

BREAD ON THE WATERS.

"Cast thy bread upon the waters : for thou shalt find it after many days."—ECCLES. xi. 1,

Were you going at the right season to Mysore or China, you would see thousands of people planting the corn of those countries. They sow it in the mud, or on the dry soil, and then immediately they turn on a flood of water, so that the whole field becomes a shallow pond. You would think the seed was drowned. But wait a few weeks, and then go and view one of these artificial lakes, and from all its surface you will see green points rising, and day by day that grass shoots taller, till at last the water is no more seen, and till eventually the standing pool has ripened into a field of rich and rustling grain. So that in its literal sense the farmers of these lands are every year fulfilling the maxim of the text. For should the spring come on them, and find their supply of rice-corn scanty, instead of devouring all, they will rather stint themselves. They will rather go hungry for weeks together, and live on a pinched supply : for the bread which they cast on the waters this spring, creates the crop on which they are to subsist next autumn and winter ; and they are content to cast it on the waters now, for they are sure to find it after many days.

Or suppose that you are in the South Sea Isles, where the bread-fruit grows,* and that by chance or on purpose you scatter some of its precious bunches on the sea. At the moment you may feel that they are lost ; but should the winds and the waters waft them to one of those reef islands with which such seas are thickly studded, the wandering seeds may get washed ashore, and beneath those brilliant suns may quickly grow to a bread-fruit forest. And should some disaster, long years after, wreck you on that reef, where these trees are grown and their clusters ripe, you may owe your sustenance to the bread which you cast on the waters long ago.

Such is God's husbandry. Do the right deed. Do it in faith, and in prayer commend it to the care of God. And though the waves of circumstance may soon waft it beyond your ken, they only carry it to the place prepared by Him. And whether on an earthly or a heavenly shore, the result will be found, and the reaper will rejoice that he was once a sower.

* The cultivated sort, however, has seldom any seeds.