

THE SOLITARY WAY.

Proverbs xiv, 10; I. Corinthians ii. 11.

There is a mystery in human hearts,
And though we be encircled by a host
Of those who love us well, and are beloved,
To every one of us, from time to time,
There comes a sense of utter loneliness.
Our dearest friend is "stranger" to our joy,
And cannot realize our bitterness.
"There is not one who really understands,
Not one to enter into all I feel;"
Such is the cry of each of us in turn.
We wander in a "solitary way,"
No matter what or where our lot may be;
Each heart, mysterious even to itself,
Must live its inner life in solitude.

Job vii. 17; Matthew x. 37.

And would you know the reason why this is?
It is because the Lord desires our love,
In every heart he wishes to be first.
He therefore keeps the secret-key Himself,
To open all its chambers, and to bless
With perfect sympathy, and holy peace,
Each solitary soul which comes to Him.
So when we feel this loneliness, it is
The voice of Jesus saying, "Come to Me;"
And every time we are "not understood,"
It is a call to us to come again;
For Christ alone can satisfy the soul,
And those who walk with him from day to day
Can never have "a solitary way."

Isaiah xlviii. 16; Psalm xxxiv. 22.

And when beneath some heavy cross you faint,
And say, "I cannot bear this load alone."
You say the truth. Christ made it purposely,
So heavy that you must return to Him.
The bitter grief, which "no one understands,"
Conveys a secret message from the King,
Entreating you to come to Him again.
The Man of Sorrows understands it well,
In all points tempted He can feel with you,
You cannot come too often, or too near.
The Son of God is infinite in grace,
His presence satisfies the longing soul,
And those who walk with Him from day to day
Can never have "a solitary way."

ASCENSION DAY.—WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

It means that our Lord Jesus Christ ascended into heaven on that day.

Who ascended? Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

But what else is he? The Son of Man. The same who was born of the Virgin Mary; the same who suffered hunger and thirst, cold and weariness; the same who was scourged and spitted on, crowned with thorns and nailed to the cross, who died and was buried. That same Jesus has ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God.

Do I understand aright? Does this mean that a man like myself has gone up into heaven? Yes, a man like ourselves in all things, sin only excepted. One who has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. So it is. Our human nature has been taken up into heaven, and sits at God's right hand.

It is hardly less wonderful than God humbling Himself to become man, and dying on the cross. One would have thought that when He entered into His glory He would have laid His suffering body aside.

But no! He has not laid it aside. He has glorified it. The angels in heaven worship Him. The Saints in Paradise worship Him. They know Him by His thorn-pierced head, by the wounds in His Hands and Feet, and Side, as well as by His great glory.

Is His work ended then? No. Far from it. He has entered in having obtained eternal redemption for us.

He ever liveth to make intercession for us.

He has gone to prepare a place for us.

See how the love for us comes in with every mention of His work, of His glory as well as of His sufferings.

He is our Mediator, our Advocate, standing between us and God, pleading our cause.

He is our great High Priest, for ever.

Our Great High Priest! And for ever! Then He must be offering a sacrifice for ever. Yes. So

He is. His Body is the one sacrifice for sin for ever, which He offered once, by death, upon the cross, and now continually presents before His Father for us.

Is He not just the Saviour we need; one who is like us, very man, and so able to be touched with the feelings of our infirmities; One who is Very God, and so able to assure us of the Divine favor.

What a glorious, what an awful, thought! One who is man like me, is sitting at the Right Hand of God the Father.

This is the meaning of Ascension Day. It is the entrance day of Our Great High Priest into the presence of God with the Blood of His Sacrifice. It is the Coronation Day of My King, my Brother, my Lord, and my God.

How then shall I keep Ascension Day? I will be glad and rejoice, with a holy joy. I will not give all day to business or pleasure. I will go to His House. I will wash my hands in innocency, and so will I go to the altar. I will show forth the Lord's death in the mystery of the holy Sacrament, I will not plead my own merits or worthiness, but the merits of Him whose death the church shews forth on earth, while Her Head is pleading in heaven. Morning and evening I will praise Him for His great glory, and prepare myself for His return.

THE CORN SHIP.

The city of Alexandria was the heart of the world. Vessels from every civilized nation rode in its great harbour; the fruits and the wares of every kingdom stood for sale in its rich shops. The heavy merchant ship from Syracuse or Ostia,—the light *actuaria*, with its one bank of oars, the Grecian *hepter*, and the barbarous craft from the coast of Africa; all these were equally known to the Alexandrian merchant, and from each he heaped a good harvest of gain.

