

chamber, and when God says "come forth," it shall burst its tenement and appear. And yet the sower takes in his feeble hand thousands of these mysteries, which all the learning, power and genius of the world could not fabricate, and casts them upon the soil without much reflection. But when the time of reflection comes we should think of this.

And what is that mysterious bed of "ground" into which this thing with its hidden mystery is thrown? It is the growth of ages, when no eye roamed through the desolate waste but the eye of God. That soil was formed during a period so vast as to be to us an eternity. During these long processes God was the presiding artist and the winds the waves, the air and the fire—the fiery myriads, the shellfish, the roving behemoth, and the slimy monster—the forest and the flood were his ministers. What animal and vegetable life formed, the fire hardened, and what the fire hardened the waters and the air softened. And so on for myriads of years. Worlds grew and perished—epochs dawned, shone and waned away—forests sprang, bloomed and died—races of fish and flesh lived and disappeared, and all these have left a heritage to us in that soil upon which our food grows, which enters into our bodies, forms part of our material substance, and shelters the immortal part, destined to shine like the stars in the firmament, for ever and ever. O! how great is God! how mysterious his plans! how vast his operations, and how infinite his resources!

The "spring" of life into growth is as mysterious as life itself and its unpretending receptacle. No one ever discovered, no microscope ever detected it. When sitting in the cabin of a ship, you cannot tell the instant when she begins to move, or when lying upon the couch of rest, you cannot tell when wakefulness dissolves in sleep. So is it with the first movement in that little shell. In the seed there is not so much life as the capacity of life. It can grow, but it is not yet growing. It can move, but it is not yet moving. There is a moment when the mere capacity becomes life itself, when the movement starts that may cover a province with verdure. But who ever saw it? Who ever detected the great Spirit at work? Who ever saw the invisible God?

The progress of the germ, after it begins to "grow," demands a multitude of operations and precautions, of which it is sufficient to say: that the number which we do know gives a very indefinite idea of the vast number of those that we do not know. The season is controlled by distant orbs, rolling on in their journey through the void under the guidance of an Almighty pilot. A slight deviation will produce a shock destructive of life. Only conceive of two planets meeting in space or approaching nearer than they ought! Combined with effects flowing from *distant worlds* there are an infinite number in *our own*. The vapors ascending from the surface of the sea

float in light bubbles in the air, and, when the cloudy reservoir has become heavy, descend in rain upon the growing seed. Every field is watered—every blade is refreshed—every heart is gladdened. The Father of all in whom we live and move and have our being hears the cry of his countless souls, praying with parched tongues for rain. And no sooner is the sky clear of the dark cloud than the air distills the pearls of dew that glisten upon every flower and sparkle upon every tree. When the air becomes unwholesome, the voice of God is heard:—"His big things beast lighten the world"—the savage crouches in his den—the sinner trembles; but anon the bow of mercy shines athwart a pale sky and reflects the beauty of a fresher and more fragrant world—symbolising the effect of redemption in purifying and adorning the corrupt race of men. If the Lord were for a moment to resign the reins of government—if the sleepless One were to slumber for a moment—if he were to cease to marshall the grub, the caterpillar, the locust and the fly; if he lost command of the zephyrs that sweetly blow, of the hoisterous South, the cold East or the frigid North; if he did not curb those forces that we cannot see, the air we breathe, or the electricity that dances in the evening sky and compasses the globe in an instant; then all life would perish in a moment like a torch plunged into the water. And, when he pleases, he can punish us with these. O, how wonderful is He! And these are but a part of his ways!

The *parts* of a single stalk of wheat are, as wonderful as the operations by which growth is perpetuated. First the tender "*blade*" appears above the clod—so small that at first you only detect its presence by a slight greenness diffused over the sombre soil. It is the swaddling band of the coming stalk. It becomes taller and stronger and effectually preserves the young seedling from injury. Waying its pendants in the wind, it catches the refreshing breeze and sucks in the watery supply. When the "*ear*" appears, beautifully elaborated in secret, orderly as a golden cornet for noble brows, and set together compactly with a view to firmness and beauty, it is sustained upon a long tube with a small aperture at each joint by which it is supplied with food from the soil and is shaken about in the wind and rain and sunshine, till its juicy hardens into the substance of grain and whitens into the bearded old age of a field that the Lord hath blessed. "wherewith the reaper may fill his band and the gatherer his bosom."

All this is the work of God. The husbandman prepares the soil, inserts the seed and does no more till harvest. He may sleep or wake, the work of God continues. His waking does not hasten it. His anxiety will not help it and, if God pleases, will not avert calamity. It is God's work altogether. True! man must work. He must work for his own sake. He would be miserable, mind and