

TO THE EDITOR OF THE CHRISTIAN MIRROR.
THE JOURNEY TO EMMANUS.

SURELY it was a sad and melancholy evening when the two disciples journeyed to Emmaus. The rich colouring and golden glories of an evening sky tinting the varied landscape, to their hearts was but the mockery of woe: for nothing adds so much to our grief as to see all joyous around us, and ourselves the only melancholy beings in the group—the contrast is too painful to be borne.

There was a cause—a very great cause—for their dismay; and let us, in imagination, walk with them, and sympathise with them in their sorrow, as they travel to the distant village. Jerusalem, with its splendid towers and lofty pinnacles glittering in the setting sun, the scene of all their miseries, gradually recedes from their view, and the dark waving cedars of Olivet throw their giant shadows in idle pomp—the whispering zephyr breathes from the green fields, and the fragrance of a thousand flowers scatter delightful perfume around.

“Behold,” says Cleopas, “how rich the declining glories of evening appear—fair, but transient, like the hopes we entertained of our great Teacher: which were once bright like them, and as soon sild themselves into the shades of night.”

Benoni replies: “Like you, my beloved companion, I was ardent, and sweetly listened to the lessons of virtue and benevolence our Master gave us; and triumphantly hoped, that by his power he would deliver our nation from Roman bondage and degradation.”

Cleopas.—It is this credulity that will make us now the scoff and spectacle of our friends. We have abandoned all earthly good for his sake, willingly despised all worldly seductions, and we were confident it was not in vain; but appearances now cloud our prospects. To face our rejoicing persecutors this is to me a bitter pang.

Benoni.—These things are heavy to be borne. One misplaced confidence has betrayed us into misfortunes, we in our zeal little thought of; however, do not let us forget the powerful lessons of fortitude and patience he constantly gave us. For nothing will render us more contemptible in the eyes of others than a pusillanimous regret and a doubtful behaviour. After so many past instances of self-denial and courage, we should not now desert our post. Remember his great power,—not far from hence, when, on the sea of Tiberias, the frail bark of the brethren was nearly lost among the billows, his omnipotent voice hushed them into a calm. Behold around us these simple flowers that now are about to close their petals, tired with gazing upon the sun,—when morning breaks forth, they will joyfully rise from their torpor, and expand themselves to the light. Perhaps this unexpected blow to our hopes may, after all, be the forerunner of good. The report of the women at the sepulchre at early dawn may not be unfounded, but our grief was so overwhelming we did not listen to what they wished to relate.

Cleopas.—Thou wouldst have me to hope against hope and to expect more miracles, when the author of miracles lies a prisoner in the tomb. His power we did not doubt: great and many were the proofs of it; and it was this which inspired our confidence; but never again will the morning of peace dawn on us. How base was the conduct of Judas, that masked hypocrite, whose secret selfishness I had long ago observed, and doubted his sincerity; but little suspected he would have become so daring a rebel in wickedness as to betray our dear Master.

Benoni.—Yes Cleopas; at the last supper—that most memorable night, when the fires of hell seemed to be mingled with the gloom of night—methought a grin of horrible infatuation curled his mouth, and that his features assumed a fiendish aspect of triumph, as he passed and repassed among the brethren: that a dark and frightful shade was upon his brow, the reflection of the awful guilt that rankled in his heart. Yet did he participate in the sympathies of that affectionate and tender hour, when the consecrated bread and chalice passed round; but this he did to render his crime unsuspected.

Cleopas.—That night was truly a night of anguish. Surely some malignant vapour was diffused through the air; for even the most faithful of us could not watch one hour. But when our Lord was prostrate in the garden, agonizing for our sins in prayer to heaven, we slept, heedless of his sorrows! Oh! have we not in this much to reproach ourselves for?

Benoni.—And Peter too, the boldest of the brethren, when the turbulent mob surrounded him, and led the majestic sufferer to Pilate's judgment hall; how basely he denied him before his most insignificant enemies; how wickedly did he disown his discipleship whose professions of attachment were loudest, and who boasted of a courage superior to us all. Surely no other result could be expected from such base dissimulation and treachery, than this just judgment of heaven. Nor can we here forget our own share in the guilt; for when expiring upon the cross, when we ought more closely to have hung upon his dying words, we also forsook him, and hid ourselves from our enemies. We are unworthy of consolation, and deserve the worst of disappointments. Heaven is just in depriving beings so unworthy, of its favours.

While thus bemoaning their common calamity, they passed along where many a graceful olive waved its fibrous branches, and purpling rivulet gurgled among the grassy savannahs.

“and where its pool
Lay, half asleep in grass and rushes cool;
Quick waterflies, and gnats were sporting still,
And fish were dimpling, as if good nor ill
Had fallen out that hour.”—*Endymion*.