The city, next to Rome and Constantinople, was the most important in the world; and the third Bishop of the Church had his see in it. Many illustrious Saints had there been prelates; none are more famous than St. Athanasius and St. Cyril, men in their generations valiant for the Truth of God. And at the time of which I write, which is the end of the sixth century, they had a worthy successor in John, commonly, from his great charity, known by the title of St. John the Almoner. He loved the poor with a never-wearying love; for them he spent and was spent; to their needs he ministered of his substance; from their prayers he looked for his only and his sufficient reward.

And God seldom raises up a Saint, eminent in any one particular grace, without giving him an opportunity of gloriously displaying that grace. So it was with St. John. As the great characteristic of his mind was charity, he had, beyond most others, field and scope in which to display it. It happened that, as if to punish Alexandria for the pride she had taken in her riches, and the presumption of her heart, a grievous famine broke out. The rich gave of their abundance to their poorer brethren; but the love of the good Patriarch shone above all. Not content with expending among them his vast income, he sold plate, and books, and furniture, and even his garments, that the proceeds might be distributed among the sufferers. Day by day, many hundred poor were fed at the gate of his dwelling. And men wondered how even a Patriarch of Alexandria had the wealth to support so many.

At length, when one morning St. John was giving orders that corn and bread should, as usual, be distributed among the people, his house-steward drew near, and with tears in his eyes, said, "Your Blessedness hath no more to give; there is neither wheat in the garner, nor silver in the palace."

"Then," said the Archbishop, "God will feed His own, and to Him I commit them. Go to Athanasius the *trapezita* (the banker,) and borrow me ten talents of silver; my Lord and Master will enable me to repay them with usury."

The old man went on his errand of love, and it was presently announced that a rich man, Theodorus, well known in the city, was desirous of speaking with John. Now this person was extremely anxious to be ordained Deacon, but there was a difficulty in the way which I must explain. It was at that time a law of the Church, that no one, who had been twice married, should be admitted to Holy Orders. Our Church has not thought fit to enforce this rule, and therefore upon us it is not binding; but when it was enforced, it could not be broken without much sin. Now Theodorus had had two wives; he had before applied to John for ordination, but had been refused, and he now thought that he had a favorable opportunity of a second time preferring his request.

"Your Blessedness," he said, addressing John, "may partly guess on what errand I come. My desire for Holy Orders is as strong as ever, and though I have been once refused, I am bold a second time to present myself before you. As my ordination would be irregular, it is but fair that I make satisfaction to the Church, and I am ready to do so. If your Holiness will lay hands on me, admitting me into the sacred office of the Diaconate, I will pay into your hands ten talents of gold, to be applied to the relief of the miserable and famishing poor."

As he spoke, the Patriarch was in a hard strait. So large a sum he could not hope to gain in any other way; if he had it, he could support many wretched families that must otherwise perish. He thought of the mother's joy, as she divided a loaf among her starving children; of the husband's, as he returned to his home with a good bushel of corn; of the hundreds who needed but food to be recalled from the gates of death to health and strength. And all this might be accomplished, if the offer of Theodorus were accepted. Then again, thus to sell the grace of Holy Orders was, in some sort, to commit the sin of Simon Magus; that sin of so grievous a nature that St. Peter could give no better hope concerning it than, "if perchance the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee." Theodorus could not read the Bishop's thoughts, but he saw from his countenance that a great struggle was going on in his heart, and wishing to turn the scale, offered twelve talents instead of ten.

The Bishop turned towards him sadly and sternly. "No, my son," he said. "God forbid that I should think to do Him service by treading close on a black sin. I will not sell the Holy Ghost for lucre. Deacon, while I sit on this Evangelical Throne, shall you never be. But that which God, in me, will not accept as a purchase, He is willing to accept as a free gift. I exhort you to lay it out in providing for the necessities of the poor; so shall they rise up, and call you blessed in this world, and He that became poor for us shall proclaim you blessed in the next, saying 'I was an hungred, and thou gavest me meat.'"

"Not so," returned Theodorus; "I will have my money, or my money's worth." And he went away in high displeasure.

"Sure I am," said John, after a short time of prayer, "that the Lord will deliver the poor." And he had scarce spoken the words when the steward returned with a countenance full of joy.

"Bring you the money from Athanasius?" inquired the Bishop.

"Better than so, far better," cried the old man. "A Syracusan ship, deeply laden with corn, is in the harbour. And her cargo is a present from the Church of Syracuse to the Church of Alexandria."

"God be praised," cried John. "Surely to obey is better than sacrifice. Go we at once to see this great treasure."

Many people spend there time in trying to find the hole where sin got into the world. If two men break through the ice into the mill pond, they had better hunt for some hole to get out, rather than get into a long argument.