

has provided. There is no one who cannot cultivate this pleasure in the beauty of Nature if he will.

They are wise who foster by every means this taste for the charms of nature which is implanted in us all, and who, in these days when vicious and vulgar forms of amusement are so numerous, seek to find their enjoyment in that beauty which the kindness of God puts before us, and seek to look through that beauty to Him whose Hand and whose Word created it.

And the bounties of summer are for all. Alike in the broad acres of the noble and in the little patch at the back of the cottage, the kindness of God is shown in the summer—the seeds spring up, the flowers bloom, and the fruits ripen. And if we learn from these glories of summer these truths about God—that He loves the beautiful, that His wisdom is far beyond our understanding, and that His loving-kindness is infinite—what lessons are we to learn for ourselves? This lesson, plainly—that we owe a debt of constant gratitude to God. Hazlitt said that ‘man is the only animal who laughs and weeps.’ A truly may it be said that he is the only animal who shows ingratitude. He owes most and pays least; he is always receiving but very seldom giving.

But in order to see his debt man must think about it; and if he does this, however little, if only he does it truly and honestly, he must own that it is as impossible for him to sum up these mercies which God gives and he receives, as it is to count the leaves of the forest, or to tell the number of the stars.

It almost looks as if the very frequency of the gift, and the regularity of its coming, led mankind to forget the Giver. It is as if a gift were left day by day at our door, till at last we allowed ourselves to think that it came without being sent. We should be ashamed of such lack of gratitude shown to a fellow-man. An aged man was planting an apple-tree. A passer-by rudely asked him, ‘Why do you plant trees who cannot hope to eat the fruit of them?’ The old man meekly answered, ‘Some one planted trees before I was born, and I have eaten the fruit. I plant for others, that the memorial of my gratitude may remain when I am dead and gone.’ And if such gratitude was due to those unknown ones who had planted the trees—perhaps with no thought for others, but only for their own benefit—how much more grateful should we be to God, who has in succeeding years poured on us the rich blessings of the summer-tide—giving heed to the continued production of those things which are for our benefit alone, for He needs them not for His delight.

As we look on them, and rejoice in them, let us each try to rise to fuller gratefulness of spirit.

And oh, let us not be grateful only for the fruits and flowers, the life and light of summer joyance, but let us be deeply grateful to God, above all, for His inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; and let us show forth our gratitude in the best way—in the only real way—namely, by accepting with true penitent hearts and lively faith the offer of mercy which He makes to us through His own dear Son, our Redeemer.

May He, by His grace, make summer in our hearts now; and may He prepare and ripen in us the fruits of holiness for the autumn of eternity. Amen.