

and developments for all His children.

It sheds a clear light on the words to read them as part of our Lord's own experience. He had been a baby on Mary's breast: that was a mansion in His father's house. Then He was a youth under Joseph's loving care: that was a mansion too. And then, He was a soul fighting with the tempter in the wilderness: the wilderness was a mansion as well. Then, He was a teacher, a healer, a comforter of sick folk in the towns and villages of His native land: and this also was a mansion in which He dwelt for a while. Then He had the inner circle of His disciples' fellowship, and here and there a home like the home in Bethany, and sometimes a lodging in the night solitudes, under the silent stars: those too were mansions. A little while longer and He shall be on the cross: and that also, strange to say, will be a mansion in the Father's house. And then He must lie in the silent grave: and there also He shall dwell in a house which His Father built for Him. But after that, He shall ascend to His Father, and to the light of that Father's love, and in the shelter of that He shall dwell for evermore.

It is out of a heart filled with that expansive experience and prospect He says, "In My Father's house are many mansions." The present environment of His people is but for a time. It is a house by the way, a mansion which is but one of a series. There are new surroundings, new spheres along all the ever-ascending path.

### III.

When we turn from the dwelling-place to the dweller to discover the life which is to be lived in heaven, the very first element which appears is joy. The life of earth with its shadows and sorrows is behind: the life of heaven begun. And joy salutes it at the very gateway: "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Not for the first time have joy and the soul encountered. Joy entered into the heart

before; but now the heart enters a kingdom which is filled with joy. We only taste joy here—

"Joys here are drops that passing flee;  
But there, an overflowing sea."

And what we there enter upon is the joy of our Lord. Who can tell what this is? His delights are with the children of men. There is joy in His presence when souls are brought from sinful ways into the way of life. It was for the joy set before Him, the joy of seeing a lost world reclaimed, that Christ endured the cross. But these are only rays left forth to tell us of the full light beyond. We may be sure, it will be joy going forth on holy objects, on righteous deeds, on happy growths, on beautiful forms, on truth and charity. The great fact is, that it is the joy of God. To the pleasures which are a delight to Him, the very joys of the eternal heart, the children of God shall be admitted. Let us stir up our sluggish imagination that we may catch some faint reflection of this fact. The flush of spring, the brooding heat of summer, the songs of birds, the love of home, the play of childhood, the peace that flows from the forgiveness of sin, the satisfaction of seeing evil overcome, the delights of well-doing: these are reflections, although only far-off reflections, of the eternal joy.

It brings us nearer to the reality to recall the pleasure of the Father in Christ. This joy in the Son who came to do His will in giving eternal life to every one who should believe in Him, and who was faithful in doing it unto death, who went near to the outcast and the lost with His mighty gift that He might save them and at last died to make the gift sure for them: this was a real outflow of the joy of heaven. Into all that joy shall the soul enter to whom it shall be said: "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

### IV.

The joy of God! That is one side of the reality: the other is that it is the Father's joy in the heart and life of the