

A RETROSPECT OF THE JOURNEY.

*“Not one thing hath failed of all the good things
which the LORD your God spake concerning you.”—
Josh. xxiii. 14.*

Lord, when the journey's over,
And we the road survey,
What grace shall we discover
Has led us all the way ;
Where we were once so fearful,
The dangers seemed so vast ;
Where we were sad and tearful,
The skies so overcast,
Because of weak faith's blindness
So slow Thy love to learn ;
We shall Thy watchful kindness,
In every stage discern.

When we Thy joys inherit,
And all Thy glory share,
And through Thy death and merit
The crown of life shall wear ;
When we shall drink the waters
Fresh from the throne of God,
With all the sons and daughters
Redeemèd by Thy blood ;
When we shall tune our voices
To golden harps above,
And each with all rejoices
In Thy surpassing love :—

Oh, what will seem the sorrow,
When measured with the joy

Of that eternal morrow,
 Of bliss without alloy ?
 How light our heaviest trouble !
 How short our sharpest pain !—
 Gone like a bursting bubble,
 Compared with all we gain !
 He comes, and we are risen ;
 We meet Him in the sky,—
 One step, as from a prison,
 To heaven's own home on high !

The world's vain, worthless pleasures,
 Its treach'rous hopes and lies,
 Its rusty, worn-out treasures,
 As baubles we despise :
 We look for His appearing,
 The Morning Star so bright ;
 This hope our spirits cheering
 Beguiles the hours of night :
 We know by many a token
 We soon shall reach our home ;
 For our " Beloved " has spoken,
 " Behold, I quickly come ! "

But, oh, most blessed Saviour,
 Before we see Thy face,
 Grant us each day this favour,
 To live upon Thy Grace !
 While groaning in this prison,
 With many a grief opprest,
 To look, with faith's strong vision,
 To our eternal rest ;
 Time's seen-things all are wasting,
 Night's shadows quickly flee ;
 O joy ! the day is hastening,—
 Eternity with Thee !

“ A LITTLE CHILD.”

It is important in a day of decline—for the day of apostacy advances (Jude 14, 15), and the saints are in danger of becoming infected with its premonitory symptoms, those of “lukewarmness” (Rev. iii. 15, 16)—it is of all importance to return to what is the desire of the great Head of the Church for us all. This, if cultivated and sought after, is calculated to preserve from this spirit, which is tinging almost the whole of religious profession. I refer the reader, in illustration of His desire, to the Lord’s reply to the question asked in Matt. xviii. 1: “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” In the preceding chapter there had been given them a glimpse of the “Son of man coming in his kingdom”—a little toreshadowing of His glories, which, as Son of man, are yet to come. Would one who gazed thereon seek to place any on an equality with Him? No sooner is the proposal on the speaker’s lip than the voice of the Father is heard interrupting the vain desire, “This is MY BELOVED SON, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye HIM.” From the excellent glory He is thus declared beyond compare glorious and beloved, the centre of all, greatest and highest. Thus Peter’s voice was hushed; and though there with Him, and the eyewitness of His majesty, as he afterwards declares, yet *He* is God’s Centre, the only one who in Himself has title to be there. In the day of the mani-

festation of that glory we who believe shall be with Him too, our voices hushed in the contemplation of Him who is God's Centre—a day which will see the fulfilment of His prayer in John xvii.: "Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."

Descending from the holy mount where they had heard the testimony of the Father as to the Son of His bosom, they ask the question already quoted, whose tenor is, Which of us shall be next to Him? And what a reply comes from those gracious lips—a reply for each heart to weigh the import of then, and a lesson for us to ponder still! Does He deny that there is such a place? Does He assert that we shall be all equal in that day? No, He does neither; but, exposing by contrast their love of self with what will be the true ground of exaltation, personal love, and devotedness to *Himself*, He replies, "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." He does not say, as is (perhaps unintentionally, but commonly) misquoted, "Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child humbles itself, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." We cannot understand a little child humbling itself, because one who *is* in the place, *who is that*, needs not to come down to it; for already he is a little child. The Lord's words are rather, "You must become *as* this little

child, if you desire the highest place in the day of my kingdom glory."

Such is the *attainment*, my reader, which the Lord Jesus proposes to each of us to aim at and to reach—"a little child." Do we ask why? It is because we are not in heart and spirit, and ways and affection, *such*; they betrayed it in their question; and do *we* not betray it in ourselves day by day? May I then draw your attention to two or three things, seen prominently in the model before us, seen in "a little child"?

