

brought vanity on His beautiful works, and marred, though He did not wholly deface the lovely structure He had built and furnished. "Vanity" came upon it; change, decay, desolation, death. Fruitful tracts became barren deserts, the volcano heaved with its desolating floods, the earthquake rent the bowels of the solid globe asunder; endless instability and endless vicissitude characterized the whole face of creation. Nothing stable, nothing settled, nothing solid; all is continually dying and rising again, but nothing "continuing in one stay." "The whole creation is made subject to vanity," and, on every hand, we see symptoms of decrepitude, we see the premonitions of death, we hear the groanings of the brute creation, the whole "made subject to vanity." Oh! what a change in that beautiful world, over which its Creator looked, and beheld that it was "very good!" Who can tell what was the beautiful state of this earth, ere sin entered in, to mar, and to destroy? Who can tell? Still there is so much that is bright in the noon-day sun, and lovely in the dark and silent night, rich in the varied landscape, sweet in spring, bright and glorious in autumn's plenteousness, that we sometimes are ready to forget, what a change has come over creation, and are tempted to say, 'Only man is fallen.' But, alas, these are but transient signs; and again there comes sad and sorrowful evidence, that the creation is "made subject to vanity." "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." Creation itself never "continueth in one stay."

To complete the dark picture of creation's mournful state, "we know that the whole creation travaileth and groaneth in pain together until now." What a grandeur there is in this personification of the whole visible universe! But though it is grand, it is not extravagant; we are told in the book of Psalms, that "the earth shall rejoice before the Lord;" the sea is called

upon to "roar, with all the fulness thereof," the trees of the forest to "break forth into singing," and the waves of the sea to "clap their hands," when the approach of the great Deliverer is announced. And if the royal psalmist thus made all nature animate and vocal—all nature to praise her Creator, and await her Deliverer's coming; it is still by a similar bold flight of imagination, that the apostle personifies all creation as wearied with the bondage of corruption, mourning and woeful through the continual vanity that harasses and wastes her; "travailing and groaning in pain," waiting for the wondrous transformation that is in store for her, and striving after it as a woman in her pangs, drawing near to her delivery, longeth for the hour when it shall be said—"a man is born into the world." And it is not mere fancy, that we may seem at times to hear, in the moaning of the tempest, in the roar of the storm, in the dashing of the billows, in the sounds and the sighings that we may often hearken to from troubled, from tempest-tossed nature—it is not mere fancy to construe these into the "groaning and travailing of creation," after that great redemption and deliverance that the Redeemer hath in store for her.

Brethren, must we not be arrested with the lesson thus taught us? What a fearful and horrible thing is sin, that it casts its dark shadow over the whole universe of God! that it throws its fearful slime and poison over all that was made fair, and bright, and lovely; and it more or less pollutes and defaces and defiles all! What must be the abhorrence with which the Holy One regards that "accursed thing," that, for the sake of it, He should reduce the unsinning creation into the "bondage of corruption," and make His own fair workmanship "subject to vanity," pour contempt and confusion on the world that He had formed for Him-