

PASTOR AND PEOPLE.

PER PACEM AD LUCEM.

"Oh send out Thy light and Thy truth; let them lead me."—Ps. XLIII. 3.

I do not ask, Oh Lord, that life may be
A pleasant road;
I do not ask that Thou wouldst take from me
Aught of its load;
I do not ask that flowers should always spring
Beneath my feet;
I know too well the poison and the sting
Of things too sweet.
For one thing only, Lord, dear Lord, I plead,
Lead me aright—
Though strength should falter, and though heart should bleed—
Through peace to light.

I do not ask, Oh Lord, that Thou shouldst shed
Full radiance here;
Give but a ray of peace, that I may tread
Without a fear.
I do not ask my cross to understand
My way to see:
Better in darkness just to feel Thy hand
And follow Thee.
Joy is like restless day, but peace divine
Like quiet night;
Lead me, Oh Lord, till perfect day shall shine
Through peace to light.

SNOW.

BY THE REV. HUGH MACMILLAN.

"He giveth snow like wool."—Psalm cxlvii. 16.

In Palestine snow is not the characteristic feature of winter as it is in northern latitudes. It is merely an occasional phenomenon. Showers of it fall now and then in severer seasons on the loftier parts of the land, and whiten for a day or two the vineyards and corn-fields, but it melts from the green earth as rapidly as its sister vapours vanish from the blue sky. The snowy peak of Hermon, the true scene of the Transfiguration, is indeed seen from every elevated point of view—a perpetual vision of winter clothed in raiment whiter than any fuller on earth can whiten it; but this snow-spectre stands spell-bound as it were on the northern threshold of the land, gazing over the smiling summer landscapes, but unable to descend among them, or even chill them with its breath. But the Psalmist seized the occasional snow, as he seized the fleeting vapour, and made it a text for his spiritual meditations. Let us follow his example and make the snow which appears oftener and remains a longer time with us, lying like a dreary white shroud over the face of nature, the subject of a few timely reflections, and the means of leading our thoughts to things higher and more enduring than itself. Let us write on its fair, white surface the name of God in letters which he who runs may read.

Let us look first at its beauty. Every eye can appreciate stainless purity, the delicate softness of the snow. It makes a spiritual world of this dull, dark earth of ours; and the fields that seemed fit only for the growth of man's food, and the tread of weary feet in the common labours of life—covered with its white immaculate carpet—seem like a celestial floor on which white-winged angels on lofty errands of mercy might alight from the kindred of heavens. How softly rounded and graceful are its curves as it covers some old wayside wall, or is drifted into wreaths over the commons! How picturesque are the forms into which it moulds the outlines of trees and shrubs! Have you ever entered a wood after a snow-storm? If so, you have been admitted into a scene of enchantment, at whose threshold you stand in awe and astonishment. It is a transformation-scene in which familiar objects become unreal as shapes in a dream, presenting an appearance similar to the white Liliputian forest into which the microscope changes a bit of fungus mould. It looks like a newly-formed world on the morning of creation before the sun had risen to cast over it a prismatic radiance and baptize it with colour. What a look of sublimity does the snow impart to the mountain peak, raising it high above all human changes, into a realm of serene, passionless repose, reflecting the light of the great white Throne of which it seems the very footstool! The line of mountain snow on the blue verge of the horizon is the most exquisite of all sculpture. It yields to the eye and mind the purest and most refined enjoyment. From the stainless surface of that Alpine snow comes back the crimson splendour of the sunrise and sunset, like molten gold in the heart of a furnace—the highest earthly of the landscape thus purified into and mingling with the heavenly. Even into the dreary prosaic city the snow enters and transfigures it; the houses become like Aladdin's palace; every cart-rug is fringed with jewels; and over smoke-begrimed railing and miry street is spread the spotless ermine of heaven's investiture.

How significant is the white of the snow! The hue of water in violent agitation—of the foaming cascade and the raging surf—belongs to vapour frozen into calmest permanence. Extremes meet; and the water that on the one side purifies itself by motion, on the other side purifies itself by rest; symbol of the frequently opposite modes of discipline by which God carries on the work of sanctification in the soul. Out of white all the colours spring, and to it they return. All summer hues are gathered back into the uniform radiance of the snow, and we retreat from a world of life and beauty to a world of death and beauty. Nature's coat of many colours gives place to the white raiment with which we clothe the infant in its innocence, the bride in her purity and the dead in their rest. Washed by the waves of the world, and refined by the fires of God, the landscape, like a gigantic lily, unfolds its white petals to the sun, and reflects the light in all its integrity and chastity; and then, clothed

in the vestal humility of winter, it is prepared for the many-hued splendours of summer.

