

A Song from the Sheepcote.

BY R. OSGOOD MORSE.

Psalm 8:

O Lord, our Lord,
How excellent is thy name in all the earth!
Who hast set thy glory upon the heavens.
Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou
established strength,
Because of thine adversaries,
That thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.
When I consider the heavens the work of thy fingers,
The moon and the stars which thou hast ordained;
What is man that thou art mindful of him?
And the son of man that thou visitest him?
For thou hast made him but little lower than God,
And crownest him with glory and honor.
Thou madest him to have dominion over the works
of thy hands;
Thou hast put all things under his feet:
All the sheep and oxen,
Yea, and the beasts of the field;
The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea,
Whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.
O Lord, our Lord,
How excellent is thy name in all the earth.

This is one of a number of psalms which celebrates the glory of God in nature. The moon and the stars by night (Ps. 8), the sun by day (Ps. 19), the majesty of the thunderstorm and the terror of the earthquake (Ps. 29), the order of creation (Ps. 104), are all subjects of sublimest Hebrew verse. Its grandeur has never been surpassed in any poetry. But the Hebrew poet always paints the picture for its spiritual lesson.

This is a psalm of the shepherd life. There we find the making of the poet. His home was in Bethlehem, the surrounding cornfields of which gave to the village its name—the House of Bread. Beyond lay a wilderness broken with bare limestone hills and sheltering deep, rugged ravines. On the surrounding slopes, along the valleys, and beside these limestone gorges the future poet and king kept his father's sheep.

David was surrounded by scenes which nourished his poetic soul. Close by was the grave of Rachel. On those very cornfields Ruth gleaned after the reapers. Perchance his father's house was the home to which had come his great grandparents, Boaz and Ruth, where the alien woman became the ancestress of David and of David's greater son. No doubt the boy had heard the romantic story of these his ancestors.

And other influences moulded David's character. The memory of Samson was still fresh among the people. His daring exploits and wild riddles would fire the soul and kindle the eye of the warrior and poet in the making. Possibly a spiritual cast was given to his budding mind by the revival inaugurated by Samuel at his school of the prophets at Ramah, but a few miles away. What is more likely than such influence? What is more likely than that through this school David became familiar with the treasures of sacred poetry, the odes of Moses and of Deborah, and with the music of the harp and the lyre. Under such influences his devotional, musical, and poetic tastes were cultivated.

David's family saw no special promise in him. The dramatic story of his consecration by Samuel betrays this. Jesse's seven stalwart sons pass before Samuel. All are rejected. "Are these all your children?" "There remaineth yet the youngest, and behold he keepeth the sheep,"—as if the father scarce ranked the dreamy shepherd lad beside his seven stalwart sons. "Send and fetch him." He comes from the sheep runs. A few strokes of the pen picture him. He comes with shepherd staff in hand. He is of fair complexion, of auburn hair, of a beautiful countenance, with bright, deep eyes in which shone the light of genius and the warmth of a fervid heart. Samuel recognizes the future king and pours the anointing oil upon him.

This marked an era in the boy's history. It gave him a sense of coming responsibility, and wakened him to self-mastery. Still he keeps his father's flocks. With no companion save the sheep, he is thrown upon himself and God. His calling developed strength and daring. His shepherd life was full of perils. Robbers swept down upon the flocks. Lions, wolves and bears made the sheep their prey. It required firm nerve and presence of mind to face such dangers: These were David's when he smote the lion and slew the bear.

The shepherd psalms mirror this shepherd life. That David composed them while he was yet with the flocks cannot be proved. Certainly, however, they are the product of early manhood. They are full of hope, and delight in nature, God, and truth. The scars of sorrow, the brand of sin are absent. David has not yet battled with successful sin, with life's inequalities, and with the anomaly of saints' suffering. His questions are those of an opening mind, his thoughts those of a young thinker. If written when the shepherd life was left behind, these psalms are true to David's life among the sheep, under the sky, amid nature's varied scenes.

The Persians still worshipped the stars. Greek imagination was yet to people the hills and the glades with varied gods. But David makes every star praise

God, and every mountain peak acknowledge Jehovah. Whence came this Hebrew boy with this clear perception of the unity, the supremacy, and the holy personality of God? It was from God.

