

LIVING WATER.

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and Duty*," etc.

The well-known words of the prophet Isaiah, "As the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud," are more clearly understood when you read, "returneth not thither, until it hath watered the earth."

When we look a little carefully into the figure of speech used we perceive its appropriateness. The water which is now in the ocean and in the rivers has been many times in the sky. The history of a single drop taken out of a glass of water on your table is truly a romantic one. No traveller has ever accomplished such distances in his life. That particle may have reflected the palm trees of coral islands, and have caught the sun ray in the arch that spans a cloud clearing away from the valleys of Cumberland or California. It may have been carried by the Gulf Stream from the shores of Cuba and Florida, to be turned into a crystal ice beside the precipices of Spitzbergen. It may have hovered over the streets of London, and formed part of a murky fog, and have glistened on the young grass blade of April in Irish fields. It has been lifted up to heaven, and sailed in great wool-pack clouds across the sky, forming part of a cloud-mountain echoing with thunder. It has hung in a fleecy veil many miles above the earth at the close of long seasons of still weather. It has descended many times over in showers to refresh the earth, and has sparkled and bubbled in mossy fountains in every country in Europe. And it has returned to its native

skies, having accomplished its purpose, to be stored once again with electricity to give it new life-producing qualities, and equip it as Heaven's messenger to earth once more.

All this is but a fair unfolding of the illustration given by Isaiah, in which he likens the rain and snow from heaven to the life-giving Word which goeth forth out of the mouth of God. The Word is ever one, ever varied, ever bringing together earth and heaven.

It is sometimes made a subject of wonder or complaint that Almighty God has completed His revelation to man, and that He does not utter fresh truths and give forth new expressions of His Will from time to time. Let the thought contained in the prophet's inspired illustration meet this complaint, and suggest the true solution of the difficulty.

God's life-giving messenger to earth—water, in any of its forms—was long since created by Him. But instead of fixing it in the ocean, an eternal stagnant mass, He endowed it with that wonderful power of movement and change under the influences of the sun's heat, of gravitation, and of chemical forces, which we have slightly traced. The same particle, under the influences of the sun lifting it up, the attraction of the earth drawing it down, and the chemistry of life making and unmaking and remaking it, has caused the living water to be the messenger of life to ten thousand living things. Ever active, but still the same, it has done its work on earth, no one can compute how often, and then returned to the heavens to prove once again a messenger as fresh and as full of life as it was six thousand years ago, unspoiled, unexhausted by its many goings and returnings.