But it is to the eye that searches into the heart of things that the snow reveals its most wonderful beauty, for it is of that truest kind which bears the closest inspection. Take one of the myriad snow-flakes which obscure the atmosphere as they fall, and put it under the microscope. It melts almost instantly, but not before you have caught a glimpse of loveliness that astonishes you. It is a perfect crystal, consisting of six rays spreading in the most symmetrical manner from the centre, and often provided with smaller branching rays. Formless and uniform as a wreath of snow looks, it is composed of myriads of such crystals, whose shapes are so exquisite that the eye is never weary of looking at them. Their variety is most wonderful. Thirty different kinds may be observed during any of our snow-storms; while in high northern latitudes, upwards of a hundred varieties have been delineated that looked as if designed from a kaleidoscope, yet all based upon the simple plan of the six-rayed star. We see in these minute crystals of the storm the sign of the cross, which is impressed upon the whole of nature, and enters in some form or other into all our art and science and literature—thus linking our religious life with all our ordinary thoughts and labours.

The snow-crystals are the blossoms of inorganic nature. According to the beautiful system of prefiguration which prevents all abrupt beginnings in nature, and sounds a herald voice of coming glory, the snow-flowers which winter grows in such boundless profusion, foretell by the symmetry of their forms, the blossoms of summer. They seem, indeed, like the ghosts of the departed flowers; the models of the spirit-world after the pattern of the snow-drop and the lily and the Star of Bethlehem are constructed. They look as if their translucent spiritual beauty needed only the Promethean fire to glow into the rosy life of June. A wreath of snow is thus, indeed a bank of flowers; and we little think, when walking over its cold and barren surface, that we are treading down at every step a tiny garden. I know of no purer intellectual joy than that of gazing through the microscope upon these miracles of loveliness; and it is a careless mind indeed that is not compelled to ask whence came these figures so exquisite and yet so frail and fleeting, so full of wonder and yet so long unknown, and still so little recognized by thousands who tread them under foot. Their beauty is not a chance endowment. It is God's hall-mark attesting that the work is His. It is the quality that is superadded to everything that God has made—to the moulding of the fleeting vapour into the sunset cloud, and the unfolding of the brilliant, fragrant flower from the summer sod—in order that our thoughts may be raised from the perishing loveliness of the creature to the enduring glory of the Creator, from the beauty of nature to the beauty of holiness. Such beauty is a reflection of the Divine image—not something that God does, but something that He is, really and suitably a part of Himself. All true beauty is something higher than creation and independent of it, something that God has not made, an attribute as much linked with our conceptions of Him as His wisdom and justice. It awakens that curiosity about God, which is an essential element of worship.

No rightly constituted mind can behold the wealth of beauty in the snow-flowers without being awed and humbled. We see in the fair structure of these inorganic blossoms, as well as in every lovely thing in nature, the transcript of the Divine image originally impressed upon our souls; and while these fleeting crystals of vapour perfectly obey the laws of their formation, and exhibit the original beauty stamped upon the first snow-flake, we have perverted our nature and made ourselves unworthy of a world which God has made so fair for us. We stand between two systems, each of which reminds us that we, and we alone, have introduced confusion and defilement into the works of God. The pure snow-covered fields of winter beneath our feet and the pure angel-tenanted starry heavens above our heads, alike typify that we are not in harmony with God's creation. But while there is in this wholesome humiliation in the sight of nature's beauty, there is inspiration in it also. Although we have lost the Divine image, it can be restored, and we can be brought again into accordance with the beautiful harmony of the world. As wondrous transformation can be brought by the Divine Spirit in our case as is wrought in nature, when the dreary city that speaks only of human toil and sorrow, with its miry ways and sin-stained haunts, is changed by the snow into a city of pearls and diamonds, and looks like a suburb of the celestial city, or when the pure white crystal of the snow-flake is formed out of the polluted ditch-water and falls from the murky cloud. He who arranged the particles of the snow into such exquisite shapes of beauty can bring order out of our confusion, and change our vile bodies and spirits into the likeness of Christ's; and He invites the guiltiest and most morally-deformed to come and reason with Him and be subjected to this renewing process, and though our sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow.

LIVE UPON CHRIST.

Our highest lesson is to learn how to live on Him who was made of God unto us wisdom; and he who relies most upon Him for that wisdom will certainly be the wisest. If the whole world was mine, and I could purchase what I would with it, I would give it all to be a scholar made poor in spirit at Christ's feet. And what then can I wish, my dear friend, better than to be one of His little children, whom He teaches His mind and will? Only I could wish you more humbled, that you may more perfectly learn the two blessed truths which He is exalted to teach His people, namely, to believe in His blood and righteousness, and to live upon His grace and power. His prophetic office is to teach us how to be always safe by believing in Him, and always happy by living upon Him. He has the residue of the Spirit with Him, and He sends Him into the believer's heart, to be always preaching this most comfortable doctrine, that whatever he wants for his acceptance at the bar of justice, it is perfectly to be had and freely in the fulness of the Lord Christ; sins as red as scarlet, sins as numerous as the stars,

