of the great things God has done for them, and of all the way He has led them.

We continue to pick our way cautiously, for although the heavy rain has washed and cleared the centre of the road, on either side of us the thick sandy water is galloping over the turf and stones, carrying weeds and refuse along with it in headlong chase, while down in the lower lying districts, the water stands in yellow pools, flooding the lanes, or is hurrying through the valley as if eager to find its own level or join the ruffled waters of the river as it hastens toward the sea. "All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full," observed the wise king in Ecclesiastes 1. "Into the place from whence the rivers come, thither they

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return again." So all things change and never rest. Even man after all his labour, is no nearer finding rest than the wind or the current of the river, if he has not found his rest in God. Hundreds of thousands of tons of water are emptying into the sea constantly, day and night, and yet the sea is not full. And is it not marvellous to think that the rivers return again to the place from whence they started without human perception? Such is the wisdom of our God and Father. The vapours that rise from the ends of the earth, from rivers, brooks and streams are formed into clouds that are carried along by the wind and once more empty themselves into the waters that gave them birth; or in the words of the prophet Jeremiah (ch. 10:13; 51:16), "when He uttereth His voice there is a multitude of waters in the heavens, and He causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; He maketh the lightnings for rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of His treasures," which is only another proof that all true science is in harmony with the inspired Word. As early as Genesis 1 this can be traced, for we read in verse 9 that "God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto 'one place,' and let the dry land appear: and it was so." And it is wonderful when we consider that while the dry land is divided off and separated, that all the seas are connected, and although the waters were to be gathered into "one place," yet they are called "seas."

There are many these days who scoff at the Bible account of the deluge, like those who scoffed at Noah for building the ark. Yet the flood came and destroyed them all. The deluge was the judgment of God upon an impious generation and whatever secondary causes were employed in producing it, the operation of these at the right time and according to the divine purpose was miraculous. With some it is a great difficulty to account for a universal flood: they would have us believe that it was a physical impossibility and that there is not as much water in all the seas as would cover the whole earth, but these clever people have never been down into the sea to prove their statements. As the sea is six miles (10 kilometres) deep in some places, it is said that if the surface of the earth were made level, there is enough water to cover the whole earth at the same time to a uniform depth of two miles (3 kilometres).

The Scripture records that the depth of the water above the high hills was 15 cubits, or between 20 or 30 feet (6-9 metres). "The fountains of the great deep were broken up," says Moses (Gen. 7:11). Thus what were made to be blessings to the earth at any ordinary time were by an extraordinary act of divine power, the means of flooding it and destroying the world of the ungodly. God has laid up the deep in store houses, we read in Psa. 33:7, and to clear the earth of all defilement, He broke up those stores. In the beginning He set bars and doors to the waters of the sea, that they might not return to cover the earth, but when He so decrees, He has only to remove their bounds and the waters of the sea return

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to cover the earth as they had done at first (Job 38:9-11; Psa. 104:9). We do not question the fact, for we know that all things are possible with God, whether it be the destruction of an ungodly world by a flood of waters, or making a path through the sea for the deliverance of His people from their enemies. Both were doubtless His mighty works. None but Omnipotent Power could have caused such wonder. All the winds of heaven could never have cut off an arm of the sea as clean as a knife would cut through any soft substance, and held them back for a season. Water is unstable naturally. The wind might have driven it over to the other side, or to the opposite shore, but Israel would still have had to wade through it, and the waters we are told, stood up as an heap — as a crystal wall, upon either side so that the people were able to pass through the midst of the sea — dryshod!

“The waters were gathered together, the floods stood upright as an heap, and the depths were congealed, in the heart of the sea,” sang Moses and the children of Israel in that glorious song of triumph recorded in Exodus 15, prophetic of a still greater deliverance awaiting them in the time of “Jacob’s trouble,” and of a grander and more marvellous overthrow of Babylon, and the Beast, described in Revelation 15:3. Standing by the Red Sea, through which they had just passed, Israel surveyed with feelings of triumph the waters that became a tomb to their enemy hosts. It was the memorial of a national deliverance from Egyptian bondage, as well as being prophetic of their future salvation under the leadership of the greater prophet like unto Moses (Psa. 78:13).

Israel were then a people saved by the Lord. It was a national salvation, for they had just put on Moses, having been baptised into him in the cloud and in the sea (1Cor. 10:1-2). They were the one Body of Moses, and God’s firstborn Son (Exod. 4:22; Zech. 3:2; Jude 9). Fifty days later the Passover was instituted and Israel were constituted the kingdom of God (Exod. 19:5). This was the foundation of “the world” so often referred to in the New Testament (see Mat. 25:34; 13:35). The beginning of the Course of Time, the duration of which was hidden from all but the Father (Mk. 13:32; Mat. 24:36).

But returning to the flood, not only is that terrible inundation in the days of Noah called a *flood* but also are all kinds of inundations or extraordinary collection of waters. Water in scripture is not only put for the element of water as in Genesis 1:10, but also for trouble and affliction and to set forth extreme dangers. Crying to God for help in trouble, the Psalmist says: “Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul... I am come into deep waters where the floods overflow me... Let not the water flood overflow me, neither the deep swallow me up, and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me” (Psa. 69:1-2, 15). In this sense it is used many times in the Psalms and elsewhere. Hence the question put by Jesus to Salome and her two sons: “Are ye able to drink of the cup that I

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am about to drink, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" That is, could they be dipped or plunged into affliction as he was, and share his cup of sorrow, even to the cross. This they did in measure as is evident from Acts 12:1-2. James was beheaded and John exiled in Patmos. And, to some extent, Salome no doubt partook of this cup of anguish, for who can measure a mother's love for her sons!

Speaking naturally Job says, "He (God) bindeth the floods from overflowing and "He compasseth the water with bounds until the day and night come to an end" (Job 28:11; 26:10). The Psalmist speaks of the earth and the world being established upon the floods (24:1-2) and in Psalm 32:6, he likens the overwhelming effects of the consciousness of sin to a "flood of great waters." Referring to the power, majesty and holiness of God, he exclaims, "The floods have lifted up, O Yahweh, the floods have lifted up their voice" (93:3). Floods here have a literal and spiritual application as may be seen more clearly from Psalm 98, that refers to the future victory and deliverance of the people of God when "all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God."

In the language of the prophets, waters denote a great multitude of people. Referring to the Assyrian army, Isaiah says, "Behold Yahweh bringeth upon them [the Jews] the water of the river strong and many, even the king of Assyria, and all his glory: and he shall come up over all his channels and go over all his banks. And he shall pass through Judah [or sweep through into], he shall overflow and pass through, he shall reach even to the neck and, the stretching out of his wings [of his army] shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel." The kingdom of Assyria was divided from Israel by the Euphrates, termed, "the river," or, "the great river;" hence it came to represent the power of Assyria, so that when the Assyrian invaded Israel, the waters are said to have swelled to the extent of rising to the neck or capital; but without submerging it, so that it would be an overflowing invasion which would recede without subjecting the nation.

The words of the prophet are extremely beautiful. Because this people rejected the soft, sweet and gentle brook of Siloam, in which the blind man went and washed and saw — because he preferred it to the more rapid, noisy and tumultuous torrent of the Euphrates; and instead of trusting to God's blessing, on what they had, looked for power where they should not, they would have what they asked.

The great river they so much admired would overflow, desolate and absorb the little stream they rejected, and they would see that the granting of their own desire was the greatest judgment that could be inflicted upon them. Therefore He says, this river "shall pass through Judah, it shall overflow and go over it and shall reach even to the neck." The idea is exquisitely beautiful. The prophet

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represents the whole land of Judah overflowed by a desolating flood, and he has Jerusalem on its lofty mount Zion, almost submerged, like a man in the midst of a flood with the waters reaching to his neck, threatening to rise higher and utterly destroy him. Jerusalem shall stand out amidst this flood that overflows the whole land, and shall not be entirely submerged for ever, for "Give ear, all ye of far countries... take counsel together and it shall come to nought: speak the word, and it shall not stand" (Isa. 8:5-10). "It is of no use, for My word is stronger than man's mightiest deeds, and all your counsels, your associations and girding of yourselves for conflict, shall be scattered like dust before the whirlwind, seeing I have spoken that word which will surely be fulfilled."

How often it happens that judgment which should go forward and bear down the opposition that is made against it, that should run its course like a river, like a mighty stream, is turned away backward on a contrary course, and the administration of justice becomes but a covering to the greatest injustice; judgment, that should check the proceedings of fraud and violence, is driven back and so evil goes on triumphantly.

"When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee," says the Spirit again through the prophet (Isa. 43:2). Waters here signify people, and rivers represent nations. The message of God is a most glorious promise first to Israel, and then to all the Lord's people! This and similar promises are for our encouragement in the midst of trouble and perplexity. When we pass through the deep waters of affliction, we may be assured that He who promised to be with Israel of old will be with us, making that affliction like the pillar of the cloud, all blackness to the Egyptians, but all glory and blessedness to Israel. When Jordan was divided for Israel, they went through the flood on foot. Their enemies trembled but they rejoiced; and we should look upon ourselves as sharers in their triumphs and of their joys: figures of our redemption through the sacrifice of Christ and the glorious deliverance it effects for us. A much more wonderful salvation from sin and death.

There is no exhaustion of God's power. He takes charge of the great things in our lives and undertakes for us in the smallest matters also. There are a multitude of mercies with Him; an abundant answer will be given to all our pleadings (Psa. 69:15). Whatever waters of sorrow or temptation we may sink into, whatever floods of trouble may seem to overwhelm us, let us persevere in prayer. The thought of God's mercy and favour should keep us from sinking.

It is testified that "when the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of Yahweh shall lift up an ensign against him" (Isa. 59:19). This is true in both a literal and spiritual sense. No weapon formed against God's Israel shall prosper and no foe that ventures to assault them shall stand. This prophecy relates to

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Jerusalem and her great final invasion by all nations. Before Christ and his saints can enter Zion it will be necessary for him to expel the enemy. He will come to redeem Zion from the power of foreign nations who “come in like a flood, and afflict her with desolation and destruction, famine and sword.”

It is now the period of down-treading and persecution both of Israel and the friends of Jesus. As in the days of Abraham “he that was after the flesh persecuted him that was after the Spirit,” so it was in ancient Rome, and will continue to be until the return of Christ. The remnant of the true “woman’s seed” must enter the kingdom through much tribulation.

Revelation 13 presents in symbolical language that the “serpent cast out of his mouth after the woman, water as a flood, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood. And the earth helped [or, rather, ran with aid to] the woman, and the earth opened her mouth and swallowed up the flood” (vv. 15, 17). Water flowing like a river indicates an army or body of men in motion, so that water in motion means moving people in various ways. When it flows like a river they move in a certain direction; when the river overflows its banks, the army crosses its frontier and invades another nation; when the water sweeps along like a flood, the army subdues and carries all before it: but when the earth opens and absorbs the flood, then the operations of the army are spent without effecting its purpose. If the water be dried up as in Rev. 16:12, the power and independence of the people represented are destroyed.

These definitions are strikingly illustrated in the prophets. The “water as a flood” was a pursuing army, but it was not successful, for the earth, or common people, helped the woman, the true believers in Christ, and she was saved by taking refuge in the wilderness, which includes the outskirts of Rome. According to His will and wisdom, God can either dry up waters, absorb or cause them to overflow. In Isaiah 44:25 and 45:1, the Lord declares of Babylon the Great, “I will dry up her great river [*eth-yammah*] and make her springs dry.” This was literally accomplished by Cyrus, who turned the Euphrates from its course, left the channel of the river dry and marched his troops along the dried path in the night into the very heart of Babylon (Jer. 1:38; 51:36). Nahum predicted the overthrow of Nineveh in these words: “With an overrunning flood he will make an utter end of the place thereof” (1:8). An overrunning flood is the symbol of desolation by a victorious enemy. The accomplishment, however, showed the signification to be twofold. That is, both literal and symbolical. Diodorus informs us, that in the third



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year of the siege, the river being swollen with continual rains, overflowed part of the city, and broke down the wall for twenty furlongs: and the enemy entered the breach that the waters had made and took the city.

Daniel testifies, referring to the destruction of Jerusalem under Titus in AD70, that "the people of the prince that shall come, shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end shall be war" (ch. 9:26). This was not a literal flood of waters as in the time of Noah (Isaiah 1). The people were "the host given against the daily" in Dan. 8:12 by the *Nahgid* or prince who sent them to destroy the murderers of the Son of God (Matt. 22). When this people encompassed Jerusalem, it was given as a sign to that generation, that her destruction was imminent (Mat. 24:15). In v. 27 we read, not of an overspreading of abomination, but (there shall be) a desolating, even to destruction; "and that determined shall be poured out upon the desolator." The subject of this desolation by successive abominations begun by the old Roman power, is the Holy Land. It is to continue under the tramp of the desolator to the consummation; and "until that determined" against the desolating power, by whatever name it may be known at the end, shall be poured out upon "him."

The effect of the outpouring of the sixth vial in Rev. 16 is to dry up "the water" not "waters" of the political Euphrates. It being a political channel, the water flowing therein must be political also. It does not signify a drying up of the people. The Euphrates represents a power of the apocalyptic Babylon, and as the name is indicative of water flowing in a certain channel, water here must signify the power of the Euphratean Empire, described as governments usually express it, "by force and arms."

This brings us to the time when "all nations," like many waters, will be gathered together against Jerusalem. Writing on this subject, Dr. Thomas said he believed that the gathering together of the national armies against Jerusalem (Zech. 14:2) is after the appearing of Christ in the south (Dan. 11:40) and before he appears upon Mount Olivet.

We see the need for watchfulness and prayer. Let us endeavour to keep our garments unspotted from the world. Do not let us be afraid when we consider the nearness of our Lord's approach, for "perfect love casteth out fear." The calamities that are taking place all around us are terrible, but our God is able to keep us from all evil, and in regard to our personal character, "He is able to keep us even from stumbling and to present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy" (Jude). Let us commit our way unto Him, "trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass" (Psa. 27).

Chapter Twelve

“THE NOISE OF THE GREAT WATERS, THE VOICE OF THE ALMIGHTY”

*What time the floods lift up their voice
And break in anger on the shore
When deep to deep calls with the noise
Of waterspouts and billows roar:
Rule then, O Lord, the ocean's wrath,
And bind the tempest with Thy will.*

“**T**HE voice of Yahweh is powerful. The voice of Yahweh is full of majesty; the voice of Yahweh is upon the waters; the God of Glory thundereth” declares Psa. 29:4,3.

A sharp walk up a slight ascent brings us to a wider roadway more open, and free from the great overarching trees laden with rain-drops trying to cling to every leaf, and, having recovered and recomposed ourselves after our shower-bath as we passed beneath the trees, we are ready to renew the conversation regarding those mighty elements, that so forcibly proclaim the power, majesty and wisdom of their Creator.

If it were not for certain landmarks we should scarcely recognise this to be the same road that we traversed but a few hours previous, and in this wild rugged country we should doubtless wander from the right track; but we pass along single file over the little footbridge with the water that a short while ago was but a muddy pool, now reaching to its level, and its green waves splashing and leaping over the rickety, weather-worn sides of the bridge, threatening to wash away both it and us.

We call to mind the words of the prophet as from thence, by a path continued at places by steps, we at last reach the highway. “The parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons where each lay shall be grass, with reeds and rushes. And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness” (Isa. 35:7-8). We must all start our probationary course on the highway of belief and baptism before we can branch off into the by-paths of service. We must look to the spiritual landmarks for guidance and direction and closely follow him who declared himself to be “the way, the truth, and the life.” To keep in the right path

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we must have our eyes fixed on this heavenly guiding light. The ancient promise to Israel, "I will guide thee with Mine eye," still holds good to every believer in the Lord, and if our faith were yet more implicit, we might even now hear plainly the divine injunction: "this is the way, walk ye in it." If we study the unerring Word and follow where it leads, then we cannot go wrong. Difficulties there will be, but with the prophet's words ringing in our ears, we shall never fail or be discouraged, "the crooked shall be made straight and the rough places plain." If we are on the highway ourselves, let us recollect that we have a work to do — a work of preparation, for our Lord is coming soon, and we must not only prepare to meet him ourselves, but help to make ready in the desert of peoples, "a highway for our God" (Isa. 40:3), for this prophecy has a double fulfilment like many more of its kind.

Think of the spiritual obstacles that had to be removed in the case of the Baptist's mission! A road had to be made in the hearts of men for Christ. But the heart, in its unrenewed state, is hard to subdue (Jer. 17:9). It is easier to level high hills than to subdue the proud will. We must give up everything that hinders us or others, removing every obstacle, that would keep us or them from Christ. All hearts by nature, like a desert, are dry, hard, and barren, occupied with useless weeds, but we must construct a road for our Lord. Have all the spiritual valleys and hollows yet been filled up? The mountains of pride been brought low? The crooked habits made straight, the rough tempers made smooth? This is the first step in the way of preparing for his coming.

Let us confidently tread the highway of holiness he has prepared for us. We are very apt to miss our way, for there are turnings to the right and to the left hand. Errors and extremes exist on each side of virtues, and temptations courting us to turn aside into by-paths of pleasure and sin, but our conscience should direct us in the path of duty, and we are not left without the guidance of God's holy Word.

We walk beside a stream that takes us through a veritable paradise, greatly enhanced by the recent rain. Woodland and stream, rock and glade, all combine to minister to our sense of the beautiful. Moss-grown boulders, splashing waterfalls, eddying pools, and interlacing foliage, regale our sight for a mile or more, while to the right we have a glorious view of waterfalls and cascades, with the purple mountains towering up grandly across the valley. We can only gaze in silent admiration, for the noise of the water rushing, foaming and dashing over the rocky surface, renders it now impossible to hear one another's voices. "The floods have lifted up, O Yahweh, the floods have lifted up the voice of their roaring. Yahweh on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea" (Psa. 92:3), exclaims a sister alongside, after we have walked along some distance. How these grand and awful works of God make us

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think of His terrible majesty, and fill us with awe and wonder!

Yes, truly, and we should always recollect that "He (God) ruleth by His power for ever; His eyes observe the nations" (Psa. 66:7), that rage like mighty waters, and in His own good time He will arise and still the noise of the waves, and the tumult of the people (Psa. 65:7). "Who in the heavens can be compared unto Yahweh? who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto Yahweh? God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints and to be had in reverence of all them that are about Him" (Psa. 89:6-7).

In setting forth His dominion in the kingdom of Nature, the Psalmist says, "The voice of Yahweh is upon many waters. The God of glory thundereth... The voice of Yahweh is powerful, The voice of Yahweh is full of majesty." Breaking cedars, shaking the wilderness and stripping the forests. In the thunder, lightning and storm, we may see the glorious majesty of our God and hear His voice. If we have listened to His voice in His revealed Word through His dear Son, and have fled for refuge to the hope set before us, then we need not fear when He speaks in anger to His enemies. While those tremble who are without shelter, let those who abide in His appointed refuge (Christ) bless Him for their security in the day when His judgments are in the earth without dismay: safe as Noah in the ark.

The twenty-ninth psalm may have been written during a violent storm of thunder, lightning, wind and rain. The thunder is often called the voice of God. During a violent storm such as the one we have lately experienced, God seems to ride in glorious, yet terrible majesty upon the many waters that form the clouds. The power of the lightning equals the terror of the thunder and the force of the wind. Enormous cedars are shivered and shattered in a moment and the mighty mountains seem to shake. The hinds, affrighted, cast forth their young, and the forests are laid bare. The words "hinds to calve" are rendered by some, "the oaks to tremble." The lightnings represent His messengers, swift and beautiful, the clouds His saints, and the angels His power, the dust of His feet as He travels in His majesty to save and to deliver. He speaks from all heights; He calls to us from all depths. To the heart changed by grace everything in nature speaks most eloquently of God's power and love.

God spoke once from Sinai, and the first rolling sentence made all Israel quake; even Moses himself, when he heard that intolerable voice — not because God's voice was frightful or unmusical, but because human nature is frail at best and so many consciences are guilty. In sweetest strains of harmony and love God spoke through Jesus on the mount, in His own glorious and blessed law of the kingdom of grace; one truth from which is worth more than all that nature speaks, or that Sinai thundered.

Exodus 19 records that God spoke to the assembled multitude from Sinai's

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formidable heights. His voice was “as the voice of a trumpet exceeding loud.” And when the voice... waxed louder and louder, Moses spake and God answered him by a voice.” This audible voice was a sign to show the people that they were not being deceived by Moses. Then followed the law of commandments, which is summed up in these words: “Behold I send an angel before thee to keep thee by the way and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared” (Exod. 23:20). This angel was the glorious Name-bearer (ch. 33:12) spoken of as Michael in Jude 1:9 and Rev. 12. Daniel’s Michael, the great Prince, the “*Who-like-El*,” God’s representative, His mouthpiece or voice to Israel. “The Word was made flesh and dwelt among them,” which is confirmed by many of the sayings of Jesus.

On his return to earth the Lord Jesus will come first to Sinai, but before he can enter the Holy Land he must come up to the various places mentioned throughout the prophets: Edom, Mount Seir and Bozrah. He comes from Sinai with 10,000 of his saints, styled by Paul, “the angels of his power” (2Thes. 1:7). And then, “The Lord will cause his glorious voice to be heard.” “See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh” exhorted the apostle in Heb. 12, when comparing Sinai past, and future. “Whose voice then shook the earth,” for “much more shall not we escape if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven.”

The heaven and earth (political) were shaken once in the Babylonian desolation and yet once more in the Roman, and the time approaches when the heaven and earth of the Gentile constitution of things will be also convulsed (vv. 25-26). Then “all knees shall be feeble and all faces ashamed,” when the Lord arises to shake terribly these existing orders, and as the psalmist declared, “God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this, that power belongeth unto God. Also unto Thee, O Yahweh, belongeth mercy: for Thou renderest to every man according to his works” (Psa. 62:11).

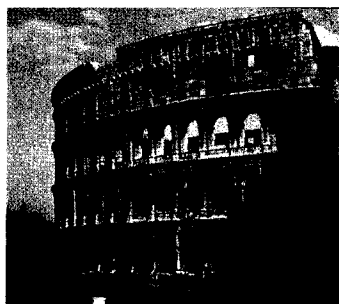
God has spoken in various ways in the past (Heb. 1:1). He does so through His own dear Son, our Saviour, giving us the loving invitation to come unto Him and find rest, strength and spiritual refreshment (Mat. 9:28; Rev. 22), but His voice when He comes for judgment will be “like the voice of the Almighty, a noise of tumult, like the noise of an host” (Eze. 1:24). May each one hear His voice in sweet and tenderest accents now, and obey Him at all times.

Speaking of God’s voice in its wonderful creative and destructive effects, the psalmist says, “Yahweh also thundered in the heavens and the Most High uttered His voice” (Psa. 18:13). “The earth shook and trembled... He bowed the heavens and came down... He rode upon a cherub and did fly; yea, He did fly upon the wings of the wind” (vv. 7-10). These words with their context are prophetic of the time referred to by Ezekiel. The clouds are the multitudes of mighty ones who speak with one powerful voice the judgments of God (Rev.

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11). "Voice" is sometimes used in the scriptures in the sense of signification: a thing signified by sign. Moses was to do certain signs to convince the Egyptian Court that he was sent by the Lord (Exod. 4). "It shall come to pass, if they will not believe thee, neither hearken to the voice of the first sign, that they will believe the voice of the latter sign." The voices, though not expressed in words, were that He whose power turned flesh leprous and restored it instantly, and changed the water of the Nile into blood, was able to deliver His people from bondage. The sign was one thing, the voice another. Voice is also used for "law," as, "if thou shalt obey His voice," i.e., His law (Exod. 23:22), and in Ezra 1:1, it is used for "proclamation." Cyrus caused a voice, or proclamation, to be sent throughout all the kingdom. In Rev. 6 we read of a voice reducing the wheat and barley to famine prices, but exempting the oil and wine. This voice that John heard was edicts, decrees and laws, proclaimed with authority and to be executed by a class of agents who exercised the power symbolized by the balances. John heard the voice in the midst of the four "living ones;" these being emblematic of the brethren of Christ and their fellow servants in all the Roman Earth. This sign-voice implied an intensely oppressive administration of public affairs in all the third seal period, with a brief intermission, writes Dr. Thomas. The "great voice" that arrested the attention of John in Patmos (Rev. 1:15), is described "as the sound of many waters." In this book of symbol "many waters represents "peoples, multitudes, nations and tongues" (17:15). Hence the voice of the Son of Man was the voice of a multitude and represented a multitudinous Son of Man. This is in agreement with Daniel's symbol (ch. 10:6) and Ezekiel also tells us that the noise made by the wings of the four Cherubim, was "like the noise of many waters." The multitudes of mighty ones referred to by Ezekiel, Daniel and John are the multitudes that no man can number, of all nations, kindreds, peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes and palms (of victory) in their hands, for then these "many waters" will have accomplished the great work assigned to them.

The voice of thunder in ch. 4:1-2, is the Voice of the Spirit that proved as fatal to Domitian as the writing on the wall did to Belshazzar by the same Spirit on the night he was slain. This voice was the opening of the first seal period, AD96. A voice that changed the time and whitened the situation of the affairs of the great Roman Habitable. It was the thundering voice of revolution that hurled the tyrant from his throne and inaugurated a new course of things, the effect of which will not cease until Christ has



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conquered Caesar.

In ch. 8 we read that "voices" were the first result of the Lamb's response to the prayers of the saints. The offering of perfume in the tabernacle being ended, the noise began in the outer court. They were the voices of the Lamb rendering recompense to his enemies, the outline history of which is given in *Eureka* vol. 3, pp. 11-74, and refers to the time of Constantine, AD337, when the voices of discontent and invasion were raised, and the most terrible fate befell the family of the Emperor by the voices, that were the means of silence, being excluded from the heaven. These verses (7-12) are significant of the consummation that awaits the family of Antichrist by the lightning, thunder and voices that are to proceed from the throne, at the coming manifestation of the sons of God. "The voices of Deity were terrific to all evil-doers," says Dr. Thomas; "they spared Gallus and Julian in childhood, but when their characters were developed and they proved themselves as evil as their catholic fathers, voices were uttered against them also and they, too, were swept from among the living."

Testifying of Belshazzar in whose kindred it was verified, as it was afterwards so notably in Constantine's, the prophet says, "Prepare slaughter for his children for the iniquity of their fathers, that they may not rise, nor possess the earth, nor fill the face of the world with cities" (Isa. 14:21).

With the eyes of his understanding enlightened, long before the fifth seal period, John saw the souls under the altar, of the slain servants of Jesus, and heard their great voice. Though really dead and therefore unconscious, they are represented as asking "how long" until their blood be avenged on their enemies. Sleeping in Jesus, the altar, they figuratively cry with a great voice, just as Abel's blood is said to have a voice and speak from the ground; and the blood of Jesus, "speaketh better things than the blood of Abel," says the apostle (Heb. 12:24) for it speaks of pardon to the guilty and eternal life to pardoned (Rev. 6:6).

In ch. 9:13 the whole community of the true believers spoken of as "a voice" or rather "one voice," for although it issued from the four horns of the altar, there was only one voice. According to the pattern in the Mosaic tabernacle, this living altar of gold has four horns, answering to the four living ones, and the four corners of the square, but one Spirit pervading the whole. They are of one heart and one soul (Acts 4:32). In singleness of heart... with one mind and one mouth they glorify God, even the Father (Acts 2:46; Rom. 15:6). In this vision there are no discordant voices, but "one voice," the unanimous voice of prayer, ascending from a heart whose faith was more precious than gold that perisheth, that receives the abundant answer in the events that follow. With one voice they cry day and night, and their cry ascends through the Spirit, who makes intercession for them to the Father and their prayers cause the judgments here

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exhibited to be set in motion which consummate ultimately in God avenging his elect.

In the days of his flesh Jesus said, "The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live." And again, "Marvel not at this: for the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done ill, unto the resurrection of judgment" (Jn. 5:25-28). Here is a voice that wakes the dead and calls the living together. By the power of the Seventh Trumpet in the period of the resurrection this will be effected. Paul tells us that "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God..." (1Thes. 4:16).

It is not the stunning sound of mighty thunder but an angel's whisper that will awake the sleepers in Jesus. A gentle call from a familiar voice is enough to rouse us from natural slumber and, methinks, the friends of Jesus, like Lazarus of old, will readily respond to the Saviour's voice and anon come forth from among the dead. The angels had much to do with the resurrection of Jesus, and in that glad day angels are to gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other (Mat. 24:31). The trumpet of the Jubilee (Lev. 23:24) will bring all the approved into possession of the inheritance symbolised in Rev. 14:6, and their joy will be unsurpassed.

Jewish history, unlike that of common history, is the story of the past prophetic of the future. The things that happened to Israel were for types, and were written for our admonition. Typical history is the past representative of the future. The Greek word "type" generally signifies "a resemblance or model," but it is variously rendered "print" (Jn. 20:25), "figure" (Acts 7:43), "fashion" (Acts 7:44), "form" (Rom. 6:17), "pattern" (Tit. 2:7; Heb. 8:5), "ensample" (Phil. 3:17), and "manner" (Acts 23:25). "The difference," says one commentator, "between a prophecy and a type is only this: that the former teaches by words, the latter by things. A word is the symbol of an idea; a type is the symbol of some principle or law, and the prediction of some general facts in the economy of redemption."

The "great voice" in the heaven (Rev. 12:10), that celebrates the victory over the great red dragon is of this typical character (Dan. 12:1; Rev. 20). It not only expresses what then was in figure, but by anticipation celebrates the greater realities of the great salvation and power of the kingdom of God. When this time arrives there will be in the heaven a "great voice" indeed. "A voice as the sound of many waters, and as the voice of great thunder: the voice of a great multitude, as the voice of many waters and as the voice of mighty thunderings" (Rev. 1:15; 14:2; 19:6-7).

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The "loud voice" of the One Angel in ch. 19 is one of the voices of the seventh seal (ch. 16:18) preparatory to Ephraim being shot forth like lightning from the Judah-bow in the hand of the Lord. It is the loud voice of the rainbowed angel as of a lion roaring. This had been preceded by a loud voice, announcing in all the "mid-heaven" or "air" into which the seventh vial will be poured, that the hour of judgment so long threatened, has actually arrived (ch. 14: 6-7). This is a voice of peace, friendship and goodwill to all who will obey it, but terrible in its consequences to those who neglect or reject it.

With one unanimous voice will all true believers lift up to God the voice of praise. Then shall be heard throughout the earth, the voice of joy and gladness, the voice of the Bridegroom and the Bride, the voice of melody and holy songs; for instead of sorrow, pain and anguish there shall be joy, health, life, and heaven's blest gift of perfect, abiding peace. In the world at present, peace is naturally very imperfect, but in the great age to come it will be full and flowing as a river. In this age it is Jerusalem "the vision of peace" but in the future it will be the happy possession of all God's people, their continual experience and enjoyment.

How different when we "enter into peace."

Peace now enters into us. It abides deep down in the heart of every true believer, and as one by one we fall asleep in our Lord's absence, the grave is our peaceful resting place. The body is laid in the grave. It is folded up, as it were, in the place where the garments of Jesus were folded, and laid in the great wardrobe of humanity until the resurrection day, but the life is hid in him, secure and certain, for he holds the key of death and the grave. "Truly God has spoken in the past in no uncertain accents," remarks a sister beloved, but men's ears have been dull of hearing. To the enlightened believer God still speaks in creation. The thunders are the undertone of His grand and awful voice. They fill us rightly with awe, while the mountains with uncovered heads listen reverently, and repeat the sound in endless reverberations. The torrents that roar and rage, as we have lately witnessed, the wind when it whispers in the zephyrs or howls in the hurricane is God's voice making known the gentleness and majesty of His power. Hurricanes and earthquakes have disturbed earth's beautiful proportions and here God clearly revealed, though we see Him often dimly at present.

"I am much afraid of high wind," says a young sister, "it sounds so dismal and foreboding, and yet I know it is one of the mighty works of our loving Father, and that He is able, in the wildest storms, to keep us safe from harm." Yes; and this may not be through any lack of faith, but due to ill-health or nervous temperament, but all being well, the wind shall be the next element for our considerations.

Chapter Thirteen

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*Thy chariots are all winds that blow
Thy ways are on the pathless sea
At thy command the waters flow,
The deeps lift up their voice to Thee.*

“BLESS Yahweh, O my soul... Who layeth the beams of His chambers in the waters, Who maketh the clouds His chariots; Who walketh upon the wings of the wind... Who maketh winds His messengers; His ministers a flaming fire” (Psalm 104:3, 4). Thus sang the sweet Psalmist of Israel, reminding us again that nature is full of evidences of the existence of a Being, infinite in wisdom, almighty in power and abundant in goodness.

The wind is a most useful, yea vital element in nature. Sometimes it is disastrous in its effects, but more often it accomplishes great good. Wind is air in motion. It is invisible, except in the stir and commotion and life it creates: sudden in its rise and in its fall, in its coming and in its going, but its effects are real. Hence Jesus, seeking to bring before Nicodemus the vital importance of the new birth and its effects, uses the motion of the wind as an illustration, saying, “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound (or voice) thereof, but knoweth not whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit” (Jn. 3:8). How tenderly our Lord dealt with his perplexed scholar, reminding him that there are many mysteries even in the common things around us. Life itself, whether natural or spiritual, is a mystery. We hear the wind, but what do we know about it? The effects are seen and felt, but we know nothing of its movements. As the motion of the wind is felt, so is the action of the Spirit-Word in the heart and its presence is known by its fruits. If our hearts have been changed, so that we are “renewed of the Spirit” are we showing it forth in our lives?

We look at a statue and admire it, for what was once an unmeaning block of marble, has been given almost life by the genius of the sculptor. It is a wonderful creation of art, but nothing like so wonderful as the work of the Spirit in the “new creation” of a soul “dead in trespasses and sins.” Renewed minds, changed affections, and godly tastes are the signs of the new birth in Christ.

In connection with the wonderful atmosphere in which the mind and heart are moved and stirred into life, the effects should not only be real but lasting. The dead and drooping spirit of man is awakened by the breath or spirit of God

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in the process of “begettal from above” by the Word, and sustained in the new life by the same divine power. We cannot exactly explain how, but we feel its blessed influence within us, and witness the results. The spirit of Truth works in us as the mind of the flesh is replaced by the mind of the Spirit, working in us “repentance unto life,” faith, hope, love, joy, peace, and meekness. It sanctifies and makes us holy. Although we cannot tell how the change is made, we can see the difference it makes in the life. If we were to take a needle and place it gently upon the surface of a glass of water, it would sink to the bottom; but if, before placing it upon the water, we were to rub it briskly between our fingers, and then place it upon the surface, it would not sink. It would float like a piece of wood instead of steel. We would see no difference in the needle from the outside, between what it was when sinking and what it was when floating. But something has been done to it which makes the needle able to float. Thus the power of the spirit-Word acts in a similar manner. It helps us to do and bear things that we could never do without it. It teaches, guides and comforts us, according to the words of Jesus in John 14. Where Christ is present by his spirit there can be no wilderness without manna, no rock without water, and no dungeon without light, and if we have the spirit-Mind in such measure as Christ intended his followers to possess (Eph. 5:18) and God is willing to help us develop (Luke 11:13), we shall have strength to overcome evil, and peace — the peace that “passeth all understanding.” And we shall realise, too, that “every virtue we possess, and every conquest won, and every thought of holiness, are His alone.”

We are not surprised that the powerful operations and motions of God’s spirit, quickening and reviving the heart towards Himself are compared to the blowing of the wind, when we consider all this.

Naturally, how fresh is the atmosphere at this very moment, and how it has invigorated our wearied senses. What a beneficent change it has brought in all nature since the recent storm. If we observe still more closely its miraculous effects both naturally and spiritually, we shall discern more clearly the most wonderful and incomprehensible wisdom of God, and shall exclaim like the Psalmist of old, “All Thy works praise Thee, O Yahweh and Thy saints shall bless Thee. They shall speak the glory of Thy kingdom, and talk of Thy power” (145:10-11) — even “the stormy wind fulfilling His word” (Psalm 148). If we look into a beautiful orchard or garden after a windy night in summer, we may behold the ground strewn with branches, twigs and half-grown, unripe fruit, and unwisely censure the wind, or rather the benign Instigator thereof for all this seeming waste and destruction. But let us well consider the wisdom of all this before condemning, for the trees overladen with fruit that could never reach full growth or perfection, still cling to the parent branches throughout the balmy days, until the rain falls and the wind arises. The trees are then relieved of the

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heavy untimely, burden, and the nourishment and strength that would have been bestowed in vain, is given to the fruitful branches that have stood the test of the stormy wind, and these receive the increased nutriment so essential to growth and perfection. This natural pruning of the healthy branches and the fast developing fruit, is also the means of light and air reaching the more secluded parts of the tree, thus assisting in the growth and ripening of the whole. The boisterous gales that sweep through the great forests in winter, strip off with relentless force immense boughs and branches from the majestic trees and clear them of all their dead and superfluous incumbrances, making room for young shoots and more vernal growths in the early spring, besides supplying fuel for the poor and humble peasantry. More is accomplished in one night by God's mighty messenger — the wind — than men could possibly achieve in a lifetime with all their skilful inventions and ingenuity.

The more we consider the works of nature the more convinced we must be that God not only created all things, but had in view the order of their marvellous workings and maintenance. And what is the spiritual lesson to be learned from this analogy. The beloved apostle to the Gentiles says in 1Cor. 2:10, "The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." Wind-like it sweeps through the ecclesias — God's grander orchards of choice and selected trees, and penetrates to the inmost being of each individual member, sifting, piercing and discerning the thoughts and intents of each heart (Heb. 4:12). By the power of the convicting and cleansing influences of the Spirit-filled Word of God, the true members of Christ are purified and strengthened, while many a dead and withering branch is lopped off in the refining process: for, "If any man have not the spirit, or mind, of Christ, he is none of his" testified the same apostle, even though united in the appointed way to Christ. When the winds of trial and adversity blow, the strength and reality of each tree is tested. The deformed, withered and useless branches soon fall to the ground and their fruit, or works, perish with them; but the healthy, fruit-bearing branches are strengthened by these trials of faith and tests of loyalty and obedience, and produce thereby more abundant and richer fruits of the Spirit, and have yet a wider scope of influence. Again, if we think of the hurricanes and wintry gales that are often so destructive in their effects, the lesson is obvious. We may have observed that it is usually the dilapidated fences that come to grief, the loose tiles and weather-worn roofs that collapse, the faulty, unequally-proportioned buildings that are demolished, the sapless boughs that are lopped off from the trees, and the trees that have deformed and stunted roots, whose trunks and root-fibres do not equal their imposing height or grand circumference that are generally uprooted.

Just as the trees are moved and stirred by the rough winds to prune and

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strengthen them, so God often sends the rough winds of trouble, distress and calamity to arouse us up to a sense of duty and to discover the useless branches. Speaking of these searching winds that represent the motions of the spirit, in Song of Solomon 4:16, the Bridegroom declares: "Awake, O north wind; and come thou south; blow upon my garden (or orchard of choice and precious trees) that the spices (the fragrance and graces of a Spirit-filled life) may flow out." This cold, bleak wind of discipline is sometimes necessary to bring the best out of us, and to rouse us up from indifference or self-satisfaction. There is a wise and good purpose in all the adverse circumstances of our human existence. Let us recollect that although winds are ever so high and ever so rough, God is able to stay them (Isa. 27:8). "He stayeth His rough wind in the day of the east wind" wrote the prophet. That is, He intermingles light in the dark and stormy skies, He causes the sun to shine even in the storm and makes the trial that seems most severe to help in purifying those who are afflicted by it.

A little thing soon provokes an angry person, and he is not easily pacified but God considers our frame and is slow to anger, and will not always be chiding. As in the days of Moses, He still sees the afflictions of His people. They can never suffer, even though it be through their own ignorance or wilfulness, without drawing down divine sympathies. He rides upon the whirlwind to their aid and directs the stormy wind. The influences of the Spirit as the wind, are to stir us up for good affections, and work within us both to will and to do of His good pleasure. God sends the north wind of conviction, and the south wind of comfort, so that we shall not be overwhelmed or chilled and driven to despair.

"Few recognise the wind as a blessing," remarks a sister, yet Amos speaks of it as such in ch. 4:13. It is one of God's mighty and glorious works used to accomplish His will and for a specific purpose (v. 7), and it is no high-flown sentimental expression of the prophet's own imagination, when Jeremiah says, "He bringeth the wind out of His treasures" (10:13) and repeated his statement in ch. 51:15-16, which is endorsed by the Psalmist in Psa. 135. Observe how God uses this wonderful element in accomplishing His almighty designs for the benefit of mankind. In Gen. 8:1 we read, "God remembered Noah... and God made a wind to pass over the earth and the waters assuaged." The wind that brought up the rain clouds that darkened the heavens and flooded the earth now at His behest drives them away and dries up the mighty waters. It is recorded in Exod. 14:21, that "Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and Yahweh caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided."

The Israelites were upon the left or west side of the sea. The east wind from the desert, therefore, must have penetrated the sea and divided the waters. If it had been a natural wind it would have blown the whole waters over the hosts of

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Israel and thus have drowned them. The Red Sea runs north and south of the Arabian desert as it was divided in ancient times. If the wind had come from the north it would have driven the sea towards the main ocean, but coming from the east it cut through the sea. It blew against the Israelites and across the water and they passed through, showing how miraculous it was.

Both were incidents of much blessing. "Thou didst blow with Thy wind," sang Moses, and the children of Israel, in their glorious song of triumph, "the sea covered them (their enemies) they sank as lead in the mighty waters." Later in their history we read that "a wind from Yahweh brought quails from the sea and let them fall by the camp." That is, they flew in the air at the height of two cubits above the ground. Higher critics explain this away and affirm that "high" must mean "deep." Reckoning 20 miles (32 kilometres) each way and two cubits deep, this would mean an enormous quantity, and each Israelite would have to consume a number of bushels each day. But the truth is clear. The quails flew within that area instead of up in the air, and the Israelites could put out their hands and take them.

In the book of Job there is an instance of the destructive use of the wind (ch. 1:19), and another is recorded in the book of Jonah (ch. 4:8), where we read how Jonah, repining at God's mercy for Nineveh, is reproved by the type of a gourd. "God prepared a vehement, or sultry east wind, and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted and requested for himself that he might die." Job, who suffered the most severest of family losses through the wind, could nevertheless speak of it as a great blessing and benefit to mankind, when he says in ch. 37:21, "men see not the bright light which is in the clouds: but the wind passeth and cleanseth them." Light always is, but it is not always to be seen. When clouds come between, the sun is darkened in the clear day. So the light of God's favour shines ever towards us, although it is not always seen. Sins are clouds that often hinder us from seeing the glory of God in the face of Jesus. As to the clouds of sorrow that so often darken our minds, if we would but trust and be still, the Lord has a wind that passes and clears them all away; for as the wind dispels and sweeps away the clouds that gather in the air, so the spirit of God clears our minds from the clouds and fogs of ignorance and unbelief; of sin and lust, and after a while will clear away all that now hides the full purport of His will from our weeping eyes. So—

"Give to the winds thy fears; Hope and be undismayed;

God hears thy sighs and counts thy tears, God shall lift up thy head."

Yes, "all things work together for good to those who love God." All winds waft the vessel that lays her head towards the true haven, and all winds and tides help the ship that steers by the right compass and the right chart; even guiding her to the haven that God has prescribed.

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The contrary wind of adverse circumstances and the boisterous winds of opposition will not turn us aside or baffle us if our hopes are fixed on Christ.

Speaking of creative good, the Psalmist says: "He (Yahweh) causeth His wind to blow and the waters to flow" (147:18). And Job says, when referring to the excellency of His wisdom, "Elohim understandeth the way thereof... He looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heaven: To make the weight for the winds: He weigheth, or meteth out the waters by measure" (ch. 28:24, 25). Everything in nature is perfectly right.

Even according to scientific laws everything is in exact proportion. The quantity of water is just right. If there were more, the earth would be too damp to live on: if less, our needs would be unsupplied. It is the same with the portion of the land, and the weight and measure of the wind (Isa. 40:12). "Mine hand hath laid the foundation of the earth and My right hand hath spanned the heavens," says the Lord (Isa. 48:13). "Who hath gathered the wind in his fists? Who hath bound the waters in his garment? Who hath established all the ends of the earth," enquired Agur, the son of Jakeh (Pro. 30:4). "The wind goeth toward the south and turneth about unto the north, it turneth about continually in its course and the wind turneth again to its circuits" observed the wise preacher (Ecc. 1:6), and yet it is held in control by divine law. It is said that man is as changeable as the wind. His senses are soon tired, and yet he still craves for what is untried. Let us seek to have our minds directed in a right course, so that every thought may be brought into obedience to the law of Christ.

The apostle Paul compares vain and inconstant opinions and doctrines to the wind when exhorting the believers to unity of faith, for the building up and perfecting of the Body of Christ. The Lord's servants should be "no longer children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine... but speaking the truth in love, or dealing truly, grow up in all things into him who is the head, even Christ" (Eph. 4:16).

The wavering, uncertain Christian is like a wave of the sea, driven by the wind and tossed, and must not expect to receive anything of the Lord (Jas. 1:6). As the wind is a subtle element, so are false doctrines without the substance of the Truth. Like the wind, uncertain, now blowing from one quarter and now from another, now loud and presently silent, so are false doctrines and false professors uncertain and unreliable. Now making a great noise and commotion, and then suddenly vanishing. "Do ye imagine to reprove words? Seeing that the speeches of one that is desperate are as wind (or, "for the wind"), enquired Job, (ch. 6:26). Bildad the Shuhite, answered and said: "How long wilt thou speak these things, and how long shall the words of thy mouth be like a mighty wind?" (ch. 8:2). A strong and driving wind is here used as a figure of empty professions and vain conceits. "Should a wise man make answer with vain

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knowledge (or “knowledge of wind,” RV footnote) and fill himself with the east wind?” asked Eliphaz. “Should he reason with unprofitable talk or with speeches wherewith he can do no good?” (ch. 15:2-3). “Ephraim feedeth on wind and followeth after the east wind,” deplored the Almighty, through the prophet Hosea (ch. 12:1), “he continually multiplieth lies and desolation.” Speaking of Israel in ch. 8:7, he says: “They have sown the wind and they shall reap the whirlwind.” Ephraim fed himself with vain hopes of help from man; when he was at enmity with God, and when he met with disappointments he still pursued his course, and followed after the east wind, which he could not catch hold of, nor if he had it should it have been nourishing but noxious.

We say the east wind is neither good for man nor beast. It was said that Israel sowed the wind, and as he sows so he reaps — the whirlwind! And as he reaps so he feeds on the wind — the east wind! Those who make creatures their confidence are very foolish. They are taking a great deal of trouble to their own loss and vexation. It was a bad harvest for Israel. They had put themselves to a deal of trouble and expense to make and worship idols. They had taken as much pains as the husbandman does of sowing his corn and in expecting some great advantage from it. But it was in vain they “laboured for the wind” (Ecc. 5:16). They took pains to no purpose, for “he that soweth iniquity shall reap vanity” (Pro. 22:8). “Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy,” exhorted their prophet (ch. 10:12). “Break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till He come and rain righteousness upon you.” For, as Habakkuk testified, “is it not of Yahweh of hosts that the people labour for the fire and the nations weary themselves for vanity?” (ch. 2:13). They that make idols of the world or anything in it, that, like the wind, make a great noise and commotion but are so vague and unsubstantial, bring ruin upon themselves. The prophet Isaiah foretold how Israel should lament their past ignorance and powerlessness, saying: “We have as it were brought forth wind” (ch. 26:18). That is, we have been in expectation of help and deliverance out of trouble, but our hopes have proved empty and unsuccessful.

All God’s creative works were intended to be blessings at the first, but history shows how often they are used contrary to nature and designed for punishment and destruction. The judgments of God are compared to the wind in Isa. 27, although God’s judgments upon Israel are more of the nature of chastisements for “by this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit to take away his sin. He (God) stayeth His rough wind in the day of the east wind” (v. 8). That is, He assuages the fury of the storm and mitigates the severity of the judgment. But when lighter calamities are not effectual to fan and to cleanse, God will give sentence — a whirlwind and a storm of vengeance that will execute His word. The prophet says, “At that time

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shall it be said to this people and to Jerusalem, a dry, or hot wind from the bare heights in the wilderness towards the daughter of my people, not to fan nor to cleanse," but a wind too strong for this — a full wind from these shall come unto Me" (Jer. 4:11-12). Thus the coming in of an army swiftly and fiercely, destroying all before them is compared to a dry or full wind. This was the sort of wind that was in the stork-like wings of the two ephah-bearing women, borne on the wings of the wind, recorded in Zech. 5:9. Multitudes are ruined by thinking that God will not be so strict with them as His Word says. Both Judah and Israel had said, "It is not He; neither shall evil come upon us, neither shall we see the sword, nor famine" (Jer. 5:12). Honest men in Jerusalem were few. Even the prophets gave fair warning but turned it off with a jest. Their words were but as wind. It was not the word of the Lord in them, therefore His judgments as a mighty wind should pursue and overtake them, and scatter and make them afraid. "Terror" says Job, "pursued my soul as the wind" (ch. 30:15). Whether wind-like troubles and calamities pursue nations or individuals, their swift, driving and sweeping character must strike terror into the hearts of those affected by them. As the wind is a useful element in separating the wheat from the chaff it becomes a most appropriate figure of the irresistible breath or spirit of God that is yet to slay the wicked (Isa. 11:4), and to clear the political and ecclesiastical air of all that is useless and offensive.

"The ungodly are like the chaff which the wind driveth away," says the Psalmist (1:4). The primitive Oriental method of winnowing the corn provides this striking figure. Hence the frequent connection between the wind, the whirlwind and the chaff in the scriptures (Isa. 30:24). Speaking of Christ and his mission, the Baptist said, "whose fan in in his hand and he will thoroughly



cleanse his floor, but the chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire" (Mat. 3:12). The wheat and chaff are separated with a fork or winnowing fan. The grain is heaped up and as the men dig the fork into it and toss it into the air, the wind carries away the light chaff and leaves the heavier grain on the floor. The ungodly are like the dust that the owner of the threshing-floor desires to have driven away as not being any use. They are

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worthless in God's account, although they may highly esteem themselves and each other. They are easily driven to and fro by every wind of temptation, and will as easily be swept away altogether. The chaff may be for a while among the wheat, but he is coming whose fan is in his hand and he will thoroughly purge his floor.

Those that by their own sin and folly make themselves as the chaff will be found so before the whirlwind and fire of divine wrath. Humanity at best is so frail and defenceless, nothing more than a passing wind, as Job said in ch. 7:7, or as the Psalmist testified: "a wind that passeth away and cometh not again" (78:39). Or, using another beautiful figure, "his days are as grass..." (Psa. 103:15-16). Just as the wind whistles over the stubble field in autumn and wafts the sere leaves, red, amber, and brown, into the air, so the wind passeth over us and we are gone. Referring to the hypocrite, Job said: "The east wind carrieth him away and as a storm hurleth him out of his place" (ch. 27:21). This vehement wind will soon carry away the chaff, stubble, and all such like things along with it, but the wheat will remain to be safely garnered in: the house with a good foundation will stand (Mat. 6:25). The doctrines of false teachers may carry aside unstable believers, but those that are rooted in faith and humility, knowing their own weakness and the grace of God in Christ Jesus, will not be moved. And a very beautiful thought is that, in spite of all their past iniquity, God will yet use Jacob as His mighty instrument in threshing the mountains, or empires of Christendom, and making the hills, or smaller powers, as chaff, for it is recorded "thou (Jacob) shall fan them and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them" (Isa. 41:16). "They are as stubble before the wind and as chaff that the storm carrieth away" (Job 21:18). Daniel foretells how the world empires became "like chaff of the summer threshing floors, and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them" (ch. 2:35).

In the accomplishment of this great work the Psalmist says prophetically, "He rode upon a cherub and did fly: yea, He flew swiftly upon the wings of the wind" (Psa. 18:10). The white cloud, or cherub, upon which the Spirit rides are the multitudes of mighty ones who are associated with Christ (Rev. 19:14; Psa. 104:3). Those who are wise will hasten to escape this stormy wind and tempest (Psa. 55:8). They will flee from the wrath to come; they will take refuge betimes in the divinely appointed hiding-place, as Isaiah most eloquently foretells "a man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and covert from the tempest" (ch. 32:2). A hiding-place; so that the wind's fierce force shall not overwhelm nor annoy them; a covert, so that it shall not sweep them away.

As the overhanging rocks afford refreshing shelter and shade to the weary traveller in the desert, so God's power, truth and love yield to the believer the only real protection and refreshment in the journey of life. Christ himself bore

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all the severity of the stormy wind and tempest when he endured the contradiction of sinners, and to him the trembling believer may flee for refuge, both now and in the future.

Like the Hebrews, we acknowledge four principal winds, although really there is but one wind blowing from various quarters. The east wind in Hebrew is called *kadim*. It is injurious to vegetation and dangerous at sea. "Thou breakest the ships of the sea through the east wind," testified the Psalmist (Isa. 48:7). This is true for all times and untold damage had been done by this wind throughout the past ages, yet students of prophecy see in this passage a wider meaning, and from its context look for a final fulfilment in the "judgments written" (Psa. 144). A better translation of this verse is "with a wind of the east Thou wilt wreck the ships of Tarshish." The character of the east wind, dry and piercing, may be gathered from frequent mention of it in the scriptures (Gen. 41:6). Predicting the fall of ancient Tyre, the prophet Ezekiel says: "Thy rowers have brought thee into great waters: the east wind hath broken thee in the midst of the seas" (ch. 27:26). Through the prophet Jeremiah, Yahweh declares of His people "I will scatter them with an east wind before the enemy" (ch. 18:17). In some passages, such as in Psa. 103:16, and Jer. 4:11-12, a peculiar withering and fatal power is ascribed to the wind. The hot winds of the east are no doubt alluded to here; the sirocco, and its more appalling form, the simoom. This gale is as hot as a burning oven and the atmosphere is loaded with minute particles of sand. The simoom is yet more intense and carries the poison of death on its wings. The traveller buries his face in the sand so that he may not breathe it. This may have been the agent employed in the destruction of Sennacherib's army, for Yahweh said: "I will send a blast upon him (the king of Assyria) and he shall hear a rumour and return to his own land" (Isa. 27:7). In the storm experienced by Paul on his way to Rome, a tempestuous wind arose, called *Euroclydon*, or *Euralquilo*, now known as a Levanter. The ship was caught and could not face its severity, so she was allowed to be driven about by it (Acts 27:14). This wind blows from all points, from the N.E. round by E. to S.E., and its danger results from its violence and the uncertainty of its course. It is of the nature of a whirlwind and falls suddenly upon ships, causing them to flounder. On account of the contrary wind, from the N.W. (v. 4) they sailed under the lee of Cyprus for protection, for between Cyprus and Cilicia there was always a current flowing westward, which helped them forward to Myra, where the centurion found a ship of Alexandria (v. 6), perhaps driven there by the same N.W. gale. A south-west breeze (vv. 12-13) is generally quickly followed by violent northerly winds, as it was in this case.

One lesson we may gather from this incident is confidence in God's foreknowledge and overruling power for our protection under all circumstances.

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“Yahweh knoweth them that are His” and will not forget them in the hour of distress. The ship that carried God’s “chosen vessel” to Rome, was tossed and driven with the wind and waves, hurried to and fro with the utmost violence, and yet an angel found his way into it.

No storms can hinder Him from sending speedy help and comfort to His servants when needed, for He is a present help — a help at hand, when the tempestuous winds howl around them and the billows roar (Psa. 46:1, 3) and can deliver them out of the direst perils. “Out of the south cometh the whirlwind, and cold out of the north” — or scattering winds, says Job (ch. 37:9). “By the breath of God ice is given; and the breadth of the waters are straightened.” Frost is given by the wind, which is the breath of God as the thunders are His voice. It is caused by the cold freezing wind of the north. The effect is that the waters that spread themselves and flowed with liberty are straightened, congealed and bound up in crystal fetters.

Both the powerful, freezing north wind (Heb. *tzaphon*) and the thawing composing south wind (Heb. *darom*) are compared to the Spirit of God. “The north wind bringeth forth rain” we read in Pro. 25:23 (RV). The AV gives an alternative rendering: “driveth away rain,” but a traveller relates that when passing between Lebanon and the sea, it rained without ceasing while the north wind blew directly in his face.

In the east squalls of winds precede these rains. Probably Elijah heard the gusts driving up the clouds when he told Ahab of the sound of the abundance of rain. In the northern hemisphere we are accustomed to expect snow or cold when the north wind blows, although Job further testifies that “fair weather cometh out of the north” (Job 37:22). “Gold” or golden splendour is given in the RV, which throws a new light on the passage and we perceive an important truth concerning the things of Christ embedded therein. Ezekiel informs us that “a stormy wind came out of the north, a great cloud, with a fire unfolding itself,” or flashing continually, and a brightness round about it, and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber (ch. 1:4). He beheld a manifestation of the resurrected saints and tells us that he was looking in a northerly direction. It represented the Spirit in tempestuous and destructive operation. But to show that it was not free spirit, but embodied spirit he says that out of the fire issued forth the likeness of Four Living Creatures. The association of the orbs with the heavens directed the attention of Ezekiel to the firmament which was as terrible crystal (ch. 1:22). Crystal (*keraph*) means “ice,” or “hoar frost,” so that above the cherubim there was a covering of clear dazzling white crystals composed of frozen water in a clear state — the meaning of which may be derived from a comparison with “a sea of glass clear as crystal” in Rev. 4:6.

The first indication was the noise of a mighty wind accompanied by a great

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cloud surrounded by a remarkable brilliancy. In the time of the apostles God literally manifested His Spirit in this manner (Acts 2:2-3). The Spirit is here compared to the irresistible force of a mighty "rushing wind." "Rushing" means "borne or carried along" as the rushing of water near a mill — a waterfall or cataract. Involuntary motion caused by a superior power. Wind is a most powerful force, as well as rapid in its movements (for example: Eurydice, the great warship, was blown out of the water in a moment). When this divine breath or spirit of God took possession of the little company assembled "with one accord," waiting for the promised blessing, they were borne along by its mighty influence, and went forth everywhere, fearlessly proclaiming the Truth as it is in Jesus, and none were able to gainsay nor resist the wisdom and spirit by which they spoke. Wind-like where the Spirit directed them to go, they went, and a stir and commotion was made that aroused the hearts and consciences of men and women — that silenced all opposition and stirred into life and activity many who gladly received their word; and these were filled with the same irresistible power to influence others for good. It may be difficult to understand why this powerful wind or spirit should issue from the north unless we take it in a more literal manner. Strictly the north is "a district," covered, dark, obscured: the derived meaning being the north of the earth (*tsophoun*) which was conceived of as veiled in obscurity with high mountains and masses of rocks, in contrast with the light and clearness of the south.

There is therefore a manifestation, or bringing to light, symbolical of the manifestation of the Sons of God, whose life has been hid with Christ in God. Their sanctified state is shown by the yellow of gold, and Job refers to the north as the gold-bearing district. Isaiah says "I have raised up One from the north, and he shall come: from the rising of the sun shall he call upon My Name: and he shall come upon princes as mortar and as the potter treadeth clay" (ch. 41:25). Here the same root *tsophoun* ("secret or hidden") is used by the Psalmist (83:3): "O El, thine enemies... have taken crafty counsel... against Thy hidden ones." And Ezekiel says "They shall pollute My secret place" (*tsophoun*, hidden)—the temple (ch. 7:22).

In the type, we are told that Moses put the table of shewbread upon the side of the tabernacle northward and set the bread that represented the national constitution of Israel, together with spiritual Israel selected from among the Gentiles, "upon it before Yahweh" (Exo. 40:22).

The visible signs of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost were "cloven tongues, like as of fire." Both wind and fire were sensible signs addressed to the ears and eyes of those present; so the more glorious and powerful manifestation of the Spirit in Christ and his saints, in the future, is associated with these symbols.

A stream of fire filled the house. Fire is penetrating in its influences; it

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quickly destroys, and has a purifying efficacy. It is a fitting emblem of the Spirit of God that destroys all that is impure. Hence the beautiful figurative language of Psalms 18:9-14 and 68. Moses referred to this in Deu. 33:26. The saints are “the heavens” ridden by the God of Jeshurun, who, with Judah and Ephraim at their command, ride forth in brilliant majesty and irresistible might (Zech. 9:13; Isa. 41:14) portrayed in Hab. 3 in such glowing terms.

There is a time of trouble intervening: even now are we passing through it. Israel has been scattered and driven to the four winds, or corners of the earth, but the day approaches when the words foretold by the prophet will be fulfilled. “Behold, these shall come from far, and, lo, these from the north and from the west” (Isa. 49:12). “I will say to the north: Give up; and to the south: Keep not back, bringing My sons from far, and My daughters from the ends of the earth” (Isa. 43:6). In the book of symbols we read: “I (John) saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, restraining the four winds of the earth, that a wind blow not against the earth, nor against the sea, nor against any tree” (ch. 7:1). The reason given why the four winds were restrained from blowing to the injury of the earth and sea, was the sealing of the servants of God. This work would have been impossible while the tempests, excited by the blowing of these winds, or calamities, were in motion. History shows us that the first “wind” began to blow “upon the earth,” AD39. In the opening period of the seventh seal, judgment was restrained on account of the sealing angel’s work. During the sixth seal there was noise and tumult, as events prove, and we may perceive how great was the uproar, by the word “silence” ensuring. It was the stillness and quietude of a calm after one storm, and before the outburst of another, when the four winds were released and did not cease to blow until the Apostasy had been sorely tried.

During the sealing of the symbolical 144,000 John saw the authorities who had control of these destroying tempests, “holding the four winds” or Roman Empire, that “the wind” of divine fury, blowing then in all directions, should not blow against the earth, sea, or any tree, meaning the great ones among the people. But being released they sounded forth, destroying blasts and swept with withering desolations, all green and living things. These hurricanes and desolations are figuratively styled “trumpets,” and as “the wind” was to sweep over the four sections of the territory of Daniel’s fourth beast dominion, each blasting current became a distinct trumpet, so that the first four trumpets are very appropriately styled the “wind trumpets.” Each of Daniel’s four beasts or dominions, were brought up out of the sea by the four winds of his vision, and John beheld the same four winds as he stood upon the sand of the sea — the sea of Mediterranean nations, lashed into fury by the four winds of the heaven — the sea that cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt (Isa. 57:20), whose

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waters are dark and muddy and no light can penetrate below its stormy surface. Daniel saw the successive phases through which the kingdoms of men would pass, were to result from the tempests of war in the Mediterranean countries. The winds were not all blowing together, but successively and at long intervals, each tempest resulting in a change in the constitution and government of the kingdom of the beasts.

So mighty winds of judgment, continue your terrible work, until everything that is cruel, false and unholy is swept from off this sad, yet beautiful earth; until the darkness and mists of the night of sorrow disappear, and the anticipated morn of unending gladness be ushered in.

A bright amber cloud careering on the wind, resplendent with the rays of the sun, reminds us of the prophet's words: "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?" (Isa. 60:8-9). As the prophet sees this animated cloud (Ezekiel 27) coming from the east, west, north and south, he enquires: "Who are these that seem to fly with such speed, as a cloud flies upon the winds, or as doves hurry home when the storm threatens them, to find refuge in their dove-cotes, or return from long migration." Yes, they are coming back to their own land, those illustrious ancient people, under the protection of our own favoured country, and "if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead."

So let us yield ourselves to God implicitly and to the sweet influences of the Spirit through the divine Word as we see the time drawing nigh. Just as the pliable trees bow and bend before the forceful wind, let our minds and wills be blended with the sovereign will of our Father in heaven and humbly submit to His all-wise decrees. Like the stout, unmovable trees that stubbornly resist the power of the elements, so are those who proudly resist the Spirit of God. Sooner or later they must succumb to the very power they resist and be suddenly hurled from their places.

"I shall recollect this enjoyable discourse whenever I hear the wind howling among the tall trees, or sweeping like a mighty giant through the land and over the sea," says our sister as we talked together, "and I shall pray to be emptied of all selfishness, so that I may be filled with the life-giving Spirit of Truth from God, to all who ask for it. I will say with the Psalmist: "What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee." May our loving Father abundantly fulfil our desires—but would it not be better to go a step higher, and say with the prophet: "I will trust and not be afraid"?"

Chapter Fourteen

“A MORNING WITHOUT CLOUDS”

*Hail to the brightness of Zion's glad morning!
Long by the prophets of Israel foretold
Hail to the millions from bondage returning,
Gentiles and Jews the glad vision behold.*

WHAT a delightful morning is this! The sky is perfect, almost transparent. There is not a cloud to be traced over the whole shining expanse above our heads, and the gladsome earth is bathed in sunlight. There are some things in nature too beautiful for words to express, and one of these assuredly is “*a morning without clouds.*” How exquisitely grand — how transporting and lovely is the sight! Thrice happy are they who have the opportunity and leisure to enjoy it to the full.

Our company is much smaller on this occasion, for summer morning rambles are exceptional and rare for busy, working folk. Hence, we who are thus privileged to participate in it, thoroughly appreciate the blessing. We gaze upwards to the ethereal heavens, serene, yet brilliant in the light of the morning sun, with hearts overflowing with love and gratitude to the eternal Father dwelling in light unapproachable, for this delicious foretaste of those unending glories of that future age of perfect bliss, and raise our voices in blithesome melody to the Giver of all good, till the woodlands re-echo the joyful sound. And thus will it be when that cloudless morning dawns. Glad immortal voices will awaken the silent hills, and they shall break forth into singing (Isa. 55:12). “For the ransomed of Yahweh shall return and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads”(Isa. 35).

As we wend our way through the verdure-clad country, fragrant, fresh and exhilarated through the previous rain, there is but one regret: that our number is so comparatively small. Some we almost relied upon being present with us are not here, while others we least expected to see among us again are in our midst, looking vigorous, healthy and happy; and the solemn truth is forced home to our hearts that some, not all, of those with whom we have associated in our walk through life — with whom we have taken sweet counsel together, even some who have named the name of Christ, and have united with him and us in the bonds of the gospel, will not come forth with gladness to welcome the light of the millennial Dawn, and our inmost soul enquires: “Lord is it I? is it I?”

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But away with such gloomy forebodings and saddening regrets — the lesson is obvious to all who have eyes to see. Nothing can hinder or separate us from participation in these glorious things but our own sinful hearts pounding after the cares of this life or the deceitfulness of riches; so “let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and run with patience the race set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith,” and not turn back in the day of trouble and trial. .

We should press forward, through the rain and storm, through the dark night of sorrow and adversity, till we behold the golden light of morn triumphing over the submerging blackness. None need despair, however dark their path or cloudy their skies, for our God is merciful and never makes our way so dark but that He will take our hand and lead us. He never denounces judgment on the guilty without first warning them of the danger. In the darkest hour of trial there are some intervals of brightest sunshine to cheer us on our journey if we will only look up, and some of the most glorious promises are set amid the severest judgment in the divine Word, to encourage the weak and erring to fresh hope and efforts. We rarely see a black cloud in the sky without some shafts and streaks of sunshine breaking through them. It is one of the most striking features in all the predicted judgments of God that they seem to be in the moral sky what clouds and lightning and tempest are in the natural sky; so that there never is a thundercloud that bursts without some gleams of sunshine stricken through or behind it. And often the greatness of the storm is the pioneer of the calm, and the sunshine that succeed it, as we observe from recent experience. We rarely have a storm so thoroughly overcasting the sky that here and there we do not see streaks of sweet sunshine, or a rainbow spread upon the bosom of the black cloud, promising a bright day; and proving that God has neither forgotten nor forsaken His covenant. Each mercy and blessing, each consolation that comes to us at intervals amid the desolating storms of adversity and trouble are like the beautiful bow of promise or the sunshine lining the dark cloud.

Yes, God is good, and in His mercy He interlaces the edges of the darkest clouds with some rays of the Sun of Righteousness, to remind us of the perfect day, and fill our hearts with hope and courage.

We will take the curved roadway, following the indented shores of the estuary, for there the rocks cutting through the hillside are clothed with a wealth of wild flowers, bracken and woodland; moss-grown walls from which peep yellow stone-crop and purple toad-flax, while here and there are ivy-clad, leaved cottages, with clematis, fuchsia and jasmine, shedding a blaze of colour, and through the interstices of the undergrowth, gleams of silvery water and golden sand meet our eyes.

If we look above us to behold the glory and majesty of our God, we may

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look around to see His infinite love and wisdom. Every morning He scatters the dewdrops like diamonds from His fatherly hand and tints every opening flower with His own perfect touch. He gives to every rose its sweet perfume; He lights up the lamps of the sky at night, and give to each day the virgin beauty of the morning, the majestic and royal magnificence of the moon each night, the loveliness and repose of twilight and evening, and not a sparrow falls to the ground without His knowledge.

It is early yet, and the dew drops still sparkle on the leaves and flowers not yet touched by the rising sun. In the warm Middle Eastern climates the dew falls sudden, heavy and in innumerable drops, saturating the earth and bathing every leaf, flower and petal on every part of the soil. There could be no more magnificent figure of refreshment and renewed vigour than this, and so God says through His servant Hosea: “I will be as the dew unto Israel.” And again in 2Sam. 17: “We will light upon him (Ahithophel) as the dew falleth on the ground,” silently and unperceived. God has also testified that just as the dew descends and saturates the earth and makes the summer overtake the spring, so let “righteousness spring up” like the grass in April and like the flowers in summer (Isa. 45:8). The Sun of Righteousness who rises only once, to set no more, causes righteous ones to spring forth from the earth, by a resurrection from the grave. The righteousness first pours down from heaven, in the person of Christ, and then the earth opens, with wondrous results.

A more beautiful sight in Nature could scarcely be seen than that presented on a clear autumn morning soon after sunrise. Every leaf and spray is united by the light tissues of the spider’s web, on which are threaded beads of transparent water, glittering in the beams of the rising sun. Every blade of grass is, in like manner, enveloped in a fine coat of moisture, and spangled with brilliant drops. On careful observation it will be found that the light which passes through these minute globes of water, is separated into distinct colours. Spots of vivid red, yellow and blue (colours already referred to, and their significance given) will be perceived scattered, apparently at random, over the glistening surface, and, in some favourable points of view, there may be traced upon the plain an iris, composed of the same colours as the rainbow, and in the same order, but arranged in two branches receding from the eye.

The copious deposition of moisture, which produces this splendid spectacle and all this brilliant display will have been caused solely by the dew. And thus again, from Nature we turn to the things of the Spirit concerning the Christ, seeking the lessons that God intended to be conveyed to His people, by the dew as a figure.

When blessing Jacob, his son, Isaac said: “God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth” (Gen. 27:28), but when David lamented for

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Saul and Jonathan, he said: "Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let there be rain upon you." This shows that both dew and rain are symbols of fertility, happiness and prosperity, which is further defined and confirmed by the words of Elijah to Ahab in 1 Kings 17:1, and also by the Lord's message to Israel through Haggai because of their sins, thus: "The heaven over you is stayed from dew," and, on account of this, "the earth is stayed from her fruit." Again there is a striking contrast in Zech. 8:12; one of the features of their blessings in the future is that "the heavens shall give their dew."

Dew does not really fall, but is formed by the condensation of the moisture of the atmosphere. This does not wrest scripture testimonies such as the following: "By His knowledge the depths were broken up, and the skies drop down dew" (Pro. 3:20), for water in a state of vapour, constantly exists in the atmosphere, and this moisture begins to be thus precipitated at a certain temperature, depending upon the quantity of vapour in the atmosphere. This temperature is called the dew-point. If the vapour comes in contact with anything cooler than itself, its moisture is at once precipitated. Around the cool sides of mountains frequently hang great clouds, which are only masses of floating vapour. The moisture from the atmosphere may be deposited in the form of dew, rain, snow or hail. "Who hath begotten the drops of dew" enquires the Lord of Job, and "the ice, and the hoary frost of heaven; who hath gendered it?" or "given it birth" (Job 38).

Dew is formed at the surface of the earth. All the great changes of sunshine, cloud and storm, the various hues of the rising and setting sun, the haloes that occasionally surround the sun and moon, are all influenced or occasioned by the vapour of water diffused throughout the atmosphere (Psa. 148). At sunrise the whole atmosphere appears full of floating particles of water, forming a dense mist, the minute drops of which are distinctly visible. As the sun rises above the horizon, the air is gradually warmed, the mist or fog begins to disperse, at first rising a little into the form of clouds, but soon totally disappearing. So will the veil of ignorance and superstition now enveloping the nations of the earth be gradually lifted, and finally disappear altogether (Isa. 25), for when the Sun of Righteousness arises, he will dispel all the mists and fogs of the Gentiles, as well as of the Jews, and all will see clearly the grand purpose of their existence and ultimate end (Jer. 16:19).

At present there is not even the grey twilight of the morning in them (Isa. 8:20), for all nations walk in darkness, and the Jews still are stumbling over the stone of stumbling and rock of offence, and the light that both think illuminates their darkness, is only composed of sparks of their own kindling (Isa. 8). The Jews with the light of the Law, and the Gentiles with the casual knowledge that the "true Light now shineth" are still groping and stumbling in the dark. It has

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been well said of the Jews that “the Law in all their synagogues is like extinguished candles, and that all that is needful to illuminate all the world is to light those candles.” Let the Jew everywhere be brought to see the true meaning of his law and customs; let the light of the Truth shine into their hearts, and then the world will be illuminated. The Truth would go with the rapidity of the sun from place to place until the whole earth were enlightened. Then, at last, the Gentiles will understand the measure of the “true Light,” and be drawn to the law that goeth forth from Zion.

There was in the Jewish economy an obscurity over divine things, as when we look through a dim medium and see things dimly, so in looking at the Truth through the medium of the Mosaic veil, we see those things dimly and darkly as through a glass, which we may see in all their transparent beauty and increasing splendour and magnificence, when all the mists are taken away.

Naturally mists and fogs are unpleasant and dangerous, and the most dangerous of mists in the moral and spiritual atmosphere is that of unbelief. It is difficult to convince some that they are on the wrong track, that they are pursuing an unfavourable course, perhaps drifting instead of steering for the desired haven, as a boat rowed against the rapid current in a mist, the rower supposing that every stroke of his oar brings him up the stream. But when the mist clears away and he looks for the landmarks on the shore, he discovers that with every stroke he has been borne away to the rapids, and is on the verge of destruction. So must we beware lest we have false hope, or allow ourselves to be carried away with ease or pleasure, with the flattering allurements of the world, and therefore miss the mark of our high calling.

Although at times, all may seem dark and uncertain and tears may dim our vision, yet let us remember that all ills will flee away like the mist of the morning, before the Sun of Righteousness, whose disc already tips the horizon, and out of which he will rise in splendour and in beauty, like a giant ready to run his race, and shine from his meridian throne, never to know a western setting or declension.

As in Nature there is something refreshing and lovely associated with the effects of the dew, so spiritually its symbolism is unique, each tiny water-glob being representative of a risen saint. One of a multitude, perfect and sparkling, clear as a crystal in the light of the morning sun, reflecting His glory while ready to be drawn up by the spirit-power of his rays, whose presence warms and clears the air, collectively to rise in clouds to meet the Lord — not to be carried up like Elijah to the dew-point of our atmosphere, the region of the clouds, to remain there for ever as some suppose — but to be snatched away or hurried off “in clouds,” so that clouds of saints, by almighty power, will be removed from the east, west, north and south, where they have been raised “for a meeting of the

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Lord in his kingdom” (1Thes. 4:17; Luke 13:28-29).

Previously each saint has existed as a minute globe of the water of life, whose lustre was concealed in earth’s darkness, refreshing and invigorating all who came within the bounds of its influence. In the darkness thus are they prepared for their glorious manifestation as the sons of God — the cloud of pearly whiteness to canopy the throne of the kingdom.

Hence we observe that both the nature and origin of clouds and dew, furnishes us with a beautiful and expressive symbol, representative of those who are to be present with the Lord at his second coming, as Dr. Thomas has explained very forcibly in his first volume of *Eureka* pages 139-140:

“As waters in the Book of the Revelation represent peoples (ch. 17:1, 15) the truth underlying this symbol will be readily seen. The apostle informs us that ‘God is taking out of the nations a people for His Name.’ The means used to accomplish this desirable end is the word of the Truth. From these waters have been exhaled by the Spirit from the generations of the past, particles which, when viewed in mass, constitute, as the apostle terms it, ‘a great cloud of witnesses’ (Heb. 12:1). The subjects of this figurative cloud are in the earth, and perceived only as particles to be exhaled, or drawn out by the power of those beams, soon to irradiate from ‘the Sun of Righteousness.’ When he shall ‘arise with healing in his rays’ they shall come forth from the womb of the dawn, as dew. Every resurrected saint will be a dewdrop, sparkling in the starlike glory of a divine refraction.

“The appearance of the dew from the womb of the dawn as representative of the resurrection of the saints is the most beautiful of scripture similitudes. Before the sun arises, all nature is concealed in the womb of night; and although the herbage is wet with dew, yet it is invisible by reason of the darkness. The dew is, as it were, in Hades, waiting for the birth to be given to it by the rising of the sun. As soon as the eastern portals of the sky begin to open to the light which is the life of dew, its drops begin to sparkle with the prismatic glory of its refraction. The appearing of the dew is its birth from the womb of dawn; and, however clear the air may be at its birth, often the heat of the sun’s rays exhales it from the herbage, and it becomes invisible until it reappears at the atmospheric dew-point in the form of clouds. Thus we are able to discern the relation of the saints to Jesus, as the dew and clouds of the Millennial Day, to the Sun of the New Heavens, prepared ‘as a bridegroom emerging from His canopy, and rejoicing as a conqueror for the running of a course.’”

There is a beauty peculiar to the morning that can be attributed to no other part of the day, and that is its purity and freshness. It represents to us all that is purest, brightest and best of all that God has in store for His people’s enjoyment.

In Gen. 1, morning is said to follow evening, but man reverses the order and

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speaks of morning and evening as one day. But God ever reserves the best until last. It is not until the long grey hours of the evening of our misery and discontent have run out, that the glad morning of our brightest hopes and expectations will dawn. God does not give us the morning first and tell us to enjoy it as best we can in our poor mortal, erring condition, with only the long, long silent evening of death open to our view. No; it is the glowing prospect of the coming dawn that is ever before us, bracing us up and nerving us to endure through the restless, sullen gloom, or the chilly atmosphere of the world's eventide. We wait for the dawn of unending Day: for, like the good wine miraculously produced at Cana's wedding feast, all the richest, choicest, and most enduring delights are reserved for that holy, happier hour, when the Son of Man will gather his brethren as sparkling jewels around his heavenly table and invite them to partake of the feast prepared for them.

What could be more beautiful than a summer morning after a night of storm and darkness, rain and wind? It is the bursting of millennial sunshine upon an earth long groaning and travailing in pain.

When God would show His erring people the blessedness of doing good — of relieving the distressed and obeying His laws, He compares the desirable change in their atmosphere, to the “light of morning,” saying “Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy just dealing as the noon-day.” The morning light is that which increases in clearness and brilliance, dissolving the clouds and scattering the mists, gilding the mountains with glory, causing the trees to be like shafts and pillars of sunshine, the lakes and streams, and the ocean to be mirrors to reflect its splendour.

We are exhorted to think on these things, for they are not only pure and lovely to contemplate, but real and certain to the eye of faith and to the mind exercised by the Spirit of God, which compares spiritual things with spiritual. The morning light is taken by the Spirit in the sweet Psalmist of Israel to represent the Perfect Dawn because of the exquisite loveliness it exhibits. He, the Just Ruler, “shall be as the light of the morning when the sun ariseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain” (2Sam. 23). The words are full of poetic beauty. The chief and first attribute of sovereignty is justice, and there shall be, for the Lord hath declared it, a Ruler upon this earth over mankind, “A Just One” ruling in the righteous precepts of Elohim, and as the brightness of morning, he shall arise the Sun of an unclouded dawn, shining forth after rain.

To understand the figure more fully we must go forth into the fields on a summer morning at sunrise. Then our first impression would be that the sun is struggling with the clouds and darkness, and that is a question, doubtful and difficult, if we had no experience, to determine whether he or the clouds and

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darkness are to gain the ascendancy. But soon we should notice that the very clouds that obscured his march, he dissolves into dew which falls upon the thirsty flowers and refreshes them as with a morning bath; and that the very things that seemed to arrest his progress he turns into elements to help him. He makes the clouds like banks of rubies, the drops of dew like mirrors to reflect his glory, and rivers and ocean become one vast luminous surface, adding to the intensity of that splendour which some of them attempted to arrest.

So shall it be with the King who rules in the fear of the Lord, although the nations may rage and the kings of the earth set themselves in array against the Lord and against His anointed. Yet God will make the wrath of man to praise Him, and His king shall be as the light of morning, and his progress as the sun, increasing more and more unto the perfect day. And although there be clouds here and there, he will dissolve them, and opposition will become impulse; his enemies shall lick the dust, and his friends shall gather around him, so that this glorious Ruler will not be alone: and as his associates, the Sons of the Morning, are arrayed in dewy, royal splendour, they are referred to in Rev. 16 as the “kings of a Sun’s rising,” whose way has been prepared by divinely appointed means.

Thus we may well stay to consider here the beautiful truth concealed under the figure of the rising sun. We know that before the sun rises it is dark, and that it is while he is rising that the darkness is receding and the objects upon the earth gradually become visible.

Nearly 2,000 years ago the Sun sent to illuminate the Judaic horizon, was emerged in darkness and set in solemn, awful stillness. But the Eternal Father by His power raised and then transformed the risen, earthborn body that sank to rest on the tree of Golgotha outside the city walls, into a life-giving Spirit.

And this is now the dark hour before the dawn of his thief-like manifestation. Soon he will arise and his glory will be seen upon Zion, and kings shall come to the brightness of her rising (Isa. 9:2).

The Light arising who is to shed forth brightness upon Zion which has been previously enveloped in gross darkness, and brings her to view, is the Redeemer who comes to turn away ungodliness from Jacob (Isa. 59:20). She is seen “rising” before it can be said she is risen. Her coming to view is progressive, as objects come into view in the dawn. Hence she is a rising of this Rising Light which shines out of the darkness.

What do we understand by the “rising of a Sun” for both Zion and her kings are said to proceed therefrom? The word rendered “rising” is derived from the verb “to rise, to cause to rise, and to spring up.” All that springs up out of the earth is caused to rise by the power of the sun acting upon the seeds therein. Everything therefore brought up from beneath, or from darkness, into view, is a

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“rising of the sun.” Hence, “as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth, so Yahweh God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all nations,” we read again in Isa. 45:8. The earth brings forth as the result of the sun’s power; so that earth’s products are the sun’s risings.

After this analogy, the Sun of Righteousness who rises, will cause the righteousness to spring forth from the earth, in causing righteous persons to spring forth from the grave. The righteousness first pours down from heaven, then the earth opens, salvation is brought forth, and salvation and righteousness spring up together (Isa. 45:8). Thus, “Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven” (Psa. 85:11).

But again the solemn truth confronts us. All that the sun causes to spring forth are not good risings. Some are poisonous weeds, which are not healed of their evil qualities by the brightness of his beams. Much depends upon the seed sown, and even the choicest and best of his risings do not spring forth in their perfection, and can only be distinguished from the weeds by an expert gardener. And so will it be on the resurrection morning when the saints are raised. At first their bodies are unlike the bodies they will be when clothed upon and made brilliant like the flowers in beauty (1Cor. 15).

How wonderful are the operations of the Father’s hand, and how excellent His mind to order and control and carry forward this glorious plan. By this formative and creative energy, if sown in the earth before this spiritual sunrise, may it be exercised on our behalf and bring us forth, as fruitful risings, to the glory of His holy name and to our unspeakable blessedness. The thought that we, once poor sinners among the Gentiles, without God and without hope in the world, have been brought into association with these things through His Son, and that each one of us may be the subject of the Sun’s rising seems almost too wonderful to be realised.

But while our hearts are overwhelmed with gratitude and our lips filled with praise, let us recollect God’s purpose centres first in His ancient people, the Jews, and from among them at this happy dawn, a dew remnant shall spring up and be in the midst of many people as the dew from the Lord, as showers upon the grass which wait not for man, nor delay for the sons of Adam (Mic. 5:7). And this remnant of Jacob shall be among the nations “as a lion among the beasts of the forest, and as a young lion among the flocks of sheep; who, if he pass through both, treadeth down and teareth, and there is no deliverer.” From which it is obvious that God has a great work for the “holy nation” (1Pet. 2:9), after their wonderful birth, and the Jews who are living at this epoch shall be made willing to acknowledge David’s Son and Lord as their Messiah in the day of his power (Psa. 110). And when once they recognise him and realise their

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glorious mission, they will not tarry but hasten to perform his word concerning them.

“We shall not readily forget these beautiful spiritual lessons from the dew and the rising sun,” exclaims a sister who has listened eagerly to these great truths for the first time, “and one can verily affirm that the Bible is indeed the inspired Word of God — both grand and marvellous in its teaching.” “Yes, truly,” says another, “and I feel just now as the Queen of Sheba must have done when she visited King Solomon and heard the wisdom of his words. I should like to hear more on this subject.”

Well, then, as the half has not yet been told, and this is one of the lessons to be gathered from our second reading for today, we will linger yet awhile and continue our subject, after changing our position on the hillside, for the beauty of the scene before us is enchanting, and the background of mountains stands up grandly in the morning light.

A short steady climb along the right side of the valley brings us to a desirable ridge, where we may rest; so we seat ourselves on the soft velvety grass and take out our pocket Bibles once again, as an elderly sister proceeds to read to us Isa. 26, which all of us appreciate very much. A glow of enthusiasm is visible on her furrowed brow as she emphasizes the words of verse 19: “Thy dead men shall live,” etc.

“This beautiful figure of the dew,” she says, looking at us intently, “has been used to illustrate the subject under consideration, and Dr. Thomas has given us a very pointed translation of this verse, besides a full explanation of the passage, and also a much more effectual rendering of the third verse of Psalm 110 already referred to, and which I can supply from memory, having studied his works for many years.” Psa. 110:3 reads: “Thy nation shall be willing in the day of thy might, in the splendour of holiness the dew of thy birth (shall be) to thee from the womb of the dawn.” The Son’s Dew, born from the womb of the dawn, are his brethren the saints, born of the Spirit from the invisible at the dawn of Messiah’s Day. The resurrection is styled “thy birth,” because He, the Deity, who raised up the Lord Jesus, will raise us up also by Jesus (2Cor. 4:14). So that, “He that raised up the anointed One from among the dead, shall also make alive your mortal bodies through His Spirit” (Rom. 8:11) and therefore the birth given to the saints from the grave will be by Jesus through the Spirit: hence, the birth in the Psalm is styled “thy birth” — the birth developed by David’s Son and Lord; the subjects of which will be Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the prophets, and among them David himself, the apostles, and all that believe into Jesus through their word.

In reference to this wonderful birth, at the epoch of Israel’s national regeneration, the Eternal Spirit says in Isa. 66: “Hear the word of Yahweh ye

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that tremble at His Word: your brethren that hated you, and cast you out for My Name's sake, said, 'Let Yahweh be glorified!' But he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed." Then he speaks of a nation being born at once — in one day, and uses the beautiful figure of the dew to illustrate this birth. "Thy dead shall live (as) my dead body they shall arise. Awake, and sing ye that dwell in the dust: for the dew of lights is thy dew, and the earth shall cast forth the dead." This dew of lights is the Lord's. We have "dew of herbs" here, and there are only two places where the word *ohroth* is so rendered. The one is 2Kings 4:39, and the other we are considering. It is used once in Deut. 18 in the singular, but more than a hundred times in the singular, and twice in the plural it is rendered "light." In 2Kings "herbs" are figuratively styled "lights" because of their appearance when loaded with dew. Hence the light belongs to the dew and there is propriety and fitness in the expression, as the similitude of the resurrected saints in the starlike splendour of Holy Spirit nature.

In former days the Israelites murmured against Moses and Aaron, and hopelessly cried, "Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and when we did eat bread to the full, for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with



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hunger.” Then the Lord answered through Moses: “Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you.” And they beheld the glory of the Lord in the cloud, and the Spirit said: “At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall eat bread, and ye shall know that I, even I, am your God.” But when the morning came they at first saw only “the dew” sparkling in the light of day. But “when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness, a small round thing as the hoar-frost upon the ground.” The people had never seen anything like this before, deposited by the evaporation of the dew; therefore, they enquired of one another: “What is it?” or, literally *mahnhu*, “What it?” For they knew not what it was. And Moses said to them: “This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat.” This, and the flesh by which Israel was sustained in life, is called by the apostle Paul “spiritual meat” (1Cor. 10:1-10). These verses teach us the significance of the things which happened to Moses, their eating the manna, and their drinking of the rock. And these happenings, he says, were ensamples or types, “written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come” — that is, the Mosaic Aions. .

The Psalmist calls this manna “angels’ food” (Psa. 78:24), “the corn of the heavens” or “the bread of mighty ones.” “Man did eat the bread of mighty ones.” But although this bread is spoken of as “spiritual meat” it was material and also corruptible, so that again we recognise the spiritual drawn from the natural. Both the flesh and the bread were types of something that was afterwards to descend from the heavens, and to become the life-sustaining principle of all that should receive it. The Jews said to Jesus: “Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written: He gave them bread from (or “out of”) heaven to eat.” Then he told them of the true bread which the Father gives for the life of the world (the *kosmos*). In Jesus “was life”; the Spirit of God in him was the manna, and the Spirit through Jesus says: “I am the Bread of Life. I came down from heaven,” and “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.” After his resurrection Jesus became a “life-imparting Spirit” (a spiritual body), so that whosoever eats of this manna partakes of *the* Life, and will be the subject of immortality and incorruptibility. And just as Israel beheld, after the dew was gone up, the manna, as beautiful, hoary crystal frost, so in the glorious resurrection morning, they who have seen the glory (the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth), and have spiritually partaken of the manna, will be manifested as they are so beautifully depicted in the seventh and fourteenth chapters of the Revelation. Until the Sun of Righteousness acts upon them and transforms them into manna — changes the body of their humiliation and makes it like unto his own glorious body, they are concealed as the dew. The manna concealed in dew is a type of the resurrection of the firstfruits of the Spirit.

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In the historical type the manna appears in two forms — as susceptible of corruption, and secondly as incorruptible. If left until the morning it bred worms and stank. The manna was given morning by morning, and ordinarily would not keep, but it was restrained and remained good, to enable the Israelites to rest on the seventh day.

The grand truth underlying this is that Jesus, being the Spirit Word become flesh, was both evening quail and morning bread. He was gathered by the nation on the sixth day, when they crucified him. They gathered him in the morning, but they did not leave him on the cross till the following morning, and although laid up in the grave, his body did not see corruption, for the tendency natural to all flesh was restrained.

Israel gathered a double portion on the sixth day and there was no manna to be seen when they went out to look for it the next day, so when Jesus was laid in the tomb, those who might go out to look for the Son of Man could no longer find him sowing the words of eternal life in the field. But some of the manna was incorruptible for a longer period than the sixth and seventh days. Moses was told to put an omer, or tenth part of an ephah of the manna into a pot and to lay it up before the Testimony, to be kept; and this was made to last for generations. All through the centuries it was preserved to prove the presence of the Spirit in the Most Holy. Hence the manna laid up in the Ark of the Testimony concealed from view, finds its antitype in the Eternal Spirit concealed in Jesus, the antitypical Ark of the Testimony, and it is of this manna the overcomers of Rev. 2:17 shall be given to eat (Col. 3:2-3). “It is a sublime figure,” remarks the sister with us, who has been very deeply impressed by the wonders of the Inspired Word. “At first I could not imagine what Col. 3 had to do with the subject, but now it is quite clear.”

While we feed upon the manna day by day, we are feeding upon Christ, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life, yet we must remember that although we feed upon, and rejoice in, the ‘right to life’ it is the life-manna concealed, for “we are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God.” “When Christ who is our life shall appear then shall we also appear with him in glory.”

“Yes,” continues our sister, “the figure is unique. It is certainly wonderful to contemplate such meanings from the terms of the scriptures.”

The present eating and drinking referred to in John 6:56, is intellectual and ensures a mutual indwelling between Christ and the believer, but soon the life-manna, so long concealed will be manifested, for “the night is far spent.” We look for our Lord’s appearing, and wait hopefully the day when, having been buried with him in baptism, we may be planted in the likeness of his resurrection. The revelation of the Father’s glory was seen in the eventide of the Mosaic Aion by Judah and his companions, but Israel has not yet beheld and “all

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flesh shall see it together,” we read in Isa. 40. It is a beautiful fact that the whole house of Israel must see the glory together — they must see it in the wilderness before the morning, according to the type, and they, with the multitude of Judah who are sleeping through the intervening night, will eat of the manna hidden in the dew, before entering the promised land.

Now that we are nicely rested and refreshed by such pleasant intercourse with the divine Word, and with one another, we will proceed on our way with rejoicing, for there is much to interest and enlighten our minds all around us, and lead us on to the consideration of the things of Christ in other aspects, if not set in more glorious colouring.

It is still painfully true that the world sees nothing either in Christ or his words. The beauty and harmony of the scriptures is overlooked, and that which tastes as sweet as wafers of honey, and is like fresh oil to those that love Christ, is distasteful and unpalatable indeed to those who reject him (Num. 11:8). They of the world still enquire: “What is it?” and still to the incredulous Jew, “There is no form or comeliness” but in the approaching dawn, the Branch of Yahweh’s planting will be glorious in their eyes (Isa. 4:13).

Neither Christ nor his brethren have any of that beauty which the vulgar eye admires, nor any of that external glory which ambition courts; and we look forward to the time when man’s renovated taste will recognise what true beauty is, for the regenerated heart will see that it is not looks, nor outward appearance, but thoughts, desires and deeds that are beautiful in the sight of God. It is moral beauty that is real beauty: external and material beauty is only a transient type, an evanescent shadow of that which is real and enduring for ever, therefore, to us, Christ even in his humiliation is altogether lovely, and our all in all. True beauty is all from within and not from without, for under a very fine form there may lurk a very bad heart. It is the inner work that is beautiful. It is the light, radiance and warmth of the inner man shining from the countenance that constitutes true beauty. May the Lord grant us the beauty of holiness and the adorning of a meek and quiet spirit.