The eighth Psalm is David's study of the heavens by night. By night he gazed into the colossal dome, studded with brilliant gemlike stars, set with the clear moon. All were glorious in that eastern sky. His personal feeling is merged into the nations, and God becomes the God of Israel. How fitting the prelude to this psalm!

"O Lord, our Lord,
How excellent is thy name in all the earth!"
As the young poet gazes upon the starry worlds, awed yet attracted, subdued yet inspired, by the spectacle, he admiringly acknowledges that the God of Israel has so conspicuously set his glory in the heavens that it is seen of all eyes and confessed even by lisping children. And what majestic glory this reveals in God! "Who hath set thy glory upon the heavens." So clear is that glory that children shall praise, for—"Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast thou established strength."

How like Jesus' words about the little ones! How often has the faith of a child proved a bulwark against the corrupt hearts and perverted intellects of men who can see in the heavens the glory of a Newton but who are blind to the glory of God. But wiser is this shepherd youth who sings,—

"When I consider the heavens the work of thy fingers,
The moon and the stars that thou hast ordained,
Do they shut out all thought of God and of man? No!
They intensify it. And I think, when thou hast made
all these worlds,—

"What is man that thou art mindful of him?
And the son of man that thou visitest him?"

The first feeling is of man's littleness in the presence of nature's vastness and splendor. The question that rises is the young man's question of all time. The shepherd poet's problem is the same one that perplexes earnest youth to-day. But what a force that problem has gathered with the discoveries of science. David could have but little idea of creation's vastness. Did he know that our earth would make but a mound upon the surface of the sun? Did he know that our sun is but one of a million suns? Did he know that there are some stars so distant that the light of our earth, though it has travelled 186,000 miles per second since the world first reflected light has not yet reached them? Did he know that it takes our world's light 50,000 years to reach the nearest fixed star? I think not. And geology has done for time what astronomy has done for space,—stretched it into almost infinite depths.

Before creation's vastness we sink into insignificance. What is man that the Almighty who rules all this creation should give him a moment's thought? Can it be that he ever came to dwell among men?
These questions perplex earnest minds today. Their answer is the same as quieted the shepherd poet of yore. In the sight of all this vastness how insignificant is man!
"What is man that thou art mindful of him?" is the natural question of the heart. What is man in his littleness, his frailty, his sin? What is man in the thought of him who made the heavens and who studded them with glittering orbs? This is the first feeling, but it is at once lost in the consciousness of man's true greatness. Man, in nature is almost divine, only a little lower than God, of the seed-royal of the second Adam, of the highest lineage and dignity, crowned and sceptered as a king. Swiftly David's thought sweeps the whole range of human life and he sees the true dignity of man. His thought reverts to the story of creation,—
"Thou hast made him a little lower than God."
A little lower because in the image of God.
"Thou hast crowned him with glory and honor."
Ah! These are attributes to God himself. Thou hast given him, alone, power to commune with thee. All earth's creatures, and even sun, moon and stars are his servants. Yes, Lord,—
"Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands,
Thou hast put all things under his feet;
All sheep and oxen,
Yea, and the beasts of the field;
The fowl of the air and the fish of the sea,
Whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas,"
over all these man has dominion. Man has conquered the seas, subdued the winds, harnessed the steam, and induced the lightning to do his errands. Truly man is a king. God has crowned him and given him innumerable subjects. "All things under his feet," has evident reference to the,—
"Let them have dominion," of creation's morning. And Paul extends the "all things," to include everything which opposes God. Jesus shall conquer all this. David praises God for giving man dominion over beasts, and birds, and fishes. Paul thinks of the conflict with principalities and powers wherein Christ conquers, and wherein man can conquer in Christ.

Yes! Man is a king. All the discoveries of science but point to the superior greatness of man's mind which holds the constellations in the hollow of his thoughts. A beautiful, a wonderful picture is the psalm! It contains a deep spiritual lesson. We are shown the kingliness of man—created a little lower than God, in the image of God. Ah! What a nobility is ours! But man robbed himself of his most kingly attribute, his holiness.

He thus became the servant of sin. This serfdom can be conquered only in Christ.

