

or tree which grows well tended and well watered, the eye rests with never-ceasing delight. Jesus of Nazareth was as the former of these, not the latter, to the generation amid which he grew up. They turned away from him as they would from a dry root which obstructed their path, or a sprout growing in some desert place. They saw no beauty in him why they should desire him.

Let him speak as never man spoke, with a Divine profoundness, a Divine authority, a Divine love, such as might have startled them into the belief that verily God had come down among men, and they turned away saying, "Whence hath this man this wisdom? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joses and of Juda and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him." Mark vi. 2, 3.

Let him admit into his presence a poor woman who had been a sinner, and whose tears are the only language in which she can express her penitence—let him not break that bruised reed nor quench that smoking flax, but speak words of comfort to the broken heart, and those around him cannot understand the state of mind which at once hates sin and compassionates the sinner; and their only solution of what they witness is,—“This man, if he was a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him; for she is a sinner.” Luke vii. 39.

Let him cast out devils from the bodies of afflicted men and women, and drive them away from earth to their own place in the deep of hell, and with a perverseness that bade defiance to all reason, they said, “This man casteth out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils.”

Even when he performed his crowning miracle, and raised from the dead a man who had lain in the grave four days, they were not conciliated nor drawn to him. The human tenderness which wept with the sisters while they stood by their brother's grave, the prophetic wisdom which opened by that grave fountains of consolation whence eighteen centuries of mourners have drawn, but which they have not exhausted, the Divine power which brought back the departed spirit from the other world, and warmed the dead body into life to receive it—all failed to convince and win his enemies. They were only exasperated and inflamed with a deathlier purpose.

Not indeed that all were thus blinded. There were a few who understood what

flesh and blood had not revealed to them, that this was indeed the Christ, the Son of the living God. They saw the beauty of his character, their hearts were thrilled by the music of his voice, and although they were often bewildered by aspects of his mission which they did not understand, they clave to him and trusted that it was he who should redeem Israel. But these aspects of his mission which bewildered the spiritually enlightened, utterly confounded the mass of the people, and formed the stumbling-block over which they fell to their ruin. There was beauty in Christ. There was attractiveness in him. He was not a root out of a dry ground. The rose of Sharon might not compare with him for beauty. The lily of the valley was no sufficient emblem of his humble grace. As the citron tree with its rich foliage and richer fruit among the trees of the wood, so was Christ among the sons of men; and much more. He was the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. But the Jews were blinded—blinded by an utter worldliness which would not appreciate the most Godlike gift unless it ministered to a worldly purpose—blinded by false conceptions of the Messiah's reign, a reign which they would have to be established on the ruins of Cæsar's throne, and to wield Cæsar's sceptre—blinded by a love of sin which shrank from his pure presence and pure character with intense aversion. The Jews were blind, and failed to see a beauty which wrapt heaven in astonishment.

II. The second idea in our text seems to be—He shall grow up without any apparent probability or likelihood of ever becoming great or fruitful. What so unattractive, we have said, as a root out of a dry ground? What so unlikely, we now say, ever to become great and fruitful? Judge according to the appearance, and that root, or if you prefer it, that sprout growing out of a small and hidden root, will never come to any strength, or height, or usefulness.

Look at the man Jesus Christ. The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but he has not where to lay his head. That wayfaring man of grief whom you might have met in the streets of Jerusalem and on the roads of Samaria and Galilee, wearied with his journeys, is now King of kings and Lord of lords. Just because of all that he did and suffered in his humiliation, God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name that is above