Chapter Fifteen

ON THE MOUNTAINS

*Lo, in the desert rich flowers are springing;
Streams ever copious are gliding along;
Loud from the mountain tops echoes are ringing;
Wastes rise in verdure and mingle in song.
Christ is coming and the mountains of Judea ring again;
Jerusalem awakens, and shouts her glad Amen.*

DESCENDING the hillside ridge where we have been resting, our way is fairly level; the air of those higher regions runs like nectar through our veins, and lends a fine feeling of physical fitness. Fresh and unexpected beauties break upon the vision. A crystal clear mountain hill, purling over a green bed of moss-grown boulders... trees meet overhead... the river meanders lazily through the meadows on our way. Stream, woodland, rock and glade, all combine to minister to our sense of the beautiful.

Longfellow was right when he penned these significant words:—

*“If thou art worn and hard beset
With sorrows, that thou would’st forget
If thou would’st read a lesson, that will keep
Thy heart from fainting, and thy soul from sleep;
Go to the woods and hills! — No tears
Dim the sweet look that nature wears.”*

We walk along peacefully until the path leads off in a winding direction towards the heather-clad mountain, and as several of our companions express a desire to reach its summit we continue our course, and soon find a narrow path that makes our ascent comparatively easy. We have a glorious view of the expanse of blue waters backed by a beautiful combination of lowland richness and stern craggy heights, which repays us amply for our trouble; the whole aspect inviting us to linger awhile and regain our normal composure. No wonder the divine Master so often sought the solitude of the mountain top when retiring from the busy excited throng, to communicate with his Father in heaven. There is something sweetly sublime and soothing in the pervading atmosphere, while the solemn, silent grandeur imparts a feeling of restfulness and awe.

Morning on the mountains affords the most refreshing sight and gratifying experiences. “Be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning unto Mount Sinai,” said the Lord to Moses. “And no man shall come up with thee, neither let any man be seen throughout the mount.” Here was solitude indeed, grand and awful, but Moses knew God and he obeyed; and there amid the holy stillness

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“the Lord descended in the shekinah glory cloud, “and stood with him there and proclaimed the name of Yahweh” (Exod. 34). And he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights. “He did neither eat bread nor drink water” — a glorious privilege fraught with the most tremendous responsibilities and issues.

This was not the first experience of Moses in the mount. He had been led on step by step, drawn into nearer and more intimate fellowship with God, day by day. When he met with God at Horeb, he hid his face in fear, but since then he had learned to trust and obey; and thus was called up to the glory and devouring fire on the summit of the mount. Afterwards he is sent to the people with a divine message: to return again with Israel’s answer, “All that Yahweh hath said we will do and be obedient” (Exod. 19). Then he is bidden to prepare them for the third day when the Lord would speak to him in their presence and hearing. That notable third day was typical of a more potent event and of a far greater assemblance. And again Moses ascends the mount until he reaches the “thick darkness” and witnesses the terrible sight and learns the great truth that “our God is a consuming fire.”

Have we been in Horeb realising that our God is fearful in majesty and almighty in power, being drawn near to Him in the full assurance of faith? Have we met Him in the holy mount and communed with Him in the secret place where no mere mortal may intrude without special invitation — the privilege reserved for God’s faithful servants still, where He will reveal Himself to them as a flame of fire dwelling in them as in the humble thorn bush? If so, we, like Moses, shall find that “perfect love casteth out fear,” and we shall come into His presence in His own appointed way with assurance, even though our natural tendency be diffidence.

The divine Presence separated Moses and his fellows. He was veiled to men but unveiled to God. His face shone with the reflected glory, though he knew it not when he descended the mount, proving that those who come nearest to God are the most conspicuously separated off, even from their brethren, for Aaron and the people were afraid to come nigh him. Similarly so little can those who do not know the Lord fully, bear even the reflection of His light and glory, that they hie away often. Yet God’s presence is to be preferred above all good things. Egypt’s good things were on the one hand, and Canaan’s on the other; yet Moses declared “If the Presence go not with me, carry us not up hence,” for the richest blessings could not be enjoyed without it.

One writer has said, there are three classes of Christians. Those who enter into covenant relationship with God in Christ, yet seek to solace themselves with the leeks and onions and garlic of spiritual Egypt: those who, while turning their backs upon Egypt’s portion, are taken up wholly with the milk and honey, the grapes and pomegranates of Canaan; and those who, like Moses, say: “It is

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Thyself, my God, my soul longs after. I have no good beyond Thee. Thou art my portion.”

But although this holy Presence implies separation, for nothing separates so effectually from sin and sinners as the presence of God, yet it gives rest. Nothing can rest the whole being so completely as this. Nothing can perturb the minds of those who experience this rest which ever accompanies the presence of God. The blessing gives evidence of this enjoyment of grace, for it is when we enjoy all the grace that is given to the One who lives in the presence of God, that many on account of this grace will seek to be sharers in its richness, and thus will be bound up in the covenant of grace themselves. Let us present ourselves therefore before the Lord with “our bodies continually as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service” (Rom. 12:1). It is a personal, individual matter. If we are to enjoy the holy Presence, there must be close union of will and purpose (1John 5:14-15) and God must delight in us. The solemn injunction to Moses “Present thyself!” is handed down to us through Jesus and his apostles — and so may the Spirit lead each one of his redeemed to come and abide there.

Turning an angle of the mountain ridge along which we have traversed with difficulty, we suddenly come upon a view that more than compensates for our toil. The prospect with its picturesque assemblance of water, woodland and cultivated plains, its shining city and shadowy mountains spreads out before us like some fair and gorgeous panorama. In the bright, clear atmosphere of these upper regions, even remote objects have a brilliancy and colouring, and a distinct outline that brings the most distant objects near. Stretching far away at our feet, are noble forests of oak, sycamore and cedar, and beyond, yellow fields of maize, and fine tall shrubs intermingled with orchards and blooming gardens, while down in the valley the flowers seem unusually abundant. We think of Jerusalem in the days of Solomon and in the time of our Lord, although so sad a change has come over the scenes then witnessed around the Holy Land, now that her stately forests have been laid low, and her soil, unsheltered and uncultivated under the fierce radiance of a tropical sun, in so many places abandoned to sterility, while her glorious temple and her magnificent palaces are in ruins. Although traces of this destruction still brood over the landscape, so indestructible are the lines of beauty which nature has traced upon her features, that no traveller can gaze on those ancient mountains, cities and villages without feelings of emotion. The same stream that murmured of old by Jerusalem, and reflected the glory of her white towers and palaces, and her gorgeous temple, now falls into the Dead Sea; ending, notwithstanding its holy and consecrated passages, in the region of the shadow of death, so that out of Nature’s sweets, it has been said, can be extracted the deadliest poison.

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But Jerusalem is the city of the Great King, and Israel the land of God's chosen, and glorious things have been spoken concerning their future. When in the light of the morning, Jerusalem shall awake and arise from the dust of ages, her glory will again be seen upon her, for she will put on her beautiful garments in exchange for the soiled, creased robes of rebelliousness and unbelief — "the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness," to appear in all her virgin brightness (Isa. 52:1; 61:2).

The prospect for Jerusalem and her people is a glorious one. When her king comes he will reign on Zion's hill and before his ancients gloriously, and confound all opposing rulers. Then his character as king and governor will be fully developed, and the sceptre and kingdom will be established in the top of the mountains — it shall be augmented and extended to the ends of the earth and all people shall flow into it (Isa. 2).

On this glad prospect the prophets fixed their eyes, and this prospect was the bright and splendid object in the "visions" that served to relieve the darkness that they saw would come upon the nation of Israel. It was this which upheld and strengthened them, and it is this also that stimulates and gives courage and hope to all God's servants throughout the years, and makes all our present burdens lighter and our troubles easier to be borne. Then all the glory of the wisest and greatest of earthly rulers will be dimmed and all their power and plans will be obscured in the superior splendour of the wisdom and power of the "Great King" who will rule the world in righteousness. And in the contemplation thereof our hearts exclaim: "Come, O, come, thou blessed Day of Promise and that right speedily."

We seat ourselves on the projecting boulders and gaze across to the purple and gold giants stretching to the right and left of us. If we were not fully conscious of the fact that we are miles distant from the Holy Land, posing on the rocky bosom of a western mountain, we could almost imagine ourselves transported suddenly within those pleasant borders, beholding the very heights that called forth the glorious expression from the Psalmist and that unique comparison: "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so Yahweh is round about His people" (Psa. 125). The great loving arms of the Eternal Father are ever around His people as the solid immovable mountains. What consolation, strength and security!

No spot in the world the size of Israel contains such heights and depths all compact in so small a compass. In the north are mountains 10,000 feet (3048 metres) high from which the snow never altogether disappears, while along the Jordan and Dead Sea valley there exists a depression of 13,000 feet (3962 metres) below the sea level, which accounts for the two extreme climates.

We think of Lebanon, "that goodly mountain," whose glorious snow-clad

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heights permit the mighty cedars to grow, and where even in the days of Job the wild asses ranged, scorning the multitude of the city and disregarding the cry of the river. It was in the area to the east beyond the mountains of Lebanon that Job lived, and where he watched the ways of the birds and beasts, and beheld the beautiful sights he describes so vividly. The stars by night, the wild goats of the rocks, and the fierce lion waiting for his prey in the coverts (38). It is in the Book of Job we have described so graphically the strength and nobility of the horse. In ch. 39 Yahweh says to Job: "He paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his strength: he goeth on to meet the armed men. He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted; neither turneth he back from the sword."

This flowery vale, we are told, lay between the Lebanon and another range of mountains, whose rocky peaks looked like towers and castles in the distance. It is called the anti-Lebanon. In the valley the sky is clear, deep blue, and the air is most pure and sweet. The whole aspect being more lovely than the fairest summer day in our country; but on the mountains it is bitterly cold and the snow lies waist deep. In the south, the valley grows more narrow, and is called the "Valley of Jordan." The most beautiful portion of this region is the Land of Gilead. The mountains of the Abarim, or "places beyond" Jordan mentioned in Num. 27:12, and Deut. 32:49, are those on the edge of the Moabite plateau, north of which is the higher chain of Mount Gilead. The former are entirely barren, but the western slopes of Gilead are covered with ancient woods of pine and oak. Gilead, the land of much cattle — and given by Moses to the sons of Manasseh, claimed by God in the prophetic words of Psa. 60:7, "Gilead is Mine, and Manasseh is Mine; Ephraim also is the strength of Mine head; Judah is My law-giver," is yet to be the scene of much rejoicing, for it is testified "I will hiss for them (the tribes of Israel) and gather them out of Assyria; and I will bring them into the Land of Gilead and Lebanon; and room shall not be found for them" (Zech. 10:8, 10).

Mount Hermon, with its crown of perpetual snow, is one of the highest peaks of the anti-Lebanon range. It formed a landmark for the Israelites towards the north. In the days of Moses Og reigned in Mount Hermon, and we find Bashan called "the land of giants." In Gen. 19:5 we read that Chedorlaomer fought in these plains with Rephaim giants in the days of Abraham. The place is now called Tel-Asherah. The cedars still flourish on Mount Lebanon in spite of the general deforesting by the natives, and the destructiveness of their herds. There are no other trees in the world like the cedars; they are so ancient and majestic. To form an idea of their size we may imagine seven large trees growing from one trunk, and their appearance so grand that they are referred to by the ordinary people as "the trees of God." And truly significant is the fact that the Spirit speaks of the Lord's people as such. Men behold these historic hills and the

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glorious cedars that remain all these thousands of years since the days of Job, when his sons built their houses among the rocks.

*“While like a glory the broad sun hung o’er sainted Lebanon
Whose head in hoary grandeur towers, and whitens with eternal sleet
While summer in a vale of flowers, smiles sleeping rosy at his feet.”*

Lebanon was celebrated of old for its cedars, and Bashan for its oaks. These two are the most eminent and beautiful among the trees of the forest. In the Bible they are taken to denote the highest and noblest of the land. Ezekiel compares the nation of Israel to a cedar tree when prophesying concerning their changed position. And he foretells how the dry tree which now bears no fruit shall be made to flourish in the heights of Israel where it shall shoot forth boughs and bear fruit (ch. 17; 2Kings 19). Of this glorious far-reaching cedar, Christ will be the topmost branch, and God has declared He will not rest until this is accomplished. But before this can be the lightning of God’s judgments will lay all the nations low, even as the lowliest shrub. It will rend and break the loftiest cedar of Lebanon and the strongest oak of Bashan (Isa. 2:13). A few lofty trees of this description still remain on Mount Lebanon. The circumference of the literal trees is about 36 feet (11 metres), and there are about 23 of them. The bark of the cedar resembles that of the pine, the leaves are long and narrow, rough and very green. They are ranged in tufts along the branches. From the qualities of the cedar we see that the great ones they represented were required to be something more than graceful and imposing. When the trees are full grown a fluid exudes naturally without incision. This is clear, transparent and whitish. After a time it dries and hardens, and is believed to possess great qualities. Few other trees possess so many virtues, so that we may gather the nature of the character and position required of those who are represented by them. Justice, clear discernment and firmness of purpose to adhere to the right, while dispensing benign blessings on those beneath their shadow. The cedar, so highly prized, becomes the emblem of the most exalted in character, and for this reason is used freely in the structure of the Temple. Solomon covered the Lord’s House with beams and boards of cedar, and the knops and flowers, the ornamental work, were all of cedar. The wood is a beautiful, solid, reddish-brown colour, and was used in the purification of sin in Num. 19. In connection with the hyssop it represents our nature in its widest extremes, and in giving these extremes embraces all between. It is recorded in 1Kings 4 that “Solomon spake of trees from the cedar of Lebanon, to the hyssop that springeth out of the wall.” The same elements were used in the cleansing of the leprosy in Lev. 14 the scarlet representing in the first instance human splendour, worldly grandeur, both the glory of the world and the glory of man. The blue hyssop indicated cleansing and then healing.

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Hiram gave Solomon cedar trees and fir trees according to his desire, showing how plentiful they must have been. These were the beautiful trees Job was acquainted with; and when God convinces him of His power, He compares the Behemoth, or the great river-horse sweeping through the waters, to the cedars, whose great spreading branches represented his powerfulness. "Surely the mountains (the Lebanon ranges) shall bring him forth food... he lieth under the shady trees, in the covert of the reeds and fens. The shady trees cover him with their shadow, the willows of the brook compass him about." And then, locating the place beyond all contradiction, he continues: "Behold, he drinketh up a river, and hasteth not: he trusteth that he can draw up Jordan into his mouth" (ch. 40:15-24).

The deer, or hart, and the beautiful leopard Job would also have seen about the valley of the Jordan, besides the wild asses and bears, all of which are mentioned in this wonderful dialogue. And what can we say more in favour of glorious Lebanon? And how shall we extol her majestic cedars? Oh, eloquent figure! "The righteous shall grow like the cedar in Lebanon" (Psa. 90). "As the days of a tree shall be the days of My people" (Isa. 65:22) and Israel, so long degenerated, shall yet "cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his fragrance or memorial, as Lebanon" (Hos. 14:5, 6). Here are beauty, stability, growth, fruitfulness and holiness of character all combined. But neither the natural or the spiritual cedar will flourish any where. The place where the few trees we have referred to are stationed is in a plain nearly a league in circumference on the summit of a mount which is environed on almost all sides by other mountains, so high that their summits are always covered with snow. This plain is levelled, the air is pure, and the heavens above always serene; from which we may enlarge the figure and draw the important lesson that the knowledge and love of the Truth should separate us from earthly ambitions, and low objects in life; it should elevate and ennoble all our aspirations, and being "called with an holy calling" and exalted to such glorious positions, as to be joint-heirs and co-rulers with Christ in the future, we should constantly abide in the pure, clean, invigorating atmosphere of the "heavenly places" (Eph. 1), enjoying that serenity of mind which will enable us at all times and under all circumstances to be patient, merciful and just; even as "cedars" of the Lord's planting. It is said that a small clump of these tall, beautiful trees is most picturesque; the oldest are large and massy, rearing their heads to an enormous height and spreading their branches to a great extent. Thus shall it be with God's choicer cedars. They shall lift up their heads and glory in His name, and their influence shall extend over all the earth. If we keep this in mind it will help us to appreciate and endorse all that the prophets have spoken. The solemnity and grandeur of these delightful regions must have impressed

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God's servants very deeply, and the more we know of them the more we realise the beauty of the lifelike and vivid pictures they give us.

We are informed that all along the range of Mount Lebanon there are traces of old volcanoes that have burnt themselves out. Some terrible earthquake must have taken place, for the declension must have been caused by some eruption, splitting the sides of the mountain, and leaving a narrow opening between two rocky walls, so steep that the wild goats that clamber from height to height look mere specks. Palestine hills consist of much limestone and soft chalk, and the Jordan Valley was formed by a convulsion occurring after the chalk period, which caused an immense defect in the strata on the east side. The existence of hot springs in the valley, and the frequent earthquakes of various ages are mentioned in the Bible (1Kings 19; Amos 1; Matt. 27:54). Lebanon "towards the sun's rising" is this anti-Lebanon chain, ending in white peaks of chalk on the north (Josh. 13; 1Kings 5:6; Psa. 29; Isa. 14:8). At the broadest part of the valley there is an opening in the mountain chain where the wild goats browse, and the vultures hover, which leads the way to Damascus. Chaldean idolators, and robber bands, frequented the northern valley. The splendid ruins of the Temple of the Sun at Baal-bec (the valley of the sun) still remind us of how deep a hold this early form of idolatry had gained over the people of these parts (Job 31:27).

"Job must have exercised much influence among the princes and nobles dwelling in those giant cities," remarks a sister, "and as good as he was great." He says "I chose out the way for them." They came to him for counsel and listened to his words. He delivered the poor, and protected the helpless from the robbers who passed through the valley and attempted violently to take their flocks, to drive off the ass of the fatherless, and take the widow's ox for a pledge. The poor sought the refuge of the hills while wicked men reaped their corn and gathered their vintage, causing the naked to lodge without clothing, and enter the rocks for shelter. Then the bow of Job was renewed and he plucked the spoil out of the teeth of the robbers. He was "eyes to the blind and feet to the lame." He fed the hungry and sheltered the traveller, so that "the blessing of him that was ready to perish" came upon him.

"And yet Job was visited with sore trials and great calamities," says another sister; "showing that good people suffer, and that trouble is by no means a sign that we are forsaken of God." Yea, "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." He sends sorrow and joy, as He sends summer sunshine after winter's cold, and we may thank Him still that all our joys are touched with pain. There is no good in this life that has not its accompanying shadow, as there is no gold that is not liable to corrosion. "We cannot help admiring Job in his prosperity," says another familiar voice. Who would have imagined such trouble coming upon him so thick and fast!

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Ah, we know not what awaits us: not even what an hour may bring forth. Like one of those sudden tempests that sweep down from the mountains there came this day of calamity to Job. The Sabean robbers came down upon his children, and the messengers one after another brought him the bad news of destruction. "The fire of God" was the thunder and lightning which comes with such terrific fury among the valleys of Lebanon. The dry grass would soon take fire, and encircle the flocks in flames with their shepherds, and there would be none to help, for no doubt the Chaldeans would take advantage of these disasters around Mount Hermon, and stop the camel train that would probably be on its way to the Syrian markets, laden with corn, balm and spices, for this fertile valley is the granary of the surrounding countries. Some wild storm blew down the little summer house of clay, crushing Job's seven sons, leaving him without assistance, while the robbers prospered (ch. 12:6), and then, the hardest of all trials, his friends soon forgot all his kindnesses and treated him with ingratitude, failing him in his last hour of need, till he longed for the quiet grave to cover him. What wonderful patience he exhibited, when in his anguish he could say: "Yahweh gave, and Yahweh hath taken away: blessed be the name of Yahweh." It is gratifying to read after all this that "Yahweh turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends, and gave Job twice as much as he had before."

"I have never felt so interested in the life of Job before," exclaims another of our company. "One can see now that Job truly found exhortations in stones, books, in running brooks, and good in everything."

How confidently he says "Ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee." Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee: and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee. Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of Yahweh hath wrought this?" (ch. 12:7-9). "The fear of

Yahweh that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding." As we recall many of these eloquent sayings we can picture Job in his rock-hewn palace, testifying to the unchangeable goodness, and majesty of the Lord. And seem to grow stronger as we contemplate his patient endurance. In him we see one of the Lord's servants, not only eloquent and rich,



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but greatly beloved. His sheep grazed upon the mountain slopes, and his camels lingered among the flowery grass, while his oxen ploughed the fields made fertile by the dew of Hermon (Psa. 133), for the snow that covered the summit melted at the edges during the heat of summer and trickled down its side in little rills until the plains below were like a "well-watered garden."

Job extols the power and wisdom of his Maker, and acknowledges His right to act as He pleases. He speaks of friends deceitful "as a stream of brooks that pass away" that blackened by reason of the ice. Of rivulets that like carded silver wound their way through lovely ravines, bright with beds of Oleander and Lebanon primroses. These mountains abounded with honey, and throughout the land in wild luxuriance grew vines, figs, olives and almonds. We are not surprised that Job's sons forsook the city to dwell in houses of clay among these picturesque surroundings, as the people do at the present time: heaping up walls of clay and overlaying them with pine logs and boughs of various trees. These houses are not very durable and often when a storm sweeps down and the flat roofs are covered with snow, they collapse or are thrown down by the wind that rushes through the passes of these eastern hills, for behind the anti-Lebanon the sandy desert stretches wide and dreary.

Many and diverse are the mountain scenes of the Bible. Some peaceful and serene as the one before us this morning. Others fearfully tragic, as depicted in the prophets, when darkness, and the gloominess of devastating armies shall cover the land, "as morning spread upon the mountains" (Joel 2), and the noise of warfare "like the noise of chariots on the tops of the mountains." Strangely contrasting with the beautiful picture given in Nah. 1:15 "Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace! O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows: for the wicked shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off."

The present scene is one of silent grandeur, reminding us of the days to come when "the wilderness and the solitary place" shall be made glad for God's people; the memory of which must still linger with us when time and circumstances have driven us down again into the city and set us among the duties of life. This grand mountain pass we have been speaking of is a roadway to help across the mountain, and is called the "Gorge of Yarmutch." When it was formed, the piece of rock that fell from the mountain alighted in the plain at its foot, we are told, making a sort of promontory across it. This falling rock cut deeply into the ground so that there is a chasm on the other side of it. Into this the mountain stream pours down, leaping from the stony wall at the head of the chasm with a rush and a roar. How naturally Job speaks of all this when extolling the wondrous works of God! In ch. 28 he says "He (God) putteth forth His hand upon the (flinty) rock; He overturneth the mountains by the roots. He

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cutteth out rivers (channels or passages) among the rocks, and His eye seeth every precious thing. He bindeth up the floods (the streams that trickle down) from overflowing, and the thing that is hid bringeth He forth to light."

On the top of this promontory are the ruins of the ancient city, and the remains of these walls are clearly to be traced. Again Job says "Surely the mountain falling cometh to nought, and the rock is removed out of his place" (ch. 14:18). It must have been a very rocky place indeed, quite impregnable, for the inhabitants of this valley scooped out dwellings for themselves in the sides of the mountains. Of the Kenite, Balaam said: "Strong is thy dwelling place, and thy nest is set in the rock" (a metaphor suggesting the security of eternal inheritance to the faithful who identified themselves with Israel Num. 24:21); when from the rocky heights he beheld the people destined to dwell alone and not to be reckoned among the nations. Many of these caves and rocky houses are still to be seen. Some have two or even three caves opening one into the other, with a massive stone door which is made to turn on a pivot. The giant city of Asherah may have been partly hewn out of a rocky promontory and partly built upon it, like Petra, another nearby city. Isaiah refers to the hiding places in the rocks; the great rocks that were such familiar objects to both patriarchs and prophets. When Job exclaimed in his misery: "Oh that my words were now written... That they were graven with an iron pen, and lead in the rock forever," there would be many smooth rocky walls around him on which to cut out his words. The earliest records of the Mosaic writings were preserved to us by this method. The characters were inscribed upon pieces of soft clay, then dried or hardened by the sun and thus became solid and durable. This rod or pen too, has been discovered among other things, thus confirming the sayings of Job (Job 19), who desired that his pleadings with God, and his integrity towards man, might be made legible and indelible in some rocky pillar, or tablet, so that his uprightness might be evident to all rising generations. And God who answers His servants according to His infinite wisdom and love, has caused this graphic account of Job's life, his sufferings and final restoration to be written for our learning, that we "through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope."

Let us lay to heart then, the beautiful lessons they are intended to convey, and be patient like Job, inasmuch as we know that "God never yet forsook in need the man that trusted Him indeed."



Chapter Sixteen

ROCKY HEIGHTS

*Thou art my Rock, Thy name alone
The fortress where my hopes retreat;
Oh make Thy power and mercy known
To safely guide my trembling feet.*

RELUCTANT to forsake our rocky lounges on the summit of the great purple mountain, we pause and gaze at the rushing waters as they thunder down the gorge beneath bowers of foliage. Away in the distance stretches the broad musical river and more rocky fir-clad heights. The cliffs here on either side are too steep to allow of a path along the glen, but we have a lovely peep through it. There is a delicious combination of river-pools and impending water-worn rocks, overgrown with ferns, dwarf oak and mountain ash, so that it is an ideal spot for a summer morning. It is indeed a scene of singular beauty that greets us and as we are encircled by a series of jagged and splintered crags so much favoured by the rock climbers, our minds naturally are directed to them.

As with the patriarch Job, so it appears to have been with the prophets. Their imagery is borrowed from the materials around them, and therefore from both mountain, sea and rocks, they received vivid impressions of the perfection, beauty and glory of that defence and that happiness which will characterise the condition of all things in the Kingdom of God.

Moses, who spent so much time on the mountain top, speaks of the Eternal Creator as the "Rock." "He is the Rock, His work is perfect," and although Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked... although he forsook and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation and became unmindful of the Rock that begat him, yet the Rock remained unmoved and unchangeable, for there is no rock like the God of Israel (Deut. 32).

Who can number the blessings Israel forfeited through their negligence. In the midst of dire distress they are told by the prophet how they had been unmindful of the Rock of their strength (Isa. 17:10). David says: "Thou art my rock and my fortress, my strong tower, the rock in whom I trust." This is the Rock on which all may lean and under whose shadow all may find shelter, in the clefts of which are the living waters and in the possession thereof is "a tower of defence" (2Sam. 22; Psalm 31:3). In eastern countries the figure would be most striking. Exposed to the rays of a tropical sun, nothing would be more

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appreciated than the cool shade or shelter of the rocks. Such figures are therefore common in Oriental writing to denote protection and agreeable shelter from storm or calamity. Sinners exposed to the burning wrath of righteous judgments (Rev. 6:16) have no shelter, but "the Lord will be the refuge of His people." In times of trouble, grief, distress and desolation there is One Rock whose shadow is real shelter, as there is one river whose streams make glad the City of God, so that our very inward being cries out with the Psalmist, "Oh lead me to the Rock that is higher than I" (Psalm 61:2).

How often David must have looked up to the rocky heights, and as he did so, his very insignificance would be most apparent. As the great rocks towered high above his head, the mind noble and zealous toward God sought to emulate the One Almighty Being in whom he trusted so implicitly. "My soul, wait thou only upon God," he says in Psalm 62, "for my expectation is from Him. He only is my rock and my salvation: He is my defence; I shall not be moved."

We have only to glance at the Psalms to learn what a close observer of nature David was. "The high mountains are a refuge for the wild goats, and the rocks are a refuge for the conies." And again he draws the lessons of God's merciful provision for His people and His constant care over them. "God is my refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble." He who protected the little defenceless conies, by causing them to instinctively run into their rocky dwelling at the sound of the vulture's wing, could provide a means of escape from more powerful enemies. Saul might pursue David with 3,000 men amid the rocks that were trodden only by wild goats (1Sam. 24), but at length he comes to the sheepcotes, somewhere on the level ground where there is a sheltering cave. The very expression "the rocks of the wild goats" implies their height, their precipitous and slippery character, the goats being able to climb to safety where no other creatures are able to follow.

He testifies to the goodness of God in delivering his feet from falling, while the wicked are punished by being led into slippery places. The sheepcotes were caves in the rocks, in which it is still common for shepherds and their flocks to lodge. Beyond the valley of Tekoa there is a very large grotto, which the Arabs call El-Maamah, a hiding place. The high rocks on each side of the valley are almost perpendicular; and the way to the grotto is by a terrace formed in the rock, which is very narrow. There are two entrances into it; the rock is supported by natural pillars and the place is so strong and perfectly dry that one would imagine it to be one of the strongholds of Engedi and possibly it may be the very cave in which David cut off Saul's skirt, for David and his men might, with good ease, lie hid there and not be seen. A welcome shelter and hiding place, indeed. In eastern lands we read frequently of caves in the rocks and the hills being used by travellers for the purpose of sheltering them from the scorching

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heat of the noonday sun, and where, covering up their feet with their cloak or plaid, they lie down and repose in a clear, cool, and delicious atmosphere. Hence the expression in the Song of Solomon: "I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste." And the Bridegroom says: "O my dove, thou art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret place of the stairs; let me see thy countenance."

"I will put thee in the clift of the rock," the Lord said to Moses, when he desired to see the glory of the divine Majesty without being consumed (Exod. 33). And none may behold the glory unless their feet are firmly planted on the impregnable rock and their hold being covered in its mighty clift. Christ is the rock-bed of the ecclesia, out of which wells up he living waters, to the satisfaction of every soul thirsting to know more of the divine purpose. Jesus truly is a river of water in a dry place, supplying strength to the needy. Many have felt in a warm climate and amid the fervour of a summer sun, what a rich treat is a grey limestone or granite rock, sheltering from the burning sun, and what coolness. There is within the area of its shadow. That very coolness and peace, that very shelter, is to be enjoyed in its spiritual and therefore in its highest sense, as it is recorded of Israel, "They all drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that Rock was, or represented, Christ (1Cor. 10). Oh the joy, the happiness, peace and conscious refreshment of those who have found a shelter under the shadow of the Rock and a retreat in the clefts of that Rock who is the refuge of His people, even in Him the Rock of Ages. A man shall be as "an hiding place from the wind, and as a covert from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great Rock in a weary land," says the prophet Isaiah (ch. 32).

How glorious is the figure. He is as "the shadow of a great rock." It is no mere sentiment, but the expression suggests solidity and copiousness. Yahweh is a great Rock, capable of sheltering all who will place themselves under His Almighty protection. Of Israel it is said "They thirsted not when He led them," being supplied with refreshing draughts from the smitten Rock which was so highly typical of the Christ (Exod. 17). The Holy Man upon the Rock was the embodiment of divine power. Eternal and almighty Power pervaded the rock so long as the waters gushed out. The power of which the Holy Man upon the Rock was the expression, was Yahweh, or "He who shall be;" first in Christ personal, and afterwards in Christ's mystical Body — the ecclesia. Moses speaking prophetically in Deut. 33 addresses the tribe of Levi. The Holy Man, *ishkhasid*, with whom they strove upon the rock, and thus in a figure made the rock a part of himself to represent something afterwards to be smitten, by certain who like Moses, should speak unadvisedly with their lips and in this way the rock became spiritual.

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In these beautiful figures the association of water with the rock seems inseparable. He who is our sheltering Rock also supplies the "living waters," the "rivers of waters" showing the abundance and continuity of refreshment and strength issuing forth from the eternal well-springs. "My soul thirsteth for Thee," said the Psalmist, "in a dry and weary land, where no water is" (63). There is no spring that can be dug in any earth-rock that can give the "living waters." "Whoso drinketh of this must thirst again." How refreshing it is to sip the water from a small streamlet when we are really thirsty, we feel it is more delicious than the finest wine; but perhaps we need a little personal experience to make us fully realise and appreciate the truth of this imagery.

In the Psalm and in Isaiah it is a picture of a warm and sultry country that is presented to the mind's eye. The sky above as polished brass, and the earth beneath as iron. A traveller exposed to a vertical sun in a land without water. Parched and weary he cries out, longing for some shelter and refreshment. Suddenly there comes upon his vision a great rock, under whose welcome shadow he reclines, and drinks from the sweet stream fresh from the verdant hills and is refreshed and strengthened. Then after sheltering awhile in the enjoyment of the cooling breeze he pursues his way rejoicing. How beautiful and how natural is all this! A burning sun, a parched land, the discovery in the midst of all this a great rock projecting forth its shadow; and near it a mountain stream running clearly and musically, to the sea, from which the weary traveller drinks and feels that water, which we so little value, is the sweetest and most precious of all things that could be presented to him. The prophets convey under this beautiful and natural imagery what the blessings of the Truth are to those who find it. The impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture provides shelter and safety, satisfaction and refreshment for the weary and thirsty on life's journey. From the withering, scorching heat of oppression and scorn we may fly to the Rock for safety and comfort, and we find sweet solace and refreshment. "In the time of trouble He will hide me in His pavilion: in the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me; He shall set me up upon a rock," says David (Psa. 27). And further, "He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock and established my goings" (Psa. 41). In the shadow of His hand hath He hid me," testifies Isaiah, speaking of Christ, and referring to the great work he will accomplish on behalf of his people, the prophet says, "They shall not hunger nor thirst neither shall the heat nor the sun smite them: for he that hath mercy upon them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them" (ch. 49).

Running to the literal shadow of a rock from the scorching sunbeams in a dry land or in a sandy desert is shelter. The wrath of God revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness, may be likened to a scorching heat, and the world

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may be likened to the desert, and, oh beautiful thought, the Lord Jesus is to those who find him, as the shadow of a great Rock in a weary land.

In all our misery, suffering, and pain, we may flee to “the Rock that is higher than I” and there find shelter. He takes away the curse of sin by his own blood, and wrath, having no conductor cannot strike us. He covers us with his own glorious righteousness, and thus is there no condemnation. Then in the phrase, “as rivers in a dry place” we have the idea of satisfaction. The ordinary figure is that of thirst. “If any man thirst, let him come unto me.” “Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come to the waters” (Isa. 55:1). This sense of thirstiness is the real condition of every human being. Want and satisfaction are like light and shade — like sound and echo, they are inseparable the one from the other. This feeling of dissatisfaction and emptiness, of longing and thirst, is common to all, high, or low, rich or poor. Many there are who thirsting for knowledge, spend all their time in searching the heavens, or exploring the deep while others are peering into all the recesses of the earth, or accumulating all available literature with the idea of benefiting their fellows or making a name in the world, yet none of these can give real satisfaction.

How different the soul who thirsts for God! He seeks an immense treasure and a store of riches, without limitation or alloy, while the greatest blessings of self-satisfaction are the shortest lived, and often the brightest prospects and the most excellent gifts are the soonest to fade and pass away. The one who seeks satisfaction in divine things has light in the surrounding darkness, a healing balm in sorrow and a shadow in the heat of trial and the prospect of inexhaustible happiness in the future.

“I have listened with much interest to this profitable discourse on rocks, but I do not think you have done justice to the mountains of Israel,” says an elderly sister, throwing a large handkerchief over her head for protection from the sun’s rays, “but I feel it is quite excusable, as we see around us so many of the Creator’s noble handiworks.”

Truly the Psalmist said, “The earth is full of the riches of Yahweh.” “But please proceed with whatever subject you consider best, for it is all so good, and we can drink of these ‘Living Waters’ freely while breathing the pure atmosphere as we rest upon the arms of the crags.” We certainly have overlooked many of these ancient mountains, but not intentionally. Mount Hermon, and Lebanon with its glorious cedars seemed to enrapture our minds for the time being, yet we would not be unmindful of those other heights which were the silent witnesses to so many interesting and solemn events.

Mount Hermon is the south eastern branch beyond Jordan. The Chaldee Tagumist calls it *toor talga*, “the mountain of snow,” because it is always covered with snow and Jerome informs us that its snow in the summertime used

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to be carried from Panaan or Caesarea Philippi to Tyre. It is now called El Heish. And Lebanon is not only famous for its mighty cedars, but its vineyards and plantations of olive, mulberry and fig trees, which are cultivated in terraces formed by walks, and as the soil in the declivities and hollows is so excellent it produces an abundance of corn, oil and wine.

Bashan spoken of as an "high hill," on the north of Mount Hermon, is one of the most lovely districts; the scenery of this elevated tract is described as extremely beautiful; its plains covered with a fertile soil; its hills covered with forests and at every new turn presenting the most beautiful landscapes that can be imagined. Some of its heights are more than 7,000 feet (2133 metres) above sea level, the Anti-Lebanon reaching 8,000 feet (2438 metres). In view of which one can only prostrate oneself and exclaim "Lord, what is man, that Thou art mindful of him?" Ah, blessed indeed is the man, O Lord, "whom Thou chooseth and causest to approach unto Thee," which "setteth fast the mountains: being girded above with might." "I am reminded of a verse given to me by a friend some years ago," says our sister. It runs thus:—

How beautiful creation is!

The work which Thou didst bless;

But O, what then must Thou be like, Eternal Loveliness.

"The heavens are Thine, the earth also is Thine; as for the world and the fulness thereof, Thou hast founded them," said the Psalmist. "The north and the south Thou hast created them: Tabor and Hermon rejoice in Thy name" (Psa. 89:12). And we look forward to hearing the voice of the Beloved as he comes "leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills (Song of Solomon 2:8), saying: "Come with me from Lebanon, my Bride... look from the top of Amana" from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lion's dens, from the mountains of the leopards" (ch. 4:8). This is the territory of the exploits of Joshua, Barak and Gideon: under whose mighty shadows lies the battlefield of many generations.

Mount Tabor in Upper Galilee, with its oak glade and dome-shaped summit graces the northern border of the Plain of Esdraelon, and is only six miles (9.6 kilometres) from Nazareth, where Jesus spent his childhood years. Here Barak encamped with ten thousand men on the eve of the battle with Sisera.

It is interesting to note that from the sunny hills of Nazareth Jesus could look down upon the great battlefield of the past, present, and of the future. From the lofty and sacred observatory of Mount Tabor, we might contemplate the land of wonders, the events of history, and the movements of divine Providence. It is a celebrated spot, and mighty nations from the time of Melchizedek have contended at its base for the dominion of the East. From Tabor we may view the little hamlet of Endor where Saul met the prophetic witch, and not far distant is

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the city of Cana in Galilee where the marriage took place which occasioned the first miracle of Christ. On this mount the whole land lies at one's feet, making us feel that "it is good to be here" (2Pet. 1:18). So many are the historic events in the very neighbourhood of Tabor, that renders it singularly interesting to the believer's heart. Nain is situated on the north side edge of "Little Hermon" not far from Tabor. It is approached by a steep ascent, and on either side of the road, the rocks are full of sepulchral caves. One entrance alone could it have had, that which opens on to the rough hillside in its downward slope to the plain.

Mount Hor, where the Lord commanded Moses to strip Aaron of the holy garments and put them on Eleazer, his son, rises up in bleak grandeur far above the other mountains of Seir. There Aaron is buried and his tomb is yet shown on its lonely summit. And can we recall this scene without laying to heart the solemn truth that one day, we know not how soon, we shall be stripped of that outer garb in which we have been recognised among our brethren or kinsfolk as servants of God, faithful or unfaithful, and the silent grave will receive us with open arms, and we must wait until the Voice of him who is "the Resurrection and the Life" calls us to our feet and clothes us with the glorious garment of incorruptibility and makes us "kings and priests unto our God," or pronounces the awful judgment "Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity, I never approved of you."

Mount Carmel, too, where the Prophet Elijah met the prophets of Baal, overlooks the Plain of Esdraelon, and who can hear the name Carmel without a thrill of enthusiasm running through his veins? Its shape resembles a flattened cone, and it is one of the finest and most beautiful mountains in Palestine. Its name signifies, "a fruitful field" or "a country of vineyards and gardens." Modern travellers tell us that the oaks, wild vines, olive trees, and fragrant flowers still indicate its former productiveness, though it has sufficiently deteriorated to fulfil the prediction of the prophet. "The land mourneth and languisheth: Lebanon is ashamed and withereth away: Sharon is like a desert: and Bashan and Carmel shake off their leaves" (Isa. 33:9 and Amos 1:2). But oh lovely thought! it shall not remain so, for the prophet declares in ch. 35: "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad: and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose," or autumn crocus. "It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon: they shall see the glory of Yahweh, the excellency of our God." And again in Jer. 1:19: speaking of Israel's future, we read "He shall feed on Carmel and Bashan and his soul shall be satisfied upon the hills of Ephraim and Gilead."

Mount Gilead, the hill of balsam trees, is the spot where Jacob and Laban made their covenant. Perhaps under the shade of one of these groves, calling the

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spot "Galeed" the heap of witness. It still has traces of its former romantic beauty, but no one ever finds the balsam tree.

The graceful form and verdant beauty of Carmel's summit is alluded to in Song of Solomon 7, which is also remarkable for its pure and enlivening atmosphere. The base of the mountain was washed by "that ancient river, the river Kishon," that Deborah mentions in her triumphant song (Jud. 5:21). Deborah, the mother and wife in Israel whom the Eternal Father raised up expressly to the responsible office of judgeship, inspiring her with zeal and wisdom equal to the important task.

"Every woman, I believe, is better and braver for her noble example. A clear proof that God is no respecter of persons. Such a lofty position required much skill and a clear, cool intellect, a mind capable of discriminating between good and evil nationally and a tongue able to express with deliberateness and certainty the decisions of that mind for the welfare of a people. Deborah was a wife and mother, too, showing that even domestic duty did not exclude her from the Lord's service," says the author of "Women in Israel." We find her using effectively that power and influence entrusted to her, and that refined dignity and ability acknowledged by Barak who refused to go against Sisera except she accompanied him. Her song is the expression of her firm confidence in God, her love and spiritual fervour for His honour. And God did not despise the weaker vessel but did a mighty work through Deborah of which every Israelite is proud today.

It seems a favourite argument with some that women's intellect is not equal to that of man: but the proper answer is that the woman's mind is not of the same fibre, generally speaking, nor of the same structure; it is superior to man's in the orbit in which she moves, and, therefore, the comparison is not fair. Both are different intellects, suited for different objects, and is it not a fact that we often find that where man fails woman is triumphant. But let us recollect that one is not without the other in the Lord, and, having gifts differing one from another, let each endeavour in their own sphere to be faithful and so "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour" in all things.

The plain of Sharon spreads out towards the south of Carmel and we are told that while Lebanon raised to heaven a summit of naked and barren rocks, covered for the greater part of the year with snow, the top of Carmel, bare and sterile as its present appearance, is clothed with perennial verdure, so that the lofty genius of Isaiah, guided by the Spirit, could find no more appropriate figure to represent the flourishing state of the Redeemer's Kingdom than "the excellency of Carmel and Sharon." "Bashan languisheth, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languisheth," lamented the prophet Nahum, but Micah intercedes for Israel, saying "Let them feed in Bashan and Gilead, as in the days

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of old" (ch. 1:4; ch. 7:14). Two other mountains of much interest are Ebal and Gerizim situated in the territory of Ephraim. They are but a short distance apart, and in the valley between was the old city of Shechem. These rocky and precipitous heights are remarkable for the solemn ratification of God's covenant with Israel, which took place upon them, and a particular account of which is given in Deut. 27:12-26; 28:2-68.

A modern traveller speaks of the "lofty, craggy and barren aspects of these mountains which seem to face each other with an air of defiance."

After obtaining possession of Canaan, the Israelites, according to Moses' injunction, built an altar and celebrated a feast on Mount Ebal. The Samaritans contended that this should have been done on Mount Gerizim, and they afterwards built a temple on Gerizim, whose ruins are still visible. This temple they regarded in much the same manner as the Jews did the Temple at Jerusalem; hence the remark of the woman of Samaria at Shechem, alluding to the differences of opinion (John 4:20). "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, but ye say, that Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship."

The beautiful valley between Ebal and Gerizim was so narrow that what is spoken on the one in a loud voice, might be heard on the other, but it seems probable that the people did not stand on the mountains but over against them in the plain. But the Talmud says, that six of the tribes went up on each, while the priests and Levites and the Ark remained beneath.

The mountains of Abarim include Mount Nebo, whose lonely peak overlooks the whole length and breadth of the Promised Land. Pisgah and Peor were but different names for these heights. They are described as "an exceeding high ridge of desolate mountains, a succession of naked rocks and precipices; rendered in some places the more frightful by a multiplicity of torrents which fall on each side." In the valley in the land of Moab, Moses, the servant of the Lord, was buried amid the awful grandeur, under the shadow of these mighty sentinels. "But no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day." If they had it might probably have led to idolatry and we are reminded of Christ's words to the Scribes and Pharisees "Woe unto you... for ye are like whited sepulchres which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead men's bones" (Mat. 23).

Another historic chain are the Mountains of Gilboa, part of the scene of the world's great battlefield. Gilboa is between the Jordan Valley and the Plain of Esdraelon. It is 1,600 feet (487 metres) above sea level or 1,200 (365 metres) above the plain. Here in ancient days "the shield of the mighty was vilely cast away" (2Sam. 1), and David lamented over Saul and Jonathan — both his enemy and his friend fell together and yet this noble, unselfish young man speaks only good of Saul in the most beautiful language that can possibly be

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uttered. Saul the beauty of Israel, "is slain upon thy high places," but do not publish it lest his foes rejoice. "Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let there be rain, because Saul, the mighty and Jonathan the brave, the noble, the faithful are fallen. Jonathan... my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful." It was constant, disinterested, unselfish love. Ah, it was like the love of Jesus, the Friend of friends, the altogether lovely One. May we all enjoy it to the full.

In Saul we have the instance of a man whose passions were as restless as the waves of the sea and those passions liable to be excited by the most unlikely causes and elements. He made a good start under the guidance and blessing of God. But blessing may be misused and abused, and so it proved with Saul. How much depends upon the receiver whether these special gifts are a real blessing, and beneficent possession. If abused the most excellent gifts may prove a truly sorrowful calamity. This lesson is copiously illustrated even in the natural world. The winds fill the sail of ship and waft her across the waves to her desired haven enabling her to bridge the ocean and thus bring man nearer to man: but the same wind, in the form of the hurricane, tornado or typhoon, falling on the vessel whose thoughtless crew are unprepared for it, buries its living freight and all its precious cargo in the ocean; and thus that very wind which is a powerful blessing when rightly used and skilfully managed, turns out a tremendous calamity when we do not prepare to receive it and make use of it. The noontide sun that fosters, warms, and nourishes, and brings to maturity one fragrant flower will scorch and wither another. It may guide one pilgrim across the desert towards his home in comfort, but it may fall with scorching rays upon another and with intolerable force cause him to droop and sink beneath it, because he has not adapted himself to its requirements.

How different with Jonathan, entrusted with these mighty blessings! After he had made that magnificent victory with the Lord's help, he dipped his rod, or spear, into the honeycomb suspended from a tree and ate a little of it. He tasted, and "his eyes were enlightened," a common phrase in the East. It had strengthened him, and he was able to pursue his way. The Word of God is compared to honey, yea, even sweeter and if we partake of its sweetness we shall receive strength for the battles of life, and go on our way rejoicing, but let us see that we make use of our gifts and blessings and do not abuse them.

But among all these glorious rocky heights, Sinai must not be forgotten. Mount Sinai, from the summit of which God gave His holy law to Israel, rears its head in stern and solemn grandeur above the surrounding heights. It is situated in the peninsular of Arabia Petraea, and is about 280 miles (450 kilometres) in a direct line from Jerusalem, but by Paran, Seir, Bozrah, and the Plains of Moab, it is about 310 miles (498 kilometres). It is frequently spoken of

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as Horeb. The difference between Horeb and Sinai is that Horeb is employed to denote the group of mountains of which Sinai is a particular summit. Throughout the whole of the Scriptures, Horeb never appears as a distinct mountain. Horeb is spoken of as a mountain district, the usual form of expression being "in Horeb." Yahweh our Elohim it is said "spoke to us in Horeb" (Deut. 1:6), but on the other hand it is testified "Yahweh came down upon Mount Sinai on the top of the Mount" (Exod. 19:18-20). The upper region of Sinai forms an irregular circle of 30 or 40 miles (48-64 kilometres) in diameter, possessing numerous sources of water, a temperate climate, and a soil capable of supporting animal and vegetable nature. One writer describes the central summit of Sinai as "abrupt cliffs of granite from six to eight hundred feet (182-243 metres) high, whose surface is blackened by the sun, and surrounding the avenues of approach." They enclose the "Holy Mountain" so called on account of what took place when the Lord descended on it in fire: on three sides, leaving the east and the north east sides only, towards the gulf of Akaba, more open to view. The cliffs are entered by a narrow defile about forty feet (12 metres) wide, with perpendicular granite rocks on each side. A gentle but continuous ascent leads up to this valley: the whole aspect is terrific, but ever varying. It does not attain more than 200 feet (60 metres) in width, and the mountains rise to an immense height on either side. Sinai has four summits, and that of Moses stands almost in the middle of the others. The view from this summit is very grand. From one of these peaks are to be seen parts of the gulfs of Akaba and Suez, besides innumerable ranges of rocky mountains: but around the Mount there are but few open places.

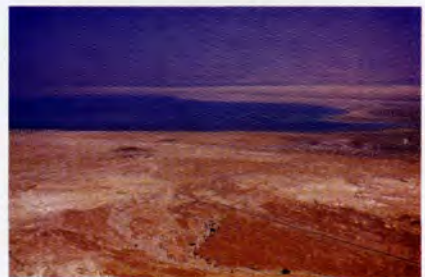
Mount Sinai required an approach like this. "There is nothing to do here," says a visitor, "with the beauty and softness of Nature." The scenes are suited to the sound of the fearful trumpet that was then heard there; and will yet again be heard when "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel and with the trump of God" (1Thes. 4:16). On that first memorable occasion the Lord led His people as an eastern shepherd his flock, from the shores of the Red Sea, into the cluster of mountains called Horeb, and assembling them at the foot of Mount Sinai. He made, as it were, a throne of its granite head, its elevation being above the sea level 7,500 feet (2286 metres). "And it came to pass on the third morning that there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that were in the camp trembled." A majestic and wonderful type of that which is yet to be: for the Lord Jesus we believe will come first to Sinai with ten thousand of his mighty ones — those ministers of his "that do his pleasure" (Psa. 103:20-21), who will gather together "his elect from the four corners of the earth; both those who have made a

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covenant with him by sacrifice — the saints, and the twelve tribes of Israel 'made willing' in the day of His power" (Psa. 1:5; 110:3) for the prophet who saw in vision, the Lord God go forth with "whirlwinds of the south," also testifies "Yahweh my Elohim, all the saints, shall come in with Thee" (Zech. 9:14; 19:5); Israel's history being typical of this; and when Moses pronounced those prophetic blessings upon them, he said "Yahweh came from Sinai and rose up from Seir unto them; He shined forth from Mount Paran, and He came with ten thousand of His saints" (Deut 33:2). Psa. 68:17-18 also indicates a future manifestation in the wilderness of Sinai and Paran. Dr. Thomas translates these verses as follows: "The chariots of Elohim are twenty thousands thousands repeated: The Lord (Adonai) among them, Sinai in the holy." In verse 22 the Lord saith, "I will bring again from the depths of the sea" hence for Yahweh to bring again, the people must first have been gathered in the vicinity of the Red Sea. Habakkuk's vision, also confirms this, for in describing this he says "Eloah (singular, not Elohim) shall come from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran." Again the doctor tells us this text should be rendered "Elohim came in from the south, and the Holy One from Mount Paran." Eloah is the word used for the setter-up of the Kingdom in Dan. 2:44. It signifies the Adorable, or Strong One — the Messiah.

The region of Sinai is well adapted for this glorious manifestation, being the southern region reserved in solitude for future events far transcending any witnessed in the days of old. The peninsula of Sinai is formed by two arms running into the land from the north end of the Red Sea, and is bounded by the one styled "the tongue of the Egyptian Sea" (Isa. 11:15); on the southwest at the end of which is Suez; and by the Elanite Gulf on the east. Within this triangular area are Mount Sinai and Mount Paran, and "a great and terrible wilderness" (Deut. 8:15). It is a hot, dry, sandy and mountainous district, containing a few of the descendants of Hagar (Gen. 16:11). To the northwest of the central region of Sinai and divided from it by a broad valley, called El Sheikh, is a mountain range extending eastward, called Zebeir. Toward the north and northwest is the wilderness of Paran, so called after Mount Paran, a chain of mountains bordering the desert on the east. The wilderness lies between the southern border of Palestine, and the Mediterranean on the north: Egypt on the west, Idumea, or Edom, on the east, and the El Tyh range of the peninsula on the south.

Habakkuk's vision related to the country of the south. There is a chain



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of mountains on the east of the valley El Ghor, the eastern portion of which is Mount Seir, associated with other places of antiquity, mentioned in Isa. 63:1. So that from this, and various other prophecies we may trace our Lord's advance from Mount Sinai to Bozrah, through the plains of Moab, Zionwards.

He will come into Egypt riding "upon a swift cloud" (Isa. 19:1), and will "recover the remnant of His people from Egypt" (Psa. 11:11). "And the Egyptians shall know the Lord in that day...and He will be entreated of them, and shall heal them" (Isa. 19:18-22). "As a trembling bird" (Hosea 11:1, 11) "Israel will be led out of Egypt," for the Lord will "set His hand a second time to recover the remnant of His people which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, and from Hamoth, and from the islands of the sea." Egypt, Cush and Seba are appointed for their ransom (Isa. 43:3). "He shall send them a Saviour, a great One" who will deliver them from all oppression.

Zechariah shows how he will "go forth with whirlwinds of the south" (ch. 19:14), and Habakkuk that he will march through the land in indignation and thresh the nations in anger" (ch. 3:12). At Bozrah, in Edom, he will confront the forces of the latter-day Assyrian king, and all will shake at his presence (Zech. 12:4), when he pleads against them with terrible judgments (Eze. 30:8), "and Israel will be saved with an everlasting salvation."

As we contemplate Sinai's solemn grandeur, another mountain scene naturally arises before the mind's eye in glorious and peaceful contrast. We are not told the name of this mountain referred to in Mat. 5, but the site of this scene is believed to be the Kum Hattin, or "Horn of Hattin," situated near the spot where it is believed Capernaum stood, and to which the name of the "Mount of Beatitudes" has been given. The mount is celebrated in the records of our Lord's teaching. It is not very high, only about sixty feet (18 metres) above the plain, but it overlooked the busy Sea of Galilee, and was easily accessible from the populous district. The scene itself is suggestive, especially in connection with Christ's teaching. He had drawn his disciples and the multitude up from the lower level of the sea of people, where they carried on their usual life. Here they had the opportunity of seeing and hearing, and entering into a better and higher life. The higher level to which they were drawn was not the highest; they would learn yet to climb higher. Jesus went up the mount and sat upon one of these horns, or higher points, but still with access to the people. Here there was a level place where he might have a view of many things. The busy life, the houses, the boats, the sea, and the fields; and that vast canopy above, symbolic of the breadth and comprehensiveness of his teaching, and the love of God. For the inner circle as well as the outer, it was needful to bring out not merely handfuls of isolated seed-truth's, but a discourse, continuous and far-reaching, yet coming

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down to the higher and lower levels of life — the sun, the shower, the light and the air. Our Lord not only lays the boundary stones where the first were placed in the Law given upon the Holy Mount, but shows the wide fields of activity they enclose. He not only explains the letter, but unfolds the spiritual significance — not the form of words, but the character and disposition well pleasing to the Father which is the fulfilling of the Law. The life that is as far removed from earthly, carnal ideas as the mighty mountains, and embracing the loftiest ideal — perfection.

But returning to our Lord's future march from Sinai, through the spirit in Zechariah, we are able to trace his ascent to the Mount of Olives, where his feet will stand as firmly and literally as in the days of old.

To the Jews, as well as to many Christians, Zechariah is a sealed book because they do not see him who is to stand once again on the top of Olivet, because he offered up tears and cries of agony at the foot of that same mountain.

Olivet is a mountain ridge to the east of Jerusalem, from which it is separated by the valley of Jehoshaphat. It overlooks the city so that every street and almost every house can be distinguished from its summit. It doubtless had its name from the abundance of olives that clothed its sides; some of which are of remarkable age and size and are still standing. It is generally described as having three summits or peaks. Dr. Stanley, however, notices four, one outer starting off to the north and another to the south. It was a place frequently resorted to by our Lord and his disciples. From Olivet he wept bitter tears over the rebellious city. Over Olivet he passed to and fro, visiting Bethany. On the side of Olivet was Gethsemane and from Olivet the last charge was given to his disciples. Olivet, indeed, is very dear to the believer as being the spot last touched by the Redeemer's feet, and where the pledge was given that as truly as he departed, so surely will he one day come again, as King over all the earth (Zech. 14:9).

As our Lord passed along the slopes of Olivet on his way to Jerusalem, the people shouted, cut down branches from the trees, stripped off their garments and spread them in the way, showing honour to Jesus. If Sinai is associated with future judgments, truly Olivet will be the scene of unspeakable joy and gladness. As they journeyed along, the Holy City, with its Temple, its towers, and its walls, spread out before them. It was a lovely scene, and the Saviour paused to look at it. The journey has been described as "the road slopes by a gradual ascent up to the mount of Olives through green cornfields, and under shady trees, till it suddenly sweeps round northward. It is at this angle of the road that Jerusalem, that hitherto has been hidden by the shoulder of the hill, bursts full upon the view. There through the clear atmosphere, rising out of the deep umbrageous valleys which surround it, the city of ten thousand memories stood clear before him, and the morning sunlight, as it blazed on the marble pinnacle

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and gilded roofs of the temple buildings, was reflected in a very fiery splendour which forced the spectator to avert his glance."

Although it is nearly 2,000 years since this triumphant entry into Jerusalem and still longer since the prophet foretold a glorious second advent, and we repeatedly hear the skeptical enquiry: "Where is the promise of his coming?" believers in the scriptures have not lost heart or hope, and as Whittier says:—

*"But warm, sweet, tender, even yet, a present help is he,
And faith still has its Olivet, and love its Galilee."*

Zechariah informs us of what is to take place when our Lord comes to Olivet again. The general idea is that the Lord Jesus will first descend upon this mount, but Acts 1:11 only proves the certainty and manner of his coming. We observe that from "the valley of Achor" he will advance westward until he stands with his feet "as pillars of fire" upon "the Mount of Olives which is before Jerusalem on the east." In the great shaking which will throw down mountains, towers and walls, the mount trembles, and is divided asunder in the midst, leaving a very great valley between the mountain parted to the north and south. The people will be panic stricken, and flee as in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah (Zech. 14:6). After this, in glowing radiance, our Lord will appear upon the Mount, and in view of the "city of the Great King." The words of Eze. 43:2, will then be fulfilled that "the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east; and His voice was like the noise of many waters and the earth shined with His glory." From Olivet our Lord will proceed with his resplendent train towards the ancient capital, the beloved and revered Mount Zion, for "there Yahweh commandeth His blessing, even life for evermore" (Psa. 33:3). Mount Zion, the southernmost hill on which Jerusalem was built, has the valley of the Kidron on the east and the valley of Hinnom, or Gehenna on the south and west: Acra to the north and Moriah north east. On it was erected Solomon's palace, called "the house of the forest of Lebanon," and afterwards the magnificent palace of Herod, destroyed by the Romans. In the time of David, the temple hill was not included within the limits of the city, but formed a part of the cultivated ground of Arauna the Jebusite, from whom David bought it (2Sam. 24). In many cases the mountains of Israel were cultivated to the very summit; terrace after terrace covering their sides. So these hills of Zion not only added to the picturesque beauty of the land, but greatly extended its surface, and were a source of productiveness. They were a girdle of defence also around its frontiers, and also intersected the whole country. Declaring the exceeding greatness of God's righteousness the Psalmist says it is "like the great mountains" (Psa. 36:6).

The temple and its courts on Mount Moriah were called "Zion" (Psa. 65:1; 84:7). "Yahweh loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob." And why? It is "the Mountain of His holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of

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the whole earth” (Psa. 48:1, 2). Mount Zion is to be the scene of the Coronation of the King of Kings, foretold by the prophets long ages before, and in Rev. 14 we read that John beheld in vision this glorious and unique event. He saw the Lamb, enthroned on Mount Zion in company with his resplendent Bride — his elect ones taken from the nations for the obedience of faith “for His name” (Acts 15:14).

They have passed through much tribulation and are come (prospectively) “unto Mount Zion and to the city of the living God” (Heb 12:22). Having believed the “glorious things spoken concerning Zion,” and been “born out of water,” they have become citizens of Zion, so that when Yahweh writeth up the people, He will count that they were born there (Psa. 87). This is to be a very literal standing, for God’s purpose is to “set His King upon His holy Hill of Zion” (Psa. 2:6). “There are set,” testifies the Psalmist again, “thrones of judgment, the thrones of the House of David” (122: 2-5). These are the thrones that John saw in the heavens (Rev. 4:3-6). An emblematic illustration of the promise in ch. 3:21. Also referred to in ch. 20:4. Among this great company are the twelve apostles to whom the Lord Jesus gave the promise in Mat. 19:27, 28. The patriarchs and prophets, too, will be there, and all the worthy ones from the north, south, east and west, and they will “live and reign with Christ a thousand years” (Micah 4:7; Rev. 5:10).

The judgment of the household of Christ, we perceive, intervenes between the resurrection and the ascension to Zion’s hill. “Who shall ascend up into the mountain of Yahweh?” The answer is — “He that hath clean hands and a pure heart” (Psa. 24). The time of this supreme and magnificent event appears to be the Feast of Tabernacles, for branches of palm trees are the symbol of joy after victory or deliverance.

Crowns are the mark of royal dignity, and of the highest distinction. The fact of Jesus wearing a crown, even though a “crown of thorns” proves him to be King — the King of the Jews, and more, “the King over all the earth.” Now there are many crowned heads; then only one. All kings shall bow before him, all nations shall serve him. What are we doing with the Lord Jesus now? Do we mock or insult him by our very actions, if not words, often? Oh, let us be more thoughtful of his name, and honour and obey him day by day, so that we may be worthy to live and reign with him when this glorious Coronation Day arrives.

Then, “out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of Yahweh from Jerusalem” (Isa. 2:3). And the most magnificent Temple that has ever yet adorned the “city of the great King” will be erected on Mount Moriah, by the Lord Jesus, the great temple builder, and all people will learn to worship the eternal Father “in spirit and in truth,” and rejoice in His unbounded goodness for ever.

Chapter Seventeen

BIRDS OF PREY

*Just as a hen protects her brood
From birds of prey that seek their blood,
Under her feathers, so the Lord
Makes His own Arm His people's guard.*

THE mountains we have been considering are all of them as literal and material as those ranging before us in all their majestic stateliness, rearing their gigantic peaks, stern and erect towards the blue expanse above them and looking as if their great broad shoulders even supported the clear radiant canopy. And from these ponderous elements of nature, in all their material glory and grandeur the prophets have drawn the most delightful pictures of the realities of the things of the Spirit concerning the Christ, and his glorious and all-embracing kingdom.

The etymology of the word "mountain" helps us to understand more clearly its significance as a symbol, where it is intended in many parts of the Scriptures. The Hebrew, Chaldee and Arabic word for mountain each signify "to command, subdue and govern," so that in military terms, mountains and hills are said to command the places about them. In Jeremiah 51 the ruling power of the Chaldean Babylon is referred to as a "destroying mountain, which destroyed the earth," whose destiny was to be rolled down from the rocks, and to become "a burnt mountain" (v. 25), and the Kingdom of God is presented both by Isaiah and Micah under the figure of a great mountain whose height and extent excels all other mountains representing the Gentile powers of the earth.

The kingdom of God is frequently spoken of as "the holy mountain," the "mountain of My holiness," and "the mountain of Yahweh's house." "The Shepherd, the Stone of Israel" (Gen. 49:24), "the little stone, cut out of the mountains without hands" or without human intervention (Dan. 2) is destined to become "a great mountain" or "empire," after having smitten the destroying mountain in its latter-day manifestation; and finally, to fill the whole earth, which, consequently, will leave room for no other. There will be no rival empires then, for the judgments of God will hurl into oblivion all the lofty mountains that now proudly and defiantly rear their heads above the political earth and sea.

The mountain of Yahweh's house will be established and sure; it will be "exalted, above the hills" and all the enlightened nations of the earth will flow

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into it. And instead of trouble, dread and trembling, and crouching beneath the tyranny of the great destroying mountain, God's people will be "led forth with singing" as Isaiah testifies, for the kingdom of the Lord is righteousness, joy and peace, and the exalted ones of that period, will break forth into singing.

These mountains will "bring peace to the people" and "the little hills" (the possessors of fewer talents, the less distinguished of that noble company) will declare the righteousness of their king. And what a beautiful thought it is, that this happiness is contagious! We know how a happy spirit sheds sunshine upon all nature around. We must all have noticed that when we have been in a melancholy mood how all nature is tinged with the same dolefulness: and when we are bright and happy all nature seems to reflect the sunshine of our happy spirits. It is not so much the outer world that gives tone and colouring to the inner, but it is the inner that lends its sweet temperament to the outer and its tone and character dispels the darkness and chases the gloom. Hence, when the Lord's servants go forth among the ransomed nations, they will carry everywhere the fragrant, refreshing influence of immortal brightness and divine love; and thus with joyous hopes and bounding hearts the mountains and hills shall break forth into singing, as the gentle zephyrs sweeping past them make music, and the very trees, as they touch each other before the shoulders of the wind seem only to be clapping their hands with ecstasies of joy. And now as the morning is advancing and the sunbeams are beginning to penetrate through our slender apparel, we must change our position for a more sheltered spot, where we may feast our eyes upon fresh scenes and revive our memories with other interesting objects. We are reluctant to leave, for the scenery here is of the wildest description imaginable, and we have grown to appreciate it in such a measure as even to envy Job of his home among the rocky reefs of Lebanon and the mighty cedars. But we carefully pick our way through the boulder-strewn fell side, relieved here and there with tall bracken and long trails of screes surmounted by beetling precipices, seamed with deep gorges and black vertical rifts lying ahead of us.

To the nature lover who finds his chief joy in the solitude of such regions among the rugged heights, this spot is all to be desired but to those to whom nature in her softer moods appeals, to those who love to wander under leafy canopies, along flower bordered paths and through a countryside rich in verdant foliage, the valley below must be a constant pleasure, and yet we cannot forsake the wild spot without tarrying to learn the lesson it imparts for our spiritual edification.

We find in God's written Word what we often find in His created world, spots that have all the beauty and fertility of Eden, and other places are bleak, untrodden and seemingly forsaken. We are not to expect from God's Word even,

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every chapter replete with the same interest as we find in most parts; but the places that look least lovely on the surface are not without importance. Gold mines sleep beneath the deserts, and where the surface is covered with fertility and beauty the contents of the earth are of least value: and so it may be in many portions of the inspired Word. Where there is the least of poetry and of personal interest, there may lie hidden beneath, links and bonds of connection with great facts, with distant events, with moral truth, that when brought up by careful research may trace the purpose of God, and those plain parts become as interesting as those parts we are accustomed to appreciate and admire.

When God made the earth there were no bleak deserts, burning sands and barren wastes, or unproductive tracts. It was originally the loveliest orb of all, and not as we find it now, when God called it out of chaos into loveliness and beauty and pronounced it "very good." Yet true Christianity gilds the lowliest place with all the loveliness of Eden. It spreads not an idea but a real beauty over all the hard materials of human life. We find nature selecting some of the bleakest places for her ivy and her loveliest wild flowers, and God feeds the mosses on the bleak rocks with the morning mists. So Christ seemed to select the desert places of social life for imparting many of the Gospel's richest joys, and the poor in spirit were the subjects of his special favour and care. There are no barren fields in the Scriptures. If in some parts there are no bright flowers scattered over the surface, there is sleeping below untouched maybe, a golden mine, for "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable... (2Tim. 3:16).

A peculiar sound and a strange fluttering among the crags suddenly startles us, and a large bird sweeps through the air in a succession of spiral curves, rising with every curve and making no perceptible motion with its wings, until it has attained a height where it is scarcely visible. "A young eagle," exclaim several of our party. What a shock he has given us, and how remarkably quick he has risen to a speck in the clear sky! We fear we have been trespassing on dangerous ground, so we had better turn the angle to the light and leave the eagles and their rocky homes in peace although the incident has aroused our curiosity and interest.

There are a great many species of eagles, but the most celebrated is the golden eagle: and this fine bird although extinct in England is still found in the Highlands of Scotland and in Ireland, and not infrequently in all the northern parts of the globe. Although there is frequent mention of the eagle in the Bible, this bird is not our eagle, but the griffon vulture; and the word is so rendered in the revised version of Micah 1:16. The characteristics of this beautiful bird are also frequently referred to in the Scriptures. In this passage the prophet refers to its bared neck, when exhorting Samaria, and Jerusalem to lament for their

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idolatry, and earlier in the chapter he gives a graphic description of their rocky homes.

Job doubtless would be familiar with the dragon, the owl and the vulture. He mentions the swiftness of the eagle, its powerful sight and its building in the high rocky cliffs, when pleading with his friends. It is a ferocious bird of prey and unclean by the Levitical law (Lev. 11:14; Deut. 14:12). In Hebrew, the word "eagle" is *nesher*. This bird is described as one of the largest, strongest, swiftest, fiercest, and most rapacious of the feathered race. His eye is large, dark and piercing; his beak powerful and hooked; his legs strong and feathered; his feet yellow and armed with four very long and terrific claws; his wings very large and powerful, his body compact and robust; his bones hard, his flesh firm, his feathers coarse; his attitude fierce and erect, his motion lively; his flight extremely rapid and towering, and his cry the terror of every wing. The *Ossifrage* or *Peres*, from "paras" to break, is probably the species of eagle anciently called *Ossifraga* or the bone-breaker, from *os*, a bone, and *frange*, to break; because it not only strips off the flesh, but breaks the bones in order to extract the marrow.

The Ospray (Heb. *Ozniyah*) from *azaz*, to be strong, is also a species of eagle, probably the black eagle so remarkable for its strength.

Using the eagle as a metaphor, signifying swiftness, Job says: "My days are swifter than a post." That is, *rotz*, a runner or carrier, some of whom are said to go 150 miles (240 kilometres) in less than 24 hours. "They are passed away as the swift ships; as the eagle hasteth, or swoopeth on the prey" (ch. 9). He realized that the time of opportunities fled by more quickly than the hungry eagle alights on its prey. So may the Lord "teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom," that while we have time we may labour, and as much as in us lies, do good. "There is a generation," testifies the wise man, "O, how lofty are their eyes! and their eyelids are lifted up." They are like the eagles and hawks in ambition, greediness and cruelty; but God will never forsake the sheep of His pasture (Pro. 1:17-19). "The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out and eat it," declares also the same writer, who, with all his wisdom, acknowledges "The way of an eagle in the air" to be beyond his comprehension (Pro. 30).

But swift of flight and keen of sight as the eagles may be "there is a path which no fowl knoweth and the vulture's eye hath not seen" (Job 28:7), and so it is no wonder we cannot tell why God punishes some wicked persons and others not at all; and why He permits some to suffer long and others to oppress; why He allows war and bloodshed to continue, when it is in His power to end all speedily; when, after all our researches, we have so scanty a knowledge of

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natural things. "Surely there is a vein for the silver and a place for gold where they find it. Iron is taken out of the earth and brass is molten out of the stone," but so mysterious are the passages of these mines that the most quick-sighted fowls never looked into them, and the most fierce and courageous animals never dared to enter them. But the miners artfully cut their way through the rocks of flint and dig to the bottoms of the mountains to come to the precious metals. And there is One "whose eye seeth every precious thing." Man labours and racks his brain to obtain riches that are unsubstantial and which quickly take to themselves wings and fly away, as an eagle towards heaven (Pro. 23:4). Oh, why are we not more industrious in digging for the hidden treasure in Jesus, which answereth all things and endureth for ever?

In the Hebrew Scriptures birds have various names, derived from their different characteristics, therefore birds of prey are distinguished by a word meaning "rushers." They have an epithet peculiar to themselves, derived from the impetuosity of their attacks and each possesses an instinct peculiar to their kind. "Doth the hawk fly by thy wisdom and stretch her wings towards the south? Doth the eagle mount up at thy command, and make her nest on high? The Lord enquires of Job (ch. 39). "She dwelleth and abideth on the rock, upon the crag of the rock, and the strong place. From thence she seeketh the prey, and her eyes behold afar off. Her young ones also suck up blood: and where the slain are there is she."

Well we know it is not by man's direction that the eagles fly directly upwards or choose their rocky residence, or spy out and rush upon their prey. In 2Sam. 21, there is a sad yet beautiful picture of woman's devotion. There we read how Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah, kept solitary watch beside the bodies of the last remnants of the house of Saul. "She took sackcloth and spread it for her upon the rock and suffered neither the birds of the air to rest upon them by day nor the beasts of the field by night."

Scorched by the sun and chilled by the nightly dews, she stirred not from the rock nor feared for her own life amid the dangers of that wild, lonely and desolate place, but watched over the dead in grief too deep for words. For five months did this broken-hearted woman watch by the bodies of her sons. "From the beginning of harvest until water dropped upon them out of heaven" (v. 10). Some suppose that this means a providential supply of rain, in order to remove the famine but from the manner in which it is introduced it seems to denote the autumnal rains which commence in October.

Concerning the things of the Spirit, all who are greedy of gain and ravenous to devour life, whether individuals or nations come under the category of "birds of prey." They are ever watchful and alert, so that "wherever the carcass is," as Jesus said, "thither will the eagles be gathered together." In Rev. 18 Babylon is

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described as “a cage, or hold, of every unclean and hateful bird.” This is given as the reason of her terrible and sudden downfall. Hence the invitation to God’s people to come out of her, and be separate and clean, lest they share in her fate.

The foulness and filthiness of her abominations, and the similitude of the fate that awaits this typical Babylon is seen in the events which overtook the literal Babylon, in the time of Cyrus and Belshazzar (Isa. 14). That powerful dynasty, the Golden Head dominion of Babylon, was well represented by a great eagle, and it was characterised by all the propensities of that unclean bird.

The great Eagle Empire of later history is Rome, which has devoured much flesh. We read in Rev. 12 that to the persecuted Christ-Woman, were given two wings of the great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished, for a time, and times and a half time, from the face of the Serpent. This wilderness was not an uninhabited solitude, a desert waste, but indicated isolation and exclusion from the religious systems recognised by the powers that be. It has reference to a state rather than a place. The fugitive multitude represented by the woman, like Israel after the flesh, were to dwell alone and not be reckoned among the nations: and still like Israel of old required some place to dwell in.

The eagle contemporary with the woman’s flight was a great and powerful one. The eagle is the well-known symbol of the Roman Power. Rome was the eagle’s head, explains Brother Thomas. Its body representing Italy and the Roman Africa, while the regions of the Alps, Pyrenees, Britain, Bulgaria, Thrace, Asia Minor and Armenia were its wings and extremities. Moses alluded to this power in connection with the eagle in Deut. 28:49, where he says: “Yahweh shall bring a nation against thee (Israel) from far, from the ends of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth, a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand. A nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor show favour to the young.” This did not refer to Nineveh and Babylon, because these eagle powers did not come “from the ends of the earth” which, as *kaasher* — the eagle flieth, or “shall fly against Israel,” and because they understood the tongue spoken by the Assyrians and the Chaldeans. Then again, it is said, “the end” not “ends” of the earth, which in regard to the Holy Land was Chittim or Italy, whose ships came against Asshur, when Antiochus, King of Assyria invaded Egypt (Dan. 11:30). Israel did not understand the tongue of Chittim, which is known to be the Roman Eagle, the Latin, between which and the Hebrew there is no resemblance.

This Eagle nation was to come against Israel as a “bird of prey” to devour and to scatter them among all the peoples because they did not fear “that glorious and fearful name, Yahweh Elohim;” and this was accomplished by the Roman Legions under Titus AD70, as predicted by Christ. When Israel became

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as insipid salt and no longer capable of being the salt of the land, to preserve it from corruption, the nation died off and became as a carcass only fit for the talons of the Great Roman Eagle, according to the predictions of both Moses and Christ. But the bright gay plumage of this fierce, ravenous Bird of Prey, is to be plucked, and its body bared and deprived of all its ecclesiastical beauty, for when the "one Angel shouts with a loud Voice," saying to all fowls of the air "Come hither and assemble together for the banquet of the Powerful Deity, that ye may eat the flesh of kings..." (Rev. 19:17-18), Israel under the leadership of their long-rejected, but then recognised, Messiah will readily and zealously respond to the call; for as Balaam predicted in Num. 23:24, "The people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion: he shall not lie down until he eat the prey and drink the blood of the slain... He shall eat up the nations, his enemies, and shall break their bones, and pierce them through with his arrows" (ch. 24:7, 8). In the development of this work they will be a united people, for "the envy of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim. But they shall fly upon (as birds of prey) the shoulders of the Philistines westward; they shall wholly spoil the children of the east" (Isa. 11:13, 14). Thus it is obvious that "eating the prey," "eating up nations," and "flying upon the shoulders," applied to Israel in the time of their political resurrection, and under the leadership of the Four Living Ones full of eyes: one of whom hath the face of an Eagle and another of a Lion, that they are well represented in the Revelation as "the fowls flying in midheaven."

In coming against Babylon to destroy it in ancient days, Cyrus was styled "a ravenous bird" from the east; and the powers hostile to Israel were termed birds (Isa. 46:11; Jer. 12:9), so Israel is symbolized by flesh-devouring fowls, when coming against the unclean and hateful birds of Babylon the Great. John saw them already gathered in battle array; and he saw the fowls gathered who were to devour them — the ravenous birds of him who rides the "goodly horse" and his hosts of the heaven.

Speaking of the pride of Edom and the consequent judgments upon the people, the prophet Jeremiah says in 49:16: "As for thy terribleness, the pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, O thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rocks, that holdest the height of the hill: though thou shouldest make thy nest as high as the eagle I will bring thee down from thence, saith Yahweh" (see also Obad. 4, Hab. 2:9).

Again, referring to the power that was to be the instrument of their humiliation, he continues (v. 22): "Behold, he shall come up and fly as the eagle, and spread out his wings against Bozrah." And similar words are also used concerning Moab in the previous chapter. Truly has Zophar the Naamathite said:

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“the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the godless but for a moment. Though his excellency mount up to the heavens, and his head reach unto the clouds, yet shall he perish for ever... The eye that saw him shall see him no more” (Job 20:6-9). From the beginning the prosperity of the wicked has been very short-lived. Though his high-towering excellency mount up to heaven, and his temporal honours and happiness be advanced to the highest pitch he shall quickly perish in the most contemptible manner.

In Jer. 4:13, the horses, the destroyers of the Gentiles, are also said to be “swifter than eagles,” whilst the ravenous bird of Isa. 40 might be better rendered “eagle,” as it is a fact according to Xenophon, that Cyrus who is alluded to under the figure of an eagle had an image of that bird for the standard of his army. A very proper emblem for Cyrus, in many respects, particularly so because the ensign of Cyrus was a Golden Eagle, the very word “ayit” which the prophet uses here expressed it as near as possible in Greek letters. Zion bewailing her desolations, says: “Our persecutors, or pursuers, were swifter than the eagles of the heaven: They chased us upon the mountains, they laid wait for us in the wilderness” (Lam. 4:19). The wings of the eagle are of an extraordinary length (Eze. 17:3), so that it darts with amazing rapidity through the voids of heaven, making it impossible for escape, so that its use in these passages as a symbol of swift destruction is very expressive and appropriate. Besides its great powers of flight and its destructiveness, its longevity is used as a figure of that strength and vigour supplied to those who look to God, and which called forth all that was within the Psalmist to bless Yahweh “who satisfieth thy mouth with good things, so that thy youth is renewed as the eagle” (Psa. 103:5).

It is a popular opinion that in renewing its plumage in advanced age, it gains a new lease of life; and the prophet Isaiah appears to have had this in mind when he gave expression to the following unique words: “Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest O Israel, My way is hid from Yahweh? Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard?... the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary... He giveth power to the faint; and to him that hath no might He increaseth strength. Even youths shall faint and be weary... but they that wait upon Yahweh — shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint” (ch. 40:27-30).

This thought should comfort and encourage us in the hour of trial, for —

*Though thy way be long and dreary,
Eagle strength He'll still renew;
Garments fresh and feet unwearied
Tell how God has brought thee through.*

The divine order of this beautiful promise is most striking, and the spiritual

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lesson it conveys to our minds very significant. It is a brief outline of the true Christian's experience. As soon as we have passed through the waters of baptism, we are raised up to the "heavenlies in Christ Jesus," and because we belong to Christ, all things are ours. The world, and all its sordid pleasures and associations are left behind and we "mount up" as the eagles, to the new life in him — a life of youthful and noble activities, in which our one desire is to prove the sincerity of our love and our allegiance to our Lord and Master "who first loved us." But after a while we lose some of this buoyancy, and are apt to think that we are losing our "first love," but this is rather a passing to an advanced stage of spiritual development, when we learn to "run the race with patience" and "not be weary in well-doing." And then we are led on until we are able to walk humbly and quietly with our God, without any self-reliant forcefulness, waiting upon Him in prayer and gladly doing each little service as it presents itself to us, till at length we are brought into that gloriously-blessed position of standing still and letting God work; of knowing that "he also serves who only stands and waits."

Another striking reference to birds of prey is to be found in Jer. 12, where Yahweh laments over His heritage, saying: "Mine heritage is unto Me as a speckled bird, the birds round about are against her." A better translation is in the form of the question "Is then Mine heritage, or people, to Me as a bird having talons? As a bird of prey? Are the birds of prey against her round about?" And then follows a picture of desolation and mourning, of downtreading and consumption, so that no flesh shall have peace (ch. 2:15).

But in spite of all the evil tendencies of the eagle, there is one redeeming feature which we cannot fail to observe and admire. The tenderness it exhibits towards its young is so characteristic, that it becomes a figure of God's wonderful care and protection over His people, which is beautifully and accurately described in Scripture. Amid the solemn stillness and sterile grandeur of the holy mount, Moses listened to these most eloquent words: "Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagle's wings and brought you unto Myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed... ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all peoples: for all the earth is Mine" (Exod. 19:3-5).

"How I bare you on eagle's wings." That is the way the eagle teaches her eaglets to fly; when the wings begin to be fledged and the feathers to be strong, she lifts up the eaglet from the nest upon the mountain crag, or the eyrie, seizes it by its neck, lifts it up and throws it into the air. Then if the feathers are not grown enough or the wings broad enough to float the young bird on the winds, the parent bird will instantly descend as it falls, with the speed of a thunderbolt,

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catch it on the back of her wings and bear it back to her eyrie and her nest.

Now that is just the way God treats us. He first tries our strength. He allows us first to fall into evil, but the instant the temptation is too strong, the danger too great, or the destruction too near, as the eagle darts down, catches the eaglets on her back and soars to the nest with them again, so will He bear up and take care of His people.

*'Tis true, He now thy strength doth try,
Like birds, that teach their young to fly,
But when thou sinkest He will bring,
Beneath thy fall, His own great wing."*

Of Israel it is testified: "In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of His Presence saved them: in His love and in His pity He redeemed them, and He bare them and carried them all the days of old" (ch. 63); and again, "Even to old age, I am He: and even to hoar hairs will I carry you; yea, I will carry and will deliver" (Isa. 46:4). And from Rev. 12:14, we perceive the merciful provision made for the safety of His people, as well as the upholding and protecting Arm stretched out at all times to help, during all their periods of trial.

The idea also of the eagle protecting her young is striking, for she spreads her wings over her eaglets so that any descending stroke must kill her before it can touch them. And so again it is written "As the eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so Yahweh alone did lead him..." (Deut. 32:11-13). "He made him ride on the high places of the earth, and he did eat the increase of the field."

The eagle builds on very high rocks, so God said He made Israel to ride upon the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields, and no doubt the custom of the eagle is alluded to for we are told that in Palestine these birds go in search of their prey in the fields at noontide in the absence of the labourers. The flying eagle is used as a symbol of the Spirit by which God makes and sustains all things.

This is one of the most exquisite figures in the Bible, exceeded and excelled only by one, namely, the figure that our Lord employed when He spoke of the people in his own days, saying: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not" (Matt. 23). The most eloquent words that ever fell from human lips; beautiful in their simplicity, unique in comparison, and revealing the deep, underlying truth, that they were the expression of the mind of the Spirit. In Isaiah 31, there is yet another beautiful figure denoting God's interest in His people. Verse 5 reads: "As birds flying, so will Yahweh of Hosts defend Jerusalem, defending also He will deliver it, and passing over He will

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preserve it." The idea here is drawn from the affection of a bird towards its young. We know that every creature has a peculiar attachment to its young, but the affection of a bird for its unfledged brood seems intense and remarkable.

Often when a forest has been on fire and when the flames have reached the tree in which was the nest of a blackbird or thrush, the mother bird has been known, whilst the flames were rising up the stem, and circling round the nest, to sit with her wings spread over her brood till she perished with them in the devouring fire. Now, God says, as the affection of the bird to its young, so will I defend you. If an earthly creature can represent God's affection for His people, so will His affection be. Nay, it will exceed, because He is able and has the power to deliver.

Think again, the idea is exquisite. As the mother bird spreads her wings to cover her young, throws herself before them, and opposes the rapacious birds that assault them: so shall the Lord protect, as a shield, Jerusalem, from the enemy, protecting and delivering, springing forward and rescuing her: for the idea is much more emphatic than that of passing over, it is *pasoach* rather, "a leaping forward," a passing over exemplified on the occasion of Israel's deliverance from Egyptian bondage. Hence the Psalmist testifies of Jerusalem, that "God is in the midst of her: she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early" (Psa. 46:5); and again in Psalm 91:4, "Surely He shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler... He shall cover thee with His feathers, or pinions, and under His wings shalt thou trust, or take refuge: His truth shall be thy shield and buckler."

We recall those comforting promises concerning the established Kingdom of God in Isa. 2 and 11, and reflect upon the delightful conditions. There will then be no rapacious birds of prey nor ravenous beasts, for "they shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain," saith the Lord. But we must hasten to retrace our steps to the old roadway, for we have lingered long enough in the vicinity of the eagles. Let us ever remember that —

*"God only is a refuge sure
The source of pleasure full and pure."*

— and until that peaceful time arrives, we must be cautious and prudent, trusting in Him and availing ourselves of the shelter mercifully provided. For as Noah's dove could find no rest for the sole of her foot all the while she was fluttering over the flood, till she returned to the Ark with an olive leaf in her mouth, so the heart of every true believer can only find rest, shelter and protection in Christ their Ark of safety. For there is no rest while hovering above the waters of the world or treading the dangerous tracks and haunts of its rapacious birds of prey.

We pause, and once more gaze around us to carry away with us this view as

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an outstanding memory of our visit. How true it is that “the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing!” When we were following the green cart-track running along the hillside we were restless and longing to forsake it, and wander among the cliffs and crags, but now as we look from the boulder-strewn height to the peaceful vale, with the still waters of the lake set like a sparkling gem amidst the encircling hills, we feel that for rest and refreshment there is nothing to equal the fertile valley, approaching in its own natural picturesqueness almost to perfection.

It is into the green pastures and beside the still waters that the Shepherd Divine leads His flock; and so, often from the mountain top of life’s experience we must be led into the lowly places; and there it is, among the humbler surroundings and the sweet, fragrant stillness, that we learn the deeper and richer lessons of the valleys.

“In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength,” says the Spirit in the prophet, and we well know that it is the still waters that reflect the beauty of all surrounding objects, as well as the light of heaven, and the glory of the sun and moon. So it is the quiet soul that exercises the most influence on others and the greatest works are accomplished in our quiet moments. Let us then cultivate stillness of mind and prayerful meditation, for it is also testified “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee” (Isa. 26:3).

Chapter Eighteen

HILLS AND DALES

*When shall the voice of singing, flow joyfully along,
When hill and valleys ringing with our triumphant song,
Proclaim the contest ended, and him, who once was slain
Again to earth descended, in righteousness to reign.*

AS we descend into the peaceful valley separated and intersected by sparkling rills and the clear, musical waters of the river as it meanders along, gleaming and eddying in the bright warm sunshine we sing this well-known hymn, and re-echo the words of the sweet Psalmist of Israel: "Thou (Lord) visitest the earth and waterest it. Thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water; Thou preparest them corn, when Thou hast so provided for it; Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly; Thou settlest the furrows thereof; Thou makest it soft with showers; Thou blessest the springing thereof; Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness; and Thy paths drop fatness. They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness; and the little hills rejoice on every side. The pastures are clothed with flocks, the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing" (Psa. 65: 9-13).

What a glowing picture of God's beneficence! How delightfully everything useful and plentiful in nature is here portrayed! Everywhere we may discern the wisdom and love of God, and everything we receive from mountains, seas, rivers, pastures and fields, as His gifts. There are no limits, or restraints in these natural gifts, and the spiritual graces and influences they represent drop down abundantly for the nourishment, satisfaction and joy of His ransomed ones. "When Israel went out of Egypt... Jordan was driven back. The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs." For them God "turned the rock into a standing water, the flint into a fountain of waters" (Psa. 114:1-6). So nothing can prevent His sovereign power when He undertakes for His people's benefit. He can make even the wild beasts of the forest at peace with them, as well as their deadliest mortal foes. Referring again to the power and goodness of God, the Psalmist says: "They (the great waters) go up by the mountains; they go down by the valleys, unto the place which Thou hast founded for them. He sendeth the springs into the valleys, which run among the hills. They give drink to every beast of the field, the wild asses quench their thirst" (Psa. 104:10-13). Changing seasons, rains from above, springs from below, fruitful fields and fertile valleys, towering trees and nestling birds are all preserved, governed and

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maintained by God's almighty power and foreknowledge; and, "Much more to us His children, He gives our daily bread."

Such are our thoughts as we see these new scenes unfolding before us, that awaken within us fresh memories of the Land of the Bible, and the lessons to be gathered therefrom. This Land of hills and valleys, of streams and fountains (Deut. 8:7; 11:11) is "the glory of all lands" (Eze. 20); and as we gaze across this beautiful vale spread out before us, we contemplate some of the loveliness of that most favoured region, for the valley with the fine viaduct eastward composes a scene of rare beauty.

Such scenes are familiar in the Holy Land. The conduit or aqueduct appears to have been frequently made the place of meeting. Isaiah was told to go forth and meet Ahab "at the end of the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field" (Isa. 7:3), and referring to the invasion of the Jews by the Assyrians, it is written: "Ye gathered together the waters of the lower pool... ye made also a reservoir between the two walls for the water of the old pool" (Isa. 22:9-11). And when the king of Assyria sent to King Hezekiah we are informed that "he stood by the conduit of the upper pool" (Isa. 36:2). Compare also 2Kings 20. Nehemiah says, "I went out by night by the gate of the valley, even before the dragon well... Then I went on to the gate of the fountain and to the king's pool" (ch. 2:13). And in the third chapter he speaks of the repairing of "the fountain gate and the wall of the pool of Siloah." We know that the fountain of Siloam, which rises at the foot of Mount Moriah formed two pools called "the upper pool," or "king's pool" (Neh. 2:24), and the "lower pool" (Isa. 22:9). One of these pools is mentioned in John 9:7. The aqueduct, which connected the upper pool with the fountain, or with the lower pool, or with the city, is called "the conduit of the upper pool."

Our way is down a narrow path on the mountain side, in the direction of a large tree which forms a prominent object, reminding us of some of those ancient landmarks of patriarchal times (Gen. 21:33) when they met under trees or groves for worship or consultation.

Is it not remarkable that the valleys which we associate so frequently with peace and tranquillity on account of their beauty and fertility should be the silent witnesses to strife and tumult? The first and last valleys mentioned in the Bible are the scenes of the greatest bloodshed that the world will ever engage in. In the Vale of Siddim the early kings of the nations were joined together for war (Gen. 14:3), and the last and severest conflict will take place in "the Valley of Jehoshaphat" (Joel 3). In the Hebrew this Vale of Siddim is known as the "Valley of Hashedim," which some translate the "Vale of the Fields," others the "Vale of Chalk," while the Septuagint has it: "The vale of salt." It was in this vale that the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were built; and where

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afterwards the lake Asphaltitis, or the Dead Sea, was formed. At the south-western extremity of the Dead Sea there is a plain of considerable extent, the soil of which is entirely covered with salt. There is also here a mountain which is one solid mass of rock salt, covered occasionally with layers of marl and chalk limestone. The salt sea mentioned in Num. 34:12, is the sea into which the Jordan empties itself and where once stood "the cities of the plain" in the Vale of Siddim. The Arabs call it "the sea of Lot." The water is intensely salty, and it is strongly impregnated with saline substances. The salt pits (Zeph. 2:9) refer to the quarries from which rock salt is extracted. When the water of the lake evaporates, it leaves in the pits a salt crust about an inch thick.

In 2Sam. 8:13, we read that "David gat him a name when he returned from smiting the Syrians in the Valley of Salt, slaying eighteen thousand men," and in 2Kings 14:7, we find that Amaziah "slew of Edom in the Valley of Salt ten thousand." And Abishai slew in the same valley "eighteen thousand Edomites" (1Chr. 18:12). Lot's wife, we remember, was turned into a pillar of salt (Gen. 19) when looking back upon the condemned cities. There is much dispute about this and the sites of Sodom and Gomorrah. The Dead Sea is the lasting and unmistakable memorial of the awful ruin of Sodom and Gomorrah. It is most probable that when Lot's wife was struck dead saline particles encrusted her; all the surface of the ground denotes volcanic energy.

We read in scripture that salt is a type of perpetuity. For instance, a "covenant of salt" is a scriptural expression of an "everlasting covenant." Lot's wife was made a perpetual instance of the judgment that falls upon those who, having put their hand to the plough, look back and wilfully disobey God's Word. Salt is abundant in Palestine and from these waters of the Dead Sea an excellent table salt is obtained. On the eastern shore it is found in lumps often more than a foot thick, in places where the lake has overflowed in the rainy season. The stones are covered also, and branches and twigs that fall into the water from the bushes become encased in salt. Even if a piece of wood is thrown in it acquires a bark or rind of salt.

