

the Bible can give us, we must take it, and hide it in our hearts, that there its truths may be a perennial spring, welling up into everlasting life.

## THE PARABLE OF THE WHEAT-GRAIN.

SERMON BY REV. A. J. MOWATT.

*"Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."*—JOHN xii : 24.

We are glad spring has come with her song-birds and flowers, chasing white-footed winter far away over the hills. She comes with health for the sick, joy and hope for the sad, courage and help for the poor, and rich lessons of truth for us all. Soon again we shall see the sower going forth to sow his seed, not without tears perhaps as he thinks of the risks he runs, and yet not without hopes.

And it is spring yonder, the sowing-time of the year, the sowing-time indeed of the centuries, and our Lord, with the shadow of the cross on his soul, that lovely April morning of the long long ago, tells wondering hearers so sadly the parable of the wheat-grain. And there are thoughts and life-lessons here for us this solemn anniversary season, precious thought seed for the ages. *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit."*

### I. THE WHEAT-GRAIN.

Our Lord Himself is the wheat-grain. He is telling us here his own sad, glad, life-story, illustrating the misery of his own destiny.

But you ask, "Why take a single grain? Take a bushel, ten of them, a hundred, a thousand, many thousands."

Ah! we live far down the broad and ever broadening stream of time and progress, and our idea of things are large. But there was, and has to be, a beginning to things, and it is not too much to say—is it?—that the vast wheat-fields of the world to-day began away back somewhere and sometime with a single wheat-grain. At all events, it is no violence to human thought to think so.

But however that may be, we know this, that our Lord is one, the only-begotten of the Father. Go far back to the beginning of things, and you come at last to the one wheat-grain, the one spiritual life-germ, whence must spring, if at all, all the life and joy that are yet to quicken and gladden the sons.

"One!" you say, "the wheat-grain, one life germ, one Lord, one Christ! Oh what if that one should somehow fail! Think of the world's bread, the bread of millions of homes, the bread of countless ages, dependent on a single grain of wheat! And think, too, of the world's redemption dependent on one life, the strength of one right arm, the faithfulness of one soul! How great the risk! too great a risk! a cruel risk!"

And then the wheat-grain is so little. It is a small seed, small compared with some others of less importance. And our Lord, in some respects, is little. Look at him yonder in the manger, and how little he is! He does not look to you as if he would ever do much for the world. What can such human helplessness as that is, such utter need, such born poverty and meanness, ever do! Thus when you are told that the hope and happiness of the ages, the world's good and men's salvation, depend on the Babe of Bethlehem, you shudder, for so little would quench that spark, so little would put out forever that feeble flickering light. But, as we shall see, there is a wondrous energy, a mighty vitality, mysteriously bound up in the little wheat-grain, the humble Nazarene. The tyrant's sword did what it could to hew out of existence the one Life, the world's one hope and help. But it failed. The Life that was to be the life of the world lived and grew. Nothing could extinguish it.

### II. THE WHEAT GRAIN ALONE.

*"Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone."*

I have supposed, that far back somewhere, there would be a single wheat-grain;—no doubt a beautiful one, perfect in its kind, so plump and full, so richly golden-amber; but alone, just one, no brother. And I can imagine the happy possessor of that one wheat-grain saying to himself: "I will keep it. This is the only one of its kind in the whole universe, and I will preserve it as a great natural curiosity. I will have a box of most curious workmanship made for it, and I will lock it up there, and hand it down to the wondering ages as the first, and only wheat-grain. It will not do to risk the one only wheat-grain in the earth, where it might grow to be many, or cease to be even one. But better one than none. So I will hoard my one treasure. I will hurry my one talent, and thus keep it in its entirety, its loneliness."

Now, our Lord is one, the only-begotten of the Father, dwelling alone and apart in the bosom of eternal Love.

And the one son, you know, the one child, the only begotten, is such a home-treasure. The one child is so loved, so made of, so cared for, so petted, so much so for his own