

him?" Or yet once again, when the wonder of the Incarnation begins to burst upon his dazzled mind, the old priest Zacharias can find no better words to clothe his inspired thoughts than these: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He hath *visited* and redeemed His people." And so, too, in the text—the Lord is always visiting the earth to bless it; His care is ever over their land. Had He not chosen it out to be especially His own? Had He not fenced it in securely? Was it not a land of fountains, and streams, flowing with milk and honey? Read Moses' description in Deut. xi. 11: "The land, whither ye go to possess it, is a land . . . which the Lord thy God careth for; the eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year."

Would it not be a good thing for us, my friends, if we were to get out of the habit of taking such a one-sided view of God's visitations? Let us ask ourselves why it is that we have got into the way of talking thus—for language is a sign of thought, and the probability is that if our language is one-sided, our thoughts of God are one-sided too. The danger is, as Charles Kingsley was never tired of pointing out, that in times of prosperity we think about ourselves, and only turn our thoughts to God when adversity comes. We have plenty of food provided for us day after day; we have got or earned the money to buy it; we can imagine ourselves without it; and so (though we are ready to allow, if asked, that in the end it comes from God, and are perhaps in the habit of muttering a grace at meal-times) as a matter of fact we are really forgetful of the constant visitation of God to bless, without which none of these necessities or luxuries would be ours.

We think so little of the commonest blessings, and take them as a matter of course. Suppose we lived in a land where the sun only appeared once in twenty years! How we should watch for it; how we should welcome it; how we should delight in its glory, and in the marvels of light and colour which it produces in the earth! Surely the Holy Spirit must be often grieved with our ingratitude. Our Blessed Lord visited our earth, and longed to bless it, and He poured out His love ungrudgingly upon the Jews and their city; but they would not receive His blessing, and despised His words, and imputed His deeds of mercy to the Evil One, and at last went about to kill Him: and He wept over their ingratitude, because "they knew not the time of their visitation." He had visited to redeem, but they refused to be redeemed. We may well take warning.

But if we are ready to recognize God's Hand in all the happiness and blessings and beauties of life, we shall be all the better prepared to recognize the same loving Hand in times of trouble and sickness. "Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil?" Only then, evil will be no longer evil, when coming from Him. How well our Prayer Book keeps this thought in mind in the beautiful Office for the Visitation of the Sick! The clergyman is to visit the sick, because the Divine Visitor is there already, and with words of love he is bidden to interpret the love of the visit of God: "Whatsoever your sickness is, know you certainly that it is God's visitation." Whether for chastening or to strengthen your faith, God has come to bless. And so, instead of praying God to go away, like the Gadarenes, who besought Jesus to depart out of their coasts, on the