The uses of salt are well known. Most food would be insipid without it. Job asked "Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt?" (ch. 6:6). We know how essential it is to the enjoyment of our food, hence the words of Jesus "Ye are the salt of the earth" (Matt. 5:13). In consequence of that close fellowship which subsists between Jesus and his people they are spoken of as salt. If honey gives to character an earthly sweetness, salt imparts a heavenly savour. If we possess it then we shall be a savour of God, and not of men. In Num. 18:19, and in 2Chr. 13:5, we read of a covenant of salt, the meaning of which appears to be a league for ever sacred and inviolable. It is quite probable that this arose from the reason that salt in preserving from decay served as a fitting emblem of

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duration or perpetuity. The Arabs, when making a covenant, eat salt together, saying "There is salt between us." May we who have believed in Jesus never lose our savour (Mat. 5:13). But let our "speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt" (Col. 4:6). The meal offering was seasoned with salt (Lev. 2:13). "Every oblation of thy meal offering shalt thou season with salt; neither shalt thou suffer the salt of the covenant of thy God to be lacking from thy meal offering: with all thine offering thou shalt offer salt" reads the holy law. In order that the typical import of this part of the ceremonial may be understood, it must be remembered that salt is a preservative against corruption, and, as a necessary consequence, emblematic of perpetuity and incorruptness, gravity and sincerity. Jesus, in offering up himself, not only presented that which made his offering free from corruption, or the possibility of being affected by it, but he supplied a preservative against corruption from whatever he might come in contact with. Jesus gave himself to God an offering and a sacrifice, that he might redeem us to God and purify us from all filthiness of the flesh. Hence the life that we have in Jesus is a life redeemed from this present evil world, and we are called upon to add to faith, "virtue; and to virtue knowledge; temperance, or self control; patience, kindness, love" (2Peter 1:5-7).

In the second seal period the salt of divine wisdom began to lose its savour. During the first seal period the Body of Christ had not lost its savour — it salted the whole of Roman society, but instead of delighting only in the life-preserving Word of God, which is the only standard of goodness and piety, many began to take it as not meaning what it exactly said, and fell from their sincerity until the salt had little or no seasoning left. So let those around us be helped by our conversation and life; as bread is the staff of life, so salt is the sweetener. Use it freely (Mark 9:50).

*"Let salt of grace hang on our lips,
To season every word."*

Salt is used to denote the subsistence which a person obtained in the service of another. Thus Ezra 4:14, reads in Chaldee, "we are salted with the salt of the palace." And even now among the Persians and East Indians such expressions are employed.

But while salt renders our food savoury a "salted land" is an unfruitful desert (Jer. 17:6), for no plants can germinate in a soil covered with it, and for this reason it is used as a visible emblem of sterility. When Abimelech took Shechem (Jud. 9:45), he "beat down the city and sowed it with salt" as a token that it should continue to be desolate. To taste salt together on the contrary, is a proof of continual friendship and security.

The name "Dead Sea" is supposed to have been given to the Lake Asphaltites in consequence of the desolate appearance of all things around, and

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the absence of animal and vegetable life: for the waters being intensely salty, and the soil around so deeply impregnated with saline matter, no plants or trees will grow there, and the saturation of the air with saline particles and sulphurous and bituminous vapours is also unfavourable to vegetable life. It is evident, therefore, that no wild animals resort thither for food or drink, and neither flocks nor herds are led to its shores. The absence of fish also in its waters prevent even the resort of the waterfowl, whose presence gives some animation to lakes less peculiarly circumstanced; and altogether the general aspect of nature in this blighted region is dull, cheerless and depressing. The unusual stillness of so large a body of water is quite in unison with the general desolation to which it not a little contributes. This is owing doubtless in a great degree to the shelter of the mountains which enclose it, and shut out the strong winds; but part of the effect may, perhaps, be attributed to the heaviness of the water.

“It was nearly dark” (says Mr. Stephans) “when we reached the top of the mountain to take a last look at the Dead Sea. From the distance, its aspect fully justifies its name. It was calm, motionless and seemingly dead; there was no wave or ripple on its surface, nor was it hurrying on like other waters to pay its tribute to the ocean. The mountains around it were also dead; no tree or shrub, not a blade of grass grew on their naked sides; and as in the days of Moses, it is a land of brimstone and salt; it is not sown nor beareth; nor any grass groweth thereon. Where the waters occasionally overflow their usual limit, a saline crust is left upon the surface of the soil, resembling hoar frost or snow. The water itself, like that of the sea, is a dark blue colour, shaded with green, according to the light that falls upon it, and perfectly clear. It is much saltier than the waters of the sea and has also an unpleasant bitterness.”

Another visitor says: “The water looks remarkably clear and pure but on taking it into my mouth, I found it nauseous and bitter, I think beyond anything I ever tasted. My clothes were wet by the waves, and as they dried I found them covered with salt.”

As the lake has no outlet, travellers have supposed that it must throw off its superfluous water by some subterranean channel; but although it has been calculated that the Jordan daily discharges into it immense tons of water, besides what it receives from the Arnon and several small streams, it is now known that the loss by evaporation is adequate to explain the absorption of the water. Its occasional rise and fall at certain seasons, is doubtless owing to the greater or lesser volume which the Jordan and the other streams bring down from the mountains. The more we realize the physical conditions of this region, the more striking and significant does the prophecy by Ezekiel become; when this desolate and solitary place shall be as full of vital activity as the Mediterranean itself. Leaving the ruins of an historic castle, we take the cart road that leads

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directly to a quaint little village where we get refreshments, and then we ascend slightly to the left for a riverside meeting.

How many such gatherings have been held for the proclamation of the true Christian faith since the days when Paul and his companions became acquainted with Lydia of Thyatira, whom he met at the proseuche, by the riverside beyond the city walls of Macedonia.

A friend on the opposite hillock takes a photo of us assembled in this pleasant retreat, and we speak of those things nearest our hearts to the few humble folk who have resorted thither. May God who looks into the heart and not at the outward appearance, see in us something of the likeness of His dear Son, and for his sake pass over our weaknesses and imperfections.

How lovely are these surroundings! The Valley of Shaveh, or the "king's dale" of ancient days when the king of Sodom went out to meet Abraham, could hardly have been more beautiful or fruitful (Gen. 14:17). According to Eusebius, Shaveh is a city lying in the king's dale, over against Jerusalem (2Sam. 18:18). It was in this valley that Melchizedek met Abram; although some think this interview was at the foot of Mount Tabor.

Another beautiful valley is the valley of Succoth, beyond Jordan and near the city of Succoth. The Psalmist puts the valley for the whole country beyond Jordan, saying "I will divide Shechem and mete out the valley of Succoth" (60:6). See also Gen. 33:17-19; Judg. 8:5, 6, 14-16, and 1Kings 7:46. The fat valleys mentioned in Isa. 28:4, are those that lie below and about the city of Samaria. This country was very fat and fruitful. Samaria stood upon a rising ground that commanded these valleys. The ancient Samaria being situated beautifully on the top of a round hill, and surrounded immediately with a rich valley, and then a circle of other hills around it, suggested the idea of a chaplet, or wreath of flowers. The prophet says, "The glorious beauty which is on the head of the fat valley shall be a fading flower, and as the hasty fruit before the summer" (Isa. 28:1, 4), "which when he that looketh upon it seeth, while it is yet in his hand he eateth it up." And this is because "the pride of Israel doth testify to his face... Judah also shall fall with them" (Hos. 5:5).

Amid valleys dreary and featureless stand the ruins of Shiloh, Israel's old mountain sanctuary. But at a sharp turn, the old "Plain of Moreh" reveals itself; at the extremity of which rise the summits of Ebal and Gerizim, with the narrow opening into the Valley of Shechem. Nearer the mouth of this valley is the well of Jacob, on which the Master rested, being tired with his journey, surrounded by the same emerald carpet in early spring, and the corn, verdant and whitening to harvest, and olives mingling with the minarets of Nablus, standing sharply beneath the most brilliant skies. "If Shechem was then," says one writer, "what it is now (and the same sources of fertility and beauty must have existed) she

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(the Woman of Samaria) could endorse the unanimous testimony of all modern travellers of enjoying the loveliest home in Palestine. If outer Nature could have moulded her into a noble character, and nurtured within her the good, the beautiful, and the true, she could have received her education in no better school in Judea, Samaria or Galilee." There is no variety of wood and shrub, from the palm to the hyssop as is to be found there. Figs, pomegranates, apricots, walnuts, vines, mulberries, oranges, the cypress, and the ever present ancestral olive, cluster in groves in the lower valley, and climb up the steep flanks of the confronting hills of Ebal and Gerizim.

From the top of the rocks, Balaam the soothsayer, who resided "at Bethor by the river" (Num. 22:5), beheld the foursquare encampment of the Chosen Nation spread out in the valley, and gave expression to the mind of the Spirit concerning their glorious future in these sublime and unique words: "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob... as the valleys (rich in fatness) are they spread forth, as gardens by the riverside, as the trees of lign aloes which Yahweh hath planted, as cedar trees beside the waters" (Num. 24:5-6). First, showing the beauty of the situation, comparable only to that which is most serene and lovely in nature, and then foreshadowing those greater and fairer scenes of the future. For the time now approaches for the king of Israel, even Jesus, to be higher than Agag, or Gog, and for his kingdom to be exalted above all (Dan. 2:45). Then indeed the mighty will be brought low, and the humble will be raised up from the dust. Or as the prophet testifies using this beautiful figure "Every valley (representing the lowly in heart) shall be exalted, and every mountain (or empire) and hill (the smaller powers or states) shall be made low... And the glory of Yahweh shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of Yahweh hath spoken it" (Isa. 40:4). In the hand of God, Israel will then be as a "new, sharp threshing instrument, having teeth," who will "thresh the mountains and beat them small," and make "the hills as chaff." "Yahweh shall roar out of Zion" and cause His glorious voice to be heard, and the nations shall know that He is the hope and strength of His people, and that their land shall yet become a paradise, flowing with milk and honey, rich in vines and pasturage, with fountains and running streams (Joel 3:18). And then, as Amos foretells, "The ploughman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed, and the mountains shall drop sweet wine and all the hills shall melt" (ch. 9:13). Yea, there shall be such an abundance of all good things that the harvesting shall extend to the next season of seed-sowing and the fruitful hills shall yield a thousand fold for the blessing of all mankind.

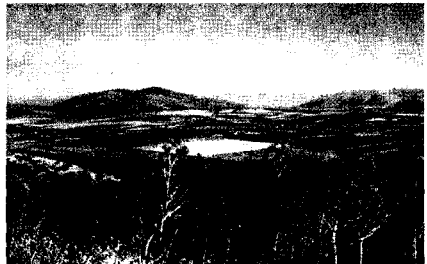
Seated on the emerald bank of the river, beneath the shady trees, among the reeds and rushes, we glance up at the surrounding sunlit hills, and think again of the Almighty of Him who "weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in

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a balance,” making everything in such exact proportion (Isa. 40:12). “In His hand are the deep places of the earth, and the strength, or height of the hills are His also” (Psa. 95:4).

Looking upon the solid, unchangeable hills, the mind of the Psalmist is directed still higher than these elemental objects, and he exclaims, “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from Yahweh who made heaven and earth” (Psa. 121:1-2). He recognises that both in a literal and figurative sense, as Jeremiah testifies (ch. 3:23), “Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills and from the multitude of mountains,” or noisy throng: “truly Yahweh our God is the salvation of Israel.” In every difficulty our eyes should be fixed on God, as the author of our help. He is a sure refuge to them who flee to Him, and with Him is nothing impossible. In beautiful prophetic language, referring to the majesty of the kingdom, he says, “The hills melted like wax at the presence of Yahweh, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth” (Psa. 97:5), for they, the lofty ones of earthly domination shall be ashamed and confounded and flee away, and “be no more” (Rev. 16:20). Then shall the Kingdom of God be established “in the top of the mountains, and be exalted above the hills” (Isa. 2:1), while the hills of His choice “will sing for joy together” (Psa. 98:8) and the rejoicing “nations of them who are saved” (Rev. 21:24), together with Israel, all blessed, “in Abraham and his seed, the Christ,” with hearts o’erflowing with gratitude, shall “break forth into singing and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands” (Isa. 55:12). “The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness” (Psa. 72:3), and their King “shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.” Even from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf and from the Euphrates to the Nile.

This is our hope and expectation, and we watch for the hour when, lo, “He cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills” (Cant. 2:8), and we shall hear his welcome voice calling us to participate in these endless joys. What a flood of blessings were pronounced upon Joseph by the patriarch of old! (Gen. 49). “Blessings of heaven above” the rain and the dew descending on his territory plenteously; “Blessings of the deep that lieth beneath,” fountains and river pouring out their gushing floods. The “giving and adding” bounty of the Lord towards Joseph, is so full, that it indeed foreshadows the fulness of blessings that will obtain in the millennial Age. They are so remarkably full that Jacob exclaims,



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alluding to the more general and indefinite blessings, common to all the tribes, pronounced by Isaac, as well as declared to Abraham, "Thy father's blessings rise high (like the flood's waters) above thy progenitor's blessings: up to the bounds of the everlasting hills." Such is the surpassing richness of his territory, even to the summit of its hills (witness the hills of Samaria, Bashan and Gilead) with the accompanying abundance of all things, and the people also enjoying this luxuriance. This, and much more is included in the blessing on him who was "separated from his brethren" in the sense of being above the rest in dignity and influence. And we are able to trace this same exuberant bounty in the later blessing by Moses also (Deut. 33:13-17): for he sings of the accomplishment of Jacob's blessing in the gift of copious, overflowing streams and plenteous waters, so that the very "hills" with their olives, vines, metals, pastures and spices, contribute to form a sample of the future earth's fulness and blessedness.

Unbounded blessings are with God for His people. Blessings suitable not only to every tribe of Israel, but to all the faithful of all times, and in every station of life even now, to every relation, and to every change of their circumstances. God's earth for their residence, and God Himself for their helper, refuge, saviour and shield — their portion and their infinite All; and soon they may feast upon the unveiled, uninterrupted enjoyment of Him in glory, through Jesus their Lord.

Another most glowing picture of the earth's millennial beauty is given by the prophet Isaiah (ch. 35:9, 10). He also displays the fertile and peaceful conditions, as well as the prosperity and happiness of the inhabitants thereof. On the sunny plains, once barren, but then carpeted with refreshing verdure, along the wooded slopes of Carmel and Sharon, or beside the sparkling springs, reflecting the azure of a cloudless sky, the atmosphere redolent with the perfume of the rose; behold, "The redeemed of Yahweh shall walk. They shall come and sing in the heights of Zion... and flow together... and their soul shall be as a watered garden." Contemplating this, Brantford says:—

*"I see those barren hillsides shine,
With waving grass and bending grain;
While vineyard-dotted vales between
Smile in the gentle summer rain."*

With such delightful surroundings and meditations, coupled with such congenial companionship, we find it easy and pleasant to meditate upon divine things and to extol the praises of nature's king; and yet we should at all times cultivate the spirit of gratitude and contentment, so that wheresoever our changeful lot is cast we may recognise His presence, and rest in His love. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee," testifies the prophet (Isa. 26:3). That is the peace which the Lord Jesus gave to his friends, as

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an unfailing legacy (Jn. 16:27). Referring to Zion's future blessedness, the Lord declares, "I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream" (Isa. 66:12). Peace as tranquil and constant as a beautiful placid, flowing river, or, as the smooth, clear, waters of a lovely stream.

Literally translated from the original, Isa. 26:3 reads: "Thou wilt keep him in peace, peace." That is, in the intensest peace in the superlative degree, duration and kind, whose whole thoughts, imaginations, fears, difficulties, doubts, and perplexities, are all laid and stayed on the Lord. The children of God should be happy to the highest possible degree even now, a foretaste of that uninterrupted bliss on this earth, when peace shall flow like a river, ever increasing, magnificent and unending.

What a sublime and beautiful figure is this, that the pure unbroken unending peace of God, is comparable to a broad, deep river! Living in the light of the truth with nothing between us and our Father in heaven, we have peace within; for this divine gift is not an outward but an inward thing — a sublime vicegerent in the heart, which often we call "conscience." This conscience makes us sensitive. It can easily be discomposed and disturbed, just as when a stone is cast into water its smoothness is broken. And just as the finger is sensitive to a pin-prick, the body to pain, or the eye to light. The taste is sensitive to what is sweet, and the ear is affected by sound, so our conscience is sensitive to right and wrong.

A good conscience brings peace. All the wealth in the world cannot buy it, and yet the very sound of "forgiveness" brings it to the troubled heart. Like a voice ringing through the contrite soul, to the depths of the conscience comes the message: "Thy sins which are many are all forgiven," and awakens within us sweet music, and there is "peace that passeth all understanding." And having "peace with God," we are at peace with others. Their faults and failings fall into the shade and are seen at a distance, and we live peaceably with all, because we have "peace in believing all is well," through him who "made peace for us by his blood."

*We bless Thee for Thy peace, O God,
Deep as the unfathomed sea
Which falls like sunshine on the road
Of those who trust in Thee.
Peace which flows serene and deep,
A river in the soul;
Whose banks a living verdure keep —
God's sunshine o'er the whole.*

Chapter Nineteen

RIVERS

*When in the sultry glebe I faint,
Or on the thirsty mountain pant,
To fertile vales, and dewy meads
My weary, wandering steps He leads,
Where peaceful rivers, soft and slow,
Amid the verdant landscape flow.*

THERE is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High" (Psa. 46:4). The common definition for a river is "a stream of fresh water flowing in a channel from a source or spring into the sea" (Ecc. 1). "Water," says one writer, "is the eldest daughter of the creation, the element which God commanded to bring forth living creatures abundantly, and upon which the Spirit of God did first move." The water is more productive than the land. Nay, the land has no fruitfulness without showers and dew, for all the herbs and the flowers and fruit are produced and thrive by the water.

Water is given a very prominent place in the Scriptures of Truth — a position of which it is justly deserving when we consider that neither man, animal or plant can exist without it. All things animate owe their existence to water. In the beginning of the creation, we read that "The Spirit of God moved upon the waters," and then the life and action commenced.

Water is the emblem of the Spirit, for as water refreshes, cleanses and makes the earth fruitful, so do the sweet influences of the Spirit affect our lives. The apostle James compares human life to "a vapour" (ch. 4:14). "Behold I am fearfully and wonderfully made," says the Psalmist. So wonderfully, that did we but realise more perfectly, we should often appreciate life much better and take care of our health, and obey the laws of our nature more promptly. Our very organism contains a large proportion of water. In the beginning God "made man of the dust of the ground" (Gen. 2), "and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life." Dust of itself will not cleave together so as to form any substantial object; therefore we understand that man is made of dust mingled with water, or of clay. The first man was called "Adam" or "red earth." A word that is composed of the same letters as "Odem" which is a gem of the colour of blood, and translated by some as "Ruby."

As water produced life in the beginning, and is still the element of our being, so baptism in water is associated with the New Birth, for it is essential to the new life in Christ Jesus (Mark 16:16). When Nicodemus came to Jesus by night,

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Jesus dealt with him as “a master in Israel” accustomed to teach and to understand first for himself what he endeavoured to teach others. From a learner he would naturally expect enquiry, reflection, understanding, and proof. He did not say, “Follow me,” but “except a man be born again he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (John. 3), for if one gets to understand the necessity of their own nature, they will in due time follow the One who has touched the sealed spring, and cased the fresh water to rise up from the latent depths below.

A new life was here taught; for none could see or enter the kingdom apart from this inward change that might well be called “a new birth” out of water — a second, as essential as the first, and that “from above,” because of the association with the spirit of life in Christ Jesus.

Nicodemus could only think of the natural conditions of birth and life. His very habit of searching into the meaning of words and terms made it more difficult for him to grasp the hidden facts. The material figure, and the spiritual truth must be fully understood before he can accept. So Jesus emphasised the thought “except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot see the Kingdom of God.” Water not only cleanses the body, but renews it, opening up the pores to the breath of heaven. And until it is rightly applied to remove all obstacles from the organism, the healthy influences of the air around cannot enter. Thus the Spirit must remove all obstructions from the heart and mind, equally defiling, so that the mind may be guided to act upon the influences the Spirit brings to invigorate and preserve the new life within.

John the Baptist told the Jews, “I, indeed baptise with water unto repentance, but he that cometh after me is mightier than I... he shall baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire” (Mat. 3:11). The baptism of John was preparatory, just as John was the forerunner of Christ. It impressed the people with the need and necessity of cleansing, although in itself imperfect. Fire and water, may be incongruous, yet they are not so, if only the fire penetrates the water, and is applied through it. For mere water cannot cleanse sufficiently, but water and fire can, being the most powerful combination. In this teaching of John, and of Christ, there is first the water alone, taking off the rough things, but leaving much that is defective, much that it cannot affect, producing a partial outward reformation altogether insufficient (Acts 19:3-4). But at length the fire is applied with the water and who can abide it unless wisely and tenderly used? (Acts 2:38).

The Spirit is introduced between the water and the fire, for the fire is not an earthly element like the water, but a heavenly thing like the Spirit. It is the scorching, burning holiness of God. “The fire trieth every man’s work of what sort it is” (1Cor. 3:13). This fire applied through the Spirit affects us not like a flame, but as heat, and thus penetrates even the baptism of water, and makes it

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accomplish that which it could not do alone.

Among the many river baptisms, the most glorious event was that of the baptism of Jesus in the River Jordan, proving beyond all doubt that this solemn rite is absolutely essential to salvation.

The delta of the Nile is not more sunny, nor the shores of our mountain lakes more bright and verdant, than the picturesque banks of the Jordan where the hot rays are tempered by the refreshing stream as it rushes majestically down to the Dead Sea, while luxuriant cornfields, alternate with thorny groves and craggy rocks, and the rustling of the tall reeds mingles its sound with the murmur of the flowing waters. The Jordan extracts life from the desert sand, and refreshing verdure from the chalky cliffs that hem in its waters rich in fish; and when vegetation withers in the scorching sun then the river rises higher and higher, and in its overflow blesses and fertilises the land. The terraced shores of the stream, when it gradually subsides into its bed, are covered with rich pastures, carpeted with adonis, yellow anemone, and marigold, whilst the water lily expands its flowers in the sunshine of the silent pool.

We are apt to think that the Baptist's stern message was delivered amid scenes of equal sterility, but it is not so. On the beautiful banks of the Jordan he appeared with his thrilling message of "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." And all the land of Judea and they of Jerusalem came and were baptised of him in the river (Mark 1:4, 5).

We may picture Israel many centuries before on the east bank of the Jordan (Josh. 3:4), an important river in God's estimation, and yet so insignificant in the sight of man, because it has "never been really navigable, and flows into a sea that has never known a port." The apostle gives the reason for this choice, even of rivers in 1Cor. 1:27-28, "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise."

This event runs parallel with that of Moses at the Red Sea. The fact that Jordan overflows its banks at this particular season of the year (barley harvest) and comes down in raging torrents is a clear proof of divine intervention.

The crossing of the Jordan is a beautiful type of the baptismal death of the believer in Christ, and forms the counterpart to the Red Sea. In the Red Sea we have the figure of death to the world, and to ourselves — the coming out and leaving behind the things that are displeasing to God. In the Jordan we see the other part, the resurrected new life with all its privileges, possessions, and glorious inheritance. The Jordan (representing death) as we have observed, was running at its swiftest and worst form, but "as the Ark entered its waters, by its very presence the floods were stayed," remarks a brother beloved. So Christ passed through the river of death first himself, and then stays its course for us, and as we are baptised into death, it is into his death; for he is "the Author and

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Finisher of our Faith.”

Is it then a mere coincidence that the waters of this river of symbolic death were stayed, and rose upon an heap a great way off at Adam (Josh. 3:16, RV), or is it to show that when Christ passed into the waters of death the effect of that stupendous event worked backward to Adam himself? How remarkable too, are the two heaps of stones for a memorial — the twelve stones — a stone for each tribe! Twelve in the midst of Jordan, and twelve on the other side. The stones evidently typify the believer's standing in its two-fold aspect. Those in the midst of the river of death tell us that we are dead with Christ, and in need of continuous cleansing and moulding. The twelve stones where the priests that bore the Ark stood, and those in the land, that we, who were dead once in trespasses and sins, are risen with Christ to a new life in him.

The land of Canaan which the children of Israel afterwards entered may be taken as a type of the life we enter at our baptism. We recollect that there was conflict between Israel and the Canaanites continually, because they never could be completely subdued. Hence, there was constant friction with the inhabitants who were as thorns in their sides. So are we no sooner through the waters of baptism than the conflict between the old man and the new begins; and although we can never completely destroy the desires of the flesh we are constantly at war against them, and in spite of all hindrances we press toward the mark of the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus.

Water, this elemental gift of God, reaches us variously; now dropping down from the bosom of the clouds, now welling up from a cleft in the rocks. But when we distinguish water in the mountain torrent, or in the still pool, from water that flows along a channel between banks, we use the word river. And what is there in nature more interesting to watch than a large, wide river? It is truly the one object on the surface of the earth that appears enduring and stable, while its very substance dissolves and glides away continually as we behold. Gen. 49:4 implies that the passions of Reuben were like water long pent up and restless, and bursting forth ultimately beyond all their bounds, to do mischief. Hence we read afterwards that the birthright was given to Joseph, the priesthood to Levi, and the kingdom to Judah. But Reuben the eldest, “unstable as water” was degraded and cast down below the youngest. We know how easily water can be moved by the wind, and when the embankments give way it rushes forth, to use the Hebrew translator's words, “with precipitancy and violence,” doing great damage. Let us ever remember that righteousness exalts, while sin degrades.

Year after year the river glides onward, exhibiting the same whirling irresistible succession of silent might — of giddy, rushing lines and twisted eddies, coiling themselves in serpentine motion. And with all this mysterious

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strength of moving waters there blends all the loveliness of changeful colours and light. Daily the brimming mirror reflects and repeats from the sky above it each mood of cloud or sunshine; the dark shadows of the hills, and the graceful forms of the trees, as well as the silver moonbeams and the stars by night. How like to mortal life is the shining river! Now gliding peacefully and smoothly, but surely to its end, ever onward until it is lost in the mighty ocean. Now suddenly interrupted by some clumsy object — a projecting rock — the weir or the aqueduct. Here narrowing off to a mere stream, so shallow that its muddy bed is visible from its surface. Then struggling with some splintered boulders or fighting its way, foaming and splashing through the undergrowth; but still appearing undaunted by these impediments and hindrances, hurrying along until it broadens out again, sweeping clear of every obstacle, beneath sunny skies and amid flower-strewn meadows, singing its song of victory more loudly than ever.

We cannot tell what a babe may turn out to be — just as when a river starts we cannot tell what course it will follow. It may rush as it were into all the convulsions of cataracts, or stagnate into marshes, or run smoothly to the sea of endless life.

Human life, how real, how broad and deep, and significant it appears in our sight. Like the river upon whose wide grassy bank we are reclining; but God sees it as He beholds all transitory things, as we beheld this same broad, deep river from the mountain top a little while ago, nothing more than a narrow band of satin-ribbon threading its way through the fertile valley.

The tiny springs of our lives lie hidden in some mountain home far away so that we do not often see their humble risings. Even when the stream gathers strength in its downward course it meets with many an obstacle, and passes through many an unfrequented valley and traverses here and there a sunless ravine. But the river deepens and widens, and is best known and most navigable, just as it passes away out of our sight for ever and disappears in the ocean's depths. So it is often in life. Many whose early days were spent in obscurity with few advantages have been the means of richly blessing their fellow creatures, and becoming prominent in social and business circles; some branching out, like the river's tributaries, in various directions, and increasing in wealth and influence, have left a name behind them; while a few having found a superior channel, have made their influence felt in a still higher direction, they have lived to the glory of God, and thereby been as powerful for good as the flowing river that so freely contributes its part to swell the ocean. Let us do our part and use our influence in the world for good, while laying hold of "the life which is life indeed," and as the years glide onward may that hidden source of strength that proceeds from God Himself, be ever increasing and flowing forth in blessings to all around us. May those who read our works or meditate upon the character we

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have developed, finding it as wide and deeply flowing as the river (although they may know nothing of the dark, winding sunless shadows of our earlier course, and perhaps may think our life has been much smoother and brighter than their own), and be helped and cheered. Our God knows all, and will reward each one accordingly.

In the Scriptures rivers are used to denote an abundance of anything. The Psalmist sings of those who put their trust in the Lord saying "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thy house; and Thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures" (Psa. 36:8). That is, they shall partake of that abundance of pleasure, delight, and satisfaction that even God Himself enjoys. One of those sources of pleasure is the divine revelation. The Bible is like a deep, clear river, whose waters are ever refreshing and a source of continual satisfaction and joy to those who appreciate its teaching. One characteristic quality of water is its power to percolate through obstacles and to diffuse itself almost imperceptibly in spite of elaborate precautions against its inflow... And in the same way the Bible can pass through doors which are barred against every influence of the Truth. The Book of books crosses the frontiers of kingdoms and silently proclaims the gospel of the kingdom of God, where no preacher's voice is ever heard, and no House of Testimony is raised. So —

*"Blest river of salvation, pursue thine onward way;
Flow thou to every nation, nor in thy richness stay:
Stay not till all the lowly, thy glorious truths have known,
Stay not till all the holy, proclaim — "The Lord is come!"*

Rivers are also used to denote constancy, and the perpetuity of these heavenly pleasures, as well as their plentitude. "The river of God is full of water." It is deep, full, fresh and continuous. Shallow minds, like shallow rivers, make a great noise, but they have little to give; but deep minds like the deep, full streams, supply abundance and freely, while moving silently on to that majestic main in which we shall then know, even as we are known now by Him who sees and knoweth all.

Out of the full, broad and fathomless river of the love of God flow only the richest and fullest blessings to mankind whether temporal or divine. "The river of God is full" — the heart of God o'erflows with mercy and lovingkindness. "O that thou hadst hearkened to My commandments," says Israel's long-suffering Lord and Redeemer. "Then had thy peace been as a river and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea" (Isa. 48:17-18). But "there is no peace unto the wicked," saith the Lord. Israel had been impoverished through their rebelliousness. Their idol worship had made their minds shallow. There was much noisy profession but little depth of reality. They might have been to the nations around them as a beautiful, refreshing river, illuminated by the

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sunbeams, never ceasing, never exhausted, and bringing their burdens to the shore, only to bless and to make music and fulness of pleasure there among the restless sea of peoples. And what of us, dear sisters? Do we possess this sweet and quiet peace? If not, let us stay awhile and think again of these significant words.

Ah, if we cannot be that grand Israelitish river, so blest by God of old, yet we may be as the little stream, helping to swell the river of His elect. If our influence and usefulness is but small and tributary, we may do our part in moving the tidal waves of that grand, final confluence of waters, when we hope to see "all things gathered into One."

"In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength, and ye would not," said Adonai Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel. And so Israel was left as "a beacon upon the top of a mountain, and as an ensign on an hill" (Isa. 30:17), solitary and forsaken — a warning, as well as a byword and proverb to all surrounding nations.

The years of our Lord's life spent in retirement were a preparation for greater work. His whole mission exhibited that quietness and confidence, so well pleasing unto God. He did not cause "his voice to be heard in the street," and yet, who can measure the extent of the influence of that quiet, lowly life, and the effects of that gentle and pleasant voice? It was a time of patient and quiet fulfilment of duty. Doing God's work in the station of life in which he was placed. What an incentive to us to perform quietly and patiently the common duties of life. The irresistible force of the great waters of Niagara, are not so useful as the little stream which flows gently and quietly on day and night, watering the farm, the garden and the meadow. So in our lives it is not by great deeds that good is done, but by the quiet and regular performance of common duties.

The method that Christ used in bringing others to himself was personal influence, although there were various means employed; and from its success we may see its special value over every other kind of agency.

The little stream of living water that had its rise among the hills of Judea, gradually gets wider and wider, until it becomes a big translucent river and forms the highway for the ships of many nations to travel upon. If our influence flows from the right source, and within the right channel, we shall not only be endued with the gifts and graces of the Spirit in a plentiful manner for our own refreshment, but it will break forth and be communicated to others also; for "out of him shall flow rivers of living waters."

Speaking of God's wisdom in creation, it is written, "He cutteth out rivers, or channels, among the rocks, and His eye seeth every precious thing" (Job 38:10). Think of what this meant to mankind. The usefulness of this one course only.

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From earliest times human civilisation has been determined and controlled by great rivers. Even down to recent years they have formed the main arteries of traffic and conveyance. "Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan because it was well watered everywhere" (Gen. 13:10-11), not considering the undesirability of the influence such a choice would lead to (2Pet. 2:7). The plain of Jordan appears to have been part of Eden, which was quite an large area of country extending from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates, and in later times became the seat of powerful dominions. From Gen. 2:10, it appears to have been well watered by the tributaries of "a river that went," or that flowed, out of it. There were four principal streams, whose names are given as the Pison, the Gihon, the Hiddekel, or Tigris, and the Euphrates, frequently styled in the Scriptures "the great river" (Gen. 15:18). Brother Thomas interprets it thus: "A river flowing out of Eden was caused to water the garden northward, the river diverging into its tributaries which terminated at four several heads." The heads were not in the garden, but at remote distances from it, the garden being watered by only one river.

The extent of the land covenanted to Abraham was measured by two great rivers, the Nile and the Euphrates. The promise before it became "a confirmed covenant" with Abraham, indicated the country he was to inherit, but did not point out its territorial frontiers. But this deficiency was supplied at the confirmation. It was to extend from the Euphrates to the Nile; comprehending a tract of country of considerable extent, reaching from "sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth." The frontiers of this territory were afterwards more particularly marked out at the time of the captivity in Babylon, we find from Eze. 48:13-21. When "the land that was desolate" becomes like "the garden of Yahweh" (Eze. 36:33), the prophet says there will be "a river that cannot be passed over" by wading; and that it will be formed by a confluence of "waters springing out from under the threshold of the temple eastward." The waters issue from Mount Moriah, down its south side, and flow on toward the east through a vast cleft in the Mount of Olives (Zech. 14: 4-5). When they have passed this valley they are divided into two rivers, the one flowing through the desert and emptying into the Dead Sea, and the other into the Mediterranean: both of them abundant and never failing streams.

These things are all stated with such geographical and practical particularity as to make it evident that these healing waters are as literally rivers as the Tigris, or the Thames. We can see, too, how that Jerusalem can become the centre of navigation and commerce, as well as the metropolis and capital of the world. By the waters flowing between the rent divisions of the Mount of Olives into the Jordan and into the Dead Sea, and thence by an old channel into the Red Sea, a watercourse will be established, with far distant countries, and Jerusalem will

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thereby become the centre of government and religion. Its spiritual application we have already considered. Let us recollect that the source of the river is the throne. So may we live in the atmosphere of prayer, for there is no other secret of prevailing intercession resulting in fruitfulness and vitality. All down the ages, along these inestimable, God-given water courses, traders have spread their sails, and plied their oars, and accumulated wealth, and boasted in the various activities afforded them thereby.

A most striking illustration of this is given in the prophecy by Nahum (ch. 3:8), referring to the ruins of Nineveh, it is testified: "Art thou better than populous No, that was situate among the rivers, that had the waters round about it?" No is believed to be the famous city of Thebes, in upper Egypt, extending itself on both sides of the Nile. The splendour and power of this city, which could furnish 20,000 armed chariots from its vicinity, are to be estimated from the extent of the Egyptian conquests.

Nineveh standing on the banks of the Tigris was the capital of the Assyrian Empire. It was the London of the ancient world into whose bosom was poured the navigation of its rivers (Nahum 3:16). Rabbah-Moab was the chief town of the principal river east of the Jordan, which originally was the boundary between the Moabites and the Ammonites (Deut. 2:24). And Aroer was a city also on its north bank (Deut. 3:12; 4:48). Referring to the divisions of the land, Joshua mentions "Aroer that is upon the bank of the river Arnon, and the city that is in the midst of the river" (ch. 13:9).

"Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?" exclaimed the leper captain of the Syrian army (2Kings 5:12). The capital of ancient Syria, the oldest city that now exists is situated on the river Barradi. The country around it is well-watered, and is exceedingly fertile. It is so beautiful in scenery, and so rich in soil that the orientals regarded it as a paradise. The river Abana, supposed to be one of the branches of the Barradi, rises at the foot of Lebanon, but separates as it leaves the mountains into three smaller streams, one of which passes through the city, and the other two through the gardens; which reuniting at the east of the city forms a lake, known as "the Lake of the Meadow." Abana and Pharpar supplied abundance of water, rendering the country around Damascus, though on the border of a desert, one of the most beautiful and fertile spots in all the world.

History shows that on river banks or estuaries, some of the earliest and stateliest cities have grown up. Rome, the capital of the Roman Empire, once the metropolis of the world is situated on the river Tiber, in Italy. At first it occupied a single hill of less than a mile in extent, but in the days of its glory it included seven, so that it is proverbially designated "the seven-hilled city." It had an hundred and fifty thousand houses, besides the mansions of nobility, and twenty

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temples crowded with pagan deities.

That rivers are used in a figurative sense will be seen from the many references to them in the scriptures. In the Book of Symbols (ch. 8:10-11) we read of "a great blazing star" or *apsinthian*, representing a destroying power, fall from the political heaven of Rome, into the rivers, and fountains of waters with a deadly bitterness, poisoning the third of them, and causing the death of many. This is fully explained by the doctor.

Yahweh charges Sennacherib with saying by his messengers to Hezekiah "With the multitude of my chariots I am come up the height of the mountains... I have digged and drunk water; and with the soles of my feet have I dried up all the rivers of the fenced and closed places" (Isa. 37:24, 25). These waters and rivers were the foreign nations he had laid waste. And again in ch. 43:2, Yahweh says of Israel, "O Jacob, when thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee." These waters are peoples, and these rivers nations. And so are they also explained in Rev. 16:4-7, where "rivers and fountains of waters" are declared to be those who have "shed the blood of saints and prophets." But we must bear in mind that although "waters" signify the population of the earth, yet their geography and topography are determined. There is a blending of the literal and the symbolical here that is seen so frequently in prophecy (Rev. 17:9, 10). "The rivers" pertaining to "the third" represent symbolically the populations, as well as their literal geography in the elevation, or valley, or river region of the Catholic West. How may we know this is so? One reason is because the region is located by the fact that "Apsinthos" is the name of a river in the Illyrian third of the Roman earth and is therefore as significant of Illyria as the Euphrates was of Assyria, or the Nile of Egypt. Pharaoh, king of Egypt, is styled in Ezekiel 29, "the great dragon that lieth in the midst of the rivers," and in ch. 31:4, it is testified that "The waters made him great, the deep set him up on high with rivers running round about his plants, and sent out her little rivers unto all the trees of the field."

The fruitful land of Assyria, the immense revenues he drew from vast lucrative commerce, by the river Tigris, and all the various sources of his wealth and prosperity resembled the rivers and streams which cause the trees planted by them to grow and to flourish exceedingly. It is clear from this beautiful allegory that countries are comprehended here and that the trees are the royalties of the land. "Dragon" in English, is *tanhin* in Hebrew, and *drakin* in Greek, and refers to the crocodile, the great scaly fish of the Nile, and the symbol of Egyptian power. The fishes represent the princes of Pharaoh. To represent the power, rapaciousness, and cruelty of Pharaoh, he was compared to a fierce, young lion, and also to an immense, overgrown sea monster, or crocodile; and it was predicted that God would cast a net over him by which many companies of

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people should drag him out of his rivers.

Again, referring to the downfall of Egypt, the Lord declares "I will lay flesh upon the mountains, and fill the valleys with thy worms" (marg.). "I will also water with thy blood the land wherein thou swimmest, even to the mountains, and the rivers shall be full of thee" (Eze. 32:5, 6). And in fulfilment of this, events show that from henceforth the Pharaoh-dragon swam no more in Egypt. To interpret many of the references to rivers that occur in the Psalms and the Prophets, we must try and realise the singular way in which Egypt is created and sustained by its river. One writer has said that the land of the Pharaohs is literally "the gift of the Nile." No river on the earth has appealed so vividly to the wonder and curiosity of mankind. The cause of its yearly overflow, the mystery that shrouded its distant sources, astonished and puzzled successive generations of the past. Only within living memory have men explored the true fountain of the Nile. But from the beginning, a fair, green, fertile strip of land has stretched along the banks of this life-giving stream, bounded on each side by bare sandy desert.

In Stanley's *Sinai and Palestine*, Egypt is beautifully described: "Above the brown and blue waters of the broad, calm, lake-like river, rises a thick, black bank of clod, or mud, mostly in terraces. Green — utterably green, at the top of these banks, though sometimes creeping down to the water's edge lies the land of Egypt. Green — unbroken, save by the mud villages which here and there lie in the midst of the verdure like the marks of a soiled foot on a rich carpet: or by the dikes and channels which convey the life-giving waters through the thirsty land... We ride through green fields — green with corn and clover, avenues of tamarisk, fig trees and acacia, along causeways raised high above the floods of the summer inundations. At every turn there is the grateful sound of little rills of living water, worked by water-wheels and falling in gentle murmurs down into the fields, or the canals. Beyond is the green again, and close upon that rise the yellow hills of the hazy desert."

The famous river of Asia, the Euphrates, which rises in Armenia, on the northern side of Mount Taurus, receiving many tributaries in its winding course along the borders of Syria, and skirting the Arabian desert, passes through the middle of Babylon to the sea. It overflows its banks in the spring of every year when the snow of the Armenian mountains dissolve. Dikes, lakes and canals, constructed at vast expense, preserved the water for irrigation during the dry season, and prevented its carrying away the soil.

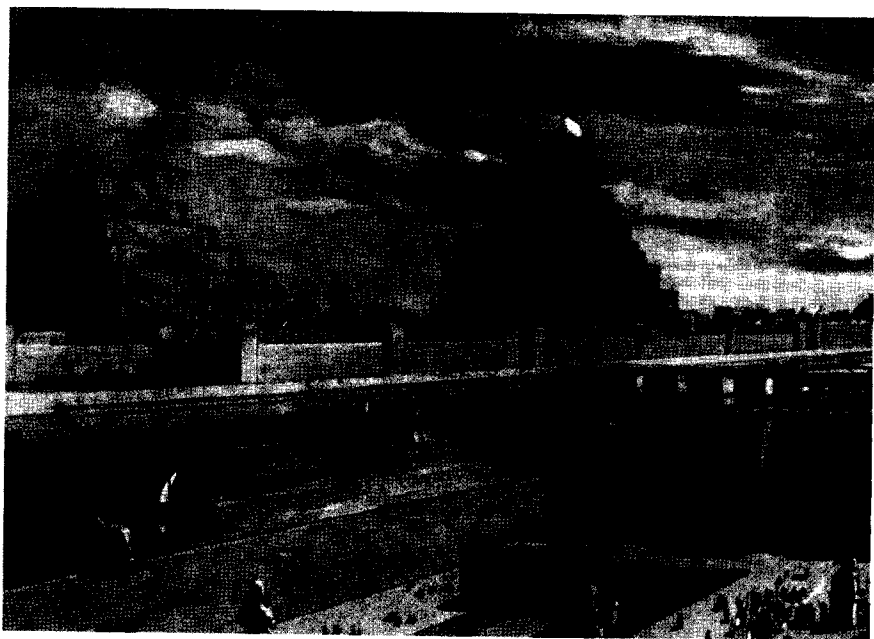
The Euphrates is called in scripture the "great river" and was the eastern boundary of the promised land (Deut. 1:7; John 1:28). It is sometimes only named "the river." Before Cyrus and Darius with their sanctified ones, the kings of the north (Isa. 13:3) could take possession of Babylon it was necessary that

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“the Great River” should be dried up, that “the way of Yahweh’s Anointed Shepherd and his flock might be prepared” (Isa. 44:25; 45:1). “A drought is upon her waters, and they shall be dried up.” “I will dry up her great river and make her springs dry” (Jer. 50:38; 51:36), which was literally accomplished by Cyrus, who turned the Euphrates from its course, left the channel dry, and marched his troops along the dried way in the night into the very heart of Babylon.

Such remarkable events, associated with such distinguished personages are typical of Christ and his kings in “the way prepared” through the “drying up of the great river Euphrates” (Rev. 16), under the sixth vial. But God’s wrath is not poured out upon literal rivers, but upon the peoples in some way related to them. The Euphrates is used here as a sign, representative of something analogous to “the river” of that name. In the days of Isaiah it was the principal river of Assyria, and is therefore used by the prophet in ch. 8:7, as a sign, or symbol, of the many and strong people of the Assyrian Empire, as the Nile represents Egypt, and the Tiber Rome.

In the scriptures we have frequently observed how the natural and symbolical run parallel with each other. There are two Euphratean rivers referred to — the natural and the political. The natural river overflowing its



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banks represents the armies of Assyria crossing the river for the invasion of the adjoining countries. When the Ninevite Dynasty was abolished, Assyria was annexed to Babylon, and the Euphrates became a river of Babylon. Hence Babylon is introduced into the Book of Revelation as symbolical of the fourth Beast, whose dominion migrated from Babylon to Rome and Constantinople; so that the Euphrates is also introduced there; as a figurative Babylon necessitates a figurative Euphrates. The effect of the outpouring of the vial is to dry up “the water” not “waters” of the political river. Waters signifying “peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues” (Rev. 17:15), or the population — water representing a “power.” We have lived to see the partial fulfilment of this remarkable prophecy, and await in the near future the full fruition — the advance of the great northern power and his overflowing and passing over, and stretching forth his power over Egypt and the Holy Land. In the day when the regeneration of Egypt, Israel and Assyria is complete, the psalmist sings of God’s Anointed, “His right hand shall be established in the rivers and His left hand in the sea.” Rivers then, in a very deep sense have created civilisation. In torrid lands under the pitiless sun all vegetation withers and dies, apart from continual supplies of moisture. And in regions where the rains are intermittent or scanty, the soil becomes fertile only in so far as it is irrigated and intersected by rivers and streams. Hence we perceive the wisdom and foreknowledge of God in this rich provision. In the East, where man’s most imperious need is water, there is an abundance supplied through these God-given channels (Deut. 10:7). Egypt suffered in the time of Pharaoh, who hardened his heart against the Lord and His people. Their rivers were turned into blood, the fish died, and the water stank (Exod. 7).

God has yet a great work to perform on behalf of Israel in the near future in bringing them finally from the lands of their long exile, and these ancient and glorious rivers will come into great prominence.

“I will bring them again also out of the land of Egypt,” Yahweh declares through the prophet Zechariah (ch. 10:10-11), “and will gather them out of Assyria... and place shall not be found for them. And he shall pass through the sea with affliction and shall smite the waves in the sea, and all the depths of the river (Euphrates) shall dry up, and the pride of Assyria (Gog) shall be brought down, and the sceptre of Egypt shall depart away. And Yahweh shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea, and with His mighty wind shall He shake His hand over the river and shall smite it, in the seven streams, and make men go over dryshod” (Isa. 11:15). So we see that Israel’s future restoration is to be after the type of their former migration from Egypt (Isa. 63:12-14). The heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it. Because “Yahweh shall smite Egypt” to “recover the remnant of His people from Egypt.” And in doing so He will “beat

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off from the channel of the river (Euphrates) unto the stream of Egypt” (the Nile): and thereby subdue the whole south of the grant made to Abraham, even “from sea to sea,” or from the Mediterranean to the Gulf of Persia. The result will be that Egypt will no longer be proverbial for its darkness that may be felt, but will own allegiance to Christ, and be a blessing in the midst of the land (Isa. 19:18-22). Speaking of this linking up of Egypt, Palestine and Assyria, a brother says:

“There seems to be an interesting preliminary fulfilment (no doubt for better things to come) of Isa. 19:22, at the present time. The late war has been responsible for a beginning with road making, a highway, by the Egyptian Labour Corps and others, from Egypt up along the sea coast of Palestine towards Assyria, work which for many years has been neglected, and which has not been taken up since the Roman occupation of Palestine. Isa. 11:15, 16 also mentions such a highway, namely from Assyria to Egypt, and mentions changes to be made at the delta of the Nile, giving ease of travel, that men may go over at this part dryshod. The British occupation of Egypt, Palestine and Assyria, has linked up together, as one, these three countries which in former days were constantly at war with each other, but are now, by this occupation, in peaceful and prosperous harmony.”

We learn from Isa. 18:7, that Israel is to be brought back to their land under the protection of a power, whose land is there portrayed as the “land of widely o’spreading wings, extending from beyond to the rivers of Cush,” that is the willing instrument in God’s hand in bringing them from far, “whose land the rivers, or nations, have spoiled.” This land has long ago been located, and is our own favoured Empire — the British Indian Mercantile Power, styled in Eze. 38, Sheba, Dedan, and Tarshish, that even now commands the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea, Egypt, and the Holy Land (Isa. 44:14; Eze. 38:13). A land of widely spreading wings is representative of a government of widely extended colonial dominion. Hence this power is located east of the rivers of Cush, or, extending from beyond, in its fullest development reaching to the rivers of Cush at the north end of the Persian Gulf, where it is watered by the Tigris and the Euphrates.

The British Army a short time ago, broke the power of the Turkish Desolater on the actual field of Armageddon, and within a week or two thereafter, the whole of the land promised to Abraham and his seed, from the river of Egypt unto the great river Euphrates (Gen. 15:18) was delivered. The miserable misrule of the Turk no longer blights the land of Palestine, Syria, Arabia or Mesopotamia, and it will shortly be removed from Armenia.

Many are the beautiful promises concerning this mighty deliverance, scattered throughout the Psalms and Prophets. The Spirit of Christ in Isa. 43:19,

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says: "I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert." And again in ch. 41:18-20, "I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water." There will be a wonderful change in the wilderness, and the desert portions of the land promised to Abraham, which will become a veritable well-watered paradise; and such a transformation will take place in the character and disposition of the wild and savage tribes of Midian, Kedar, Chushan, and the rocky mountains of Arabia, that there will be peace, docility and joyousness abounding there and everywhere (Isa. 42:11). By the waters of Babylon captive Israel "sat down and wept," when they remembered Zion. They "hanged their harps upon the willows, the weeping willows along the water courses, and thought of all their past glory and blessedness, and the sins that had brought them, doubtless, into such distress. But what is yet in store for Israel, and all the world, no human eye has seen, nor the ear heard of. By the deep, clear, silvery waters, in the once blest land of their forefathers, Israel will yet roam amid scenes far transcending in beauty, peace and splendour any that have ever before gratified the sight or charmed the senses.

In the beautiful words of the prophet "There the glorious Lord will be unto us (or, with us, in majesty) in the place of broad rivers and streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ships pass thereby." The Bible gives us the first beautiful effective picture of the primeval paradise in which man was placed where the four fold river existed to water the thornless garden of the Lord, and the last glorious scene depicted therein is that of "a pure river of life proceeding from the throne of God, and of the Lamb" (Rev. 22:1). Here this pure, transparent stream represents the almighty power of God, by which He creates, regenerates, makes glorious and subdues all things to Himself, just as the place, the rivers, and the streams of Isa. 33:20-21, stand for Yahweh and His power. Ezekiel saw that the river issued from under the Altar, and gave life and health to the Dead Sea, and all around. A stream of this pure transparent water of life was poured out upon the apostles on the Day of Pentecost, which though so great and marvellous in its effects, was only the earnest of what is yet to follow; for, the country of the four rivers is yet to shine forth and be the glory of all lands, from whose borders blessings will flow to the ends of the earth.

As we pause and look into the clear waters of the river — a perfect mirror, reflecting the loveliness of this delightful spot, the mournful note of the wood-pigeon breaks the stillness and we are reminded that the evening shadows are gathering across the sky, and so we hie away home, with hearts brimming over with gratitude for all the blessings we enjoy, and for all the joys we anticipate in the coming Morn.

Chapter Twenty

FRUITFUL VALLEYS

*Rich and fair the fruitful valley
Spreads beneath the summer skies;
While the gliding river sparkles,
And the hills in verdure rise:
Shadowing forth a brighter morn,
Even the millennial dawn.*

“**T**HE earth is satisfied with the fruit of Thy works” (Psa. 104:13). If morning on the mountains is beautiful, and so resplendent with glory, verily morning in the fertile valley is equally replete with loveliness. It is some time since we visited this delightful region in the country, and this morning it appears even more beautiful than ever before. From the bank of the river we watch the mist dispersing on the mountains, and soon they are flooded with heaven’s own gift of light, of richness and splendour.

By and by all the mists that shroud life’s pathway, and veil the vision of future glory and happiness from our sight, will vanish away for ever, and we shall see clearly all our Father’s tender dealings with us and thank Him for all the way He has led us. For —

*“Like the night mists from the valleys,
These shall vanish every one.”*

A young friend with us sings in a clear treble voice the verse of a well-known hymn. Beautiful words, to which we all fully assent.

*When the mists have rolled in splendour,
From the beauty of the hills
And the sunlight falls in gladness
On the river and the rills —
We recall our Father’s promise,
In the rainbow of the spray;
We shall know His purpose better,
When the mists have rolled away.*

The bright warm rays of the sun beam down upon us, and the sparkling waters seem to leap and dance for very joy.

Could there be possibly anything more beautiful than a river valley? And who ever beheld a more lovely stretch of river and vale than this? On either side of the shining stream there are vernal meadows, ripening cornfields and rich pastures, all stretches of extreme beauty to compare with it.

In the distance we catch the sound of the silvery waters of a cascade, as it

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fighters its foaming way down this valley of singular contrasts. Bare, frowning cliffs plunge their bases into deep heather and bracken, and sombre pinewoods rise directly above the luscious lowland foliage; while bare mountain sides merge in luxuriant meadows. Could even the beautiful valley of the Jordan produce a more picturesque panorama of vitality and peacefulness? Or its productive soil give more excellent pasture land, richer cornfields, or more fruitful hills? To us westerners the scene is perfect — there seems nothing that could equal it, much less excel or surpass.

The wood-pigeon, or ring-dove, we hear with its musical “coo-coo” in the shrubs and bushes, whose voice is as sweet and pleasant as that of the cuckoo in spring. It is also a familiar bird in the Holy Land, and is found in large numbers where the trees of the wood or high hedges abound. Colonies of the blue rock pigeons live in the rocks and caves, and crevices of the mountains on the sea coast, and their numbers are very great because the eggs and young cannot be taken, except by hawks, eagles and other creatures, which capture a few now and then.

Towards the south of the land of Israel there is a smaller family, known as the Egyptian Rock Dove, but these are as numerous where they exist as the others. A visitor says: “No description can give an adequate idea of the myriads of rock pigeons. In absolute clouds they dash to and fro in the ravine, whirling round with a rush and a whirl that could be felt like a gust of wind. It was amusing to watch them upset the dignity and equilibrium of the majestic griffon as they swept past him. This enormous bird, quietly sailing along, was quite turned on his back by the sudden rush of wings and wind.”

This exactly suits the figure of the prophet Isaiah: “Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?” (ch. 60:8). The immense compact masses of these birds that eastern travellers describe so graphically, as they are seen flying to their homes, sometimes resemble a distant heavy cloud, and are so dense as to obscure the rays of the sun.

The return of the Jews to their own land, and the glories of their future state are displayed in the prophets in the most splendid colours, and under a great variety of images, highly poetical and designed to give us an idea of what shall be in the latter days when Israel shall be gathered from their long dispersion. But perhaps none is more beautiful than the figure of the migratory doves. In their dispersion, Hosea compares Israel to a “silly dove without heart” or understanding (ch. 7:11). The dove is a defenceless creature and no bird is more afraid of man. It is neither able to protect itself or its young, nor to take precaution against those who have designs upon its life and liberty. Thus, notwithstanding all their afflictions, Israel have exposed themselves again and again to the same calamities, and mourn like doves, sitting solitary and calling to

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their mates (Isa. 59:11; 38:14). And Ezekiel testifies of their desolation, saying: "But they that escape of them shall escape, and shall be on the mountains like doves of the valleys, all of them mourning, every one for his iniquity" (ch. 7:16).

But Israel is yet to fulfil the beautiful characteristics of the dove, that of innocence and gentleness, and like the doves, swift of flight and in numerous companies, at the approach of brighter and warmer weather, fly in clouds high in the air, each with its mate, even so they will swiftly and gladly flee to the land of their nativity, and to their king so long despised and rejected, whose "eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters" (Song 5:12).

A small boat glides placidly along under a canopy of leaves, almost drifting at will past little creeks and bays, while the water laps dreamily along its sides; and now and then we catch the gleam of a fish as it flashes over the stones beneath. Cowper wrote significant lines when contemplating the lesson of the gliding water of the river —

*The lapse of time and rivers are the same,
Both speed their journey with a restless stream;
The silent pace, with which they steal away,
No wealth can bribe, no prayer persuade to stay;
Alike irrevocable both when past,
And a wide ocean swallows both at last.
Though each resembles each in every part
A difference strikes at length the musing heart;
Streams never flow in vain; where streams abound,
How laughs the land with various plenty crowned;
But time, that should enrich the noble mind,
Neglected, leaves a dreary waste behind.*

How easy it is to drift along with the stream of time that bears all its sons away! "They fly forgotten as a dream, dies at the opening day." Therefore, let us be wary, so that for every day we may be able to give some good account at last.

How amply blest are we in having so many things around us to remind us constantly of the love of God. He speaks to us on the mountain-top where the alpine flowers bloom, and in the fruitful valley; in the opening blossoms of spring; in the ripening fruits of summer; in the golden harvests of autumn; in the singing of the birds, the hum of the bees, and the murmur of the streams that rush downward to the sea. God speaks to all who will open the ear and reverently listen. Through the flowers He smiles upon us; the dew drops are His jewels, each reflecting His varied and resplendent attributes. We are not placed in a dumb mute world with no attractiveness, and then asked to lift our voices high in adoration, and though it is true that God speaks to us first of His will and purpose through another channel — His written Word — yet we must not

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conceal the fact that He also speaks to us in the morning dawn and amid the evening shadows. Nature never will deceive us. The mountains, rocks and streamlets always speak the same glad message. Her fruits are all pure, lovely and true. But our time would not be profitably spent if we only lent a listening ear to Nature's sweet voice, and did not seek to understand those deep and glorious truths revealed to us by God through their imagery in such an interesting and marvellous manner. The lessons we seek to learn at this time are both the natural and spiritual "fruits of the valleys" (Song 6:11).

All the children of God at some period of their lives must pass through their valley experiences, if they are indeed all for Christ, and intend to go right on with God. They must know the fellowship of Christ's sufferings before they can participate in the joy and glory that is to follow. It is only in the dark passages in life that we learn what are the hidden depths of the heart of God. And let us remember that —

*Christ leads us through no darker rooms
Than he went through before;
He that into God's kingdom comes
Must enter by this door.*

Moses sought to impress Israel with the importance of choosing God's way before their own, however adverse or dark it might appear to them, for that would lead them eventually to many joys and much prosperity.

He encouraged them by saying, "Yahweh thy Elohim bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths springing forth in the valleys and hills" (Deut. 8:7). This beautifully described the physical conditions of the literal Land of Promise, which they were to enter after their wilderness experiences, but it also may serve to illustrate their history — the goodness of God — their exalted privileges, their fruitful position, and the depths of suffering through which they passed. Yet for Israel and for us, these very trials and troubles, these discomforts and inconveniences, are the means of humbling us and proving our sincerity. They are God's methods for our sanctification and eternal welfare. When we realise this, instead of murmuring, we shall exclaim: "Oh the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out" (Rom. 11). Let us seek to glorify Him in our valley experiences, believing that all is well, and in due time we shall be exalted to praise His name for all the way He has led us (Isa 24:15 marg.). The fires of affliction are keen and fierce, but their work is to melt and to purify. When night steals into the depths of the valley it is wrapped in darkness and gloom, but how fresh and lovely it looks when the morning breaks, for the very mists and darkness that shrouded it have enriched and increased its fertility and fruitfulness. Even the

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valley of the shadow of death — the valley of deep darkness — teaches us that we should daily die to self and rise to a new and better life, and that we not only are nothing of ourselves, but are willing to be nothing, that God may be all in all. We may thank God that it is only “the shadow” that quickly flies away when the morning sun arises. God first takes us down into the depths, that He may exalt us when the proper moment arrives, and the “valley of weeping” (Psa. 84:6) will become “a place of springs,” and we shall be “covered with blessings” (RV). Yea, this “valley of Baca” will also be “the place of healing” (balsam trees); the early rain representing the timely graces of the Spirit covering us with blessings. But before we can fully appreciate the lesson of the deep “valley of weeping” we must come to our “valley of vision.” We must see by faith, him who is the “altogether lovely One” — the Lily of the valleys — the central figure in every dark pathway (Song 2:1; 5:10-16).

Prophetically the “*valley of vision*” (Isa. 22:1, 5, 7) signifies Jerusalem. It is called a valley by Antiphrasis, because it stood upon a mountain, and was comparatively so to those higher mountains wherewith it was encompassed. The additional name of “vision” was given to it on account of the many and clear visions and revelations of God’s mind in that place above all parts of the world. Some think it was because the temple was built upon Mount Moriah which is the “mountain of vision” (Gen. 22:14), and probably the same mount upon which our Lord was crucified.

Jerusalem is situated in the midst of surrounding hills, described poetically by the Psalmist: “As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so Yahweh is round about His people from henceforth and for ever” (Psa. 125:2). Concerning the House of David, the prophet declares, “Behold, I am against thee, O inhabitress of the valley and rock of the plain, saith Yahweh; which say, Who shall come down against us? or, who shall enter into our habitations?” (Jer. 21:13). This prophecy foretells the invasion of Jerusalem by the Assyrians under Sennacherib; and secondarily of the Chaldeans under Nebuchadnezzar.

Zechariah refers to a future invasion of Jerusalem, when, on account of great physical convulsion, the Mount of Olives will be divided into two parts, making an immense valley. At that time he continues, “Ye shall flee the valley of My mountains” (Zech. 14:4-5), or, as some read, “the valley of My mountains shall be stopped.”



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This valley of vision speaks of a day “of trouble, of downtreading, and of perplexity” of breaking down the walls, and of crying to the mountains. “Thy choicest valleys shall be full of chariots, and the horsemen shall set themselves in array toward the gate” (vv. 5-7). Both in a moral and spiritual sense it speaks of plans upset, and of barriers of self-defence demolished. We must keep our eyes off ourselves and look into the divine Word to see what the Lord doth say concerning our conduct. As the eyes of servants look upon the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress so our eyes (must) wait upon Yahweh our Elohim (Psa. 123:2), for He cannot reveal to us the fulness of His blessings unless there is a corresponding willingness on our part to receive them. Like Isaac of old, we must leave the “valley of Gerar” — “the place of halting” — behind, with all its scenes of hatred and contention (Gen. 26:12-22), and pass on to “Rehoboth” which means “broad places or room,” and there receive the full benefits of God’s revelation to us through His written oracle, and that peace and consolation that naturally follows.

How often God would bless us, but He sees no room in our hearts and minds to receive it! Hence we are brought to the “valley of threshing” — the place of sifting and of severe judgment, where we learn to look at things from a divine standpoint and find how much has been done merely in the energy of the flesh, and in the power of the old carnal mind. And we abhor ourselves for all our pride and self-opinion.

But we cannot pass over the lesson of this valley without emphasising the significance of the prophetic utterance of Joel, through whom Yahweh declares, “I will gather all nations and bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there, for My people, and for My heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted My land” (ch. 3:2). And again in verse 12, “Let the nations bestir themselves, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the nations around about. Multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of decision, or threshing, for the day of Yahweh is near in the valley of decision” (v. 14). There are various opinions about this valley. Some tell us that it was where King Jehoshaphat obtained his signal victory, recorded in 2Chr. 20:1, 2. It lay towards the Dead Sea beyond the wilderness of Tekoah; and after this event it was called the “valley of blessing” (v. 26), because of the solemn blessings and praises that were given to God in it on this occasion. Others think with us, that the valley lies between the walls of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives, and that it is watered with the brook Kidron, which runs through the midst of this vale — and this certainly agrees with other prophecies concerning the great battle at Jerusalem (Zech. 14:2); while some maintain that the ancient Hebrews had no distinct knowledge of any particular place under that name, and that Joel intended by it to show the place

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where God will execute His judgments against the nations, which He certainly did.

The "garden of Gethsemane," or "orchard," lay at the foot of the Mount of Olives in the valley of Jehoshaphat, and just across the brook Kidron. Hence we are reminded of that memorable fourteenth day of the month at even, and the later scene, when the full moon in the stillness of the night was a silent witness to the taking of Jesus by the wicked leaders of the Jews. It is fitting that in the very neighbourhood where he was captured, mocked and insulted, the nations should feel the rod of his indignation, own their guilt, and acknowledge his power.

The place now bearing the name is a walled enclosure, 160 by 160 feet (48x48 metres) in dimensions, containing eight venerable olive trees, but many doubt whether it is the actual site of the ancient garden. Josephus records that Titus ordered all the trees in the neighbourhood to be cut down, and the Tenth Legion of the Roman Army was actually encamped on the Mount of Olives. The name Jehoshaphat in Hebrew signifies the "Judgment of God." Correctly speaking it is "Yahoshaphat: the judgment of Yah." When our Lord comes again, to redeem Zion from the power of the enemy who has scattered Israel among the nations, who will then, as Daniel testifies, have "planted the tents of his entrenched camp between the seas and the mountain of the glory of the Holy One" (Dan. 11:45), and successfully laid siege to Jerusalem, Israel will be crushed in the very dust, for it will truly be "the day of Jacob's trouble."

Joel sees these vast multitudes of ripened wickedness in the plain, or valley of judgment, unconsciously awaiting their most terrible overthrow. They are the Hamon-gog of Ezekiel 39:11, the multitude of Gog, which are to be buried in the valley of judgment executed, and gives name to an adjacent city, called Hamonah, meaning "multitude." In the siege he will occupy the narrow glen which runs from north to south, between the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east and Mount Moriah, and through which the Kidron flows. Joel styles this glen "the valley of threshing" and in the sixteenth chapter of Revelation the same locality is termed Armageddon.

Thus the nations are to be gathered together without perceiving the hand that has led them on to slaughter, and they will fall upon the mountains of Israel, having been gathered as "the sheaves into the floor for threshing" (Mic. 4:12; Zeph. 3:8). After this victory Christ will stand upon the Mount of Olives which is not only before Jerusalem but also before and above the valley of Jehoshaphat. The Lord will then take away His judgment, and Israel shall rejoice and be glad, and Jerusalem shall be holy. And inasmuch as all the earth will be filled with peace and blessedness, this "valley of judgment" will then become "the valley of blessing."

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In the "valley of dry bones" there are already many encouraging signs of life and activity. As prophesied by Ezekiel, there is "a noise, and behold a shaking," and the once dry bones of the House of Israel are coming together, bone to bone, and soon they will "stand upon their feet, an exceeding great army." This valley of dry bones has also a personal and practical application for each of us.

As we see the Day approaching for Israel's redemption, and ours, are we showing a corresponding liveliness in the things of the Spirit concerning the Christ? In the midst of the dryness and apostasy of present-day Christianity, are we making renewed efforts to live the resurrected life in Christ, that at his coming we may be united as to form one great company in him, to the praise and glory of our heavenly Father? And this leads us to another thought. Before we can arrive at this desirable standing in the sight of God we must not only be "dead with Christ" from the rudiments of the world, but the old self must be buried with him securely. In the "valley of burial" God buried His servant Moses, literally and most successfully, so that "no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day" (Deut. 34:56). Here Moses had to die to all his human and natural desires to enter the "good land" in God's own time, and was brought to an end of himself. Before he could lay down and die physically, he must readily submit to a higher will — the divine. He must relinquish all and say, "Thy will be done, not mine."

How striking are these valley lessons! Moab means the "land of desires." From the top of Pisgah Moses beheld all the lovely stretches of the desirable country covenanted to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and yet again to the people he had led thus far, even to the very borders — the south land and the plain of the valley of Jericho, "the city of palm trees," but he must wait God's time before he may enter into the enjoyment of them. God has in store for Moses something better than the temporal pleasure of possession in the Land, although so beautiful, under conditional promises. With all the faithful of all ages, he will enter the everlasting inheritance and possess life unending for the full and complete enjoyment of it, when the curse is removed, and there is "no more death." If our Lord still tarries awhile, and we must be laid quietly to sleep till he come, may we submissively relinquish all our fleshly ties — all our human plans, and mortal desires, and gently yield our breath. Like Moses, for us there awaits a glad awakening according to the faithful promise upon this earth (Rev. 5:10), when maybe many of our hopes will be realised and far exceeded. If we have been truly buried with Christ in baptism, are we daily recognising our death union with him?

But there is another valley in the scriptures that refers to burial, yet not the peaceful and hallowed burial of the servant of God. There is a most striking contrast. This burial ground is styled in Ezekiel 39:11, the "valley of the

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passengers.” It seems to be located on the eastern side of the Dead Sea, along the same pathway as was followed by Israel of old as they approached the Promised Land. Following the great destruction of the Gentiles in the valley of judgment, the prophet foretells the burial of the slain multitudes in these words: “It shall come to pass in the day that I will give unto Gog a place of burial in Israel, the valley of the passengers, or, of them that pass through, on the east of the sea... and there they shall bury Gog, and all his multitude: and they shall call it “The valley of Hamongog... and seven months shall the house of Israel be burying of them that they may cleanse the land... and they shall sever out men of continual employment that pass through the land to bury those that remain... and they that see a man’s bone shall set up a sign by it till the buriers have buried it in the valley of Hamongog... Thus shall they cleanse the land.”

Jeremiah prophesies of a time of terrible judgments upon Judah and Jerusalem, saying, “The children of Judah have done evil in My sight,” saith Yahweh... They have built on the high places of Tophet which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire... Therefore, behold, the days come,” saith Yahweh, “that it shall no more be called Topheth, nor the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of slaughter: for they shall bury in Tophet, till there is no place,” that is, “because there shall be no place else to bury” (ch. 7:30-32).

Gehenna, derived from the Hebrew word *Hinnom*, is often translated “hell” in the common version of our Bible, and has led to many erroneous ideas. The



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Diaglott explains it thus: "Gehenna is the Grecian mode of spelling the Hebrew words which are translated 'The valley of Hinnom' (Josh. 18:16; 15:8). This valley was also called Topheth, a detestation, an abomination. In this place were cast all kinds of filth, with the carcasses of beasts, and the unburied bodies of criminals who had been executed. Continual fires were kept to consume these. Sennacherib's army of 185,000 men were slain here in one night. Here children were burnt to death in sacrifice to Molech. Gehenna then, symbolises death and utter destruction. The Jews having come to look upon Gehenna as a place of horror, it was associated by our Lord with the destiny which awaits those who shall be the victims of the wrath in the day of just retribution. The Jews knew well that to be in 'danger of Gehenna' was to be in danger of an ignoble death — a devouring of worms, or a consuming of fire in the detested valley of Gehenna, instead of even being allowed a burial."

Hosea prophesied "great shall be the day of Jezreel" (ch. 1:11). This valley of Jezreel extends east and west of Scythopolis to the foot of Mount Carmel. It is an extensive valley (1Sam. 31:7) called by the Greeks "Esdraelon," stretching south and south-west from Mount Tabor to Nazareth, and is remarkable for its beauty and fertility. It has been the scene of many battles. In it was a celebrated city, of the same name, which belonged to the tribe of Issachar. Ahab had a palace there (1Kings 21:1-2), and this city was also famous on the ground of Naboth's vineyard and the vengeance that God executed on Jezebel at Jezreel (2Kings 9:33), whose fate made her a fitting emblem of the apocalyptic Jezebel, whose children will be devoured in the day of Jezreel (Psa. 68:23).

But we will not dwell longer on this dreadfully solemn subject. Amid such lovely scenes about us today, we can scarcely realize the awfulness of the events connected with this once fair valley, nor need we be fearful of having to experience its terrors; for us, if faithful, will be the encouraging invitation: "Come, My people, hide yourselves for a little while, until the indignation be overpast." So from this valley of slaughter and of burial, we turn to fairer scenes and brighter prospects; even where the "valley of trouble" becomes for God's people "the door of hope" leading on to better and more enduring things. "The valley of Achor" (Hos. 2:15), in the territory of Jericho, and in the tribe of Benjamin, where Achan was stoned to death (Josh. 7:24; 15:7) is to be "a door of hope" when Christ leads Israel to his encampment. But it is only the earnest of their complete restoration.

The king of the north (Eze. 39) will then be overthrown throughout the land, but the national graves of Israel will not then have been opened. Israel will be gathered one by one into the wilderness of Egypt. Yet multitudes will remain in Assyria ready to perish (Isa. 27). Crossing the Jordan, we have reason to believe that they will be led into the plains of Jericho, according to the significant type

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in the days of Joshua. From the plains of Jericho they will be able to look in hope, sure and certain of the restitution of all things" (Acts 3:21). This "door of hope" stands for the beginning of mercies and blessings, as the earnest and pledge of future favours.

As this valley was a "door of hope" to Israel of the enjoyment of the Promised Land, so will God deal with repenting Israel, who will mourn as for an only son... "as the mourning in the valley of Megiddon" (Zech. 12:10-14; Rev. 1:7), at the time here referred to; and the valley of Achor will then be "a place for flocks to lie down in, for My people that have sought Me," saith Yahweh (Isa. 65:10).

Another valley of peculiar interest to us as children of God, is the "valley of Rephaim" (2Sam. 5:17-22). Here David twice defeated the Philistines that spread themselves in the valley, because he was guided by the hand of God, having enquired of Him the wisdom of such a course. If we have come to an end of ourselves we shall seek divine guidance in all things, and our Rephaim experience will be that, having ceased from our own plans and purposes, we shall wait God's time, which is always best, and the unfolding of His methods for silence or action, and nothing will have us worried and over-anxious, but we shall be able to say: "Whatever suits God will suit me." In the "valley of giants" (Gen. 14:5; Josh. 15:8; 18:6) we shall not be afraid or faint-hearted for implicit reliance upon God always brings calmness and assurance.

It was while encamped in this beautiful and remarkably fertile valley (Isa. 17:5) that three of David's mighty men so willingly risked their own lives to satisfy the longing desire of their leader for a draught of sweet water from the well of Bethlehem. As we think of this scene of mighty triumphs over self-indulgence, and the glorious and complete victory over the most formidable enemies, may we not enquire of our own hearts if we have yet reached that same high standard. In his youthful days David had experienced God's unfailing strength and goodness towards those who put implicit trust in Him. And again our minds are directed to another valley scene, in which David, the ruddy shepherd youth, was victorious over the boastful, self-confident giant Goliath (1Sam. 17:2). In the broad valley of Elah, Saul was encamped with the armies of Israel, and met their powerful opponent. Or, rather, their tents were pitched on the hills each side of the valley while the deep ravine separated their armies.

This valley was to the south of Jerusalem towards Succoth and Azek, and ran from the hills of Judea, in an east and westerly direction; and was about fifteen kilometres west of Bethlehem (1Sam. 21:9). Being shut in by low rocky hills, and running through it was the steep bed of the winter torrent, in which lay many such smooth, white stones and pebbles as David made use of. One writer describes it as a "small valley that broadens out into a deep ravine... a small

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stream which had shrunk almost under its stony bed, passes through it from east to west. A well of water under the bank, with few olive trees above, on the north side of the valley, are said to mark the spot of the young shepherd's triumphs over his boasting antagonist."

But interesting as this event may be, for us its import is that our daily battle is not a forty-days' challenge, but that every day we must meet our deadly foe — sin in the flesh — not in our own strength, but in "the name of Yahweh," for "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal," but mighty to the breaking down of the strongholds of sin, and in the all-prevailing name of the Lord Jesus, our Goliaths are slain and we become "more than conquerors through him" who loves us.

The valley of Elah lesson is simply beautiful, increasing in significance as we meditate upon it. David went forth trusting in God only. No metal armour did he rely upon for protection against the assaults of the enemy. God, who had helped him hitherto, would succour and sustain him yet again! Long before he was chosen to be king God had looked into his heart, and He knew the faith of His humble servant. It is with the heart we believe, but it is by our actions we prove the sincerity of our belief. It is the heart guided and controlled by the Spirit-Word that alone can manifest such active faith and holy courage. In this David is a type of Christ our champion. Have we this faith and courage?

We pass on to another significant valley experience, that of Berachah, or "the valley of blessing," and seek to learn the lesson it conveys to our minds. Literally it was situated in the tribe of Judah, to the west of the Dead Sea (2Chr. 20:16). The spiritual fruits of this valley are faith coupled with the full assurance of hope. It is here we learn to praise God first and find the fulfilment of our prayers afterwards (1Jn. 5:14-15). All spiritual blessings are ours in Christ Jesus, and we should enter into the enjoyment of them daily, in the fuller, deeper life of faith. We should climb higher and higher up the ladder of spiritual experiences in Christ. God works with us and for us, if we work with Him. And life becomes sweet and precious — a foretaste of that happier and more noble and endless existence, when the things seen in vision by the prophets will be realized. Then we shall possess the miraculous power of discernment, because we walk in perfect harmony with the mind of our Father in heaven, and the walls of our Jericho fall down flat without any effort on our part.

What a lovely picture to contemplate! Jehoshaphat set himself to seek the Lord, and gathered Judah together also to seek His help, and before taking any steps against their enemies they prayed to Yahweh. And what a glorious experience was theirs, as a result! Just think of that assuring message: "The battle is not yours, but Yahweh's. Tomorrow ye shall go down against them... ye shall find them at the end of the valley, before the wilderness of Jezreel (v.

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16)... ye shall not need to fight... stand still and see the salvation of Yahweh with you, O Judah and Jerusalem... for Yahweh will be with you. And Jehoshaphat bowed his head, and all Judah fell down before Yahweh, worshipping Yahweh... And the Levites stood up to praise Yahweh with a loud voice, while Jehoshaphat encouraged the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, Believe in Yahweh your God, so shall ye be established; believe His prophets, so shall ye prosper: And he appointed singers unto Yahweh that they should sing in the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and say, Praise Yahweh, for His mercy endureth forever. And when they began to sing and to praise Yahweh... their enemies were smitten... and on the fourth day they assembled themselves in the valley of Berachah, for there they blessed Yahweh: therefore the name of that place is called The Valley of Berachah ("Blessing"), unto this day" (v. 26). "And there was great rejoicing, for Yahweh made them to rejoice."

Let us ask ourselves again if we are as victorious in the work of the Lord, and is "the joy of the Lord" our daily strength? Indeed if we have truly learned the lesson of this "valley of blessing" we shall be joyous and successful in the service of our Lord, and fruit, luscious and abundant, shall we bring forth to gladden our Captain and to encourage our fellow-believers, of which the delicious fruits of the valley of Eshcol are such a lovely type (Num. 32:9). Yet it speaks not of the perishable products of Nature, but the "fruit that will remain" (Jn. 15:16).

The name of the "Valley of Grapes" is given to this beautiful valley on account of the incident recorded in Num. 13:23-24. Like Joshua and Caleb, such hopeful and joyous faithful are few in number, but they are singled out for divine approval, and will eventually enter into the full enjoyment of all the blessings God has in store for them in the future (Josh. 15:13). Faith sees God in everything, and what He is able to accomplish, and all the difficulties disappear before His presence. Hence we are brought to consider the teaching of the "valley full of ditches" (2Kings 3:16-17). Here the prophet's mind had evidently been agitated and discomposed with holy indignation by the presence of the idolatrous king, and the recollection of his abomination. The soothing influence of music is generally acknowledged in every civilized nation. And it is recorded that when the harper played "the spirit of Yahweh came upon Elisha," and he said, Thus saith Yahweh, "Make this valley full of ditches."

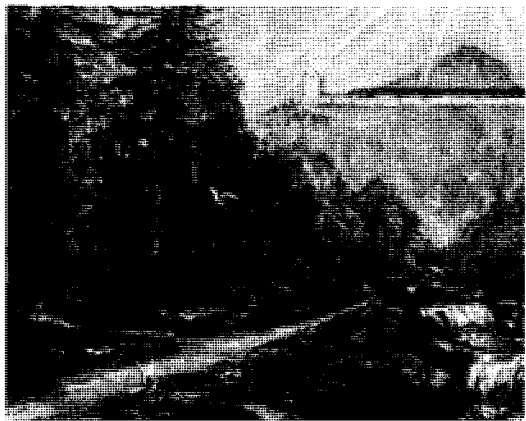
This supply of water was altogether miraculous, for there was neither wind nor rain nor any other natural means to furnish it. Just another beautiful proof of how God works on behalf of those who trust in Him.

The lesson of this valley is that we learn experimentally to walk by faith and simply "be still," and let God work in His own marvellous way. When stripped

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of all the filthy rags of our own righteousness and emptied of every vestige of self-importance and might, we can receive freely all that is laid up for us of spiritual resources of grace and strength. We shall have arrived at the same exalted position as the apostle Paul and his fellow-labourers, when he said they were “as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things” (2Cor. 6:10). For “He that spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with him also, freely give us all things” (Rom. 8:32). And thus having proved God, we shall desire Him only and receive from Him those greater and richer supplies of refreshment, pre-figured by the valley full of ditches. We shall be the humble, thankful recipients of all God’s grace and goodness, and be filled with all the riches and fulness of Christ our Lord, as the valleys are filled with luscious fruits. We shall find an abundant supply for all our needs, have a larger knowledge of God’s love towards us, and a deeper assurance of His nearness and willingness to act on our behalf, so that there will be no barren places in our lives, but all will be praise and glory to God in the highest, while our whole being will be permeated with the sweet consciousness that He is with us in all that our hands find to do. We shall be continually filled with joy and fruitfulness, imparting satisfaction and happiness to all around us, as “the valleys covered with corn” (Psa. 65:13), not only rejoice the heart and gladden the sight, but are a beautiful, gratifying means of strength and support to those who participate in their abundance.

But these valley lessons are as numerous as the valleys themselves, recorded in the scriptures, and we may all search for their lovely fruits if we will. They are not only of historic and geographic interest, but each conveys some special, practical suggestion for our help and comfort on life’s way. So may we ever have the receptive heart and diligent mind to search out these spiritual “depths that spring forth in the valleys.” And when the heavenly Bridegroom comes down into his garden may he see in us such fruits that only can give joy and satisfaction to the heart (Deut. 8:7; Song 6:11).



Chapter Twenty One

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*See the stream of living water,
Springing from eternal love,
Well supply thy sons and daughters,
And all fear of want remove.*

“**H**E sendeth the springs into the valleys, which run among the hills.” “He turneth the wilderness into a standing water, and dry ground into water-springs” (Psa. 104:10; 107:35). “Yahweh thy Elohim bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills” (Deut. 8:7).

“That water is good,” exclaims one of our company, stooping down and ladling a sample of that sparkling element with her hand, from a clear crystal spring, half hidden with brushwood and bramble.

We stop for a moment, and each confirms the statement as we drink freely of the cool, living water. No wonder that nomad tribes struggled and fought for the possession of wells and fountains, as “diamonds in the desert,” when under a flaming sword in the heavens day after day, the patient camels and their drivers travelled across the burning sand. The heat is intensely fierce and there is no valley nor hollow, no shadow of hill nor mound to mark the way. Above is the circle of burning sky, and the same circle of sand beneath still glaring with life and fire. In such case human nature’s many needs are all merged into one wild imperious craving for water.

When we turn to the Bible we find the same dominating factor. Throughout the lives of the ancient patriarchs, and during the journeyings and encampments of Israel in the wilderness it was so, for the Hebrew Scriptures were written by those who dwelt in dry and thirsty lands. And so, throughout the Scriptures we find that the most precious of earthly possessions was a water-spring, and the most importunate of all prayer, the request, “Give me to drink.”

“Dwellers in the desert are made to feel continually how water measures life,” says one writer. Where a spring is flowing the gardens gather round it, the heads of the palms throng taller and thicker, the village spreads along the slopes, and there are visible signs of life and activity.

Perhaps we can hardly realise the tremendous significance of such glorious and assuring promises of life and joyousness as those addressed to Israel through the prophet Isaiah especially, for who like they could enter into the spirit of the

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words of Isa. 35:6-7, "In the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground, or glowing sand, shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of waters." This figure is beautiful in the extreme if we can enter into its meaning. The traveller, thirsty and ready to drop from fatigue, sees shining in the distance what appears to be a pool of silvery water, and he goes out of his way, and puts forth all his remaining strength in order to reach it that he may quench his thirst at its sweet waters, but when he comes to it he finds instead of being a refreshing stream, or pool, it is a mirage; it is the dry burning sand, reflecting the beams of the scorching sun. But here it shall be literally a pool, and the thirsty land that now cracks from dryness shall become "springs of water." A similar promise is to be found in ch. 41:17-18, "when the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I Yahweh, will hear them, I the God of Israel, will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, or on the bare heights, and fountains in the midst of the valleys. I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water."

Occasionally even in our own country of England we have witnessed some unusual optical illusions. Quite recently two fine specimens were seen on the outskirts of our city. In each case it took the form of a large lake of water apparently covering the ground, and horses and people passing were reflected in it as they would be in a pond.

The appearance of such phenomena therefore, is not unknown in English cities, though, of course, they are generally associated with the sea or with tropical deserts. It is said that a mirage can occasionally be seen at the top of Oxford Street, London, on a light day at the close of a long period of heat. It is one of three distinct kinds of mirage produced when the earth is colder than the air above (then objects beyond the horizon are seen erect above it), when the earth and air immediately above it are colder than a warmer stratum above (producing the appearance of objects in the air magnified and inverted), or when the air nearest the earth is hottest. It was this last form that was seen in our city.

It may interest us to know that the explanation is a technical one in connection with the science of light. The delusive appearance of water is due to the rays of light upon the sky being bent upwards in their passage through the hotter stratum of air near the earth. The eyes receive the same impressions as when the light rays strike the sea, and the illusion is rendered more complete by the flickering due to the currents of air from the curved surface of the earth, which conveys the appearance of a haze playing over the illusory water. Hence this effect can only be obtained when the earth has been able to store up sufficient heat to warm the air next to its surface to a temperature higher than that of the ordinary air above, and the second essential circumstance is a flat

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surface, big enough to enable the effect of a watery surface to be produced. As the whole effect is dependent upon the bending of the rays of skylight, it is clear that the best time to see a mirage is when the sun is most nearly directly overhead. But though this gives us a splendid idea of the formation of a mirage it does not help us to realise the feelings and disappointment of the dweller in the deserts where such illusions are most frequent.

Such is life — a mocking mirage, the phantom of the wilderness: thousands are lured by the brilliant spectre, and hurry on in the chase for happiness, in hot pursuit after the vain and unreal. But all is illusive, ending in mockery and disappointment, as “a dream when one awaketh, leaving the awful thirst unquenched” (Isa. 29). As if a man thinks he sees what will satisfy his thirst and awakens; to find that the refreshing stream was only false — as a mirage in the desert. So let us freely invite the thirsty crowds, who still to streams of false delight repair, to approach to springs where living waters flow, “Free to that sacred fountain all, without a price may go.”

Although the Holy Land embraces within its borders remarkable contrasts of climate, the country, as a whole, is by no means destitute of water. Besides the mountain torrents, the land has copious springs and fountains, swelling up among the limestone hills. The only quite waterless parts are the southern deserts.

Gilead and Galilee are especially rich in springs, and the hills of Samaria and Hebron are also well watered. There are only five important springs mentioned in the Bible — The spring of Jezreel (1Sam. 29:1); the large pool probably under the north cliff of Gilboa; Harod (Jud. 7:1), in the same valley; the waters of Aenon (Jn. 3:23), believed to be the fine brook of Wadi Farah, between Salim, on the south, and Aenon on the north. The spring of Gibeon (2Sam. 2:13); and En Rogel, or Gihon, the only spring now existing at Jerusalem (1Kings 1:9) which is thought to be the “sheep pool” (Jn. 5:2) called Bethesda (“house of the stream”) which is remarkable for the sudden, intermittent, flow of its waters, in the cave which now communicates, by an aqueduct, with the pool of Siloam.

Who better than dwellers in such a land would understand the meaning of “drawing water with joy from the wells of salvation?” (Isa. 12:3). What pleasant recollections are associated with the fountains and wells of the Bible! Of one it is recorded: “That is the well whereof Yahweh said unto Moses, Gather the people together and I (Yahweh) will give them water. Then sang Israel this song, Spring up, O well, sing ye unto it; The well which the princes digged, which the nobles of the people digged, with the sceptre and with their staves,” by order of the Law-giver (Num. 21:17-18).

The book of Numbers is remarkable for these fragments of ancient poetry

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preserved in it. If we read ch. 6:24-26, and consider its influence on some of David's lines in the Psalms, we shall notice the similarity of style. In ch. 10:35-36, there is another fragment: "Rise up, O Yahweh, and let thine enemies be scattered... and, Return, O Yahweh, unto the many thousands of Israel." Chapter 21 is particularly rich. Here is "the song of the Well" and later, "the song of Victory." Referring to verse 16, "beer" means "well."

At this well the Lord had once more provided for the people's needs. Perhaps they were here told to sing this song, and then the Almighty filled the well with the water. The words would form a beautiful hymn of request, and a wonderful example of "ask and ye shall receive."

But we may go back to more primitive days even than this, and picture Hagar, Abraham's bondwoman, sad and solitary, where the angel of the Lord found her by the fountain in the way to Shur, which was afterwards called, on account of the circumstances associated with it, "*Beer-lahai-roi*" — the well of "the Living One who seeth me." Or, "my beholder" (Young). Later, when Abraham had sent her with the child Ishmael from his home, the angel again met her near a well of water (Gen. 16:7-14; 21:19). Abimelech's covenant with Abraham at Beer-sheba, "the well of the Oath," is another instance of the importance of wells.

Wells of water were of great consequence, especially where the flocks were numerous, because water was often scarce, and digging to find it was attended with the expense of much time and labour. In Gen. 26:24, we read that Isaac "had possession of flocks and herds, and the Philistines envied him." Now all the wells which his father's servants had digged in the days of Abraham had been stopped. And Isaac encamped in the valley of Gerar, and digged again the well of springing water, and there was contention "between the herdsmen of Gerar and Isaac's herdsmen" showing once more how valuable these wells were. To stop a well was one of the greatest acts of inhospitality, and to dig one the greatest kindness that could be conferred. This explains the Psalmist's words that those "passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools" (Psa. 84:6). That is, in the valley which they had to traverse in approaching the temple of God, in the sultry land, water was most refreshing, and the pilgrim who dug the well had bequeathed it to those who should come behind him.

So let us dig spiritual wells of refreshment wherever we pass in the world's wide valley, so that they who are drinking from broken cisterns, and are fainting by the way, may drink and live for ever.

The wells of Arabia are generally dug in the rock; their mouths are about two metres in diameter and they are from six to seven metres deep but Nicbur informs us that "many wells are from 160 to 170 feet deep (48-51 metres)." The

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woman of Samaria remarked that Jacob's well was deep, and the Psalmist says "He brought them forth water out of the rock." In the land covenanted to Abraham, the Israelites came into possession of wells digged already for them (Deut. 6:11).

Wells appear to be regarded as notable meeting places in early times. Naturally they would be frequently resorted to for the supply of water. Abraham's servant met Rebekah by a well (Gen. 24). In his beautiful prayer for guidance and good success, he mentions the fact of standing by the well. Then we have recorded that unique incident — the answer to faithful prayer, which for beauty, sincerity and simplicity is unequalled in history. It is a very beautiful thought that the Hebrew word for a well, and for the human eye are the same. It seems most appropriate to call the well or spring "the eye of the earth," for just as tears rush from the eye when sorrow smites the heart so the water rushes from the earth. As "eye of the earth" is the Hebrew word for a spring or fountain, the significant language of the prophet Jeremiah is explained. The weeping prophet exclaims, "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears." In other words, I wish that I could just weep enough to express the depths of my sorrow at so terrible catastrophes, that were to overtake the people and their beloved land.

The women of the highest classes in the East go to draw water at the well, strange as it may appear. It is believed that ladies of distinction went out to draw water in ancient times, and even now in some parts they still do so. The action of Rebekah at the well was not singular, or unbecoming. There is this difference, that the higher classes carry the water on the shoulder, and the humbler ones on the head.

This beautiful and touching incident is worth our deepest consideration, for it contains a significant lesson. Isaac is a type of Christ the Bridegroom, and Rebekah of his Bride, the ecclesia. Isaac met his bride at the well Laroi, the name of which means "God my beholder," at the eventide of the sixth day. According to the cycle of time we are now living in the evening hour of the great anti-typical sixth day, and may meet our Lord any moment, for his coming draweth nigh—may it be with the same readiness and joy that Rebekah greeted Isaac of old. Isaac was meditating in the fields. What were his thoughts as he tarried for his bride? The chiefest, we are sure, were for her welfare and happiness. It was at the time of prayer and meditation that Isaac and Rebekah met, so possibly it may be with us. But whether it be in the open fields or in the place set apart for the celebration of the memorials of his love, may we be able to lift up our heads with joy, as he receives us as his own for evermore. We are not surprised to find that after the death of Abraham, Isaac dwelt by the well where he had such pleasant recollections and found so great a prize.

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“By a well in the field” Jacob also met Rachel, the shepherdess (Gen. 29), for whom he served Laban so many years. Let us picture this scene and the beautiful eastern custom of watering the flocks, bringing them to the well. The stone at the well’s mouth was to prevent evaporation, and to guard the well from the sand of the roads, or from decaying vegetation being hurled into it by the wind. Heavy stones are placed upon the mouth of each well, to be not only a protection, but also to keep the water cool, and to show the wayfarer where the well is situated. In the third verse of this chapter the ordinary usage is described, while in the eighth the fact of this usage being practiced. The flocks and herds gathered around, waiting for the arrival of Laban’s flocks. Consider Jacob’s delight at coming upon such a scene after his long journey. He leaves Laban, a purified, strengthened and developed man, pleasing to God, with his wives and sons, his cattle and sheep, riches in abundance, and a great faith in the God who had indeed kept His promise to bless him and bring him safely back to his land. Jacob is a type of Christ in the service he rendered for his bride. He gave himself for her (Eph. 5:25; Acts 20:28). Christ’s Bride, like Jacob’s two wives, represent both Jews and Gentiles bought with a great price.

Joseph was “a fruitful bough by a well.” This word “bough” is the same as translated elsewhere “branch,” to which Jesus is compared in the prophets and in the psalms, partaking of the richness of the parent stem, planted by a well. In the case of vegetable life, if the plant cannot, like other forms of life get to the water, the position would be a dry one. Hence this bough is planted by a well of water, and was partaking constantly of that necessary to its existence, and so is a fruitful bough. Jesus said those who came to him would never thirst, and here we see the beauty of this prophecy of Jacob. The branches proceeding out of the fruitful bough reach over the wall, and refer not only to Joseph, and to Ephraim, but to those afar off among the nations who would eventually share in Israel’s blessings and fruitfulness. The message of God’s love was to reach the Gentiles, and we are partakers of the richness of that Branch springing from the stem of Jesse. Another interesting incident associated with Bible wells is that of Moses, when he fled from Pharaoh, which also led to his taking a wife, and it is recorded in Exod. 2, but we will not dwell further upon this now.

At the well called “Jacob’s well” many centuries after Jacob met his bride Rachel, the Saviour met the Woman of Samaria (Jn. 4:6), with whom he dealt so tenderly and yet so thoroughly as to convince her of sin, and of the necessity for a new life. How graciously he speaks to her concerning both wells and water! God in Christ is the great well of living water and those who drink of this water will find joy and satisfaction, and live to help and refresh others.

