

a dear friend whom I loved as I believe I loved no other on this earth, and he prayed for me that I might know what it was to have the pillar of cloud when the day was too bright, and the pillar of fire when the night was too dark. Did I mention to you what I thought as I saw that picture of the German painter some time ago? I could not make out what he meant by it. It was called "cloud-land," and it seemed nothing but cloud on cloud; but what do you think? As I looked I saw that every cloud turned into an angel or an angel's wing; and the whole picture, that at first seemed only a mass of gloom, looked out upon me with hundreds of angels' eyes and hundreds of angels' wings. So with all clouds, if God comes nigh to us by them; look at them, and they turn into angels. "They are not desirable in themselves, they are not pleasant; no chastisement, no affliction, no cloud, is at present joyous, but grievous. We foolish men would walk always in the day-brightness; we do not want clouds; but the angels know their value, and God too, or he would never send them to us."

Finally, there are clouds in some parts of the universe that have no silver linings. There are thick, dense, rolling masses of clouds, the gatherings together of sin, retribution for sin, and Divine vengeance on account of sin - and down beneath those clouds there are beings who live, and live, and look up, and look up, but no gleam of glory ever brightens their gloom; no star ever breaks the spell of that prison-house. The lights there are but the fitful lightnings that flit to and fro, the ministers of Divine retribution and condemnation. There is a place so gloomy, so black, so terrible, a place where all are sinners, where there is no pardon for sin. It is hemmed in, and walled in, so there is no possibility of a ray of gladness entering in, any hope of comfort, any gleam of hope. Oh! may all our clouds meet us in this world! May all our clouds have fringes of beauty to them! May there never be to any of us a cloud so deep and dark that prayer will not pass through it! When our mortal puts on immortality, may we know the last of clouds and enter into the realm of perfect sunshine, perfect bliss! "Comfort one another with these words." Breaking hearts, bursting hearts, sad hearts, wearied, wayfaring hearts, hearts burdened and bowed down, comfort one another with these words. With your staff in your hand march on. I hope I have not said what has seemed unsympathetic, coarse, or careless. I draw nigh to you, my dear friends, in the love of a man, the love of a brother; and I say, so live, so walk, that the light may come to you without a veil, through Jesus Christ our Mediator, and that at last you may rise up, through His grace and mercy, to that realm where they need no cloud. Amen.

THE APOSTLE PETER.

BY REV. J. R. MACDUFF, D.D.

ONE of the most beautiful of ancient legends regarding the close of Peter's life (if legend indeed we may call an incident which has been narrated both by Ambrose and Origen) would seem to indicate that he was not altogether bereft of friends. The well-known story they have left is this:—

At the instigation of some of the faithful, Peter was urged to flee for his life. At first, the proposal was met by him with a decided negative, justly fearing reflections on his courage and constancy, - that friends and foes might alike accuse him of shrinking from those sufferings for his dear Lord, to the endurance of which he had exhorted others. But the appeal of their prayers and tears as to the value of his life to them and the infant Church, fortified too as the recommendation was by Christ's own injunction (Matt. x. 23), for the moment overcame his scruples. With reluctance he acceded; and by night was assisted over the prison wall. He betook himself along that same Appian Way, by which, probably, as in the case of Paul, he had entered the city. He succeeded in getting two miles beyond the Porta Capena, and was nigh the spot, bordering on the wide Campagna, which was soon after sacred as the place of repose for Christian dead. The same Lord, whom last he saw in the ascension-cloud, appeared to him hastening in the direction of the city. The fugitive Apostle immediately recognises the Divine Master. The same penetrating look, doubtless, was cast upon him, with which he had once been confronted in the palace-court of the High Priest - a look of sadness and gentle reproach.

Peter was the first to break silence with the question—"Lord, whither goest Thou?" The answer was immediately returned, "I go again to be crucified."

The interrogator continued—"Lord, wast Thou not crucified once for all?"

"Yes," was the reply, "but I saw thy flight from a death, and I go to be crucified in thy stead."

"Lord," was the immediate answer of Peter, "I go to obey Thy command."

"Fear not," was the Master's farewell word as He vanished from sight, "for I am with thee."

The Apostle at once retraced his steps, returned to his cell, and surrendered himself to his keepers.

The above story, we are aware, is by many rejected;—classified among the "apocryphal writings," and deemed only another of the many similar inventions of a credulous age. It may be so; but we see nothing in the narrative itself to relegate it to the category of the purely mythical and legendary. True, it is not recorded in Scripture. It has no shadow of an inspired basis. But the answer to this is—that the whole narrative of Peter's later life is left unchronicled by inspired pens; so that such omission is not by any means fatal to its credibility. Similar Divine appearances of the Lord Jesus were, moreover, by no means uncommon in the life and experience of St. Paul. The revelation of Christ to him on the way to Damascus did not stand alone. In Corinth, when oppressed in spirit by the obstinate rejection of the Gospel message by his fellow-countrymen, that same Lord appeared to him "in a vision by night," with words of encouragement—words proceeding from the lips of a glorified Person—"I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city" (Acts xviii. 9, 10). When apprehended at Jerusalem, and called upon to make his defence on the Stairs of Antonia, he narrates a similar appearance of his Lord while he was praying in the Temple: "And it came to pass that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the Temple, I was in a trance; and saw Him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning Me. And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on Thee: and when the blood of Thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him. And He said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles" (Acts xxii. 17-21). Yet again, when he was put in safe ward by the captain of the guard who had generously rescued him from the violence of the Sanhedrim: "The night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul; for as thou hast testified of Me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness at Rome" (Acts xxiii. 11). Nor need we remind our readers of an instance still later on than the closing years of Peter; when the same heavenly Redeemer appeared to the last of His living Apostles in the Isle of Patmos; He revealed Himself in the lustres of His glorified humanity, with the circle of stars in His right hand, and speaks as a Divine, glorified Person. "And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death" (Rev. i. 17, 18). We can substantiate with no proofs this alleged analogous appearance of the Lord to Peter; but we have said enough to show from the experience of his most like-minded and like-privileged brothers, that such an appearance was not impossible in itself,—that it was by no means novel or exceptional in apostolical story; and the details of the narration as regards Peter himself are certainly in remarkable keeping with his character and antecedents.—*From "Foot-steps of St. Peter."*

Duty can never have too much of our diligence, nor too little of our confidence.

Do all the good you can in the world, and make as little noise about it as possible.

A man's conduct is only a picture-book of his creed. He acts after what he believes.

Humble we must be, if to heaven we go;
High is the roof thero, but the gate is low.

Absence of occupation is not rest:

A mind quite vacant is a mind distressed.