

"THE JOY OF HARVEST."

A MEDITATION.

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"Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness."—PSALM lxxv. 11.

AFTER three thousand years it is still natural to sing this psalm of David as our hymn of thanksgiving for the harvest to-day. Why is it not equally natural to write such psalms? In point of literary ability I suppose the poets of our own day do not fall below David and the children of Asaph and the other unknown writers of the Jewish Psalter.

Why, then, is it that from Tennyson and Browning and our modern poets we have never had such psalms as this sixty-fifth of David? "The inspiration is wanting," you say. Yes, and you say what is true. But why is that? The inspiration wanting! and yet God's Holy Spirit is still here! Jesus said, "He will give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him." Is it that the poets of our own age and time do not ask Him? There is indeed but one source of inspiration, for there is but one Holy Spirit.

Ah yes! And in those old poems the one great strain that runs through them all is this, that this great world about us, and the life within us, are the very expression of God Himself. Written before man knew much of what we nowadays call "Natural Law," these old Hebrew Psalms are steady to the grand idea that God Himself is Law, so that everything in nature, whether of beauty, or of sublimity, or of awe, everything in life, whether of light or darkness, was interpenetrated with the presence and power of the Divine Spirit.

That, I take it, is the secret of the power of the Hebrew Psalms—their wonderful realization of the direct presence and agency of God as the God of Nature and of Providence and of Law.

Now is it, do you think, because we have lost this freshness of belief, this keen sense of God in everything and everything in God that so many of us find it difficult to sing out of our hearts such psalms as these?

We do not want to sing for joy of harvest, most of us, because we do not really feel joyful.

It is easy enough, of course, to join in hymns and psalms of thanksgiving; easy enough, of course,

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to do as we have all no doubt often done at the annual harvest festival in Church; easy to enjoy sensuously the sweet scents and bright colours of the flowers and fruits with which the House of God has been decorated by loving hands; easy to take pleasure in the beautiful singing and music by which the praises of God are rendered for us by a well-trained choir;—all this is easy. But oh! it is difficult, is it not? to be really grateful, really to feel the joy of harvest.

Because the daily bread is given, and the water sure, we are all too apt to forget the Hand that gives. Because God's constancy of protection has taken the semblance of natural law, we are all too apt to forget that, after all, *Nature is but a thought of God, and Nature's Law His Voice.*

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And so, as we cannot sing for joy of harvest, you and I, like David, naturally, spontaneously, almost without thought, let us reason about it for a moment.

Consider this fact:—It is not probable that there ever was a year-and-a-half's supply of corn at any one time in the world. As we yearly approach the season of harvest, therefore, the world is within a month or two of absolute starvation. The barrel of meal is nearly exhausted, and no new supply can be obtained except from the fields that are slowly ripening under the patient heavens. Were the winds permitted to thresh those fields all round the world,—a quite possible supposition,—or the mildew to blight them, or the rain or drought to