The three flocks (Gen. 29) speak to us of the descendants of Shem, Ham and Japheth, and in the days when Israel shall again be blessed, they shall water

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these three flocks from the same well.

Let us ever remember that God's Word is a well of living water and drink deeply and often of this:

*“Stream from the fount of heavenly grace,
Brook by the traveller's way.”*

The life we need is not a mere supply as of water from Jacob's well; the water that God gives, springs not from nature's source but from the infinite depths that spring up from beneath and above. And this must be given as by a new birth, so that the well-spring shall be within, and shall flow for ever. All great rivers are formed by the union of smaller ones. These owe their rise to the rivulets that run into them, and the rivulets derive their origin from springs and fountains. But whence do springs proceed, seeing that water, by its gravity and fluidity, always occupies the lower part of the earth's surface? It is true that rain, snow, and all vapours which fall from the air, furnish a great part of the water that flows from springs. These waters penetrate into the earth till they are obstructed by beds of white clay, through which they cannot pass. Hence they accumulate and become fountains; or they collect in cavities which afterwards overflow, and the water gradually escapes out from innumerable crevices of various sizes, still naturally declining on account of its weight. This continuous flow of water forms subterraneous currents in which others join and unitedly form a vein of water.

But fountains do not owe their origin entirely to the atmospheric vapours; for there are high mountains on which are springs and lakes. Many springs are produced by vapours driven by wind towards the mountains, or they are drawn by the power of universal attraction, towards those great masses. The atmosphere is more or less loaded with aqueous vapours, which being driven and pressed against hard and cold rocks, condense immediately into drops, and thus increase springs. In countries near the main ocean the sea water filters through the ground, and produces springs which usually taste like the water whence they come. But whatever the cause we acknowledge gratefully that God is the Creator and Preserver of these salutary springs. He speaks, and the fountains issue from the bosom of the hills; the springs become rivulets, and these swell into rivers, that widely diffuse the blessings of abundance and fertility over the earth. He causes the useful fountains to spring from the high places of the earth. Sometimes they wind among the mountains, and sometimes precipitate in cataracts from the lofty eminences. It is God's wonderful method of preserving the kingdom of nature, and the draining of waters, that might otherwise prove injurious by their too great abundance.

Through the teaching of Christ concerning Nature we get to know of another water that does not fail. The water must be made to spring up within. And,

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beautiful thought, our Lord first digs within, that the living water may spring up as his gift. He awakens the conscience, bringing up as he digs a little here and there, the earthliness, hard and dry, of past and present experiences. Thus often, as in the case of the woman of Samaria, the water comes up for a time mixed with muddy and erroneous ideas, but still hopeful of after clearness. Hence, we should have patience and tact in seeking to win others for Christ. In some, the hope of the coming Messiah flickers like a distant star amid the darkness. Yet how brightly that hope will shine when the mind has been enlightened and the heart-strings touched in tenderness. With many the teaching of early days has been overlaid, like an old disused well is covered with stones and dust, but when it is digged again, and the rubbish removed, the water springs up fresh and clear; yea, we may pierce even the old foundation, that new springs may flow in that which never had an entrance before, and there will be seen as great a contrast as that of the dead waters of a cistern, and the sparkling waters of a crystal fountain. But alas! How many only think of the natural element that satisfies only for a time, the external supply for present needs, but the inner, unailing source that would satisfy every want as it occurs, just as a draught of water gives temporary refreshment, they do not desire.

The springs of earth may quench the thirst, and heal the body, but "the water of life" only can cleanse and renew the inner being. Salvation's stream is as boundless as the love of God. May many see that living source of joy.

One of the greatest calamities that can befall anyone is the lack of water, either elemental or spiritual. In both cases it produces dryness, fatigue, and at length famine and death (Isa. 41:17). The sorrowful complaint of Israel was that they should die of thirst in the wilderness. But God "turned the rock into a standing water, the flint into a fountain of waters" (Psa. 114:8). If they had only waited for God how much happier they would have been, for in His own good time — the best time — the needs would have been met and satisfied. How discouraged they were by the way as they continued in their journey, and yet God bore with them and gave them blessings all undeserved. After one such season of depression "they came to Elim where there were twelve springs and three-score and ten palm trees," signifying "refreshment and shade," and they camped there by the waters (Exod. 15:27). Was there anything significant in these numbers? We cannot tell. But Israel once numbered seventy souls, divided into twelve. And here was abundant supply for all, individually and collectively.

Have we not found often after much sorrowful complaining that if we had but waited for God's guiding hand, what a deal of misery and inconvenience we should have spared ourselves and perchance what causes for sinners to point the finger of scorn and reproach at us professed believers in the power and love of God, we should have avoided. Therefore in every season of bitterness let us

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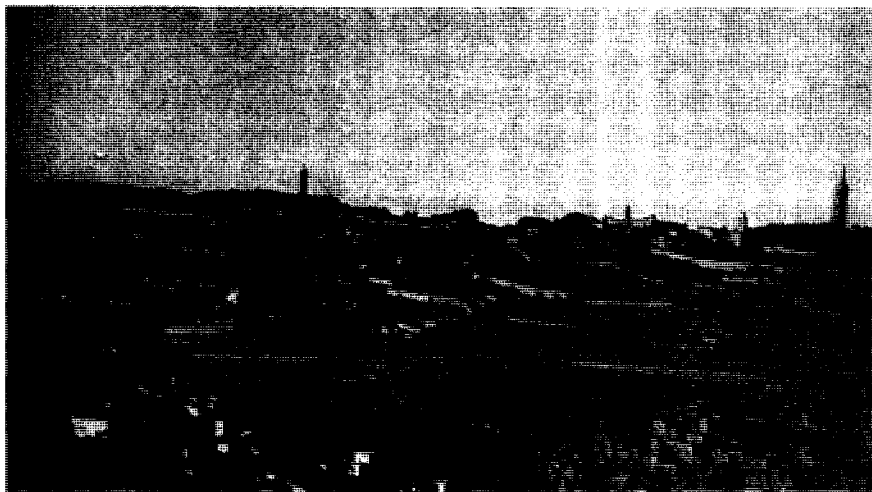
learn to be patient, and we shall find —

*A branch of healing near every bitter spring,
A whispered promise stealing o'er every broken string.
And o'er Elim with its coolness, its fountains, and its shade,
A blessing in its fulness, when buds of promise fade.*

In the wilderness there was not only lack of water, but lack of faith, and so God provides. The bitter waters were made sweet, and at Elim an abundant supply was found. The divinely-provided tree that sweetened the bitter water represents the cross of Christ (1Peter 2:20; Gal. 3:13), and the application of this principle will sweeten all the bitterness of life.

The event in Exod. 15, illustrates a divine principle in the training of God's people. In all life's experiences it is Marah before Elim, the wilderness before Canaan, the cross before the crown, the worse before the better and suffering before the glory. How closely suffering and glory are united. In our Saviour's life, the disciples saw how the one was intended as a preparation for the other. Our path lies through the "valley of humiliation" and only through hard fought fights will victory be won. So in our lives, the means of grace are only intended to prepare us for trials and temptation. In this way God trains us for useful service. We must follow Christ in the season of sorrow as well as in joy — through evil report and good, and allow neither the smile of success nor the chill of failure to deter us from keeping on even to the end.

It is a sad picture presented in Jer. 19 when "the nobles sent their little ones to the pits, but found no water, they returned with their vessels empty." But



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there is still a more terrible thirst than this, and much more deplorable. "Not a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of Yahweh." There are various kinds of thirst, and mankind of all ages have followed after them. The thirst of all nations has been to get a sight of God, but that sight is vouchsafed to believers in Christ who have his likeness in the New Testament. The Jews thirsted for a sight of God, and this was granted in part to Moses who, from the rock beheld when His glory passed by. This inordinate desire led to the breaking of God's holy law, and many foolish ideas and practices. The Greek thirsted too, and with his fine, cultivated taste, he wrought the marble into forms of material beauty, hoping that at least one might be beautiful enough to embody and represent Him. The Hindu has images to his own taste such as he thinks will represent God, although revolting and horrible.

The secret of all idolatry is this thirst to get a vision of God, to hear and to know that God is near and with him. And so, throughout the Scriptures, God meets this thirst, and grants us foreshadows and outlines of that perfect manifestation of Himself in Christ Jesus in the future.

To express the beneficent effects of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon those who rightly thirst after Him (Psa. 42:1), as the hart pants after the water brooks, Yahweh sends forth the gracious promise, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty" (Isa. 44). When we see the ground dry and cracked, because of the absence of the sweet spring showers, we have in that parched cracked ground the outward symbol of a heart, withered by this world's passions, and a world hardened by unbelief and disobedience — dried up in all its springs. On such, when thirsting for the Living God, the spirit of Truth and understanding will be poured, and the effects will be the same as with the fresh spring shower. The desert heart will rejoice and the barren life will blossom forth as the rose, and the result will be "they shall spring up as among the grass," like the beautiful flowers that adorn the earth, and they will grow green like the tender grass putting forth the first tufts of spring, and "as willows by the watercourses" refreshed by the waters that continually flow to their roots. And, on account of this choice gift, "one and another will say, I am Yahweh's." Thus, he that thirsts after righteousness shall be satisfied. For all spiritual blessings shall be poured out upon those who truly desire them and they that are as the dry ground shall be watered with the grace of God, even with floods of that grace to cause them to be fruitful indeed.

If the ground be ever so dry, we need not despair. God has floods of grace to water it with, so that everything that is virtuous shall be eminent and excel all around them as the willows stretch over the grass among which they grow.

It is said that "true religion finds its ultimate proof in the depths of spiritual experiences." The challenge of divine wisdom is not to argue and reason, but

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“taste and see.” For the incontestable witness and warrant for God’s living water must come from those who have themselves tasted of its living virtue to quicken and heal. Naturally a fountain is “the source or spring-head of waters.” Metaphorically God is called “the fountain of living waters.” “My people have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters. They have hewn them out cisterns that can hold no water,” says Yahweh (Jer. 2:13), and the prophet weeps and laments over this deplorable condition. So let us come away from the muddy streams, whose sources, although pretentious, have no substance, no reality, nor refreshment, and seek the water that flows from the spring in the rock, which is both cooling and refreshing.

Springs or fountains are called “living” when they never cease or intermit, but are always sending forth their crystal flood. And such has God’s kindness and mercy been ever towards His people who had forsaken Him. To God the Fountain Head, we may always go with confidence. When other streams are dried up, and their channels have no water, we may drink not only of those cooling streams, like the streams from the Alps, but get “wine and milk without money and without price” (Isa. 55:1). Wine that exhilarates the heart, and milk that gives nutriment and strength. Yea, we may get all earth’s choicest blessings, and heaven’s most valued gifts, if we draw from the prolific springs of God’s unending bounty. And Christ stands, as it were by the eternal fountain opened amid our wilderness experiences, and invites us, and whosoever will, to come and drink freely of the living water. Shall we go then, and dig wells and springs of our own devising, and exhaust our energy in seeking after false streams and mirages that can neither revive nor satisfy?

Referring to Israel, the prophet says, “He that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall He guide them” (Isa. 49:10). Then—

*Judah’s sacred valleys where thorns and briars grow,
Shall blossom like the garden, and Eden’s beauty know.*

How the meaning of these deeply interesting figures intensify as we gather around this lovely, refreshing stream before us! Our senses are revived and quickened by the thought of all God’s precious promises, as our failing strength is renewed by a draught of this clear, cooling water. Even the grass that we are crushing beneath our feet has a lesson for us, as well as that which is being mowed down in the opposite field, directing our attention to yet another grand truth arising out of its analogy. These narrow strips of fluted green seem to possess no special beauty or goodness, and are neither tall nor strong. They only seem made to be trodden under foot.

Yet when we think of all the beautiful trees and flowers, perhaps there are none so highly prized by man as the slender grass that will spring up everywhere and anywhere for his common use. The grass that is in the fields today and

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tomorrow is cast into the oven, reminds us of the shortness and uncertainty of human life. It is short-lived, although as wide-spread as the earth itself. It carries us back to the first chapter of the Bible when "God said, let the earth bring forth tender grass, the herb yielding seed and the fruit yielding fruit after his kind" (Gen. 1:11). And it was so. Oh, the greatness and wisdom of this! Think of the pleasure it affords us to look upon the soft, green carpeted earth. How it refreshes our wearied brains and relaxes the strain and tension due to overwork or anxiety, to walk abroad in the vernal lanes and grassy meadows interspersed with bright variegated wild flowers. What an additional glory is this fresh, green mantle covering up the otherwise dull, monotonous acres of barren sod, and how restful to the sight! It is often only by stern contrasts that we can realise the vastness and greatness of the works of our heavenly Father.

Grass is not only ornamental, but useful, for observe how much depends upon its plentiful production. In the Scriptures grass is frequently applied to the herbage in general (Isa. 15:6), although sometimes a distinction is made between herbs that are used by man and the grass that is used for cattle. One of the most beautiful promises to the Hebrews was, "I will send grass in thy fields for thy cattle" (Deut. 11:15). Permanent pastures like those of northern countries are not met with in the Holy Land, but their fields, green with grass and clover in spring, will, in the summer heat be as arid and dusty as a roadway. The Psalms are full of references to the grasses and their brief duration. "Grass in the field," indicates all the herbs of the field. Hay, as dried grass, is unknown in the East, but grass to be cut for eating is mentioned in Pro. 27:20. The Psalmist sings of the mercy of God in these words, "He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herbs for the service of man" (104:14). "Who maketh the grass to grow upon the mountains, He giveth to the beast his food" (147:8-9), and in Zech. 10:1, there is this glorious promise, "The Lord shall give every one grass in the field." It is a saddening contrast in Isa. 15:6-7: "No grass in the fields" spelt starvation.

How quickly and profusely grass grows! It spreads over the land where man never sets his foot. It covers up the unsightliness of barren piles and neglected wastes, while it springs up with the refined smoothness and loveliness of the richest tapestry on cultivated lawns. God's people may be compared to the grass on the lawn, that we would keep in the best condition, and is so often mowed. This grass has scarcely any respite from the scythe. Out in the meadows there is no such repeated cutting; mowing once or twice in a year will answer there. Both have their uses, but on the finer grass more care and time is taken. And so it is with the design of our chastisements and sorrows. One of the most gladdening sights of early spring is the young tender grass springing up after the winter's stagnation (Pro. 27:25).

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And what is the message of the Spirit, in the grass of the field. "It grows up in the morning, and the evening it is cut down" (Psa. 90:5). The great multitudes of people, says the prophet, are like grass. "Surely the people is grass" (Isa. 40). The lightning blasts it, the frost nips it, the scythe of the mower cuts it down. The high and the lofty are simply as the grass in flower — they are indeed the flower of the grass; but the flower of grass is first stricken by the frost and blasted; it is first touched by the birds of the field and destroyed. If it should outlast all these incidents and accidents, even then, like the grass, it too, is cut down by the mower — death, and perishes. How expressive then is this figure: "The grass withereth, the flower thereof fadeth." But joyful news, "The word of Yahweh endureth for ever." The wicked spring up as the grass, and sometimes we fret and vex ourselves because they seem so bright and prosperous, but like the grass they are soon cut down and wither away (Psa. 32:2; 102:4). The grass springs up green and flourishing and "when the workers of iniquity do flourish" (says the Psalmist), it is that "they shall be destroyed for ever" (Psa. 92:7). This helps us to understand the symbol in Rev. 8:7, "All the green grass was burnt up." Grass being figurative of a multitude, it may be withered or green. Before the trumpet blast in Rev. 8:7, the grass is "green," but when it ceases to sound it is burnt up, and consequently "black." Briefly, before the hail and fire descend, the catholic multitudes, consisting of priests and people, are "green as grass," and are so represented because of their wickedness.

Grass, whether it grows upon the housetop (Psa. 129:6) or in the field, is soon gone; and so is man with all his boasted achievements — with all his pride of birth or culture, his days are comparatively as short as the grass that is so common. "As the flower of the field so he perisheth" (Psa. 103:15). It may appear well for a time, but like the stray grass seed dropped into a crevice of cement, there is no depth of earth to nourish and strengthen it, and soon it becomes sickly and withers away. So let it be, says the Psalmist, with all those "who hate Zion." But, consider the beautiful promise to all who love her: "they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth" (Psa. 122:16). Like the grass that grows up after the fertilizing showers (v. 6). Those beautiful "showers that tarry not for man, nor wait for the sons of men" (Mic. 5:7), when "the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as dew from Yahweh and as showers upon the grass."

Of the Lord Jesus it is testified that "he shall come down as rain upon the mown grass." And what is the effect? Fertility and beauty. Humanity is compared to the mown grass because they have been mown down by oppression and the sword, but those that remain in that day will spring up fresh and green and there will be no desolate hearts or barren lives.

Why, then, should we be afraid of man that shall die, and of the son of man

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that shall be made as grass (Isa. 51:12), and forget to honour Yahweh our Maker? Nay, God forbid that we ever should so do.

We are, however, loathe to leave this lovely spot, where such thoughts befit the scene and where —

*Wild and sweet the flowers are blooming, by the streamlet's side,
And a greener verdure showing where the waters glide
Down the hillside murmuring on, over root and mossy stone.
Where yon oak his broad arms flingeth, o'er the sloping hill.
Beautiful and freshly springeth that soft flowing rill,
Through its dark roots wreathed and bare,
Gushing up to sun and air.*

But we must pass along the river's bank at quicker pace if we are to reach a more secluded shelter before the sun rises to meridian splendour. Yes, wild and sweet the flowers are growing, and their beauty and fragrance are such that we cannot pass them by unheeded. Indeed, the lessons they teach are made more impressive as we walk amid this flowery vale. But yonder a shepherd with crook in hand is tenderly calling to his fleecy white flock to lead them forth to greener pastures and shelter from the noonday sun, and we feel constrained to linger yet awhile and speak of him — the centre of our hopes and joys — the Good Shepherd, who gave his life for the sheep, and will, ere long, gather them together, and lead them forth into the fields of paradise restored. And so, as we instinctively repeat the "Shepherd Psalm" of our childhood, we seat ourselves once again on the deep green bank near the fountain beneath the scanty shade of a few old willows to contemplate this loveliest of all scenes, and this most beautiful of all subjects.

Chapter Twenty Two

THE GOOD SHEPHERD



*Thou, only thou, the kind and good
And sheep-redeeming Shepherd art;
Collect thy flock and give them food;
And pastors after thine own heart.*

AMONG the many varied titles that characterised our Lord in his ministry, perhaps none is more beautiful or more significant of his divine mission than that of the “Good Shepherd.” The Master is represented in the Scriptures as “the son of God,” “the only begotten of the Father,” “the first-born of every creature,” “the power of God and the wisdom of God,” “the Word,” “the Beginning,” “the image of the invisible God,” and the “brightness of His glory,” “Immanuel, Messiah and Redeemer,” the “Prince of life” and “Prince of peace,” the “Sun of righteousness” and the “heir of all things.” But when “he came unto his own,” speaking words of life and power, he presented himself in these memorable words: “I am the bread of life,” “I am the light of the world,” “I am the good shepherd” — the “resurrection and the life” — “the true vine” — “the Alpha and the Omega” — “the root and offspring of David,” and the “bright and morning star.”

These were self-styled appellations, and we may reasonably enquire how it was that Jesus laid claim to them. But after a brief reflection we cannot fail to observe how the intelligent Spirit-directed mind of the Saviour of men, quick of understanding and so familiar from close contact with, and a diligent study of “the law and the prophets,” had discovered in his own person the anti-typical light-stand of the holy place, the “true manna,” the “bread from heaven,” and the “Shepherd of Israel,” who would nourish and care for the scattered flock.

In the subject before us, the work of Christ is explained by the analogy of the “shepherd and the sheep,” and John 10, is both unique and graphic in its descriptiveness, whilst set in the plainest and most simple language imaginable. This, no doubt, is one of the reasons why the words of the Lord Jesus fall with such force, beauty and effect upon the minds and hearts of his hearers. He never used difficult words when simple ones would suffice to convey the truth; hence it is recorded of him “never man spake like this man,” for all others have more or less exhibited a show of human knowledge and wisdom.

We recollect that once, when Jesus saw a great multitude, he said they looked like “sheep having no shepherd” (Mat. 9:36). We know from Mat. 23:4,

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13-14 who ought to have been shepherds to those sheep. The Pharisees claimed for themselves that they were shepherds of Israel. They decreed who should be admitted to, and who should be cast out, from the fold. They professed to be the interpreters of God's truth and with it to feed the flock. When Jesus came down from the mount of Transfiguration, he was met by a man who threw himself at his feet in great distress (Matt. 17:14-21). After healing his boy, Jesus passed through Samaria, where previously, by Jacob's well, near the beautiful emerald vale of Shechem, he had sought and found one of his sheep (Jn. 4).

Jesus then came to Jerusalem to attend the Feast of Tabernacles, and while there he healed, at the pool of Siloam, a man who was born blind. This poor, blind beggar was an example of the Pharisees' treatment of the weaker ones of the flock. In spirit, if not in deed, they had thrust him out from the fold of God. The True Shepherd had sought and found this lost sheep. In His love God may send suffering for our good, and here He uses this man's calamity for his good. His blindness was the opportunity for God's power to be revealed. Follow him from the moment he is brought into contact with Christ, and observe his implicit faith in Jesus. Here faith is exhibited by works and unhesitating obedience, as also the nobleman, "whose son was sick at Capernaum" (Jn. 4:46).

See him quickly feeling his way down the steep hill into the valley. The Pool of Siloam still exists. It is at the foot of the hill Ophel, which is the continuation southward of the hill on which the temple stood, where the two valleys of Hinnom and Jehoshaphat meet. The water descends to it through a subterranean passage under Ophel, from the "Virgin's Fount," a spring higher up in the valley of Jehoshaphat; and this spring is believed to come from under the temple. The comment of the evangelist: "which is by interpretation, *Sent*," points to a symbolic meaning in the direction to go to the pool. Some writers think that the idea is "go to the God-sent spring of water and let it remind thee of him who is sent of God, and who gives the 'living waters'"; drawing upon the words of the Psalmist "He sendeth the springs into the valleys which run among the hills" (Psa. 104:10). It is noteworthy that in the gospel of John, the idea of Christ as "Sent from the Father" is most prominent. "God so loved the world that He gave or sent His only begotten Son." "God sent not His son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." "He whom God hath sent, speaketh the words of God" (ch. 3). Again, ch. 5:36-38, "The Father himself which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me." "I am not come of myself, but He that sent me is true" see also (ch. 7:28-29; 8:42).

On one occasion Jesus said, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." The work he came to do was to give health to the sick, life to the dead, and to save the lost (Mat. 9:12). It was the murmurings of the Pharisees and scribes that called forth from the Saviour that beautiful parable of

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“the lost sheep” (Luke 15:3-7). In this parable there is the figure of the Good Shepherd showing his compassion for one of his sheep that had wandered from the fold. Leaving the rest of the flock in a secure place the shepherd goes in search of the wanderer, and seeks until it is found. He never tires — never gives it up. And when found he places it gently upon his own shoulders (no one else bears the burden) and carries it back where it is welcomed with joy.

How beautifully this parable sets forth Christ’s love in seeking and receiving the sinner! He has sought us in the same way if we are his, for Isaiah says: “all we like sheep have gone astray.” The Saviour pursues each wandering sheep with his love, sustains it in its weakness and leads it by his grace back to the fold. And there is more joy among the angels over one sinner that repenteth than over the self-righteous Pharisees who thought they needed no repentance.

But to return to the blind man, we see him washing his eyes as he stoops at the pool, and then with what overwhelming joy and gratitude he beholds Olivet, the Kidron, and Salem’s towers, bulwarks and palaces for the first time. The trees and animals, the blue sky above, the faces of his fellow-creatures, all so new to him. The old blank expression has disappeared. His face is now radiant and joyous, so that his friends scarcely know him (ch. 9:8-9). Did the Jews rejoice with him in this marvellous experience? Not at all! Our Lord censures their conduct and forces home to them duties neglected. They were teachers of the people — the shepherds of the flock — and yet they had no sympathy with the sheep. They thought they saw better than others, but they were spiritually blind — they wilfully shut their eyes to the truth (v. 41), and were therefore unable to lead others. Their treatment of this poor, blind beggar, who, like a stricken sheep, appealed to their sympathy, was an instance of their blindness. They cast him out because he spoke the truth. And who found him after his expulsion from the synagogue? Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, who “came to seek and to save the lost.” Was he not more like a shepherd? But such an extraordinary case as this must be further investigated, so the man had to be summoned before one of the courts then sitting. And what do the Pharisees and rulers observe most in the man’s account of this miraculous gift of sight? Is it the wondrous power of the Healer? Ah, no. Just as it was when the impotent man received strength to walk (ch. 5) so now they hated Jesus and sought occasion to attack him about his observance of the sabbath. The making of clay would be regarded by the Jews as a “servile work,” and therefore, unlawful on such a day. How would Jesus justify such sabbath work? “The Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath,” he said (Mat. 12:12).

But the judges are not all agreed, as is apparent from John 19:16. Perhaps Nicodemus or Joseph of Arimathea were there. And listen to the man fearlessly speaking out the whole truth (v. 17). He declared that Jesus was evidently a

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prophet (v. 31), one "whom God heareth," therefore he cannot be the sinner they take him to be. Although the man knew little about Jesus, he had really no idea who he was, yet he determined to be a disciple, even if no one else would (v. 27). One thing he knew that, whereas he was blind, now he could see, and he was ready to suffer reproach and excommunication on account of his benefactor. But Jesus finds his expelled servant, and although he had not seen Jesus before, yet that Voice he knew so well and recognised him as the "One sent from God" — the "Son of God" — in spite of his plain, peasant garb. Now he not only hears the Shepherd's voice, but sees with his own eyes the great "Prophet that was to come into the world." He confesses Christ before others and seeks to lead them to him.

The office of shepherd was highly esteemed among the Jews. It had been familiar to them from their earliest years. The greatest men of Israel — Abraham, Jacob, Moses and David, had been shepherds and to be the shepherds or teachers of Israel was an honour which the Pharisees were anxious to retain. But there were good and bad shepherds, and in the parable of the "good shepherd" our Lord proceeds to explain to the Pharisees the difference between them. This occurred near to the actual presence of a sheepfold with the shepherds and their flocks. Bethesda was near to the "sheep gate," which was probably a covered portion of the "pool of Siloam." It is to some part of such a scene as this, passing before our Lord's eye as he taught, that we have to trace the words that follow. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep" (John 10:1-2). This passage is obviously a continuation of the discourse to the Pharisees begun in ch. 9:39-41. With reference to the case of the blind man, Jesus remarks that one effect of his presence in the world is that, while the ignorant are enlightened, the self-sufficient are hardened (v. 39).

The Pharisees, feeling that Jesus alludes to them, retort indignantly, "Are we, the leaders and teachers of Israel, blind also?" Jesus replies that if they were totally blind they would not be guilty, but as they profess to see and have, in fact, some knowledge, they are guilty. Then he goes on to show them what they, the professed teachers, really are. Not "shepherds" of the people because "they enter not by the door into the sheepfold," but "thieves and robbers." As they failed to grasp the full meaning (v. 6) and being obviously puzzled by "the door" Jesus proceeds to explain that he is himself "the door" (v. 7) — the door both of the shepherds and the sheep (v. 9) — and all who do not acknowledge him are not true shepherds.

Perhaps when our Lord spoke these words he was looking upon the enclosed places by the hillside, where the sheep were kept during the night. The sheep-

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fold was enclosed by a wall or fence, into which at evening the shepherd led his flock through the proper entrance — “the door.”

The low, flat buildings out on the sheltered side of the valley are sheep-folds. They are called *marah*, and when the nights are cold the flocks are shut up in them, but in ordinary weather they are merely kept within the yard. This is defended by a wide stone wall, crowned all around with sharp thorns, which the prowling wolf will rarely attempt to scale. The leopard and panther of this country, when pressed with hunger, will overleap this thorny hedge, and with one tremendous bound, land among the frightened flock. “This is the time to try the nerve and heart of the faithful shepherd,” says Thomson, in his *Land and the Book*.

Both the sheep and the shepherd enter the same way — through the door. To understand the true significance of Christ’s words “I am the door,” we must remember that eastern sheepfolds have nothing at the entrance. It is just an open space or doorway by which the sheep enter. A friend, travelling through Palestine, was very much surprised and interested on visiting some of these sheep-folds, and remarked about these open entrances, and so was taken one evening to see the sheep folded. The shepherd led the sheep in, going before them, and when all were safely sheltered within, the shepherd calmly lay himself down in front of the entrance, his rod and his staff beside him, and was at one and the same time both “the shepherd” and “the door” into the fold. No one could enter in, or come out, without the knowledge of the shepherd. Through this door the sheep must go for safety, and come out through it for pasture. The shepherd gets at them through it and leads them in and out. So following this beautiful figure, it is only through Christ that we may enter into the heavenly fold, and all the blessings of grace and strength that come to us are through him alone.

Would the Pharisees ask Jesus to teach the people? Would they bring them to him? They went another way, and so were not shepherds, but robbers. Another mark of the true shepherd is that the sheep hear and know his voice. In the morning the shepherd would knock at the door of the sheepfold and “to him the porter openeth.” The doorkeeper is what is here meant. There is no further interpretation of what, in the spiritual fold, corresponds to the office of the porter, whereas “the door” and “the shepherd” are successively made the texts of fuller expositions of Christ’s own work. We are not, therefore, to regard “the porter” as an essential part of this allegory, for the word rendered “parable” is the wider word (*paroimia*), which includes every kind of figurative and proverbial teaching. John nowhere uses the word “parable.” The discourse of this chapter, which is a story in which the outer facts are kept wholly distinct from the idea, the truths that are to be taught whereas here the form and the idea

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interpenetrate each other at every point. Strictly speaking, neither the "Good Shepherd" nor the "True Vine" is a parable. Both are allegorical interpretations of actual events in the material world, that are thus made the vehicle of spiritual truths.

Through the narrow doorway the sheep pass one by one, and the shepherd counts them and notices if any are wounded or lame. Then he himself lies down to sleep across the doorway as we have observed, so that none can enter the fold unknown to him. Literally then our Shepherd says "I am the door," and nothing happens to his sheep but he knows all about it and permits for our good.

Sometimes, possibly where there is more than one fold a porter is stationed at the door, and to his own master alone will he give admittance, for he alone has the right to enter. A thief must needs "climb up some other way." Each shepherd calls his own sheep — those under his special care, and knowing his voice they follow him to pasture. "I never ride over these hills, clothed with flocks," says our visitor to the Holy Land, "without meditating upon this delightful theme." Our Saviour says that "the good Shepherd," when "he putteth forth his own sheep," goeth before them and they follow. This is true to the letter, for they are so tame, and so trained, that they follow their keeper with the utmost docility. He leads them forth from the fold or from their houses in the villages just where he pleases. As there are many flocks in a place such as this, each one takes a different path, and it is his business to find pasture for them. The shepherd also must have forethought to see that the wants of his sheep can be supplied during the dry season. Hence, our Shepherd supplies both the physical and the spiritual needs of his people. He fed five thousand in the wilderness upon two occasions, and to those who gathered round him said, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." The shepherd must provide both food and water for his flock, leading them when possible to green pastures, and to clear brooks of water. Each shepherd has a peculiar call which his flock readily recognises. Several shepherds may water their sheep by the same well, but there is no difficulty about each taking away his full number — no more and no less. "A stranger they will not follow, for they know not the voice of a stranger." They know and trust the voice of their own shepherd, for they receive nothing but kindness from him, and no matter where he leads they will follow. It is necessary they should be taught to follow and not stray away into the unfenced fields of corn that lie so temptingly on either side, for any one that thus wanders is sure to get into trouble. Do we in like manner follow our Shepherd?

It is related that a traveller asserted to a Syrian shepherd his belief that the sheep knew the dress and not the voice of their master, and, in order to test the point, exchanged dresses with the shepherd, mingled with the flock, and called them to follow him, but without success. The sheep never moved till the

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shepherd called, when they ran to him at once, notwithstanding his disguise.

There were three flocks at the well when Jacob came to Haran (Gen. 29), but others were to come in the ordinary course before they watered them. The following will serve to prove that this is no isolated incident, and is both interesting and instructive:—

“Three shepherds with different flocks assembled at the same spot, and after taking a midday meal together, one stood up, and giving his usual call his flock immediately rose and followed him. The second did likewise, leaving the remaining shepherd with the visitor. They conversed for some time through an interpreter, when the visitor enquired what word he used to call his sheep. He tried to learn that word and catch the tone of his voice, and, thinking he had accomplished this enquired the direction in which the pasture lay. Making himself as much like the shepherd as possible by a change of garments and the possession of the shepherd’s staff in return for his umbrella, he proceeded in the direction indicated, calling the flock to the best of his ability. All his efforts, however, were in vain. He could not induce a single sheep to follow him. When he had done his utmost and failed, the shepherd rose in the visitor’s attire, and putting up the umbrella over his head, walked off in another direction, calling his sheep in the usual manner, and without exception they all rose and followed.”

Some sheep always keep near the shepherd, and are his special favourites. So Christ had a little chosen band whose joy it was to be near him (Mark 3:13-14). Each of the sheep has a name, to which it answers joyfully, and the kind shepherd is ever distributing to such choice portions which he gathers for that purpose. It is like John who leaned on Jesus’ breast and enjoyed a closer fellowship and deeper knowledge than the others. What a beautiful illustration of the close relationship existing between the shepherd and his sheep — the union between Christ and his people! The stranger may try to imitate the sound of the true Shepherd’s voice, but the true sheep will not follow or listen to him. They are alarmed at the stranger’s voice and will run away at his approach.

Another mark of the true shepherd is that he leads and goes before the sheep. The shepherd sees all the sheep out of the fold, and then places himself at the head of the flock and leads them out to green pastures. He defends the sheep against the attacks of wild beasts and is ready to give his own life rather than they should be hurt (v. 2).

A shepherd must be brave, for there are other foes to conquer besides hunger and thirst. Wild beasts lurk around in search of prey. The shepherds are well skilled in the use of slings and stones such as David used, and very true is their aim. When the enemy comes near he is met with blows from the heavy club-like rod the shepherd carries for the purpose. When a tender lamb becomes wearied

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with the journey he does not leave it to an unknown fate, but takes it up in his arms and carries it (Isa. 40:11).

Think a little of this Eastern shepherd. See him walking along the mountainside, all the sheep following him. Some sheep lag behind, and the shepherd looks back and sees which they are, for he knows them all. He calls to them — to each by its name. They hear the call, know the voice, and follow. But presently they come to a difficult path between high rocks, through thorny bushes, so the shepherd makes a way with his crook for the sheep to go through. He finds the best place for them to feed. It is the “green pastures” and the “still waters” where he leads (Psa. 23; Gen. 29:7; Eze. 34:13-14). By and by he sees one missing. Where can it be? He must go and find it. So he toils over the mountainside, searching everywhere until he finds the poor starving, frightened sheep (Eze. 34:12). How gently he walks, so as not to tire the weak ones, and:

*Then all the night grows light and soft and sweet,
The stars shine overhead;
While homeward by the Shepherd's tender hand
The wandering sheep is led.*

The hireling does not care for or defend the sheep if his own comfort is threatened. He serves only for gain. In times of danger, when the wolf — the great foe of the flock, comes prowling about, the false shepherd leaves the sheep to their fate. Why should he risk his life for the flock? So the wolf catches and kills all he can, and worries and scatters the rest.

Up to this point, Jesus has not spoken of himself as the shepherd and although the description in vv. 2-4 is, of course, true emphatically of himself, it is not its direct application. The shepherd there is the good and faithful scribe or teacher, but in v. 10, the Lord expands the figure and describes himself as the “good shepherd.” He had been describing his own character. He was the Good Shepherd of whom the prophets had foretold, and of whom David had sung in his beautiful psalms. He was not merely a good shepherd like others, but he was “the Good Shepherd” — the owner of both shepherd and sheep. Not only the Shepherd of the Jews — of his own nation, but also of those “other sheep” that were not of his fold. Nothing less than the whole world will satisfy Christ the Good Shepherd. He commanded his disciples his chosen shepherds, to go into all the world and make disciples of all nations, for “there shall be one fold and one Shepherd.”

In v. 16 the two words rendered “fold” are not the same; the latter should be “flock.” The Gentiles who were to be brought in should not come into the Jewish “fold” or external organisation, though they should be part of God’s one universal “flock” — His spiritual Israel. In this age there are many folds, but only “one flock.” There is yet to be a gathering into one of all the scattered

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children of God, even though separately clustered now on far distant pasture grounds and in many folds. The one flock depends on the one Shepherd-Lord. The commission was left to be fulfilled: "Go ye into all the world." The words to the woman "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," and the command, "Go only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" does not limit the saving work of Christ, but only shows the preparatory work in order to save. Christ was not to go from the land to land, laying down his life in every place where a fold might be, but only in Jerusalem where God's fold and flock had always been. The "other sheep" must be gathered in by His under-shepherds, influenced and sustained by the power and grace of His Spirit-Word. Here all is to be finished and fulfilled from birth to death.

But what is fulfilled here will be proclaimed everywhere. Just as it is with the day, a fine shadow of light first flickers in the east and the day is born and grows there, but soon it is not only there but everywhere. The west was black with night, clouds and darkness seemed closed upon the dawn, even on the horizon when the day had unmistakably appeared. The light spread, we could not tell how, gently, noiselessly, without any sudden burst. Every moment, as we gazed over the great expanse of heaven, the light seemed to grow from all quarters equally, although we knew it grew only from the east. At length the earth and heaven were full of light, and all eyes could see the sun. Thus it was with Christ. One starry night he appeared in Bethlehem; the light soon spread over Nazareth, Capernaum, Jerusalem, Asia, and Europe, and all lands began to see "the light" that is to "lighten the Gentiles" as well as the Jews.

As the "Good Shepherd" Christ is "the Door" through which his people enter into his sheep-fold. Just as the door is the entrance to a house, so Christ is the way by which his people enter the Household of God, and of faith, and finally will "enter through the gates into the city, to go no more out" (Rev. 22). All who came before him were "thieves and robbers," namely all who professed themselves to be the means by which men enter the fold. The thought that proceeds and follows is that Jesus is "the door." "All that ever came before me" is in immediate contrast to this thought. The Old Testament teachers cannot be meant because they witnessed to the true door. But there had been growing up since the return from the captivity, and the close of the Old Testament, a priestly caste in the place of the prophetic schools, and these men had been in practice, if not in word, claiming for themselves the position of door to the kingdom of God.

The expression "all" and "me" may be perplexing at first sight, but "me" must mean "me the door," as this figure appears in vv. 7, 8, 9. What is the meaning of "all that came before the door?" "Before" may indicate not only priority in time but priority in position. Going in at the door was submitting to

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the rule of entrance made by the owner, and so acknowledging his prior authority. This the thief did not do, but chose his own way before the owner's way — namely, preferred it, acting as if his right of entrance was prior to the owner's, which is precisely with what Christ charges on the Pharisees. The way of salvation is through Jesus Christ and there is no other way by which men can be saved (Acts 4:12). The beautiful "veil of blue, purple and scarlet, and of fine twined linen," with its cunning work of cherubim, might indeed tell of the glories concealed behind it, as it concealed from view the most holy place; but the ark, with the mercy seat, the golden pot of manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant, were all hidden from view. The immediate presence of Him, who dwelt between the cherubim on the mercy seat, was unapproachable by the priests. That was accessible to the High Priest alone, and to him only but once a year, and then not without blood which he offered for himself and the errors of the people. But now all is laid open by the blood of Jesus, indicated in a most significant manner by the veil of the temple being rent in twain at the very moment Jesus exclaimed, "it is finished," in consequence of which he is "the way," "the living way" (Heb. 10).

"If there be a veil at the present time," says one writer, "he is that veil, not to conceal anything of God, but to bring out to view all that may be seen of Him." We must not forget to mark well the Way of Access. At Sinai all was distance. Distance ever characterised worship under the Law. To see God under that economy and live, was impossible. But now that Jesus is the "living way" and to see him is to see God and live. He is not the barrier between us and God, but the way to God, all distance and boundary lines having been done away in him. Did the Israelites gaze on the outside of the beautiful curtain and long to pass it, but for death that threatened? Let him look to Jesus who says "I am the door: by me if any man enter in he shall be saved."

Yes, indeed, the death and resurrection of Jesus have become to us the living way. If after having passed within the curtains of the holy place, the veil seems to forbid us further entrance, we must continue looking unto Jesus and we shall then discover that the veil is his flesh. If we perceive further that the veil is rent, let us continue, again looking to Jesus and him crucified, and hear the God of righteousness, the just, the holy God, inviting us to enter. What blessed words the following are, and the worshippers once for all purged should never lose sight of them: "By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh."

As the good shepherd Christ calls his flock by name. This shows how familiar Christ is with every lamb of his flock. He knows their wants and weaknesses. He knows all his flock. They are to come from east and west, north and south in the day when the scattered flock are gathered (Eze. 34). None will be forgotten or overlooked by him. Nathaniel, Zacchaeus, Martha, Mary, Saul,

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and Cornelius, besides many more, were all called by name. How sweet, refreshing and comforting must the sound of that familiar voice have fallen on Mary's ears in the stillness of the garden glade that first resurrection morning! Does not this prove Christ's love for his own? We know how much interest and pleasure we take in those we call by name, and how readily our voice is recognised by those thus named. Oh may this sweet companionship — this blessed oneness be ever our happy experience, throughout life's journey — and on the resurrection morning may our trembling hearts be reassured by his gracious voice, bidding us welcome into his glorious presence.

Another beautiful thought is that the true sheep know the Shepherd. Like Paul they can with confidence say, "I know whom I have believed." They listen to his voice. This requires stillness, nearness and intimacy. They obey it also, for the reality of our love to Christ is proved by our obedience to his commands. "If ye love me keep my commandments."

Yet another beautiful thought is that Christ goes before his people and leads them into pleasant places. He leads and they follow. The path they have to traverse is not a lonely path. Jesus is never far ahead. He goes before to show them the path to tread and how to walk in it. This should encourage us, for have we not often observed in walking along a road, we can walk better and continue longer if we follow someone that is a little ahead of us. Wherever Christ's people have to go, he has gone before. Through weariness, hunger, thirst, and sorrow, yea, even through the dark "valley of the shadow of death."

They have only to follow in his steps. He will protect his sheep from all evil (Psa. 121:7-8; 1Pet. 2:21). We are safe in his keeping (vv. 28-29; Rom. 8:35-39). Left alone we should be sure to wander, but he came not only to seek and to save, but to guide and protect. Yet sometimes his own sheep may wander, like the Psalmist who pleaded, "I have gone astray like a sheep that is lost; seek Thy servant, for I do not forget Thy Word." As the "Good Shepherd," Christ seeks and finds the sinner and when found, he says "the Father seeketh such to worship Him in spirit and in truth," and to glorify His name by their loving obedience. This term "seeketh" is not in the sense of "wisheth" or "desireth," but of going after to search and find. It is the Shepherd seeking his flock that are scattered "in the cloudy and dark day." "Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep and find them out." The woman of Samaria was indeed one of that scattered flock, the worse truant of all the fold. Let us enter more fully into the spirit of these inspiring lines:—

*Jesus, thy wandering sheep behold!
See, Lord, with tend' rest pity see
The sheep that cannot find the fold,
Till sought and gathered in by thee.*

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Then the hour of the gospel of grace had dawned and the shadows were beginning to flee away. The substance had come — the Great Shepherd was going forth, not as of old, on the mountains of Judea, alone, but out amid earth's pathless wastes, from distant east and west, where the lost and wandering are to be found. Wherever there was an ear to hear, the voice of God spoke by what Jesus was as a man, to the heart and conscience of his sheep. He came in by the door, and the porter opened and the sheep heard his voice. The humanity of Jesus, expressed in all his ways, penetrated to the innermost being. "He knew what was in man" — the sin, the sorrow and the deep yearning of every heart. How meek was he when meekness became him, and yet fearless as a lion when roused to indignation at the coldness of the Pharisees, and the tears of the mothers of Israel did not move him to weep over the sorrow about to overwhelm him.

Christ is unlike all other shepherds in that he laid down his life for the sheep. A mere hireling would not do this. Some have risked their lives, as did David when faced with the lion and the bear, and sometimes a shepherd has even lost his life for the sheep. But if the robber or wild beast kills the shepherd, will the sheep ever have him again? The sheep may be stolen or killed, too. But with the Master and his sheep, it is different. He laid down his life that he "might take it again." Jesus was killed by those very thieves and robbers with whom he had been conversing — the priests and rulers; but they did not succeed, for he rose triumphant from the grave, he took his life again.

Is not such a shepherd worthy of our love? And if we love him in very deed and truth, that love will constrain us to serve him, to keep his commands and to care for those "other sheep" yet scattered throughout the world, and help seek them out and bring them to the fold — for thus acting we shall, as shepherds, be imitating the example of the Good Shepherd, our Lord.

We have been brought into the fold for this reason. Are we still listening to the Good Shepherd's voice? The shepherd may call, but the sheep must follow, if they would continue in safety. Let us beware of our great foe and determine to watch against false shepherds, for they are not less numerous now than they were in the days of Christ and his apostles. They come in the same way, and do the same kind of mischief (Mat. 7:15), but if we keep near to Christ a bond of sympathy unites us to him, for he says, "I know my sheep and am known of mine." Christ does not call himself the shepherd of the world, but the "shepherd of the sheep." Those who have been called out of the world.

Many say they belong to the fold of Jesus and call themselves christians, but they do not follow Christ, because they are not his sheep. If they were they would follow his teaching, and "a stranger they will not follow." There are still plenty of strangers and robbers in the world, and many wolves in sheep's

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clothing that look very much like sheep, but they only lead astray. The wolf came in the person of Judas, but Jesus did not flee away, but met him and said "Whom seekest thou?... If ye seek me, then let these go their way," thus proving his love for his own, having loved them to the end. All are precious to Christ, for he has bought us with a high price. They are his in two ways. First, his Father gave them to him, and second, he purchased them with his own life-blood. If he were to lose one of his own, he would not be the Good Shepherd. The wolf may scatter the sheep, may frighten and distress them, but the Great Shepherd is "able to save to the utmost all who come unto God through him" (Heb. 7:25).

The wolves are not always rending the sheep yet they are always wolves. Their teeth are sharp and their hearts deceitful and bloodthirsty, although their mouths are shut and the sheep lying near them. The world of unbelief and ungodliness is the same now as when it crucified Christ and scattered his disciples (Mat. 26). "The carnal mind is enmity against God." Let us recollect that Christ is never loved till he is really known, and that "belonging to Christ" is not always the root of kindness but hatred (Jn. 15:19). The fear of the world bringeth a snare and is more to be guarded against, than open hatred and hostility. We must not be afraid to look and speak as if we belonged to Christ, because the world is around us; or assume the air and walk of the world for disguise and safety. The sheep that Christ sends forth will draw others like them to the fold. Their way is not only prepared for themselves, but prepared for others. They are to seek and help those whom he finds and marks privately as his own. The power is not ours, but is given to the needful at the right moment. We must not be surprised some time at a surly, gruff reception, and we may see the track of the wolf and hear its growl any time, but the work is worth the risk. The shepherd sends the sheep, but it is "before his face." We must not attempt to be as wolves, but be gentle and patient with all.

"Be wise as serpents, harmless as doves," he declared. The serpent is naturally the type of wisdom, of art, and of cunning; the dove, the type of harmlessness, love and simplicity. One has said, "Our Lord makes us 'new creatures' neither serpents nor doves. Not crawling, crafty, venomous serpents, but simple, humble, wise-hearted servants of God."

What a noble spirit our Master would have us develop! A combination of the sheep, the serpent, and the dove. Patience, faith, wisdom, purity and singleness of purpose. Let us be wise and keep a sharp eye on temptation; be wise and discreet, having no serpent-hold or fangs, but only a sincere purpose in doing good. Be simple as the dove, that has no sweeter place than her nest in the cleft of the rocks, when her work permits of repose. Be as sheep and doves, easily startled, and as serpents, wise for every turn, and the Lord will bless all earnest endeavours in his service.

Chapter Twenty Three

IN THE WOODS

*On the Tree of Life Eternal,
Oh let all our hopes be laid;
This alone, forever vernal,
Bears a leaf that will not fade.*

*Hail, ye old trees, so great and good, where birds rejoice;
And for their quiet nests and food, pay with grateful voice.*

THE sun has now reached its meridian splendour, so we seek the secluded shelter of the heaped and fragrant wood. Many centuries ago a faint and hungry people came to a wood where the wild honey dropped from the bursting combs in the hollow trees, upon the ground, but one only, Jonathan, the beloved and faithful friend of David, partook of a little, and was enlightened, or refreshed. It was this prince who later went to David in the wood and strengthened his hand in God (1Sam. 23:16).

As we have recourse to the Word of Life that is sweeter far than honey, may we freely partake thereof, and enjoy its divine refreshment to the full, as we recline beneath these monuments of our Father's wisdom and goodness, or wander among the bracken and greensward under their cooling shadow. For it is only those who feed upon the Word and are strong in faith themselves that can strengthen and encourage their companions in like tribulation.

The bluebells are at their best right now, and appear as usual a great attraction to the bees. The fresh green of the young foliage is most satisfying to behold. Truly one has said "the young leaves are the fabric of spring, and everything else the elaborate embroidery." The beech, maple, lime, willow and larch have put forth their most vivid and tender green, and the elm, slower to respond to nature's voice, is now in full leaf. The oaks, too, are clad in beautiful foliage, and the hornbeam which naturally pollinates in the woodlands, has here an almost superfluous daintiness and grace, its drooping brown tassels and leaves appearing at the same time.

Amid all this verdure, the dark evergreens and conifers, and the glorious old ibex are ungratefully forgotten, but the pines claim our attention, for these warmer days have drawn out from them the sweet resinous perfume of the mountain forests. Nothing invites us more to reflect on the grandeur and beauty of nature than a solitary wood, and the delightful shade and still silence we enjoy. To forest trees we are indebted for many useful things, such as houses, ships, furniture and fuel. The wood is polished, shaped, turned, carved and made into forms elegant and useful by man's industry. Beautiful woods and forests are

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more or less abundant all over the earth. In some countries they extend far. Although so much timber is used, this rich gift of God has not been exhausted, for often a forest is seen where formerly there was only a low copse, or a few scattered trees. We might have preferred orchard and fertile fields, but how superior is the wisdom of God to ours in providing this plentiful supply of wood, for where there is most occasion for shipping the largest forests are found. Most other things are obtained by labour, but the planting and keeping of the woods and forests are not altogether left to man. Here the trees grow and multiply independently of our care. It is God who waters them with dew and rain sufficiently to renew their verdure year by year. The earth only could not bear them; it would soon become exhausted, for of itself it is a heavy, dry mass that draws from other sources the juices and nutriment with which trees are supplied. The air, without our aid, furnishes abundance of salt, oil, fire and every other substance that trees require.

Longfellow has truly said: —

*“Pleasant it was, when woods were green,
And winds were soft and low,
To lie amid some sylvan scene,
Where the long drooping boughs between,
Shadows dark and sunlight sheen,
Alternate come and go.”*

No doubt all lovers of Nature have a more or less passionate fondness for the noble trees. Some travel many miles to visit some gigantic specimen, such as the giant elm of New England which appears like a great green cloud swelling on the horizon, “so vast, so symmetrical, and of such Olympian majesty and Imperial supremacy, among the lesser forest growths as to make the heart almost stop short,” says a traveller.

There is something awe-inspiring about such trees, and perhaps no travel pictures produce such deep impressions as those that give us glimpses of the towering eucalyptus in Australia, the enormous baobab in Senegal, or the mammoth pine of California, whose hoary age is reckoned not by hundreds but by thousands of years. Referring to life during the millennium no more significant and beautiful figure could be found than the duration of a tree, to prove its longevity, “for as the days of a tree are the days of My people” testifies the Spirit in the prophet (Isa. 65:22). Even we in this far off land have explored with awe and delight “the savour and shade of the pine forests, where the wet hill-winds weep,” and have we not felt when roaming beneath the verdant arches, dim and dense, that we have unconsciously reached “the very heart of things” and are not after all so much surprised that in the primitive days men gathered to worship in these glimmering aisles, and built their altars, and listened for their oracles under some immemorial tree. If we went into a great

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forest of full grown trees, when the leaves have all dropped off in winter, we should be able to see the exquisite interlacing of the branches, and stretching forward we should see the long aisles, the nave and the transept, and we should feel the effect of the beautiful perspective, heightened by the deep and sombre gloom that settles over all. This is the original type of a medieval cathedral; only man's copy falls far short of God's grand original.

The Druids were called from a word meaning "Oaks," and the Greeks perhaps from an earlier word, because the oaks were the first temples, and very magnificent ones. From Gen. 21:33, these grove sanctuaries appear to have been desecrated and God commanded them all to be pulled down (Exod. 34:3; Judges 3:7; Isa. 27:9).

The Jews worshipped idols beneath the oaks, which was a shame to those who knew better, and had learned to worship the only true God in His own appointed way (2Kings 16:4; 17:10; Eze. 6:13). We might compare the words of the prophet Isaiah (ch. 1:30) with those of Jesus concerning the withered fig tree. Although there was a fair show, it was "nothing but leaves," for "they that worship the Father must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

But not only did men worship idols under the trees, they also cut down trees to form their idols. A good portion of Isa. 44 is taken up in showing the folly of idol worship. It is as if God said, now I will give you a picture of an idol. Here is its genealogy — here is its antecedent! And if the maker of it be a man, how can the produce of a blacksmith's hammer and a carpenter's rule, be a god? In order to get material for his god, "he heweth down cedars, and taketh the cypress, and the oak," and then? The remainder, the chips of the wood, the portion of the trunk of the tree that he does not want for his god, he makes a good fire; he roasts meat with it; he warms his hands by it; and on a cold wintry night exclaims: "Aha, I am warm." Truly all such have no understanding.

The oak is said to live a thousand years, and the cypress, or the original gopher, a tall evergreen, of which Noah's ark was made, to a great age. The timber of this tree has been known to suffer no decay by the lapse of eleven hundred years. It was used and cultivated for idol timber, and received peculiar attention in the East in many forms of superstition, as the oak did in the days of the ancient Druids. The word translated "plains" in some passages really means "places" noted for clusters, or groves of terebinth, tiel, or oak, and isolated trees may even now be seen covered with rags, in southern and eastern Israel — the votive offerings of superstition or affection.

Israel, enriched, adorned and blessed, forsook their God and His worship for idols of wood and stone; and they have all fallen like seared and withered leaves when their greenness is gone. They are stripped of their ancient splendour; they are left "as an oak, whose leaf fadeth," but its inherent sources are not dried up, the natural richness of soil is unblighted, the substance is "strong as a tiel tree,"

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or the solid oak that retains its substance when it has cast off its leaves. And as the leafless oak wails throughout the winter for the genial warmth of returning spring, to be clothed with foliage renewed, so this ancient people, and their glorious land is yet full of latent vigour, or of vegetable power, strong as ever, waiting to shoot forth even better than in the beginning, whenever the sun of heaven shall shine upon them and it again, and the "Holy Seed" is prepared for being finally "the substance thereof" (Isa. 6:13). Then will come into operation that religion which is all embracing and God will be worshiped "in spirit and in truth," in the temple that has for its floor all space, and for its roof the whole canopy of heaven: wherever the sun shines, the wind blows, or the rivers roll, and the waves of the ocean roar. And that will bring down answers to prayer in blessings in Christ's all-prevailing name.

Yahweh has not cast off His people (Psa. 94:14). He has only broken off a dry branch from the Hebrew cedar tree. The tree remains, though in a sapless condition. But nothing is too hard for the Lord, who has declared through the prophet Ezekiel, "I will take of highest branch of the high cedar, and will set it... in the mountain of the height of Israel will I plant it: and it shall bring forth boughs and bear fruit, and be a goodly cedar... And all the trees of the field shall know that I, Yahweh have brought down the high tree (as it was under Solomon and his successors) have exalted the low tree (above the Babylonish dissolution), have dried up the green tree (by the Roman power) and have made the dry tree to flourish (when Christ returns in power). I, Yahweh have spoken and done it" (ch. 17:22). It is possible to look upon the hills, the trees and the meadows without realising how lovely they are, and how wonderful. We are too familiar with these marvellous things to admire them sufficiently, although we must guard against the extreme of idolatry. The works of God above, below, within and around us, are "pages of a book to show how God Himself is found." It is well to consider what we should think of them if we had been born blind, and someone took us by the hand and led us far out among the peaceful woodlands, and our eyes were suddenly opened to behold all these fair things. Oh, the blessedness of open eyes to look upon the beauties of Nature! But sweeter far and better still, eyes unsealed to the glories of the divine revelation, in which so many of Nature's wonders are used to make it plain to our understandings.

In the words of the following hymn let us seek for the blessing of spiritually enlightened eyes:

*"Thou who has given me eyes to see,
And love these things so fair,
Give me a heart to find out Thee,
And see Thee everywhere."*

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One writer has called this beautiful earth "God's Album." Every page represents some delightful and instructive picture. The most marvellous thing about these nature-pictures is that they grow and change — they are living, moving pictures, not cold, inanimate prints, or even the still, silent, motionless productions of the master minds of art. For instance: we behold the trees in early spring, in all their freshness and verdure, gradually deepening in hue and shade till they reach perfection and fulness of growth in the summer; the golden-tinted mellowness of autumn's solemn grandeur, and later, robbed and stripped of this vernal glory to be yet changed again, and so marvellously robed in crystal hoary whiteness by the wintry frost and snow.

Truly the grand old trees witness to the wisdom, power and love of God, for the earth replenished with all things useful and serviceable for man, is made yet more beautiful by these gifts of the trees, the birds and the flowers.

Consider a few of these miracles of divine power. God exercises His power in wonderful and diverse ways. We think of an acorn, perchance planted by a squirrel, or pressed into the ground under the hoof of some animal, in due time springing up into an oak tree: and because this is done so constantly we forget the miracle that has been performed, and pass it by without even a glance at it. We do not recognise God's power in producing such a noble tree out of such a small substance. It is said that hidden in the acorn is the full perfect oak in miniature, which can be traced by the aid of the microscope, even to the branches of the future oak. So in the rudiments of the world are traceable the things of the future kingdom. These elements were exhibited in the original sentence pronounced upon the serpent, the woman, and the man, and in that constitution were styled "the way of the tree of life" (Gen. 3). Out of these things were afterwards to arise the kingdom of God, so that in constituting them a foundation was laid upon which the world to come should be built — even that world of whom Abraham is to be the heir (Rom. 4:13).

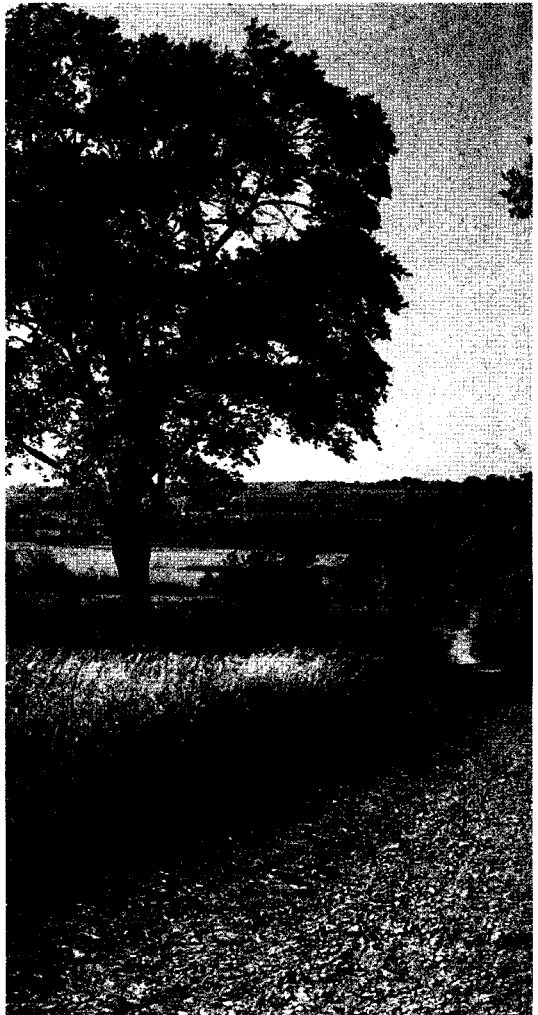
Such trees as the beech, elm, poplar, and willow are familiar to us all, just as the cedar, the palm, and the olive are to the Orientals, but in different parts of the earth there are many strange and wonderful trees with which we may not be acquainted — such as the "traveller's tree" of Madagascar, that if pierced, will supply a refreshing draught of water; the "cow tree" that produces milk; and the "candle tree" with its burning nuts, giving out light when rightly prepared. The "rubber tree" of Ceylon is another wonder, and yet another, the "lace tree" of the West Indies, with its shining silken bark, worked in most exquisite and beautiful design, that may well be termed "the work of God's own fingers" (Psa. 8:3). In Northern India there is a tree that yields a costly perfume; and the West Indian palm shoots up to a height of an hundred and fifty feet (45 metres). The Arabs pretend to have no less than 360 names or epithets for this tree, and to derive as

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many uses from its multifarious component parts. The terebinth or "turpentine tree" that abounds in Syria, Mesopotamia and Israel, besides having rich and luxuriant foliage, produces the genuine turpentine of the ancient and the rich, balsamic gum which exudes from its trunk. The balsam of Abyssinia from which the resinous substance called balm is extracted, is yet another marvel of creation. The bark is cut with an axe when the fresh juices are in most powerful circulation.

Pliny admired trees out of whose bark boats were constructed capable of holding thirty persons. What then would he have said of those trees of Congo, that may be hollowed into vessels large enough for two hundred men; and trees that can, according to travellers, carry from 40,000 to 50,000 lbs. (17.8 to 22.3 tonnes) weight. One of this kind at Malabar is said to be fifty feet (15 metres) in circumference. The cocoa tree is of this kind, and some of them have leaves large enough to cover twenty people. The tallipot tree in the island of Ceylon, in height resembling the mast of a ship, is equally famous for its leaves, which are so large that it is said one of them will shelter fifteen or twenty men from the rain.

One of the most striking features about the trees is their diversity of form, character and hue. We admire them for their beauty and enjoy them for their



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usefulness. But our chief object here is to gather up some of the many lessons they teach, and see how they are used in the scriptures to prefigure the things of the Spirit concerning the Christ. We observe order and variety in all nature's endless wonders. There is always an additional beauty in variety of form, colour and species. Though all are derived from the same source, yet all differ. Some trees are tall, graceful and most becoming, while others are stunted and dwarfed. Some are beautiful evergreens, and others lose their lovely foliage earlier or later, each returning autumn. Some are given for fruit, others for their foliage and fragrance only. Some for the medicinal qualities of their leaves, while yet again others are noted for their durable wood. And so it is with the believers in Christ. There are differences of grace and bearing, of rank and position, yet all belong to God. "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit," says the apostle. "And there are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God that worketh all in all" (1Cor. 12:4-11). All are not alike in disposition and abilities. All have not the same opportunities of development. It is God's arrangement of things. What is lacking in one is made up by another. Just as each tree is good and has its proper use, so we all have our place and calling. The cedar is cultivated for its fragrant and durable wood; the plum and apple for their fruit. We should not think of taking the wood of the apple or plum tree to make anything of it, neither do we expect the fir tree to yield fruit. So we read in 1Cor. 7:20-22, "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called... Art thou called being a servant? Care not for it." Seek not to be somebody else, but be faithful in that calling. The mountain ash and the hawthorn are both fragrant, flowering trees, and their bright clusters of berries nourish the feathered tribes of the air in winter — but neither could fill the place of the exalted palm or the mighty cedar. Although we are not all constituted alike, yet each may be of service in the Household of Faith if we only faithfully abide in our calling.

One important lesson we may learn from the study of the trees is that they are all so natural! There is no exhibition of pride in their appearance. The elm does not envy the oak nor the oak disdain the laurel bush. Are we not sometimes saddened to see the haughty look and mark the arrogant word amongst each other, where we should find only gentleness and love? "We have not so learned Christ" (Eph. 4:20), and it is written, "Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves" (Phil. 2:3).

Where the tree springs up, there it remains in its own soil and surroundings, developing life and strength and nourishment from what it has within its reach. The tree never *tries* to grow, and yet what is there in all the world more beautiful and perfect than a full-grown tree? How many of God's nobler "trees" are

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constantly trying to make themselves grow! Their spiritual existence is one continuous struggle. They are always anxious and fearful because they feel no better and perceive no lasting improvement in themselves, forgetting the glorious testimony of the apostle, "It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). And, "He that hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Christ" (Phil. 1:6). Let us make full use of all our resources, the means of grace within our reach, and leave the growing in our Father's hands.

Another beautiful thought is that the trees retain their individuality. They never seek to be like another. Have you noticed what a lot of advice is given in the epistles to servants and masters? Servants must not despise their masters, nor masters impose upon their servants. How striking are the individual characteristics in each of God's illustrious servants of old! What a difference there is in the character and position of David, Samuel, Isaiah, and Amos — of Peter, James and John — of Hannah, Deborah, Esther and Mary the sister of Lazarus! And yet how true each one is. May we always be natural — just our own plain, humble personalities, and not care what others may think of us, for each one has a work to accomplish that no other can do, and if we foolishly waste time in assuming what God has never intended us to be, we shall miss "the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus," and be filled at length with shame and remorse.

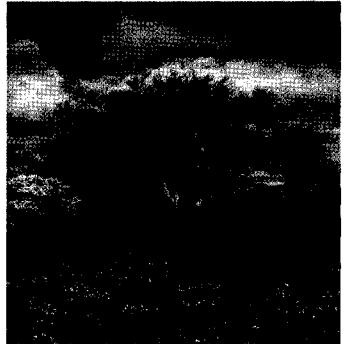
How naturally the willow droops its graceful branches, while the palm, elm and poplar aspire towards the skies! The willow could not lift its boughs upward, neither will the elm bow down its head. In the Scriptures there is only one Miriam to lead the women of Israel in songs of triumph — one Jael to "put her hand to the nail and her right hand to the workman's hammer" (Jud. 5:26) — one Esther to speak for her condemned people — one Mary to break the alabaster box of ointment and anoint the Saviour for his burial. Just so, there is some special work for us, however lowly, and we must not wait to find another doing precisely the same thing, or hold back because such a work as we are prompted to do has never been attempted before.

The trees may be said to represent the several stages of human life. The tender sapling speaks of childhood; the buds and blossoms, of youth in all its freshness and vigour; the flowers and summer fruits, the prime of life in manhood; the mellow full ripe fruit, the falling and decaying leaves, of old age. Every tree, however luxuriant in branches and foliage, derives its principal nutriment from the root. There appears to be a circulation of juices in it similar to that of the blood of animals. The outer parts of the root are prodigious masses of spongy fibres and globules of air, that are ever open, in order to be filled with the juices they receive from the earth. At first this juice is nothing but water,

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loaded with earthy matter, but by means of a kind of milky substance that is peculiar to each and distinguishes it from any other, the juice acquires a nutritive quality before it rises to the parts above the surface of the ground. Notwithstanding its hardness, wood is a collection of an infinite number of tiny hollow fibres. Drawn by the heat of the sun, the juice gradually rises into the branches and all the external parts, and when sufficiently diffused, what remains ascends by certain vessels lying between the outer and inner bark, in the same way as the blood returns through the veins to the heart. This results in new growth every year, causing the tree to become thicker. The root increases in proportion as the stem grows higher, and the outer bark forms a covering and protection for the more tender parts from accident, and from the temperature of the air. Here we observe our Creator's excellent system of solids and fluids, in order to give life and growth to the trees that adorn the earth. The contemplation of such wisdom is a noble study which should lead us to glorify Him day by day.

There are many useful lessons to be learned from the growth of the trees. The sap is continually rising from the roots, and the trees derive nourishment therefrom, and grow from this hidden centre. It runs up through the trunk to the boughs, and from thence to the branches, and throws out in all directions new stems and foliage, and although the sap descends in winter, it leaves a new mark of growth upon the bark that is visible to all who carefully observe it. Each year the trees put on another ring of wood which makes them stronger and more able to endure the storms of winter. As they advance, these tokens of development are clearly seen. And so it should be in the spiritual analogy. The believer draws life and strength from the great source of all spiritual life and activity. The unseen Spirit — sap — the inner motive power of the Truth, is the centre and soul of every Christ-like virtue, springing up from the very depths of the contrite heart, and permeating the whole being, becomes visible to all by the daily walk and conversation.



This indwelling Spirit-Word is the secret essence of life, producing within the believer's heart and mind a deep sense of the unspeakable love of God in Christ Jesus: an appreciation of all that is noble and right, and gives firmness of character and confidence in the divine revelation that must be as manifest as the beauty of these lovely trees above our heads. But alas, how difficult it often is to see the yearly increase of virtue and make the higher round of spiritual growth in our lives! Of the early believers,

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the apostle could say, "Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men" (2Cor. 3:2).

When a tree is felled, the skilful workman can tell by the rounds and marks in the wood, whether the tree has been in a favourable position, and what kind of a season of fruit-bearing it has yielded. How much more can He, who is the searcher of hearts, discern the reality of the life, and the progress in the development of the character of His people, as well as the inner motives and impulses that have prompted their words and actions! "If the tree fall in the south, or in the north, in the place where the tree falleth there shall it be," says Solomon in Eccl. 11:3. Thus what we are when felled by the hand of death, or when we are summoned before the great tribunal, that shall we be when we appear in the presence of Christ.

In our progress through life we need to resemble a flourishing tree. As the tree puts forth new shoots each year and extends its branches laden with verdant foliage and nutritious fruit, we must continually grow in grace and holiness, bringing forth acceptable fruit to God. May we be strengthened and established in our most holy faith, and all the storms of life will never move us, for we shall be deep rooted in humility. But may we never resemble it in this particular — that as the old tree approaches its limits of existence, it always attaches itself more strongly to the earth, while the aged believer's hope must be centred on things above.

As the climate and soil greatly influence the growth of the trees, so do the surroundings and associations of the believer in Christ. Our constant association with those of like precious faith tends to upbuild and strengthen us; the healthiest and most useful being those who make a firm stand for the Truth and can say, "I am a companion of all them that love Thy word." For, as a worm at the root of a beautiful tree, so is strife and jealousy. It eats away the very life principles, leaving its victim at length sickly and withered, and far from life, joy or peace. We must bear and forebear with one another, and not separate ourselves. We must overcome evil with good, and "not forsake the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is." Just as the wood of a tree requires a certain amount of inclement weather to harden it and to make it suitable and durable for use, so do we need a certain amount of affliction, persecution, and sorrow to make us strong to endure the buffetings of the world, and the fretting indifferences of those who are careless, or weak in the faith. "In the world ye shall have tribulation," said Jesus, "but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." And how did Christ overcome it? We do not need to seclude ourselves to enable us to live the Christ life. As the trees that are clustered together in the great forests are stronger to endure the fury of the gale than the solitary tree upon the spacious plain or barren hillside, so are we more

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able to endure hardness and to overcome temptations more successfully if we move in and out among others, seeking to do them good both by precept and example.

Hence, as we see the trees moving and bowing with the gentle breeze, so we should move and bend our wills to our gracious Father's Will and the sweet influences and guidance of His spirit-Word. Then nothing will be irksome to us, but we shall think and act in harmony with the divine will and purpose, even though tossed and bowed by the winds of adverse and trying circumstances.

Is it not a familiar fact that the trees in the great pine forests have thicker barks in the direction of the prevailing storm: just as the Arctic animals have a warmer fur? How true it is that "a smooth sea never made a skilful mariner." Then let us "cast aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us." Let us free ourselves from every anxiety and earthly care that would weigh us down and prevent us from lifting up our hearts and voices to God in prayer and praise, just as the trees throw from off their drenched branches the rain in summer and shake off the snow that covers their boughs in winter.

The extent of the roots of the trees, unseen beneath the ground is far greater than the visible boughs and branches above; and this strong foundation is the secret of their firmness and strength to withstand both the wind and storm. So the inner unseen life of the believer should be much greater and deeper than the outward appearance, and the natural mind of the flesh. It is the inner life that makes us what we are outwardly. Like the wood of the evergreen box tree whose perfect proportions, beauty of foliage and utility, so well illustrates the prosperity and grace that God will yet bestow upon Zion, and whose firmness makes it especially adapted for the delicate art of inlaying musical instruments, may we "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, in all things" through the hidden grace of our hearts, having that sweetness and grace within, that produces outward melody and harmony: the outward beauty of our profession corresponding with the secret resources within. Hence we must spend more time in the secret chamber in prayer and meditation than we do in outward activities. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty" (Psa. 90:1). "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

A great deal depends upon the planting of a tree in a good place. It is said that the flourishing and fruitful condition of the vine at Hampton Court is due to the suckers of its root continually drawing moisture from the Thames. If this is so with the natural tree how much more important it is that the root suckers of our spiritual existence should go to the right Source — the pure fountain of the water of life! We must draw direct from the chief source too, for indeed this is the secret of all true spiritual health and strength.

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Neglecting this we become like trees whose roots have been gnawed through and which must finally perish. In order to strengthen and increase the fruitfulness of a tree it is not only necessary to lop off the branches but to prune the roots, and here again we have another beautiful figure in that every tree of the Lord's planting receives of this cleansing and purifying principle — the cutting away from our very life-roots all superfluous growth — the undue and over abundant labour, even in the Lord's vineyard. As in the case of Israel, the check is put upon our work, "too much, too much!" The command is given to bring no more offerings. You have laboured long putting your heart and energy into the service of your Master, now be still, and see what God can do without your aid: lie quietly in pain or weakness while another takes your place and reaps abundant fruit where you have sown the seed. Thus our inner life is dealt with by our Father in heaven and is manifested in the outer experiences.

Sanctified afflictions are the evidence of our adoption, the proof that we are God's Husbandry, and, of course, we do not prune lifeless trees to make them fruitful, nor those that have sprung up in the desert — but only those that belong to the garden or orchard, and possess life. The precious results of this pruning process are seen in the autumn season of life when the full ripe, mellow fruits of love, joy and peace are made manifest to all around, and many "taste and see that Yahweh is gracious." The venerable old trees standing so firm and erect after centuries of buffetings by wind and storms, still sheltering from rain and protecting from the sun's burning rays, all who come within the range of their shadow may be said to represent the aged saints — the few "fathers" referred to by the apostle (1Cor. 4:15), who maintain their rectitude, faculties, and activity, even to hoary hair, whose chief delight is to teach and exhort, comfort and encourage all who come in contact with them; imparting to them the priceless benefits of a lifelong study of the Word, and experience in the Truth.

Sometimes we see along the banks of a river the gnarled stumps of trees, all the boughs and branches sapless or vanished altogether, and the whole outward appearance stunted and withered. On the bark there are visible signs of decay, yet the roots are strong and firm, still drawing nourishment from the moist soil and drinking of the life-sustaining water. And so it is with the aged servant of God, when stripped of all that is of "the pride of life" and "not of the Father," when the world, or death, has severed all ties of natural kinship — the physical frame decayed, and nature's comeliness all vanished, these grand old trees of the Lord's planting still remain rooted and grounded in the Faith — and though the outward man is perishing, the inward man is renewed day by day by feeding upon the Word of life and drinking deeply of its sweet, refreshing waters. The inward grace and beauty of character, like the bare unearthed root-suckers of the old trees, are plainly seen in the gentle, Christ-like attitude, and the mellowness

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of tone and speech, that can only be produced by years of fiery trials and experience: hence many are helped and blessed by them.

Have we not all seen some curiously shaped, hollow stumps of trees too, in whose dust-filled knuckles a passing bird has dropped a seed or a berry, that has been nurtured into life by the rain and the sunshine, and sprung up into a flourishing plant — young life springing out of old age and decrepitude! Thus in the very lap of the aged the tender seedling in the faith may be fostered and nourished, to grow up strong and capable in the service of the Lord, like Timothy, Paul's "own son in the faith." The disciple of Christ is like the ivy, or other parasite plant, that because of its very nature, must draw nutriment from that upon which it leans. While we receive help and comfort from others who are a source of strength to us in the Truth, yet we must trust in Yahweh and not lean wholly upon the arm of the flesh.

The parasite plant that grows upon the oak or the apple tree, draws its nutriment not so much from the soil below, as from the tree around which it twines and which often perishes by exhaustion of sap through the parasite that clings to it. But the Tree to which we should cling, is inexhaustible and can never be weakened by our drawing from its fulness. And therefore faith partakes of the nature of the Tree to which it clings and, like the ivy, draws nutriment from Him around whom it twines.

Following the figure yet further, we may compare the old tree with nettles and brambles springing out of its splintered trunk, to the old man of the world in contrast — disagreeable, selfish and objectionable to all about him: his friends shrink from him and have no remorse when at length he is cut down by the hand of death to spring up no more. "For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof may not cease. Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground; yet through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant. But man dieth... and where is he?... they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep" (Job 14:7-12). What we are when our breath goeth forth that shall we be hereafter in character before God. Now is the time of opportunities, and there is no second chance for any. But how different with the "trees of Yahweh!" They will yet spring up and grow more beautiful and serviceable than ever, and know no weakness or decay. Just as the trees in autumn become most magnificent under their autumn tints, when they are about to drop all their foliage on the earth, so the aged saint feels the greatest joy, and is radiant with the brightest hopes, knowing that "henceforth" there is laid up for him "the crown of life which fadeth not away," and therefore like Simeon of old, can give expression to the richest songs of praise.

So we must not only have the blossom of fruitfulness, but go on to

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perfection, and not be merely what looks well, but what is well. We must bear the fruits of good works. An apple tree in blossom is a lovely sight, but how disappointing to the owner if it does not bear fruit! The test of our sincerity is “love to God” and “love to our neighbour” and the measure of our love to Christ, is our “love of the brethren.” The pity and compassion that does not lead to active love, God takes no account of (1Jn. 3:18), any more than we keep account of the blossoms in the orchard that are nipped by late frosts, or are blown away by the wind and never turn to fruit. The good Samaritan by assisting the poor traveller lost a day, but he saved a life, and “love is the fulfilling of the law” (Rom. 13:10).

“I am enjoying this topic immensely, as well as the acceptable rest and shelter beneath the trees,” interrupts an elderly sister. And all these beautiful lessons we may wisely lay to heart. Perhaps few of us have considered the value and usefulness of the trees as we ought. Treeless regions are always dry and barren. Even leafless trees will keep away frost from the cattle that shelter beneath them. Part of the daily work of the trees is to warm the earth. We all know how much warmer a wood is than a treeless plain! Trees also influence the rainfall and are great promoters of lakes and rivers as we observe from the wooded parts of our country where glens and waterfalls abound amid the most picturesque landscapes. Where the woods and forests have been cleared it has been proved that all bodies of water are much diminished. In Psalm 1:3 the figure is unique. The godly are like trees planted by the rivers of waters — fresh, green and flourishing (Eze. 19:10).

May we not also learn the lesson of cleanliness and unassuming beauty from the trees? Every tree is a marvellous proof of God’s power and methods of working. God works quietly but surely, and just as the trees increase silently and steadily, so God’s purpose is gradually unfolding and will, in His own good time, reach its full fruition. Then God makes much of little. The tiny seed becomes a plant, the acorn becomes a full-grown oak. The weak and erring children of men by the grace of God become His sons and daughters, “joint heirs with Christ,” and at length “partakers of the divine nature.”

Chapter Twenty Five

TREES OF PARADISE

*Fadeless trees of God's own planting,
Life diffusing all around,
Fill the earth with joy and beauty
Unto its remotest bound.*

IN the Scriptures both the good and the wicked are compared to trees. The ungodly are like “trees whose leaf fadeth” (Psa. 1:3), but “the trees of Yahweh are full of sap” (Psa. 104:16). They are “the trees of righteousness” of Yahweh’s planting, referred to in Isa. 61:3 in contrast with those of Jude 12 “whose fruit withereth.”

The captains of Assyria’s army were compared to trees (Isa. 10:19). The prophet testified that the remainder of his mighty host should be so few that the meanest accomptant would be able to muster them. The Ninevite Assyrian is styled “a cedar of Lebanon,” for his dominion extended over the land of the ten tribes of Israel, in which are the cedar-crowned mountains of Lebanon. After describing the greatness of his power by the magnitude of the cedar, the Spirit says: “The trees in the garden of the Lord could not hide him; nor was any tree... like to him in his beauty. I made him by the multitude of his branches, so that all the trees of Eden... envied him” (Isa. 33:11-13). These trees were the royalties of Mesopotamia, Syria, and Israel among others — trees representing the royalties of the land.

The Holy Land is part of the Eden of the East in which was placed the “tree of life.” It is styled by Moses *aizha-chayim*, meaning “a tree of the lives.” The idea is that of plurality. “The tree is the type of the lives and though single, represents plurality,” explains Brother Thomas. It was in the midst of Eden’s garden, and would have imparted life for the Age if our first parents had been permitted to “take of the fruit of the tree and eat thereof.” But they were excluded on account of disobedience to the command of God.

This tree in the midst of the garden was allegorical of the wood portrayed by the Spirit to John in Patmos. Here “lives” is changed into “life” and “tree” into “wood.” The plurality is found in the “wood,” and the oneness in the “life.” The figure embraces “the multitude that no man can number,” all in Jesus, who is “The Life.” In the beginning it was as “a grain of mustard seed which a man took and planted in his garden, and it grew and waxed a great tree and the fowls of the air came and lodged in the branches of it” (Luke 13:18), symbolically “the wood of trees in the paradise of God” (Rev. 22). Each tree is a perennial which

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lives for ever. Its leaves shall not fade, for it can know no decay. Here the Great Teacher likens the kingdom of heaven to a tree, "the greatest among herbs" (Matt. 13:31). The birds of the political aerial that come and lodge in this tree, represent the saints who are to be the ruling authorities, or the millennial air — spirit and air being parallel terms. In the Song of Solomon 2:3 Christ is compared to an apple tree, and his brethren to "the trees of the wood." This again points to the future, when the saints shall "eat from the wood of life" and so become spiritual bodies (the apple tree is generally agreed to be the citron tree, as all that is said in Song of Solomon of its beauty, fragrance, delicious fruits, and its refreshing shade is to be found in the citron).

"The tree of knowledge of good and evil" stood also in the Mosaic Eden, so called because by the eating of it man came to know experimentally the vast difference between good and evil, and the greatness of that evil he brought upon himself by disobedience. Some have wondered whether it was a literal tree or that it was the medium of these moral effects. There does not appear to be anything peculiar in the physical character of this tree, but God uses it as a symbol to show to man his dependence, even in the Edenic paradise, upon a higher Being. It was the test of man's obedience to law. Some have thought that it was the apple tree and many that it was the fig tree, as in Scripture we read of the fig tree sometimes in a bad sense. A bad character among the Greeks was called a "sycophant," meaning "a man who shows figs." And other references and proverbs prove how the fig tree was usually associated with something bad among both classical and barbaric nations. The sycamore tree that Zacchaeus climbed (Luke 19:4) belonged to the family of the fig tree; hence the fruit is called "wild figs." It is common in the Middle East, growing large and to a great height being rather like a mulberry tree in its leaves and general appearance. Its Greek name is from *syco*, "a fig," and *moros*, "mulberry, namely "the fig mulberry."

A mysterious sacred tree figured among the most ancient emblems and sculptures of Egypt and Assyria, as well as in the remoter East. Tradition still points in Jerusalem to a rugged, ghastly, wind-swept tree, which is called the "Judas tree" where it is supposed by some that a rope, or a branch broke under his weight, and "falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst..." (Acts 1:18).

The barren fig tree was a type of Israel. It was cursed by Christ we know, but Christ also used the fig tree, and all the trees, as a sign of his coming kingdom (Luke 21:29-31). It is interesting in passing, to note that it is the custom in Israel to cut down any fig tree that presents an unhealthy or diseased appearance. Subsequently when winter has arrived and the sap has descended, brushwood is collected and piled upon the stump. This is set on fire, and the whole burnt to the ground. After the next spring rains, a vigorous young shoot appears from the old

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root, and this, under careful treatment soon becomes a fruit-bearing tree. When Israel, like the barren fig tree, has passed through the consuming fire of divine wrath, they will spring up yet again more vigorous than ever in the mercy of God, and "fill the earth with fruit" (Hos. 14:5-8).

We have to learn, like Eve, after bitter experience, that many things taste sweet, but they are not right for food. Many things look beautiful, but they are not lawful. We do not always recollect that a certain course or a favorite indulgence is displeasing to God, and a violation of His law. The pleasure of the thing alone presents itself before our eyes, and we forget that often the blossom that looks most beautiful and smells the most fragrant, contains in itself the most deadly poison.

In Eden, there was this lovely garden or paradise, from *pardais*, an untranslated word merely transferred from its original Persian to the Hebrew, and then to the Greek and from Greek to English, in which the word *paradaisim* is often translated "orchards." These orchards in the days of Solomon were tracts of land planted with all kinds of fruit trees, and irrigated with streams of water to make the trees productive. Solomon, who "spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon, even to the hyssop that springeth out of the wall" (1Kings 4:33) tells in Ecclesiastes 2:5 how he made for himself gardens and orchards and planted trees in them of all kinds of fruits: and in Song of Solomon 4:13 we have an illustration of the kind of garden our first parents were placed in at the beginning. In Neh. 2:8, we read of one Asaph who was styled "the keeper of the king's forest." This was a *pardais* in Palestine, from which Nehemiah was instructed to take timber to make beams for the gates of the palace, so that it is evident that a *pardais* was a tract of land containing trees, pleasant to the eyes, and yielding luscious fruits. This Eden has been defiled and desecrated by war, and bloodshed, but it is destined to be yet more beautiful and fertile than ever. When Yahweh shall comfort Zion He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of Yahweh (Isa. 51:3). Then "all the trees of the field shall clap their hands." "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree and instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle tree, and it shall be to Yahweh for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off" (Isa. 55:13), or, as we read in ch. 41:19-20, "I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the olive tree; I will set in the desert the fir tree, the pine and the box tree together: That they may see and know... that the hand of Yahweh hath done this."

*Then the lofty cedars shall rejoice,
And fan their boughs in the scented air,
For Carmel's height shall raise its voice,
And Sharon see God's glory there.*

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It appears from 1Kings 7:2, and elsewhere, that large tracts of country were allotted off and designated as woods or forests, such as the "forest of Ephraim," and the "forest of the house of Lebanon." In Isa. 32:15, "forest" means a tract of land uncleared of its natural wood, and the signification of the figure is, that what was reckoned barren should be covered with vegetation, and what was deemed fertile should be sterile and unproductive. "When it shall hail in the downfall of the forest" (v. 19), representing the wicked where there is no peace or safety; while "the trees of Yahweh's planting" dwell securely, as Israel did in Goshen, when the rest of Egypt was scorched and desolated.

"Is it not yet a very little while, and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field and the fruitful fields shall be counted for a forest," enquired the Spirit in the prophet (Isa. 29:17; 32:15-19). Here we see that an aggregation of wild, uncultivated trees constitutes a forest, that will suffer the vengeance of the divinely prepared storm.

While we are still resting beneath the leafy shade of the trees we may well consider a few of these representative trees of Paradise. Perhaps among the many choice specimens the cedar stands out pre-eminently; its beautiful, solid wood, of a reddish brown colour, so remarkable for its durability, as to gain the reputation of being incorruptible. The cedar tree seems to have been most highly prized and is used as an emblem of exalted characters as will be seen from Eze. 17:23; and Jer. 23:5. "Cedar trees in abundance" were used in the building of the temple (1Chr. 22:4). They were collected by David and added to by Solomon. Also "fir trees, and alnum trees out of Lebanon" (2Chr. 2:3, 8-9). The walls of the house were of boards of cedar, and the floor was covered with planks of fir. The door posts were of olive tree, and the two doors were of fir tree (1Kings 7). Cedar wood was used in the preparation for the purification of sin" (Num. 19; Lev. 14) in connection with the blue hyssop, the type of cleansing and healing. Here we are shown the blue in association with the water and the blood (vv. 4-7).

All the choice trees of the wood are emblematic of those who constitute that spiritual house referred to in the apostolic writings. The Lord's people are compared both to the cedar and the palm tree in Psa. 92, and in Song of Solomon 1:17, to the cedar and the fir.

Next to the cedar, the fir tree seems to be the best symbol of the disciple, as it takes the least of the earth for its roots and it towers highest into the sky in its aspirations. James tells us that "God hath chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom" (ch. 2:5). Like faithful Abraham they have possessed not so much ground as to set their foot on, and yet like him, prospectively, "all things are theirs" (1Cor. 3:21-22). This fine, tall, straight tree, in the tops of which the storks build their nests (Psa. 104:17), is a valuable

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evergreen, representative of the unfading evergreens in the Paradise of God.

In Hosea 14 there is a cluster of these beautiful figures. Israel shall grow upward and be more flourishing than in ancient days; they shall grow downward, and be more firm: for combined with the loveliness of the lily shall be the strong root of the cedar of Lebanon, and the unfading freshness and verdure of the fir tree. "Ephraim shall say... I am like a green fir tree" (v. 8). He has smarted for his idolatry and "this is the fruit, even the taking away of his sin (Isa. 27:9), and as the root of a tree, the Spirit says, "From Me is thy fruit found." Spiritual growth consists most in the growth of the root which is out of sight. From Him we too receive daily grace and strength. From 1Kings 5:8, 10; 6:15; 9:11, we may gather the usefulness of the fir tree.

Almug, or alghum trees, were brought from Ophir (1Kings 10:11), and were used for pillars or railing, and ornamental work for the temple, and for musical instruments. Solomon asked the king of Tyre to send him "alghum trees out of Lebanon" (2Chr. 2:8; 4:10-11). The wood of this tree is described as fine, white and glossy, and is most highly prized for its fragrance, durability, and the beautiful polish that it takes. If we cannot be mighty as a cedar, we can be as the fragrant alghum, making harmony and melody, and so beautify the temple of God.

Another lovely, upright, flourishing tree is the palm, which provides also another significant figure. It grows by the sweet springs of water and continues long. The palm will not be pressed or bound downward, or grow crooked, even though heavy weights were laid upon it: teaching us the significant lesson of fortitude and courage. The palm is one of the most famous of all the forest, and is the emblem of constancy, fruitfulness, patience, and victory. The more it is pressed down the more it flourishes; the higher it grows, the stronger and broader it is in the summit. "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon," exclaims the Psalmist. "Those that be planted in the house of Yahweh shall flourish in the courts of our God" (Psa. 92:12-13). At Elim, where the Israelites encamped for a time there were twelve wells of water, and three-score and ten palm trees" (Exod. 15:27). After the bitterness then the refreshment. The bitter waters of Marah were in the very path of Yahweh's leading, and represent the trials of God's people that are educating them and are not punitive. The tree cast into the waters that made them sweet stands for the cross of sacrifice that makes sweet all bitter experiences (v. 23, 25), and brings us at length to the place of palm trees — the place of healing and refreshment.

The finest and best palm trees were about Jericho, Engedi, and along the banks of the Jordan. From the same root is produced a great number of suckers that spring up and soon form a kind of spreading forest. It was under a little

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wood of palm trees that Deborah dwelt between Rama and Bethel (Jud. 4:5). Along the picturesque banks of the Jordan where the hot rays of the sun are tempered by the refreshing stream as it rushes majestically down to the Dead Sea are clusters of stately palm trees, luxuriant cornfields alternate with the thorny groves and craggy rocks; and the rustling of tall reeds mingles its sound with the murmuring waters. Here the cool shade of the willows, acacias, and the holm-oak is enlivened by the bright tints of the pomegranate and oleander, whilst laurels, tamarisks and arbutus attract the eye, as well as the slender fig tree with its interlacing branches and broad overlapping leaves. The red fuchsia like flowers of the Sidr, and the orange tinted fruits of the Solanum, glow brightly in the warm sunbeams, whilst here and there the turban-shaped head of a solitary palm tree supported on its slender stem rises from out of the thick undergrowth of bays and balsam trees. In the shady recesses of this wooded paradise hung with graceful creepers of all kinds, dwell innumerable tribes of wild boar, otters and leopards; whilst flocks of waterfowl, herons, storks, partridges, ducks and snipes, build their nests in the reeds, and the woodpigeon in the branches of the trees from whence gleams forth the many coloured feathers of the humming bird, while the song of the nightingale is heard in the grove. Hence this beautiful vale of Jordan might easily be made a very Eden when our Lord returns, and wars for ever cease.

Palm trees were carved upon the doors of the temple (1Kings 6:32), and the walls of the house were ornamented with carved figures of "cherubim and palm trees and open flowers," within and without, prefiguring the time of rejoicing at the feast of ingathering at the end of the year; just as the white, flowery blossoms of the almond, together with the vine and fig tree point to the epoch of the resurrection. The almond tree is the first tree that bursts the bonds of Nature's wintry depth; its beautiful blossoms present the first returning sign of the vitality of the groves and gardens: by it we know that "summer is nigh" as well as from the fig tree; when the earth will be once more clothed with verdure. This herald almond tree is therefore a fitting emblem of life out of death, or resurrection, and is used to express it symbolically, where Levi's budding, blossoming and almond-bearing rod determined the question of the priesthood being vested in Aaron (Num. 17:1-10). We get a clue to its significance in Jer. 1:12. At the appointed time Yahweh will hasten the performance of His Word.