Here and there the white cottage of the herdman pressed among the dark trees, and the shepherd going before his sheep leading them bleating to the fold. The sheep knew his voice and followed him; which like the two disciples, would know not who to follow, or where to go, if he were taken from them. Mute silence would now at intervals steal upon them; each ruminating upon his own sorrows, they heeded not the travellers' passing salutation. Until, at length, one appeared to them, of dignity and carriage most captivating; it was their risen Saviour!—“But their eyes were holden that they should not know him. And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk and are sad? And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: and how the Chief Priests and our fathers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel; and beside all this, today is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre; and when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not. Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.”

1. Thus it is often in the season of the deepest adversity; when the heart is overcharged with grief, and all hope shut out; then the messenger of joy appears to confound our unbelief and shame our distrust. Providence often throws darkness, clouds and shadows thick around us, ere the morning of peace and joy breaks upon our vision, and discovers our weakness and unworthiness.

2. “Do not our hearts burn within us?” with shame when we consider how much suffering and love the Redeemer has exhibited for us, and how cold and indifferent our conduct is towards him. We have not to struggle in doubt as to the certainty of his resurrection, like the two disciples. We have sufficient

testimony of the fact; yet, we seem often as if we never read the scriptures or believed them.

3. The certainty of Christ's resurrection. Jesus rose, and was about to enter into his glory. We too, if real followers of Christ, shall share likewise in his triumph over death. As pilgrims, then, and strangers in this world, let us press forward, until the heavenly messenger shall meet us by the way—and instead of finding our hearts sorrowful with doubts and unbelief, let us rejoice that we are counted worthy to share in the reproach of the cross, for his sake, who despised its indignities, and is for ever set down at the right hand of God. JUNIUS.

St. Sylvester, Aug. 10, 1844.

NATURAL HISTORY.

THE OSTRICH.

Concluded.

The ostrich constructs its nest in the bare ground, excavating the sand with its feet. It is hollow in the middle, and fortified on all sides by a circular mound of some height, to prevent the rain from flowing into the nest and wetting her young. From the most accurate accounts which Dr. Shaw could obtain from his conductors, as well as from Arabs of different places, it appears that the ostrich lays from thirty to fifty eggs.—The first is deposited in the centre; the rest are placed as conveniently as possible round about it. In this manner it is said to lay, to deposit, or trust “her eggs in earth, and to warm them in the sand, and forgetteth (as they are not placed, like those of some other birds, upon trees, or in the clefts of rocks, &c.) that the foot of the traveller may crush them, or that the wild beast may break them.”

Ostrich eggs are of considerable size, often measuring fifteen inches in circumference, and weighing from twelve to fifteen pounds. Dr. Shaw adds—“We are not to consider this large collection of eggs as if they were all intended for a brood: the greatest part of them is reserved for food. The dam breaks them and disposes of them according to the cravings of her young ones.” As the ostrich is polygamous, this numerous deposit of eggs in one nest is the produce of several females, ten or twelve bring the contribution of each. It is a vulgar error that the eggs of the ostrich are hatched by the heat of the sun. The original word, rendered “warm,” is used in an active sense, implying that she hatches her eggs by incubation like other birds; but through fear or want of food, often leaves them.

“Upon the least distant noise or trivial occasion,” says Dr. Shaw, “the ostrich forsakes her eggs or her young ones; to which, perhaps, she never returns; or, if she does, it may be too late either to restore life to the one or to preserve the lives of the other. The Arabs sometimes meet with nests of these eggs undisturbed; some of which are sweet, others addled, others again, have their young ones of different growths: they often meet a few of the little ones half starved.—And, in this manner, the ostrich may be said, as in verse 16, to be “hardened against her young ones, as though they were not hers; her labour” (in hatching and attending them so far) being “in vain without fear,” or the least concern of whatever becomes of them afterwards. This want of affection is also recorded by Jeremiah: “The daughter of my people is cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness.”

The ostrich is no less inconsiderate in the choice of food, which is often pernicious to it: it swallows every thing greedily—pieces of rags, leather, wool, stone or iron, and even her own ordure. When Dr. Shaw was at Oran, he saw one of them swallow, without apparent uneasiness, several leaden bullets, scorching hot from the mould; the inward coats of the oesophagus and stomach being, in his opinion, probably better stocked with glands and juices than in other animals with shorter necks; divine Providence in this, no less than in other respects, “having deprived them of wisdom, neither hath it imparted to them understanding.” “The gastric glands of birds,” says Dr. ROBERT (Bridgewater Treatise, vol. ii, p. 185) “are larger and more conspicuous than those of quadrupeds; but, independently of those which are situated in the stomach, there is likewise found, in almost all birds, at the lower