or as the sand upon the sea-shore innumerable, and nature as black as hell, a heart as wicked as the devil; the divine and eternally precious blood of Jesus can so cleanse and purify that not one spot shall remain. If I had been guilty of all the sins of Adam and Eve, and of all their descendants to this day, yet believing in this I should be safe, because His blood cleanseth from all sin. And in it the believer has a better righteousness than that of angels; theirs is finite, His is infinite. When the Holy Ghost takes of the things of Christ and preaches them to the heart, then what sweet peace follows!—for the believer then finds himself saved from all the miseries of sin, and entitled to all the blessings of eternal glory; and being then persuaded of his safety, by believing in the blood of our great High Priest, then the Holy Spirit teaches Him how to live upon it, and how to make use of its fulness. On our learning this lesson depends our comfortable walk heavenwards; for Christ does not give us a stock of grace and expect us to improve it by being faithful to grace given; no, no, that is not His way. Our souls must depend on Him, as our bodies do upon the elements of this world. Every moment we must live by Faith upon His fulness, and be every moment receiving out of it grace for grace, and this is our happiness—to have all in Christ. A beggar in myself, but rich with unsearchable, eternal riches in Him. Ignorant still in myself, but led and taught by His unerring wisdom. A sinner still, but believing in His blood and righteousness. Weak and helpless still, but kept by His Almighty love. Nothing but sorrow in myself, nothing but joy in Him.

Oh! this is a blessed life. No tongue can tell what a heaven it is, thus to live by faith upon the Son of God. Thanks be to Him, I know a little of it, and I cannot but heartily pray that you may know more of it this year than you ever did. Surely I could not have thought some years ago that there was such a heaven upon earth as I now find. May you find it more and more! Sweet Jesus keep you, my dear friend.—W. Romaine.

OBEDIENCE THE WAY TO KNOWLEDGE.

"If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." We learn in this passage, that *honest obedience to God's will is one way to obtain clear spiritual knowledge.*

The difficulty of finding out "what is truth" in religion is a common subject of complaint among men. They point to the many differences which prevail among Christians on matters of doctrine, and profess to be unable to decide who is right. In thousands of cases this professed inability to find out truth becomes an excuse for living without any religion at all.

The saying of our Lord before us is one that demands the serious attention of persons in this state of mind. It supplies an argument whose edge and point they will find it hard to evade. It teaches that one secret of getting the key of knowledge is to practise honestly what we know, and that if we conscientiously use the light that we now have, we shall soon find more light coming down into our minds. In short, there is a sense in which it is true, that by *doing* we shall come to *knowing*.

There is a mine of truth in this principle. Well would it be for men if they would act upon it. Instead of saying, as some do,—"I must first know everything clearly, and then I will act,"—we should say,—"I will diligently use such knowledge as I possess, and believe that in the using fresh knowledge will be given to me." How many mysteries this simple plan would solve! How many hard things would soon become plain if men would honestly live up to their light, and "follow on to know the Lord!" (Hosea vi. 3.)

It should never be forgotten that God deals with us as moral beings, and not as beasts or stones. He loves to encourage us to self-exertion and diligent use of such means as we have in our hands. The plain things in religion are undeniably very many. Let a man honestly attend to them, and he shall be taught the deep things of God. Whatever some may say about their inability to find out truth, you will rarely find one of them who does not know better than he practises. Then, if he is sincere, let him begin here at once. Let him humbly use what little knowledge he has got, and God will soon give him more.—"If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." (Matt. vi. 22.)

HOW TO BEAUTIFY GOD'S HOUSE.

"But there is a way to be adding ever-increasing beauty and glory to the house of God. Oh that we way prize it more and more! Go out into the lanes and highways; find some outcast wretch—some stray fragment of the universal wreck of man, some trampled stone in the miry clay; sound aloud the Word of the Lord, that harp of blessed music by which the Spirit draws dead stones to Christ. By-and-by, under the power of God blessing the Word, that soul is awakened to a sense of ruin and want, and is led, in the strong captivity of the truth, to Christ. No sooner does he touch that rock, than the virtue of a new life comes unto him, and he lives. The love of God is shed abroad in his heart. The beautiful garniture of inward graces, more precious than the most fine gold, adorns him. He is united to Christ, and through him to God. Here is the honour of the Church, the preciousness of the Gospel, and the glory of the grace of God. How wonderful that communication of life, that resurrection from the dead, that ascension of the regenerate soul 'to sit in heavenly places with Christ!' Look unto the rock whence he was hewn, and the hole of the pit whence he was digged! How is God glorified in such an addition to His Church? What joy is it to the angels that do His will? By such is the Church a building of God. Thus does it rise towards heaven. They are thy jewels, daughter of Zion; 'thy walls, salvation; thy gates, praise.'"

Aim high; but not so high as not to be able to hit anything.

"We depend upon Christ, not only as the *vine* upon the *wall* for support, but as the *branch* on the *root* for sap."