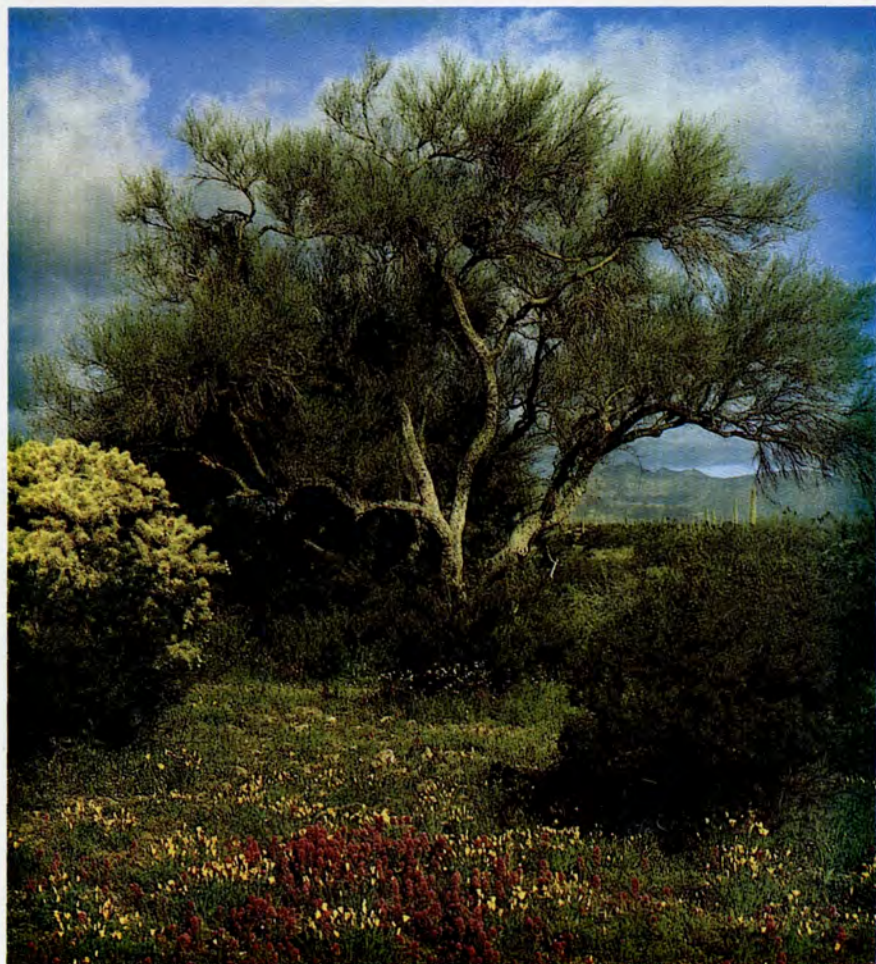
From these lovely emblems we perceive that there is a gradual process of development, just as nature unfolds herself. "First the blade, then the ear, and afterward the full corn in the ear" (Mark 4:28). First that which is natural and then the spiritual (1Cor. 15). In the Song of Solomon 2:10-13 the invitation is given to the Bride to come forth, because "the winter is past... The fig tree putteth forth her green figs and the vines with the tender grapes give a good

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smell." The blessings of this glorious epoch begin to descend before the time of the appearing of fruits upon the earth, we see from Haggai 2:18-19.

The olive tree, another beautiful specimen, is an evergreen also and the symbol of flesh and continued piety, the result of divine blessing. "I am like a green olive tree in the house of my God," says the Psalmist (52:8), and Isaiah foretells of the future glory of Yahweh's house, saying "There shall be as the shaking of an olive tree" (ch. 24).

The two cherubim of Solomon's temple were made of olive wood overlaid with gold — the symbol of a tried and precious faith. The doors also for the



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entering of the oracle were of olive tree (1Kings 6:31), showing the way of entrance into the holy place must be through the Israelitish Olive Tree (Rom. 11). The ark and the staves thereof, the altar of incense, the table, and the boards of the tabernacle were shittim wood, or acacia; and the beautiful "veil of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen," was hung upon "four pillars of shittim-wood" (Exod. 25:13), representative of human nature, covered and beautified by faith. We find that all the wood was covered with gold — a figure of that final perfection of God's purpose in Christ who partook first of our human nature, and then finished with the divine, in which all his brethren and sisters one day will participate. The beautiful fragrant acacia wood represents the humanity of the Lord Jesus who lies at the very foundation of all things — "God manifest in the flesh." The boards may be said to represent the saints. Each board showing our individual experiences in the Truth. First, as being cut away from our former life; second, of the drying-up process, the old sap of life all gone; third, cleansed from all impurities of the flesh, and fulfilling an entirely new position, for it is not enough to put off the old life, but we must put on the new (John 13:10; Col. 3:12). We must be clothed too with the gold (God's righteousness; Rom. 3:22; Phil. 3:9), and be "fitly framed together" (Eph. 3:20-22) as polished boards for, "the habitation of God through the Spirit."

The Mosaic "pattern of things in the heavens" were all of gold, or of precious wood overlaid with gold. Mere "wood, hay and stubble" found no place there. Wood and gold speak also of Christ the high priest of our profession, touched with the feeling of our infirmities, who "ever liveth to make intercession for us" (Exod. 31:1).

The acacia is a beautiful tree with spreading branches, and fragrant flowers. Its wood is so solid and durable that the Hebrew term for it means "incorruptible wood." Isaiah places the shittah, or acacia tree, in the midst of a group of equally lovely and useful specimens (ch. 12:9), speaking of them in a figurative sense as representative of the blessed influences of a general diffusion of divine knowledge in the future. The myrtle, yet another beautiful fragrant and ornamental evergreen, of which groves of natural growth in Judea, are still to be seen, is mentioned by Nehemiah with the olive, the pine, and the palm tree (ch. 8:15). Myrtle branches were used to decorate the booths made during the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev. 23). And there is Zechariah's significant vision of the "man among the myrtle trees," representative of Christ and his brethren (ch. 1:8, 10, 11). In their rebelliousness the Jews are regarded as thorns and briars, but in the restoration they are as the olive, pine, the palm and the myrtle.

Even now we may climb the range of hills called "Mount Naphtali" and find every height well wooded and often fragrant with the myrtle. A green vale, with rich olive groves close at hand, are relics of the "favour and blessing" that the

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tribe of Naphtali enjoyed when it was like “the gazelle let loose, or the spreading terebinth” (Deut. 33:23).

Nothing is more common in the Scriptures than the comparison of Israel with a plant (Exod. 15:7). In Zechariah’s vision the man on the red horse stands “among the myrtle trees,” not lofty cedars, but beautiful myrtles. (The name of Esther was *Hadassa*, or “myrtle,” on account of her unpretending beauty — Esther 2:7). The beauty and security of these trees is that he who is first called a “man,” and is afterwards seen to be “the angel of Yahweh” is in the midst thereof, even as Christ walked “in the midst of the seven lampstands,” as the salvation and strength of his people.

Zechariah describes the myrtle trees as in the depth (or “shady place,” RV) overtopped as it were, by the surrounding mountains, buried in obscurity and opposed by the mighty world kingdoms that rose up out of the depths. Israel is thus described as being in those days, neither a lofty cedar nor a vine, the fruit of which refreshes the heart, but as myrtle trees: simple and comparatively small, but fragrant and evergreen; in the midst of the fire, yet not consumed. The time of this vision appears to be the time of the Feast of Tabernacles first ensuing when the Holy One of Israel, the man on the red horse, shall have completed his conquests and shall be the Prince of Peace in the midst of Israel.

In the celebration of the Feast of Ingathering, the Israelites took the “boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook,” and rejoiced before Yahweh their Elohim. The willow flourishes best by the brooks and watercourses, as is seen in Job 40:22; Isa. 15:7; 44:4; and Eze. 17:5. The beautiful species known as the “weeping willow” is called the “Babylonian willow,” an allusion to Psa. 137:2. Before Israel can figure as stately palm trees (Rev. 7) they have to “drink of the brook by the way” (Psa. 110:7), and this is why they are afterwards exalted above the people in this great Feast of Tabernacles, as lofty palms. The Captain of their salvation, was himself once “a willow of the brook” — a weeping willow — “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.”

The Feast of Tabernacles is distinguished by a symbolism of the profoundest importance, and well deserves our most attentive consideration. The literal rendering of Lev. 23:40 is: “ye shall take you on the first day the fruit of a beautiful tree, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of a thick tree, and willows of the brook.” This day has been designated by the Sanhedrin as *Hoshana Rabbah* or “the Great Hosanna,” a true knowledge of which is derived by the light of the New Testament. God has taught His people from the beginning by a system of allegory, illustrated by emblem and symbol. In order to realise what they had lost by their first parents’ disobedience, their thoughts must go back to the garden of Eden. They may also look forward in hope to the

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glorious paradise of God, which “Yahweh our Righteousness,” the second Adam, after the sharpness of death, should open to all true believers, and in the fulness of time bring to pass the true *Hoshana Rabbah*.

Literally “the tree of knowledge of good and evil” was “a beautiful tree,” described as “very good” (Gen. 1:31). Thus in a most effectual way the Israelites were reminded of our first parents’ apostasy from what God appointed. The “fruit of a beautiful tree” appears to be the emblem of the “tree of knowledge of good and evil.” But the emblem is not unaccompanied by a symbol of the “tree of life;” hence the ordinance of the “branches of palm trees,” which have a connection with the House of God (1Kings 6:29, 32, 35), where “cherubim and palm trees” are conspicuous. The more we consider this, the more do we appreciate the beautiful symbolism of “the fruit of a beautiful tree, branches of palms, the boughs of a thick tree, and willows of the brook.”

The apostle speaks of “the time of the restitution of all things.” The garden of Eden with its “tree of knowledge” and its “tree of life,” were spoken of by all God’s holy prophets and apostles in one form or another, and were represented at the Feast of Tabernacles by “the fruit of a beautiful tree” and “branches of palm trees.” From earliest times the fruit that has been used by the Jews for that purpose, called *Ethros*, is the citron, known by the name of “the Paradise Apple.” Many believe the “tree of life” to be represented by palm branches, as from its leafy canopy are suspended enormous clusters of fruit. While in the first instance the singular “fruit” is used, “the fruit of a beautiful tree;” in the latter it is plural “branches of palm trees” — the palm being the emblem of power, victory, triumph, patience, a peaceful end, and a glorious immortality. “The boughs of a thick tree” may represent the stability of this chosen nation. For though they were to pass through “the wilderness of the people” weeping, represented by “the willows of the brook,” yet shall they lift up their head, erect and glorious, when the real *Hoshana Rabbah* takes place as the seventh day of this festival is described by the Jews.

The multitude who welcomed the Saviour with palm branches and with loud *hosannas*, may never know the full significance of their words and deeds, but we may. Little do the members of the synagogue realise that, as they wave the *lulabh*, as they now term the palm branch, the symbol of victory, power and triumph, east, south, west and north, upwards and downwards, they are, in fact, showing forth the great salvation centered in Jesus, the despised and rejected Nazarene.

The palm-bearing Elohim of Rev.7 are the antitype of the goodly trees, the palm trees, the fig trees, and the willows of the brook — the trees of righteousness, whose leaves are unfading: the great forest of evergreens filling the earth with their perfume, to the glory of His name.

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We might continue to enumerate and enlarge upon these glorious trees of Eden, but the sun is now inclining towards the western horizon and we are some distance from the high road. May we at last be found worthy of a place in that Great Wood of many choice and fragrant trees of righteousness, of Yahweh's planting, and rejoice for ever while beautifying this divine paradise.

As we wend our steps beneath this veritable archway of foliage, a few thoughts, particularly about the leaves of the tree, will not be profitless, for not only do the trees themselves show forth the Creator's wisdom, but every leaf upon them also. The leaves of a tree are the lungs or breathing organs. We think of the leaves with their strangely varied shapes. Star, heart, spear, arrow, fringed, fretted and furrowed; serrated and sinuated; in tufts, wreaths — spire and whorls, endlessly expressed and diversified. Never the same from the foot of the stem to the blossom. This may be the reason why certain distinctive leaves have been used as types to enshrine noble memories, or to express lofty ideals, such as the laurel for the conqueror, and the bayleaf to wreath the poet. The shamrock represents Ireland, the maple leaf Canada, and the olive leaf is universally accepted as the symbol of peace. The victorious athlete in the public games of antiquity was decorated with the *stephanos*, or coronal wreath of laurel (1Cor. 9:25). In the Bible there are two words rendered "crown," *stephanos* and *diadem*. The first is used here, and in Mat. 27:29 and 1Peter 5:4. In the Book of Revelation, when unassociated with other words it signifies "a garland, chaplet, or wreath." The mock robing and crowning of Jesus reminds us that the laurel crown and purple robe were the coveted insignia and honour in those days. Being constructed of the evergreen laurel, the *stephanos* was a very appropriate device for association with life, honour, glory, rejoicing and righteousness. It is a beautiful and unique emblem of the Life which is unending, and "the crown of glory that fadeth not away." But the laurel wreath that was plucked from the living tree was corruptible and soon faded. And so it is with us; as long as we retain our hold upon Christ, by his truth in our hearts, he, who is "the Wisdom of God," is to us the living and unfading Tree, and we, as the leaves thereof do not wither. But separated from him as a leaf from its parent stem, we should soon fade, and another would seize upon our coronal wreath (Rev. 3:11).

Those who obtained the evergreen wreath in the public games were those who contended with the rules that justified the reward of the victor's crown. The laurel wreath was therefore a crown of righteousness, honour and rejoicing in a natural sense, and becomes a symbol of the golden *stephanos* of glory, honour, immortality and life, that will be awarded to the overcomers, who are found walking according to the Law of the Lord.

Among all this marvellous variety of leaf form we have here before us the oak, elm, lime and chestnut, besides many others. In Bible lands there is the

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same amazing complexity, for He who gave to the palm its graceful draping foliage, clothes also the great beech with its summer garments of countless translucent leaves, so fantastic that no artist can justly imitate their living masses and multitudes. A master botanist tells us that leaves are "green expansions borne by the stem, outspread to the air and light, in which, assimilation and the processes connected with it are carried on. Vegetable assimilation, the most essential function of plants, being the conversion of inorganic matter, takes place in all ordinary vegetation only in the green parts, and in these when exposed to the light of the sun." Thus in every plant, the leaf is the most distinctive and essential part. For it is by means of their leaves that plants are able alike to exhale and to absorb, also to effect that subtle interchange which is implied in all organic life. Foliage, then, is "an adaptation for largely increasing the green surface." Nothing connected with a tree is more vital than the majestic wealth of foliage that it throws out to meet the radiant beams of the sun. In this we perceive the beauty of the symbol in Rev. 22, where the evergreen leaves of the Wood of Life are for the "healing of the nations," when touched by the Sun of Righteousness.

We are told that there are two Greek words incorrectly rendered "tree" in the Bible — *xulon* and *dendron*. There must, therefore, be a distinction of ideas which required different words to convey it. A tree cannot be at one and the same time on both sides of a river, but a forest wood can, and yet be one wood, representing the many in One. The word *dendron*, "a tree," occurs in Rev. 7:1, 3; 8:7; 9:4, correctly; but in ch. 2:7; 22:2, 14, "tree" is in the Greek *xulon*, also in ch. 18 twice, but in both instances rendered "wood," as "thyine wood," and "precious wood." *Dendron* only represents one tree; *xulon* many trees. The matter of all trees is used symbolically for any number of individual trees — one material, or *xulon*, typical of a whole forest, or aggregation of *dendra*.

The Wood of Life vitalized by the Living Waters represents the whole community of the immortal and incorruptible servants of God, while the leaves are the individual saints in particular. The Spirit breathes through this numberless multitude, and the grace of life is imparted and diffused abroad among all the nations of the earth. Naturally there are powerful medicinal properties in leaves. How much more powerful and efficacious will be these spirit-filled leaves of the Wood of Life! To be in glory then, is to have "eaten of the wood of life" when quickened, and to enter into the peaceful and glorious rest of the millennium. This is the consummation. As the leaves and branches feed upon the sap that circulates through the vessels of the tree, so do the saints as "the leaves of the wood" feed upon the Spirit which will circulate then, as the Holy Oil through the two branches of the "two olive trees" (Zech. 4).

Addressing the transgressors in Israel who practiced idolatrous ceremonies in

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gardens and beneath the oaks, Isaiah says: "Ye shall be ashamed of the oaks ye have desired... For ye shall be as an oak whose leaf fadeth and as a garden that hath no water" (ch. 1:29-30). The dried leaves of Israel's withered oak have done nothing for the nations who are unhealed to this day. In "the green tree" they had crucified the "Holy and Just One," and in the "dry" there was no abomination they eschewed.

What a suggestive thought we have in Isa. 34:4, and 64:6. Earth's mightiest, noblest and proudest are "as a leaf." Sometimes gnawed by a worm, and dropped in mid-spring, sometimes blasted by intense heat and shrivelled in mid-summer, or, if spared in spring and summer the frost nips it, and we see on earth morally what we witness in a frost in autumn — one of the saddest sights — the falling, fading, and withering leaves.

Almost all trees lose their leaves, their chief adornment, so Christ's disciples lose the natural attractiveness of the flesh, but the hidden grace of the heart increases. Frost and cold are causes for the leaves falling, but there are other reasons, for plants in warm climates and greenhouses are stripped of their foliage. Cold causes the sap to stagnate and the leaves to wither because the root no longer supplies what is necessary for their respiration. Let us thank God for rich and continuous supplies of grace for our spiritual growth; there should be no falling back in the higher life. It is evident that the branches grow in thickness when they no longer increase in length. The stalks of the leaves do not continue to increase with the thickness of the branches, therefore they must loosen from their fibres and consequently the leaves fall off, but are not entirely useless. The snow and the rain wash the salts out of them, and convey them to the roots of the trees. Strewn upon the ground, leaves, especially those of the oak, preserve the roots of young plants, and keep a proper degree of warmth and humidity, and increase the growth of the grass. The fall of the leaves, too, is destructive to a multitude of insects that live in trees and plants. It is true that autumn sweeps away shoals of insects with their nests but it may not follow that these creatures perish. Many may live under cover of the leaves. From the falling leaves we learn that the tenure of our existence is as brittle as a thread. A little cold air may terminate our mortal life, but, precious thought, we may leave behind us the mature fruits of righteousness that will warm and cheer others when we ourselves mingle with the dust.

As we step out once more into the open country we feel somewhat relieved although reluctant to forsake our leafy canopy, for, as Byron says, "There is a pleasure in the pathless woods," and we seem to have grown quite familiar with the venerable old trees interspersed with tender green saplings. One can understand why the ancient patriarchs chose the greatest among the trees to serve as landmarks, or met beneath their shade for special consultations. We

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think of that beautiful promise concerning Israel in Eze. 34:25. "They shall dwell safely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods." "They have dwelt solitary in the wood in the midst of Carmel, but they shall feed in Bashan and Gilead, as in the days of old," says Micah (ch. 7:14). They have been fed with the "bread of tears" for many generations: "the boar out of the wood" (of nations) "has wasted their goodly land" (Psa. 80:5, 13), "but," testifies the prophet, "wickedness burneth as the fire... and shall be kindled in the thickets of the forest. Through the wrath of Yahweh Elohim is the land darkened and the people shall be as fuel of the fire" (Isa. 9:18-19). The spoiler himself shall be spoiled, for "the light of Israel shall be for a fire... and it shall consume the glory of his (the latter day Assyrian's) forest. And the rest of the trees of his forest shall be few, that a child may write them" (Isa. 10:16-19). "The voice of Yahweh maketh the oaks to tremble, and discovereth the forests" (Psa. 29:9). Like the ancient king of Syria and his people, their hearts will be moved as the trees of the wood are moved by the wind (Isa. 7:2). The ungodly are often punished by those as bad as themselves. "In the fear of Yahweh is strong confidence," but they that despise Him have no solid support, and the most daring are often terrified by perils from their fellow-creatures, so that their hearts are moved as the trees of the wood by the wind.

Ezekiel's prophecy against "the forest of the south field" is very expressive. "Thus saith Adonai Yahweh, Behold I will kindle a fire in thee, and it shall devour every green tree in thee and every dry tree... and all flesh shall see that I, Yahweh, have kindled it" (ch. 20:46-48; 39:8-10). May ours be that infinitely more blessed portion of the fadeless evergreens in the paradise of God, for, says the prophet, "those who lay at the greater distance, even the Gentiles, should join in these praises as sharing in these joys that await Israel in their final salvation." "Sing, O ye heavens; for Yahweh hath done it. Shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing ye mountains, O forest, and every green tree therein, for Yahweh hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel" (Isa 44:23). All shall then bring in their tribute of thanksgiving for Israel's redemption, and fill the earth with beauty, joy and gladness.

The setting sun now tips the hills with gold and crimson splendour as we step from beneath the canopy of trees on to the roadway leading homeward. If we are somewhat wearied with the journey we feel amply repaid by all we have seen and heard, and our earnest prayer is that we may walk more worthy of Him who "hath made everything beautiful" in His season.

Chapter Twenty Five

THE VINE AND THE OLIVE

*Oh, fair sweet land of Promise, once with God's Presence blest
What glorious things await thee, when comes the promised rest;
Then shall thy fragrant pastures, with milk and honey flow,
And in thy choicest valleys rich vines and olives grow.*

WHEN our minds are filled with any interesting subject for meditation we frequently seek some quiet spot where the beauties of the natural prospect will help us to form pleasant and profitable associations. Hence, we ascend to the summit of a hill where we have a commanding view of the surrounding country, and a long chain of hills stretching for miles before us. The whole scene encompasses a rich and fruitful valley, filled with yellow cornfields and green pastures. Near is a large and venerable mansion, embowered in fine woods, interspersed in every direction with rising and falling grounds and extensive orchards of ripening fruit.

The Gothic character of the original dwelling can be traced by the latticed windows, ornamented with pillars of stonework. One side of the house is entirely clothed with the foliage of an immense vine that has climbed almost beyond its limits, while in the spacious conservatories adjoining there are other vines and plants more choice and flourishing. Such lovely plants laden with such wealthy clusters of luscious grapes seem almost congenial to the walls and trellises that support them. The picturesque landscape in general, with its gardens and groves carries us in imagination once more to that "goodly land" which has afforded us already so many pleasurable hours.

Israel is pre-eminently the land of vineyards and oliveyards, although the vine has been highly prized in most countries. In the days of Israel's settlement in the land under the benign favor of God their king and of Joshua their leader, there were many excellent vines and olives. The ever memorable words of Moses in reference to this people and their land are familiar to us all. "It shall be



when Yahweh thy God shall bring thee into the land which He sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities which thou buildest not, land and houses full of all good things which thou filledst not, and cisterns hewn out which thou hewedst not, vineyards and olive trees which thou plantest not; when thou shalt eat and be full. Then beware lest thou

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forget Yahweh" (Deut. 6:10-12; Joshua 24:13).

In Deut 8:8, it is described as a "land of wheat and barley and vines and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil, olive, and honey." It must indeed have been "a delightful land," "the glory of all lands," as testified through the prophet Ezekiel (ch. 20:6, 15), whose capital was pronounced by the Psalmist as "beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth... the citadel of the great king" (48:2).

When the people chode with Moses and spoke disparagingly of this favoured land, saying "It is no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates" (Num. 20:5), they sadly misrepresented "the good land," for, when dwelling there in peace and safety under the providential care of Yahweh their God, who had promised His richest blessings upon them, besides the increase of their wealth and stores, on conditions of faith, and obedience to His laws, they enjoyed all these good things to the full.

Moses had said, "Yahweh thy God... will love thee and bless thee and multiply thee: He also will bless the fruit of thy land, thy corn and thy wine and thine oil... and thou shalt be blessed above all people" (Deut. 7:13). This was something both glorious and encouraging to look forward to — something attainable also and which was realised in part when Israel entered in and took possession of the Holy Land (Deut. 11:24). And none the less certain will be the realisation of those more enduring things associated with Israel and the saints under the New Covenant in Christ Jesus our Lord. "For all things are yours" says the Apostle, "and ye are Christ's and Christ is God's" (1Cor. 3:22-23). And in regard to present necessities, "my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19).

Let us once be certain that we have God's favour towards us, and His blessing upon us, and all will be well. What begins in Him will be blessed by Him. It is God that blesses, and without His blessing the greatest results are small, and with it the least results are blessings indeed. The blessings pronounced upon the believer shine out in his countenance; he is happy and contented, for "the blessing of Yahweh, it maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow" (Pro. 10:22). Those who are blessed thus are blessed in their mercies and in their prosperity. They are blessed in their labours and enjoy the work of their hands. The Psalmist testifies, "Thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: and happy shalt thou be."

But Israel soon became selfish and ungrateful. Receiving all the blessings they forgot to thank and praise the Giver, and those blessings soon vanished. Those who receive the greatest blessings should be the ones to give most, whether temporal or spiritual. Our prayer to God should ever be: Lord, bless us, that we may be blessings to others. We do not wish to be like the barren desert

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that drinks in the rain, the sunshine and the dew and yet produces nothing of benefit. Instead, we should be like the good soil that responds to the sun and rain, and bears much fruit, and glows with rich harvests — a blessing and joy to all around.

The soil and climate of the Holy Land were well suited to the growth of the vine, and it is among the chief productions of the country. It is also adapted to the favourable production of the olive, the mention of which has a peculiar prominence in the Scriptures. It is the most common tree in the Holy Land, and always constitutes an important part of the wealth of the country, on account of the many useful properties it possesses. Hence we find from numerous references to the vine and the olive how much depended upon the blessing of God upon them. The soil of Israel is very rich, and it is said that in the hands of intelligent farmers it could be made to produce almost anything. Even with the most primitive implements and methods, every kind of grain and fruit can be produced.

It occupies the most unique central position in the eastern hemisphere and forms the junction of Europe, Asia, and Africa. It is interesting to note that any road leading from Asia to Africa, or from Europe to Africa, at its most important point would have to pass through the Middle East, so that now liberty is proclaimed to the captives and the Jewish people enjoy their rights and privileges, a people with such a land, and such abilities could shed their influence throughout the whole world. This land, although occupied by such privileged people, was never very prominent in the political world. Egypt and Assyria usually overshadowed, excelled and conquered them, but they are destined at length to be the conquerors. Originally the Jews were a pastoral people. Greece may pride herself in art and science, as also Rome and Egypt, yet these Eastern shepherds — these despised and down-trodden peasants — these humble tillers of the ground, have ruled the destinies of the whole civilized world, by giving to it a Book — the Book that has been the source and very motive power of all that is truly good and noble in it today, leading mankind to God Himself, and giving them One — “the Branch of righteousness” (Jer. 33:15) — who by his example, life and death, has changed the whole course of the world, for, through them came “the man, Christ Jesus.”

Truly, then, are they a people that have been a blessing in the past, in spite of their failures, and will yet be a blessing to all the world in the future (Zech. 8:13), exercising that magnetic power of the Spirit in drawing many peoples to the Lord (v. 23). Then, “the seed shall be prosperous” indeed, and “the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase... and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things” (v. 12), saith their God.

How forcible are these words! And let us recollect that it is the same land of

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promise — the land covenanted to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that is to be thus restored and beautified. Moses informed Israel that it was “a land which Yahweh thy Elohim careth for: the eyes of Yahweh thy Elohim are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even to the end of the year” (Deut. 11:12). And that word “careth” is rather “seeketh.” Thus Moses exalts the land above every land. The eyes of the Lord were continually watching to see if anything was lacking. Its fruitfulness was not so much the effect of the soil as the fruit of divine blessing, and was conditional upon perfect love and obedience. Love will work in obedience. The law of God sets before us a blessing. The only acceptable obedience is that which flows from a principle of love (1Jn. 5:3). Sin always tends to shorten the days of men, and this is what shortened the days of Israel’s prosperity in the good land. God would bless them with all good things, if they would love and serve Him. So “godliness has the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come,” and God’s favour shall “put gladness into the heart more than the increase of corn, and wine and oil” — the symbols of all good.

*“Love is the fountain whence all true obedience flows,
The believer serves the God he loves, and loves the God he knows.”*

For lack of love to God and disobedience to His Law both Israel and Judah were eventually removed out of God’s sight, for when they were expelled from the Holy Land they were out of the lovely landscape and were out of the sight of their divine Benefactor, who refuses to “look upon” transgressors and the wicked. When they returned from their captivity, they did indeed for a time “live in His sight” but not for long.

In one sense it is impossible for any to escape the all-piercing eye of their Creator, and so as evil as Israel and Judah were, nothing can be out of His sight, who seeth all. After an enumeration of the sins of Israel it is recorded in 2Kings 17: “Therefore Yahweh was very angry with Israel and removed them out of His sight: there was none left but the tribe of Judah only. Also Judah kept not the commandments of Yahweh their God but walked in the statutes of Israel which they had made. And Yahweh rejected all the seed of Israel” (vv. 18, 19, 23).

Ingratitude, idolatry, impiety, and falsehood accompany the secret sins of evil thoughts and covetous desires, “He that telleth lies,” says God, “shall not tarry in My sight” (Psa. 102:7). The golden altar community we read of in Rev. 9:13, have never been removed out of God’s sight as Israel were, though scattered, through a long series of ages among nations, kindreds and tongues. They have been cast down, but not forsaken; troubled and oft perplexed, but not hidden from sight. They are represented as before Him in all the brightness of a tried and precious faith. It is the altar of gold from which ascends the sweet odours of prayer and praise through Jesus Christ. Yet we must never forget that

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Israel will again be restored and united (Eze. 36), for Yahweh testifies through the prophet Hosea (ch. 5:15), "In their affliction they will return and seek Me early." They will say, "Come let us return unto Yahweh... After two days He will revive us: in the third day (the day of their national resurrection) He will raise us up and we shall live in His sight."

When the dying Jacob blessed his sons, he said of Judah, showing the abundance of vines that he should possess, "Binding his foal unto the vine and his ass' colt unto the choice vine... He washed his garments in wine and his clothes in the blood of grapes: his eyes shall be red with wine and his teeth white with milk" (Gen. 49:11-12). The Jew translates this as follows: "Binding unto the ass his foal and to the vine branch the son of his she-ass, he washed in wine his attire, and in the blood of grapes his raiment; his eyes are red with wine and the whiteness of his teeth as with milk." In this prediction respecting Judah, the patriarch uses his name to describe what he should enjoy. The meaning of Judah is "praise" — "Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise." Caleb and David were of the tribe of Judah, and our Lord is called "the Lion of the tribe of Judah." We find this distinction of the tribes in Num. 23:24, "Behold the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion; he shall lie down until he eat the prey and drink the blood of the slain. Vineyards and wine in great abundance are his."

To this day the inhabitants of Lebanon, when at vintage season they strip off the rich clusters of grapes, and thrust them into the wine vats, tie to the vines the asses that have been helping them, letting them eat the leaves and branches as they please. In allusion to this very ancient custom, that spoke of vintage satisfactorily gathered in, and hinted at the gatherers having gone away to the wine vats, there to tread out the grapes, Jacob describes Judah's plenty of all good things.

Think of Eshcol and Hebron, with their hills terraced to the summit with lovely vines — of their plains and valleys covered with cattle and goats. All that might make the eye sparkle and the countenance beam with ruddy glow, while they enjoyed a full share of the land flowing with milk and honey. O Judah, thy brethren and the nations shall praise thee. The Gentiles will love thee for Shiloh's sake, who rests at the Father's right hand, the true Judah who sheds the greater glory over the tribe, for he dispenses blessings greater far, and better, than the wine and milk of Judah (Zeph. 3:20; Joel 3:20).

In Isaiah 63:1, the spiritual significance of this is given: "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed (or crimsoned) garments from Bozrah? glorious in his apparel, marching in the greatness of his strength?" The prophet beholds in vision the Messiah returning from the conquest of his enemies in triumph, of whom Edom is a type. He is struck with the majesty of his appearance, because

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he is arrayed in glorious apparel, as a mighty prince, and marching not as in a weary combat, but in the greatness of His strength. To the questioner Messiah answers that he has been treading the winepress alone — the winepress of the wrath of God (Rev. 14:19; 19:13), and by his own power without any human aid the multitudinous Christ has crushed his opposers, for it is the day of vengeance, appointed by the Father.

In ancient times the wine was pressed from the grapes by a person treading on them with bare feet, and the juice flowed out from the cask into vats prepared to receive it. Those employed in treading the purple, blue, or coloured grapes, frequently sprinkled their robes with the juice, and bore traces of doing so as they could not avoid it. The idea is that of great slaughter, and he that was chiefly concerned here, bears upon his robes the blood that has been sprinkled. It is a symbolical expression denoting the severity of the conflict through which he passes.

Once this mighty Conqueror appeared on earth in weakness to pour out his own precious blood as an atonement for our sins; but in due time he will manifest himself in his mighty power “taking vengeance on them that know not God and obey not the Truth” (2Thes. 1:8).

Much that is said about Judah in Gen. 49 can be applied to the Lord Jesus. In him there is an abundance of all that is nourishing and refreshing to the soul, and which maintains and strengthens the spiritual life. The AV translation of v. 12 is not correct; it should be “red with wine and teeth white as milk.” Wine is the symbol of Christ’s blood which is “drink indeed” (Jn. 6), and all the blessings of the gospel are as wine and milk, free to all who hunger and thirst after righteousness (Isa. 55:1). The wine mentioned in the Bible undoubtedly is fermented liquor, which may be proved by the fact that when taken in excessive quantities was intoxicating. If it had been only grape juice it would have needed no such divine injunctions as are to be found in Eph. 5:18; 1Tim. 3:8; and Tit. 2. In the New Testament the word “wine” is found 39 times, in 38 of which references the Greek original is *oinos* as in the previous three. The Hebrew word most frequently rendered “wine” is *yahyim*, and if we refer to Esther 1:10; 1Sam. 1:14; and Jer. 23:9, among many other references, we shall observe that wine was intoxicating and stimulating at these times. And much earlier still, for we read in Gen. 9 that Noah planted a vineyard and drank of the wine, and was drunken. He was the first to cultivate the vine after the flood. Many are of the opinion that wine was not unknown before the flood and that Noah only continued its cultivation. Early writers think that he did not know the force of wine, having never used it. He is supposed to be the first that pressed out the juice of the grape and to have reduced it to a potable liquor. Before him men might only have eaten the grape like other fruits. We read of the first vineyard in

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the days of Noah and the vine still grows plentifully in Armenia and the districts of Ararat. But, though we have no earlier record, we believe that this choice and significant plant must have graced some of Eden's loveliest garden bowers, and we can rightly imagine our first parents, a happy pair, reclining in the gathering twilight, in the cool of the day, beneath some of the most luscious branches of a fragrant vine. The fig tree was there, we know, and this seems to be so often associated in Scripture with the vine. And not only do our imaginations go back to Eden's sunny bowers but we look forward in the light of prophecy and behold Paradise restored and every man "sitting under his own vine and fig tree, none daring to make them afraid."

The methods of planting the vine were various. They were generally propagated by suckers. The branches were sometimes allowed to creep upon the ground, or the vine stood upright without support, or a post was erected with a crossbar, or a trellis or arbor was set up with four or more pillars, over which the boughs spread. Very often in Syria vines are trained upon a trellis or framework in straight rows, much as our rambling roses are: sometimes upon trees, and particularly the fig tree, hence the expression in Mic. 4:4 and Zech. 3:10. It is the emblem of peace and security. Vines are found in Hebron trained in this manner and bearing clusters of ten pounds in weight. Sometimes they run upon the sides of houses as the one we have been admiring.

In Psa. 128:3, we are introduced to a happy Jewish homestead. The father, the head of the family, walking in the fear of Yahweh and shedding a godly influence on the whole domestic circle. "Thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands" is the promise to all such. "Happy shalt thou be and it shall be well with thee. Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table."

The wife is not to be merely as a spreading vine, that serves only as an ornament, but as a fruitful vine that is profitable and fruitful both to God and to her husband. The vine is a weak and tender plant of itself and needs to be supported and cherished, but it is very valuable. Hence the injunctions in the epistles of Paul and Peter.

As sisters we should always remember our place in life. It is the "sides of the house" that the fruitful vine adorns. The godly wife and mother is seen and known at her best in the home, guiding and training the little ones and bringing joy to her helpmeet. Woman's place is neither creeping and trailing about the floor as a cowering drudge or idle gossip, nor a cumberer of the ground as a busybody and tale bearer, an uncared for and neglected bramble; nor as "the grass upon the housetops" we read of in the next Psalm — standing up for equal rights and privileges with man in public affairs. But as the beautiful vine that cleaves to the housesides, tender and pliable, so shall such a wife, such a mother,

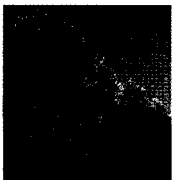
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daughter and sister, be in their respective homes. Fruitful in loving service, in wisdom, purity and good management, a vine, the branches of which, as it is recorded in Gen. 49 of Joseph, "run over the wall." We have only to trace the history of Ephraim and Manasseh to see how truly Joseph's spreading branches "ran over the wall." Not bringing forth sour grapes, or the grapes of Sodom, but the sweet refreshing fruits of a godly mind and a loving heart.

The vine of Sodom is referred to in Deut. 32:32. That is, a vine of a plant from Sodom, that brings forth only bitter grapes and of which no use can be made. It is affirmed that the fruits which grow about the Dead Sea are all rotten within, and when opened are only full of dust. Moses shows by this figure that the people of Israel were degenerated, and that their principles and practices were all corrupt and abominable.

"Thy children (shall be) like olive plants," continues the Psalmist, likely in time to become olive trees themselves, and though we are wild by nature, yet may be, in due course, grafted into the good olive and partakers of its root and fatness. The wild olive (Rom. 11:17) is smaller than the cultivated, and its fruits, if it produce any, are far inferior. To graff, or graft, is to inset a shoot or bud of one tree into the branch of another. The stock of the latter is usually inferior and the graft valuable. The sap of the natural tree being conveyed into the graft is, by a peculiar process, changed into the natural sap of the graft, and hence the fruit of the graft will be of its own kind, and the natural tree of another. In the spiritual analogy it is the inferior wild sapling, only valuable to the Master Gardener, who takes painstaking care with it, for the prospect of what it may become when it partakes of the root and fatness of the true olive.

The olive is a beautiful and durable tree, and its fruits rich and valuable; hence the frequent figurative allusions to it in the Scriptures. The fatness of the olive was proverbial as we see from Judges 9:8-9. Being an evergreen tree it is used as a beautiful symbol of fresh and continued piety, the result of divine blessing. "I am like a green olive tree," says the Psalmist (52:8). If we would be like the green olive tree, we must live the life of faith and confidence in God, and in His grace, and remember that the thankful hearts add much to the beauty of their faith. The young sprouts of the olive grow up in graceful circuit from the roots of the older trees, and so the Psalmist sings, "Thy children like olive plants round about thy table." This green and spreading tree was an object of great



beauty, and the prophets refer to it thus. Speaking again of Israel and Judah, Jeremiah says, "Yahweh called thy name a green olive tree, fair and of goodly fruit" (ch. 11:16). But when the vine or the olive planted in the pleasant vineyard becomes, and remains unfruitful, though luxuriant in foliage and promising in appearance, they must be cut down and cast into

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the fire of judgment. Hosea gives us a lovely description of these chosen people in their future blessedness, saying, "his branches shall spread and his beauty shall be as the olive tree... they shall grow as the vine." This is the fruit of God's favour which shall be produced in them, so that at last His grace will not have been bestowed in vain. Holiness is the beauty of the believer's character, so let us see that we adorn our profession with this heavenly grace.

The olive branch is regarded universally as the emblem of peace, and it is an object of much joy. We all know from experience that peace and joy go hand in hand, as the result of holiness, in the Lord. Peace and plenty, joy and satisfaction, is the picture presented before our mind's eye when meditating upon the trees and plants of the Holy Land. Joshua and Caleb, the two faithful spies, bore with pleasure and joyful anticipation the specimen fruits of the good land. Think of them returning to Kadesh bearing that immense luscious bunch of grapes between them to preserve it from injury! Bunches were often found weighing ten pounds, and even up to twenty pounds, and are even now to be found very large. The grapes of Egypt were very small comparatively (v. 20). There was a great contrast, yet the ten despised God's goodness (Num. 14:2), with the result that they forfeited their share in the promised blessings (Heb. 4:2). We see the fulfilment of it in Joshua 15:13. How little did they appreciate the goodness of God! They overlooked His power, wisdom, and faithfulness, and saw only the obstacles in the way. But faith sees God in all, and the difficulties vanish.

"What a murmuring and discontented people they were," remarks one in our company. "Even when they left Sinai on what they expected to be their last journey to the land they fell a lusting, for though this lusting commenced first among 'the mixed multitude' it soon spread to Israel. The melons and cucumbers they could remember that were so cool and refreshing, but there was no looking forward to better things." True: and we see their ingratitude also, but we must take heed to profit by their failures, for as our privileges exceed those of Israel, so do our responsibilities. The things they longed after grew marvellously quick in that hot, sandy country, even without cultivation. Onions and garlic are considered by Orientals as among the necessities of life, and no doubt would seem all the more delicious when remembered in a parched wilderness. Such melons and cucumbers are the common food in Egypt in summer, and it is said that the Egyptian onions are the sweetest in the world.

The things of the world likewise are more tempting to the flesh than the things of the Spirit, but we who are Christ's "have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts thereof." Let us therefore see that we press forward, and desire earnestly the best gifts that ever increase in richness as we learn to value them above all others.

Chapter Twenty Six

WINE AND OIL

*The ransomed earth we see
With peace and plenty blest;
And there in glorious liberty
Its hosts find rest.
There milk and honey flow,
And oil and wine abound
And trees of life for ever grow
With mercy crowned.*

“**T**HOU (Israel) shalt yet plant vines upon the mountains of Samaria, the planters shall plant and shall eat them as common things... for there shall be a day when the watchman upon Mount Ephraim shall cry ‘Arise, and let us go up to Zion, to Yahweh our God...’ And they shall come and sing in the heights of Zion, and flow together to the goodness of Yahweh, for wheat and for wine and for oil... and My people shall be satisfied with My goodness” (Jer. 31:5, 12, 14).

We have observed that the cultivation of the vine had arrived at some perfection in very early times, by the account of Melchizedek, of Lot, and of the aged Isaac, when refreshed by his sons: in the prophecy of Jacob, and in the book of Job. Wine, in moderation, is permissible. The evil is in the excess, and the sin of intemperance is most severely denounced in the Scriptures. Even the very use of the word “excess” proves that there is a proper use of wine (1Pet. 4:3). We must not forget that God created the fruit of the vine and has blessed it abundantly to the uses of the people. Both the oil and the wine was to receive the blessings of heaven, and the Psalmist tells of “wine that maketh glad the heart of man” (104:15). The fruits of the earth, varying in different lands, are God’s provisions. And let us not forget the spiritual blessings they represent — the cup of salvation, and the oil of gladness, the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

At the marriage in Cana of Galilee, Jesus sanctioned the use of wine by miraculously providing a further supply to continue the feast. We know, too, with what satisfaction it was proclaimed, “Thou hast kept the good, or best, wine until now.” It was of the finest quality.

Perhaps the real reason for this abundant gift lay in the symbolic character of the fruit of the vine. What induced Christ’s gift of wine here was that which induced its permanent use in the Lord’s Memorial. Wine, in the East and everywhere has been regarded as the richest element on the festive table. It is because of its very potency to stimulate the blood and brain that many refuse to

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take it. As a symbol its significance lay here. It was the richest and rarest delicacy or necessity that could be provided at this feast.

The prophetic aspect of the miracle should not be overlooked. He who now turned the water into wine should turn in like manner "the poorer dispensation," the thin and watery elements of the Jewish religion (Heb. 7:16) into the richer and nobler, into the life giving, gladdening wine of a higher faith.

Corn and wine and oil denote all kinds of temporal blessings which were more frequently promised and bestowed under the Old Testament economy, but were types of spiritual blessings. When blessing Jacob, Isaac said "God give thee of the dew of heaven, the fatness of the earth (oil) and plenty of corn and wine" (Gen. 27:28).

Wine was in use in the time of Joseph, and it seems very natural that the cupbearer (Gen. 40) should dream of wine, and of presenting it in a cup to his master. Our daily duties are usually woven into our night dreams, and what the heart has nearest and closest is what is most often reflected to us in dreams during the silence of night. The remarkable feature in this dream was not the natural history of it, but the speed in which it was represented. There was to be a speedy fulfilment, for in three days he was restored to his butlership again. The word rendered "butler" here is "cupbearer" in Nehemiah. In ancient times it was the duty of the butler simply to have charge of the wine-cellar and to present the wine at the banquet, which, in this case, was unintoxicating, for he squeezed the grapes into the cup that he offered to his master.

The vines of the East attain a very large size, reaching the tops of the highest trees, and are sometimes much thicker in the trunk than a man's body. The first produce of the vineyard is seen in the green grape referred to in Num. 6:4. It is used for its verjuice to give a tart taste to all articles of food that need it, and for making a refreshing drink. Sometimes this green grape is thoroughly dried and ground into powder in a mill, and the powder bottled. It supplies the place of lemonade to those who may never see a lemon.

A Nazarite was to abstain from wine, and all intoxicating drinks, and every form of vineyard fruit, natural or prepared. He must neither eat moist grapes or dried. "He shall eat nothing that is made of the vine tree, from the kernel to the husk." We learn from this that even that which is lawful, under certain circumstances was not expedient. The fruit of the vine was also forbidden to Aaron when going into the tabernacle (Lev. 10:9).

Wine, or the cup, is often referred to as representing the anger of Yahweh as in Psa. 60:3, "Thou hast shewed Thy people hard things. Thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment" or staggering. And in Jer. 25:15, we read: "For thus saith Yahweh Elohim of Israel unto me: Take the wine cup of this fury at My hand, and cause all the nations to whom I send thee to drink." Wine used to

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be administered by way of medicine to such as were in trouble and sorrow, as recorded in Pro. 31:6-7, "Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish and wine unto those that be heavy of heart. Let him drink and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more." Wine and strong drink were given to those who were condemned to die, at their execution to stupefy them and take away some of their pain and fear of death. Hence we find that certain of the women of Jerusalem used to mix certain drugs together with wine. It may have been such a kind of mixture that was offered to our Lord before he was nailed to the cross. The Psalmist says, "In the hand of Yahweh there is a cup and the wine is red; it is full of mixture, and He poureth out of the same: but the dregs thereof all the wicked of the earth shall drain out and drink" (Psa. 75). This will have its fulfilment when the things of Rev. 16 and 17 are accomplished facts. The great system of abominations will then "come into remembrance before God" and He will give unto her (Rome) "the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath," so that she will no longer be able to deceive and make drunk the inhabitants of the earth "with the wine of her fornication" in its false doctrines.

"The vine of the earth" (Rev. 14:17-18) is a phrase representing the civil, military, and ecclesiastical constitution of what is called "Christendom." The grapes of this vine are the nations clustered together into empires and kingdoms. To gather the clusters of the vine is to cause the armies of the nations to assemble together for war, so that they may be cut off and trodden down. Wherever the trampling of them occurs, there is the wine press into which they are cast, the great wine press of the wrath of God. The great outcry shouted forth by the angel of the altar is promptly responded to by the angel of the sickle who will put his forces into motion against the enemy. The sickle that he handles in the sanguinary vintage of the earth is "the remnant of Jacob" who then will be "among the Gentiles in the midst of many people as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flock of sheep; who, if he go through, both treadeth down and teareth in pieces and none can deliver. And I will execute vengeance in anger and fury upon the nations, such as they have not heard" (Micah 5:8, 15).

Such is the instrumentality of the Spirit in the down-treading of the wine press. The Master and his brethren in command of the twelve tribes of Israel, are the sickle of the Spirit, by which he cuts off the vine of the earth and treads its clusters in the great wine press of divine wrath.

The fathers have eaten the sour grapes and the children's teeth have been set on edge (Jer. 31:29; Eze. 18:2). They have sinned and the children share in the guilt and bear the punishment of their crimes.

The Jews made complaint to God who punished the sins in them that they pretended not to be guilty of, but Yahweh said He would cause this proverb to

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cease in Israel and that in future every one should suffer the punishment of his own iniquity. And so it is with the nations who forget God and yet blame Him for the calamities of war — the punishment of their own crimes and rebelliousness against His law.

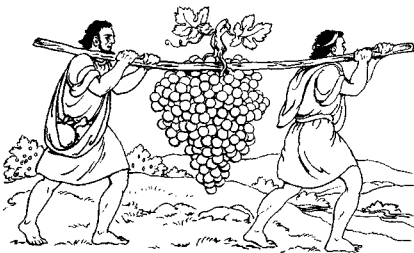
Wine presses were cavities in the ground, built up or lined with mason-work. Such are referred to in Job 24:11 and Matt. 21:33. In Isa. 5:2, and in Mark 12:1, the term “wine press” means rather the open place or vessel, that received the expressed juice from the wine press. It was in one of these cavities that Gideon threshed his crops of wheat, for fear of being molested by the Midianites.

The regular vintage begins in Syria about the middle of September, and lasts about two months. Lev. 26 mentions its blessedness, the cause of great rejoicing; and the prophet Amos carries us forward beyond the season of failure and distress portrayed by Habakkuk, to the days when “the ploughman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine and all the hills shall melt” (ch. 9:13-14).

The fresh ripe grapes may be had in the places where they are cultivated from three to five months in succession, owing to the differences of the vine and the soil and climate of the particular district. The Jews were expressly required by their beautiful God-given law not to gather the grapes until the vine was three years old (Lev. 19:23), and they were to leave even then some fruit on the vines, and on the ground for the poor and the stranger (v. 10), whose privilege it was to gather these for their own use. The grapes thus left were called “the gleanings,” and as they hung here and there, one or two, on the vines, or scattered on the ground, they were a very striking emblem of the decreased inhabitants of a city or country, as the prophets observe (Isa. 27:6; 24:13; Her. 6:9; 49:9; and Obad. 5).

When passing through a neighbour’s vineyard, the Jew was allowed to eat the grapes at his pleasure, but none must be taken away (Deut. 23). In Lev. 25:3-5 there are certain restrictions concerning the sabbath of the seventh year. “Six years shalt thou sow thy field, and... prune thy vineyard, and gather in the fruit

thereof; but in the seventh year shall be a sabbath of rest unto the land, a sabbath for Yahweh: thou shalt neither sow thy field nor prune thy vineyard. That which groweth of its own accord of thy harvest thou shalt not reap, neither gather the grapes of thy vine undressed: for it is a year of rest unto the land.” This is a difficulty to many who stumble at the Word, but its



divine authorship is hereby the more truly confirmed. Who would naturally leave their land uncultivated and their vineyards not pruned or dressed for a whole year? But whatever God requires is consistent, for v. 20 declares that provision was promised for that year, so that "in keeping His commandments there is great reward" (Deut. 24:20-21). Some are of opinion that the prohibition delivered by Moses against gleaning grapes after the vintage may signify a second vintage after the first, which was never so good or plentiful as the former: for this, they say, was over in the hot climates about the end of August, and the other in September. God requires therefore that the second vintage shall be left to the poor, as well as the grapes of the first that have escaped the observation of the gatherers. It is frequently used in the Scriptures to describe an almost total destruction: the similitude of a vine stripped in such a manner that there is not a bunch of grapes left for those who come forth a-gleaning (Jer. 39:10). The recollection, if not the actual fact of the vintage season, drew from our Lord's lips the parable of the laborers in the vineyard, with the object of showing how all faithful service, of long or short duration, will be rewarded.

Morier, a traveller in Persia, relates that he saw every morning in the market-place of Hamadan, a band of peasants with their implements, waiting to be hired. Finding some standing unoccupied late in the day he put to them the question, "Why stand ye here idle all the day?" and received the reply in the very words, "Because no man hath hired us." In our present favourable position we may try and picture the scene of vintage time. All the hillsides covered with vines, and all the vines loaded with fine ripe grapes. Vines are usually planted upon heights or precipitous crags (Jer. 31:5), where it is sometimes necessary to build walls in order to retain the soil. The whole process of preparing a vineyard is described in Isa. 5. The vine dresser selects a propitious spot, with a southern aspect or exposure; he builds a wall around it, loosens the soil and gathers out the stones; then erects a tower and digs a wine press. Then can it be truly said: "What more could have been done to my vineyard?"

Vineyards were also enclosed with a hedge or wall to defend them from the ravages of wild beasts to which they were exposed. In the Song of Solomon we read "the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines." A tower was built as the station of the watchman. What remains of the culture of the vine is very simple. Once or twice in the season the plough is run through the vineyard, to loosen the earth and free it from weeds, and a proper direction is given to the growing branches. The vine dressers, or keepers of the vineyard, form a distinct branch of labour. During the vintage season extra labourers are required. The men know this, so the village market-place is thronged early in the morning with knots of men waiting to be hired. Then comes the vine grower and bargains with them. The wages are soon agreed upon and off they go. Again and again the vine

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grower comes back, for he wants more men. The weather is fine and there is the prospect of a good vintage, and the work must be done without delay. We look into the vineyard and see them all working like bees. Some gathering grapes; others carrying them in baskets (Jer. 6:9) to the wine press; others are treading out the juice.

Eastern travellers tell us that they have often seen the black grapes spread on the ground in beds exposed to the sun to dry for raisins; while at a distance one or two, and sometimes as many as five men, with bare feet and legs are treading the fruit into a kind of cistern, or vat, usually about eight feet (2.4 metres) square, and four feet (1.2 metres) high, with a grated aperture near the bottom, through which the expressed juice runs into a vessel beneath.

A very beautiful prophecy relating to the blessedness and plenitude of the future age is given in the words of Hag. 2:16. The time of blessing begins before the time of the appearing of the fruits upon the earth.

The treaders usually sing and shout while the red blood of the grapes flows around them, and thoroughly stains their garments, hence the expression in Lam. 1:15, "Yahweh hath trodden, as in a wine-press, the virgin, the daughter of Judah." It is a gloomy picture given in Isa. 16:8-10, "for the shouting for the summer fruits, and for thy harvests is fallen." O Heshbon and Elealeh... "gladness is taken away and joy out of the plentiful field; and in the vineyards there shall be no singing, neither shall there be shouting: the treaders shall tread out no wine in their presses, I have made their vintage shouting to cease," on account of the pride and haughtiness of Moab (see Jer. 25:30). All the while the vintage is progressing there is a noise and shouting, but it is hard work toiling under the fierce sun and parching wind for so many hours. The word rendered "heat" in Mat. 20:12, is the name of the dry, sultry east wind, and is used in the *Septuagint* version of Eze. 19:12.

These hired labourers only think of their wages. By and by they take it and go wearily home. But the men who came just as the sun was sinking behind the western hills — how different with them! They do not know what they will receive, but they know it is little that they deserve and so are contented to leave it, knowing the master to be a generous man. The sun is setting, the work done, and the paying time arrives (Lev. 19:13; Deut. 24:15). The master is rich and kind, he cannot bear to think that the last hired should return home with nothing for their families, for he knows they were willing to work, only they were not hired; so he makes them a present — he gives them a whole day's wages. But there is dissatisfaction. The first hired received the exact sum agreed upon. They were not wronged, for they received precisely what they expected.

Christ calls us to work for him. There is plenty of work for all. If we have but little time, so had the last-hired labourers in the parable. Do we care for our

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Master? Then let each of us do something. He knows our works, our abilities and our opportunities, and whatever we do, if it is done out of love for him, he will smile upon it and say, "She hath done what she could." Christ will give us an abundant reward, not because we are really deserving of it but because of his free grace. Not wages, but a gift. Let us pray that we may plenteously bring forth the fruit of good works, so that we may of him be plenteously rewarded.

"It certainly makes one's mouth water to think of all this delicious abundance," remarks another sister. What a most severe punishment it must have been when neither the vine nor the olive yielded their fruits! (Deut. 28). Yes; and truly pitiable was Israel's experience when they forfeited their possession of the Holy Land and lost all its blessings. Extremely delightful and refreshing indeed must have been such joyful seasons as that we have just contemplated. It must have filled the heart with gladness to behold such fruitful regions, and much more to partake of its luscious fruits.

"We should all have appreciated a walk through King Solomon's vineyard at Baal-hamon" (Song of Sol. 8:11), says a third sister. "Its beauty and fragrance must have surpassed anything we can imagine." Throughout this Song of Songs there is frequent mention of the choiceness, plenitude, and fragrance of the vine, and in these we may trace the things of the Spirit concerning Christ and his Bride, the ecclesia, for all these lovely things relating to the king and his courtiers are emblematic of the riches of the glory of the inheritance of the saints in Christ. He is the vine and his people are as a vineyard. Each plant growing the same universal fruit, by the influence of the light and warmth of the same Spirit, and refreshed by the breezes of the same divine atmosphere. The roots of each cohering with the roots of the parent vine, in the midst of the vineyard, and from it deriving nutriment: their vitality, sap, and their fruit-bearing, and that abundantly to his praise.

The Bride in Song of Sol. 1:14, is compared to a cluster of camphire or cypress that came from the vineyards of Engedi. The cypress tree is a shrub as high as a pomegranate tree, its leaves are like those of the olive, its blossoms are white and sweet-scented, and its fruit hangs like clusters of grapes and has a very pleasing fragrance. Those grapes of the cypress that came from the vineyards of Engedi were of great reputation (ch. 7:8; 6:11). Particular districts of Judea were noted for the excellency of their grapes, as Engedi, Eshcol and Sorek. The word *Sorek* is not only the name of a region in the tribe of Judah, but also signifies the finest and noblest variety of the vine and its clusters that abounded there. Ezekiel speaks of the wine of Helbon that was sold at the fairs of Tyre (ch. 27:18). Sometimes it is spoken of by a common name, as "sweet" or "fat" wine, for Helbon comes from a word signifying "fat." The finest grapes were of old, as at the present produced on Mount Lebanon and Helbon or

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Aleppo. In recent times Palestine has been known to produce clusters weighing twelve pounds, the single grapes being as large as plums. The clusters of Judea, a few miles west of Jerusalem are larger than any in Europe. They have been seen of such a size that it was impossible for a single man to carry one of them uninjured for any distance. Some of the best vines grow in the environments of Bethlehem, in the vale of Rephaim, between Bethlehem and Jerusalem, and in the vale of Eshcol. The grapes of the Holy Land are mostly red or black, with the exception of the Sorek. Hence the juice of the grape is called “the blood of the grape” (Deut. 32), translated in our version “red wine” (Isa. 27:2). Hosea, referring to the wine of Lebanon, speaks of the “sweet scent thereof” (ch. 14:7). Some think that “the wine of Lebanon” may mean a sweet scented wine in which perfumes are mixed to make it of better flavour. In Song of Solomon mention is made of a medicated wine, spiced wine — wine mixed with perfumes.

The wines of Palestine were also qualified with water that they might be taken without inconvenience. In Proverbs we read of those who are supported with ill-gotten goods and abuse the good things that God gives them; they offend Him by the bad use they make of the necessities of life. And Amos tells how they “make themselves merry” at the expense of those they have unjustly condemned (ch. 2:8).

“We usually find that the wicked abuse, or use in excess, the things which God supplies for our sustenance and enrichment,” rejoins another of our company. “I have noticed how frequently ‘wine and oil’ are mentioned in the Bible, but I have never quite realized the vast importance or significance of either as I do now.”

The vine and the olive are frequently mentioned, and in conjunction with each other. The Good Samaritan poured oil and wine into the wounds of the unfortunate man who fell among thieves. Pure olive oil is a good cure. Wine with oil is referred to often. Pure olive oil was used for the light in God’s sanctuary and in the holy things pertaining thereto.

In Psalm 104:15, both the juice of the olive and of the vine are implied. It is “oil to make a man of cheerful countenance, and wine to gladden his heart.” The Holy Land was indeed a wine and oil growing country, and certainly the best use was made of both.

When blessing the tribes of Israel, Moses said of Asher, “Let Asher be blessed with children; let him be acceptable to his brethren and let him dip his foot in oil” (Deut. 33:24). This expression is one that every Oriental can appreciate and desire to make his own. The oil of the olive tree is always associated with blessings, and Isaiah foretold that Messiah would give to his people “beauty for ashes, and the oil of joy for mourning” (Isa. 61:3). Oil confected was used by God’s appointment to anoint the priests, their garments,

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and the holy things of the tabernacle, which signified the separation of these things to the service of God, and the inward qualifications requisite to the office of the high priest, namely the gifts and graces of the Spirit, that elsewhere are set forth in the Scriptures by oil (Exod. 30:24; Matt. 25:4). It was also typical of those gifts with which Christ was endowed beyond measure. Of him the Psalmist sang, "God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows" (Psa. 40). That is, God hath raised and advanced thee far above all men and angels, to a state of joy and endless glory at His right hand, or, God hath endowed thee with all the gifts and graces of the Spirit in an eminent and peculiar manner to the comfort and refreshment of thine own, and all peoples, who will at length acknowledge thee to be their prophet, priest and king.

The oil of the olive was associated with the offerings under the Mosaic code for these specific reasons. The meal offering consisted first, of fine flour, oil and frankincense; second, of unleavened wafers anointed or smeared with oil (Lev. 2). In the meal-offering we find a type of Christ's life on earth. How he lived and acted in the midst of those who watched his words and also the course he pursued from day to day. In the three different kinds of offerings we have brought before us — first, his sinless purity in the unleavened cake; second, his divine character, as well as human nature, in the unleavened cake mingled with oil; third, his being anointed with the Spirit throughout the period of his humiliation, in the unleavened wafers anointed with oil.

Oil is generally used in the Scriptures as emblematic of the anointing of the Holy Spirit in a pre-eminent degree. Wine was used at the great Jewish feasts. The day, we believe, is not far distant when Jerusalem will arise from her sadness and put on her beautiful garments; and her people, anointed as with fresh oil, will rejoice in all her borders, amidst the increased usefulness and blessedness of these wonderful gifts. They will keep their feasts with gladness, and grow in all the graces of the Spirit, as the beautiful olive tree, and be strong and spread abroad as the luxuriant vine branches, and we hope to participate with them in these endless joys.

"We have lingered long enough in our present position, and dealt somewhat full with this subject; yet I should be disappointed if we dismissed it altogether without that most prominent feature — Christ, the true Vine," says another elderly sister.

Yes, verily, we cannot turn away from this pleasant picture, and this delightful theme without contemplating him more particularly, who is the centre of all this blissfulness; so, after a short rest, we will renew the subject.

Chapter Twenty Seven

THE TRUE VINE

*May we in all our weakness
find strength from Thee supplied;
And all, as fruitful branches,
in thee, the Vine, abide.*

AS throughout the Scriptures, the Vine is the type of all things fruitful, fair and gracious, so he who is “altogether lovely,” appropriates this title as his own. Whatever was dimly shadowed forth by the vine and the vine branches in nature and prophecy have their fulfilment in the kingdom of grace, being realised in Christ and his people. Yea, all things most fair and lovely in the natural world are vindicated for himself, by him, who is “fairer than the children of men” and who claims all these as shadowy types and dim reflections of his own perfect beauty, and of those associated with him.

Under the sublime figure of the vine and the vine branches our Lord sets forth that spiritual union existing between himself and his saints. This close union lies just naturally in the words: “I am the true vine, ye are the branches” (John 15). It needs no forcing and is the most beautiful of all truths that the language of our Master embodies.

The disciples were sorrowful at the idea of losing their beloved Master, but Jesus consoled them with these familiar and comforting words “Let not your hearts be troubled,” and shows them that his going away would not really separate him from them, because of the closeness of their union. We have three illustrations of this wondrous union in the Scriptures, one each from the mineral world, the vegetable world, and the animal world. The foundation stone and the building in Eph. 2:20 and 1Peter 2:4-6; the vine and the branches as given in John 15; and the head and body in 1Cor. 12:27; Eph 1:22, 23; 4:15-16, and Col. 2:19.

Various conjectures have been given as to the occasion of this allegory. Those who think that Christ left the house after thus comforting his disciples (ch. 14) suppose that it was suggested by passing through some vineyards on the way to the brook Kedron and the Garden of Gethsemane, or that Christ alludes to that famous vine all of solid gold, with which, as a symbol of the theocracy, Herod had adorned the temple he rebuilt. But there is no need to find any immediate circumstance that suggested the metaphor, beyond the “fruit of the vine” of which Jesus and his disciples had partaken on that last memorable

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evening. Think of our Saviour's act recorded in Matt. 26. (Wine is obtained from the fruit of the grape.) Yet it may have been that as Jesus looked out into the night, he beheld in the moonlight's silvery beams, the leaves of a vine that clustered and entwined its tendrils around the latticed window of the guestchamber, or falling on the golden vine-branches that wreathed one of the temple gates. But our Lord required no suggestion from without; for he was well acquainted with all the secret essences of things the wonders of nature lay open before his mind's eye, and he could draw from this vast storehouse what was best suited to his present need — whatever would best embody that spiritual truth which he sought to convey.

So far as Christ did receive a suggestion, it was derived from those many passages in the Old Testament in which Israel, the people of God, are referred to under the type and figure of a vine. And in this fact we have the explanation of that word "true" ("I am the true vine"), which he claims for himself. For whenever he uses this word "true" about himself, or whenever John uses it of him, he claims or it is claimed for him, not so much that he is the true as contrasted with the false, but rather the perfect as distinguished from the imperfect, the substance as from the shadow. Thus, when Christ says of himself, "I am the true bread that came down from heaven," he does not deny that Moses gave the people bread from heaven, for the Psalmist declares "Man did eat angels' food." He only affirms that it was not such that a man might eat thereof and not die. When John testifies of him "that was the true light," he would certainly not imply that all others were only meteoric, or misleading. John the Baptist was a great prophet, but yet an inferior light compared with Christ. He did not deny, but allowed to Israel the title of God's vine, when affirming "I am the true vine" as in Psalm 80, where we read: "Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt, Thou hast cast out the heathen and planted it." Again in Jer. 2:21, "I planted thee (Israel) a noble vine, wholly a right seed." But Israel did not answer to God's true vine for they disappointed and defeated the expectations and intentions of Him who planted it. The goodly plant which He had planted on the mountains of Israel was turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto Him, whose clusters, after infinite long-suffering and forbearance were found to be "void of truth" and worthless, only fit to be cast out and trodden in the great wine press of divine judgment. The prophet says "He (God) looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry" (Isa. 5). Israel could neither expect the comfort of God's love, nor the protection of His arm unless they were obedient to His law and trusted in His Word. They bore the fruit represented by the wild grapes (v. 6). Wild grapes are the fruits of a corrupt nature. Where grace does not work, corruption will. Good purposes and good beginnings are good things, but not enough: there must be vineyard fruit;

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thoughts and actions, words and affections, agreeable to the Spirit. This vineyard hedged about, planted with the choicest vine, and receiving the best and most constant attention, with all the advantages of its excellent situation and special privileges, must be brought into account. God gave Israel His most excellent law, and divine ordinances. The temple was as a tower or beacon where He gave them tokens of His presence. God expects fruit from those who enjoy such privileges. He has a right to expect fruit, but when errors and vice go on unchecked and uncontrolled, and the vineyard is not pruned, then it will soon be grown over with thorns (v. 5). Instead of the fruits of humility, meekness, love and patience, for which God looks, there are the wild grapes of pride, passion and discontent; instead of the sweet, rich grapes of prayer and thanksgiving, there are the wild grapes of slander and evil speaking.

Let us take warning and endeavour to bring forth the fruits of righteousness. Notwithstanding all their advantages Israel had become like the wild vine that bears poisonous fruit, so "be not high-minded, but fear," and remember our privileges and responsibilities. And now there is another vine, the "true" Vine. The Jews thought that if a person was to be fruitful and to please God, he must belong to their race, for "apart" from the nation of Israel, whatever their character and disposition towards the divine Husbandman and the Israelitish vine, he could do nothing. This is true in many respects, but "apart" from what vine is answered in John. 15:5. There are two Greek words signifying "true": *alethes* and *alethinos*. The former means "true" as opposed to "false"; the latter indicates that which is "true" as opposed to the merely shadowy, imperfect or typical. The word here in John. 15 is *alethinos*, and is translated by Wycliff as "I am the very vine." Christ was so in contrast, not only with the Jewish nation, but also with the material plant. He does not say, "I am like the vine," but "I am the true vine," and thus declares that the vine is the actual shadow of his substance.

Israel was an empty vine, bringing forth fruit to itself and not to God. Elect though they had been, the salvation of the nations was not, in the highest sense, as it might have been, in it. The nations did not attach themselves to it as fruitful suckers. "Salvation is of the Jews" through him who proceeded out of their midst. Yet there had been a time when Israel flourished and was most truly God's vine, just as it was God's Son, although not his true Son. Thus in that word "true" our Lord is contrasting himself more with the moral than the material. Christ claims to be the highest — the only one in whom the title of the vine, with all its promise of fruitfulness could be completely fulfilled; who having trodden in the wine press of suffering and affliction, should yield as no other could yield, the wine of the soul — the wine that maketh glad the heart of God and man.

And what was the secret of our Lord's position which enabled him to express

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himself in this manner? How was he this true vine — both root, stock, and stem of a new order of beings who, united with him, would bring forth acceptable fruit and so glorify the Father? The answer can only be in that he was the Son of Man — the perfect Man, as well as Son of God — the only well-beloved Son of the Father full of grace and truth and also full of the Spirit; who having life in himself, had also the power invested with him to impart life, even spiritual and incorruptible to his members or followers. For it was necessary, yea, of vital importance, that he, the very root and essence of their glorious existence, should first partake of human nature; before the grand central Branch reaching even unto “heaven itself,” could be the root or means, out of which should grow branches yielding rich and luscious fruits, arriving at length to perfection, and becoming partakers of the divine nature. For, following the natural order, the root from which the branches receive life, nourishment and support is from beneath. From this root we draw our life — the life that had its origin in the death of Jesus.

But why did Christ choose the vine as representative of himself, and not the olive or the fig or some other fruit-bearing plant? Because the vine being the most perfect of all plants exhibits a most peculiar appropriateness as a type of Christ. Some plants possess one part, or one quality more highly developed, as the date palm for rectitude and gracefulness, the oil olive for healing and illumination, and the fig for nutriment; but in the vine there is an harmonious development of every part and quality. For perfect balance of loveliness and usefulness, no plant can equal the vine. Its stem and leaves are among the most elegant in shape and hue, its blossoms among the most modest and fragrant, while its fruit is botanically the most perfect of all fruits. Planters tell us that, to study perfection of form, colour, light and shade united in one object, we must place before us a bunch of grapes!

It is perfectly innocent, being one of the few climbing plants that do not injure the object of their support. It has no thorns and no noxious qualities; and besides this, all its parts are useful.

There are two great, strictly natural orders of plants — the *exogenous*, and the *endogenous*. The peculiarity of the exogens is to produce branches in all its parts; whilst the peculiarity of the endogens is to be simple and unbranched in all its parts. The vine is an exogens. And what a beautiful truth this suggests! Christ is not merely an endogens — a palm, that grows in stately majesty alone in the desert, rearing its branchless trunk, like a Corinthian pillar, graceful but solitary, and drinking in, by means of its beautiful foliage, all the fervid sunshine and the rich dew of heaven for its own selfish individual use. He is an exogens — a vine sending out branches on every side, repeating the general type in numberless miniature copies of its own form and structure, and converting all

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the influences of heaven and earth into means of nourishment and growth for its whole social economy.

Having presented himself as the “true vine” by which is meant that he is the source of spiritual life, Jesus proceeds to explain who are the branches. “I am the vine, ye are the branches.” His disciples were the true branches of the true vine. But stress is placed upon two points. The branches derive strength from the root, and no fruit can be produced apart from it. The baptized believer in Christ is a member or branch grafted into this true vine. There can be no spiritual life without him.

Just as the natural branches of the tree depend entirely upon the root and trunk, so the believer draws a spiritual life and nourishment from Christ. What do we expect to find on the branches of a vine? The luscious fruit such as we behold suspended on the branches of this glorious vine just above our heads as we rest in its shade. Some trees are cultivated for their wood, and some for their bark; some plants for their roots, some for their leaves and some for their flowers. But the vine for none of these, it is cultivated for its fruit. If there is no fruit, then of what use is the vine? By the unfitness of the vine-branch for any work, the prophet shows the rejection of Jerusalem, saying, “What is the vine tree more than any tree, or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest? Shall wood be taken thereof to do any work?” (Eze. 15:1-4). The answer must be in the negative.

The husbandman looking at his vines and seeing them bare, withered and useless, would feel not only grieved and disappointed, but angry and indignant. But what pleasure and satisfaction at seeing them full of life and promise. God had found pleasure in the Jewish vine, but oh, what joy and satisfaction He found in the true Vine — His Son, the Lord Jesus.

But let us think about the branches of a vine more particularly and try to understand more fully the illustration that Jesus gives. If Christ’s followers are the branches or members of him, the true vine, what does the Husbandman, his Father, look for in them? Is it not fruit, the choicest and the best? These are enumerated for us in Gal. 5:22 as love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance. They are produced by the indwelling Spirit-Word in those united with Christ. We speak of being created “new creatures” in Christ Jesus, of being redeemed and sanctified in him. What object has God in all this cultivation? Surely it is our fruitfulness in every good work (Eph. 2:10). Just as the rich, fine grapes are a credit to the vine grower, so God is glorified if we bear much fruit (Matt. 5:16; John 15:8). If a fruitless branch is useless, how much more so a fruitless servant of God? What good are we if we only “seem” to be religious? As James tells us: “it is vain.”

Let us see now what produces fruit on the branches of a vine. The chief

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essential is the sap flowing from the stem, but there are other important items, for example, the position of the vine, and the particular soil in which it is planted. Christ, the true vine, had his root or origin in Israelitish soil. He was of the royal house of David.

The vine never flourishes in a flat country, nor does every hill agree with it; only those that are turned mainly toward the east. It is said that "hills are in a manner the bulwarks of nature, which she invites us to garnish as so many vast walls for fruit, where the reflected heat of the sun is found united to the salubrity of the open air." Even barren hills, and those hanging grounds where no plough can be used, are annually clothed with the most beautiful verdure, and produce the most delicious fruit. The vine, with its dry and shapeless wood, is an emblem of those who, devoid of outward splendour of birth and honours, fail not to be useful. Often the obscure and unpromising perform such deeds that raise them above the princes of the earth. Even our dear Lord himself was humble and despised, and yet what great and wonderful works he did. Jesus, like the vine was planted in a barren soil, but who can estimate the blessings he wrought! Proving that the most humble in this life may work successfully for the glory of God.

The elements of the weather also produce different effects. Christ, although planted in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, nevertheless had ever around and above him the protecting arms of his Father — the great Husbandman. He grew in wisdom and in stature under the tender sympathy, care and tending of the divine Head Gardener. But all the care and training of the vine would be unavailing without the sap inside. It cannot be seen, but it is there, ever rising and flowing and finding its way through all the turns and twists of the branches even to the farthest twig: and on that remotest twig the fruit may appear. What is the "sap" in the true vine, and what is it that makes the children of God, the members of Christ, "fruitful unto every good work?" It is the grace and power of the Truth in their hearts. The great work associated with the true vine and the vine branches, both past, present, and future, is "not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit," saith Yahweh of Armies.

This strength comes to the believer through Jesus Christ (John 1:14, 16). It is indispensable like the sap. True, other things may help. Some who are in more favourable positions in a better situation, should bear more fruit, but there can be no fruit without this heavenly grace. The branch regarded of itself, apart from the vine, has no original source of life. The sap flows from the vine root to branch, tendril, leaf and fruit. So Christ says, "Without me ye can do nothing." That is, apart, or severed from me, ye are powerless, lifeless. The branch of itself is a lifeless organ and only fulfils its functions when it is connected with the vine. And so it is with the spiritual life. Apart from Christ we have no

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original source of life or fruitfulness. The true Life flows from him to every branch that abides in him; quickening by its power the whole being and making us fruitful in all good. "Those who live without faith in God may be said to exist rather than live," says a writer.

But suppose a branch that has been cut off, were fastened on to the vine again (not a grafting, but a loose fastening) will it get the sap as before? And if not, will it bear fruit again? Exactly so, says Jesus, "as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, no more can ye, except ye abide in me." Therefore we must "continue" and "abide in him," and not only be first united with him, grafted into him by faith and obedience, but we must keep in him. "Continue" (v. 9) is the same word in the Greek as "abide." We are "in Christ," like Noah in the ark. We are safe from God's judgments upon the wicked, shut in unto Him and separated off from the world, and like the man-slayer in the refuge city, we are secure from the avenger.

What a glorious and blessed position is ours in Christ Jesus! The apostle Paul thought it worth the loss of all things (Phil. 3:9). But what is it that prevents this continual abiding in Christ — that cuts the believer off from life in him? It is the same reason as the prophet testified to Israel, "your iniquities have separated between you and your God" (Isa. 59:2).

The branches abiding in the vine are all more or less abundant in fruit-bearing, and we cannot leave out of sight the solemn, awful truth of our Lord's words concerning the unfruitful branches. "Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away." Observe that "in me" — "every branch in me," therein is the particular force of the sin in those represented by the barren branches, inasmuch as there lay the possibility of their fruitfulness. They are branches in him. They have been united to him in the appointed way, and yet are not receiving life from him: all the recesses of their inner being, having become choked with worldliness and indifference, and the channels by which the divine grace might have been received, are all obscured by sin and unbelief. In baptism they were ingrafted upon him — the true vine, they were made branches in him and yet they would not draw life from him. As Christ said to the Jews: "Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life," but refusing him they chose rather to draw death from the roots of their old corrupt nature which they might have subdued and renounced completely.

The unfruitful branch, although it may have a place upon the vine for a time, while it appears to derive little life from the root, will not continue, for it will become dry and sickly, and eventually will run to waste. It looks as if a great wind or a heavy wind would detach it from its stem. The husbandman is distressed. He digs about the root and cleanses it. He removes with his knife everything which is likely to hinder the growth. If it continues barren, then it is

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lopped off, taken away, and its place filled with something more productive. So it is with the unfruitful member of the Body of Christ. They have been grafted into the true Vine, they have found a place in the true Vineyard, but notwithstanding all the care bestowed upon them, they are sickly, barren and unfruitful. They have received all the privileges, but they have been wasted upon them. They sometimes make a show of blossom, but it ends in disappointment. The blossom drops off, and never becomes fruit. Nay, instead of good fruit, bad fruit appears: evil habits and things that offend, which check all spiritual progress.

And what is done with these fruitless branches of the vine? Well do we know what we should do if we saw a bare withered and shrivelled branch with no fruit on it? Chop it off, of course. And, as we have asked previously, of what use is a chopped-off vine branch? No wood is so unfit as the vine for any use or work but its own, as the prophet Ezekiel has significantly taught. And if not fit for its own work, it is fit for nothing. The withered branch is taken away. It does not even retain in appearance its connection with the vine. The inward separation becomes an outward severance also, and the slightest touch will cause it to fall off, for there was no vital coherence, but only external contact between it and the living stem.

Is it possible that any believer in Christ answers to this? Any who profess and call themselves Christadelphians, or Christ's followers, who are so worthless? See what our Lord said about this in v. 6: "If any man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered." Also compare Matt. 3:10 and 13:41-42. The slightest occasion, the most trivial temptation, will be sufficient to bring out the fact that such have already fallen away from their Lord, and that all vital union between him and them has ceased.

The withered branches at last are gathered into bundles and burned. Thus proving that all is useless, for we do not make fuel of wood that can be turned into any nobler use or ends, but we do so without remorse of that from which all these uses have for ever passed away.

But there are signs also that distinguish the fruitful branch. It preserves its natural healthy appearance. It bears fruit and performs its proper functions. It remains part of the tree because its connection with it is essential for fruit-bearing. Once separated from the root it bears no fruit and dies. It is the same with the branches of the true vine. Apart from Christ, the believer has no life; he can do nothing. But in Christ, who is the source of life and fruitfulness, the true life flows from him to every branch that abides in him, and we can say like the apostle Paul: "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." Abiding in Christ, therefore, is the great essential to fruitfulness (John 15:4).

Let us observe, too, how this fruitfulness may be increased. "Every branch

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that beareth fruit he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.” If a surgeon has a patient suffering from some disease and he knows that an operation would afford great relief, it would be neither wise nor kind to withhold the operation on account of the temporary pain it causes. So God sometimes sends us temporary trials in order to increase our fruitfulness (Heb. 12:6). If the believer’s spiritual life becomes weakened, or there is the possibility of increased usefulness, then the divine Husbandman in love, prunes it in order that the best may be produced from it. The process may cause a pang as sharp as the edge of the pruner’s knife, but it is far better than this stagnation, ending in death, or moderate bearing of fruit.

Oh, precious words of the Lord Jesus, so fraught with comfort and consolation. He says “My Father is the Husbandman,” as if to tell us that we need not fear, for the One who inflicts the pain is the All-wise, Omnipotent Father, who doth not willingly afflict, but who knoweth our frame and nature, and our proneness to falter and droop under the pressure of grief or loss, as well as all our weaknesses and failures in striving to do the right. And here, as so often, the greatness of Christ goes side by side with his humility and he himself brings them into the closest contact and identifies himself with his weak and



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erring followers. He does not exclude himself from his heavenly Father's authority to be the Husbandman, not only of the branches but of the whole vine, for did not he bring also his own will into subjection to his Father's; he drank of the cup that his Father had mingled and was pruned by the same knife of suffering and affliction and much more extensively on account of the perfection of the fruit yielded. In all points tempted as we are, he learned obedience by the things which he suffered; and through his own obedience unto death became the Author of salvation to all them that obey him.

But while Christ does not exclude himself from this Husbandry, he refers chiefly to the branches, as they need it in a different sense and much more for refining and discipline. The very best need to be pruned and the worthless require taking away. "Every branch in me that beareth fruit He purgeth it," or rather "pruneth" or "purifieth." The RV gives "cleanseth." The word is connected with that rendered "clean" in the next verse. "Now ye are clean," said Jesus, or rather, "Ye are clean already." The word is the same in John 13:10 and the same sense. No plant requires more pruning than the vine. It is a familiar operation in the East, which all know to be necessary in order for it to be fruitful. The Law which forbade the Israelites to gather the grapes of the first three years (Lev. 19:23) gave occasion to the more careful and unsparing use of the pruning knife; hence the young stock came to much greater strength. We watch the husbandman as he takes the knife and cuts away all the boughs and sprouts from every branch. We may think "why injure the vines so?" But it is necessary, for if the branches are left to themselves, there will not be much fruit; the sap will be all used up in producing sprouts and leaves. If the husbandman cuts away what is not wanted then the more sap goes to feed the grapes.

There are two ways of "pruning" or "training" the believer in Christ. First, by instruction as intimated in John 15:3, "Ye are clean through the Word." The same idea is to be found in the seventeenth verse of chapter 17: "Sanctify them through Thy Word: Thy Word is Truth." And again in 2Tim. 3:16-17, Christ's words and the apostle's teach us both how to be holy and why to be holy, besides giving us the model and the motive of holiness. This is why Paul exhorts us in Col. 3:16 to "let the word of Christ dwell in us richly." Many ages before David knew of this divine method of cleaning, he said: "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way, even by taking heed to Thy Word" (Psa. 119:9).

The second way is discipline. Trial and troubles are God's pruning knives. If we do not cut away our sins of our own selves as our Lord advised in his discourse on the mount (Matt. 5:29-30), he must do it, however painful. But it all is done in love, not in anger, as it is written: "whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth... Now no chastening is pleasant, but grievous, yet afterwards it yieldeth (if rightly exercised) the

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peaceable fruits of righteousness.” David says again, “I know O Yahweh, that Thy judgments are right, and that Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me” (Psa. 119:75). So when troubles and trials come, let us remember what they are intended for, and we shall be able to say also: “It is good for me that I have been afflicted that I might learn Thy statutes” (v. 71). On the surface perhaps there appears a certain austerity, which we may observe even in the very promises of God. The fruit-bearing branches have their reward in being pruned: and herein is the secret of all that mystery of suffering with which the children of God are so often burdened. All their luxuriant shoots, maybe those most popular works in which they engage, shall be checked, and this oftentimes can only be done by a far sharper discipline — a far keener use of the pruning knife than they would willingly have chosen for themselves. So let us not be faint hearted nor discouraged, but learn the lessons well that the heavenly Vine-dresser desires for our good.

*Doubt not His love, whatever may betide,
Thou'rt not alone, the Lord is at thy side.
Trust Him with all thine heart, and thou shalt know
The peace that from this perfect trust doth flow.
His grace is all- sufficient, and ere long
Thy sighing shall be turned to grateful song.*

Christ pledged the faithfulness of his Father. He will not leave His own without that which is so necessary for their protection, for what does He want? It is “more fruit.” The heavenly Husbandman is not satisfied with a few grapes. No; He would like the rich, luxuriant grapes after the type of the grapes of Eshcol (Num. 13:23). God would have us like the beloved Persis who “laboured much” in the Lord (Rom. 16:12). “Much fruit” glorifies Him, and the chastening is in itself part of the reward. Jesus said to those two aspiring disciples, “Ye shall indeed drink of my cup (of pain) and be baptised with my baptism” (of suffering), and this very thought of identification with their suffering Master did not deter but drew them into yet closer union with him.

Another feature is that among the vine-branches there are degrees of fruitfulness. All the natural branches of a tree are not equally fruitful, so all the branches or members of the true vine are not equal. Some thrive and bear fruit abundantly, while others bring little fruit to perfection. The believer’s fruitfulness depends upon the closeness of the union with Christ. To be fruitful is to remain in union with him. The true life flows to every branch that abides in him. “Abide in me and I in you” is the secret. It is a command more than a promise. “Take heed that ye abide” may be understood by it. Apart from Christ we are fruitless, although there may be a show of leaves — yea, it may be “nothing but leaves.”

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The degrees of fruitfulness are not all the same, as some branches of a tree vary in size: some are larger than others and some more fruitful even though smaller in size. But all draw their life from the One Source. It is possible by our wilful waywardness to sever our union with Christ. The significant reason for all the training and pruning is that the fruitful branch may yield "more fruit" — the precious fruits of love, patience, and faith. The divine Husbandman takes great trouble with these choice branches, using special means and devoting special attention to them, putting them through keener testing, so that at length they may be refined and purified, and because of this perfection He has in view He will not spare until the desired end is reached. Just as the artist touches and retouches his picture when it is nearly finished, and will not leave it even when pressed by the unskilled onlooker who cannot understand why he still keeps returning to it, for he can see that greater excellence must be attained before he is satisfied to pronounce its completion.

And so it is recorded of these fruit-bearing branches: "He cleanseth them" in order that they may bring forth "more fruit." The great thing therefore is to "abide in Christ." How can this be done? The answer is given in John 15:9-10. "Continue in my love," believe in it, trust always in it, and return it. "Keep my commandments and ye shall abide." Then we shall not be ashamed before him at his coming (1John 2:28).

Christ is the vine, we are the branches. It is not that we may be, but that we are. The all-important question with us is whether we are fruit-bearing branches or not — are we the branches the Chief Vinedresser will prune until the "more fruit" is brought to perfection, or are we the barren, withering branches that he will presently have to "take away." We have all had our roots in the Old Adam and produced the fruits of corruption, more or less; but now, being in Christ, let us continue, rooted and grounded in him, and bring forth fruit acceptable to God. Abide in him by earnest prayer and deeds of love, by study of His Word and quiet meditation therein, and by constant attendance at the Memorial Feast, where we may meet our Lord and drink of the cup — the fruit of the vine, in remembrance of him and so he will abide in us and enable us to do all things because we are drawing life from him and receiving all the benefits he came to bring, so that we may have our "fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."

*Is Christ "the Vine?" His heavenly root
Supplies the boughs with life and fruit.
O let a lasting union join
My soul to him, the living Vine.*

Chapter Twenty Eight

BY THE SEASIDE

*The earth with its store of wonders untold,
Almighty, Thy power hath founded of old
Hath 'stablished it fast by a changeless decree,
And round it hath cast like a mantle the sea.*

“**O** Yahweh, how manifold are Thy works! In wisdom hast Thou made them all: the earth is full of Thy creatures. Yonder is the sea — great and wide, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts. There go the ships: there is leviathan, formed to take his pastime therein. These all wait upon Thee, that Thou mayest give their meat in due season” (Psa. 104:24-25, RV). Leaving the green hillock that has afforded us such an enjoyable resting-place, and such a delightful prospect, we now come in sight of the fine artistic white mansion we visited a short time ago, with its choice vinery, its spacious and picturesque grounds, and its fragrant orchard, whose rich fruits are elegantly relieved by dark woodland foliage. Here we recall the words of the wise king who built many such stately dwellings. “Through wisdom is an house builded: and by understanding it is established: And by knowledge are the chambers filled with all precious and pleasant riches” (Pro. 24:3-4). It is not always kind or good to point the finger of scorn at the dwellings of the wealthy; perchance many of their poorer brethren might have enjoyed similar blessings had they but used their God-given talents aright. But, says the apostle, leading us from the material to the spiritual things in Christ Jesus, “Ye are God’s building: ye are God’s husbandry” (1Cor. 3:27). Therefore let us seek to fill this better and abiding residence, with all things precious and pleasant in the sight of God.

What a deal of preparation is necessary before a house can be built successfully. Materials of all kinds cover the ground, and to all appearances it is a mass of confusion. An uninformed person looking upon the materials in this stage would never imagine that these could be skilfully arranged so as to become a handsome edifice. But presently we see the building taking shape, and by the combined energies of the different kinds of workmen this result is achieved.

The process of house-building may help us to understand the nature of the work of Christ, of his apostles, and of ourselves also. The first thought is the foundation upon which the superstructure is to be erected. We know the

importance of a good foundation. Christ is the foundation and chief corner stone of God's building, and no other will suffice (1Cor. 3:11). The apostles were the builders or organizers of the ecclesia built upon this "sure foundation," for says Paul "He (God) gave some apostles, and some prophets... some pastors and teachers, for... the ministering unto the building up of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:11-13). They were sent forth as heralds to announce that Christ's kingdom would be established upon this earth. The doctrines they taught formed the basis of faith for all true believers, who increased in the knowledge of truth and united in acts of common worship and deeds of kindness, as well as in the "breaking of bread." They held meetings for prayer, and gladly shared their possessions with others.

But necessary as a foundation is, it does not require to be constantly relaid, therefore having once firmly grasped the first principles of the Truth, "let us go on to perfection" (Heb. 6:1). We do not live on the foundation, but in the house, so may we endeavour to build well, with good materials, for the foundation will bear it. In the beautiful mansion before us there are rooms elaborately furnished and the occupants live in them and enjoy their beauty and conveniences. If we live the inner life in Christ Jesus, all the gifts and graces of the Truth are within our reach to enable us to live the life worthy of our high and holy calling. Jesus spoke of an abode where his friends are to reside (John 14:1-2). It will be something worthy of those who are to dwell with him for ever. "In the Father's house are many abiding places," and these are not only places of rest, but also temples for worship (2Cor. 6:16; 1Cor. 6:19).

Are we taking our share in this work of building? We know how a heap of stones becomes larger by additions from the passer-by; and how a snowball increases by constant rolling, perhaps by different hands; so the ecclesia of Christ grows in strength and influence through the exertions of its members, and we may add some stones to this building. Indeed, we are "living stones" ourselves in this spiritual edifice, and should think of the world's need of Christ, and of its loss without him. How many there are in spiritual darkness and what a privilege is ours to tell some of them the glad tidings of the kingdom. We can all pray, and just a word sometimes will start the mind in serious thought, and awaken the desire for better things. By the light of a lamp a miner gropes in darkness for the way to light. That light is essential to his safety. The mine has many winding passages in which he may be hopelessly bewildered. Here and there marks have been made on the rocks to point out the right path; but without the light he could not see them. Should it go out, the mine would be his dark tomb. Is there no one into whose hand the very weakest and humblest among us may place the lamp of God's Word?

But we pass on thinking how truly the Psalmist sang, "The earth is full of

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Thy riches," for wherever we look fresh scenes attract our grateful sight; fresh sounds fall sweetly on our listening ears. To the right we catch a glimpse of the shimmering waters of a beautiful lake, peeping through the leafy trees beyond the fragrant wood we have not long forsaken. In the midst of the lake is a beautiful island. Both the island and the shores of the lake afford admirable miniature coast scenery. There are hard rocks, beautifully variegated in colour, in their rugged sternness forming a deep contrast with the emerald green that clothes the hills from the water's edge to their summits. The still water reflects the trees that lean over it in loving tenderness, and the sweet, green, wooded hills that slope gently from its banks. Did we as perfectly reflect the character of Christ, how many more might be attracted to him. Below, the silvery water, winding river-like for some distance, spreads out gracefully in width. Beautiful Lake Merom through which the Jordan flows, with all its loveliness, around which gather many strange, bright birds, could not offer a greater charm. Most of its bed is dry in summer, and is overgrown with grass and shrubbery, affording good retreats for wild animals. To the left of us is a pretty old fashioned village nestling among hills, which offers an irresistible temptation for a visit.

Here we cause no little excitement among the humble fisher folk whose curiosity is aroused on seeing so large a number; some peering through the tiny windows of singular quaintness compared with those of the fine hall on the nether side of the hill. Others stand on the narrow pathway, blankly staring as we pass along, scattering broadcast, the precious seed of the Word of Life, for our reaping by and by.

A wedding party is just leaving the tiny grey stone church with its wonderful old porch and solid oak doors. The ancient edifice is surrounded by a small grass plot, intersected with crumbling tombstones, that mark the peaceful resting places of some who lived in these humble dwellings nearby and died in a good old age many centuries ago. The bells chime this morning as the village children, clad in white, sing their festal songs, while they strew the red-carpeted path with their posies of sweet, wild flowers.

"Can two walk together except they be agreed?" says one of our number, which meets with a decided negative. Just as light and darkness cannot agree, truth and error cannot. Neither can love and hatred be successfully joined together any more than we can mix iron with clay, or oil with water. "Beautiful is the morning of love," says an unknown writer, "with its prophetic crimson, violet, purple and gold, with its hopes of days that are to come. Beautiful also is the evening of love, with its glad remembrance and its rainbow side turned towards heaven as well as earth." If we love truly and seek to do good to all, love only will abide in our hearts.

The whole scene is such a picture of simplicity and happiness that we cannot refrain from watching till all are out of sight. This solemn yet beautiful rite of marriage remains as true and essential as when first instituted by Yahweh Elohim in Eden. Christ confirms the account in Gen. 2:24, and teaches the lawfulness of it. Marriage requires faithfulness and sincerity in family relationships. It suggests home life, companionship and unity. God uses the figure in Isa. 62:4 as a type of the unbroken unity and bliss that is to exist on the earth in the future, and Paul speaks of it in connection with the ecclesia and the law of Christ; therefore the woman, representing the Bride of Christ was "not to be put away for every cause." It links up the past with the glorious future when this unique symbol will have its complete fruition in the kingdom soon to be established. What a beautiful thought is this, that the first man — Adam — is a type of "the man, Christ Jesus," with dominion (Gen. 1:28; Psa. 8:3-9; Heb. 2:5-10) and Eve, a type of the Royal Bride. Eve was formed of something taken from the pierced side of Adam whilst he slept. Hence, the Redeemer, who was pierced in his side on Golgotha's hill, slept the deep sleep of death for three days and three nights, that by the blood of his side might be built up the Bride who is at length to be brought to him by God.

This book of Genesis gives us many beautiful traits of domestic interest; they were written for our instruction and guidance, and should be very highly esteemed. One writer has well spoken of it thus: "Expunge this book from the Bible and what a blank would be behind! We learn here the promise of a Saviour, besides the great truths of our existence and the providential government of God. We have mercies, forgiveness, love, God, holiness and sin. From it almost all ancient philosophers, astronomers, and chronologists have borrowed the confirmation of their theories and their facts. And is it not remarkable that as science makes progress, it casts clearer and brighter light upon this book. The objections urged against it are found to be frivolous, and he who dares to state them to the true believer in the Bible, is a very illiterate character indeed. The lapse of years throws light upon closures in the firmament above, the telescope of the astronomer, and the hammer of the geologist, have equally combined to show that this book, where it touches the confines of science, does it truly: and more, that it has God for its author, truth for its matter, and an everlasting rest for its bright and blessed hope."