"What is man that thou art mindful of him?" Think not that because you are creation's lord that you are sovereign of the universe. There is a KING OF KINGS. To him you owe allegiance. Yet against God you raised the puny arm of your rebellion, and declared yourself your rightful king. YOU SINNER.

And now,
"What is man that thou art mindful of him?"

Would you know God's estimate of sinful man, look to Bethlehem, to Egypt, to Nazareth, to the Baptism, to the Temptation, to the Transfiguration, to the Upper Room, to the Garden, to the Trial, to the Cross, to the open and empty Tomb. There is God's estimate of man.

If this is God's estimate of man, how ungrateful is he who rejects the only way of life, how ungrateful is he who does not make the very most of his opportunities to fit himself to reign with Christ.

Man is not measured by the yard stick. Quantity of atoms cannot compete with quality of spirit. The soul is denizen of the spiritual universe. Man bears the image of his Maker.

The endless sweep of creation argues God to be infinite. But his infinity must reach down to the infinitely little as well as rise to the infinitely great. A straight line is not infinite which only stretches up without limit. It must stretch down as well. God is not infinite unless he reach down to the infinitesimally small. His power is infinite, his knowledge is infinite, for the very hairs of our head are all numbered. So, too, his love is infinite. His Godhead widens down as well as up.

A thousand years after David, other shepherds were keeping watch over their flocks by night on the same hills near Bethlehem, the same stars looked down upon them. A brighter glory than that of the stars shone round them, and they learned better than David knew the meaning of his words,—

"What is man that thou art mindful of him?"
To them the angel said, "Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ, the Lord. He is your Saviour, but is he a Saviour of life unto life, or of death unto death? Can you say, "O Lord, our Lord."
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Sociology and the Ministry.

PROF. S. P. BROOKS.

In undertaking to popularize such a subject for such a paper as *The Baptist Argus*, let it be understood once for all that I am not an iconoclast who delights to smash the images of the orthodox myself. But there are some things that some ministers might learn from a layman, hence the following:

'Tis popularly understood that sociology is the science of reformations and that to study it successfully is at once to become a reformer. By another class it appears as the science of charities whose object is to help the poor and afflicted. Yet others narrow it to mean the science of crimes. Honest people despise crime, the selfish abhor charity and the busy have no time for reformations. By all the foregoing people the sociologist is regarded as a vagary.

Roughly speaking, sociology is the science of society. Society is an organic unity whose parts are land and population. Sociology is to minds what psychology is to ideas. But as ideas are related to the physical bodies so are minds modified by physical environments. Sound ideas will be found in sound minds and sound minds grow best in sound localities. Of course much depends upon the scope of the word sound.

The scientist searches for the laws of physics, but the artist makes the application to the machinery that moves the world. The social scientist searches for social laws and he must be as free from prejudice as is the physicist. He must have absolutely no opinion as to results. His business is, having discovered the laws, to see their relations. A man may be both scientist and reformer. This is perhaps especially true of social scientists. But remember as scientist he discovers laws and as reformer he makes applications.

It is often stated that the work of the minister is that of a reformer. As the physician should prevent disease as well as cure it, so should the minister prevent sin as well as lead men to salvation. To know how to mix medicine is not enough to know how to prevent disease; to know how to lead a man to salvation is not to know how to keep away the environments of sin. Shall a preacher be familiar only with antidotes?

If the time ever was when ignorance was a ministerial virtue it has passed. No man is fit for leadership who denies it. The world calls for an educated ministry. The churches pay money to that end. The young minister is impatient for professional studies. To him the call of God demands it, the emotions of his heart urge it. To accomplish this he withdraws himself from the world and declines to study anything save the prescribed courses of the seminaries. He learns about faith but not about the dispositions of men. He learns about theoretical sin, but knows not how to reach the man who is in practical sin. He learns about missions in the abstract

but not about the people in the church. He preaches the for the origin of for political econ is a virtue and desire to unders world, he refuse in human know his many-sided theologian. agitator, the given.

The preacher preach salvation Granted. But society elevates the latter more ed in ignorance salvation means which each is a ment? Exactly

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Why D

You say, my de is reaching a good church, but that I to call on his own your pastor, and neglecting his duty. No, it has nothing it came to my men It occurred in John, N. B. It wa