

LIKE DRAWS TO LIKE.

BY REV. WILLIAM ARNOT.

"Being let go they went to their own."—Acts iv. 23.

It is observed that in many cases, though by no means in all, those who devote themselves intensely to the study of Nature lose their faith in God. This is a melancholy feature in the history of human experience; for in the mysteries of Nature a believer might discover many helps to faith: I suppose the absorbing study of physical facts and laws is like those potent remedies which either kill or cure. It kills a formal; external, unreal faith; but where there is a living faith, scarcely anything is better calculated to strengthen it than to observe the might and the constancy of Nature.

Though drops of water are dissipated in the air, congealed in icebergs on mountain ridges, and scattered on inland plains, every one, when at length let go, returns to its own in the ocean. Not one is permanently kept separate; not one solitary wanderer misses the way home. Every creature after its kind; and the new creature in Christ is not an exception to the rule: The children of the Kingdom may be long kept separate from their Head, and from each other, but they will certainly reach their own at length. "Blessed are the home-sick, for they shall get home." If any that have been renewed into Christ's likeness were kept permanently away from their Redeemer's presence, the fact would be an anomaly in creation,—would prove that the constancy of nature had ceased to be a law of God:

I have sometimes entertained the thought—nursed the imagination, until it grew beyond endurance, painful—if the sun should let go his hold of this globe; if the law of gravity should snap asunder like the cord of a sling in which you swing a stone round your head, where would the great earth-ball go? To its own. But where, or what? The scriptural expression, the blackness of darkness for ever, leaps into your memory, but does nothing to satisfy the overstrained mind. If the

Redeemer should forget his ransomed; if He should relax His hold and let them go. But why vex ourselves with an imagination which is impossible in fact? "Neither death, nor life, nor things present, nor things to come, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ, Jesus our Lord." I love the constancy of Nature, for it shadows forth to me the constancy of grace.

It seems to be a law of being, animate and inanimate; material and spiritual, that the unit which has been separated from its kind, as soon as it obtains liberty returns to its own.

The science of chemistry supplies the best examples—and supplies examples in the greatest profusion. Chemists are a favoured class of workmen; they are admitted into the secret chambers of Nature, and see with naked eye the movement of her mysteries. When by throwing a solvent into a crucible which contained two elements in combination, they have let go the feebler constituent that had from the beginning of the world been forcibly locked in the embrace of its robuster brother, they are privileged to see the released prisoner go straight, whether by evaporation or precipitation, to the to the place where it can mingle with its own. The impalpable mist, as soon as it is set free from the grasp of the heavy sea water, rises, like a bird on the wing, to its own kith and kin among the clouds; and conversely, when the moisture, which is held fast on high in combination with the atmosphere, is by certain changes of temperature loosed and let go, it hastens in the form of innumerable rain drops, down to its parents, earth and sea. More exactly than the ox knows its owner, and the ass his master's crib, the elements of matter, when released from constraining chemical or mechanical combinations, know and find the way back to their own.

The instincts of animals are, in their own