May we read, study and remember its precious truths, that they may serve to guide, comfort and build us up in our most holy faith, and ask God to give us teachable hearts, and write all His law upon them, taking away the veil from the Jews, and ignorance from the Gentiles.

It is not our intention of remaining long in the village, for we are anticipating a whole day at the sea, and the narrow streets and low dwellings although

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romantic, are nevertheless uninteresting to lovers of pure air and nature's own gifts of beauty.

We will not despise these humble dwellers by the sea, for was not Cornelius instructed by the angel to send men to Joppa to fetch from thence the Lord's messenger, Simon Peter, who "lodged with one, Simon a tanner, whose house was by the seaside" (Acts 10:5-6). So we walk, or, rather, stumble down the steep incline, which calls for great care unless we are to suffer from bruised or sprained ankles, as our feet are constantly slipping into ruts, or kicking against the rough stones. An experience, although most unpleasant, which is not without significance, in that it teaches us a lesson of considerable value. We complain of the stones upon the pathway as we often do of our hardships, forgetting that even these are sent by God. Nature has thrown about the stones lavishly and carelessly in many parts of our land, not only on the rough, uneven paths, but amid the most beautiful scenery. The rocky shores are strewn with them as well as the smooth pebbly beach. May we ever follow nature, for she is gracious and liberal. How graceful are the stony grottoes in our gardens! The rockery gives a delightful effect, with its moss and flower filled crevices. Who would not prefer the grey stone wall over which trails the ivy, and out of which springs the lichen, to the brick? Nature often hides the deep preparations and gives the appearance of utter carelessness in her arrangements.

God knows the path of life we are treading. "We walk by faith and not by sight," for we cannot tell what a step may bring forth. We are like the Alpine traveller; through ravine and rock and forest we thread our way, now coming to a narrow ledge with the steep below us, and now to the flowery vale. Without God's upholding power unseen, we should stumble, and plunge ourselves into death. We must keep our eyes on the summit, and not look down; we must set our "affections on things above." Sometimes it is the treacherous mire of difficulty that obstructs our road; we do not know what to do for the best, but we set our feet firm on the stepping stones that help us along the way, and get over the cares and toils that fret us, and would work our ruin. Sometimes the white mists of sorrow veil the glory of the future and blight our present hopes like the radiant landscape that disappears as the mists fall around them, but still though hidden, God has not left us, and soon the sun shines out again with hopes of the brighter morrow, and floods our path with light — a glorious foretaste of that which shall crown our pathway in the Kingdom, when we shall, if found worthy, receive "the white pebble" (Rev. 2:17).

To walk successfully along the rugged and oft stony path of life we must "walk circumspectly," avoiding evil and surmounting obstacles as precisely as yonder tabbycat is seen picking her way cautiously over the top of the broken glass on the stone wall. How carefully she moves along without the least slip —

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the soft padded paws receiving no hurt! She looks ahead and treads circumspectly. It is a homely object lesson enacted before our eyes, the import of which we must not miss. While "the wicked know not at what they stumble," "the righteous are bold as a lion." They tread firmly and cautiously and thus succeed.

Passing from thence through a lovely glen which gradually widens until it brings us into full view of a heavy expanse of ocean, calm as the ocean can be, in which is mirrored an almost cloudless sky, and glittering in the brilliant sun, we all exclaim: "How lovely," and lean against the projecting rocks in silent admiration. Nothing can be seen for miles but moving waters on whose surface are a few ships in the distance, and where the clouds touch the water a few red sails of fishing craft hovering near the shore. The ceaseless chopping of the waves, the whirring wings of the gulls and the song of a lark are just examples of nature's present rejoicings in a perfect day. Except for this, the water below the deep jagged rocks is soundless, while, lying in the blue embrace, are waving threads of seaweed, bound loosely round the grey boulders. A glorious stretch of yellow sand, where the sun's bright rays fall, making it appear like a line of sparkling crystals. Truly beauty reigns over earth and sea.

Human nature may rightly be compared to the deceptive waters of the summer sea, for danger lurks even in the swaying weeds and black rocks, and suddenly a fog may wrap close around it and a tragedy is enacted in the calm, untroubled water. But now the sun lights its blue expanse while the waves reflect the glory of heaven, and, night after night, the stars glitter in its vast depths and the moon's pathway leads across its surface.

The gulls attract our attention as they skim through the air, or dart beneath the surface of the water for fish, or some other seafood their keen eyes observe with such accuracy. Some sail gracefully on the waves, resting their silvery grey wings, while others even sleep afloat, looking like tiny drifting barques. It is interesting to watch how skilfully they will seize a morsel of bread thrown to them before it reaches the surface, circling around the rocks and over the sea with the greatest ease and swiftness. May we show an equal intelligence in things divine as these beautiful migratory birds do for the natural, losing no opportunity to gratify the appetite, and intuitively observe the minutest objects around them.

Along the rocky shores of the Mediterranean bordering the Holy Land, the Sea of Galilee, and other bodies of water, the gulls, or seamews flock in immense numbers, living on fish of such a nature as to render the birds unclean for food. We recollect God's provisions of the clean birds for Israel's needs, when the quails flew within easy reach, so that the people "put forth their hands and took them. The seamews possess the intelligence peculiar to the raven, the

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hawk, and some species of eagles which also frequent these rocky regions, who, on finding a shell that they are unable to pierce, will bear it on high and crack it by dropping it upon the rocks. Although small, they are powerful in flight, and appear quite fearless, bravely facing the rough winds and even taking a seeming delight in the raging storm, sweeping restlessly over the dark, heaving billows when other birds have sought their nests. As a rule, birds are the first to flee and hide from the fury of an approaching storm. On a cloudless summer's day long before there is any visible sign of a change, they become silent. With marvellous instinct they promptly discern the changing atmosphere, when man has no idea of the approach of stormy elements. Hence from this remarkable trait of character the prophet draws the picture of a storm of indignation yet to sweep away the habitations of the wicked. Soon, numbers of the birds that have visited our shores and frequented our fields and woods will be leaving us for other climates. Few pass the winter with us here in Britain. The migration of birds is wonderful in every respect, and as we are glad to welcome them in spring, we may profitably think of their leave-taking in autumn.

Some, which we call birds of passage, collect together and fly in large bodies to other climes. Some, without taking their flight very high, and without separating from each other, draw gradually towards the south, to seek the seeds and the fruits they prefer, but soon return. Others cross the seas, and undertake voyages of surprising length. Quails fly in flocks, like clouds, and often fall through fatigue into ships; while swallows pursue a different method. Some cross the seas, but many of them stay in Europe, and hide themselves in holes underground, or in marshes, fastening themselves to each other, claw against claw, and bill against bill. They also pile themselves in heaps, out of the way of men and animals. Wild geese and cranes all assemble on a certain day and divide company. They usually form into two lines, united in a point like the two sides of a triangle, with one bird at the head, and the rest in rows. The bird that forms the point, cuts the air, and makes way for those that follow, and these always lay their bills on the tails of those which go before. The leader goes from the point to the tail in order to rest, and is relieved by another. What a lesson for us of larger intellect. In nature we perceive that God loves order, equality and peace. He has given instinct to the birds and animals, as He has given reason to us. These never fail to come and return at the appointed time, and are guided and upheld by the Father who knows when a sparrow falls. "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works." Let us live as those who realize that this is not our rest, and prove that we "seek a better country, that is, an heavenly" (Heb. 11:10).

Around the inland seas, as well as the large rivers of the Holy Land, water fowl live in flocks. Their beautiful golden green plumage varying in hue as the

sun lights upon them, making their nests in the clefts and ledges of the rocks as firm and solid as these upon which we are now leaning. Do we but lean as unreservedly on the great "Rock of our salvation"? Let us lean hard on the Rock, unflinching, as we endeavour to climb the heights of perfection, and we shall reach the goal successfully. Rocks, like trials, are sharp and hard when we come into contact with them, but they pull us up and teach us to be more careful in future. Christ is the "stone of stumbling and rock of offence to both the houses of Israel... and many shall stumble thereon" (Isa. 8:14-15). If we fall on a rock we shall be bruised and injured, but if a rock fell on us it would be fatal. Gentiles, as well as Jews, have all stumbled over this Stone. And we, too, who love him now, once stumbled, believing what was not true. It caused us damage and we were broken and contrite. Here, "broken" means "crushed together." That is what takes place when we become united to Christ. Thus to fall on this Stone is a blessing, but those on whom he will fall in the future, will perish. "It will grind him to powder."

Having once fallen upon the Rock — Christ Jesus — let us cling to him with the same tenacity as the little grey limpets cling and cluster on the strong boulders around us. What a splendid example they are of this fast clinging. The more anyone tries to sever them from the rock the tighter they grasp it; holding on so tenaciously that it becomes almost impossible to separate them. The stronger the measures used, the firmer they cling, and herein is the secret: it is a twofold clinging — a double suction; affliction only serves to strengthen the grasp, and not to weaken in the least. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ"? Nothing should, and yet it is not impossible for us to release our hold. But if we cling closer and closer still when danger is near, nothing will ever be able to tear us from his keeping.

For most people the sea has a peculiar charm. We look forward to a season of refreshing by the seaside, when we can relax our overwrought energies and renew our failing strength. Some may only think of mere pleasures and indulgence, but the mind and heart of the true believer is filled with higher thoughts, and seeks to build up his faith and love for God as well as to strengthen the nerves. We learn how weak and limited is our strength and how dependent, we are upon our all-wise, self-existent Maker. How great must He be who never is weary and who neither "slumbers nor sleeps"! How "fearfully and wonderfully" we are made, and all our muscles, nerves and veins arranged! There is no particle of our bodies for which there is not a reason or an absolute necessity. We cannot understand our marvellous structure, but we know that by obedience to the laws of our nature we enjoy greater blessings than those who disregard them. Now we are susceptible to pain and weakness, but we look forward to the day when God, in His infinite love and mercy, will change these

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bodies of our humiliation and make them like the glorious, incorruptible body of His dear Son, our Lord.

Some of the greatest miracles of the past were enacted near, or, upon the sea. When answering his accusers, Stephen (Acts 7:36) tells how God had “shown wonders in the Red Sea,” carrying us back to the days when Israel encamped by the seaside (Exod. 14:2). Pi-hahiroth, or Pi-hachiroth, “the mouth of Chiroth,” denotes the valley which extends from the wilderness of Etham to the Red Sea — “the sea of weeds,” so called from the vast quantity of coral which grows in it, and red, from Edom, or Esau, whose territories extend to its coasts. This valley ends at the sea in a small bay made by the eastern extremities of the mountains. Here the mighty waters were separated by “a strong east wind,” making a dry path for Israel to pass through the midst of the sea; and here the pursuing hosts of Pharaoh were overcome beneath the coral depths, and Israel afterwards “saw the Egyptians dead upon the seashore. The sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters” (Exod. 15:10).

The great or eastern sea, and the uttermost or western sea, or “Sea of Tarshish” (Joel 2:20), are each interesting in that they show the grand boundary of the land yet to become the glorious inheritance of the twelve tribes of Israel (Eze. 47). The Sea of the Plain or Salt Sea, and the Mediterranean Sea between Italy and Sicily, besides others not so particularly associated with Bible history, have nevertheless their peculiar interests and would afford many pleasant hours of study and supply food for much reflection; but perhaps the Sea of Galilee is the most interesting of all the seas mentioned in the Bible; for it derives its interest from the fact that much of our Lord’s time was spent on or around the Galilean Lake. The early companions of Jesus also were chosen from those who lived in the town situated upon its banks. It has several names familiar to us — the Sea of Chinnereth, or Chineroth (Num. 34:11), the Lake of Gennesaret (Luke 5:1), and the Sea of Tiberias (John 21:1). It is a beautiful, fresh water lake, and is an expansion of the River Jordan. The length of the lake is about thirteen miles (21 kilometres), and its breadth about seven (11 kilometres). It is 328 feet (100 metres) below the level of the Mediterranean, and from thence the river valley declines to the Dead Sea, the surface of which is nearly 1,400 feet (426 metres) below the same level. Owing to the great depth of this depression, together with the heights that wall in the valley, the heat is so powerful, as it were “a great furnace.” Travellers, on descending into this low and deep country, feel as if in another zone. These physical conditions help us to locate the region referred to in the symbolic language of Rev. 9:2, which all may study at their leisure. Events dealing with Mahomet, and the Arabian Abyss. There are two aspects in which we may think of the sea. First, as we behold it today — calm and at rest; and second, ruffled and discomposed by the storm.

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In Hebrew, any collection of water is called seas, as in Gen. 1:10. "The gathering together of the waters He (God) called seas." Herodotus calls the Mediterranean the inside sea; and the ocean the outside sea. The Latins call it *mare nostrum*, "our sea," as it is both naturally and symbolically. What Matthew in ch. 8:20 calls *thallasa*, Luke in ch. 8:23 terms a lake, or an inland sea, clear and serene, and it denotes an orderly collection of people in a quiet and peaceable state.

"Sea," troubled and tumultuous, signifies a collection of men in motion and war. Being a collection of waters, the sea becomes the symbol of people, gathered into one body politic, kingdom or jurisdiction, or united in one design. The resemblance between the noise of an enraged sea, and the noise of an army, or multitude in commotion, is obvious and frequently noted by the prophets. Addressing Tyre, the Lord says: "I am against thee, and will cause many nations to come up against thee, as the sea, causeth his waves to come up." Here the waves of the sea represent the military forces of the nations marching against an enemy. The forces of the Medes and Persians that captured Babylonia are styled "the sea" in Jer. 51:42. And Daniel's four great beasts are represented as arising out of the "Great Sea" or Mediterranean, as the result of the striving of the four winds upon it. These four beasts are systems of powers that arose out of the conflicts of the nations inhabiting that portion of the earth, the central sea of which is the Mediterranean.

And in this sense it is also used in the symbols of the book of the Revelations. In ch. 10:2, 5, the Angel of the Bow is represented as planting his right foot upon the sea. This is the same sea; and the right foot of the angel, even Christ, resting upon it, indicates that it is to be subject to the judgments of the seven thunders from the throne, and of the earth, or interior regions. In ch. 12:12, the sea is regarded as an inhabited region, and represents the provincial region of the Fourth Beast in which the last struggle for power ensues between Catholics and pagans. In ch. 16:3, the second Angel power is exhibited as pouring out his vial upon the sea, and it became the blood of a dead man, "and everything died in the sea." This is a sea of living persons, in a state of trouble, tumult and distress. It was stained with human blood to the excess. It is the sea of nations dead in trespasses and sins, and noted for their wickedness, of whom the Spirit says they are "like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt" (Isa. 57:20). It is dark and muddy, and no light can penetrate below its stormy surface. This is the present condition of the sea of nations represented by Daniel's four great beasts. They are a dead and troubled sea, so stagnated with mire and dirt that nothing but the judgments of God can purify, clear, and make it to reflect His glory. Then the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness, and "all nations will come and worship before the Lord

because His judgments are made manifest" (Isa. 26:9; Rev. 15:4), for God's purpose is to make this troubled and polluted sea clear "like to crystal," transparent with righteousness and truth. In ch. 15:2, John tells us that he "saw as it were a translucent sea that had been mingled with fire." But the fire had ceased to burn; and those who had gained the victory were standing upon it, singing "the song of Moses and the Lamb;" and this sea of nations will no more be lashed into fury but be so clear and tranquil that those who stand upon it will see into its utmost depths.

The Sea of Galilee, when calm, must have been a beautiful sight in the days of Jesus while on earth, and we may presume that he who had perfect knowledge of the laws of nature, took a keen delight in beholding all that was good and lovely, being able to appreciate them to the full. We thoroughly enjoy all, and feel almost as if the Great Teacher were personally with us while we contemplate him upon the mountain side or resting in the little ship, as the foam breaks at our feet. There can be no doubt that our dear Lord was fond of this sea. At that time a large population lived in the towns bordering its shores, the valley along the coast being especially fertile and populous, and plenty of fishing and pleasure boats sailed upon its waters.

But now it is deserted — all is changed. Matthew tells us that upon one occasion Jesus upbraided those cities wherein most of his mighty works had been done, because they repented not (Matt. 11:20-24), so that Galilee's proud billows bear witness to many a mortal wreckage. Christ was called "Jesus of Galilee" (Matt. 26:69) because he was brought up in that province, and there he lived, taught and called his first disciples. It is called by the prophet (Isa. 9:1) "Galilee of the Gentiles," or nations, and it became a name of contempt (Jn. 1:46; 7:52; Acts 2:7), both among Jews and Gentiles. Peter's mode of speech proved the place of his nativity (Matt. 26:69, 73), for Galileans spoke a corrupted dialect.

Fish abounded in the Lake of Galilee, in the Jordan, and in the rivers flowing into the Mediterranean. King Solomon spoke of fishes, as well of the beasts and birds that abounded (1 Kings 4:33). We read of fish being of many kinds, "as the fish of the Great Sea" (Eze. 47:9-10). In the beginning God said "Let the waters bring forth the moving creature that hath life" (ch. 1:20). So the first man had "dominion over the fish of the sea" (v. 26). The second Man, Christ Jesus, will exercise lordship over all the earth. He will have universal dominion over all the political fishes of the sea, the beasts of the field, and the fowls of the air, for "all the nations shall serve and obey him." Speaking prophetically, the Psalmist says: "Thou (God) madest him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands, Thou has put all under his feet... the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas" (Psa. 8:6-

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9). He will reign until all are in subjection to divine law, and heaven and earth shall praise the benign Creator of all things — the seas and everything that moveth therein, and all shall know that “whatsoever Yahweh pleased, that hath He done in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and in all deeps” (Psa. 135:6).

But now the fishing is gone, and the fishing boats, too, for no fishing boat is now seen on its waters: the fishers wade into the water and cast their small nets; or a line is thrown from the beach. Tyre and Sidon are both overthrown as the prophet declared (Isa. 23), so that all that is remaining to mark out the ancient merchant city is a few fishermen’s huts, and a few nets spread on the rocks. Around Galilee it is solitary and desolate, yet men travel from all parts to see it, and those who cannot visit it love to read or hear about it, for the very fact that Jesus of Nazareth walked upon its shores, and enjoyed its beauties. He brought miraculous draughts of fishes from its waters and delivered many of his parables, and performed some of his miracles upon its banks.

How pleasant to me thy deep blue wave.

O sea of Galilee!

For the glorious One who came to save

Hath often stood by thee.

Fair are the lakes in the land I love,

Where pine and heather grow,

But thou hast loveliness above,

What nature can bestow.

Better days are yet in store; even now they break the grey mists of the dawn when this once fair and favoured region shall arise up to greater prominence; and instead of silence and desolation, the voice of joy and gladness will be heard — the voice of the Bridegroom and his Bride, and every trace of disobedience will flee away and be known no more. For as Micah foretold (ch. 7:19), Israel’s God “retaineth not His anger for ever, because He delighteth in mercy He will turn again... He will subdue iniquity” or “tread out iniquity under foot and Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea” (Psa. 68:22), indicating that when Israel is brought back from their long captivity by Christ the “prophet like unto Moses” they will be nationally baptized of him by a marine investment (1Cor. 10:2), and be “a people saved by Yahweh” to sing “the song of Moses and the Lamb” (Rev. 15:3, 4).

We think of those humble fishermen — the followers of Jesus! We picture their earnestness, their simplicity and their readiness to forsake all for Christ. They were accustomed to a life of toil, of mending and washing nets, and to the deep with its mysterious life — its winds and its waves. Peter is first asked to lend his boat for a while for the purpose of preaching the Word — to thrust out a little from the land for this purpose; and thus he began his first studies under the

Great Teacher. For the first time the instruments of his ordinary life were turned to the use of a new calling: his boat, his oars, his strength and his skill! What a lesson for us here, to be ready to use all we have in the service of our Master: house, shop, seat or field. Peter was first taught to thrust out — a venture new and timid, but this being done, the next move is “Launch out into the deep.” And all the more suggestive is this that a lifelong skill comes under a higher control, and is exercised in a wider and nobler sphere.

How often would Peter afterwards think of this beginning when in other waters! Of his partners in the ship, and of the fellowship in the work as well as in the faith! Of the joy of drawing men to the Master who watches and directs, and of the wonder of the nets unbroken under the heaviest pressure. We may trace the outcome of all this when studying his beautiful epistles. Begin with what you have, dear reader — start as you are, and the Master will soon supply all your needs, as he did the disciples “without purse and without scrip.” Give yourself wholly to the work and God will honour your faith. Work for Christ is like learning to swim. Jesus knew the difficulties. His friends would often be tossed on the waters, in little ships or larger vessels, and also on planks and pieces of broken wreckage, thrown as it were on their own resources. The lesson of trust is as needful as knowing how to swim. We have no idea when starting what is to be done, but we trust ourselves to the element, and find how easy it is to float. So we pin our faith to the promises of God, pushing the threatening dangers aside, and rest upon them when we are too exhausted to move. Once learned, this art of faith is easily carried about, and it gives us great confidence when moving among the treacherous and stormy depths of life.

The experiences of Peter and of all the disciples whilst in training are fraught with useful lessons for our guidance and comfort. Was there not much in the incident of Christ walking on the sea, to confirm their impressions from the discourse on the mount, of One with wider vision seeing into the darkness that they could not penetrate; walking on one element on which they were hopelessly tossed; approaching them in a form that at first troubled them, as though the old familiar presence were gone, until his voice reassures them, “It is I, be not afraid.”

“Bid me come unto Thee upon the water,” said Peter. And Jesus answered “Come!” So Peter makes the effort, but when he looks at the surging billows he grows fearful, and needs a stronger arm of support to bear him up bodily and spiritually. It was thus a wise direction when Jesus forbade his disciples beginning work by bladders and buoys. Better get off the feet at once, when they were not really beyond their depth and in no danger of drowning while he was near to succour and encourage them. Later on how much they had to do in providing for others — the poorer brethren — the widows and orphans, besides

the care of the ecclesias (Luke 22:2; 1Cor. 16:2).

We, like Peter, in the hour of safety, may venture to tread the unstable element on which we have been tossed. But the faith that ventures is not always the faith that perseveres or succeeds. Yet the Lord who encourages us to venture also saves us from sinking, and when in the boat again we find the winds have ceased. No doubt the disciples never had so deep an interest in the boat as when it carried all they valued — even Jesus. The boat had so often transferred them from one side of the lake to the other, and in association with which they had been helped from the carnal to the spiritual. When we pass from what is fixed and unchanging like the land, to what is unstable like the water, when we enter some new sphere or upon some transient arrangement, seized like a boat for a temporary purpose, let us not take to the water unless we have the assuring word and confidence in the Master's presence.

The sea, we said, is not always as peaceful and harmless as it appears at the present moment, or during the bright summer months. It is often disturbed, and the Sea of Galilee was frequently subject to severe storms (Mark 4:37-41). When our Lord delivered the parables given in Matthew 13, a great crowd collected. It was getting dark, and Jesus needed rest. The disciples were told to pass over to the other side of the lake; so the multitude was dismissed, and they proceeded to carry into effect Christ's command. They took Jesus "as he was" without any preparation, in a fisherman's boat, belonging probably to Peter, or the sons of Zebedee, and started upon the voyage, followed by many other "little boats." Soon a great storm of wind lifted up the waters which began to beat into the boat. The tempest came on suddenly. The boat filled rapidly with water and was at the point of sinking. We are not told how the "many little boats" fared in the storm; some of them may have been lost. Little boats sometimes suffer more in a storm than larger ones, and young Christadelphians, too, have their rough seasons to encounter as well as those of larger growth. They have special trials to bear in the changes of this mortal life. May all have the faith that perseveres and that will preserve them from sinking into despair, or foundering on the sands of time.

A real and living faith never falters; she still hopes to attain her object. Like a ship making for harbour in stormy weather tries several times to get inside, into smooth water, but fails at first, perseveres, and at last succeeds — even so faith wrestles with Christ, as Jacob did with the angel (Gen. 32:26), and would not go without a blessing. God's dealings with His servants in the past should strengthen us to endure, and we have the Scriptures as our chart. In them we may observe the right course, and learn to avoid the wrong mark; the errors that stand out like beacons, and imitate the graces of others that encourage us to make efforts in the right direction. Both are of peculiar value to us, for who does

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not know that the sandbanks in our channels are made less formidable by retaining the wrecks that have struck upon them. A wreck sinks, and the top mast only appears; a buoy is put there to warn others of it. And so these defects that appear in great characters are the buoys — the floating buoys that warn us where the wreck has been and tells us where we may make a shipwreck far more disastrous. There is only One perfect. Even the finest specimens of humanity are flawed. All have trials to face, and have difficulties with which to struggle, as little boats on the sea of life. All have imperfections, and some of them great ones. The best proof that the Bible is the inspired Word of God is that it records the failures and sins, as well as the good in the most splendid characters. A human biographer describes a person, and brings forward constantly the bright spots and tries to tone down the darker ones, but the Bible gives us both unadorned. As there are beacons at sea to warn the ships off the shoals and rocks, and lights at the harbour to guide the ship safely into the haven, so there are in God's Book beacons as well as guides and precedents that we may imitate, besides recorded errors and perils carefully to avoid. "We must judge of duty," one has said, "not by illustrating, or violating it, but by what God has said."

On the Sea of Galilee the wind sweeps down from the deep, wild mountain gorges on the north, which are like immense funnels. Storms such as that described in this chapter, are of frequent occurrence in all inland seas. The wind sweeps through the narrow mountain valleys, and the sea, which a few minutes before was as smooth as glass, now becomes rough and stormy.

"My experience in this region," writes Thomson in *The Land and the Book*, "enables me to sympathise with the disciples in their long night's contest with the wind. I spent a whole night in the 'Wady Shukalyif' some three miles (4.8 kilometres) up to the left of us. The sun had scarcely set when the wind began to rush down towards the lake, and it continued all night long with constantly increasing violence, so that when we reached the shore next morning the face of the lake was like a huge, boiling cauldron."

During the storm Jesus was in the stern, or hindermost part of the vessel, asleep on a pillow. Tired and wearied by his long day's teaching and work, he slept calmly amid the hurricane. It was dark and the disciples were in great distress. They had little faith and great fear, and thought that Jesus was indifferent to their safety; so they came and said in a tone of reproof: "Master, carest Thou not that we perish?" What a touching incident! Jesus slept through the storm of the lake, but he awoke instantly at the cry of his frightened disciples. Gently complaining of their fear (Matt. 8:26) he rose, rebuked the wind, and immediately all was calm. With his usual vividness Mark gives the very words of the rebuke: "Peace, be still!" — literally, be dumb, be muzzled, as

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if the howling wind were a maniac to be gagged and bound. And what a change took place! No wonder the mariners were amazed. "They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters. These see the works of Yahweh and His wonders in the deep," says the Psalmist (Ps. 107:23-31). "For He commandeth and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifted up the waves thereof. They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths: their soul melteth away because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man and all their wisdom is swallowed up, Then they cry unto Yahweh in their trouble, and He bringeth them out of their distresses. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet: so He bringeth them unto the haven where they would be. Oh, that men would therefore praise Yahweh for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men."

We may class storms among the evils of nature, but though they are often disastrous, yet much good results from them. They are the means of purifying the air. We think of the dense, unwholesome fogs, as well as the dark, gloomy and rainy days to which we are subject! Storms are designed chiefly to disperse these harmful vapours, for our health depends, in a measure, upon the agitation and intermingling of various humours, that otherwise would corrupt. And so with the world. It is necessary that the air should be in perpetual motion, and this is effected by the winds — by storms and tempests which collect the vapours



from different countries, forming them into one mass, so mingling together the good and the bad, and thus correcting the one by the other. If the ocean were not frequently agitated, the very calmness of the salt

water would cause a degree of putrefaction that would not only destroy the innumerable shoals of fish, but be injurious to the mariners. "Motion is the soul of universal nature," it is said. "It preserves all things in order, and saves them

from destruction.” And this is true in the physical, moral and spiritual sense. Our plans are being continually upset for this specific reason. The persecutions of the early believers scattered them abroad, “and they went everywhere preaching the gospel of the kingdom.”

The sea, which is the common receptacle for all the dregs of the earth and wherein so many animal and vegetable substances putrefy, would stagnate if not in perpetual motion. Motion is as necessary to the seas as circulation to the body. Nothing but storms can answer the purpose, because the gentle and more uniform motions are not sufficient to purify the whole. Truly, through storms even richly laden ships are often wrecked — fields are laid waste, causing terror and desolation — but even for these results the advantages far outweigh the evil, and we should not consider the storm more formidable than the sun that scorches the earth and often leaves it barren, seeing the blessings derived from it are indispensable.

There will be storms in our lives, great or small, but there can be no storm too great for God to quell. The path is not always smooth even when sailing with Christ in the vessel, but we may smile at the storm, for our safety consists not in the absence of risk but in having Christ with us to face the risk. We may be tossed about, but the “great calm” will put all right. The wind and the waves speak not merely of hindrances to progress, but of disturbing elements that suddenly rise around us, breaking upon us as with a cold drenching spray, or, as with drowning seas that beat in upon us until there seems no room for anything else: we are driven about by strange and unexpected events, that stir up fears and doubts, and we are not only suddenly pulled up and pushed back, for it is so dark we know not what to do, or where we may be driven. We feel that we are helplessly moving, not progressing with freedom or energy, or having easy control of sail and helm but are at the mercy of the waves. Our faith is small then and it seems that if we were to go down, whatever we possess of Christ will perish with us.

Such are some of the circumstances in which life’s boat, bearing Christ’s followers, may be placed. And how often nothing of what we fear happens, or is likely to happen; but the fear itself, and all its attendant troubles. The wind and the waves beat in, and the ship gets full.

Oh, that we might confidently say, though:

Affliction is a stormy sea, where wave resounds to wave;

Though o’er our heads the billows roll, we know the Lord can save.

On the mountain side Jesus saw his disciples in the midst of the sea, tossed about with the waves, but their struggles were not unobserved. It was dark but Jesus saw their danger. So from the highest seat at his Father’s right hand he beholds his followers of all ages and sends them speedy help in every

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emergency. In the "fourth watch of the night" Christ left the mountain, and went walking on the water to their aid. But they were troubled thinking it was a phantom, or spectre. Soon he will come to deliver us from all evil. Shall we be filled with guilty fears and not be able to recognise or receive him gladly?

Often from the deck of a vessel may be seen some fancied object or dark spectre which strikes awe into the hearts even of the mariners, or the flashing, gleaming lights of the phosphorescence. In the same way Christ is often mistaken by us when he comes in a shape we do not expect — in afflictions, bereavements, and other troubles; but if we only realised his tender love then, how much lighter the burden, or the sorrow would be!

Perhaps there is not a more beautiful figure of the ecclesia of Christ than that of a ship on the sea, tossed by the storms of the world. But Christ is in the midst of her, therefore she cannot sink. She sails across the ocean of the world's history to the "other side" — the life beyond the grave. The wind is the blast of persecution, and the Lord of the ecclesia seems as though he were asleep, and heard not the cry of the sufferers, and oft-times the disciples are fainthearted and afraid. And then their prayer is heard and the storm ceases, and there is a great millennial calm during which time the Truth will be widely proclaimed, and mankind will learn to know Yahweh and will walk in His ways.

The sea is the emblem of the world, in its uneasiness and unrest. Only until recently the great sea of nations has been lashed in fury, and the raging, surging billows have heaved and tossed as they carried away millions of human beings to return no more. But now the storm has ceased, the fury of the waters has been quelled, and there is a lull while yet the restless waves roar and madly leap upon every shore, proving that the combined efforts of the world's masterminds have not accomplished politically what Jesus of Nazareth did physically on the Galilean Sea. "Peace" has been proclaimed and a "League of Nations" agreed to, but still at any moment the storm may burst upon the troubled, agitated waters with double fury, causing the most dreadful tragedy that has ever been enacted in the history of the nations. But "though the waves of the sea are mighty, and rage horribly, yet Yahweh on high is mightier" and so His people need not fear. The expression "The channels of the sea appeared" (Psa. 18:15) gives us an idea of the terrible state of affairs. The ocean agitated and convulsed, its waves rising so high that its very channel is laid bare, in consequence of the breath of God and His anger when He comes down in judgment upon the nations. And then is described the result of this interposition. Deliverance and safety; for though the remnant may be "at their wits end" they shall see the salvation of their God, who will make "a way through the sea for His ransomed to pass over," and they shall glorify His name.

Life is a voyage, and any moment its storms may cease for us. So if our

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outlook sometimes be gloomy, the waves of strife and discontent fierce and rough, and men's hearts are failing for fear, let us keep our eyes fixed on Christ. He has promised to be with us in the time of our greatest need. With his presence we are secure and he bids us "Be of good cheer."

If the mariner wishes to travel safely through the night across the ocean he does not look at the dark, restless waves at his feet, but at the clear sky filled with stars above him. If the sky be overcast and the stars hidden by clouds he turns to his compass, and its needle still points to the star, though he cannot see it. So with us: if we would see God's guiding light in our voyage through life, we must not look at the waves of trouble that threaten to obscure our path or overwhelm us altogether, but to God who gives us power to overcome. When darkness and clouds gather around us, then we must turn to our Chart and Compass, and we shall find that it always points to Him who shines beyond the clouds in unchanging glory.

Let us use our privileges as Christ used his to increase in wisdom, for if we think we can successfully cross the ocean of life, without constantly consulting the divine Compass and Chart, we are as foolish as the man who went to sea without experience in a rickety boat with neither compass nor chart, because he was without the aid and experiences of other men.

The sea cannot be known, for it is always restless and changeable — but we must be "steadfast and unmovable; always abounding in the work of the Lord" (1Cor. 15). Of Reuben it was said, "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel" (Gen. 49:4). And Peter was lacking in steadfastness once, and he fell. The steady disciple of Christ is like an iceberg in a stormy sea. It receives all the waves on its sides and casts them off unmoved. Amidst all the moral changes and political unrest we need to meet together for strength and comfort, and "so much the more as we see the day approaching." There are undercurrents that might draw us away from the Truth and many influences at work that tend to undermine our belief. What gives steadiness to the iceberg is its depth. Hence, as we float on the sea of life with others and bear the same buffetings, we remain unmoved, while they are troubled and perplexed. The reason is found in Col. 3:3 — our "life is hid with Christ in God." Yes, the very chiefest part lies beyond the reach of this restless surface, and it is a beautiful fact that however rough the surface of the ocean, the deep waters beneath are always calm.

Chapter Twenty Nine

WONDERS OF THE DEEP

*Yes, God is good; in earth and sky,
From ocean depths and spreading wood,
Ten thousand voices seem to cry:
“God made us all, and God is good.”*

THE “earth is Yahweh’s and the fulness thereof: the world and they that dwell therein. For He hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods” (Psa. 24:1-2). “In His hands are the deep places of the earth; the strength of the hills is His also. The sea is His, and He made it: and His hands formed the dry land” (Psa. 95:4-5). “He layeth up the depths in storehouses” (Psa. 33:7). Yahweh said: “I will bring My people again from the depths of the sea.” “Great is Yahweh and greatly to be praised, Yea, His wisdom is unsearchable.” “His understanding is infinite” (Psa. 68; 145; 147). Yes truly God is the eternal Source of all that is grand and beautiful in nature, from the broad majestic oak, to the green blade that twinkles in the sunshine. From the snowy Alpine peak, illuminated by the first bright morning rays, to the ocean’s depth where pearls and coral lie, and the delicately tinted algae flowers of the sea.

*“In bright and changeful beauty shine,
Far down in the green and glassy brine.”*

When we consider the works of His hands, even the smallest objects, such as a grain of sand, or the drops of water that make up the mighty ocean, we see that His wisdom is infinite, and His power is wonderful, and that He is “worthy to be praised by all His hands have wrought.” This may not only be traced in the immense globes that compose the system of the universe, but also in the little worlds of insects and plants; as much in the spider’s web as in the power of gravitation which attracts the earth towards the sun. Behold the mosses and weeds in such abundance, and think of how many fine threads and tiny particles they are composed, and what variety of shapes and forms they take, besides all their genera and species. Think of the innumerable multitudes of small particles of which any particular body is composed, and which may be separated from it.

“If millions of particles of water may be suspended from the point of a needle, how many must there be in a fountain, a river, or a sea? If, from a lighted candle there issue in a minute more particles of light than there are grains of sand, how many fiery particles must pass from a great fire in the space of an

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hour? Or, if a grain of sand contains several millions of particles of air how many must there be in the human body! If we can divide a single grain of copper into millions of parts, without arriving at the first elements of matter, if odoriferous bodies can exhale fragrant particles enough to perfume the air at a great distance, without the body itself losing anything of its weight, it would require an eternity for the human mind to calculate the prodigious number of these particles."

Such are the reasonings of one who realised the greatness of the infinite Maker of all things. The same marvellous order extends to the animal creation also. Each drop of water is a little ocean teeming with inhabitants; each leaf of a tree is a tiny colony of insects, and probably every grain of sand contains a multitude of animated creatures. There are millions of minute creatures much less than a grain of sand, with organs of nutrition and motion; and shellfish that the microscope reveals scarcely as large as a grain of barley. God can do all things. He hath "measured the waters in the hollow of His hand" (Isa. 40) just as men span the partition wall in a house. He can "comprehend the dust of the earth" and the sand of the seashore. He can take up the great mountains, the hills and the rugged rocks and put them in scales if He pleases, as the chemist puts a little dust in the scales and tells us the exact weight. What a magnificent idea of Deity is conveyed in these words. And in order to show that God needs no instruction He enquires, "With whom take ye counsel?"... "Behold the nations are as a drop of a bucket." As a person casting down a bucket into the sea with a rope attached to it pulls it up into the ship, and a drop of water falls from the bucket, in a like proportion to the ocean, so are nations from the perspective of the infinity of God. Oh that the nations might know this! — their trifling quarrels and their puny works are as the "small dust of the balance."

We must not limit God's power as Israel did, but praise Him for His goodness. "He sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants are as grasshoppers." History records how, not so long ago, the popes imprisoned Galileo, and burnt others for believing that the earth is round, and that it moved round the sun which was the centre of the solar system; but when did the prophet discover that the earth is round? For a thousand years after his day it was not so believed, but only that it was a vast, flat plain, the limits of which no one pretended to determine or to fix.

The more we contemplate these wonders, the more miraculous will they appear, and multiply, until our imagination is lost in the two extremes of nature — the great and the small.

Within God's lower storehouse — the ocean depth, including its wealth of yellow sand — are innumerable wonders, many of which neither mariners nor seafaring men can explain. One of the most enjoyable pursuits of a seaside

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holiday for lovers of nature and nature's God, is searching for these treasures — the plants and animals that live either upon the sands and shores of the ocean, or upon the rocks and slopes of its rolling waves.

We think of some of these wonders as we stroll along the sandy shore this morning. There are fossils and shells of so many shapes and sizes that alone would afford a pleasant study. Pink, green and brown weeds, and pebbles in endless variety of colours and substance lying at our feet, while beneath the green billows are still more remarkable specimens of the Creator's handiworks. We usually regard the great trees of California as the most gigantic specimens of vegetable growths known to man; but there is a submarine plant growing in the North Pacific Ocean — that, according to Professor Rhinsch, dwarfs all others in its vast proportions. The *macrocystis pyrifera*, one of the melanospermor, has been known to grow to such an extent as to cover vast areas of the ocean bed. One specimen by measurement was found to cover three square miles (4.8 kilometres), and the stem from which the growth proceeded was eight feet (2.4 metres) in diameter. It is almost impossible to conceive of such a plant, or how a system of nourishment can be maintained through such extensive channels in the living organism. And nothing can be more wonderful than that of this gigantic species there are specimens so small as to be observed only with the aid of the microscope.

In the water, also, there are many great fish. Moses tells us that God created "great whales" (Gen. 1:21), which probably means no particular species, but the largest of living creatures of the rivers and seas. There are fishes corresponding in size with the great sea plants, and some as small as the minutest specimens. Among this innumerable multitude of animated creatures the same order reigns, in the sea as on the land. There is no confusion anywhere. All are ranked in certain classes and have their particular characteristics — food, life and instincts. In the ocean, as above it, there are degrees and shades — some are plain, some are beautiful in form and colour. The stone that is the chief among the minerals is partly a plant and the plant that terminates the vegetable kingdom belongs in part to the animal. Some so nearly resemble the sea in colour that they can hardly be distinguished from it. Others are adorned with the brightest and most beautiful colours and all are connected by an immense chain in which no link is missing.

Here we may learn the lesson of humility and dependence upon others. No part of God's creation can say the other is useless and unnecessary. How much depends upon the regular working and product of what we may term the meanest and lowest of things — the very dung of the earth — the swarming insect pests and the most ferocious of animals. And among our fellow-creatures we have no right to despise any, for all contribute to the common good. To the

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miner in the foul pit and the rough ploughman on the fields we owe a debt of gratitude, for what should we do without either! And when we come to the Body of Christ, "the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee..." (1Cor. 12). So let us endeavor to do our part faithfully, and as far as we can, live peaceably with all. How wonderfully these living creatures of the sea fulfil every function in that element with ease and pleasure! The way in which the fish live and move is truly marvellous. To enable them so to live and move, there are several essential points differing from land animals. God has given to most fish a slender thin body with flattened sides and pointed head, to enable them to cut the water and swim through it. They are covered with scales of a horny substance to preserve them from being injured by the pressure of the water; and those without scales are enveloped with a fat, oily substance, to protect them from harm and cold. Their bones are light and flexible, their eyes sunk in the head, and the crystalline humour is spherical for the same purpose, and to help them to take in more light: proving how their Creator considered them in every way.

But perhaps more wonderful still is the construction of fins for limbs, and of these being sufficient to perform all their motions. They are continually swallowing water through their mouths, which is the drawing of breath, and casting it out through their gills, which is their way of breathing out again. And who can number their species? Some are long and as small as a thread; some flat, others round, triangular or cylindrical, and others short and broad. What wisdom appears in all this! From the whale whose back is like an island in the midst of the sea, to the goldfish that glitters in the streamlet.

The whale is mentioned in the Scriptures several times, and we are familiar with these passages. But there are various opinions regarding these sea monsters, there existing several species of whale that are known to us; and probably in different parts of the ocean there are others, for the deep contains many such enormous creatures. The *leviathan* of Job 41:1 probably refers to the largest inhabitants of the sea, as *behemoth* seems to denote the largest of the quadrupeds, and is believed to be the elephant, from the description in Job 40:15. Some think it is the hippopotamus, or Egyptian river-horse that is of such prodigious size and strength. It feeds on grass and vegetables, moves slowly and heavily, swims dexterously, sleeps in reedy places, has a tremendous voice between the lowing of the ox and the roar of the elephant, and when irritated will attack furiously.

The leviathan is believed to be the crocodile, for when it dives to the bottom of the ocean, the violent agitation of the water may be justly compared to liquor boiling in a cauldron. Its rapid passage through it making it white with foam, and by its tail the waves sparkle like a trail of light. The Lord demanded of Job

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whether he was able to master leviathan. Could Job draw him out of the sea with a line and hook after the various methods of taking other fishes? Could he tame or confine him for amusement? Or, would he divide the oil and bones among the merchants? In the days of Job perhaps it was not thought possible to take whales, but some might have been cast on to the shore, and divided for use. Could Job take him by wounding him with fish spears or barbed irons? Would he dare to stir him up when asleep, basking on the surface of the ocean? And who would dare to meet him when enraged? No more can mortal man prevail upon his Creator to alter His purpose or to use His power to humour His wayward servant! Nay, this marine ox is a terrible monster — “the chief of the ways of God,” and we may well consider how great must He be who made not only all things bright and beautiful, but all things vast and small.

As the whale dives down into the water to obtain food, but cannot remain long beneath it, but comes to the surface to breathe the air, so must we necessarily spend some time in the world; we go down into it to obtain the natural things of this life, but we cannot live in the world, we must rise above it and breathe the vital and congenial air of divine things. We must seek “the things that are above,” we must come up out of the world — we must come together and breathe in the spiritual atmosphere of the Lord’s people, around His Word and around the emblems that invigorate and uplift, and strengthen us for the Lord’s service.

Among amphibious animals, that is animals that exist either on land or in the water, the most formidable is the crocodile. Both the crocodile and the chameleon can live without food for six months, and the salamander is said to possess the power of being in the fire for some time without being consumed, because the cold, slimy fluid it emits extinguishes the coals. It is cold-blooded, and has a repulsive appearance and figure. God forbid that we should in any way resemble the salamander. We should warm and cheer others by our presence, having received our portion of the “live coal from off the altar,” and allowing its blessed influences to penetrate into our inmost being.

From these enormous monsters of the deep we turn to one of the smallest and most simple — the coral insect that secretes from its own substance a rocky house which afterwards becomes its tomb. Myriads upon myriads untold of these united, form reefs and islands. The coral reef is a kind of cement composed of these tiny jelly-like creatures, and so marvellous are these vast and dangerous ranges of stone often extending for miles, that even the mighty pyramids sink into insignificance before them. It is proved that the coral insect cannot exist in the sea below a depth of 150 feet (45 metres), although these reefs are known to extend far below. Naturalists explain that the whole area of the Pacific Ocean is gradually sinking, and that all these coral reefs and islands

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are the summits of former mountains. Originally the coral structures were attached to land at a shallow depth, and as the land gradually sank, the coral insects ever working upwards on a foundation composed of their dead ancestors, have maintained a living coral structure near the surface, a beautiful example of what may be done by united efforts. We are building upon the experiences and industries of those who have lived before us and have laid a good foundation. Our work may come into greater prominence, but let us recollect to whom we owe gratitude for all our enrichment.

Another wonder is the sponge. A living sponge may be regarded as a colony of lowly organized animals, just as a mass of living reef coral is a colony of sea-anemone-like animals. The coral anemones differ from our well-known sea anemones by the hard limy substances in their interiors, due to the calcification of the tissues. These remain behind after death, and when the flesh has decomposed, these durable limy substances are popularly called "coral." And so with sponges. When alive, the outer layer of "sponge-flesh" is usually permeated with myriads of fibres and spicules. These fibres are exceedingly small, solid bodies, and the spicules are of a variety of shapes, from the most simple to the most complete.

Our washing sponge is the skeleton of an animal production called *chitin*. There are a number of classes of sponges, receiving names from naturalists according to their composition. One group especially possesses the most complete and beautifully shaped spicules, the dead skeleton forming one of the loveliest of zoological objects.

The habits of recent sponges throw light upon the conditions of ancient sea-beds, inasmuch as the oldest kinds have much the same habits. A remarkable sponge has indulged in the habit of boring into the denser structure of bivalve shells, as may be seen in a thick-shelled deep sea oyster. Sponge life has not changed much from the earliest period, but perhaps there is a greater variety of species in recent seas, although it is doubtful whether sponges are as abundant in our great seas or oceans as when the European chalk was deposited.

Fossil sponge-hunting becomes most interesting when we come to the chalk formation, being found in all marine calcareous and arenaceous formations, as well as fresh water sponges abounding in rivers and streams. Whether the rock appears "rotten" or the thin beds of limestone shale which are frequently "sandwiched" between the limestones, seem unusually crumbly, we should box some for examination during the winter evenings. Wherever there are chalk flints we may be sure to find an abundance of fossil sponges. One gigantic specimen is in the form of a series of cups, the largest one at the bottom and the smallest at the top, being usually crowned with an extinguisher-like cap, at the side of which is a perforation which is connected with the traces of a pipe

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running down the centre of the chalky core, occupying the segments of this particular fossil. Each segment is hollow, or rather occupied with a dense core of chalk. The country people use the segments for flower pots in their gardens after they have removed the chalky core. Fossil sponges are also obtained by hammering the most likely and "rotten" of the flint pebbles forming the gravel of the eastern and southern counties of England. Another family of sponges whose shapes and structures are often so beautiful that a slight magnifying power shows a similar latticed appearance to that we admire so much in the "Venus flower-basket." The Body of the believers in Christ may be said to resemble the living sponge, in that they compose a vast multitude united in one common faith, "knit together in love" and fitly framed as one compact and beautiful structure, to the praise of their Creator. Working with one mind for one grand end, while possessing that refinement of character, the "beauty of holiness" which is well-pleasing in His sight.

The changed and prepared chitin sponge is a beautiful emblem of the life in Christ filled with the Spirit-Word. The fleshly activities have disappeared. Like the skeleton sponge the believer waits to be filled and refilled. Receiving all the graces and blessings of the Truth from the Eternal Source that enrich and enlarge the receiver, they are imparted fully and freely to all around. As the apostle exhorts: "Let him that is taught in the Word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things" (Gal. 6:6). The empty, unfilled believers, like the dry sponge, can impart nothing to others, having no life or joy in themselves. Hence the command in Eph. 5:18, "Be not drunken, or saturated with wine" (the interests and pleasures of the world) but "be filled with the Spirit." How much depends upon the filling and that wherewith we are filled! As the sponge imparts only what it imbibes, so do we out of the fulness of our soul, disperse abroad either good or evil. So, dear reader, let us continually have recourse to the Fountain Head, that we may be filled with the fulness of the Lord, until our very hearts o'erflow, and others are drawn thither to be filled also.

Perhaps the most precious of all the wonders of the deep is the pearl. Pearls are produced by a shellfish of the oyster species, and by a malady of the creature, which completely develops itself in seven years. If it is not secured at, or about the end of, that period, the animal dies, and the pearl is lost. It consists of the extravasation of glutinous matter, and the secretion may be excited not so much, perhaps, by the disease as by the irritation of some foreign substance, such as sand sucked within the shell along with the food. The pearl oysters are found in clusters on rocks (hence they are called pearl banks) in the Persian Gulf, or Sea of Catif, and in the islands of Kis, on the coasts of Ceylon, Java, and Bahrein, so called from a city upon the borders of Arabia, Idumea and Israel being not far distant. Pearls were well-known both to the patriarchs and later to

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the Hebrews.

Speaking of wisdom Job says: "No mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls: for the price of wisdom is above rubies" (ch. 28:18). The pearl oyster shells are obtained by diving, and this is done by skilled persons. What a beautiful figure of him who came "to seek and to save" that which would be lost for ever, apart from divine intervention! "In the fulness of time God sent forth His Son," the skilled Diver, lest we, left to our own devices should perish like the costly pearl in the oyster shell beneath the deep billows. The diver for the natural pearls may risk his life to secure one precious specimen, but the heavenly Diver gave his life as "a ransom for all."

It was you and I he sought, hidden away in the deep waters of the selfish ignorance of the world, like the pearl among the mire and wreckage. What could he see in us? In its rough state the pearl is nothing desirable, but when it is cut and cleansed and polished, then, how exquisitely beautiful! Only the diver knows the real value of the pearls, and those who understand their nature seek them not for what they are but for what they may become. We are not to be judges of our fellow-creatures, because we cannot read the inner workings of the mind nor the secret impulses of the heart; but God can. Some of the costliest jewels we may deem only fit for the rubbish heap. Christ, "the pearl of great price," was "despised and rejected of men." And we who in due time hope to become pearls of great price, purchased at a tremendous price, even the life-blood of our Redeemer, must not be surprised if by the world we are forgotten and despised also. Some who may be very attractive now, and pass among others as costly pearls may be found at length to be superficial and gradually fade into oblivion. But the true pearl will never lose its lustre, and the true disciple will "shine more and more unto the perfect Day." We do not know all. How often do we condemn others for their curious ways without trying to find out if there is not a pearl beneath the rough exterior! The diamond does not reveal its worth until it is cut and polished.

The transcendent excellency of Christ and his grace made known in the gospel are compared to a priceless pearl (Matt. 13:46) and the twelve gates of the city — the new Jerusalem — representing the tribes of the sons of Israel were of pearls. "Each gate severally was one pearl" (Rev. 21). The names on the pearls represent the "hundred and fortyfour thousand" who are "Israelites indeed" in their glorified state with Christ the Jasper Light in the midst of them, and may it be our happy portion to be numbered with them.

We cannot conclude our observations of these wonders of the deep without briefly considering that most marvellous of all crustaceous animals — the lobster. This certainly is most extraordinary, casting off its shelly skin every year to clothe itself with new armour. It has flesh in its legs and tail, hair in its

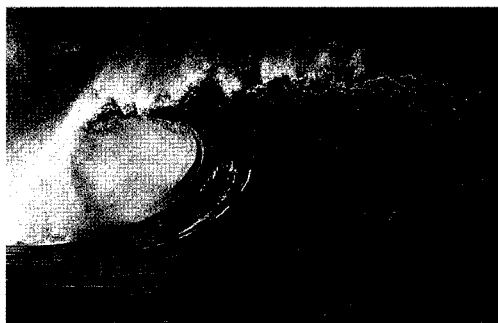
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breasts, and a stomach in its head which is annually renewed. The first function of the new stomach is to digest the old one. A creature with two stones in its stomach that are engendered and grow there, and with which it feeds itself till they are consumed, is indeed a wonder. The lobster can also throw off its legs when they become troublesome, and replace them with others, and its eyes are placed in long moveable horns.

The same God who gives the lobster instinct and power to throw off these incumbrances, and free itself from its old hard shell, has given us the power to “lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us” — to free ourselves from the world that would encircle us in its bounds, and to rise again and again to a new and better life in Christ, while feeding upon the Word hidden deep in our hearts. So let us use our spiritual privileges as this wonderful creature does his natural properties.

Who but the all-powerful and all-wise Creator could lift up the hand saying: “I created all these, and also sustain them”? Moses’ blessing of the tribes of Zebulun and Issachar is very significant when we think how rich and full is the ocean. “They shall suck the abundance of the seas, and the hidden treasures of the sand” (Deut. 33:19). Babylon, situated “upon many waters,” abundant in treasures, gives us this same idea of richness and plenty — the wealth of the deep and its immeasurable sands. And how men of all ages have set their hearts on heaping up treasures! Job speaks of seeking death as eagerly and persistently as those who dig for “hidden treasures,” and Solomon of seeking wisdom, as for silver, and “searching as for hid treasures.” To Cyrus, Yahweh said: “I will give thee the treasures of darkness and hidden riches of secret places” — such words that are yet to be fulfilled in one far greater than he, even the Christ our Shepherd.

The sea claims also treasures greater than these material things. Some of God’s choicest pearls lie buried in the briny deep, but the sea as well as mother earth, will one day give up the dead that are therein. They shall rise from her heaving bosom, being attracted by the cheering rays of the Sun of righteousness descending from on high, because they put their trust in Him “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3). These possessed “wisdom from above.” There is no true wisdom to be found in any



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but those who are “born from above.”

Those who dig into the heart of the earth to rifle the treasures there, cannot in these dark recesses find this rare jewel, nor with all their art, make themselves masters of it. Ask the mariners, and the sea by them will say, “It is not in me” (Job 28:13). It can never be obtained either by trading on the waters, or by diving into them. It can never be sucked from the abundance of the seas, or the treasures hid in the sand. “The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea” (Job 11:9), and knowing this is so, Job enquires: “Where shall wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding? Man knoweth not the price thereof: neither is it found in the land of the living.” Vast and effulgent as the ocean is, “The deep saith, it is not in me...” God understandeth the way thereof, and He knoweth the place thereof, for “He weigheth the waters by measure” (Job 28:25). “He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing... He compasseth the waters with bounds, until the end of light with darkness” (ch. 26:7-12). Truly then “the works of Yahweh are great, sought out of all them that take pleasure therein” (Psa. 111:2-4). “And unto man He saith, Behold the fear of Yahweh, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil, that is understanding.”

Some little of God’s wisdom and goodness we see in the government of the universe, but the secrets of His wisdom we can never search out to perfection, for they infinitely exceed our narrow capacity. In this abyss, our thoughts and reasonings are swallowed up: the height and depth, the length and breadth of all His attributes pass our knowledge, and it is our duty to love and revere His name. Whatever we may know is only like a pebble out of the great ocean of truth. There are still heights and depths we have not fathomed.

God’s treasures are the earth, the sea and the sky, and out of each we may draw forth abundantly. Out of His highest treasury He “brings forth the wind,” which is so mysterious in its motions that none can tell “whither it cometh and whither it goeth,” but always according to fixed and regular laws. At sea, between the tropics, and some degrees beyond them, there is an easterly wind that continues the whole year with little variation. It prevails on the open sea, for if the islands or great continents are opposed to it, the direction may be changed to north-east. In the southern parts of the ocean the wind is generally westerly. The nearer to the coast the more changeable is the wind, and still more so on the land. In the Indian seas there are winds called monsoons, or trade winds, that continue to blow in the same direction from three to six months of the year, and for a similar period in the opposite. There are seas and countries that have winds and calms peculiar to themselves. There is the burning wind in the Persian Gulf that stops respiration, and the fatal wind at the Cape of Good Hope, known as the ox-eye. At first it is very small, but visibly increases and soon produces a

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furious storm which swallows up ships and plunges them into the depths of the sea. God regulates the winds for our good. When the earth begins to languish, a wind from the seacoast, laden with exhalations waters the pastures, and renews the face of nature. The north wind brings the icy particles that carry off the noxious vapours of autumn, and the south fills the air with life and warmth. All are at God's command. The stormy winds arise and the tempests roar; they rush from sea to sea, and men's hearts fail for fear, but He speaks again and all is still and calm. And shall not He who directs the winds, guide us safely through the perplexities of life? Let us trust Him. The clouds are the source and treasure of the moisture of the earth, and the great bank through which it circulates a necessary provision also — the stagnation of which would be as hurtful to this lower world as of the blood to the body. The clouds alone distil upon the earth below: therefore if the heavens were to become brass, the earth would become iron. Hence in mercy God says: "I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth" (Hos. 2:21).

How delightful it is to breathe the pure, fresh air as it pervades the vault of heaven and extends over land and sea. The particles that rise out of the earth and form the atmosphere, are of different kinds — watery, earthy, metallic, and sulphurous. Some abound in certain places more than others and this occasions great variety in the air. A heavy air is more wholesome than a light one, because it promotes the circulation of the blood and insensible perspiration. When the air is heavy it is generally serene; when light it is always attended with clouds, rain, or snow. The best air is neither too dry nor too moist. How we should praise God for all these beneficial arrangements!

If pure air is so indispensable to health and happiness, how much more necessary to our spiritual welfare is the sweet atmosphere of things divine? As the fish cannot live out of water nor the bird fly through the firmament without the air, the believer cannot live without God and His Word. We cannot breathe freely in the world's polluted atmosphere. Its works are unwholesome, its ambitions unholy, its pleasures are more or less poisonous, and its joys savour of fleshly glory and satisfaction. "Evil communications corrupt good manners." Therefore, "having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust," let us never become entangled again in its affairs, but as often as opportunity presents itself, gladly avail ourselves of the pleasure of being in the pure atmosphere of those of like precious faith.

Symbolically, air represents the political firmament of the world — air and heaven being regarded as one. Matt. 13:32 records that the "birds of the air (marg. heaven) came and lodged in the branches" of the great tree that had sprung up from the "least of all seeds," representing the little tribe of Judah, first saved by the Lord and made the vehicle in bringing the world into subjection to

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God (Isa. 66:19). The firmament between the clouds and the waters is the air. The political world has its atmosphere which divides those who rule from the people who are ruled. In the natural, if there were no air, there would be no clouds, or water above, but simply "darkness upon the face of the deep." All the waters would be commingled without order or distinction. And thus it would obtain in the political, without similar arrangements.

Referring to the Gentile air, the apostle says in Eph. 6:12, the spirit that now works in the disobedient is the spirit of the flesh. It is the chief ruler, or authority of the air in which exist the powers of darkness, like unclean birds (Rev. 18:2), lodging in every branch of the wide-spreading world-tree, poisoning the air of the great city in which it flourishes. But the storms of judgment will at last clear this air. The symbolical raging elements will sweep all away for ever, and the air will be fresh and pure. The air of the seventh vial comprehends all the heavens, or aerials, of the kingdoms of the world that will soon become the kingdom of our Lord and His Christ. In this new air the children of God will live and move, being borne along by the sweet and gentle influences of the Spirit, as the birds naturally are borne swiftly and securely upon the wind.

"We have all fully appreciated this pleasant time by the seaside," remarks a sister, "many cannot visit the ocean to explore its green treasures, yet there are many wonders open to them, and all have the opportunity of examining the streamlets and ponds for plants and weeds, and other marvels they may afford. There are quite a variety of water-loving wild flowers, and what is more lovely or wonderful, than water-lilies floating amid masses of deep green plants, we call water weeds? These have many uses, besides many lessons to teach us. Some purify the water in which they flourish, some remove foul gases from the air and nearly all supply food to fishes, insects and snails. Each one might form a separate study and cause us to exclaim: "How manifold are Thy works, O Lord, in wisdom hast Thou made them all."

To us who are privileged to visit the sea there are more gigantic attractions if not more wonderful. Those who live near the sea may watch the process of obtaining salt. Pits are dug on the shore which are plastered with clay, and at full tide the sea flows into them, and the water it leaves soon evaporates by the heat of the sun, leaving the salt at the bottom in abundance.

And so we might enumerate these wonders, but once more the twilight gathers. The air is growing cooler as the sun that warmed it throughout the day, like an immense crimson ball in the western horizon is about to plunge into the ocean. We come across a deserted cove where the sand lies ribbed with the waves, and prepare to take our leave.

Jeremiah magnifies the omnipotence of God who has fixed the sand of the shore for the boundary of the sea, and has said of it: "Though the waves thereof

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toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not prevail over it” (Jer. 5:22). The sand of the sea is often made to express a very great multitude or a very great weight. Solomon says that sand and gravel are heavy, yet anger is much heavier. Being of a slippery nature it is foolish to build upon what is compared to sand. In the symbolic, prophetic writings, sand is represented as the bound, shore, or limit of the symbolic sea we have been considering, as well as the people. Hosea foretells the multitude into which Israel shall be developed in the day of their glory “as the sand of the sea that cannot be measured nor numbered.”

We walk over the hard, bending sand, fringed here and there with the froth of the sea, and where the wiry tufts of grass creep down towards the water. We cross the pebbly beach beyond “the musical sands” that scientists with an ear for the tiny sounds of nature discovered long ago. Again the clouds gather around the waning sun and, like the beautiful tapestry, its beams form a golden arras over the water. “As the waters wear the stones” (Job 14:19) making them smooth and soft, so do the waters of affliction when they pass over us have the effect of softening and smoothing our characters. Although they appear numberless, yet we could scarcely find two exactly alike. There is diversity and variety in all things. Even among the multitude of the redeemed this beautiful feature will obtain in the kingdom, so that those who cannot attain to great things may take courage and do their best.

We take a few specimens into our hands and make a selection, casting away remorsefully those of whom we do not approve. And has not the Creator equal rights so to deal with His creatures in like manner? Who shall say to Him, “What doest Thou,” seeing all are beneath His hand? We have among our collection some intensely interesting specimens of shells. They are as diverse and numerous as the stones. Many of them are so small and delicate that the least touch would cause them to crumble and yet each has been the habitation of some tiny creature possessing life. It is said that the shells carry the sound of the sea wherever they are taken, so we place one against our ear to catch the familiar roll and roar of the waves, and resolve that, wherever we may go, we will carry with us the savour of Christ, and the sound of his glorious gospel.

We fain would tarry longer, for moonlight on the ocean is a lovely sight, but we have to retrace our steps through wild and beautiful scenery that lies still and solitary throughout the silent night. So we hie away in the mellow light of evening, lifting to God on high our grateful hymn of praise for all His goodness; for the sea with all its wonders, the splendour of the noon-day, for the sun by day and for the moon by night.

Chapter Thirty

MARVELS IN EARTH AND SKY

*O give thanks to Nature's King,
Who made every breathing thing;
And all creatures are His care —
Not a bird that cleaves the air
Falls unnoticed but who can
Speak the Father's love to man?*

“**H**E giveth to all life, and breath, and all things... For in Him we live and move, and have our being” (Acts 17:25-28). “Let everything that hath breath praise Yahweh” (Psalm 150:6). For He governs the earth with more than a father's care, extending His merciful attention to everything that exists. Speaking of His goodness towards His creatures, the Psalmist says, “Thou openest Thine hand and satisfiest the desire of every living thing” (145:16).

Within God's highest treasury, myriads of the most wonderful of His creatures live and move freely. There are the birds with their sweet melodies, whose variety of notes all blend in perfect harmony and fill the earth with gladness. Some, who are not musical, are adorned with exquisite plumage. There are fowls of graceful form and marvellous species that can either fly through the air or rest on the land or water. And these all look to God for “meat in due season.” There are multitudes of minute insects also, each tribe and family exhibiting in their peculiar manner the unsearchable wisdom of their Creator. From the industrious bee and the gaily-dressed butterfly to the tiniest specimen of the gauzy gnat tribe, which is only once mentioned in the Bible (Matt. 23:24).

Birds are the free tenants of the air, the sea, and the sky. They were so abundant in the beginning that they are termed by Moses “the fowls of the air” without classification. Since that period they have increased, and vast multitudes have migrated to and from various lands as the warmer seasons have revolved. These enormous flocks often darken the sky in their wonderful flight. They are of inestimable value to mankind, for without their untiring service, the gardens and fields would be laid waste by insects. The study of birds too, helps us to develop the best impulses of our nature. We find among them examples of generosity and unselfish devotion, besides other estimable qualities. Their habits of industry, patience and ingenuity are praiseworthy. The conditions under

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which they live both on land and sea should teach us contentment and resignation. Their cheerful songs as well as their free and graceful motions, are the subjects of intense pleasure, and of the greatest usefulness. Their plumage, delicate and beautiful in the extreme, is well described by the poet as —

*“Thick without burden, close as fishes’ scales,
Or loose as full-blown poppies on the breeze:
Wings that might have had a soul within them,
They bear their owners with such sweet enchantment.”*

The birds we have grown familiar with in England are beautiful indeed, but those of warmer and brighter regions excel them in plumage if not in song. We love them all, not merely for their beauty and sound, but for the lessons they teach. Their habits and motions are wonderful. All may recall some curious facts concerning the birds. Some can talk, and others are so intelligent as to be held up for our pattern. The *Frost Bird* constructs her nest as white as snow, while the *Weaver Bird* makes a kind of swinging nest that sways to and fro as the boughs of the tree move in the breeze. In some countries, not only eggs are eaten, but birds’ nests also. There are three kinds thus used, but the white nest is considered the best, said to be like isinglass. One writer describes a bird’s nest:

*“It wins my admiration,
To view the structure of this little work — a bird’s nest”*

Mark it well, within, without, no tool had he that wrought, no knife to cut, no nail to fix, no bodkin to insert, no glue to join; his little beak was all. And yet how neatly finished! What nice hand. With every implement and means of art. And twenty years apprenticeship could make me such another? Fondly then —

*“We boast of excellence whose noblest skill
Instinctive genius foils.”*

The most beautiful of British birds’ nest is undoubtedly the *Longtailed Tit’s*. Old nests have been taken from gorse bushes and have always been marvels of construction. The outside is green moss, grey lichen and cobwebs, cunningly felted together; the inside lined with literally hundreds of feathers. As many as two thousand have been found in a single nest.

From the Scriptures we learn of God’s care for the birds. Their building places, manners, and faithfulness to their young, are each mentioned. “The sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself where she may lay her young, even Thine altars, O Lord of Hosts, my King and my God,” sang the sweet Psalmist (84:3). He sings again of the great cedars, “Where the birds make their nests: as for the stork, the fir trees are her house” (104:16-17). From Job 38:41, and Matt. 6:26, we see that God does not forget the most insignificant of His creatures. Sparrows are very numerous in the Holy Land— they weigh down the trees, which makes this lesson of trust so much more valuable. We

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wonder sometimes why such intelligent creatures can be so destructive and cruel as to kill each other. We cannot understand why it should be so any more than we can understand why some people take pleasure in hurting others and even taking their lives: why some animals tease and torture their prey, and why some creatures feed upon others. Like the Psalmist we find such things "too hard for us," we cannot attain unto them. God permits it — that is all we know. We must learn to trust when our prayers are not answered in the way we expected and circumstances are adverse from what we anticipated.

The singing of the birds is given in Song of Solomon as one of the bright and glorious tokens of the approach of an eternal Spring.

And what shall we say of the bees, and their skilful dealings. Our word "bee" represents "a dwelling" which appears to have originated from the wonderful dwellings they contrive. The name Deborah means "a bee." Shakespeare speaks volumes in a few lines concerning these tiny wonders —

*"So works the honey bee,
Creatures that by a rule in nature teach
The act of order to a peopled kingdom.
The singing masons' building roofs of gold,
The civil citizens kneading up the honey.
The poor mechanic — porters crowding in
Their heavy burden at his narrow gate:
The sad-eyed justice with his surly mien,
Delivering over to executor's pale,
The lazy yawning drone."*

The bee is mentioned in the Bible first in Deut. 1:44. The only species alluded to probably is the honey bee. Wild bees were common in the Holy Land, depositing their combs in the clefts of the rocks or in the hollows of trees (Jud. 14:8; Psa. 81:16). Wild honey is plentiful and is seen in the warm weather running down the rock walls in streams. Our hived bees were originally natives of Bible lands. There were myriads of wild bees, being attracted by the aromatic odour of the flowers, spices, and gum-bearing bushes. In Canaan honey was a common article of food, and commerce.

Surely the bees teach us that we should work while we have opportunity, and that we should have order, unity, and tact in our methods. As a community each should work for the common good of all, "bearing and forbearing one another in love," and scorning anything approaching sloth or indifference, admonishing some, while encouraging others, living in peace and doing all "heartily as unto the Lord." Though small and weak, these industrious little creatures all working together, accomplish great things. Let us endeavour to sweeten the lives of others, giving a helping hand or a cheery word whenever we can.

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It is said that if, when the bees go out to make honey, they find it in one particular flower they will visit only that one kind all day. So, too, when we have found out what is pure, virtuous, or lovely may we forsake all else and keep to it, though, like the bees, we may have to venture a long distance. Bees will go five miles (8 kilometres) from home in search of the best honey flowers; and all this diligent, unselfish labour is not for themselves but for the enjoyment of others. We obtain through the study of God's Word that which is sweeter far than honey, so may it be our greatest joy and privilege to share it with our fellow-believers and so help sweeten and refresh their lives.

The butterfly family that many suppose have no better object than to flutter in senseless frivolity hour after hour among the gayest flowers of bright mid-summer rearing, are not nearly so light and useless as they are attributed to be, for they prove a wonderful intelligence.

We think of the beauty and variety, and examine them whilst they yet enjoy their transitory existence. Some are plain and simple, and others profusely ornamented and beautifully shaded, as if nature had delicately pencilled their variegated wings. They are objects of intense interest when seen with the naked eye, but our admiration is greatly increased when observed through a microscope, and their wings are found to be covered with plumage. What is commonly called dust, is in reality feathers, whose structure and arrangement are as strikingly symmetrical as the colours are soft and brilliant. Each of these tiny feathers has a quill at the base, and if the wing be roughly touched, the most delicate part of these is destroyed, and should all the dust, so called, be wiped away, nothing remains but a fine transparent skin as fine as lace embroidered with a needle. Our finest laces are coarse compared with the elegant robes of these wonderfully fashioned and delicate creatures. What an extreme contrast between nature and art! And what a sweet lesson all this imparts when we think that these bright and wonderful insects proceed from worms of the most vile and abject appearance that grovelled in the dust, in continual danger of being crushed to death.

We watch this beautiful specimen as we take our morning ramble once more in the country, displaying its sparkling wings, and sporting in the sun beams, rejoicing in its existence, and we feel assured that He who raised it up and gave it such ethereal beauty can also transform us into the image of His dear Son. Changing us from earthborn creatures of the dust to spiritual and immortal beings to dwell in bliss for evermore; being raised above all weakness and perfected in Christ Jesus.

Butterflies, like birds, migrate, which proves their intelligence. Our *Monarch* or *Milkweed* butterfly, is known to be a true migrant. One writer describes "the familiar red-winged, black limbed hoverer above roadside blooms and swamp-

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land flowers, flies south in autumn and is believed to return the following spring. Indeed, many notable autumn flights in western states have been reported: for there great, ruddy flocks often swarm for miles and move southward in immense clouds, while lesser flocks appear in the east. But peculiar opportunities for such observations are offered by southern Long Island beaches, where the southward flying insects, becoming confused by the land limits fronting the wide waters, hesitate and reveal their hidden purposes. For, although great flocks do fly directly southward over the sea, usually they return westward along the shore in a sidewise diversion that, with ever recurring year, converts these barrier beaches into great migratory insect highways."

Again — "Ruddy, black-veined, beating wings are passing in considerable numbers almost any mid August or September day, and as three miles (3.8 kilometres) of salt marsh and open water separate this particular Long Beach sandpit (my principal place of observation) from the mainland, these butterflies can be nothing less than migrants, for almost all are tending westward. During pleasant days, steadily fluttering units traverse the dunes in an intermittent but unquestionable procession, hinting at some slowly marshalling assemblage farther to the west; in blustery weather gathering companies congregate on the beach-grass or berry shelters, and fitfully flutter about the swaying stems and twigs. But when sunset approaches they gather for the evening rest, and reveal a more splendid sight. For still greater companies advancing and forgathering from the east, come clustering to all the surrounding vegetation till golden-rod plants are almost hidden beneath the winged clouds that settle there. They fringe every terminal stalk with red wings arranged in pendant series, or cling closer in massed myriads that sleep more quietly along the lower leaves; while farther away the more restless groups and clustering clans, settling and resettling themselves in the level autumn light, seem to glow and flame then die to flame again like uptossed embers from half extinguished signal fires set here and there among the hollow, purple dunes between me and the setting sun."

We miss the butterflies in autumn, but do we wonder what they are doing and where they have gone? They are wise little creatures. They disappear but they are not extinct, for they live in their posterity. By a wonderful instinct they have taken care to provide for the preservation of their species. May we be as wise, and consider those who are to follow after us in this time of worldwide distress. Paul says that "the parents should lay up for the children" and provide for those that survive them so that they may be left as comfortable and happy as possible. And who can judge of the trouble and hardships ahead of us! All these bright and intelligent creatures — the residents of God's vast and glorious treasury are lent for our pleasure and profit, and are an indelible proof of His existence, power and love.

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Flies occur in great swarms and may be well said to devour human beings (Psa. 78:45). The Hebrew word *zebug* stands for flies in general, whence the name "Beelzebub," signifies the god of flies. Many are poisonous, and in some parts human life is only supportable with extreme precautions, owing to the vast powers of these swarms. Let us not be intruders like the flies who, contrary to the bees, carry poison wherever they go, and are hated for their mischievous character. "Dead flies," or "flies of death," cause the ointment of the perfumer to "send forth a stinking savour," thereby, to stink and putrefy; "so doth a little folly outweigh the wisdom of him that is valued for wisdom," says the Preacher (Ecc. 10:1). We are well aware of the exceedingly annoying and polluting nature of flies even in our temperate climate. They abounded in Egypt and in Judea; the Egyptians being once sorely tried with them. One species that modern travellers have found along the Nile, called the Abyssinian fly, is as large as a bee, and so terrible an annoyance to cattle and other animals as to oblige them to forsake their pastures and ranges, and flee to some place where they can roll in the mud and sand. And yet these living atoms have their uses, just as our troubles and annoyances are sent to try us, and to work for us "a far exceeding weight of glory." God has created all things, even the wicked that trouble us, for the day of judgment. We have only to wait His time to know that "He hath done all things well." The sun, moon, and stars are the jewels of this exalted treasury. God brings them forth in their appointed seasons and we enjoy their living lustre as each lends their separate and collective glory to contribute to our happiness. Oh that we were as perfectly unselfish, in regard to our puny possessions, as is the great Ruler of the heavens and earth in displaying His boundless treasures for the benefit of all.

This upper treasury has for its roof the shining canopy, and for its floor the smiling earth that is illuminated by these glorious lamps of heaven. Their continual flood of light and glory are a fitting emblem of that excellent glory that will illuminate and bathe the renewed and beautified earth from pole to pole during the millennium and the great "beyond." Every morning as the sun arises in the east, resplendent and triumphant over the darkness before the dawn, we are reminded of that Perfect Day, and the glory in which the risen saints will be invested at their Lord's return. And just as the sun shines with increasing strength until it reaches its meridian brightness, illuminating the whole horizon with indescribable grandeur, so will it be in the kingdom, but that glory will never know a western setting. The glory will extend to the far west and fill it with a mellow radiance that surpasses any elemental illumination, for the glory of the Lord surrounded by his immortal courtiers and established in his kingdom will be unspeakably glorious. The north and the south, as alike the east and the west, will be afforded the loveliness of which the northern and southern lights

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are a most striking emblem. "Out of the north," says Job, "cometh golden splendour." Was he thinking of the solemn grandeur of the aurora borealis, whose beautiful luminous appearance is often seen at night in high northern latitudes?

This word "north" refers to that which is hidden or kept secret, and in relation to events shortly to transpire, points to the direction from which the incorruptible golden splendour of God's ransomed ones, whose beauty of character and fulness of life has been hidden with Christ, ready to be revealed at the appointed hour. Zechariah's words are very significant, for he says "the light shall not be clear nor dark, or with brightness, and with gloom: But it shall be one day known to Yahweh, not day nor night: but it shall come to pass that at evening time there shall be light," which beautifully corresponds with Ezekiel's vision of the same glory.

A description of an Arctic night will impress this upon our minds, only the glory of the terrestrial but dimly shadows forth the glory of the celestial in every respect —

"It is dreamland, painted in the imagination's most delicate tints; it is colour etherealized. One shade melts into another so that you cannot tell where one ends and the other begins, and yet they are all there. No forms; it is all faint, dreamy colour music, a far-away, long-drawn out melody on muted strings. Is not all life's beauty high and delicate and pure like this night? The sky is like an enormous cupola, blue at the zenith shading down into green, and then into blue and violet at the edges. Over the icefields there are cold violet and blue shadows with light pink tints where a ridge here and there catches the last reflection of the vanished day. Up in the blue of the cupola shine the stars, speaking peace, as they always do, those unchanging friends. In the south stands a large red-yellow moon, encircled by a yellow ring and light golden clouds floating on the blue background. Presently the aurora borealis shakes over the vault of heaven its veil of glittering silver changing now to yellow, now to green, now to red. It spreads, it contracts again, in restless change: next it breaks into waving, many-folded bands of shining silver, over which shoot billions of billions of glittering rays: and then the glory vanishes. Presently it shimmers in tongues of flame over the very zenith: and then again it shoots a bright ray right up from the horizon until the whole melts away in the moonlight. Here and there are left a few waving streamers of light — they are the dust of the aurora's glittering cloak."

A similar phenomenon in the southern hemisphere is called the *Aurora Australia*, or "Southern Light." A general term applied to both is the *Polaris*, or "Polar Light." Aurora exhibits an almost infinite variety of appearances so that no general description can be given to include them all. The work of God's saints in the future will be of this character. Though diverse in operation all will

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be actuated by one Spirit. In England the aurora is most frequently in spring and autumn, and usually commences as a low arch of white, or pale greenish-yellow light, stretching across the north-western horizon. Beneath this arch the sky appears darker than the rest of the heavens. This is sometimes called the "dark segment" of the aurora. Occasionally there are several arches, as many as nine having been counted at one time. From the luminous arch there generally rise numerous streamers, or jets of light, which shoot up with a pulsing tremulous appearance described by Burns in the well-known lines —

*"Like the Borealis race
That flits ere you can point the place."*

How suggestive is this of the movements of that glorious company depicted in Ezekiel 1. "They ran and returned as a flash of lightning." Incessant movement characterizes the aurora. Along the arch, brilliant wave-like flashes pass from one end to the other, that lengthen and shorten with a dart-like motion towards their point of concourse, and sometimes they are so elongated as to appear to meet round this spot, and form a luminous ring, called the crown or "corona of the aurora." What a beautiful figure of the saints who will encircle the throne! Earthly monarchs are crowned with gold, but Christ will be crowned with the living immortal lustre of the arch of redeemed ones when he sits upon David's throne in Jerusalem. We shall crown him, for we are to be the sparkling jewels of his royal diadem. Oh, for the happy day soon to appear!

There are other nocturnal appearances, but none are so remarkable or splendid as the aurora, which is usually observed in calm and serene weather, and when the moon does not give so much light. When it is to rise in all its glory, a thick, black cloud is to be seen towards the north edged on the upper surface with a white luminous border that gradually develops as we have observed. In serene weather we often observe a circular light, or luminous ring, round the moon, which we call a "halo" or "crown." Its outline has sometimes the faint colours of the rainbow, as we beheld a short time ago following the lightly falling rain. The moon is in the centre of this ring and the intermediate space is generally darker than the rest of the sky. When the moon is at the full, and elevated above the horizon, the ring appears most luminous. But this circle is not actually round the moon. Our atmosphere causes it, where the vapours occasion a refraction of the rays of light that penetrate through them and produce this effect. False moons, also, called "parasalenes," are sometimes seen near the real moon, and appear nearly as large, but their light is paler. They are generally accompanied by circles, some of which are coloured like the rainbow, while some are white, and others have long luminous tails. All these are but illusions produced by refraction. The light of the moon falling on aqueous, and often on frozen vapours, is variously refracted and separates into coloured rays,

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which, reaching our eyes, double the image of the moon. Another sight that occurs but seldom, is to be seen by moonlight, after a heavy rain a lunar rainbow with the same colours as the solar but fainter. It is also caused by refraction. When sulphurous and other vapours take fire in the higher atmosphere streaks of light dart swiftly like rockets, and when these vapours collect in a mass, take fire and fall, they appear like little balls of fire falling from the sky, known as "falling stars." These imaginary stars are often very brilliant, and beautifully coloured, but when they touch the lower atmosphere they are soon extinguished. Great balls of fire, more luminous than the full moon, have also been seen with trails of light. They are thought to be sulphurous and nitrous vapours that accumulate and take fire, for they usually travel with great rapidity and burst with a great noise.

On summer evenings, after great heats, we often see little flashes of light. These are produced by the vapours in the atmosphere, and must be distinguished from real lightning as they are never accompanied with thunder. These flashes are reflections of lightning at a great distance so that we do not hear the thunder. There are other meteors, such as the *ignis fatuus* that are seen in hot countries in all seasons. These are little flames of light that play only in the air a few feet from the ground, and appear to go hither and thither at random. This fire frequently seems to come and go suddenly, probably when shrubs or bushes hide it from the sight. They are frequently seen where there are putrid plants, or animal matter, as in churchyards, shores and rich marshy ground, and are never extinguished by wind or rain. It is natural to believe that these ethereal fires are ignited sulphurous exhalations, as carcasses and rotten plants sometimes emit light. Condensed vapours by the cold of night will take this appearance, or the electricity produced by the interior motion of the vapours that rise in the air may cause it. Men and animals may become so electric as to emit sparks of fire when rubbed or put in motion in a certain manner. Even the air may occasion the *ignis fatuus* when it is electrified to a certain degree. Superstitious people have looked with fear upon these flames, thinking they were departed souls, or wicked spirits, as they follow the motions of the air, and fly from their pursuers; and, on the contrary, pursue those who try to avoid them and fix on vehicles that go swiftly, for the person who drives the air produces a current and draws the flame after him, which stops whenever he stops.

How many of our fears are caused simply by imaginations that might easily be avoided if we would but examine the objects of our alarm and discover their natural causes. Morally, and spiritually often, the same thing occurs. In our ardour or anxiety we may pursue a course that never can be realized; or if realized, would bring us that which we little expected, and prove all our exertions in vain. Let us "follow the things that make for peace" and "lay hold

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on the life which is life indeed;" not cunningly devised fables that, like the will-o-wisp, will vanish and leave its pursuers hopelessly disappointed and deceived, or leading them on, cause them at length to perish for ever.

Such is the magnificence of this boundless treasury which proclaims the power and majesty of God! What unsearchable wisdom is therein exhibited. When we contemplate thereon, truly we are lost in wonder, love and praise.

Another gift from God is the snow. "Fire, snow and vapour" proceed from this upper treasury. And what is more beautiful than driven snow? We rise on a bright, clear, wintry morning and find the whole earth around us clothed with a glittering white mantle. The trees are weighed down with this sheltering cloak of feathery plumage, and every unsightly object is hidden away beneath its silvery embrace.

As our minds revert to such a delightful picture, especially on warm, summer days like the present, it has a smooth, cooling effect on our senses. A snowy day is only once mentioned in the Bible (1Chr. 11:22). "As the cold of snow in time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to them that send him: for he refresheth the soul of his masters," says Solomon in Pro. 25:13, referring to the use of snow brought from the mountains to cool the drink of the reapers in the heat of harvest, in the same way as we use ice. The Psalmist speaks of the white "snow in Salmon" (68:14), and the prophet asks: "Will a man leave my fields for a rock, or for the snow of Lebanon? Shall the running waters be forsaken for the strange cold?" (Jer. 18:14).

The enquiry of Job is also very significant, and the similitude very elegant. The pretensions of his comforters are well compared to the great show the brook makes when swollen with the waters of the flooded land by the melting ice and snow, that makes it brackish and muddy. Job's expectations that were aroused by the coming of his friends around him to comfort him, are like a thirsty, weary traveller's expectations of finding water in summer, where it had been in such abundance in winter. "It is better to trust in Yahweh than to put confidence in princes," says the Psalmist. Where we have met with help and comfort, we expect to find it again, but we are often disappointed. The earthly spring has dried and vanished. We find only heaps of sand where we expected floods of water, or cooling snows. In winter when the traveller was not thirsty there was plenty. And is it not a fact that many will gather round when we are in prosperity, but, in the heat of adversity, when help is needed, these fail us and are often like Job's friends: the first to condemn? Let us ever look above for strength and comfort, for worldly hopes and confidences are like the reeds along the water's edge; they soon break beneath us, and leave us helpless in the mire of despondency. We all drink of the "brook by the way," and find life's experiences often very deceptive. Sometimes it is full to overflowing, at other

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times hopelessly dry, or shallow and miry. But we must not be discouraged, for our Lord drank deeper than we, and by and by himself will lead us to streams of "living water," even "the fountain of life."

As in our Alpine regions the snow lies on the mountain peaks all the year, so it does in northern Israel. There is not a drop of rain in summer; hence "snow in summer and rain in harvest" would be as exceptional a thing as is "honour to a fool" (Pro. 26:1).

In the fair Alpine Valley, the deep blue sky smiles above the glittering snow. The bare grey or rich red rocks, the dark pines, mixed with bright green larches, stand clad in snowy white. All the loveliness of summer is strangely blended with the sterner grandeur of winter. But far away in northern Siberia and elsewhere, nature lies shrouded in almost perpetual winter. Endless snows, and ice covered rocks, bound the horizon. Into these silent solitudes man cannot penetrate except when the land is buried in snow and ice.

In passing over these vast snowy expanses by day, the sledges of travellers seem to be in the midst of a boundless pure white sea on whose dazzling expanse the mirage hovers in strange forms and colours. But by night the spectacle is solemn and awful. The intense cold, the solitude, the oppressive silence, and the red, gloomy moonlight, like the glare of a distant but mighty conflagration, all unite to excite in the mind a feeling of awe and wonder. And all through the long Arctic night the aurora fills the beholder with awe and admiration. When he is driving in his reindeer sledge over the snowy plains, the superb flames, as they spread their wavering glow, are unspeakably sublime.

"The whole northern sky seemed on fire, and looked like a blood-red ocean," says one. "An arch of brilliant prismatic colours spanned the heavens from which shot up luminous banks and fringes of crimson and yellow. The auroral bow with its wavering streamers, moved up and down toward the zenith. Every instant the display increased in unearthly grandeur; the luminous bands, revolved like the spokes of a great fiery wheel." (How this reminds us again of Ezekiel's vision!) The spectacle was beyond all description in its awful grandeur, and the terror-stricken natives cried out "God have mercy."

Such are the wonders associated with the snow! Truly Elihu said of the Almighty: "Great things doeth He, which we cannot comprehend. For, He saith to the snow, 'Fall thou on the earth,' and it comes at His behest" (Job 37:5-6). The Lord also enquired of Job: "Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow? or, hast thou seen the treasures of the hail?" (Job 38). Snow is vapour condensed in the air and often falls in large flakes resembling wool. The Psalmist says, "God giveth snow like wool: He scattereth the hoar frost like ashes. He casteth forth His ice like morsels: Who can stand before His cold?"

In our climate snowflakes usually are large and light; much lighter than

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water, but in cold climates they resemble fine, dry powder in the form of hexagonal stars. Most flakes resemble little stars with six equal rays. We may examine their wonderful shape by letting them fall on white paper. The size depends upon the intensity of cold. Frost is caused, or given, by the “breath” or spirit of God (Job 37:10). It is formed by the cold freezing wind of the north, and the effect of it is that “the breadth of the waters is straightened.” The waters that spread themselves and flow at liberty are congealed, benumbed, and bound up in crystal fetters. The word “crystal” is a Greek word denoting ice, and seems to have been applied to bright, hard minerals, from the popular belief that they were only unusual congelations under the influence of peculiar cold. Crystal and ice are used interchangeably in several passages of Scripture. “He sendeth out His Word and melteth them: He causeth His wind to blow and the waters flow,” continues the Psalmist (147:15-18), and the poet sings —

*“His hoary frost, His fleecy snow, descend and clothe the ground,
The liquid streams forbear to flow, in icy fetters bound.
He sends His Word and melts the snow; the fields no longer mourn;
He calls the warmer gales to blow, and bids the spring return.”*

And such is the change wrought in our hearts when God sends forth His Word to melt and restore them. For like the thawing Word, the gospel and melting power of God go forth effectually to work. Converting grace softens the heart that is hard and frozen, and melts it into tears of repentance, making good reflections to flow, which before were chilled and stopped. The change that is made by the thaw is very evident, yet who can say how it is done. May we always recollect that the gospel of God is a remedy to heal — a balm to soften, and is prescribed for those who are sick or dying in trespasses and sins. “As ambassadors for Christ” we must proclaim the good news, and not snow down cold precepts, like snowflakes upon the heart-ground, but cover it with the softening influences of tenderness and love, and we shall find the “living waters” springing up fresh and freely from broken and contrite hearts. God promises a blessing upon every faithful effort to make known the Truth. “As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall My word be that goeth forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto Me void” (Isa. 55:10-11). The snow from heaven is not merely given because it refreshes, but also because it gives food to the plants. Many think that the snow can be of no use from an agricultural point of view, yet it shields the tender roots from excessive frosts, and forms a mantle over the earth that protects young plants waiting for the footfall of spring. Vegetation suffers much more from cold than do animals, therefore God has ordained that the rain that falls in summer to cool and revive plants, should in

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winter fall in the form of a soft wool having a degree of warmth in it. When it melts, it becomes a fruitful moisture to the earth, and at the same time washes away every hurtful thing from the seedlings and plants, and what remains helps to fill the springs and rivers. The chemist will tell us that snow is laden richly with carbon and supplies to the plants of the earth that peculiar food without which they cannot possibly prosper or grow. The rain and snow therefore are the ordinances of God; and here we are told that they come down from heaven to water the earth and make it fruitful, so that there may be seed to sow in the ensuing spring, and bread in the ensuing winter. And not one wit less sure than these ordinances of nature are God's ordinances of grace. There is not a shower that falls uselessly, nor a snowflake without a reason: and there is never a message faithfully given but it will leave an impression and accomplish that whereunto it was sent.

We may drop a seed in springtime; we may water some young plant; we may shelter some tender shoot from the winds of temptation, and simple though it may seem or fruitless, it shall not be in vain.

One of the most beautiful of Bible invitations is: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith Yahweh, though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool" (Isa. 1:18). Scarlet is one of the deepest dyes; it is supposed to be the produce of an insect found upon the oak. Though there be as the deepest and most inveterate dye that no appliance of ancient chemistry could extract, and though the stains of sin be inveterate, wool-dyed, in the very heart, as it were, of our nature, yet there is a provision that can wash them all away and make them as white as snow when it falls from above. Crimson is a colour in which there is no trace of purple; yet they shall be like the wool before it receives its dye, perfectly white and pure. How rich, then, is the comparison and how great the love that can remove every trace of sin! "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow" was David's prayer. God alone can do this for us through Jesus Christ. Even Job realised that if he washed in snow-water — the beautiful driven snow from the mountains of Lebanon — yet he would not be clean. There is also a very significant reference to snow in Revelation 1, where the symbolical "Son of Man" is said to have "hairs white as wool, as white as snow." This is identical with Daniel's vision of the "Ancient of Days" the hair of whose head was "like the pure wool."

Jesus is "the head of the ecclesia," and he is "the saviour of the Body" — his Bride. This whiteness represents the purity of the head, and the wool shows the relation to the "Lamb of God, that beareth away the sin of the world." John saw that all had been washed and made white "in the blood of the Lamb." Thus the snow-white wool becomes the emblem of the purity of the whole Body of

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Christ, when presented to himself “a glorious ecclesia, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing,” but “holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:27). This lovely silver-like whiteness is frequently alluded to in the Scriptures. The weeping prophet lamenting over Jerusalem says, “her Nazarites were purer than snow, they were whiter than milk.” May we retain our purity in Christ unto the end. White is the fadeless colour associated both with the transfiguration and the resurrection of our Lord (Matt. 28:3; Mark 9:3). But snow soon loses its soft, pure whiteness after it touches the earth. Just so may the beautiful garments of the Christlike character be soiled by the least touch of worldliness; so let us “come out and be separate,” and keep ourselves “unspotted from the world.”

But from this wintery contemplation we must turn to consider the flowers with which God’s higher treasury is so richly carpeted, for the birds and bees are still busy about our path. Yet we would not undervalue the winter season. Yea, rather, there are unexpected pleasures, whether there be frost or snow, with the sparkling stones among the solitary hedgerows, the dead rushes by the half-frozen stream, or the tiny hillocks be clothed in white instead of green. We can explore old villages, hills and dales, asleep in the wintry twilight as well as in the summer sunshine and still find that nature abounds with wonders from which we may gather innumerable lessons.

Mountains and rocks, whose summits are covered with snow all the year, are not without their peculiar plants. From the finest dust to the hardest rock, there is no land or season that does not produce things peculiar to itself. The fir, the pine, the juniper, and cedar, flourish as well in winter as in any other season, and there are flowers that grow beneath the snow, while the snowdrop, hyacinth, narcissus, and the single anemone, grow green in the cold. The winter season is good if for only one reason. The earth requires rest after yielding for all our needs, just as man seeks repose after incessant labour, and God has made provision for all this. In a sense the earth is exhausted by its fruitfulness, and has time to recover strength by receiving this repose and added moisture. So nature is never really idle, any more than we are when we rest to renew our daily strength. Let us remember that to bring forth the fruits of good works, trials and afflictions are as necessary as joy and prosperity, and that God has set one over against the other in His infinite wisdom and goodness.

