

# THE EARTHLY HOME A SHADOW OF THE HEAVENLY.

BY THE REV. OCTAVIUS WINSLOW, D.D.

"My Father's house."—John xiv.

What hallowed attractions and sunny memories cluster around the paternal home! If there is one earthly spot dearer, sweeter, brighter than another, *it is the home of our childhood.* Around it, when years and oceans and continents have long and far severed us from its hearth, our fondest, warmest thoughts and recollections still cling. And we think, when sickness and loneliness and want steal upon us, could we but return to that home again, and again feel the warm embrace of a mother's love, and find ourselves beneath a father's sheltering roof, life would be a pleasant thing.

Transfer your thoughts, my reader, from the earthly to the heavenly,—take the purest, the fondest, the most poetic conception you can form of the one, and blend it with the other,—and still you have but the faintest analogy of heaven! And yet you have made some approximation to the idea. You have entwined around your heart the image and hope of heaven as your HOME. Earth has some foreshadowings of this truth. If "now are we the children of God," then ours is not a state of dreary orphanage—we are not fatherless and homeless. Christ reminded His disciples of this: "I will not leave you comfortless;"—margin, ORPHANS.

If, then, we are not fatherless, there is a sense in which we are not homeless—a sense in which the lower rooms, the outer courts, the vestibules of the heavenly Home are found on earth, in which we meet and hold communion with our heavenly Father. What is the sanctuary, filled with His glory—the closet, hallowed with His presence—the chamber of sickness soothed with His love—the hill-side, where at eventide we go to meditate, sanctified with His fellowship,—but our Father's Home, coming down out of heaven to dwell awhile with His children on earth? Where my Father is, there is my Father's house. It may be remarked of many of the ungodly, that

they go through a hell to hell; with equal truth it may be affirmed of the children of God, that they pass through a heaven to heaven. Our Father's house is a house of "many mansions," and EARTH is one of them. The universe is His abode, every sun and star His dwelling-place: why should we exclude Him from this our own planet, though the smallest, yet, in its history, the greatest, the grandest of all? "The whole family on earth and in heaven" claim Him as the one Father, and earth and heaven are but parts of the one Home. And, O! if earth, the vestibule, the portico of heaven, is so radiant with glory, what must be heaven itself!

"Since o'er Thy footstool, here below,  
Such radiant gems are strewn,  
O, what magnificence must glow,  
My God, about Thy throne!  
So brilliant here these drops of light—  
There the full ocean rolls, how bright!

"If Night's blue curtain of the sky,  
With thou-and stars inwrought,  
Hung like a royal canopy,  
With glittering diamonds fraught,  
Be, Lord, Thy temple's outer vail—  
What splendour at the shrine must dwell!

"The dazzling sun, at noontide hour,  
Forth from his flaming vase,  
Flinging o'er earth the golden shower  
Till vale and mountain blaze,  
But shows, O Lord, one beam of Thine;  
What, then, the day where Thou dost shine!

"Ah, how shall these dim eyes endure  
That noon of living rays,  
Or how my spirit, so impure,  
Upon Thy glory gaze!  
Anoint, O Lord, anoint my sight,  
And robe me for that world of light."

While, therefore, we would not exclude earth as one of the mansions of the Father's abode, seeing it is the temporary dwelling-place of so great a portion of the family, we must still view it as but one of the lower rooms, hallowed and radiant, indeed, with the Father's presence, yet, by service and discipline, designed but to prepare us for the state-rooms above, the higher and nobler mansions to which ere long we shall