

GOD'S LOOMS AND MAN'S.

At the very beginning of human life on the earth we encounter the riddle of divine providence. We are told in Genesis that the Lord God made coats of skins for Adam and Eve, and clothed them. There is no reason to suppose that this manufacture of clothing was by other hands than those of the first pair. The meaning of the statement is the same as that in Christ's appeal, "Shall he not also clothe you, O ye of little faith?" Christ's reference to the grass of the field is suggestive in a too-often-neglected sense; for the grass of the field does clothe itself by the ongoing of its vital operations. These grassy spinners and weavers of the soft and gay fabrics that surpass Solomon's glory in richness and beauty do the work which Christ says that God does. The flowers of the field clothe themselves; and yet it is true that God clothes them. Adam and Eve clothed themselves; and yet it is true that God clothed them. We clothe ourselves; and yet it is also true that God clothes us. If we can read the riddle straight, we shall never have any more trouble about the fact that there is a divine providence in the earth.

Let us begin with the grass of the field. Here no question of volition seems to trouble our thought. We see the grass growing by the employment of its vital powers upon materials in earth, water or air. We know that without this vital activity in the plant it will not be clothed; but we also know that the plant does not make earth, shower or sunshine. God made and makes these, and he made and makes the plant capable of using the soil and the sunbeam. Now in ordinary thinking the rain and the light are fixed facts, and the plant's vitality the variable factor, so that we attend most to this factor when we think of it. But we know in a moment that this vitality of the flower is a little thing, and the natural forces by which it climbs up into the light a very large thing. And so we can easily realize the utter dependence of the plant on the great world from whose bosom it springs, on the great sun from whose golden cup it drinks life. Religion by Christ's mouth says, "God so clothes the flower," because religion affirms that the earth, rain and sun are God's working. At one point of view the flower makes its own glorious robe; at another point of view God's hand is seen weaving the robe out of other things which he has made. In its modesty the lily will cry out, "God made me," and to a rational soul it will be equally clear that the lily has made itself. Even the dumb things that live by the grace of God are permitted and required to build their own lives. The fit soil lies under their feet; the great sky glows over their heads; the dews and the rains fill their little cups.—But they must use all these in accordance with natural laws and harmonies in order to live upon all this beneficence of the great God.

If we turn from the flower of the field to ourselves, we shall see our personal will acting in the place of the vitality of the flower; but we shall also see that we could not possibly clothe ourselves, that God does the greater part of the work of clothing us. There are two looms with flying shuttles at work before our eyes. One is God's great loom, in which all the material of our clothing are growing into being and beauty, that the other loom, man's little loom, may take them and weave them into human garments. The religious

sense, keeping watch of the great shuttle of the divine Weaver, says, "God clothes us: he clothes the grass which to-day is and to-morrow is not." The natural sense, losing sight of the mighty loom of God, cries out, "Man makes his own clothing." Both views are true views; but neither can exclude the other; the combination of them makes religion natural and the natural religious. He who sees both looms working to a common end has before him the explanation of providence. He sees what God does and does not do: what man does and cannot do. He may not find the meeting place of the human and divine operations, but he will know all that he practically needs to know of the relations of providence to human life.

"But there is here no place for a special providence." Is it not altogether special? The Lord God clothed Adam and his wife. It is hard to come closer to special providence than that statement in Genesis. If we have justly conceived of its meaning, we see ample room for a special providence for every man. That kind of a special providence is not, of course, satisfactory to people who want God all to themselves for a few minutes every day; but to broader Christians it is a comfort to feel that God's looms make dresses for the lilies, and coats for men—for all lilies and all men—simultaneously, so that no lily need want a dress, nor any man a coat, because God is preoccupied in dressing others. That is special enough, surely, which puts clothing on our backs. We know that we could not make it ourselves if God's looms did not play. Surely they play for us when we get the product of these looms. This is just the kind of special providence that Jesus had in view when he said, "Shall he not clothe you?" In life perfect modes as those which make the lilies glorious the Father clothes all his children.—No one shall lack clothing who takes up the product of the great loom and weaves it by his industry into garments. But there need not be (how can there be?) a special providence that excuses us from keeping our human looms at work.—*Zion's Herald*.

The *Atlanta Constitution* gives the following story of reconstruction days in South Carolina: "A prominent farmer of Beaufort district had conclusive evidence that one of his Negro tenants was stealing largely from him. A warrant was issued for the arrest of the Negro, and his case was brought for trial before a newly appointed Negro Justice of the Peace, who summoned a jury of his own color to pass judgment on the trial. The trial was a brief one, and the evidence was so overwhelming and conclusive against the defendant that the Justice sent the jury out with a statement that the case was so plain that it was not necessary for him to charge them as to their duty. After a few minutes consultation the jury returned, and the foreman announced that they had agreed. 'What is your verdict?' We find Mr. — guilty.' The announcement was a shock to the room, as Mr. — was the plaintiff. 'You fools!' exclaimed the indignant Justice, 'go back and bring in a verdict 'greeble wid de fac's.' The astonished jury withdrew, and in a few minutes again returned with smiling countenances. 'Well, is you ready?' asked the mahogany-hued Judge. 'Yes sir; we fin' Mr. — not guilty, but guilty of accusin'."

When clothes are scorched remove the stain by placing the garment where the sun can shine on it.