The divine Author of Nature arranged all things well — the days and nights, years and seasons. Our earth is annually subject to many revolutions and changes of climate. Cold, heat, dew, rain, snow, hail, and wind, are no mere accidents. Boundless wisdom produced, combined, and mixed the elements, measured their force, and determined their effects; and He will order our lives according to the same infinitude if we commit ourselves to His guidance and keeping.

Chapter Thirty One

FLOWERS AND SPICES

*Soon shall Zion's long waste places
Rise in beauty as of yore;
While aloud with grateful praises
Israel their King adore.
While the olive, vine and myrtle
Grace the richest, fairest bowers,
And mid spicy groves, the turtle
Sweetly coos among the flowers.
Lord, that I may worthy be
This grand sight at length to see.*

FOR the full enjoyment of nature's scenes there is something required beyond our mere presence by the sea, or in the country. Unless our attention is aroused, and our minds occupied with the many objects of beauty around us, the true enjoyment of our rambles is greatly diminished, and pleasant indeed it is to roam the fields, lanes, and woods after wild flowers. Mary Howitt, a dear lover of nature, says —

*“God might have made the earth bring forth, enough for great and small,
The oak tree and the cedar, without a flower at all.
He might have made things grow for every want of ours,
For luxury, medicine and toil, and yet not made the flowers.”
“Our outward life requires them not, then wherefore had they birth?
To minister delight to man, to beautify the earth.
To comfort man, to whisper hope, where'er his faith is dim,
For we who careth for the flowers will care much more for Him.”*

Nature is the servant of God, and the lessons she teaches contribute to our good and happiness. “She always wears the colour of the Spirit,” wrote Emerson; and yet another writer says, “Nature is one of the Creator's books, written for our pleasure, instruction, and profit. Its pages are spread out before us. So let us read them and we shall find nothing but good.”

When we come to the Bible we find that the writers of its sacred pages were students of nature. They were also conversant with the science of botany and the nomenclature of plants in the Holy Land, to which they frequently refer. The language of the Song of Songs reveals a mind that derived exquisite pleasure from the study of plants and flowers. But we do not half appreciate them as we should, often passing over them without a thought of their beauty, or the wisdom of their Creator, and only vaguely dream of them coming again when the snow

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lies deep, and the hoary frost sparkles on our window panes. And so it is with all life's blessings; we do not realise their value, nor fully appreciate them till they have gone. Yes, strange indeed —

*“Never prize the music
Till the sweet-voiced bird is flown,” and
“Strange that summer skies and sunshine
Never seem one half so fair
As when winter's snowy pinions
Shake the white down in the air.”*

The Master himself was a deep student of nature. How closely He observed the beauty of the flowers, and what lessons he drew from them, calling the attention of the disciples to the lessons they impart. The vine and the fig tree, the wheat and the tares, the vernal springtime and the rich golden harvest, besides the grass and the birds. Showing the importance he attached to an intelligent observation of them and of the affinity existing between them and the things of the Spirit. The sky, and the sea, with all the changes of their beautiful colouring, the earth with its verdure and flowers were all taken into account by him, who was himself as a lily of the field. He was the meek and lowly Jesus — the Saviour of all, as the lilies of the field are free and for all; unlike the fair and fragrant garden products, hedged about, and tenderly cared for, and then enjoyed by the few only. He had “no form nor comeliness” and yet how beautiful to those who stooped to look and listen, as he passed through the midst of Judea.

The lily is a most lovely flower, and of great variety of species, whose gloriously bright masses in the Holy Land attract both birds and bees. The Hebrew word *shushan* appears to stand for all the bright coloured flowers. Many think the lily of the Bible is the anemone that grows so plentifully everywhere. In Song of Solomon the Bridegroom terms the Bride: “the lily,” and speaking of herself she says: “I am his, feeding among the lilies.” The chapiters on the top of the pillars at the entrance of Solomon's temple were of “lilywork” (1Kings 7:19). The walls, also, and the lampstands were adorned with “open flowers,” teaching us that “grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” The flowers are used as emblems of him who was “fairer than the children of men.” Oh, that we were more like him.

The lily and the rose are representative flowers. To the true believer Christ is as a beautiful rose or a milk-white lily, though all the choice fragrant flowers in some way or other represent him who “is altogether lovely.” The rose is only twice mentioned in the Bible (Song 2:1; Isa. 35:1). Speaking of the future blessedness of the land, the prophet says, “the desert shall blossom as the rose,” showing how lovely and how plentiful these flowers must have been. This is not our rose of so many varieties, but is believed to be the sweet scented narcissus

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that blooms in vast variety and abundance on the plains of Sharon. The soil and climate were well fitted to produce it in great perfection. Some have suggested the tulip, others the mallow. The plant now called the "rose of Sharon" is a rock cistus.

In the East, the rose is the pride of flowers for fragrance, colour and elegance. If Christ is compared to the rose and the lily, his followers should be like them, too. We should possess both the purity of the medicinal lily flowers, and the fragrance of the rose. All are prefigured in the "lily-work" of the temple. That beauty of character is not always seen or acknowledged at present. Like the beautiful arum lily, that is rich in names, the children of God may be lightly passed over, but all are known to Him. Many pass along the hedges where the arums are growing, and see the leaves, but do not notice the curious flower spikes of the plant, because they are always hidden from view. The flowering arums do not grow in sight, but further back among the low plants and dead leaves under the shady part of the hedge or bushes. God's children are often overlooked, and the sweet graces of their real being are not seen by the thoughtless passerby on life's highway. The flowers of the arum are arranged round a tall spike, from which the plant derives its name of "lords and ladies." God's true "lords and ladies" surround Christ their Lord. He is the central stem upon which their grace and beauty depend. Both at present are hidden. But the times of the Gentiles are at an end, and when the leaves of empty profession begin to fall, then all characters will be made as bare as the hedgerows in autumn. This is the season when the fruit of the lily is seen crowded together on the stem — bright orange, or red-tinted, representing the richness and glory of the saints who will cluster around their Lord in his kingdom: fruit is all that will then remain.

We may have observed that most flowers possess a double fashioning. The snowdrop has white petals encircling a crown. The outer folds of the double species may be said to represent the nominal Christians, such as those inferred by "the earth" helping the woman in Rev. 12:16, or as God's "sanctified ones" in Isa. 13. As the outer petals preserve and protect the inner, so does nominal Christianity the true saints: it gives liberty and freedom in proclaiming the Truth, and is therefore a blessing, being in God's purpose as the outer petals are part of the flowers. Again, the grass-like spears of the snowdrop, all seeming alike, spring up straight. But when carefully examined, we find one of these spears slightly thicker than the others, is double near the top, and contains the stem, and something white shines through towards the point. This is the flower pushing its way upwards as it grows, until it pierces and clears itself of this double sheath of green. Then it begins to bend and droop down from the lengthening stem. But for this droop it could not produce seed after its kind.

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Hence the law of gravitation. The whole weight of the earth's mass has been reckoned with, in rightly adjusting the strength of the vegetable fibre in this little flower, so that it may bend its head just at the proper time. And shall not God accomplish His purpose as wonderfully and just at the right moment, strange as it may seem, as easily as He causes this tiny flower to pierce its double blade? It comes slowly but surely, and soon the risen and glorified saints will be seen with Christ in his kingdom. If Israel "shall grow as the lily" (Hos. 14:5), truly the perfected Bride should be represented by these pure and lovely emblems also. There are some with whom we are acquainted who are just like the lovely flowers. They are often found in the most obscure places, but they bring gladness and hope to the downcast, and sweet messages of comfort to the sorrowful.

We cannot tell all the uses of the flowers, neither can we measure all the great thoughts in the mind of God towards us. To some it may appear wasteful to scatter the flowers so profusely, often where there are few or none to observe their beauty and enjoy their fragrance; but God can make no mistakes. There is a purpose and work of some kind for all, however weak and humble, as there are uses for all the flowers. For some a great and noble work — a far reaching work too — while for others just the humble duties of home life, that are often so full of vexations and trials, calling for much patience and prayer. This, perhaps, is the hardest of all work to do thoroughly and well. For some it is the keen activities of business, and to others apparently is assigned the duty only of lying still, and learning patient submission to the will of God, yet strengthening others' faith by their cheerful obedience to the divine Will.

How effectual the flowers are in brightening our lives. They teach us that God loves all that is pure and beautiful. It is a singular fact that in nearly every instance the white flowers are more fragrant than those more highly coloured. The bright orange and lemon flowers are often most disagreeable in smell, so that when a flower has less colour it has a more delicious perfume. Thus we find that God makes up to those who have less advantages than others, and that it is not the most attractive outwardly whose lives are most fragrant with the graces of the Truth. God chose the white, fragrant almond blossom to typify immortal purity, because the white blossoms in the early spring foreshadow a time of fruit-bearing.

Some flowers are to be avoided, such as the meadow-sweet which is known to give one a headache if kept in a room, and even cause illness. From such flowers we learn that the company of all who look well is not necessarily agreeable or helpful always to the disciple of Christ who desires to be strong and healthy. There are some books that are not profitable reading, some pleasures that stupefy the senses and destroy the appetite for holy things; and some

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persons whose conversation and walk may be compared only to deadly poison. Some have an idea that violets can cure headache and the loose, strife, ill temper, but be this true or not, we know what a refreshing influence some flowers exercise over the senses, as likewise do some persons. But there is a very solemn lesson the flowers teach us. Although they are so lovely, they soon fade. Hence it is written in God's Word that "all flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field" (Isa. 40:6). One day bright and flourishing, the next day faded and gone, as the Psalmist also testifies (103:15). And though Ephraim in pride may rear the head as the orange red Rimmon, all his glorious beauty must droop and fade into insignificance (ch. 28). It is said that a sharp frost while the almond tree is in bloom, will deepen the colour of the blossom to a deep red, and so it will remain for several days, while the more gaudy flowers become shrivelled and dead. And so it is with the frost of trials and affliction which come upon the children of God, it only serves to make their lives more full of the riches of His grace and their affections deeper and more mellow.

Some flowers are much more difficult to bring to perfection, or even to rear at all. They are choice on account of their rarity, while others are so hardy and strong that they seem to thrive anywhere and draw nourishment from the roughest ground, and smile amid the thorniest obstacles and hindrances to growth. They are like many of God's children who, through faith, endure bravely untold difficulties, surmount unnumbered obstacles, and look up hopefully with their eager faces turned persistently towards the sunlight. They are constantly making good use of the opportunities afforded them, scanty though they be, and they thankfully acknowledge that they are unworthy of the least of the great Father's blessings, and so are happy while surrounded with hardships. Like the golden-eyed daisies they spring up all unbidden among the grass, and peering to the morning sunlit sky, catch the first bright rays of light and drink up the early dew, and are thus able to cheer others on their way. Truly the daisies are one of nature's involuntary bestowments for the adorning of this earth, presenting a picture of beauty and innocence wherever they are found, and so are God's flowers of a spiritual growing.

In cultivated gardens the more favoured specimens may glow with the prismatic hues of far distant lands, imparting through their rare loveliness a sense of the care and skill needed for their production, but the daisies among the grass, like the sunshine descending indiscriminately on all alike, respect not the person, but greet both king and peasant without distinction.

There is a sweet unconscious beauty about the flowers. They smile on all; they send abroad their refreshing fragrance, and their lovely forms and colours are studied and praised, while they retain their innocence. So again those flowers

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of God's choice seek no lustre of their own, for they recognize the influence they may exercise for the benefit of others is not of themselves but of Him who beautifies the meek with the heavenly adorning of divine love which is "not puffed up" and "seeketh not her own."

What lessons then of love, joy and peace, of trustfulness and contentment, we may learn from the flowers. We may try indeed to copy those pleasing qualities which they so freely exhibit if we cannot make them, and some of those virtues are sincerity, humility, and innocence.

However beautiful the artificial may appear these things are lacking. They may look so perfect that it is difficult to detect the reality, but in the way of butterflies or bees the difference will soon be made clear.

In the fields, along the hedgerows, and among the weeds that abound on uncultivated plains, these silent witnesses to purity and rectitude are too often choked into oblivion like God's children in the midst of a crooked and perverse and thoughtless world. The prouder forms of worldly enterprise, skill, the many coloured blooms of frivolity and self-admiration, may exalt themselves unchecked, but the purer forms, like heaven-sent messengers, reflect in their bright open countenance the rays of the sun of righteousness.

These are the real ministers of hope, which testify to a clearer shining in the future and the greater possibilities of that season of greater fertility. So let us appreciate the flowers, not only for their beauty but for the character and the ideas they typify, for they have many lessons of value to teach us and many blessings to shed upon us.

May we praise Him who has so arranged them and look away from the cares and sorrows to that brighter day, the unclouded morn when God's immortal and everlasting flowers will gladden the replenished earth.

There are many others we might profitably consider, but we cannot stay to examine all. As we look before us the whole landscape seems enamelled with them. The situation is most favourable and inviting for rest by the way. In the beauty of the flowers that adorn the earth, in the charming variety of their forms, in the exactness of their proportions, in the brilliance and magnificence of their colours, and the exquisite sweetness of their fragrance, we trace the goodness, the power, and wisdom of God. They

*"Image forth the boundless love
He bears His children all;
Whatever droppeth from above
Upon the great or small."*

The "sweet flowers" (Song 5:13) of the Holy Land, and those plentifully scattered over all lands, speak to us tenderly and hopefully of life beyond the grave. They spring up from the dust of the earth, beautiful and fresh each

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returning spring, reminding us that we flowers of a larger growth may mingle with the dust before we can put on the lovely garments of immortality and light. The evergreen rosemary seems especially to bid us to keep this fact in mind, so that we may be inspired with hope and courage. We observe that every plant, and even the tenderest herbs, have a tendency to raise themselves; and those of the briar and honeysuckle tribe, that are too weak to support themselves, entwine around some stronger plant, or climb up into the hedge and so lift up their delicate blooms to kiss the morning sun. Thus may we learn to rise above the fleeting things of earth and fix our hearts and minds on things eternal, aspiring higher day by day, while growing in grace — the beauty of the Lord being impressed upon us, as his glory and wisdom are upon the flowers, for “where your treasure is there will your heart be also,” said the Master.

We gather a few wild flowers as we pass along, and examine their perfect structure, drinking in greedily their sweet perfume. What elegant examples are they of simplicity, modesty, humility and discretion! They bloom pleasantly in the most secluded spots, and seem to flourish best in places of retirement. Their delicious fragrance attracts us often, and when they are hidden beneath the foliage they embalm the air. And should not we “be clothed with humility,” scorning any fleshly show, but seeking the good of all without any sign of self-conscious pride; “content to fill a little place, if God be glorified.” Solomon’s glory, great indeed, was inferior to that of the flowers of the field. It was an earthly glory which soon faded away. But the lilies are arrayed in that unassuming beauty — the emblem of the glory that covers each humble servant of God even now, and of that divine radiance in which Christ and his saints will be clothed when glorified together in his kingdom.

The Bible describes the delicious spices that load the warm air with their rich, full odours. Solomon speaks freely of these in his Song of Songs. In the Holy Land, the word “spices” is much more comprehensive than our modern use of it, for it includes not only fragrant gums, such as myrrh, and the roots and barks of trees as the cassia, cane, cinnamon and citron, besides the myrtle, camphire, or henna, the pomegranate, almond and other rich, fragrant flowering trees, as well as the refreshing odours of the flowers, of growing spices, and various perfumes. How lovely these must have been during Solomon’s glorious reign! We try to picture the fragrant myrtle groves, the rich clusters of henna, the scented gardens of thorny myrrh, the lovely beds of aloes, balm, and sweet calamus, the exquisite almonds and date palms, their masses of snowy white blossom shining in the tropical sunshine.

Jacob’s present to Joseph consisted of choice fruits, of “balm, honey, spices, myrrh, nuts and almonds,” and the Queen of Sheba brought “spices in great abundance” to Solomon, besides gold and precious stones. Referring to the

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perfection of holiness pertaining to Christ in his kingdom, the Psalmist sings “all thy garments smell of myrrh, aloes and cassia.” At the Saviour’s birth wise men came and presented before him their gifts of “gold, frankincense and myrrh.” Before his death, also, Mary brought her alabaster box of ointment of spikenard, very precious, and anointed her Lord for his burial — a gift not only appreciated for its loving motives, but on account of its significance (Mark 14:3). A single pound of genuine spikenard cost in our Lord’s day what in modern value of money would be a considerable amount of money (John 2:3). In fact Judas, in condemning Mary’s action, claimed that her ointment could have been sold for upwards of “three hundred pence,” at a time when labourers might have received “a penny a day.” Thus, it could be valued at a working man’s wage for nearly a year!

We must not keep our alabaster boxes of love and sympathy sealed up until our dear ones are gone, but fill their lives with sweetness, cheering and helping them by our words and actions. The kind things we mean to do and say should be done now, and so brighten their homes with the sweet flowers we might afterwards place upon their graves. Many an alabaster box full of the fragrant perfume of affection and tenderness has never been broken till the one intended to anoint has passed beyond recalling, without having tasted the sweetness of human sympathy, or their wearied senses being refreshed by the fragrant flowers of kindness. On the resurrection morning “Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome, brought sweet spices, that they might anoint the body of Jesus” (Mark 16:1), and though this was a custom among the Jews, yet it showed the loving thought and sympathy they had for him they held most dear.

Do we sufficiently appreciate these gifts of God which we consider luxuries, on account of their rarity in our country? Or recollect how much industry is required to procure them for us, as sugar, tea, coffee, cloves, nutmeg, and cinnamon? These should be received with our warmest gratitude, for each has its special use, and proves how beneficent our Father is in bestowing so many blessings upon us.

Sugar is the juice of a certain reed, the preparation of which does not require much art, but is extremely laborious. Tea is the leaf of a shrub that grows in Asiatic countries. Several times during the spring these leaves are gathered and are more or less delicate and fine flavoured. Coffee is the kernel of a fruit like a cherry. The tree that produces it is a native of Arabia, but has been transplanted into several hot countries. Cloves are the buds, or dried blossoms, of a tree that resembles the laurel, and formerly grew without culture in the Molucca Islands. Its trunk is covered with bark like the olive, and white blossoms grow in tufts at the extremities of the branches. Its buds change from pale green to yellow, and

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then to red, and at length to the colour we see them — a dark brown. They have a strong aromatic smell. Cinnamon is the second bark of a kind of bay tree. The flowers are small and white, with an agreeable fragrance like that of the lily, and are emblematic of God's choicer flowers soon to grace the ransomed earth. Another example of white being associated with peculiar fragrance is that of the blossoming and fruit-bearing shrub from which we obtain pepper. The stem requires support and has knotty wood like the vine. Its leaves have a strong scent, and at the centre and ends of the branches are white blossoms from which the fruit grows in clusters; each cluster bearing twenty or thirty peppercorns. Enclosed in the fruit of another useful shrub is a kind of pod that when ripe, opens and reveals a quantity of down, extremely white, which becomes our cotton. As the pod swells by the heat it becomes as large as an apple, and with the aid of a small mill the seed is caused to fall on one side and the cotton on the other. Who can estimate the value of this humble shrub? May our usefulness be as far reaching!

God has not only given us many beautiful things in nature that gladden our sight and delight the senses, but many necessities to gratify our palate, and every country helps to contribute some good thing for our comfort and convenience. There is not a more dependent creature on earth than man who has so many wants beyond those of the lower creation. But the wisdom of God is herein manifested, for He designed that man should continually exercise that reason which is given for his happiness. For this he must be active and diligent. If we could obtain all things without trouble, we should be dull and slothful. Our senses, our reason, and our hands, suffice to procure for us the necessities of life, and enable us to enjoy all the sweet treasures that God bestows in nature.

The ingredients of the "holy anointing oil" (Exo. 30:23-25) consisted of flowing myrrh, sweet cinnamon, sweet calamus, cassia, and olive oil, with which the tabernacle and its holy furniture were to be anointed. And on account of its divine significance it was not to be used for ordinary purposes upon Jew and Gentile, nor any to be made like it. Moses was also told to take "sweet spices, stacte, and onycha and galbanum," sweet spices with pure frankincense "and make of it a perfume... pure and holy... Whosoever shall make like unto that, to smell thereof, he shall be cut off from his people." A combination of sweet spices forms the last article brought into the holy place on the Day of Atonement, and were emblems of the perfume radiating from the Spirit-anointed host of Zech. 4:14, that will be unlike anything known to the human sense, for it is the Spirit's own composition, and represents the "One Body" perfected and glorified in all its members. The "sweet incense" perfume was within the veil, and constituted all that touched it as "holy." The One Spirit that consumed the sacrifices on the brazen altar also kindled the sacred perfumes of the golden

altar, and lighted the lampstand, representing Christ and his saints. Hence ordinary fire could not be used in these holy services. Aaron, anointed high priest of Israel, was still but the shadowy type of him who perfectly fulfilled the character of "Yahweh's Anointed" (Psa. 89). Yahweh said, "I have ordained a lamp for Mine anointed" (Psa. 132), who in Psa. 92, says prophetically "I shall be anointed with fresh oil."

As upon the head of Aaron first, the holy anointing oil was poured, so upon the head of Jesus first alone, the holy anointing Spirit descended. The "Comforter" was promised to the disciples, and the fulfilment was given on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:32-33). And John says "of His fulness have we all received, and grace for grace" (John 1:16; 1Cor. 1:21-22). It may appear remarkable that while leaven and honey were not allowed, frankincense was commanded to be offered with the meat offering (Lev. 2). Frankincense is a gum resin of a brownish colour, and is produced by a very fine tree belonging to the family of the turpentine-bearing trees. It is an ingredient that emits a fragrance, all the sweeter from its subjection to the fire (Lev. 24). When laid upon burning coals or a hot iron, it sends forth a very fragrant vapour. Here we have another deeply interesting type of the Lord Jesus. Although it is true at all times that his garments did smell of "myrrh, aloes, and cassia," it is well known that it was under trial, or when in the furnace, that the holiness of his character and the glory was manifested more fully. He suffered the reproach of men and answered not his revilers. We may follow his mission with increasing interest and listen to his words with greater joy, yet may not catch the odour of his name which is "as ointment poured forth," or rightly appreciate the beauty of his character until he is seen as the one "made sin for us." Like the "fine flour" mixed with oil, or the "cakes anointed with oil," there may not be much that attracts us. But as the hot coals act upon the frankincense, it will be seen that in the complete offering there is purity and fragrance, and something that still is with us after the pan has cooled and the coals are extinguished — the Jesus who withstood the fire — the Messiah who lives for ever, whose beauty of character, and whose holy sweetness we all hope one day to be partakers, when "we shall be like him," having come through the fire of trial, although more moderately heated.

The twelve-pieced "unleavened cakes" in two rows of six each, representing both Jews and Gentiles, were accepted on account of the frankincense — the emblem of the excellency of the Lord Jesus, both in his life and in his death, which ascended continually to his Father, as a "sweet smelling savour." These twelve representative loaves were covered over with frankincense, and were supported by the pure golden table. This covering of "a sweet savour" on the loaves thus represented the spotless character of the future offering and the exceeding preciousness of it, and that which should be accepted for Israel, with

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the purity of which all should be clothed. Israel was before Yahweh continually in all sweetness and preciousness of the frankincense character, and were also presented to Him in all the value of the divine excellence of their Messiah. How delightful are all these glorious figures. We feel that God's presence fills the whole universe, both far and near, and every object in nature foreshadows something beautiful concerning the kingdom and Age to come. On the stern mountain and in the flowery vale where the young bees hum, the butterflies flutter and the larks carol while on the wing. From the sweet spices we gather that the hidden purity of the heart is better than outward appearances. God values this as we do the cinnamon tree which is only valuable for its bark, for He knows the inner life and the sweet influences of that life, although obscure, that is lived in humble obedience to His will.

But we pass along —

*“While the bee with honeyed thigh,
At her flowery work doth sing” —*

to the open meadows where fresh objects meet our eyes.



Chapter Thirty Two

ANIMALS

*In spacious pastures green and fair,
The cow and bear shall feed;
The lion's whelp and fatling, there
A little child shall lead.
No cruel beast, nor angry foe,
May venture to destroy
When in God's holy mountain dwells
Eternal peace and joy.*

WE walk along the pretty narrow lane, and soon discover that we are not only arousing the curiosity of the country-folk, but are a source of surprise to the dumb creatures around, who are seldom so rudely interrupted; for as we attempt to cross the fields, a slim colt faces us mutely, then pricking up his ears, suddenly kicks out, and gallops wildly round the whole area, followed by several older friends. Thus we are brought into contact with another order of living wonders, the free occupants of our Father's vast treasures.

In Genesis 1, these terrestrial creatures are classed under three heads: cattle and beasts for the use of man; beasts of prey, those feeding on flesh, and land reptiles. All these are styled *nephesh* or "souls of life." When Adam was created, all the beasts of the earth were under his subjection and were ruled by love; but the beasts of the earth are now under a new feeling of respect to man, as witnessed by our remaining this side the hedge beyond the reach of these fine animals. Once they honoured Adam because they loved him, now they flee from man because they fear him. Noah found that all creatures — the beasts of the earth and the fowls of the air — forthwith obeyed him. They recognised in him a portion of the ancient authority with which man was first invested, as their king, disowned by Adam, but to be restored again in Christ.

In its wild state the horse has to seek daily food; therefore it not only runs at a great speed, but leaps also. Its feet are so made that it runs on the tips of its toes, like other animals that run fast and far. Slow-moving animals as bears, plant the whole length of the foot on the ground. We run on tiptoe when we wish to run at a quick pace. The horse does not put the soles of the feet to the ground at all, because it is constantly running. The hoof is so constructed that he can run and gallop for many miles every day, over the hardest and roughest ground as easily as over the softest pasture. The wild horse never wears shoes, and they are not necessary except for very hard work. Being a very heavy animal, the jar of

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his footfall when galloping is tremendous; and when he alights on the ground after a leap the shock is even greater still. And here is another marvel in nature. If the shock were allowed to pass straight to the brain, the animal would be stunned, or even killed by the concussion, but nature protects him from this by causing the shock to pass from the knuckles to the wrist and thence to the elbows, the shoulders and the neck, thus greatly diminishing the shock. The hoof appears to be a solid mass of horn, but it is composed of thousands of delicate, and yet exceedingly strong springs. Shoes reduce this fitness for springing, separating the hoof from the ground and robbing him of nature's beautiful provision.

In pagan Egypt the horse was connected with the worship of the sun, so that they were only reared for chariot and war purposes. As the horse, in its natural element moves freely and with alacrity, facing the foes of the battle-field with remarkable courage, so should we be dauntless in the face of opposition to the Truth and not turn aside from the path of duty. How often our prayers are hindered by the sense of our own defectiveness, but did we but continue to pray, instead of giving up at our first attempts, but rather go fearlessly on, seeking the power that helps, teaches, and intercedes for us, we should succeed, and be free; not binding ourselves to habits and forms, but using our liberty in the faith. We must not be like the mill-horse, plodding through the same monotonous round continually, while bound to one central point without any freedom, and enlargement. The service of the Lord is free and joyous, and its scope is varied and far-reaching. The dull routine of mere duties performed aright, though not altogether without results, any more than the work of the mill-horse, is not all that God requires. Like the free horse on the prairie, or under the guidance of its rider, ranges over wide fields and far extending highways, so must be our spiritual life. Prayer, like the wireless telegraphy, can speed across the ocean; it can be carried over deserts, yea, more, it can link the believer with the eternal Mind, through the One Mediator, and bring down upon unworthy instruments untold blessings.

In olden days the horse was used only for warlike expeditions. Hence the beautiful description in Job 39. It is the symbol of war and conquest. The meaning of Zechariah's words (ch. 10:3), "Yahweh of hosts hath visited His flock, the house of Judah, and hath made them as His goodly horse in the battle," is that He will ride them as their Commander-in-Chief, and make them conquerors over all their foes, both glorious and successful.

But the horse is not only warlike but swift, and therefore is the symbol of speediness (Joel 2:4; Jer. 4:13). Habakkuk testifies concerning the fierce, swift, and invincible career of the Chaldeans against Judah, "their horses were swifter than the leopards, and more fierce than the evening wolves." Just as people

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represent themselves by symbols of animals, so the Lord makes use of them in prophecy, speaking of nations by their own signs. The Spirit in Isa. 63:13, says that Yahweh led the whole of the tribes of Israel “as a horse in the wilderness” that they should not stumble. And both Zechariah and John beheld in vision horses of divers colours representing certain diverse conditions of the political body typified by the horses. White is the emblem of peace, red of war, black of lamentation, mourning and woe, and pale green of famine and pestilence. The great Captain of our salvation who leads many sons to glory is seen by John “sitting upon a white horse” and his “called, chosen and faithful” hosts are also seen sitting upon white horses, riding in immortal majesty and might.

Some have found a difficulty in how all the genera and species of the animals of the earth could be gathered around Adam and he give names to all; but the various species can be reduced to a much smaller number. Zoology teaches us that animals which seem distinct to us are often connected with each other, as the lion, tiger, and cat all belong to the same class. All these difficulties disappear before divine power. Some have an idea too, that labour is a mean thing, forgetting that Adam worked even in his state of innocence, and that labour is a most honourable thing, and the humblest labourer as acceptable as the greatest, if his labour be “in the Lord.” God does not estimate His workmen by class and social bearing but by sincerity and usefulness. In Eden man found it a pleasure to put forth his energies, for labour in itself is enjoyment. The curse is not labour but the excess of it and the continuance of it in the “sweat of the face” (Gen. 3:16-19). The horse feels it a joy to put forth his strength, but how different to find him faltering under the burden and oppression of excessive work!

The very fact, therefore, that the beasts of the earth, even the most formidable of them, unless under the pangs of hunger, shrink from man, is just a portion of the remaining memorial of the covenant made with Noah. “into your hands are they delivered” (Gen. 9:1-2). It is very significant that man, whose physical strength is the least, comparatively, should present so formidable an aspect to the beasts of the field. So much is this felt that it has been said that “a lion will shrink from that man who has the nerve, physical and moral, to look him directly in the face — the eye not retreating.” So that even the lion feels what God imprinted at the Flood and shows it by shrinking from man, because “the fear and dread of him” is upon it still.

It is here we read of the permission to eat animal food. It is not an injunction but a permission. Yet even here there is an exception made, that man should not eat the blood of the animals he destroyed for food, for various reasons. One is that God asserts “the blood is the life.” A distinguished physiologist says that the blood in the human body is quite different from any other material substance of,

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or in it, and that it is in itself a vital fluid, and so far this discovery of science is just an illustration of the statement of God thousands of years before. Why, we may ask, apply this restriction to the animals and beasts of the earth? Partly to prevent cruel and savage feelings, but chiefly on account of the particular use to which blood was to be turned under the ancient Levitical law (ch. 7:27). "Ye shall eat no manner of blood... Whosoever eateth... that soul shall be cut off from his people." This institution was made 400 years after the permission given to Noah (Gen. 9:3-4).

There is a very solemn injunction here also in regard to man. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed" (v. 6). God first encouraged Noah against the possible violence of the brute creation; but man's experience before the Flood was that violence governed the earth and blood stained it every day. This proved that he had a more formidable foe by far, for he would not only fear the beast but his own race and family. Hence, God made provision against the violence of man, and pronounced this dread penalty following upon the crime of murder (Gen. 42:22), making allowance in His beautiful law for death by misadventure. He would have man to realize what it meant to take even the life of the beast, and so do nothing rashly. "He that killeth an ox" should be as careful as "if he slew a man," not causing needless pain. A lesson that needs to be deeply impressed upon all.

That God hates cruelty and desires all creatures to enjoy peace and liberty is evident from the various methods of protection He has contrived for them. In all things we may trace His mercy and love. The need for protection is greatest for those creatures whose lives are most in danger: and this is given to all game birds, and animals that are hunted especially. The gay pheasant in winter is able to flutter himself among the russet-brown leaves that cover the ground, and so escape the observation of all but the keenest eyes, because his plumage so harmonises with his surroundings. And it is the same with the partridge and others. Birds are protected from man by the form and colouring of their surroundings, and caterpillars are protected chiefly by their colour from the birds that seek them for food. It is not easy to detect a green caterpillar on the green leaf on which it is lying flat. Those of the thorn-moth family are exactly like little bits of dry stick. Certain butterflies, also, such as the hair-streak and lappet-moths, when resting among the foliage are scarcely distinguishable. The manner of the protection is perfect that nature affords to her weakest and smallest offspring. But perhaps the most wonderful of all is the power some creatures possess of changing their colour to suit the varying character of their surroundings. The chameleon, which resembles a lizard, is said to change its colour as often as it passes from a plant of one hue to that of another. Hence the same creature may be any shade as it clings to the foliage of a tree, and yet will

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take on a brown appearance when it moves its position to the trunk of the tree. It is the creature of most frequent change, although ptarmigans and some hares are brown in summer and white as the surrounding snow in winter. Both birds and animals that are coloured in summer change to snowy white when winter appears. The elephant's trunk resembles the dark boughs of the jungle, and the untameable zebra prances fearlessly among scenery as exquisite as his own beautifully striped body. The tiger lies at ease amid lovely tropical foliage, the leopard changes his skin, and the little prairie dog varies in colour from cream to red, always matching the soil in which he makes his home.

There are also fish that vary their hue to the depth and colour of the water in which they live. In deep shady pools every trout is dark, while on bright, pebbly shallows every fish is almost white. Then again, all kinds of animals have not the same organs of sight. Most eyes appear round, but in these there is much variety. The position of the eye enables them to see straight before them. Most quadrupeds have an extra muscle to man, to suspend and support the eyeball, because their head and eyes incline towards the ground while seeking for food. Insects enjoy more perfect sight. Flies can see distinctly on all sides without troubling to turn. Fish would not be able to see on account of the strong refraction of light on the water were it not for the crystalline humour so arranged as to collect these rays. The membrane connecting the eyes of frogs is transparent; thus they are defended from dangers of land and water.

The mole possesses two tiny black eyes because it is usually underground. The snail observes distant objects through having eyes at the end of two long horns. Spiders have as many as eight eyes, clear as diamonds, because they can neither move eyes nor head. The chameleon has the power to raise one eye and lower the other and of seeing what is before and behind him, while the convex eyes of hares and rabbits save them from many dangers.

And does not God protect us in many wonderful ways? How quickly we are able to close our eyelids against intrusions. "Keep me as the apple of the eye," said David, thinking of this marvellous security. What a blessing is ours as believers in the Bible to pass unheeded among so many that might taunt, if not use us. God delivers us daily out of temptations, and shields us from unforeseen dangers. Yea, He watches over us with the tenderest care, and nothing shall "in any wise harm us if we follow that which is good." The purpose of forms and colouring are to conceal from the enemy. But enemies, if afraid, will leave alone just as if they cannot see. Hence, things in nature to be afraid of are known by their colour. It is observed that among insects bright yellow suggests something that stings. In grass something showing a mottled pattern denotes snakes. A bluish hue in the midst of green leaves startles a browsing animal, who associates this colour with poisonous plants.

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What a protection then for a defenseless moth to be so exactly like the dreadful hornet that his sting must be tried to detect it! The hedge sparrow's nest is often in the way of a browsing cow, but one glimpse of those blue eggs is sufficient to protect it. Hemlock and other plants not good for cows, warn her to be off, and the eggs are saved. Again, the mottled appearance of a robin's eggs often prove its safety by reminding the greedy intruder that there are such things as snakes, and so he must keep away.

The naturally provided covering of birds, beasts and reptiles with clothing adapted to their situation and manner of life, is another wonderful arrangement of divine wisdom. Some creatures are covered with feathers, some with hair, and some with scales and shells. The texture of their skin is so formed that they can lie on the ground in all weathers. Besides protecting them from wet and cold, their fur or feathers warm and shelter their young. The bodies of some reptiles are composed of little rings, each furnished with a number of muscles by which means they can extend or contract the body at leisure.

The beauty of these various kinds of clothing is very wonderful. We think of the wonder of some species of birds and insects. The tiny humming bird is one of these wonders of nature. It is no larger than a bee, but is so beautiful in plumage that its head and wings resemble the rainbow. Do we not observe infinite wisdom united with unlimited goodness rendering every creature as happy as its nature and design will permit?

There are some animals that lay up stores for winter, and others that sleep all the winter and make no provision. Nature prompts the bees to collect honey and wax as long as the season lasts, before the colder days arrive; while ants, spiders, frogs, lizards and serpents enjoy a profound sleep during this season. Creatures of the greatest importance appear to work the hardest and show the most intelligence. Sometimes we complain that the people of the world have a far easier time and less troubles than those who endeavour to serve God; but which is the more preferable position to hold? Who would not rather bear the character of the industrious bee before the slothful snail, in spite of all the difficulties of wintry experiences? And all faithful service will be rewarded.

We might continue to speak of these marvels, but these suffice to show that they are not accidents, but exhibitions of the wisdom and foreknowledge of God. "The creature may not be conscious of these changes any more than we realize the dangers we often escape," interrupts a sister much interested in our subject. "That little burrowing animal — the mole — is a marvel to me. To pierce the earth, its body must be a proper shape." Yes, that is, pointed like a cylinder. The torpedo and the aeroplane made to bore through water or air, are of this shape. It is no new invention, for nature is before man's ingenuity even in this. The mole is a perfect cylinder, and resembles our modern ships, bullets and bombs. They

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are perfectly smooth, like the mole's glossy coat. The earth will not cling to it any more than water to the duck's back, so each creature is supplied with that which is most useful to it. Claws are given to the cat, limbs and arms to the monkey for climbing, and spade-like paws to the mole for burrowing through the earth, that also serve for pickaxes. He has such a keen sense of hearing that he does not look for worms and grubs, but listens for them. The mole is never heard at work nor seen throwing up the soil, for he can hear footsteps 50 or 60 metres distant. So we see how nature has not only furnished this subterranean creature with tools for digging, but ears instead of eyes for the dark tunnels in which he lives.

There is a lesson also for us here. We should quietly perform the work God has ordained for us to do, however humble or laborious. If no eye observes, the effects are known and what is done in secret will eventually be made known and rewarded. Let us make good use of our abilities, and not waste valuable time in lamenting over what we have to do. Courage and perseverance are inestimable qualities, and much may be accomplished by those who are "swift to hear" as well as those of keen mental perception. Like the antlion who, with such wonderful art, succeeds little by little in his object, so must we continue unwearied in well-doing. All its actions are directed by fixed principles. He works backwards and prepares his trench, although his victim for food has not been seen by him. It is not therefore the effect of experience, but that of patience.

Another remarkable feature is that animals show that they have the faculty of reason, and the sense of taste. The Lord makes use of the intelligence of the animals in Isa. 1:3 to show His people their sin. Through the prophet He says, "The ox knoweth his owner and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, My people doth not consider." Israel ought to have known, for God had endowed them with greater knowledge, and promised to provide for them.

In the Scriptures the ox or the bull are always used to denote princes. "Strong bulls of Bashan" in Psa. 22:12, refer to princes, and the expression in Gen. 49, "They lamed an ox," is applicable to Israel's sons in their conduct towards Joseph, whom they tried to prevent from getting that destined dignity which he at length attained, and which they impeded slightly, but failed to prevent altogether. The cruel conduct is related in Gen. 37. They were foremost in getting rid of the brother whom their father loved. They slew Shechem, a man of distinction, and they lamed, or cut off the sinew of an ox (not a wall) — a distinguished individual afterwards pre-eminently so — Pharaoh's prime minister. We all know the quality of the ox. Strong and patient to labour and of great service to man, being used in agricultural pursuits: for ploughing, for drawing, for threshing, or treading out the grain and for food. When employed,

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the oxen were not to be muzzled. Hence those who labour in the Lord's service should not be fettered. We should "use hospitality" toward such "without grudging." "The oxen likewise, and the young asses that ear the ground, shall eat clean provender which hath been winnowed with the shovel and with the pan" (Isa. 30:24). All who work for the Master should be careful to take and assimilate the clean, unadulterated corn of the Word, for therein lies their strength for acceptable service. As the oxen are proved in the East with much ceremony — a thing that is most necessary; so are we all being tested, and there will come a day when all our work will be tried also (Luke 14:19). The ox, in the Scriptures, is the symbol of service. The Gospel by Mark represents the Lord Jesus as servant of all, and corresponds with the cherubic "face of an ox" in Exod. 25, Eze. 1 and Rev. 4:7. In Num. 7:3 the princes of Israel brought oxen and offered them before Yahweh for service, and the Psalmist's prayer was "that our oxen may be strong to labour," which meant a rich harvest and increased wealth. Let us work while it is called today, for "the night cometh." Let us therefore

*"Take Christ's easy yoke and wear it
Love will make obedience sweet.
He will give us strength to bear it
While His wisdom guides our feet."*

Israel was forbidden to yoke the ox and the ass together, because they were not of equal strength or proportions. Thus duties that we should be doing ourselves we must not impose upon others smaller and weaker, nor expect all to do alike. All are not fitted for the same office. If we are strong, let us consider others, while keeping pace with those who possess the like precious gift. In the East the ass is by no means the despised animal as we know him. He is not fiery and impetuous like the horse, but quiet, simple and devoid of pride. May we be as patient and even-tempered, and as willing to bear others' burdens without murmuring, as this extremely useful animal. Princes rode upon asses and mules as a mark of distinction.

Christ made use of the ass' foal when about to enter Jerusalem. We have a picture of the ass in its wild state given in Job 39:5-8, "He scorneth the tumult of the city, neither heareth he the cry of the driver. The range of the mountains is his pasture, and he searcheth after every green thing." The angel predicted that Hagar's son should be literally "a wild ass-man" — like the wild ass of the desert, untameable. The Arabs are the lineal descendants of Ishmael, and we have only to read their history to see how this saying has been fulfilled. Claiming the barren plains of Arabia, they have considered themselves entitled to seize and appropriate to their own use whatever they could find; the tent their dwelling, the circular camp their city, the spontaneous produce of the soil, added to by a little patch of corn, suffices them for food. Mounted on their favourite

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horses, they scour the wastes with a velocity only surpassed by the wild ass. The Arabian is the same today as 3,000 years ago. He has literally his hand against every man, and is still the "wild ass man" of the desert. What a proof is this of the inspiration of the Bible!

It is remarkable that each of the tribes of Israel are described by the symbol of an animal. That of Issachar was "a strong ass crouching down between two burdens," and exactly shows their position. This was a patient tribe occupying a quiet valley and paying tribute to any extent rather than go to war. A Jew's translation of this is: "Issachar is a bony ass, crouching between the folds; he saw that repose was good, and the land that it was pleasant; and he inclined his shoulder to receive the burden, and became a servant unto tribute" (Gen. 49). Judah had the boldness, grandeur, and dignity of a lion. Issachar, the patience, and it may be the lack of spirit and stubbornness of the ass, if this could be applied to that animal in eastern lands. Of Dan, Jacob declares "Dan shall pronounce judgment on his people... he shall be a serpent by the way, a viper in the path, that biteth the horseheels, so that his rider shall fall backward. I hope for thy aid, O Yahweh; Gad, an assailing troop, shall assail him, he shall assail the heel." Samson was one of the most illustrious descendants of Dan. "He judged Israel forty years." The whole conduct of this tribe was to be that of a serpent gaining the victory, not by open assault, but by cunning, and note what is written of Samson in Judges 16:27-30.

The serpent is distinguished for its subtlety. Most animals as well as man have an instinctive dread of it. Hence it is used as an emblem of wickedness by Jesus (Matt. 23:33), and of cruelty both by David and Solomon. There are at least 300 species, the largest of which are said to be terrific in their power and venom. The serpent therefore appears not only to represent sin, but every imaginable form of evil, each as injurious and deadly as the serpent's sting. We need to be constantly on our guard, for temptations are usually suited to our needs and inclination. We are led into them by choosing the path that the flesh would rather go — the "way that seemeth right, but the end thereof is death." When the chameleon wants to catch flies and grasshoppers, he lies on the grass and takes its colour, and in disguise capturing quite easily all he desires. So our temptations usually are in the shape of things we fear least, and to which, through the weakness of our nature, we are most inclined. In popular religion, sin is often represented in a repulsive form, but the apostle likens the powers of evil to "an angel of light" (1Cor. 11:14), and to a lion, the king of beasts, and the noblest of the forest.

The serpent is a beautiful creature, but it is armed with a sting, although not seen. In the first instance it must have been an extremely beautiful object. It is described in Gen. 3 as most 'subtle,' that is 'suitable' from its superiority over

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the other animals. Some think it moved upright with great dignity. There is a great difference in the comparative intelligence of the animals. The dog is more intelligent than the cat, and the horse more than the cow. We have no evidence that the serpent in Eden had of itself the faculty of speech, but there is evidence that God has given animals the vehicle of voice, so that it was not impossible for the literal serpent to address Eve. Balaam's ass spoke in human voice through the power of God. But whatever difficulties may be produced, we have the divine record to rest upon, and this we believe. There are some who would have us believe that man originated from the baboon, and has gradually developed into what he is at present. But how absurd is this idea and contrary to the divine revelation. The man made of the dust, has ever since been man, just as the horse has always been a horse and the cow continues to be a cow. Nature testifies to the truth of the Bible. All lights gather around it, and all true science is in harmony with it. If sin appeared ugly or unseemly we should not be so easily drawn into danger by it. It is only when we become acquainted with the holy law of God that we see how exceedingly sinful sin's flesh is, and learn to shun and flee from it as we should from the graceful, though venomous, serpent.

There is a remarkable contrast between the blessing pronounced upon Dan and Naphtali. The patriarch says: "Naphtali is a hind let loose; he giveth goodly words." The hind is the female stag, and the characteristic of this tribe, like that of its symbol, is timidity. It is a most graceful animal, whose agility and beauty are famed in Eastern poetry. She is sure of foot, and leaps fearlessly among the rocks and precipices, and yet at the least sound of intrusion she is startled and afraid. From the gentle hind we may learn how the small and weak among God's children may be sure in the Word and swift to bear the glad tidings of Truth far and near, overcoming obstacles, and, though timid, for very joy of heart leaping over the hard places and the precipitous difficulties, always exhibiting the meekness and gentleness of him whose beautiful, willing feet were truly like "hind's feet" (Psa. 18:33). So Lord —

*Take our feet and let them be
Swift and beautiful for Thee.*

Of Judah he said: "Thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise. Judah is a lion's whelp." One who should early show that he would command others. The quality was soon manifest in Judah taking the lead in the wilderness march, and in going foremost after the death of Joshua to take possession of the land. The Israelites encamped in four grand divisions with the tabernacle in the centre, though at a distance from it, and the ensigns embroidered on their standards were the lion, a man, an ox and an eagle (Num. 2; compare Rev. 4); Judah taking the lead under the lion. The "young lion" grew and became indisputably terrible to his foes. "Judah prevailed over his brethren in the past, and of him

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came the chief ruler" (1Chr. 5:2), and so he continued that career which indeed entitled him to the name of Judah — that is "praise" (1Chr. 26:27).

But Jacob says again: "He has lain down; he has couched like a lion, and like a lioness, who shall rouse him up?" A lioness is peculiarly fierce if her cubs are threatened; so all this imagery sets forth the days when Solomon was king of Judah and Israel, quietly seated on his throne, honoured and feared by all the nations, none daring to do wrong to his happy subjects. It also points to the days when the King greater than Solomon shall rule in majesty and power. It was then that Judah naturally was at the height of pre-eminence — the praise of all lands. And afterwards even all the best and noblest of the kings sprang from Judah's soil, as well as the most renowned prophets; and all the sweet singers, whose songs have been handed down to us. Judah retained dominion, too. "The lion" was still his emblem, for Judah held its place as a kingdom till Messiah was born. Growing up unnoticed "as a tender plant," the true "Lion of the tribe of Judah" will command his brethren, and will "roar out of Zion" prevailing over his enemies — and in whom are combined the courage and nobility of the lion, and the gentleness of the lamb.

We know the characteristics of the lamb. It is meekness and patience, inoffensiveness and non-resistance. The Spirit testifies of Christ: "he was brought as a lamb to the slaughter." Have we thought of what this meant? The helpless, innocent lamb under the hand of the slayer, makes no attempt at escape and utters no cry. The sheep that is robbed of all its fleece is given nothing in return and yet it was all it possessed to keep it warm and protect it from wind and storm, and the attack of brutal enemies. Christ was stripped of all that we count dear and valuable in this life — yet he gave up all freely, and "opened not his mouth." Are we following him indeed? "He was smitten," and the sheep of his flock were scattered for the Lamb on Mount Zion is symbolical of "the Shepherd and the sheep." The saints are all in the Lamb and partake of the lamb-nature, and bear the same characteristics, whom the Lord Jesus identifies with himself — the chief shepherd of the flock. How perfectly was he fitted for his office! And this glorious self-sacrificing life was rudely cut off by a shameful death. In "passing under the rod" (Jer. 23:13), he was marked off for sacrifice, just as the sheep destined for sacrifice. "Of whatsoever passeth under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto Yahweh" said the Law (Lev. 27:32). At the shepherd's side is a bowl of colouring matter into which he dips his rod, and with it he marks every tenth sheep. All God's sheep must pass under the rod, tithed. They make a "covenant with Him by sacrifice" (Psa. 1:5). "We are counted as sheep for the slaughter" said the Psalmist. Those who have "passed under the rod" (Eze. 20:37) are the ones that have been



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counted thus. When our Shepherd counts up his sheep may we each be found bearing his mark impressed upon us. "If we suffer with him we shall also be glorified together." By nature we are ignorant and helpless, unable to guide ourselves in danger or difficulty, and in this very helplessness we are "as sheep going astray." But what a lovely picture in Isa. 40:2. It is the Lord fulfilling towards his flock the office of shepherd. The Lord who once "passed under the rod" himself, will wield the rod of power, coming with a strong hand to deliver his sheep, and then shall he lead them forth into green pastures, and feed them with the richest food. In Rev. 5:6 John saw in vision the "Lamb slain." This was the cause of great joy and thankfulness, for "without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins." God provided "the Lamb" to "bear away the sin of the world," and upon this fact rests our hope of future bliss. The gentle seal, whose character most resembles that of the lamb, is used by the *British and Foreign Bible Society* translators in the familiar passage of John 1:29, to convey to people to whom the lamb is unknown, the same idea, so that all may recollect the harmless and beautiful character of their "Sin-Bearer."

The prophetic blessing upon Simeon and Levi is very significant also. The Hebrew translation of verse 6 is certainly correct. "In their self-will they slew an ox" not "dugged down a wall." The Hebrew for wall is *shor* while for "ox" it is *shur*. A slight difference in the lettering makes a great difference in the meaning. Digging down a wall would mean nothing, but "houghing oxen" reveals the characteristics of these tribes.

Although at first Simeon and Levi joined unholy brotherhood to take vengeance, deceitfully and cruelly, on the men of Shechem, Levi, whose name means *Joining*, was not afterwards united; being scattered over all the land in their forty-eight cities with their enclosures for cattle and flocks. They walked everywhere as witnesses for God in the happy days of their early service as Levites. Hence the history of Levi is rich in suggestive lessons, for it is the history of the children of God outlined, and we might weave a whole web of spiritual truths from the threads of such a history. Yahweh was "his inheritance," and Levi will yet occupy a prominent position in the future "House of prayer for all nations."

It is strange to find the name *Leviathan* — the "joined serpent" — resembling Levi. But very different is their history and work. While Levi "joined" to God, and "joining" to others, is a blessing in the earth, Leviathan (Isa. 27:1) "joined" in his scales, is gathering together earthly monarchs "against Yahweh and His anointed." This crocodile of Egypt is still the emblem of the enemy who will with all his violence and power as the "king of the children of pride" (Job 41) seek to disjoin men from the Truth. But the sword of Yahweh will smite him; while Levi, who drew the sword for his Lord (Exod. 32) receives

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the blessing, and with his brethren will take root again, and reappear in holy and glorious beauty in the latter days (Isa. 66:21).

In ancient days, by the institution of Levi the sacrifices were figures, types or shadows of the one great sacrifice that was to be, and the Israelites looked through the shadow to form some idea of the substance. Now the Substance has come, the shadows have departed, just as the blossom withers when the fruit appears, or the darkness vanishes at break of day.

Of Benjamin it was said, "Benjamin shall ravine as a wolf," and we may read the history of Saul, who was of the tribe of Benjamin, to trace the wolf-like characteristics, for no doubt he, like many of his descendants, was stained with rapacity (see Jud. 20: 21 and compare 1Sam. 9:1 and 20:31. Also Acts 9:1; Rom. 11:1; Phil. 3:5). Israel's oppressors are likened to the wolf in Eze. 22:27, and the sallying forth of the evening wolf in search of prey (Hab. 1:8) is used as a figure of the destruction that awaits the wicked (Jer. 5:5-6).

What a beautiful thought is this, that the rapacious wolf shall one day be so harmless and docile that it "shall dwell with the lamb" (Isa. 11:6). The wolf is the very animal that is noted to be the terrible enemy of the sheep. In the East the traveller not only fears the burning sun and scorching sand, but the formidable wild animals. In the future there will be peace and harmony everywhere. When the earth is restored to its former beauty, and God's law is obeyed, then "no lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon; it shall not be found there" (Isa. 35).

When Daniel beheld in vision the four great world empires, they appeared as



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the terrible, bold, rapacious, and destructive wild beasts, but these will be superseded by the kingdom that may fitly be symbolised by "a Lamb." It will be the kingdom of the Lamb Christ Jesus, and there will be "one flock under one Shepherd." Then the lion will have lost its wild ferocious nature, and will "eat straw like the ox" (Isa. 11:7). "The calf and the young lion and the fatling will also dwell together, and a little child shall lead them."

In the first paradise, all the beasts of the field and the birds of the air were at peace. The lion, the leopard, the wolf and the bear could meet without disturbance, and the smaller animals might freely mingle with them. As there was no sin there would be no antagonism, no death. It was at the Fall that the very brute beasts and the cattle parted friendship and lost confidence in each other, so that the peace and goodwill among the brute creation was marred and spoiled. The lion has not always been the blood-thirsty creature as zoologists would have us believe; and the mere naturalist argues that the lion and tiger must always have fed upon flesh. The lion's teeth are canine, and the physical organisation of the tigers and the ox indicate the kind of food upon which each should feed. But the difficulty is solved when we consider that God made all these animals with an anticipatory reference to the Fall. It was no unforeseen event but was provided for in Christ — the Lamb prospectively "slain from the foundation of the world." And it seems probable that God made the animals with a reference to the long 6,000 years they would have to live under subjection; and their habits were foreseen and taken into that great system of things, over which God through Christ would reign for a thousand years, and bring the world into subjection to Himself. True religion will then dominate and be the supreme and governing force, giving colouring, tone and direction to all life's little duties and to all life's great responsibilities. The geologist may tell us that death took place in pre-Adamic ages and although the evidence is irresistible, from the fossil remains of animals devouring each other, and these fossils are many of them thousands of years old, yet this does not interfere with the fact that "death came by sin." Man sinned, and the animals rose up against him and against each other. But, in the resurrection — at the new birth of creation, there shall be no lion, in the sense of a ravenous beast, for we are told in Isa. 65 what shall be their condition then. In ch. 31 the prophet shows the natural intervening character of the lion, saying: "like as a lion, and the young lion, roaring over his prey, if a multitude of shepherds be called forth against him, he will not be dismayed... so shall Yahweh of armies come down to fight for Mount Zion and upon the hill thereof." When the lion is hungry and ravenous for food, the strength that he throws into every muscle and fibre of his system is prodigious, and almost irresistible, and though a thousand shepherds should go against him with sticks to beat him off, and though the multitude of shepherds shout against him, he will

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utterly disregard them; he will spring upon his prey and tear it in pieces, and their opposition will only exasperate his passionate fury. This is but the dim figure of the fate of them that sin with open eyes against the Lord, for all will be as a shepherd boy in the presence of a lion leaping or springing on his prey.

We find in the beginning that whenever man sins the brute creation suffers (Gen. 6). The animals had remained as God made them and were not responsible for sin, and yet they suffer. Surely such a spectacle as the lion devouring the lesser animals, or the wolf preying and feeding upon the flesh he had torn would not be compatible with the peace and blessedness of Eden. Hence when the cause of this mischief is obliterated and the glorious Maker, and Re-Maker of all things shall again exercise His power in the earth's redemption from sin and death, then these animals will be restored to their pristine relationships and will be the willing servants of man.

The economy that was the fruit of sin and that rested on a great and awful curse, was the reason that the animals should be so constituted, that each animal is a telling lesson of the consequences of sin, even the brute creation "groaning in pain, and seeking to be delivered from its awful curse." Our hearts of pity often go out towards these poor patient creatures as they trudge through our streets, or limp in their stalls. If they do not often laugh, it is a solemn fact that they often weep. All animals that chew the cud have this power. Calves are known to shed tears very easily. The stag and the bear both cry when their end is approaching, and the sensitive giraffe regards tearfully the man who has wounded it. "Tears fell from the great black eyes" of a pursued eland, says a sportsman. Elephants, monkeys and dogs all weep. The gigantic elephant will freely shed tears when wounded, or when it sees no way of escape. Wild elephants in captivity have been known to lie quite still while tears fill their eyes and constantly overflow. Even creatures that live in water, such as dolphins and seals are observed to sigh and weep when troubled or teased.

How glorious then is the promise concerning the future in Isa. 35:10! The very words are full of music. The sorrow that now breaks the human heart and is shared by the mute, suffering and afflicted animals — even the deepest sorrow that can find no tears under the shadow of the tomb, all the griefs and disappointments, yea, all "sorrow and sighing" like the mists of a summer morning, "shall flee away." For "God shall wipe all tears from off all faces," and there shall be laughter, joy, peace and holiness. All will live in perfect harmony and fellowship, for it is testified "they shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain." And the reason is that all shall "know Yahweh, from the least unto the greatest" — the earth being full of the knowledge and glory of His name.

Chapter Thirty Three

“HIDDEN TREASURES OF THE SECRET PLACE”

*We thank Thee for Thy gifts, O Lord;
The wealth that hidden lies
Beneath the bosom of the earth
Our various needs supplies.
But chiefly for Thine own dear Son,
Our grateful songs we raise.
The work of Thy Redeeming Love
Calls forth our highest praise.*

“**H**E that spared not His own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall He not with him also freely give us all things” (Rom. 8:32). We have observed that man was placed under law, and that sin is the violation of God’s law. In order to prove how reasonable this is, we have only to consider how all created things with which we have come in contact in God’s natural world, are under law. The course of the planets in their orbits, the process of vegetation, and the falling of the leaves; growth, reproduction, and decay; all are under, and obedient to, fixed and immutable laws. By law the plants grow, the rain descends, the wind blows; and the fruit ripens when the blossom and flower have passed away. We may see things intruding upon and disturbing this great law of God, in consequence of what sin has done, but there still remains enough to prove the universality and unchangeableness of that law. Nature, thus subject to the laws that govern it, is a faint shadow of things spiritual under corresponding laws (Rom. 5:7). Just as God’s natural world — the flowers, the fruit, the water or the planets — are under fixed laws, so also His moral world is governed and restrained by law, and whenever these are transgressed there is penalty. If a bird should leave the air and take to the sea, it must perish. If the ant were to forsake the hillock, to feed upon flowers, it would have no winter store. If the bee left the hive, or the mole its tunnel, both would be starved, for the law comes instantly into force, and being violated brings trouble. All are injured by the transgression of law. It is important then that we should obediently fulfil those higher laws of our being, to which we are called to be subject as children of God. We must neither go beyond nor come short of the divine law, for either will bring trouble, pain and death; the very word “transgression” means “I go beyond.”

It is a very significant fact that God has more respect for law than life, for He

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will allow life to be destroyed rather than change His law showing us the fixity of His laws and the absoluteness of them. He will suffer the death of His creatures rather than repeal that which governs the welfare and salvation of all. But stern and unchangeable as these laws are, there is still a restorative power.

Now all creation groans under the awful ravages of violated and broken law. All are suffering in consequence. And here is a beautiful fact that there is mutual sympathy. If one member of the great Body suffer, all share the pain, and the Head is affected; but the Great Restorer will one day step in and arrest the action of law, not by repealing it, but by the over abounding force of His mercy, goodness and love. Death is the natural and necessary result of sin, as effect comes from cause, echo from sound and shadow is preceded by light. But Christ's perfect obedience opens up the way of life and we are “freed from the law of sin and death,” being “not under law but under grace;” so may we with humility and thankfulness serve our Lord.

But we have not yet exhausted this storehouse of wonders nor explored all the deep recesses of God's glorious treasures. “The earth is full of His riches,” or creatures, as David says, while beneath its indented surface lie hidden treasures not only remarkable, but of inestimable value to man.

We can only form conjectures respecting the interior of the earth. Those who work in mines are unable to go very deep into it, for the pressure would suffocate them even if protected from the water which there abounds; therefore miners scarcely penetrate the first crust. But we know that after digging some depth this crust is found to be composed of different strata or beds placed one over another differing considerably in direction, substance, and thickness. The common earth in gardens is usually white clay, sand, marl, and rich earth mixed. The best account seems to be that which divides the earths into seven classes. Black earth is composed of putrid vegetable or animal substances, and contains salts and inflammable matter. Clay retains water on its surface longer, and sandy earth is hard, light and dry; this neither retains nor dissolves in water but is the worst of all earths for growing plants. Marl is softer and attracts moisture better. Bog, or marshy earth, contains vitriolic salt that is too acid for plants, and chalk being dry, hard and calcareous, is not very favourable, while stony earth — among even the smoothest stones — however bare of soil, are yet covered with moss, which is a vegetable production; and birch are known to grow to a considerable height between stones, and in the clefts of rocks.

There is wisdom exhibited in this also, for there are many advantages resulting from these different kinds of earth. Layers of sand, gravel, and light earth give passage to spring water, that filters in running through them. These beds are used also for the reservoirs of springs. When mixed with hard and gravelly soil, the water is purified much more. Everything in nature is

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wonderfully perfect. “All that art can do is to imitate nature,” says an old writer, “which prepares for the soil the nutritive juices, and the warmth most proper for different plants.” Variety of soils will make herbs, trees and roots, though of the same kind, differ according to the earth they grow in. The soil that favours one fails another. Plants that have fibrous roots, without much sap, should be sown and planted in a light sandy soil, that the roots may extend themselves without resistance. All these observations should lead us to thank God who has prepared every soil suitable for the production of “herbs for the service of man.”

David says in Psa. 37, “I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green tree in its native soil. But I passed by and lo, he was not, yea I sought him, but he could not be found.” The revised version is much more expressive than the ancient version, and the figure is unique. The native soil in which the wicked flourish is the world. All its constituent parts favour the growth and prosperity of the wicked. In this world-soil they flourish and spread abroad like a beautiful tree in its native soil that, to all appearance, seems firm and unmovable. But some calamity unexpectedly overtakes the workers of iniquity, and in a moment they fall, and soon vanish away. Just as if we took a walk in mid summer and observed the beautiful spreading branches of a tree whose height and circumference was more imposing than those with which it was surrounded, and we again visited the spot next spring and sought its graceful form and shadow; but in vain, for the stormy winds of winter uprooted it with sudden violence, and it lay cumbering the ground until the woodman came along and took it away, and “the place thereof will know it no more.” The soil in which the righteous flourish is “the house of God.” In striking contrast the Psalmist says, “But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God” (52:8)... “I will give Thee thanks for ever” (Psa. 92:13-14).

Moses informed the Hebrews that they were about to enter a land where there would be no scarceness, but abundance of wheat, oil, and honey — a land whose very stones were iron and out of the hills they might dig plenty of brass (Deut. 8).

Gold, silver, brass, iron and coal, ivory and jewels, are some of the treasures which the earth yields. Many of these are beautifully described in the book of Job. They are not scattered over the earth’s surface or it would be entirely covered and leave no place for animals and plants. And here again we must recognise the wisdom of God in that the surface is free from such encumbrance and may be cultivated and traversed. Metals, stone, coal, and many other things for our use are stored beneath our feet. They are not buried deep in the heart of the earth, but purposely brought near the surface and placed under a covering both thick enough to produce our food, and thin enough to be dug through when we find it necessary to take some of these numberless materials provided for our

use.

The 26th chapter of Job is a beautiful description of the majesty and greatness of God as revealed in His works. The earth is upheld with no support extended to it from any side. It is suspended from nothing, and yet it is held and kept in place by a divine operation. Have we not beheld with amazement, with the aid of a telescope, a planet suspended in the vault of the heavens? The difficulties that are sometimes raised about the earth having ‘foundations and pillars’ as well as ‘ends,’ can readily be explained. These scriptural expressions are in perfect harmony with that which we know of the earth. The same unsearchable wisdom and skill of Him who “hangeth the earth upon nothing” has arranged and organized the internal workings and designs of our planet, that are found to be marvellously accurate descriptions of how the solid crust of the earth has been built up, and every moment since been sustained.

The Bible tells us that the earth’s first condition was that of a shapeless mass of chaotic waters in which nothing could exist, and on whose surface nothing could have rested. It was “without form and void and darkness was upon the face of the deep.” Merely a globe of mineral structure submerged in water, and mantled in impenetrable night. Out of these rough materials, a beautiful abode was made, most wonderfully adapted to the new race of living creatures. The light was caused to shine, and the atmosphere was formed, which enabled the fog to float in masses above the deep. The waters were gathered together into seas, and the dry land appeared, that was afterwards profusely clothed with verdure, fragrant flowers and beautiful trees.

In this delightful dwelling place were animals of every kind, for which food was abundantly provided. Fish and water fowl were produced from the teeming waters, and cattle, reptiles, and beasts came out of “the dust of the ground,” while man, the last and noblest of all created beings in whom was “the breath of life,” was introduced into this gloriously illuminated and well aired estate.

From the earth are constantly being dug the buried growth of ages gone by, which, in their solid compressions, we now call coal. These massive layers bear the traces of mosses and ferns, thus proving their origin. Periods in the earth’s history that might have occurred many ages ago are still to be read in depths and surfaces; these continue, while masses now hard rock, were filtering in moving particles of sand through living waters, when the black beds of coal were soft and green like the fields. Some great pressure, full of power, kept these mighty masses in movement and life, which, when withdrawn, left them to settle down into their fixed and final place and relation.

God first prepares the soil to produce an abundance of food. This was largely made out of the debris of millions of plants that lived and died that this work might be done. And not only food, but the air which the animals were to breathe,

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had to be prepared first. It is stated that the air contains about four parts in 10,000 of carbonic acid, and no doubt, as much air is needed for vegetable life. But four percent of carbonic acid in the air is enough to kill all the warm blooded animals on the face of the earth. Therefore the atmosphere had to be permanently deprived of its surplus carbonic acid — a work that vegetation, which absorbs that element of the atmosphere — could alone do, and which must have taken an enormous time. And these necessities were accomplished before the animals were introduced. All these facts and investigations serve to prove the statements of Moses concerning vegetable and animal life — the work of the third and fifth days. We are so familiar with earth's wonderful products that we often forget their origin and the Great Mind that arranged them all. Different forms of life massed and decayed, are now being dug from beneath the earth in a hardened state, which we burn for fuel. These often bear the impress of various mosses and foliage in such a petrified condition as to prove that they were once on the earth's surface. Layers of coal, rock and slate, are dug up in which are found the petrified remains of the most primitive animals that originated in the waters. Among the azou rocks — the strata in which there are no traces of life — there was discovered a substance called graphite of which our pencils are now made. It has long been used for black lead and for plumbago. It is found everywhere in beds of more or less thickness. Like the strata of which it is part, it has been changed by intense heat. Previously it existed as vegetable matter. Our graphite is compressed and calcined coal. The huge ironstone beds of the Laurentian rocks are said to equally imply the existence of an immense primeval vegetation.

This transformation of various substances from the vegetable and animal into the mineral kingdom is one of the marvels of God's lowest treasury. The most extraordinary skeletons discovered are those of elephants. Aquatic animals are frequently found petrified. Multitudes of shells and little worms are changed into stone besides fish of various kinds. Petrifications of marine substances are found in abundance all over the world, on the summits of mountains and thousands of feet below the surface of the sea. Vast numbers are met with in different depths and strata of the earth, proving that the greatest portion of our earth was once covered with water. The immense, regular beds of petrified shell fish show that these mountains were formerly beneath the water. These petrified masses and objects required moist, soft earth, mixed with dissolved stony particles to consolidate them.

Many of God's works are manifested before our eyes, but many more are produced in secret, to be “sought out” by those who have “pleasure therein.” There is a wonderful gradation in all things, leading up to the most complete perfection.

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The mingling of earth with salts, oil and sulphur, etc., results in different kinds of soil, more or less compound, light or compact — and these lead us naturally to consider the mineral kingdom, though briefly. Substances known as earths are those that cannot be dissolved by water, fire, or oil, and include the stones which are composed of them. Salts include those bodies that are soluble in water. Some are liquefied in the fire, while others remain in it unchanged. These salts are the chief causes of vegetation, and form the second class of minerals. The third class are bitumens or inflammable bodies that burn in the fire, and when pure dissolve in oil, but never in water. The animal kingdom commences with worms, leading us to insects, reptiles and so forth, and the fourth class consists of bodies that become fluid in the fire, but resume their solidity when cold, namely metals.

We study the Scriptures as the geologist studies the earth. In both cases a certain depth only can be reached where some openings occur, or a rock has been by a greater force thrust to the surface; or by some shaft that has been made by laborious efforts to reach and to raise some hidden treasure. In both fields of labour there is but a small surface partially examined, and a vast interior never explored, whose secrets we can only guess. In working at some rich seam in God's inspired treasury we sometimes come upon what geologists call “a fault.” Some strange matter extrudes itself, like a huge dike, breaking off the richer layers we have been following and compelling us to work on this to get back to the other.

For instance, amid the closing scenes of our Lord's life, while listening to his last words, watching, as it were, his agony, and looking towards his death, in the night of the last supper, of the closing discourse, and the great intercession; in the dim depths of Gethsemane, we come upon Judas that betrayed him. We cannot understand why one so long in the company of such a Master could so act, and we are thrown back to the very beginning to trace the reason; but we must work out the different seam before we can justly proceed with the nearer one. If we examine the character of Judas, as we might a volcanic dike, we may discover that forces had been at work beyond our reach, and though we cannot fathom those deep hidden forces, yet we may explore what is thrust to the surface. Forces had been at work, and always are at work on rocky masses like this. The character of Judas appears like the volcanic convulsion that breaks out here and there in the precious strata, moving the mass, rather than the forces that heaved it up. What is the lesson from this ruined life? Proposals of treachery are not made frankly like honest agreements, but by dim hints and broken, or imperfect proposals.

“They are not like the explosions of an open battery,” says one writer, “but as the secret mine, where the shaft has been made with difficulty, and with

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muffled tools, chiefly through soft soil, through the rock, and the battlements are reached at length.”

When this has been bored, the powder lodged and the train laid, a single spark at the right moment will accomplish the work. We shudder at the thought of such a wreck, but such examples should humble us, and cause us to look to God continually and not to trust our own hearts, or listen to the vain allurements of the world. When we are in desperate earnest, faith climbs the dizzy heights of grace, and pleads for strength, hanging on by the slightest twig rooted in the rocks. As with affection very slender, but very strong, we plead for grace to hold fast, and receive the answer to the unselfish prayer.

The different species of stones are very numerous. There are two kinds — the precious and the common, which are exceedingly abundant, and present themselves to us in masses of differing form, size, colour, and hardness, according to the earth, sulphur or other substances of which they are composed. Among them are various metallic and saline particles, from which proceed minerals and precious stones. There are some stones with fibres and some with leaves, such as slate, talc, the lithophytes, or marine stony plants, and the amianthus, or the stony flower of the mine, besides many others.

Precious stones also exhibit great variety. Some are perfectly transparent, and appear to be the most simple; others are more or less opaque, according as they are composed more or less of heterogeneous particles. The peculiar excellence of a precious stone is seen in this, that the more intense the light which is brought to bear upon it the more brightly it shines. The twelve tribes of Israel, one as well as another, the smallest as well as the greatest, were borne upon the breast (affection) and the shoulder (strength) of Aaron before Yahweh and maintained in the divine Presence all their undimmed lustre and unalterable beauty which belonged to the position in which the perfect grace of the God of Israel had set them. Whatever might be their infirmities, their errors or failures, yet their names glittered on the Breastplate with unfading brilliancy. Yahweh has set them there, and who could pluck them thence? No one; for they lay beyond the reach of every energy, or the influence of every evil, and this also is true of those who are Christ's.

The breastplate of judgment, worn on the breast of the high priest — Aaron, as he ministered in the holy place — was filled with settings of precious stones, four rows of them, three in a row, and each stone was set in gold. Upon these twelve stones were engraved, as upon a seal, the names of the twelve tribes, who were represented by them, so that the whole nation of Israel was contained symbolically in the square ornament, and borne upon the heart of the high priest in the holy place. It is first mentioned in Exod. 28:15. It was a texture wrought in gold, blue, purple, scarlet and fine twined linen, four square and of equal

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sides. It was attached to the robe, called the ephod, or overall, because it was put on over all other vestments, in which were put “the Urim and the Thummim,” that is, the twelve precious stones, which were indispensable to its manifestation. The Urim was the glittering of the stones — the lights refracted and reflected from cut and polished surfaces, and developing lights of divers colours. These were termed *urim*, meaning “lights” and the twelve stones themselves — *thummim*, or “fulness,” that is, fulness of number and fulness of measure, being 144,000, 144 cubits, and furlongs, because these are perfections representing the square of twelve. All are related to the most holy things pertaining to the kingdom of God. Without the glittering gems there would be no light. The one implies the other (Phil. 2:15). The Lord Jesus said that his followers should be “lights in the world,” and the apostle testifies “Ye are lights in the Lord” (Eph. 5:8), and “the Body of Christ” (Col. 2:17), of which Body, Christ is the Head — “the fulness of Him who filleth all” — the saints, “with all things” (Eph. 1:23). When Christ became “Son of God with power by the spirit of holiness” (Rom. 1:3), he was typified by the “curiously wrought” ephod, or jewelled robe, put on by the high priest. As the living embroidered ephod he stands in the presence of the Father with the names of all the saints engraved upon his heart.



*“Nor shall the humblest one complain,
That he hath lost his part.”*

He is set forth “for all” as an ephod to be put “upon all” who would enter into the divine Presence “that they die not.” Jesus, the Head, is perfected; his saints are as yet gold under trial, but when by the Spirit they too are quickened, a golden thread of incorruption will be interwoven throughout their material substance, as the gold wire twined with the blue, purple, scarlet and fine linen of the veil; and they will be like Jesus — immortal. The “Urim and Thummim” illustrate the glory and beauty arising out of that perfection of light and measure that is combined in the gospel of faith, hope and love. The two golden chains represent the perfect union of all God’s people, whether Jew or Gentile, into one. They are two classes made “perfect in one.” In Isa. 54:11, we read “I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and... thy foundations with sapphires.” Here the children of Jerusalem exalted are compared to precious stones of fair colours, or “lights” — *Urim*, without defining their full number, the *Thummim*. Peter says, “Ye are *living stones*, all built upon the sure foundation,” and whom Paul styles “gold, silver and precious stones.” May our light shine amid the darkness now, so that when Christ, who is our light, appears we may be manifested with him in

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glory (Mat. 13:43). The names of the children of Israel were also engraven upon two onyx stones. This stone is a kind of agate, marked with bands of grey and white colours, and slightly resembling the human nail. It is mentioned in Gen. 2:12, and takes the highest rank among the precious stones collected by David in preparing for the building of the temple.

The *breastplate of judgment* was suspended from these two memorial stones, by “two wreathen chains to the ouches of gold,” and within this foursquare ornament the twelve precious stones were set. The significance of the twelve names is inscribed twice, if we refer to the words of the apostle in Eph. 3:6. Two classes of Israelites are here represented.

In the Apocalyptic Book of Symbols the splendour of the glory of the holy city — the new Jerusalem — is likened to a most precious jasper stone, “clear as crystal.” This beautiful transparent cerulean gem is the symbol of the Spirit manifested in a glorious immortal company. The first foundation is jasper, and he who occupies the throne is likened to jasper. It is the Spirit’s symbol, being of various hues, such as purple, cerulean, and green. “The wall of the city had twelve gates: each gate severally was of one pearl.” And upon each pearl was the name of one of the tribes of Israel. They corresponded with the breastplate. The twelve precious gems of the foundation of the city are embellished with the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. Jesus Christ himself, being the “chief corner stone,” or First Foundation, he is represented by the jasper, which is first here, but last in the breastplate because Christ is the beginning of this new and glorious creation (Col. 1). Each of these great polished gems, or precious “living stones,” would be beautiful alone, but how much more so when decorated and adorned by “all manner of precious stones” besides! What a beautiful thought is this, that we all are included in that little word “all.” Paul speaks of those who believed on Jesus through his preaching, as his “joy and crown of rejoicing.” “Ye are our glory and joy” (1Thes. 2:19-20). They are the indestructible gold, silver and precious stones incorporated in the glorified Bride of the Lamb, who have stood the fire of trial and rejoice together in the presence of Christ, “the jasper light,” and the “wall” of the great city at his coming, and every one who has been brought to the obedience of the faith, and accounted worthy, will be a gem of sparkling glory.

The elements of the wall and the precious gems are built upon the jewels of the foundation. At present this community is hidden and unseen. But its future state was seen by John in vision. He tells us that “the city had no need of the sun.” Her light was “like unto a stone most precious.” “And the building of the wall was of jasper.” In ch. 4 we read of “one who sat upon the throne... who was to look upon, like a jasper and sardius stone.” The jasper is a hard stone of various hues.

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“A beautiful cerulean gem, clear as crystal, is the symbol of the Spirit condensed into substance,” says Brother Thomas. “The City, or Body corporate of Yahweh’s glorified sons and daughters is set forth thus. These rare and brilliant insets, which highly adorn the state, are worked into pure crystal-like gold, by which the city multitude of its street or Broadway is represented.”

The mention of gold and silver in connection with precious stones leads us to the consideration of metals. Among the many stages in human development, perhaps the discovery and use of metals has been of the greatest importance. Gold is the first metal mentioned in the Bible, but iron must have been the most precious of metals to those who first found how to smelt and to forge it. Gold was not only scarce for general use but too soft to be made into tools or weapons; yet gold is distinguished by rare qualities and of the highest degree. It stands alone in colour and lustre; its chief virtue being that it is able to resist oxidation, is almost indestructible, and defies corrosion. It is so pliable that it can be drawn out into wire or flattened into leaf of almost incredible fineness. Its beauty and rarity restricted its use to objects of delicacy, adornment and luxury.

In Egyptian tombs elaborate gold work has survived from far remote ages and specimens of leaf-gilding are found on mummy cases. This precious metal was naturally devoted to sacred uses. Gold plates were fastened on the walls of the temples by the Incas of Peru, and the “Golden Rose” was an ornament made of wrought gold, and set with gems, generally sapphires, which was blessed by the Pope of Rome. Hence the gold regions of the world were jealously guarded, and eagerly sought for, and have been the cause of many sharp contests. The lust for gain has led to many cruelties, for even till recent years men have lost their lives in seeking the glittering treasure, and what men and nations have vainly dreamed of from earliest times will be realised by those who have valued and studied the Scriptures that are “more precious than gold, yea, than much fine gold;” even the golden age of incorruptible glory. Job protests that he had never set his heart upon the wealth of the world. He had gold, fine gold, for his wealth was great, but he did not set his heart upon it (ch. 31:24-25). Wealth is only an advantage according to our use of it. If we trust in it and make it our ruler it will be our ruin; if we make it our servant and an instrument of righteousness, it will be a blessing to us. It is hard to have riches and not to trust in them, and so dangerous that “a rich man can hardly enter the kingdom of God.” May we always remember that it is God who “giveth us power to get wealth,” and use all we possess for His glory and the good of others. We do not worship idols of gold, because we see no use in them, but do we give undue attention to the things of the world, while professing to serve God only? Do we know that we are poor and naked when we may think ourselves “rich and having need of nothing?” (Rev. 3:18).

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Havilah is the earliest mentioned gold region of the Bible. “The gold of that land is good,” said Moses (Gen. 2:11-12). We read of ornaments of gold and silver quite early being in use (Gen. 35:4). Abraham was rich in silver and gold; and in the days of Solomon gold was abundant (1Kgs. 10:27; 2Chr. 9:1, 13-14). In answering Job, Eliphaz said: “If thou return to the Almighty... then thou shalt lay up gold as dust, and the gold of Ophir, as the stones of the brook... Yea, the Almighty shall be thy gold... Thou shalt have plenty of silver” (ch. 22:24; 28:1-2, 6).

As gold is the most precious of all metals it becomes the symbol of all that is excellent and glorious in the sight of God. Whatever therefore possesses Almighty characteristics is golden. Symbolically gold represents the wisdom of a tried and precious faith. “When He hath tried me I shall come forth as gold,” said Job (ch. 23). Gold was used largely in the tabernacle and the beautiful temple of Solomon. The Mosaic “patterns of things in the heavens” were all of gold, or precious wood overlaid with gold. The cherubim, the ark of the testimony, the mercy seat, the altar of incense, the seven-branched lampstand, the table of shewbread, spoons, tongs, censers, hinges, and staves, were all of gold, or overlaid with gold. And the “holy garments for glory and for beauty” worn by the high priest, who officiated in this temple resplendent with gold, were brilliant with the shining metal and precious stones. Gold was chosen by God to represent the most precious of “heavenly things,” faith, perfected by trial, which is much “more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be refined by fire,” and without which “it is impossible to please Him.” It is the basis of righteousness unto life eternal, for “we are justified by faith.” The fine linen robe of righteousness is girded about the saints by the golden girdle of tried faith.

When celebrating the future glory of the new order of the Elohim, consisting of the king and his brethren, David styles the latter “the Queen” (Psa. 45:10), saying to Christ the king, “the Queen hath been placed at Thy right hand in fine gold of Ophir.” Thus David sings of the Spirit and the Bride clothed and perfected. They are represented at the end of the Bible as “a great city, the holy city,” a “city of pure gold like unto crystal.” “The precious sons of Zion,” says the prophet, “are comparable to fine gold” for in their glory they are the Spirit incarnations of a tried and precious faith. In the day of opportunities they “bought gold of the Spirit” by which they have become rich. They are adorned with golden crowns, or *stephans*, and are girded with golden girdles. The intellectual, moral, and physical qualities are manifestations of the eternal Father’s own attributes. The gold of the city (Rev. 21:11) is more precious than the finest and purest gold current among men. It is transparent like the crystal that is alluded to in ch. 4:6 and 21:1, being one of the most beautiful of precious

stones. It is ranked with gold in value in Job 28:17. It is perfectly transparent, resembling the purest glass.

The question of glass not being then known is no difficulty, in that transparent substances were known and used long before. The Jewish Rabbins say that the “window of the ark was made of transparent, precious stone,” but this is merely tradition. Describing his vision of the future glory of the saints, Ezekiel testifies, “There was the likeness of a firmament like the colour of the terrible crystal” (mg. “ice”). Hence the beautiful promise that “the Almighty shall be thy gold and treasures of silver to thee,” will be very practically illustrated when the saints are tried, approved and changed from the inferior metals, into the pure gold likened unto crystal. We should rather then welcome our trials than despise them, seeing what they are intended to accomplish within us and for us.

“Tribulations are treasures,” says one writer, “and if we were wise we should reckon our afflictions among our rarest jewels. The caverns of sorrow are mines of diamonds. Our earthly possessions may be silver, but temporal trials are to the saints invariably gold. We may grow in grace through what we enjoy, but probably we make the greatest progress through what we suffer. Soft gales may be pleasant for homebound vessels, but rough winds are better. The calm is our way, but God hath His way in the whirlwind. Saints gain more by their losses than by their profits. Health cometh out of sicknesses, and wealth floweth out of our poverties.”

Repeated afflictions come to the believer, not as the lightning to the scathed tree, blasting it yet more and more, but as the strokes of the sculptor on the marble block, forming it into the image of beauty and loveliness. Let us lie in His hands, and no events will be unwelcome.

There is a machine in the Bank of England for determining whether sovereigns put into it are of full weight. As they used to pass through, all the light ones were thrown one side and those of full weight to the other. So will it be in the Day of Judgment; our hope of acceptance lies in being of “standard weight” — of true metal. We must be cleansed from all impurities, in the refiner’s fire of trial and when we have been tried may we come forth as the pure gold.

Another precious metal, yet inferior to gold, which is termed “perfect,” is silver. The arms of Nebuchadnezzar’s colossal image were constructed of silver, and symbolised the Medo-Persian Empire, just as the head of gold, previously represented that of Babylon.

Silver appears to have been well-known at a very early period, being used as a common medium of exchange. Probably the reason is that like gold, it is often found in a state of purity in the earth. It was used both in the construction of the

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tabernacle and temple. The dwelling of the God of Israel rested on sockets of silver — the emblem of atoning ransom. Whatever precious type these silver sockets may afford of the “ransom for all,” every member of every dispensation is included. The silver ransom or atonement money that was demanded from every individual of the congregation of Israel amounted to 301,775 shekels, half a shekel being the estimated sum that was paid for each one. Of this amount 300,000 shekels were cast into sockets for the boards, the remaining 1,775 being formed into silver fillets for the heads of the court pillars and their hooks. All Israel was thus represented individually and

collectively in the atonement silver as thus appropriated. And not only Israel after the flesh, but spiritual Israel also; each individual is represented in the price laid down for their ransom by the Son of Man who freely gave his life for all.

Silver was used by weight, it was not coined (Gen. 23:16). Metal coins came to be used in many parts later, on account of the small compass and weight of carrying. Copper coins and also iron were among the most ancient Hebrew money. Copper formed the sole coinage at Rome, down to when silver was introduced. Silver was the principal Greek material for money. Down to the close of the fourteenth century, money, as a rule, was coined in silver, and almost until the present time Eastern people preferred silver to gold. The “pieces of silver” thirty of which were given as the price of innocent blood, were probably shekels of silver, the price of a common slave, amounting to about three pounds sterling. Joseph was sold for twenty pieces, both amounting to the same sum.

It is interesting to notice that the offerings under the law are represented in order, in the accounts given of the crucifixion. We may trace the corresponding details in each. Some are given briefly in one Gospel narrative, or some things not mentioned at all, because they have nothing to do with the sacrifice they represent. In Matt. 27:3-10 we read of how the adversary took the price of release. In the day of his power he valued the blood at thirty pieces of silver. In this was fulfilled the saying in Zech. 11: 12-13. The life being purchased for this amount of blood money, Christ was nailed to the tree. His blood was poured out

and he gave his life a ransom for all. Hence redemption is release for a ransom. God is the purchaser, the precious blood of Christ is the price, or the ransom paid. Let us ever remember that we have been “bought with a price.” And what a price! We are not our own: we have been released from our old master — Sin; we have been bought by God our Father, through Christ our Redeemer, to be His willing bondservants for ever. In the gold is the incorruptible glory of the Son of Man; in the silver his preciousness as our ransom.

The next metal in order of importance, and by which the third world empire, the Grecian is symbolised, is brass. Brass was largely used in their methods of warfare, from which they received the name of “brazen-coated Greeks.” Brass was known as early as the days of Tubal Cain (Gen. 4:22). He was “an instructor of every artificer in *brass*,” which describes copper and iron. The brass referred to in the Bible is most probably what is called copper. The composition which we call brass was not invented until the thirteenth century. It is usually made of two thirds of copper and one third zinc. The early copper was a natural production dug out of the hills of Canaan (Deut. 8:9). Copper, a rarer and later metal, is mentioned in Ezra 8, but we find in the margin “shining brass,” so that these “vessels of fine copper, precious as gold,” may have been actually brass containing copper, bronze or hardened copper being used. As we read of artificers “in brass and iron” there must have been fires to smelt the ores. It has been a very curious question among the nations as to what was the origin of fire. But here certainly it must have been discovered in order to smelt the ore. One effect of fire, familiar to all, is that of dilating such bodies as are exposed to its influence. A piece of iron made to fit a hole in a plate of metal, so that it easily passes through when cold, being heated cannot be made to enter; but when suffered to cool, it passes into the hole with the same ease as at first. This dilation produced by fire is more or less visible according to the properties upon which it acts. Fire soon melts and changes inanimate and compact bodies — part into fluid matter and part into a solid of a different kind. It communicates fluidity to water, oil, fat, and to almost all metals. Some solid bodies undergo other kinds of changes. Sand, flint, slate and spar, vitrify in the fire; clay turns into stone, and marble, calcareous stones, and chalk, turn into lime. The variety of these effects does not proceed from the fire, but from the different properties of the matter. Thus we see that in every instance God has promoted the welfare of mankind, and placed proofs of His love everywhere before our eyes.

There is another lesson. We are not all constituted alike. The fire of trial has different effects upon different individuals, but God knows what each can endure, and only allows us to pass through that which tends to produce in us the best for which we are suited in His purpose. Brass is sometimes used as a symbol of pride and wantonness; and sometimes as an emblem of durability and

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strength. In the things of the Spirit, gold was peculiar to the holy and most holy places, as silver was associated with the ransom, while brass characterised the court of the priests where the sacrifices and washing were performed. The brass pertaining to the temple was all holy. The brazen altar was “most holy,” so that whatever touched it was holy also. The altar overlaid with plates of brass represented sin’s flesh purified by fiery trial; brass being the emblem of endurance and suffering. “Gold, silver, brass, iron, tin and lead, everything that may abide the fire, ye shall make go through the fire, and it shall be clean,” said Yahweh (Num. 31:22).

The four horns of brass represented the same as the four cherubim, four carpenters, and four living ones of Ezekiel, Zechariah and John, in their sacrificial state preceding the golden age of the millennium. As horns of brass they “execute the judgments written” as a consuming fire, for “brass” and “offering by fire” is the association of the things in the type. In Mic. 4:13 it is testified, “I will make thine horn iron, and I will make thy hoofs brass; and thou shalt beat in pieces many people.” That is, I will give thee strength to tread underfoot and to break the power of thine enemies into pieces that shall never be repaired. It is a figure taken from the Eastern manner of threshing corn which was by the treading of oxen, whose hoofs were shod with brass or iron. Zechariah saw the four chariots representing the saints, going forth from between “two mountains of brass.” This metal connects these mountains, or dominions, with the body and thighs of Nebuchadnezzar’s image, with the “claws of brass” pertaining to the fourth beast, and with the “band of iron and brass” around the stump of the Babylonian Tree. The two mountains of brass, and the two thighs are identical, representing the Greek portion of the “great mountain” that is to become a plain before Zerubbabel.

In Rev. 1 the multitudinous Son of Man is represented as having feet of fine brass as if they had been glowing in a furnace. It is a picture of the saints who will then have all passed “through the fire” and the “water of separation,” and been consecrated by “the blood of the covenant,” and are “partakers with the altar” — even Jesus. The Jews have been passing through the process for ages, and the Gentiles who have trampled them as in a great furnace of affliction — the brass and iron element of the nations, will themselves be visited and punished. Yahweh declares through His prophet, “Israel to Me is become dross; they are all brass, and tin, and iron, and lead in the midst of the furnace; they are even the dross of silver. Therefore... as they gather silver, brass, iron, lead and tin into the midst of the furnace, to blow the fire upon it, to melt it, so will I gather you in Mine anger... And ye shall know that I, Yahweh have poured out My fury upon you” (Eze. 22:17-22). Israel in the flesh are compared to brass and other metals full of dross, as distinguished from the “fine brass” of Israel in the

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Spirit. They are still the “dross of silver” in the midst of the furnace of affliction; forsaken of Yahweh and melted. But if Israel be the dross of silver, the Gentiles are dross of brass, iron, lead and tin — the baser metals that are of no more value. When purified, Israel will be brass and silver well refined (Mal. 3:2), for though they are now “prostrate among the cattle-pens” they will be as “the wings of the dove covered with silver, and her feathers with the brightness of fine gold” (Psa. 68:14; Jn. 1:32). The nations, too, will become as molten brass in a great smelting furnace, and many shall be purified and made to share with Israel in their future brightness.

The purifying and refining of gold and silver is an illustration of the purging away of sin. Gold and silver are termed the “noble” metals because they do not rust, but retain their brightness and are not affected by the atmosphere as are all other metals known as “base” metals. When silver and gold are purified, the base metals are removed from them. The dross of metals represents sin which works death; and while the refined metals stand for the redeemed of Yahweh (Zech. 13:9), the dross is the sinners of the nations. Gold, heated seven times in the fire, is the emblem of perfect purity, the result of intense suffering and manifold afflictions. Hence —

*In the furnace God may prove thee
Thence to bring thee forth more bright,
But can never cease to love thee;
Thou art precious in His sight.
God is with thee, God thine everlasting light.*

So may our characters always have the clear ring of gold and silver, and not the dull clang of “sounding brass” (1Cor. 13:1). May we possess that love which is as purified, solid gold, and the faith that resembles the brightness and clearness of sterling silver.

Our conversation is fast drawing to a close, yet we feel that we cannot overlook the lessons of that valuable and well known metal — iron. When Moses described the Land of Promise as “a land whose stones are iron,” no doubt he referred to an abundance of iron ore. We find a passage of similar import in Deut. 33:25, where it might be rendered: “Under thy shoes are iron and brass, and as thy days so shall thy strength be.” Iron is the symbol of strength. Referring to the “behemoth,” Yahweh declared that “his bones are as hard and firm as iron and brass” (Job 40:18).

Iron is proverbial for its hardness. We speak of a person being as “hard as iron,” just as we say one is as “true as steel” (Isa. 48:4). The “northern iron,” mentioned in Jer. 15:12, that is “north of Judea,” is noted for its hardness. This was the peculiar characteristic of the fourth kingdom of men, known as the great iron empire of Rome, the last great world dominion, which, in its divided

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condition of the present hour, is so remarkably prefigured by the ten toes of the image, of uncleavable iron and clay. Shortly the “Little Stone” will descend with terrific force upon the hardened nations, and will crush them to powder; then the unrefined gold, silver, brass and iron kingdoms will be destroyed for ever.

Iron is used also as a figure of affliction in Psalm 107:10. Its furnace is the emblem of slavery, and its fetters of captivity, just as silver and gold stand for purity, truth and happiness. Let us therefore encourage one another as we see the Day approaching, for “as iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend” (Pro. 27:17).

There are other metals of more recent discovery, such as steel, aluminium, nickel and platinum. There are imperfect metals that may be reduced more or less quickly by fire, and usually change into a calx. One of these — lead — has the property of being changed into glass, and of vitrifying all other metals except gold and silver. There are five imperfect metals: quick-silver, lead, copper, iron and tin. Platen, bismuth, nickel, arsenic, antimony, zinc and cobalt are called semi-metals, because they are not ductile nor malleable. Both lead and tin are mentioned in the Scriptures. The little island of England had once the reputation of being “the Tin Island.” Speaking of the riches of ancient Tyre, the prophet gives a list of the beautiful things she was once privileged to trade in, namely “ivory, ebony, coral, rubies, balm oil, wool, spices, and precious stones,” some of which we have been considering.

The wealth of the world lies hidden in the earth. From thence the silver and the gold is sought, mixed with dross, but afterwards refined. Iron and brass, although less costly are even more serviceable. Metals of many kinds are taken out of the earth. One ancient writer has beautifully said: “The mineral kingdom may be considered as the great warehouse of nature where she secretly labours for the good of the world. No naturalist can surprise her in her operations, and steal from her the art with which she prepares, collects and composes earths or fossils, salts, bitumen and metals.”

If we cannot guess how nature employs the matter which she every day produces, it is no less difficult to discover how the parts mix, combine, attenuate, and, in the end, form the different bodies which minerals present to us. We have but an imperfect knowledge of the surface of the earth, and we are still less acquainted with the interior parts. The deepest mines are not lower than 630 fathoms, which is not the sixth-thousandth part of the earth’s diameter. This alone may convince us how impossible it is to obtain an exact and general knowledge of nature, and the formation of many things. Happily in the use we make of nature’s gifts it is of little consequence that we should know their origin and first principles. In having the knowledge necessary to apply them to our use, we know enough to glorify our Creator, as we are convinced that there is no

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spot, either above, or beneath the earth, in which He has not shown His power, wisdom and goodness. That which is most serviceable is most abundant. “Out of the earth cometh bread;” that is bread-corn, the necessary support of man. So man is continually reminded that he, as well as the food for his maintenance, proceeds out of the earth — he is “of the earth, earthy,” and is hastening to the earth again. “Under it,” says Job, “is turned up as it were fire — precious stones that sparkle as fire; brimstone that is apt to take fire, and coal that is proper to feed fire. As we have our food so we have our fuel cut out of the earth. There are sapphires and other gems, and from thence gold ore dust is digged” (Job 28:5-6). The wisdom of the Creator has placed these things first, out of sight to teach us not to set our eyes upon them (Pro. 23:5, 2), and second, under our feet so that we should learn not to lay them up nor set our hearts upon them. We perceive then how full the earth is of God’s riches. Yea, the whole “earth is His, and the fulness thereof” (Psa. 24:1).

How many of God’s good gifts are accounted “precious” in the Bible? His natural gifts are all spoken of as “precious.” Stones, metals, oil, ointment, seed and fruits. Life and death are also said to be precious; Christ is precious, and his people are precious, too. The promises they receive are precious, and so is the faith by which they lay hold of them. They are “redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, more precious than the blood of bulls and goats,” and of “gold that perisheth”; and the wisdom thereof cannot be valued with “the precious onyx and sapphire.” God’s thoughts towards His people are precious, and so are His lovingkindnesses. For their sakes He causes the ground to bring forth all manner of precious things, and for them awaits a city, whose light and glory can only be compared to “a stone most precious,” while the trial of their faith, by which they have been prepared for this high state is precious also. Such are some of the precious lessons to be gathered from a contemplation of the precious things of the earth. God’s treasures are full and bounteous, and our hearts are overwhelmed with gratitude as once more we hie away home.

*Say shall we yield Him in costly devotion
Odours of Edom, and offerings divine?
Myrrh from the forest, or gold from the mine?
Vainly we offer each ample oblation;
Vainly with gifts would His favour secure;
Richer by far is the heart’s adoration;
Dearer to God are the prayers of the poor.*

Chapter Thirty Four

SOWING AND REAPING

*Thy bounty every season crowns
With all the bliss it yields;
With joyful clusters loads the vines—
With strengthening grain the fields.*

“**W**HILE the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease” (Gen. 8:22). “Thou openest Thine hand, and satisfieth the desire of every living thing” (Psa. 145:16). “Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness; and Thy paths drop fatness” (Psa. 65:11). Autumn is the crowning season of the year. It is the golden season and there is an atmosphere of plenty and contentment everywhere. A mild breeze stirs so gently that the windmills can scarcely keep turning, and the roving cattle bring an instinct of peace into the fair scene. If the broad green meadows were emptied of their flocks and herds, the picture would not be complete, the scene of tranquility would not be nearly so real; even though there were plenty of our feathered friends around us. But now everything is suggestive of peace, fulness and rest. The blue sky above us, lit with the white golden sun is unutterably calm and clear; there is hardly a sound to be heard amid the beautiful serenity of this autumn morning. And as this is to be the last of our rambles for a while, we trust that the strength and refreshment we gain thereby may be of such an uplifting character, as to carry us hopefully and courageously through the coming winter.

The brain thinks just as the heart beats, and it is evident that the brain becomes wearied with thought. And what is rest to the brain better than change of thought and change of its currents and channels? There are thoughts that excite, irritate, stimulate or compose the system. Hence thoughts of God, and His wonders in nature, His Truth and the hope of the future bring rest more or less deep and lasting as we enter into and appreciate the subject of the change.

Spring clad in her youthful garb gives a brighter aspect. The air is fragrant with the scent of lilacs, and golden chain, while the nightingale takes up his song when the thrush and blackbird cease theirs.

It is the season of new birth, of resurrection and life. Everything we see in nature around is bursting forth in the newness of vitality. The buds and blossoms, and the singing birds all reminding and reassuring us of life beyond the tomb. The renewal of nature fills us with delight, and summer with its glow

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of promise thrills our hearts with gladness. The green branches, full of foliage and covered with flowers intervening with the green leaves, all the colours of the various hues, though perfectly distinct, sweetly blending together. The green leaves of the trees contrasting most appropriately with the smiling flowers. The pastures are very drifts of greenness, with the cattle sunken to their knees, while the meadows, white with daisies, gold with buttercups, are set in seed grasses of exceeding brightness of aspect. The hedges are in full bloom with woodbine and honeysuckle, while masses of wild roses are flung lavishly on every side. Everything is so natural and perfect, filling us with pleasure as our voices blend with the songs of the birds. There are portions of God's Word, so touching and so eloquent, that to attempt to explain or enlarge upon them would be as foolish as to gild refined gold, or to try and add fresh beauty and perfume to the flowers. Therefore we must leave them untouched in their simplicity and grandeur. It is indeed a delightful season, that passes all too quickly, so —

*“While summer lasts enjoy it,
Let us to the fields repair;
Snatch some hours from toil and study,
Nature's blessed gifts to share.”*

Autumn with its falling leaves reminds us of decay, and that rest is necessary to all God's creation; but even the falling leaves have their purpose, and seem to be a soft blanket for the tender plants, and form a rich manure to the wide spreading trees. Earth's noblest, proudest, and mightiest are like leaves. Sometimes gnawed by worms and droppings in mid-spring: sometimes blasted by the intense heat and shrivelled in mid-summer. And if spared in spring and summer, the frost nips them and we see morally what we witness in the autumn frost, one of the saddest sights: the leaves falling frequently and in countless number, are borne hither and thither by the wind to mould and decay. There is a touch of sadness in all, yet we must not forget that autumn brings the golden sheaves and ripened fruits. It speaks to us of fulness of joy, of well-stored barns, or prayers answered and hopes realised.

How wonderful are the changing seasons! They are each perfectly distinct, and yet brought about so gradually. All these things should cause us to acknowledge the supreme wisdom of our Creator: the golden harvest, the richly embroidered carpet of nature, the treasures of the earth unitedly call forth our grateful praise. This beautiful universe is too good for those who can behold it without emotion. Yet for them the corn ripens and the trees bring forth fruit, and all things minister to their necessities. The thoughtful mind is drawn towards the Creator. The vast creation becomes the temple of God, and we bow in worship. But here we find ourselves once again by the mercies of our Father in heaven, in the very midst of all this golden splendour, and our hearts, at least, are full of

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gratitude for all the way He has led us. Among the opening buds of vernal spring we took our first walk together, and many a pleasant summer day has found us roaming freely over hills and dales, through shady woods, and among the shining rocks bordering the yellow sands and restless waters. And now the green and scarlet foliage makes a rich carpet on our path, and the hedges glisten with red berries of the prickly holly, evergreen; and the acorns drop in showers around our feet. But for the gilded field and the russet and yellow forest foliage it would seem as if summer prolonged her stay, being loathe to leave us. In spring we have the promise of worldwide blessings. There is a sense of relief when we see the buds bursting and the seedlings peeping through the ground. It is a universal feeling of gladness, a feeling that is shared by all nature, and is breathed forth by the wise Preacher in his spring song (Song of Solomon 2:11), which savours the sense of freedom and is the very essence of joy. We have all felt, after the long dreary winter, if we may call winter so, the preciousness of the promise in Gen. 8:22. The expression: "I will not again curse the earth," should be rather: "I will not add to curse the ground," which is the strict rendering of the Hebrew, and means: "I will not inflict an additional curse upon it." Therefore, we have the earth, the air, and the water of the globe, exactly the same now as they were immediately after the Flood. These ordinances of "seedtime and harvest, summer and winter, and day and night" still remain. The decree that fixed them thousands of years ago still lasts, and in their stated recurrence the believer sees that God's Word is the real law of nature — that nature hangs on the will of God, and that He commands and it is done. The long chain of causes and effects which we see, is fixed to a staple, which is fastened, as it were, to the throne of God. Let us never so far forget these truths as to place creation before the Creator, or creation's laws in the place of the Word of God.

The apostle speaks of fruitful seasons as God's witnesses (Acts 14), and what a lot depends upon the sowing of the seed which is to result in a fruitful harvest! From the one we are thrown back on the other. No seedtime, no harvest. There are conditions, also. In Lev. 19:19 Israel was reminded that the increase depended not so much on arduous labours, or strenuous efforts, as upon the blessing of God. Both in the natural and spiritual this is so: "God giveth the increase" (Lev. 26:16; 2Cor. 9:10). And the reaping will be in proportion to the sowing (Luke 8:5): "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6:5).

*We plough the fields and scatter, the good seed on the land,
But it is fed and watered by God's Almighty Hand.*

Things that are passing away are taken hold of by holy men of old, and used as symbols of a future life. We shall understand better Paul's words in 2Cor. 9:10 if we know what was in his mind when he wrote them. There were numbers

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of tenant farmers at that time, all dependent upon the landlord. They would go to him and receive a certain amount of seed, which would be part for his own need and another part for sowing. If he put by the seed for sowing until his own was consumed, and fell back on the other when that was gone, he would have no harvest; and how could he face the landlord and ask for more? If the seed was used up in a proper way, he could go again with confidence and receive more, and at harvest time not only have an equal share for the seed that was sown, but a multiplied yield also.

There are two things that God supplies to the spiritual sower. Seed for sowing and food for his needs. It is our duty to use up the seed that God supplies, and then He will give more. If we keep all to use for ourselves and not for others also, we lose the blessing. It is the same idea in Isa. 61:10. We see the opening buds — the expanding leaves and flowers, and watch them fade away and all is gone, and apart from our experience it seems as if they would never live again — all seems lifeless; but we think of force and the wonderful miracles performed every day. The dry seed bursts its tiny cell beneath the ground we know not how, but knowledge and experience teaches us that it is so, and we see these things constantly done without fail, strengthening our faith and assuring us of that greatest of all miracles — our resurrection from among the dead. But first the seed must be sown. It must be buried and hidden deep in the earth before it can spring up according to its kind. Like the grain, that when sown, is watered by the soft showers of spring, bursts forth and pierces the soil, so the better seed will spring up to newness of life in the eternal springtime by the sweet and gentle influences of the breath of God. Therefore let us be “steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord,” for, though we may go forth weeping and bearing the precious seed, we shall without doubt come again with joy, bearing rich sheaves before “the Lord of the harvest.” As the seed watered by the gentle showers springs up fresh and green, having taken root more readily and deeply, and thrives much better, so “they that sow in tears shall reap in joy.”

All who work on the land for profit or for pleasure at this time of the year, appreciate the value of rain. Sometimes we see the countryside under an extraordinary spell of sunshine, and we rejoice in the freshness of nature passing from spring to summer. Blossom gives place to fruit buds and flowers change their colour as the flowers of spring die down and are replaced by flowers of summer. Most vegetation shows vigorous signs of growth, and to the casual observer all seems well; but we feel that this state cannot continue for long because the plants are only deriving nourishment from moisture stored in the soil, and there would at length be a drought, and long drought brings famine. Hence we should acknowledge God’s hand in these things and pray that He will

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preserve to us the kindly fruits of the earth, so that in due time we may enjoy them. The task of the husbandman is often laborious, and uncertain. The early and latter rains must be given in their season or the harvest will not ripen. We may see the bloom of April destroyed by the frosts of May. Thus the husbandman works in hope and faith, preparing the ground, sowing the seed, uprooting the weeds, taking care of the weak plants and encouraging the strong. In Heb. 6:7-8, Paul speaks of the ground as a thirsty man. The traveller in the desert is tired and parched with thirst, but he comes to an oasis where there is a well and fruit trees, and he drinks eagerly of the cool waters, and soon is refreshed; his energy is renewed, and he is able to continue his journey. In like manner the earth responds immediately to the refreshing showers. The fading plants become greener, they are revived, and throw off their fragrance almost, it seems, in gratitude for the precious drops. Hence we see the wisdom of taking the Bible as our handbook to the study of nature. If we are tempted to be discouraged, or to turn back, let us recollect how much patience the husbandman must exercise before he sees any result of his labours (James 5:7). Let us make good use of our opportunities, and God will give the increase.

*Soon life's spring will be over,
And its autumn days will come;
Happy then will be the workmen
Who have sheaves to carry home.*

There is a precious thought in regard to the watering of the seed. The apostle says that "one planteth, and another watereth." The seed is sown, God's sunshine falls upon it, and it is fed and watered, not always directly from the clouds, but from the gardener's hand. So the Word of Life is sown in the heart and it is fed and nurtured by the rain and sunshine of the love of God, but here and there it is helped along by the services of others — by the kindly word and advice of the under-gardeners. As if one comes along with the watering can, and another with loving hands takes the withes to train and bend the tender plant in the right direction, and a third gently nips a false growth.

The words of the wise Preacher in Ecclesiastes 11 are an incentive to diligent effort. "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, or both be alike good." If we have missed the precious morning sowing do not let us give up altogether. Someone has regretfully said, "Ah! twenty five years ago, had I planted seeds of trees, how I should now enjoy their shade and see their fruit swinging in the breeze." True, some good must accrue from early and faithful labour, and we shall enjoy the fruits of it sooner or later if we diligently pursue our way. Indeed, we are, although unconsciously, sowing every day seed for our reaping by and by. As the poet says:

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*“Seeds of good or ill we scatter,
Heedlessly along our way;
But a glad or grievous fruitage
Waits us at the Harvest Day.”*

We must be prepared for losses and disappointments. It is a sorry sight, enough to bring tears to the eyes, when the husbandman awakes some morning full of hope, and finds to his dismay that a frost has nipped the tender plants and blossoms, and all is ruined, at least, for that season. In the natural order it is a temporary loss, but how disappointing to find the tender seedling of our early sowing thus blighted by the frost of persecution or by some unholy gratification, and those we love forsake the path of righteousness and truth, and the spiritual life within becomes shrivelled, and at length fades away altogether. In the face of such a bitter disappointment we can only go to the great Head Gardener and Husbandman who knows all, and who once was constrained to enquire of his followers: “Will ye also go away?” and later “Could ye not watch with me one hour?” Another important lesson arising out of the spring is that of transplanting. The small weak plants sprout up together from their moist and narrow beds, but in this condition they would never become fine healthy flowers, or bear precious fruit, because they need room to expand. When transplanted in open spaces where they may be revived by the pure air, exposed to the rays of the warm sun and watered by the gentle rain and dew, they shoot forth into leaf and rise up in all their beauty.

Like the weak plants, we all grow up out of mother earth, all crowded together in one common space — the world. But God does not leave His choice plants to perish. Although weak and imperfect, He takes them out of their native surroundings and transplants them into “the kingdom of His dear Son,” where the sweet rain of the Spirit and the dew of His grace may light upon them. Thus they spring up from well prepared ground and grow in “the beauty of holiness” to the praise of His name. But it is not all smooth, easy growing; there is the unpleasant process of weeding out, of training in a certain direction, and of pruning false buds, and superfluous shoots, just as in the natural. The children of God must often endure things that seem as unreasonable and distasteful as the objectionable manures in which are raised some of the most nutritious vegetation, and the most luxurious fruits; being of the foulest odoured excreta that it is possible to conceive. Yet through the beneficent operation of nature these vilest of materials contribute towards the production of the choicest growths. One writer has truly said that, “It is out of that which has been presumably destroyed that plants are built up — the dead leaves — the broken twigs and the excreta of animals.”

It is, so to speak, the life that is in death, on which plant life flourishes and

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depends for its own life. As Keats observes: "The flower must drink the nature of the soil before it can put forth its blossoming; and as the tree is fertilized by its own broken branches and fallen leaves, so is the soul of man ripened out of broken hopes and blighted affections."

Sometimes upon a foundation sordid and objectionable are built the most beautiful and noblest of things, and the most refreshing — from putrid substances, the civet and musk, plants of the sweetest odours are generated. So too, from mean and sordid instances there sometimes emanate things useful and elegant. It is evident that all the work of God is that in which the mind and heart of God may be seen, but the heavenly joy is not so easily traceable. Judgment is His "strange work." The storm, the pestilence and death are all needful, but they look stern and joyless.

Springtime, with its buds and fresh grass, and songs of the birds; summer with its sunshine and its lavish growth; autumn with its golden grain and ripe fruits — what joy seems to beat through all! Chiefly in human life, the imperfect, but still most perfect reflection of the divine, what joy there is in love's first search, and recognition and endless union. In births and growths of young life, and gatherings home. Thus, while God's earth is full of riches and even the bleakest and most barren places are lighted up with glimpses of sunshine, it is in His house, among His people, and in His Word that we find the greatest joy, and that we see most of the joy of the Lord, which is our strength under trial. Some plants are most easily affected by inclemency of weather. The climate that suits one will wither and scorch another. The rain that beats down one will cause another to spring up fresher and greener than before, but "the Word of the Kingdom" may be compared to a plant that is not affected by any material changes. It retains the freshness of spring, the beauty of summer, and the fulness of autumn, and is the believer's evergreen during winter. It has been well described as a plant that is the same in the temperate, in the torrid and in the frigid zones. It does not seem to be scorched by heat, or benumbed by cold. Age does not diminish the freshness of its bloom, neither does soil affect its nature, and climate does not modify its peculiar properties. Among the frost bound latitude of North America, and the burning sands of Africa, or the fertile plains of India, we find it still shooting up, the same plant of renown, the same "tree of life" whose "leaves are for the healing of nations," and under whose shadow all kindreds, tribes and tongues will one day rejoice, when privileged to take shelter under its all-covering shade, and draw refreshing nourishment from its perennial fruits.

In spring we gather together the accumulated refuse of our fields and gardens into heaps and consume it by fire. Away in the far West, among the backwoods, devastating fires break out and sweep through the forests in spring, and burn up

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the growths of years — the dead, fallen trees. "It is a grand sight," remarks a sister in isolation in these backwoods, surrounded by the vast forests as by a mighty ocean, "to see the tall trees like masts of ships blazing from the top, crash and fall, and the moose, deer and bears all running for the streams and waterholes. And after the fire, still stand those everlasting green jackpines and shrubs, never singed, reminding us of how we withstand by faith so many fiery trials and emerge green and untouched through all. Nature causes many deep thoughts to arise," she continues. "Even the birds of all colours, of which Canada has a good collection, the bluebird bringing happiness and the yellow canary and snow bird each bearing a message of trust in God, and showing us His wisdom and goodness."

Spring reminds us of the beginning of things. The beginning of life, the beginning of work, the sowing of seed and of planting anew. From these beginnings in nature we may gather the true spirit of work. We observe how God labours in all nature. It is thorough, increasing, and effectual. So may He reveal to us the grandeur of human life in work — the grandeur of it even when it is retiring, quiet and humble; that we may do our least actions as we sow the small seeds, knowing that a self-multiplying power is in them. Dorcas is no more, but the influence of her example has gone into all the earth. Instead of working with one pair of hands in her solitary room, she is now sitting, as it were, in thousands of places, making garments for the poor with many thousands of hands. Another writer said that, "the fume of a pot of ointment, which an obscure individual once devoted to the Lord's feet, is gone into all the world, and we are assured that, if we only give a cup of cold water, with the intensity of the spirit — that is, with Christ — the act will spring up in eternity, and return to us again in marvellous ways."

The great truths connected with seed-sowing were taught in simple and striking manner by the Lord Jesus. If an artist wishes to depict some important subject he does it in a number of small pictures. So in Mat. 13 our Lord's teaching is comprised of a series of several parables, that together represent a picture of the kingdom of God in its relation to the world. All the truths a parable is intended to teach could not be understood all at once, although by their means a way is more readily found to the heart, and a deeper impression made on the memory. We do not at once understand all the beauties and truths the parable represents, but only gradually come to know the meaning! It is like the kernel in a shell and is revealed by God to the humble, diligent seeker after knowledge.

We have often looked at these beautiful word pictures, whose perfect colouring and graceful tints show the skill and tact of a master-mind, being drawn from the common objects of life, while linked with the greatest spiritual

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verities; but have we looked into them as deeply as we should, so that we may catch every vital line of thought they are intended to convey? How familiar we all are with the first of this series!

“A sower went forth to sow.” It is beautifully simple and yet so full of meaning. How perfectly the work of the sower agrees with the work of Christ, and his followers, who sow the seed of the Truth in this and every age! Every humble brother or sister of Christ who proclaims the “gospel of the kingdom” from the heart, every Sunday School teacher, and even their scholars, may be sowers of the Word. Yea, we all are sowers: every moment of our lives. Every word is a seed-thought, and in the end the harvest will yield according to the sowing (Gal. 6:7). “The seed is the Word of God” (Luke 8:11), the “word of the kingdom,” about which Jesus preached, and sent forth his disciples to proclaim also. No figure sets forth the Word more clearly than that of the seed, because there is life within the seed.

What a little thing a seed is! When we take it into our hand it seems dry and dead. But plant it in the earth and it bursts its shell, rises from the ground, and becomes a beautiful flower, or a tree, and supplies food for man. Just so the “gospel of the kingdom” has life in itself. It is “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.” We think of its power over all the earth. It finds a soil in one or two hearts wherein to strike, and then in a short time we see it springing up here and there in beautiful characters whose influence is felt far and wide. But we must not forget that the seed might fall into well prepared ground and have the most able sowers, but unless it had “life in itself” there would be no growth or harvest. The preparation of the heart-ground is inevitable to the welfare of the good seed. God’s plough must first break up the fallow ground of indifference, and formality before the seed-Word can be sown effectually. It can never fall into the furrows of the conscience and will, unless it is first ploughed. If there is to be profitable sowing there must be deep ploughing. Plough, harrow, roller, wind and rain, all belong to God’s tillage as truly as to the fields of nature (1Cor. 3:9). These agricultural operations are alluded to in Isa. 28. God shows Israel that just as the farmer does not always plough, but sometimes harrows, sometimes sows and at another time reaps; just as he varies the seed that he casts into the soil, according to its character, by rotation of crops, to produce better and more profitable results, “so will I deal with you.” I will vary the treatment, saith God. Sometimes prosperity will test; sometimes affliction will try. Sometimes I will visit the land with hurricane, but will not always send torrents of rain, nor give continual sunshine; yet all is for a great purpose and a grand design.

We have our part to do in the great work of preparing the ground, and God supplies the strength and gives the blessing. Sunshine and rain are His gifts.

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They represent God's tillage, the love of Christ, and the softening and refreshing graces of the Spirit-Word. It is said that one day's rain — an inch — deposits on a small field of five acres, over five hundred tons of water. Here is the measure and scale on which God loves and gives fulness of life and abundance of peace. One writer has said:

*"The hardest stones I break with ease
I always break them on my knees."*

This is obviously the secret of all successful toil, which we should adopt. We watch the harrow swinging across the ploughed field, with its sharp iron teeth breaking up the great lumps of earth and tearing up the weeds. Just so with the spiritual harrow. It breaks the hard clods of self-will, uproots the weeds of sinful habits, and goes deep down into the inner recesses of the heart (Heb. 4:12).

Zion has been "ploughed as a field" (Micah 3:12) for many generations on account of iniquity. Now she lifts up her head, for soon she will know a joyous regathering. The nations "know not the thoughts of Yahweh, neither understand they His counsel: for He shall gather them as the sheaves into the floor" (ch. 4:12).

This preparation of the ground for the seed is most important. The smallest seed from the divine Seed Basket has great possibilities. It is the Word of life, and again there is the same order as in the natural. First the blade: "the promise and awakening life;" then the ear "of spiritual advancement;" afterwards "the full corn," ripening towards perfection.

But this living seed must not be scattered recklessly abroad, but be sown and received into the mind and heart if it is to spring up and bear fruit. We must "receive with meekness the engrafted Word" (James 1:21). The sowing of seed is closely followed by the heavy roller which does the double work of smoothing out the rough places, and covering up the newly sown seed (Isa. 40:4). The seed must be hid (Psa. 119:11) before it can be revealed as corn, tree or flower. Like as Gideon had to hide his wheat, so we must hide the Word in our hearts, and when the wicked come against us we shall know how to speak and act. Let us remember that prayer covers the seed, and prayer crumbles up those hindrances of temper, bad habits, and evil manners, that prevent the tender blade from reaching the air and sunshine.

There is force in seed; so the sower takes it and buries it in the ground, but it does not remain inactive. It soon forces its way upwards and pushes aside the earth that covers it. In the same way the Word of God, with His blessing upon it, makes itself felt under the most unfavourable circumstances and breaks the hardest heart. There is also an increasing power in seed. We are told that the produce of a single grain of seed would in the course of time, were the produce of each season sown again, cover the whole earth. In like manner it is impossible

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to limit the influence of the gospel wherever it finds an entrance (Isa. 11:9). What mighty changes it effects! It reforms the character of persons and nations, gives freedom and happiness, and is adapted to the ever changing wants of mankind throughout the world.

These and many more are the lessons we gather from springtime and seed sowing, but perhaps the crowning lesson of this season is the joy of sacrifice. Not of getting, but of giving — of laying out for others, and not laying by for ourselves; of self-surrender, not self-assertion. Jesus both illustrates this and sets the example. He says: "Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone" (Jn. 12:24). The golden fields we behold today are the result of seed that once died. The "great multitude that no man can number" are from One who died. The most beautiful thing in the world is self-sacrificing love. Every one of that glorious company will say: "He loved me and gave himself for me." It is the yielded life, whose will, affections and ambition has caught the true spirit of him who is "the corn of lives," that makes others want to be like him also. Yes, the golden harvest has come from seeds that died, and the great future harvest will proceed from seeds that first fell into the ground; that died to sin and were buried symbolically in the waters of baptism, and rose again to the new life in which they endeavoured to please God, and draw others to him who first laid down his life for them.

If we live unto ourselves, we lose; but whatever we give to the Master in loving service, we keep unto life eternal (1Cor. 3:6, 12; Phil. 4:19). The wheat is chosen to represent both our Lord, and his brethren. All trees and plants have roots, but the wheat-root dies in the ground and the stem is gradually drying as the wheat grows upwards and ripens; so we must die to things of earth, and as we rise in the new life, the old life will gradually weaken, and die, and at last all that is of the earth will have passed away, leaving the full fruit — the golden ear ready for the Reaper.

The potato, put into the ground, dies to produce a multitude. As the hidden life increases and expands, so the outer appearance loses its greenness and show of leaves representing maturity and old age ripening for the harvest.

Some regretfully speak of growing old and going downhill, but we should rather think of it as climbing higher and higher, and of getting nearer the things for which we long. What a comforting promise for those advancing in years — for the aged believer — is this: "Thine age shall be clearer than the noon day; thou shalt shine forth; thou shalt be as the morning." In the words of a beautiful old poem we ask: —

*"Who would exchange for shooting blade, the waving golden grain?
Or, when the corn is fully ripe, would wish it green again?
And who would wish the hoary head found in the way of truth*

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*To be again encircled with the sunny locks of youth?
For though in truth the outward man may perish and decay,
The inward man shall be renewed by grace from day to day,
They who are planted by the Lord, unshaken by their root,
E'en in old age shall flourish still, and still bring forth their fruit."*

The friends of youth disappear like the summer flowers and we seek their places in vain, for like the dew that sparkled but a moment on the flowers they have vanished for awhile; but God is still the strength of our life and our increasing joy. As youth resembles the rose newly opened in early summer, so age is represented by the ripened fruit and waving corn. "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger," or, as we read in Job, "Thou shalt come to the grave in a full age, like a shock of corn cometh in his season." Of an aged brother it is recorded that "as the years fled, hope was still resplendent, faith brighter and brighter, and that love divine took possession of him more and more. At times he could scarcely restrain his emotions as he listened to some sentence that mirrored the mind of the Eternal, that brought in bold relief the richly studded promises set in the unfading richness and beauty of its literary flowers and fruit. In his face could be seen a love-lit radiance suffused with joy that flung itself back upon the speaker." And such should be the character of every golden sheaf. The extent of the growth depends upon the quality of the soil in which the seed is placed, and upon the degree of care which is taken to have it properly prepared. The seed might be of the best kind, but if the farmer neglected to clear the ground before sowing, the seed would be smothered by the coarse weeds growing up with it.

There are four different kinds of ground described by Jesus in this beautiful parable. That by "the wayside," "the stony ground," "among the thorns," and the "good ground." These indicate four different states of the heart — the hard, the shallow, the worldly, and the good. Let us try and picture the scene. One writer thus describes the shores of the Lake of Galilee, helping our imaginations: "A slight recess in the hillside close upon the plain, disclosed at once in detail, and with a conjunction which I remember nowhere else in Palestine, every feature of the great parable. There was the undulating cornfield descending to the water's edge. The untrodden pathway running through the midst of it, with no fence or hedge to prevent the seed from falling here and there on either side of it, or upon it — itself hard with the constant tramp of horse and mule, and human foot. There was the good, rich soil that distinguished the whole of that plain and its neighbourhood from the bare hills elsewhere, descending into the lake, and from which there is no interruption, produces one vast mass of corn. There was the rocky ground on the hillside protruding here and there through the cornfields as elsewhere through the grassy slopes. There were the large bushes of thorn — the

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nabk; that kind of which tradition says the crown of thorns were woven, springing up like the fruit trees of the more inland parts in the very midst of the waving wheat. The scene was familiar enough to the people whom Christ was addressing.”

The “wayside” was the spot where the field and the road joined, the edge of the field which the plough had not turned up; not the common highway, but a path through the field, and the margin of the field had become wrongly turned into a path. The constant traffic made the ground hard, so that the grain remained upon the surface and the birds that followed the sower plucked the seeds as soon as they were dropped. The wayside represents the hard-heart ground into which the gospel seed cannot enter any more than seed can into a well beaten path. The Word is listened to but not cared for. It falls upon the ear as seed does upon hard, unploughed land, and “the devil catcheth away the Word,” as the birds in early morning fly about and pick up the seeds. The hearts of this class of hearers become hardened by the wear and tear of daily life, and the good seed is trodden down by care, or amusements, or frivolities that like “birds of the air” prevent the good seed from taking root. The unfeeling heart is like the trodden footpath. We cannot prevent worldly thought and cares from lighting on our hearts, like the birds on the seed, but we can prevent them from making their nests and finding a home there.

Again some seed “fell on stony ground.” Not on rocky ground, or where stones and earth were mixed together, but where there was a thin surface of warm, rich mould, with solid rock underneath; where there was just enough to allow the seed to take root. The hot sun in the moist air drew up the shoots quickly, but the roots could not pierce the hard ground. As long as the weather was cool and wet it thrived, but when the heat of summer came, it was burnt up for want of depth. It “lacked moisture” (Luke 8:6), and soon died. The stony places represent the shallow heart into which the seed enters, but does not



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take root. The Word is received with joy, but there is no depth of character. It is a surface religion lacking zeal or reality. Such do not oppose the Truth but their love for it is a mere matter of form or excitement. They are shallow hearers, and, although they desire the privileges belonging to those who indeed serve Christ, they fail to count the cost. The heart is untouched and unchanged, and in the time of trial or temptation, which strengthens and refines the true believer, as the grass over which a scorching flame passes, leaving its surface charred and dead, springs up fresher, greener and finer afterwards, "they fall away." They have 'no moisture,' they lack in their trials the sanctifying and preserving grace of God (1Thes. 5:28).

Then again, "some fell among thorns." This shows that the ground had not been properly cleared before sowing. All that could be seen had been taken away but the roots remained and grew faster and stronger than the grain taking all the sustenance from the ground, besides choking and smothering the seed. The ears came up; they did not die off like the seed sown in stony places, but were slowly strangled by the rank weeds which came up with them. By the thorny ground is represented the worldly heart — the heart that is only partly given to God. The thorns represent the cares of the world, the anxieties of the worldly life. Unless guarded against, these things fill the heart with worldly matters and crowd out better things. We have therefore to keep watch over our hearts (Mat. 6:2; Pro. 4:23), and look closely into them to see if we are cherishing any roots of wicked thoughts, evil habits, or sinful pleasures, that prevent us from giving ourselves wholly to God. If so, they must be plucked up by the roots, or they will gain in strength and force, until they stifle the growth of every divine grace. The fourth kind of ground is the good. The seed fell into prepared soil, softened, deepened, and weeded. It grew and bore fruit, "some an hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty." Even in the good ground the seed did not bear the same amount in all places. "The good ground" represents those who "in an honest and good heart receive the Word and understand it" (Luke 8:23).

Not that the human heart is so by nature (1Cor. 2:14). "By nature we were children of wrath, even as others" but "by the grace of God I am what I am," says the apostle. Yes: it is all of grace, and the best way of doing right is to be humble. We may plant our own hindrances to fruitfulness. The ears of barley that bear the most fruit always hang the lowest. Our Lord selected his first disciples from honest hearted Simeons and Annas of the temple, from the earnest, baptized disciples of John, and from those who, even at their fishing, were looking into the depths of prophecy — from the meditative Nathaniels; the Marthas and Marys of a virtuous domestic life, prepared by moral and religious training and looking for increasing light. The Sower goes forth expressly to this good ground, fine and cultivated, and clear, though still needing the Seed-Word

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in its final perfection, and its most vital seed form, as he brings it from the heavenly storehouse. Some falls as he goes, resting on the trodden bypaths, on the stony places and among the thorns, and new fields are taken in that have been lying fallow and rich only for the thorns. The seed thus received and kept in the heart prepared by the softening dew of the Spirit does not die but increases in power. It is not scorched by persecution, but matured in the planting and springs up at length to life eternal.

But the fruit of these holy characters is not all alike, but according to the capacity and opportunities of the recipient. Here, as in the "parable of the talents" (Mat. 25), it is a question of faithfulness and patience. Fruit is the test of the "good heart ground." All that the sower can do is to sow the seed in faith. He leaves it, but cannot tell if his labour will be of any avail. He has to wait for results. We drop the good seed into the hearts of those who will listen to us, and await the signs of "the fruits of the Spirit." The Jewish Rabbis likened one class of hearers to the sponge that receives all and then imparts to others; another class is like a sieve that lets all the fine flour through and retains only the bran. The seed grows secretly. Some good thought or deed shows that it is growing, for every good action is the fruit of the good seed. And what an encouraging thought is this that the "birds of the air" — the wicked and worldly around us — are not permitted to pluck the good seed away. So at length there is the harvest of a beautiful and fruitful life to the praise and honour of the divine Husbandman.

Let us freely sow the good seed, and the fruit will be correspondingly good. "He that soweth sparingly will reap also sparingly." We think of all the labour that has been bestowed upon us! Of the influences and privileges, and of our knowledge of the "mysteries of the kingdom," and the prayers offered on our behalf. May we remember, too, the responsibilities resting upon those to whom so much has been entrusted (Luke 12:48), and endeavour to improve our talents day by day, showing ourselves worthy of the honour of being "sowers" of the precious Seed.

*In the days of summer help us
To devote our strength to Thee;
May the fruit we bear be precious,
Yielded gratefully and free;
Fruits of holiness, refreshing,
Strengthening others in the strife —
Fruit that proves to all a blessing,
Leading on to endless life.*

Chapter Thirty Five

“HARVEST HOME”

*The golden sunshine, vernal air,
Sweet flowers and fruit, Thy love declare;
When harvest ripens Thou art there
Who givest all.*

Come labour on!

*Who dares stand idle on the harvest plain,
While all around him waves the golden grain.
And to each servant does the Master say:
“Go work today!”*

AS soon as the grain is developed in the air, when it is animated, so to speak, it sprouts from the earth in the form of a beautiful plant and raises itself triumphantly from the place where it is buried but not in the perfect beauty of full development. So shall we one day, if our Lord remains away a little longer, rise with all who sleep in him, from the tomb, and be clothed with all the splendours and magnificence of resurrection life and glory.

The words of Paul are very significant on this point in 1Cor. 15, where he reasons “Thou foolish one, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die. And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be... But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him, and to every seed his own body... So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power.” The earth is to be made to cast out, or bring forth the dead — literally, the “feeble ones” (Isa. 26:19). These appear before the tribunal of justice, coming forth from the grave with the same kind of body and nature that they carried into it. If it were not so, it would not be resurrection. Jesus rose again — the same Jesus that was buried, only that instead of being dead he was living again. “This mortal must put on immortality.” It is “swallowed up of life.” The life-power descends upon it, and permeates it in all its substance, so that “corruptible” becomes incorruptible. The swallowing up of every particle of the earthliness of an earthly body is after approval, but the work of “a moment” as in “the twinkling of an eye.” It was one of the events that took place in the case of Jesus on the third day. He “rose and revived” on the “third day” (Rom. 14:9, RV). Rising is one thing, reviving is another. Hence being perfected as the “quickening spirit” he received the “body of his glory” (Phil. 3:21), the glorious body that dies no more.

The apostle speaks of Christ as the “firstfruits.” In the day of his flesh, Jesus

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was both “sower and reaper.” The few faithful ones who forsook all and followed him were the firstfruits of a ripening harvest. He sowed the good seed, gathering in the Simeons and the Annas that “waited for the consolation of Israel,” and these with other disciples of John that grew in the chill early springtime of his ministry, ripened in his warmer summer.

But Christ is the “Firstfruit” to God — the earnest of a great multitude of golden sheaves to be garnered into the heavenly storehouse, by the Angel Reapers, and we may be among the laughing, singing sheaves on this vast harvest plain. In the woman of Samaria we have a beautiful example of how the good seed, dropped into good ground, will spring up and yield an hundredfold. Christ realised the greatness of the work, and the importance of making use of present opportunities. “I have meat to eat that ye know not of.” “My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me,” he told his disciples (John 4:34-38). That meat and that work were closely connected. He laboured to do the will of his Father, and that will sustained his life. It is so with the harvest. It is both food and work. It is so in this life. Although we cannot yet see the ears of corn, we may see where the ears of mankind appear. “Look,” said the heavenly Sower, “the fields are whitening with the hastening crowd.” There is sowing and reaping here. The sower and the reaper may rejoice together, receiving wages and gathering fruit unto life eternal. You have been into these fields and brought only this meat that perisheth; another has gone, and behold what a harvest appears! You have entered into their labours, for this is but the firstfruits.

Jesus says to every one of his followers: Do not get absorbed in this meat — the natural eating and drinking, or there will be no reward, and no inner work or gathering of fruit. We know how easily we may get absorbed in this question of meat. And not only with these temporal necessities, but with reading and study in the service of the Truth — meat for the mind. While not neglecting this we must be able to say there is meat in doing the will of Him who has entrusted me with the good seed, and in finishing His work. Our Lord knows that we have “need of these things,” and shows this by satisfying the wants of the hungry multitude in the desert place. In the presence of them all he took the five loaves (usually made in the form of biscuits and easily broken) and the two fishes into his hands, turning his eyes for a moment to God in prayer. He then “blessed and brake them” before dividing them among the disciples to distribute to the people.

The loaves and fishes increased as they passed from hand to hand until the multitude were more than satisfied. But they were not only fed, for the fragments were enough to fill twelve baskets — more than twelve times the amount they had at first. The five loaves were not made into five thousand, but as they were broken in faith they multiplied. We may understand in measure this

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miracle by observing what is accomplished year by year in the fields, where a single grain of corn multiplies itself, and in the end unfolds in numerous ears of corn. An Old Testament miracle resembles this in many particulars (2Kings 4:4). The widow's oil was made to increase, not in the cruse, but in the act of pouring out. The seed does not increase in the granary, but in the sowing. The talent gained nothing while kept laid up in the napkin, but rather met with a curse. In the same way grace and blessings increase when used (Ecc. 12:9). “There is that scattereth and yet it increaseth; there is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty,” says Solomon. God, through Christ, multiplies our supply.

The people were astonished at the miracle of food in the desert, for they felt that they were in the presence of “that prophet” — the long-looked-for Messiah, who was to come into the world (John 6:14) — but they did not understand the true meaning of the miracle. They only saw in it the pledge of the earthly plenty, and thought only of the meat that perisheth. But Jesus desired they should understand the spiritual significance. The manna in the desert with which their forefathers were miraculously fed, as well as the bread with which the five thousand were fed, were beautiful types of himself, “the Bread of Life,” given for the support and nourishment of the new man, as the natural bread is for the body — the source of all spiritual needs as well as temporal wants.

Let us gather up two of the many thoughts suggested by this miracle. Want is one of the fruits of the Edenic Fall, and what a calamity it is! How frequently man has been punished by death since that unhappy day. The pangs of hunger induced Joseph's brethren to go down into Egypt when the countries were famine-stricken. The valley of the Nile was the richest corn growing district in the world, and would be now, if there were better men to sow and to reap its harvests. Christ came to give plenty; to redeem us from the effects of the curse. He “gave himself for us.”

A lad carried the loaves and fishes with which Christ fed the multitude. So the humblest may serve him. God only asks us to do what we can. He will then bless our efforts, and supply all our needs (Phil. 4:19). We think of the act of Jesus before distributing the loaves and fishes. It was natural and simple. John uses the words “giving thanks.” It was just as the head of a Jewish family would ask a blessing. The formula in such cases was usually short and simple; such as “May God, the ever-blessed One, bless what He has given us.” In everything we must give thanks, for it is one of God's commands. From the reading of their beautiful Law, the Jews made a rule of praising God for everything, and upon all occasions. If they took a cup of wine they lifted up their hands and said, “Blessed be He who created the fruit of the vine to make us glad.” They not only thanked God for the rich fruits of the land, but the good land itself in which they

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had such pleasant settlements. Looking, however, to the teaching which followed this miracle, as in Jn. 6, and to our Lord's use at the last supper of the same words and acts, with others which gave them a new and higher meaning, we cannot be wrong in thinking that, as Jesus distributed the earthly bread to the hungry crowd through the agency of his apostles, there was present in his mind the thought that he would hereafter, through his chosen servants, impart to those who hungered after righteousness, the gift of life, that they might feed upon the “True Bread” from heaven. Jesus sent his disciples “two and two before his face.” It was their work to prepare for him, and it is our duty also to prepare not only ourselves for his coming again, but help others to prepare for him too, and to scatter the good seed over the vast world fields, that many may be ready for him when he comes.

But all our efforts will be in vain unless God sends the early rain of the Spirit-Word to vitalise the seed sown. The heart is barren as a dry meadow or garden when the soil is burnt by the hot sun. It thirsts for better things — for the consolations of the Truth, as the thirsty ground calls for rain and calls not in vain; for God sends us sweet refreshment and comfort, that we may be able to console and comfort others, and lead them to “the green pastures and beside the still waters.”

“The kingdom of heaven” is also likened to “leaven.” It puts forth a fermenting element into the midst of human life, quietly and deftly as by a woman's hand. And this secretly works its purpose in the individual heart, in communities and homes, and through all life's labour and leisure, its science and arts, its laws and customs.

Like the seed in a prepared soil, the leaven is introduced among prepared meal. It penetrates one particle after another, infusing through all a new spirit. Thus moistening what is dry, and, though close together, real union will not be until the kingdom of heaven brings into unity every fragment of human life influenced by it. But while thus united, it opens up the mass, stirs and elevates and prepares the whole for the gradual application of a holy fire, to turn what is loose and leavened into what is like bread, wholesome and nourishing in the world. Thus it works secretly, yet in due time its work becomes manifest and visible to the touch and taste. It heaves up as well as opens up, causing stir and commotion, controversy, reformation, inquiry and transition, from the lower to the highest order of life.

As leavened bread is more agreeable to the palate than unleavened, it may be well to enquire why leaven was prohibited in connection with the meal offering, seeing a portion thereof was to be eaten by the priests. We must consider what leaven symbolically sets forth. The ingredients of dough with leaven in it were the same as those contained in unleavened dough, but through fermentation a

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change was produced and the dough became sour. “A little leaven, leaveneth the whole lump,” or dough (Gal. 5:9). Here the apostle warns the believers against falling back to the old system of legalism, and in 1Cor. 5:6 admonishes them to purge out the “old leaven.” Both these passages refer to evil. Our Lord warned his disciples against the “leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees” (Mat. 16:6, 11). God would not accept human nature leavened or corrupted by the Fall. His purely begotten and anointed Christ was the only one who ever lived on earth in whose heart there was no leaven. Through all his trials and temptations he was entirely free from leaven.

Honey, also was forbidden in the meal offering. In the flesh there dwelleth no good thing; all the natural sweetness of disposition that may be found in us is not more acceptable to God than any other feature of character that is cast in a grosser mould of evil. It is possible for the earthy, corruptible, honey-like sweetness of nature to insidiously infuse itself even into the very highest developments of the Christ-like life. Paul speaks of love “abounding more and more in knowledge and in all judgment.” That is, sensitive, perceptive, and disinterested. “That ye may approve, or discriminate, things that are excellent.” Such would be the result of love being exercised on divine, instead of natural principles; of having ‘salt’ in it instead of ‘honey.’ In loving others we must use discretion and sanction things only that are excellent. If we smile on those who are hindering Christ’s truths as on those who sustain them, instead of having regard to the great principles of God, then either leaven or honey are present. Affection should exist in every heart. We have Christ and his apostles as examples (Rom. 1:31). The affection of Christ towards those with him, like every other element in his character, was fit to be presented on the altar — it had “no honey” in it.

Christ condemns the ‘leaven’ of hypocrisy. We must all partake of the “unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” to be accepted of God. The hypocrite was an actor, one who disguised himself with a mask. At first the mask was a rude contrivance. Everyone knew that some other person was personating a character for play. No one was deceived. But a more clever art was introduced when the actor learned how to mask his own features, and amuse an audience for hours, making them laugh or weep as he chose. But the art was carried higher and more skilfully managed. The actor might deceive himself, and the parts gradually and without difficulty learned, became so natural, that not only in the theatre but in the street, the market place, the forum, and even in the ecclesia, they could almost unconsciously go through their performance.

Such is the natural history of hypocrisy. So our Lord warns his disciples against it. The features, voice, and whole bearing of the character of a person, especially of the believer, must not take outward form and tone contrary to the

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inward being. “The type of hypocrisy is gradually, and not easily set up,” someone has said. It is a slow, secret, silent process like the leaven. Christ calls attention to the inner life — to the true spring of life, the silent depth in which life’s well fills, and where it can be most easily made deadly or wholesome by some mineral mixture. It is the handful of leaven hidden in the meal which he warns against: the kind of strata, not out of which, but through which, the water rises. Though the work be within, it may begin from without. Outward circumstances, like the hand, may hide the leaven within; the mineral mixture may percolate through various interstices of associated life, into life’s individual well. The neighbourhood of hypocrisy is dangerous. This disease is contagious. The air becomes infected by it. If we breathe it much it may infect the blood. Thus unbelief, suspicion, doubt and mistrust may easily leaven us with hypocrisy. Faith is deceived and the outward appearance that once was natural becomes only the disguise of a very different character. This leaven deals with the mainspring and regulates the human life. It comes between the heart and conscience, the Truth and Word of God. It hinders the inner work of the Spirit-Word, and stifles its influence and power within. Let us remember that “there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known” (Mat. 10:26).

We pass one by one through the turnstile into the open fields of waving corn, interspersed with blue cornflowers and scarlet poppies. It is one of the grandest sights of autumn, for peace and plenty, coupled with love and joy, abound everywhere.

Blue, scarlet, purple and gold carry us back in thought to the colours used in the Mosaic “pattern of things in the heavens.” Hyssop is like an ear of corn, bearing a blossom of azure colour. It was used with cedarwood and scarlet in the preparation for the purification of sin. The Psalmist says “Thou shalt purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean,” referring to the ancient law (Num. 4:7, 12; Lev. 14:4). Solomon says: “the blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil,” or “is a purging medicine against evil” (Pro. 20:30). A lace of blue united the golden plate of the holy crown to the mitre, and a lace of blue fastened the golden rings of the ephod. With the purple and scarlet, the blue also united the gold and fine linen, and a cloth of blue was spread over the ark and all the golden furniture of the holy place. Blue is a most prominent colour among the emblems of things divine (Exod. 25:4). *Tichailleth* is generally supposed to mean an azure, or sky colour, and is rendered by the Septuagint and the Vulgate as “hyacinthum.”

The land of the Bible lay stretched beneath fair azure skies, and its favoured people in the happy days when God and His Word were honoured, were a correspondingly bright and joyous people. Perhaps it is not strange to find how much they appreciated bright colours, or that God should use these very colours

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in conveying to their minds, in symbols the glory and beauty, His holy purpose; setting the more brilliant in striking contrast with the fairest and most beautiful, to prove the virtues of the character acceptable in His sight. Purity and simplicity, faith and love, are represented by blue and gold, as against the gaudily-arrayed harlot of the Apostasy. As outward beauty is empty and vain, so God's colouring was of a different nature and for a different purpose than mere outward aggrandisement. Although for “glory and for beauty,” it was the “beauty of holiness,” and not the glory of flesh.

The earth, the beautiful abode of man, is adorned with massive variegated green, intimating the vast multitudes of its present and future inhabitants — grass, trees and leaves being figurative of people. Like a vast curtain of blue, the heaven is spread over all the earth, representing the perfection of love that embraces all creative work. The colour blue may be traced by reference to the scene recorded in Exodus 24, when Israel were introduced by grace into the presence of God, “under whose feet was, as it were, a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were, the body of heaven in its clearness.” The visible “clearness” of heaven, signified by the transparent blue of the sapphire, suggests to the mind the state of the atmosphere into which Israel was brought: cloudless, brilliant and luminous with symbolic millennial splendour. Do we not perceive a similitude of this as we gaze upwards at the cloudless sky and admire the brilliant clearness of the sapphire in the atmosphere that surrounds us?

There are wondrously glorious spots on this earth even now, rich with almost primitive glory, in the tinted verdure, the varied luxuriance of groves and flowers and sunny meads where the foot of man has seldom trod, and the trail of the serpent is but faintly perceived. In such spots, when the sky is clear and the subdued light of a summer evening seems to girdle the earth with a sapphire zone, a faint thought of millennial peace steals over the mind and gladdens the heart with the joy set before us. If it is through the heavenly atmospheric medium that blessings of light and heat from the sun are so gently, yet so effectively diffused over all the globe producing vegetation, and covering the earth with good, how beautiful an emblem have we of the grace of God through which His rich, free and unsearchable, spiritual blessings are conferred on the members of His new creation in Christ Jesus! Purity and love are the primary attributes of the eternal Father on high. He rules in majesty and love from the sapphire clearness of His throne in heaven, and His eyes are “too pure to behold iniquity.” He is the loving Protector of all and the gracious Healer of all our woes. When faith is lost in sight and our highest hopes become realised, the beautiful blue of “perfect love” will remain the loveliest canopy encircling the incorruptible gold.

As we stand upon the narrow footpath and look across the shining fields, we

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think, too, of him who walked through the cornfields on the Sabbath day in company with his disciples who “began to pluck the ears of corn,” rub them in their hands and eat thereof. This act called forth from the Pharisees the indignant question: “Why do they on the Sabbath that which is not lawful?” It was the day, and not the deed in particular, that was so offensive. The Pharisees knew well the privileges afforded them in the law. “When thou comest into the standing corn of thy neighbour, then thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand; but thou shalt not move a sickle unto thy neighbour’s standing corn” (Deut. 23:25). Jesus therefore points out what was done in the days of Abiathar (1Sam. 21:6) — how David and those with him partook of the shewbread and “were guiltless.”

It is a pretty sight before us this morning. Men and maidens — the happy reapers — wending their way across the hillside, sickle in hand, towards the golden valley, making us feel how true to nature are the beautiful illustration of the Scriptures. “The valleys (stand so thick) are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing” (Psa. 65:13), says the Psalmist. We laugh and sing when happy and prosperous, and the earth also laughs with her voice when the golden sheaves sway in the breeze. They are witnesses to the goodness of God and the labours of man. The joy of harvest excels all other joys. “They joy before Thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil,” we read in Isa. 9:3. As this joyous band of harvesters approaches we catch the sound of merry laughter, and look into their beaming faces, and presently receive from them as free a welcome to remain with them as the faithful, devoted “Ruth the Moabitess” did, who chanced to come into the fields of Boaz.

The Israelites were taught to be thoroughly unselfish; to share their joys with others, and to put God first in all things. The first of their corn and wine were given to Him. “Thou shalt offer of thy firstfruits, corn in the ear parched with fire, bruised corn of the fresh ear,” said the Law (Lev. 2:14). And what significant types are these of him who was bruised for our sins, and who cried from the cross at Golgotha: “I thirst!” Those who ministered in the holy things were to be remembered (Deut. 18:4), and the poor also were to be considered (Lev. 23:22).

We recall here the words of a beloved brother who has given us some valuable thoughts. There are seven feasts in all, given in the following order: “The Passover” (Lev. 23:4-5) comes first. It is a “memorial,” and brings in view redemption by blood, upon which all blessings rest. It points backwards to Egypt as its origin, but forward to the crucifixion of our Lord for its fulness — the Lamb of God who by the shedding of his blood “taketh away the sin of the world” (1Pet. 1). The second is the “Feast of Unleavened Bread” (Lev. 23:6-8). The divine order here is beautiful: first, redemption; then a holy walk (1Cor.

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5:6-8; 2Cor. 7:1; Gal. 5:7-9). “The Feast of Firstfruits” (Lev. 23:10-14) is typical of the resurrection — first of Christ and then of them that “are Christ’s at his coming” (1Cor. 15:20-23; 1Thes. 4:13-18; Rev. 14:4). “The Feast of Pentecost” (Lev. 23:15-22) is fourth. The antitype is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to establish the early ecclesia. For this reason leaven is present, because there is evil in the ecclesia (Mat. 13:33; Acts 5:15). Let us observe now that it is “loaves,” not a sheaf of separate growth loosely bound together, but a real union of particles, making one homogeneous body. The descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost united the separate disciples into one organism (1Cor. 12:12, 13-20; 10:16, 17). The fifth, the “Feast of Trumpets” (Lev. 23:23-25) is a prophetic type, and refers to the future regathering of long dispersed Israel (Isa. 18:3; 27:13, with contexts). We may refer to Isa. 58 and Joel 3:21, in connection with the trumpets also. “The Day of Atonement” (Lev. 23:26-32) has a double meaning. The work of the priests on that day as given in Lev. 16, points to the great atoning work of the Lord Jesus. The bearing away of sins — the opening of the way of access to the Father through the veil, and the bringing of us to God. But the sorrow and repentance of the people in that day are prophetic in type, and speak of the repentance of Israel after her regathering at the second advent of our Lord, and preparatory to the setting up of the kingdom. At our leisure we should observe the connection between the trumpet of Joel 2 and the mourning which follows in verses 11 to 15, and also Zech. 12:10-13, in connection with the atonement of Zech. 13:1. The seventh and last is the “Feast of Tabernacles” (Lev. 23:34-44). This feast is also prophetic in type, and in direct historical order. It speaks of Israel’s glory after her regathering, repentance and conversion, when the nations, blessed by the King in Zion, shall rejoice with Israel and keep the feast (Zech. 14:16-19).

Under the law the “firstfruits” were the new fruits of the harvest of the land, offered in the form of “two loaves,” called the “bread of the firstfruits,” fifty days after the waving of a single sheaf of the firstfruits on the third day after the Passover. In the antitype, Jesus, risen from the dead, is “the wave sheaf of the firstfruits;” and those who believed and obeyed the gospel preached by the apostles are, “the bread of the firstfruits.” Christ has become “the firstfruits of them that are asleep.” James says in ch. 1:18, “Of His own will begat He us, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.” The word of Truth, the good seed, took deep root, and illuminated their understanding, and when baptised into “Christ the Firstfruits,” they were “planted” in the likeness of his death in hope that they would also be “planted in the likeness of his resurrection.” Or, become “firstfruits unto God and the Lamb” — the “bread of the firstfruits” that can only be offered in the land promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, as foreshadowed in the type in Lev. 23:9-21, and represented by symbol in Rev.

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14.

In the type, the Pentecostal firstfruits were waved in the form of two loaves made from the fine flour of the new grain and baked with leaven. This represented that the firstfruits would be taken from two classes leavened with the Truth: one loaf of the Jews and one of the Gentiles. They were two loaves, but only One Bread. This work commenced on the Day of Pentecost, fifty days after the resurrection of Jesus, on the morrow after the Sabbath he spent in the tomb; when three thousand were leavened with the “gospel of the kingdom.”

The Pentecostal Feast of Firstfruits of the third month in “the pattern of things in the heavens,” was succeeded in the “first day of the seventh month” by the memorial of the “blowing of trumpets.” Between this memorial and the offering of “an offering made by fire unto Yahweh” was an interval of ten days. This tenth day of the seventh month was “a day of atonement” or properly “a day of covering,” a day on which the sins of the past were being covered over by fiery expiation. The sons of Aaron, the priests, were appointed to blow the trumpets in the day of their gladness in the solemn feast days, over their burnt offering, and over the sacrifices of their peace offerings (Num. 10:8, 10); and in Revelation 14 we have the antitype of this prefigured. The Pentecost is celebrated on “Mount Zion” in the inauguration of God’s kings and priests — the “bread of the firstfruits.”

Then the memorial proclamation will sound through the mid-heaven, warning and inviting mankind to turn and repent, and worship Him who made all things. When this proclamation has been made to the end of the world, the “jubilee blast of the Day of Covering” will be blown — a grand jubilee to Israel. It is not only “the day of vengeance” but the glad “year of release,” the “year of His redeemed” (Isa. 63:4). The primary references of the “acceptable year of Yahweh” was the “year of jubilee” to be observed every fifty years, when the land that had been mortgaged returned to its owner, and the Israelitish slaves were set at liberty (Lev. 25:9-10). “The year of jubilee” was typical of the Messiah’s reign and the blessings it was to bring.

But before this glorious scene upon Mt. Zion where the Lamb with the 144,000 are seen standing, comes the Passover in its fulfilment, in the kingdom of God (Luke 22:15-18). “Christ our passover is sacrificed for us, therefore let us keep the memorial feast. Not with the old leaven... but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth,” and be ready to celebrate it in that happy day.

How pleasant is the Harvest Home! God ordained that Israel should observe a season of thanksgiving every year, when all the crops and the vintage were gathered in. It was a time of great rejoicing. The record of this is given in Deut. 16:13, 15. This, the third of the three great yearly feasts, fell in the month Tisri, about October, lasting eight days, from the fifteenth to the twenty-second. Each

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had reference to the fruits of the soil, and thus were suitably appointed for an agricultural people.

In Exod. 23:16, this last great feast is called “the Feast of Ingathering” and was, in one of its aspects, a thanksgiving for the produce of the year; the corn, the wine, and the oil, having then all been gathered in. But in another aspect it was the commemoration of the life in the wilderness, and the thanksgiving for the settlement in permanent habitations, hence the command to dwell in booths, or “tabernacles” during the week of the feast. The *Talmud* gives minute directions for the construction of the booths.

Two remarkable ceremonies were added to the observances later. The daily drawing of water from the Pool of Siloam, and pouring of it out again upon the altar; and the lighting of eight great lamps supported on two lofty stands, four on each, in the court of the women. But these ceremonies were not observed on the eighth day which was regarded as an extra day. It is probable that on that day Christ used those words in Jn. 7:37 and 8:12, which seem to refer to them. This was the most joyous of all the Jewish feasts, and is called in the *Talmud*, “The Festival” by way of preeminence, and the proverb was current that “He who has never seen the rejoicing at the pouring out of the water of Siloam, has never seen rejoicing in his life.”

To understand indeed the deep truths underlying the sayings of Jesus at this feast we must go in thought to the Holy City ourselves at this joyous season. Jerusalem looks more like a forest than a city. Everywhere we behold green arbours made of the branches of trees — the palm, sycamore, olive, pine, and willow, in the streets, and squares, on the roofs of houses, and outside the gates even, for lack of room within. The two thoughts prominent in the minds of the people are the safely gathered crops and vintage when once they were wanderers in the wilderness and had no crops to gather in. But God gave them a “good land” and fruitful seasons, “filling their hearts with food and gladness” (Psa. 65:9-15; Acts 14:17). In the days of Nehemiah this feast was kept with “very great gladness” (ch. 8:13-17). But to come back to the time of Jesus: amid all the rejoicing there were heavy hearts full of sorrow and disappointment. They were not free, for those who hated the Jews — the Romans — were ruling over them, and many were looking for the Deliverer, the Messiah, their King to rescue them from all their enemies. If they had only realised that he was among them what joy would there have been! Jesus of Nazareth they well knew from his miracles and teaching. Would he come to the Feast, they enquire with puzzled looks as they stand in knots talking of him? And presently he is openly teaching in the temple, and, in the midst of all their joys, “despised and rejected of men.” Each morning during the seven days of the Feast, down in the valley below the temple, at the Pool of Siloam, the priests filled the golden pitcher with water,

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and bore it in procession, followed by the crowds, up to the altar in the temple court, poured it into a silver basin with holes therein, and the pipe carried the water down through the rock under the temple to the brook Kedron, flowing through the valley. As the water poured out, the Levites sang Psalms 113 to 118, and the people shouted and waved the palm branches with great rejoicing. As the booths reminded them of the wilderness, this act is associated with the water that God gave them out of the rock. How significant it is that on the last day of the Feast, Jesus should utter such remarkable words about the "living water!"

Each evening the people assembled with their blazing torches, and eight lamps were lighted amid great shoutings, illuminating the temple and the city, and making dark Olivet across the valley look darker still. In the morning they thought of the tent life in the distant wilderness, and at night of the "pillar of fire" shining on the camp, and guiding their march.



But now the feast is over; there is no more illumination, but many listen to a humble Galilean peasant who stands in the midst of the temple before the priests and Pharisees and startles them all with: "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life" — not like those lamps, shining only a little distance, but rather like the sun shining to the end of the earth, chasing the gloom and misery from the human heart as well as revealing the ignorance of superstition, unbelief and open rejection. "Abraham rejoiced to see my day;" he

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rejoiced in the anticipation that he should see it in a resurrected and glorified state, at the “end of the days.” But the people in Jerusalem, with all their professed knowledge and edged about with such elaborate ceremonial, beyond what God required, could not see through the darkness that encircled them, that he who stood in their midst was the antitype of all the beautiful figures in their beautiful God-given law. Like the sun that ripened the grain and mellowed the fruits that were actually the cause of all the joy of harvest, he was the outshining figure, the source of all true joy and gladness of heart.

This feast that was enjoined to be celebrated at the time of harvest, typified the process of the great spiritual harvest, when the Husbandman of the worldwide field shall come to gather the wheat into his barn. The six days represent the manifold dispensation of reaping, binding, threshing, winnowing, and separating the tares and chaff from the wheat. The seventh day represents the gathering of the wheat, and the eighth the grand final rejoicing.

But there is another harvest which is referred to in Rev. 14:14-15, the “harvest of the earth.” John says he beheld “one like unto the Son of Man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.” And “another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice... thrust in thy sickle and reap... for the harvest of the earth is ripe.” The harvest of the earth has been ripening “for their wickedness is great.” This harvest is composed of the vast multitudes of ripened wickedness in the plain, or valley of judgment, unconsciously awaiting a terrible overthrow (Zech. 14:3). The sharp sickle is the symbol of power to reap down these multitudes. “And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped.” Such is the harvest of the earth and its reaping. The angel of this seventeenth verse is doubtless identical with the symbolical Son of Man in Rev. 1, and elsewhere. This harvest is sickled for the purpose of “opening a door” through which the mighty ones of the Spirit could enter into the heaven and set up a throne therein (ch. 4:12). The angel power of the harvest and of the vintage of the earth belong to the nave, or temple, in most holy manifestation. It is explained that the harvest and vintage of the earth are distinguished in the vision of the four beasts of the sea, in Dan. 7. First there is the slaying of the Fourth Beast, a process the beginning of which is the harvest; then there is the destroying of his body in the burning flame; the taking away of the dominion of the other three beasts, that consummates “the judgments written” and constitutes the “vintage of the earth,” which the angel — the “Son of Man” with the sharp sickle — is to gather and to “tread without the city.”

But from this dark picture we turn to further consider that harvest with which we are more particularly concerned. Have we well considered the miracle of the harvest? Year after year it proclaims the faithfulness of God. We are so sure of it

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that we do not hesitate in speaking of its accomplishment. Ever since the promise to Noah, the harvest has come along and never failed, although more or less bountiful. This brings to mind three important facts. First, that God's promises are in keeping with His power. He supplies all our needs “according to His riches.” We cannot exist without Him (Acts 17:25, 28), neither can His gifts be purchased for money, but He invites us to partake of them freely “without money and without price.” God's air and sunshine are free to all. Health and sleep cannot be bought with gold and silver, and all the wealth of the world will not buy a character, nor gain respect.

Then the harvest proclaims God's goodness. “The pastures are clothed with flocks: the valleys also are covered over with corn.” It is the season of great joy and gladness, for peace and plenty are promised to those who walk in the ways of the Lord. “Then shall He give the rain of thy seed, that thou shalt sow the ground withal and bread of the increase of the earth, and it shall be fat and plenteous. In that day shall thy cattle feed in large pastures” (Isa. 30:23). Yea, when all shall serve the Lord, “the ploughman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed” (Amos 9:13), and all will partake of the “fatness of the earth,” and there will be “plenty of corn and wine” (Gen. 27:28).

But God does not send these good gifts without any exertion on our part, nor all in a moment. The husbandman sows his seed in winter and then waits in patient expectation until he sees his fields gradually covered with verdure and giving the promise of a plentiful harvest. Nature works secretly while the seed is unfolding, but its operations may be seen by taking a few grains from the ground when they are commencing to shoot. Two days after the seed has been sown it is swelled by the juices and begins to sprout. The germ is always at one of the ends of the grain, and in that part of it which is next to the outside is the little root of the future plant. The part turned inwards is the stalk and head. Twenty-four hours after the corn has been sown the germ usually begins to pierce the coat of the grain, and to disengage itself. The root and stalk become visible. The root is at first wrapped up in a sheath, which it opens; and some days later other roots shoot out of the sides. The fifth and sixth day a green stalk springs up above the ground. In this state it remains for some time, until the season arrives when the ear of corn bursts from the coat which had hitherto protected it from all inclemency.

We cannot but reflect as we think of all this, how our present existence is but the germ of a future life. It is the seed time when we behold very little growth. We neither see the ripened fruits nor the grain in perfection, but we live in hope. Having sown his seed the husbandman leaves it to corruption, to the storms and rain and sunshine, and sees not what will be the result. And it is so with the spiritual seed. Let us sow in humility and faith, and be not discouraged if we do

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not reap the fruit of it at once. Now is the time for work and for prayer — and let us not be weary in “sowing of the Spirit.” While we wait in patience, let us ask God to crown our fields with His blessings. Every time we supplicate for our daily bread we pray for the blessings of the harvest. But we must not only desire the bread that perisheth, but remember, also, how the spiritual harvest depends upon the seed sown in due season. In these harvest fields the willing labourers are often few but the “harvest is great;” therefore said Jesus, “pray ye the Lord of the harvest that He will send labourers into His harvest” (Mat. 9:3). The essential qualifications are faith (Isa. 55:10-11), expectation (Gal. 6:9), patience (James 5:7-8), humility (1Cor. 3:6-7), hope (Psa. 126:5-6), and perseverance (Eccl. 11:4-6). And, “blessed are ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth thither the feet of the ox and the ass” (Isa. 32:20).

The harvest is also a time of testing. We are all familiar with the parable of the “wheat and the tares!” The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man that sowed good seed in his field, but while men slept his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat” (Mat. 13:24-30, 2Cor. 11:2). This parable carries us back to the days of the early ecclesia when it was like a beautiful field of healthy, flourishing wheat; but the enemy crept stealthily in and sowed discord, strife and false doctrines, breaking the unity and disturbing the peace. Two distinct classes are referred to in these verses. We must not be deceived. Some are to perish like the tares, while others, like the wheat, are gathered into the heavenly granary — reaped for life eternal. For this reason “God sent His only begotten Son.” For every humble, faithful follower of Jesus, it will be a time of rejoicing. The gladness of heart will be much more than “when the corn and wine are increased” (Psa. 4:7). It will be deep and lasting. It is the time of reward for faithful, loving service. It is then that the weeping sower comes again rejoicing, and, bringing his sheaves with him, hears the Master say, “Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” “For he that soweth, and he that reapeth shall rejoice together.”

Oh, what joy it will be around the kingdom, not only to meet the risen saints who now sleep, but those especially dear to us whom we were privileged to gather in bright, full sheaves for the Harvest Home!

The busy, blithesome reapers fast bind the golden sheaves before our eyes, and many a searching thought passes through our minds as we watch them. “The harvest is the end of the world and the reapers are the angels,” said Jesus. We need not fear, for these heavenly reapers will make no mistakes, and all will be well. What though we sorrow now, “joy cometh” with the Harvest Home. We reason from what God is — a loving Father — and know that nothing can befall us but what is for our good. We plant our feet on the rock of God’s faithfulness, and leave the future with Him. Light and darkness, joy and sorrow, adversity or

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prosperity; we learn to thank Him for all.

If unblessed sorrow hardens the heart, unblessed prosperity hardens it still more. How encouraging is the promise of the natural food! "I will bless thy bread, and thy water shall be sure." And God gives us also the promise of spiritual blessings, so that we may be able to bear temporal troubles. Even prosperity without God is not a blessing, but affliction with it is so. God's present help and favour makes bright the darkest night, and the absence of that blessing makes the brightest days dark, so that Amos could say, "although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall there be herd in the stall. Yet will I rejoice in the Lord."

*"I'll ne'er distrust my God for cloth and bread,
While lilies flourish and the ravens be fed."*

Paul's words "rejoicing in tribulation" seem strange at first, but we must see the plan, purpose and process, and then we can rejoice, for the trials of life are ordered and arranged for us, and should act upon us as the grindstone upon the corn, the sand upon the glass, or the axe upon the stone, shaping, fashioning and producing in us the likeness of the perfect Christ pattern, that can alone stand in the day to come.

"Bread corn is bruised because he (the husbandman) will not ever be threshing it, nor break it with the wheels of his cart, nor bruise it with his horsemen," says the prophet Isaiah (ch. 28:28). What a contrast between the treatment of bread corn and the grass that flourishes in the meadows! The grass cannot be crushed when up. Such a bruising would be too severe for it to survive, but the corn is crushed so that it may be deep-rooted and fruitful. The grass class of people are left to themselves. They grow up smoothly and easily because they cannot stand the crushing, but the true wheat is crushed beneath the heavy wheel of affliction and discipline, and springs up fresh and vigorous. Have you noticed that it is the most precious grain that undergoes the severest treatment? Jesus said to Peter, "Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat" (Luke 22:31). How is wheat sifted? Our wheat is threshed, winnowed, screened and weighed up in different quantities for the corn market by one piece of machinery, but in the Holy Land it is performed in the open air by "oxen that tread out the corn," crushing the straw at the same time into fragments that mingle with the grain. Sometimes the threshing is done by means of a large sort of sledge which is drawn around the threshing floor by the oxen. This is a huge slab made of wood, having its underside studded with bits of iron, or rough stones of lava. The next process is winnowing. The broken up straw with all the grain is collected into a great mound in the centre of the threshing floor, and then all is tossed into the air with the winnowing forks. The straw or chaff is blown by the wind and comes down a little away, while the grains fall

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straight down to the floor again. This is quite insufficient to clear the wheat of all the chaff and rubbish, such as grains of other corn, seeds of grass and tares. Small stones get in too, and a certain amount of dust. But it is then sold without further cleansing or sifting, and the buyer has a long and tedious time of sifting before use. Special sieves are kept, and the women of the poorer classes do the work dexterously, and help it on by blowing with their mouths the dust and scraps. They can then keep the smaller grains and grasses for feeding the poultry.

The Psalmist mentions the “finest of the wheat” as Israel’s portion, forfeited on account of their rebellion (Psa. 80:16), and speaking of God’s goodness to them he says: “He maketh peace in thy borders, and filleth thee with the finest of the wheat” (Psa. 147:14). The fat, or richest of wheat, is given in the margin of both references.

“What is the chaff, or straw to the wheat,” saith Yahweh? There is no comparison (Jer. 12:13). While the wheat is carefully garnered, the chaff is cast aside and at last destroyed (Mat. 3:12; Luke 3:17). Here then is the solemn lesson of the harvest. It is a time of separation. What a striking picture is given us of the wide ranging world-field, in the parable of the wheat and the tares. “Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.”

Tares are called by the naturalist *lolium temulentum*. It is a species of darnel. The tares called *zewan* are the farmer’s great plague in the East. When first growing they look like wheat, and cannot be distinguished from it until fully grown. Then the tares are seen to be long and the grains black, quite different from the English tares). Each grain of *zewan* has to be removed before the corn can be ground, as it is bitter and poisonous. It is when the fruit appears that the difference is seen.

Thus in the time of the Great Harvest Home will be known the difference between those who are represented by the black *zewan* and those who resemble the golden wheat. May we all be among the rich, full sheaves to be gathered by heavenly reapers into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour.

Chapter Thirty Six

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*O gracious Father, mid the calm and stillness
of the evening hour,
We lift to Thee our solemn psalm,
To praise Thy goodness and Thy power.
In the days of autumn may there
Be rich sheaves of golden grain;
Plenteous stores of wisdom garnered,
Thoughts divine that cause no pain.
Rich experience of Thy mercy,
Large remembrance of Thy love.
Grant, O God, that in the autumn
We may all Thy goodness prove.*

AND now we leave the harvest fields with joyful hearts after many pleasant and profitable hours in company with the blithesome reapers. The warm sun is setting like an immense glittering globe of diamonds in the cloudless west, and there is a mellow sweetness pervading the scented air.

Many a bright day has ended in clouds, and when the morning dawns we who are so frail and ignorant, know not what the evening will bring. So for many, the morning that breaks with joy in the evening ends in trouble and pain. Sometimes a fair and beautiful sunrise gilds the whole horizon, but gradually it darkens, the clouds gather until the sun that rose so fair, sets amid banks of dark tempestuous and stormy clouds. And thus it is in life. The bright morning of promise fades and fails, and the evening gathers around blighted prospects and unrealised hopes. But this has been a perfectly cloudless day, and we fully appreciate the joy it has brought to our hearts, as well as the thoughts of a yet more glorious day it has called to mind.

These bright and glorious things that we see before us in the near future make us willingly throw into the shadow our great defeats, and all painful reminiscences which we may have had against others are extinguished; for we discover how faulty we are ourselves and seek to cover up their faults rather than publish them. Like the moss on the thatch we gladly spend ourselves in shielding the deformities and weaknesses of others, for it makes the grey wall, by its velvet softness and beauty, wear the garment of grace and youthfulness, instead of age and decrepancy, and is loved and admired by all. We should bring into prominent relief all that we can remember that is good and noble in others, and take example from those we can, for life is replete with lessons, and in every

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winding of the road and current of the stream is some special instruction. As we are warned by wrecks, so are we guided by beacons.

We have watched the birth of day — the dawn with its grey streaks of light, the gradual passing away of darkness, and then the full light of day; and what a sense of relief it has brought! So will it be when the night of sorrow is over and we step forth in the clear light of the millennial morn, and are assured that never again will the twilight and evening shadows fall around us, and we shall be beyond all weakness and pain, and from sights and sounds that sadden us. Christ, like the sun, rose from the obscurity of a previous setting. He not only lighted up the clouds that long had gathered across the path of his appearing, but made them melt away. To the first disciples he shone clearly and fully as the "Light of men." But once risen our Sun remains. Successive generations have been rolling slowly but surely toward his coming again, when "we shall see him as he is," and while no others can go through all the experiences peculiar to those first disciples, there is much in common to all, as all eyes that never saw the sun in the long winter, or only in the brief summer of Arctic regions, have much the same experience of the sun and its effects of warmth, growth, and colour on the world around.

We learn of Christ, and come around him indirectly through his Word and by his ordinances. We do not fear to follow him with wide open eyes, or his apostles, for as we often catch some peculiar lights and shadows in the Word we may linger over and preserve; we do not look directly on the Sun, but looking where he looks and seizing on the effects, we so learn of Christ. The Scriptures reveal Christ to us as the dawn reveals the light of the sun, gradually. If we were taken blindfold at night into the midst of some beautiful scenery, we should see nothing. The views and objects around would be there but the darkness would hide them. If the moon and the stars were shining and the bandage was removed we should see the chief figures and outlines, but it would not be until the sun had risen that we should see the whole landscape. Hence, the writings and prophecies of "holy men of old" may be said to represent the moon and the stars, but the gospel in which these prophecies are fulfilled, and wherein Christ is revealed to us in his fulness, can only be compared to the light of the sun. The dawn is gradual (Heb. 1:1). God's plan was gradually unfolded, so that when the gospel came to be proclaimed by Jesus and his disciples it was not new, but a complete revelation of what had already been received in part.

Christ came, and he is just the Saviour we need; but do we know him experimentally as we should? All the light of a noon day sun is useless to those who have closed eyes, and the prospect is dark and gloomy. God has given us the power to see, and as "children of the light" we should live in it and do the works of the light. In the Old Testament it is desire and hope; in the New there is

possession and fruition. In the former we have youth; in the latter manhood. We see, from the time of Abraham, all the outward circumstances of our Saviour's mission gradually growing into shape and it is this that gives interest to the historical portions of the Bible. As up to the time of Christ it was an ever narrowing stream until it all centered in him, so after Christ, the stream is ever widening till the knowledge of our Lord shall at length "cover the earth as the waters cover the deep." We have only to wait his pleasure and he will refashion all things after the fadeless pattern of his new creation.

We bear away a few golden ears we were invited to glean after the reapers had been by. Rich trophies and mementos of the happy time spent together; a day we shall often recall when these bright fields lie sleeping beneath the snowy sheets of winter.

We join in the shouts of joy as the harvest cart bears away its load of golden sheaves from one of the stubble fields, reminding us of the rude cart so familiar in the East, with its wooden axles and thick wooden wheels, swaying and groaning under its weight of sheaves, as it is driven across the uneven ground. To Israel it was a most natural and striking figure. God says through the prophet Amos, "Behold, I am pressed under you as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves" (ch. 2:13). It expresses the sorrow of Him who "as a father pitieth His children" in spite of their disobedience and wilfulness, still pitied His people. We may see it yet again manifested in the "Man of sorrows" bowed and pressed under the weight of sins not his own, for he groaned and bled beneath the accursed load, not for the Jews only but for us. "He was bruised for our iniquity," and "the chastisement of our peace was laid upon him." Let us learn the lesson of the harvest cart as we watch the load of golden sheaves being driven across the fields. Never may we cause one touch of pain more than we can help, to the Father who so loves us and to the Saviour who feels for all our tears and woes.

The alternate rendering of this verse gives us another striking lesson. The conduct of Israel towards their long-suffering Benefactor was beyond endurance (Isa. 1:14). And although "Love is kind and suffers long, and beareth all things," there is a limit even to divine mercy. When love is slighted and mercies pass unappreciated, then judgment must accomplish the great work of discipline. "If love will not lead you to obedience, then severity will hold you in bounds." "I will press you in your place as a cart presseth, full of sheaves." You shall be crushed and burdened until you groan and plead for mercy during years of cruel down-treading and merciless oppression. "Ye shall know that I am Yahweh your God." May we recollect this when we are pressed with sorrow, and our burdens seem heavier than we can bear, and turn at once to our merciful Father in humility and prayer. Then the weight will be lifted, the pressure removed, and

we shall yet go on our way rejoicing.

The smiling farewells of the merry men and maidens in the distance, as we pass once again through the old turnstile, seems just a faint re-echo of the familiar greetings in the Holy Land: "Yahweh be with thee." And forthwith we spontaneously sing to each other that loveliest of all blessings given under this old dispensation: "Yahweh bless thee and keep thee... and give thee peace." Perhaps there is nothing more sublime or more elegant in its expression or more fitted to produce upon the heart a deeper and more solemn and lasting impression than singing. Nor is there anything more expressive of what is grandest, and most impressive in its own untouched simplicity. Music is the one thing that can make clearer and more beautiful that which otherwise would seem feeble, giving clearness and force to what might otherwise be obscure. How singing helps us to appreciate many of the beautiful passages in the prophetic Scriptures also! How indeed could Israel sing the songs of Zion while captives in a foreign land? The loveliest of all songs tell of joy and liberty, of peace and prosperity in the past, and echo forth the promise of a yet more glorious time when "the redeemed of Yahweh shall return, and come to Zion with singing; and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads."

We pick our way carefully now, for here on the edge of the field the nettles and thorn bushes grow rank and tall, reminding us that amidst all earthly joy and bliss, the thorns remain, the striking emblem of sin, and its bitter consequences. Our first parents were introduced into a land of beauty and fertility, of blossom and abundance. The curse produced exactly the reverse. It inflicted thorns and thistles, desert and barrenness.

There is a call for help, and we turn to find a sister vainly endeavouring to extricate herself from a tangled mass of bramble with which she has unfortunately come in contact. The one saddening feature about all these fair things which surround us at present is that everywhere we find traces of the original curse of the ground through disobedience to divine law. Thorns were the fruit of the curse. Man would till and cultivate the ground in the sweat of his brow, but much of his efforts would be disappointing and fruitless. "Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee" (Gen. 3:18) was part of the punishment divinely pronounced, and this has been the unhappy experience of mankind ever since. We are all acquainted with the prickly nature of the thorn bushes, but in the land of the Bible they are very formidable, and travellers in some parts suffer much inconvenience and danger from them. Hence they are taken to represent great difficulties and impediments, as in Job 5:5, and elsewhere. "I will hedge up thy way with thorns," Yahweh says to Israel, for their idolatry. That is, He will bring them into great straits and difficulties. The nations among whom they associated were to be "pricks in their eyes and thorns in their sides," or snares

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and traps and scourges to impede their progress, and hinder them from full surrender to the will of God.

But perhaps the saddest of all pictures is that literally the wild, prickly thornbush and stinging nettle should be found in their tabernacles, even “the thorn and the thistle shall come upon their altars,” we read in Hos. 9:6; 10:8, showing the awful neglect of their worship of the living God. And this has been lamentably true (Isa. 34:13; 33:13). Israel had been as a beautiful “vineyard on a very fruitful hill,” but alas, after all that had been done, thorns and thistles were to come up instead of fruit. “The best of them” says Micah, “is as a briar.”

The Assyrian army, that God used to punish Israel in the past, is compared to thorns, and is yet to be punished itself by a power that shall be as a fire and a flame that will “burn and devour his thorns and briars in one day” (Isa. 10:17). That wicked and mischievous persons are compared to thorns and briars we see from the words of Jesus. “For of thorns men do not gather figs nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes” (Luke 6:44). The thorny class of people are only fit for destruction. They are ever hindrances to the good, and yet they teach patience, and warn us to keep clear of evil and danger... The sins and lusts that spring from a degenerate heart are to be carefully avoided by the servant of God (Heb. 6:8). If we have tasted of the good Word, let us not fall away. If we remain faithful, we receive blessings from God, just as the fruitful earth is open to receive the refreshing showers. Many are deluded and snared, and many are bowed down by excessive care, and some cling to wealth, while others are as difficult to approach as the thornbush. “The way of the slothful is as an hedge of thorns; but the way of the righteous is made plain” (Pro. 15:19). But the day comes when the wicked shall perish from off the earth, “For while they be folden together as thorns... they shall be devoured as stubble fully dry” (Nahum 1:6). “The people shall be as the burning of lime, as thorns cut down shall they be burned in the fire” (Isa. 33:11-12). And then the glorious promise will be fulfilled. “There shall be no more curse;” and both literally and figuratively, “instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle.” “And there shall be no more a pricking briar... nor grieving thorn,” for Christ the sin-bearer, once crowned with thorns, will then be crowned with glory and honour. Hence we are not discouraged, and although this may probably be our last visit to the laughing, singing harvest fields before the Lord of the grand, final harvest comes with his angel reapers, to gather in the richer grain, we have no regrets, but rather rejoice in that we may be among the full, ripe sheaves, to be gathered into the divine granary, in the time of the antitypical “feast of tabernacles” — the sounding of the “silver trumpets” and in the “year of jubilee.”

We now cross a tract of wild moorland, redolent of heather and bog myrtle,

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beyond which our road bends toward the lowlands. Trees greet our sight once more, the song of the birds, the music of the river, and the trill of children's laughter fill our ears, as we near the little village where we met the bridal party previously. In the time of the Harvest Home, the Bridegroom and his Bride will have been united, and the marriage supper will have taken place. Oh, what joy! What gladness this will mean to every devout follower of the Lamb who is seen among them! As we pause to look around once more it seems as if —

*The past, the present here unite,
Beneath time's flowery tide:
Like footprints hidden by the brook
But seen on either side.*

The little cradle of bulrushes bearing its precious freight on the brink of the blue waters of the Nile, among the waving flags, that so attracted the Egyptian princess and her escorts, could not have afforded a scene more sublime and picturesque than that of yonder tiny barque tethered to its slender stake among the tall reeds, that has caused several of our company to pause in admiration. Such vessels of gome or papyrus would frequently be seen in those early days. Egyptian boats were made of this reed, for it grew abundantly on the banks of the Nile in marshy grounds. The stalk rises triangular to the height of six or seven cubits above the water and terminates in a crown of small filaments resembling hair. This reed was of the greatest value to the Egyptians; the pith serving them for food and the woody part for vessels. These vessels are mentioned in Isa. 18:2. Egypt, which is bounded on the south by Ethiopia, on the north by the Mediterranean, on the east by the mountains of Arabia, and on the west by those of Libya, is one long vale, 750 miles (1207 kilometres) in length, through which the Nile runs, thus providing such prolific supplies of papyrus and other grasses. This bulrush of the Nile is evidently the origin of our familiar term — paper. The stalk is split with a needle into plates or layers as broad and fine as possible. The bamboo and common cane are species of the reed, and so are the calamus and flag, that are all plants of the grass family, and are mentioned in Job 8:11 and 40:21-23.

The reed is often used to illustrate weakness and fragility (2Kings 18:21; Isa. 36:6; Mat. 12:20). In his boastful speech to Hezekiah, Rabshakeh declared: "Behold, thou trustest upon the staff of this bruised reed, upon Egypt, whereon if a man lean it will go into his hand and pierce it," showing the character of this reed, to which Jesus later referred when calling attention to the disposition of his forerunner, John the Baptist. John was no reed-like character, easily shaken by every opposing wind of doctrine or difficulty, but was bold and unswerving in the path of duty (Mat. 11:7). And the Saviour of men, to whom John so willingly surrendered all, is characterised by the prophet as dauntless and just, while

possessing such patience and forbearance, that not even the weakest follower of his as “a bruised reed shall he not break,” nor quench the smouldering flame of interest, or spark of light that glimmers in the soul of the meanest, humblest seeker after the Truth. He came not to call the self-righteous but “sinners to repentance;” not to cause a noisy commotion but quietly to take out of the eager throng a few humble followers who would fervently believe in him. Not to suppress and condemn but to invite and to lead. We must not be like the reeds by the riverside (Eph. 4:14). The words of the prophet referring to the confusion of Egypt are very significant for he says, “the reeds and flags shall wither. The paper reeds by the brooks... shall be no more” (Isa. 19). Both literally and figuratively the reeds and rushes will suffer in the day this prophecy has its final accomplishment. But what a contrast there is in Isa. 35:7, when the prophet speaks of the future blessedness of the earth. The palaces that had been overrun with nettles and brambles shall then be rebuilt and the water courses beautified with grass among which will spring up reeds and rushes, and “the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.” Let us lift up our heads hopefully then, dear readers, and not be bowed down with care. We are not called to mourn and to fast, but to rejoice and “be steadfast” in the work of the Lord.

We cross the old stone bridge that with its triple arches spans the river, that has been a source of much delight to us as it sparkled and foamed over the jagged beds of moss-grown rocks and through the beautiful gorges of everchanging character, imparting a charm that could not be equalled in picturesqueness. A pleasant occupation for a summer afternoon is to stroll along the level greensward, and watch the silvery fish dart and dive in the sunlit water, leaving behind them an eddying circle of wavelets.

But now we walk peacefully on, following its winding course as it meanders through the meadows. There is a delightful sense of tranquility and satisfaction. If we do wrong all things seem to cross us, but humbly follow that which is good, and all heaven and earth encompasses us with blessings. We simply rest, and glory in the knowledge that God is everywhere present, ruling, governing, and controlling all, and is concerned in all things that transpire around us. By His greatness, condescending to observe all life’s little things, as well as the great ones, sanctifying, sweetening, and comforting all, taking as much care of the humblest wild flower as he does of the orbs of the sky: and thinking as much of the lowliest of His children as of the most influential. Man looks at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart. Nature makes the elder in this world, the chief, but grace often passes over the elder and lays hold upon the younger, as Jacob did when blessing Joseph’s sons. The most illiterate in knowledge may thank Him for the gift of common sense that lends colouring, tone and direction to all life’s little duties, which if faithfully done, are great in

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His sight. It gives to all life's great responsibilities that harmony and beauty which is so necessary to our ultimate perfection of character. Self-control is also a priceless virtue and most essential to peace and happiness, for more terrible than the stormy wind, the rain and the snow are our own unsubdued passions that discompose our minds and render us unfit for the tranquil service of God. Hence we are taken into the dark room of affliction for development, that the likeness of Christ our Master may be produced in us. Some of our best experiences are transacted in the dark room of discipline, and when at length we come out altogether into the light, bearing His bright image, we shall thank God for every dark hour and for every sorrow that almost melted our hearts in the work of subduing our proud and stubborn wills. As in our needlework, the dark ground work is laid before the beautiful colours are wrought in; as the sculptor cuts and carves his statue before he gilds it; so often the life that is most full of sadness ends in the greatest joy. God first cuts and wounds, and then heals; He first cleanses the sore, and then pours in the wine and oil, and all is done in love. We shall then realise the worth of pain, and feel that we would not have had one sorrow less. Thus we require simple, childlike faith to see clearly, to trust implicitly, and to grasp firmly the precious truth that God is ever near.

"Faith is the telescope through which we see aright, and the observatory is some rock, highway or sick-room; and those who may claim an interest are the poorest, the most obscure and needy, the crushed and despised who have nothing left but grace to lift them up," says one writer. If we are Christ's we have all, and faith lays hold of every blessing; what a privilege will it be to have a place in the future kingdom, and share in all its blessedness!

But all privileges involve responsibility. If we are truly the "children of the kingdom" we shall behave as such, and have the temper and disposition of a good child. A noble life needs but simple garments to set it off; and as we have a noble spiritual birth we must act accordingly. Some pictures are valuable only for their frames, but a beautiful picture requires only a simple frame. Let us strive therefore to possess the best and costliest of ornaments; that of a "meek and quiet spirit which in the sight of God is of great price" (1Pet. 3:4). If there be this inward grace there must be in some form or circumstances, the visible manifestation of it, just as we could not conceive of a fire without heat any more than cause without effect. The heart may be compared to a garden, and God expects us to cultivate it. Therefore it is necessary we should unceasingly apply ourselves to the cultivation of the good and the extraction of the evil that would take root, otherwise it would be uncultivated ground and produce no pleasant fruits.

Such are some of the lessons of this quiet autumn eventide that seem to steal into our hearts as we step along beneath the green and gold, curtained arches

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high above us, while all sounds seem hushed in the deep charm of the silence, save for the splashing of the water under the shadows, and we softly repeat the poet's lines —

*“Worship or service, which? Ah, that is best
To which He calls us, be it toil or rest —
To labour for Him in life's busy stir, or seek His feet,
A silent worshipper.”*

It is beautiful to feel that God our Father sees all and hears every sound and murmured prayer amid the stillness of this evening hour; that He is just as near on the lonely hillside as in the populous city, and His presence here is often more vividly impressed upon the heart.

How multitudinous are these lessons from Nature! At every step of our way and throughout life's journey they are scattered about our path like the tiny pebbles on the beach; and we may gather them up freely and bear them home with us to use for our profit if we will.

At this point the river narrows and the overhanging trees — those lovely trees, dip their russet branches in the smooth water which mirrors the rich landscape. The thrush warbles his evening melody, a gay butterfly flits noiselessly past us and a bee that has lingered too long among the flowers hurries homeward with its hum, making us feel that we also must hasten on our way. “Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening,” sang the sweet Psalmist; and then comes rest and home. All nature, too, obeys this divine law, and follows this beautiful instinct. Even the daisies close their sleepy eyes until the sun arises, and both birds and beasts hie away. How expressive are the words of the Master: “The foxes (even ‘the little foxes that spoil the vines’) have holes, and the birds of the air (that are counted by myriads) have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head.” But we can thank God that he who once spent whole nights in prayer on the chilly mountainside, and who during the hot day “went about doing good,” he who knew what it was to be tired and weary, homeless and athirst, now lives to die no more and ever is beyond all weariness and pain. “The head that once was crowned with thorns is crowned with glory now.”

In the eventide of life how beautiful to rest in His keeping who “neither slumbers nor sleeps” but giveth His beloved sleep, and as

*“Jesus lives! henceforth is death
But a sleep with glorious waking;
This shall calm our trembling breath,
In the hour of last leave-taking.”*

Our eternal and loving Father gives us a resurrection every morning, for how marvellous it is that we should go to sleep and awake each morning with the

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same likeness, character and thought. He who can restore us daily to life and activity, preserving to us our faculties, identity and intelligence, is able to remake us, and call us forth in the morning if we fall asleep in the absence of our Lord. And oh, blessed thought! we "are his, at his coming," and will be gathered unto him as the imperishable, rich, ripe sheaves of the eternal harvest.

But still more joyous is our hope; we may not die, but remain alive to meet him here, and so be for ever with the Lord. Hence, "to him that loves us, and hath loosed us from our sins in his own blood... be glory and dominion for ever and ever.