Watch him in the nursery (picture of this world wherein we grow up, and where the child of God now is); not a fear, not an anxiety, not a care has he! Dependent for food, and shelter, and raiment, and everything he wants or possesses on another; while in himself without plan, or thought, or resources, and with no ability to make his wants known save to One, who alone can understand the baby language that he speaks—such is our model. Is he happy? Let any one who doubt it observe him; or let my reader look back at the days of his own infancy, and the reply is at hand. But while his feebleness is thus before us, we must remember that he *has a consciousness*, young as he is—a consciousness that only deepens and increases with the lapse of years—that consciousness is that *he is beloved*, beloved by the One we have already mentioned, with a perfect and never-changing love. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath

torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. That *person* who loves fills the whole range of his vision—a *person*, my reader, not a *place*. And is it so to-day? Is it so with each of *us*? One, as he walked this earth has borne the marks of it. "One thing I do that I may win *Christ*, and be found in Him." "For to me to live is *Christ*, and to die is gain." "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." A *Person* filled the sphere of his vision. He was beloved, and he knew it. "He loved *me*, and gave Himself for *me*." Reader, do *you* know it? Can *you* say it? and has it power over you as it had over him?

But the nursery time is passing away with all of us. Let our model, "a little child," be brought then from the nursery into all the light and brilliance of that day of the coming glory for which we wait. Let the assembled company stand back to make way for the approach of a "little child." "Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto me; *for of such is the kingdom of heaven*" (xix. 14). Why amidst the brilliant throng wanders his eye timidly from one to another? Is there not enough in the grandeur of all around to engage his attention? No; the *place* is nought to him, while all the grandeur and all the dignity do but distress him. He seeks for One whose heart's affections are twined around

him, and whose love he has learnt and proved in other days, and in other scenes, than these ; for that same person, who fully satisfied him then, can only fully satisfy him now ; and passing by all else, he hastens to the arms and the bosom of *love*. And He, whose is all the grandeur and dignity of that day, delights to pillow that timid, trembling head on His own bosom.

Add thus shall it be in the day of the kingdom-glory ; and THUS has the " little child " reached the highest place, even the bosom of that One to whom it shall be confessed in that day, that fast-coming day of His glory, " Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing " (Rev. v. 12).

Reverend, who will occupy the place of the little child ? If you occupy it *now*, He declares you shall occupy it then. Again we would ponder His blessed words, " Of such is the kingdom of heaven." Oh, may we cultivate day by day, and seek grace to manifest day by day, the simple heart and ways, and the spontaneous affections for Him, our ONE BELOVED OBJECT, which are seen in " a little child ! "



" For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."—1 Cor. viii. 9.

THE ANTHEM OF THE ANGELS.

Luke ii. 13, 14.

Two things here present themselves—the angel who comes to the shepherds of Judea announces to them the fulfilment of the promises of God to Israel; the choir of angels celebrate in their heavenly chorus of praise all the real import of this wondrous event.

“Unto you,” says the heavenly messenger who visits the poor shepherds, “is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” This was proclaiming good tidings to them and to all the people. (Not, as in the authorized version, “all people.”)

But in the birth of the Son of man, God manifest in the flesh, the accomplishment of the incarnation had far deeper importance than this. The fact that this poor Infant was there, disallowed and left (humanly speaking) to its fate by the world, was (as understood by the heavenly intelligences, the multitude of the heavenly host, whose praises resounded at the angel's message to the shepherds), “glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good pleasure (of God) in men.” These few words embrace such widely extended thoughts that it is difficult to speak suitably of them in a work like this; but some remarks are necessary. First, it is deeply blessed to see that the thought of Jesus excludes all that could oppress the heart in the scene which surrounded His presence on earth.

Sin, alas ! was there. It was manifested by the position in which this wondrous Infant was found. But if sin had placed Him there, grace had placed Him there. Grace super-abounds ; and in thinking of *Him*, blessing, grace, the mind of God respecting sin, that which God is as manifested by the presence of Christ, absorb the mind and possess the heart, and are the heart's true relief in a world like this. We see grace alone ; and sin does but magnify the fulness, the sovereignty, the perfection, of that grace. God in His glorious dealings blots out the sin with respect to which He acts, and which He thus exhibits in all its deformity ; but there is that which "much more aboundeth." Jesus come in grace, fills the heart. It is the same thing in all the details of Christian life. It is the true source of moral power, of sanctification, and of joy.

We see next, that there are three things brought out by the presence of Jesus born as a child on the earth. First, glory to God in the highest. The love of God, His wisdom, His power, not in creating a universe out of nothing, but in rising above the evil, and turning the effect of all the enemy's power into an occasion of showing that this power was only impotence and folly, in presence of that which may be called "the weakness of God ;" the fulfillment of His eternal counsels ; the perfection of His ways where evil had come in ; the manifestation of Himself amidst the evil in such a manner as to glorify Himself before the

angels—in a word, God had so manifested Himself by the birth of Jesus that the hosts of heaven, long familiar with His power, could raise their chorus, "Glory to God in the highest," and every voice unites in sounding forth these praises. What love like this love? And God is love. What a purely divine thought, that God has become man! What supremacy of good over evil! What wisdom in drawing nigh to the heart of man, and the heart back to Him! What fitness in addressing man! What maintenance of the holiness of God! What nearness to the heart of man; what participation in his wants; what experience of his condition! But beyond all, God above the evil in grace, and in that grace visiting this defiled world to make Himself known as He had never yet been known!

The second effect of the presence of Him who manifested God on the earth is, that peace should be there. Rejected—His name should be an occasion of strife; but the heavenly choir are occupied with the fact of His presence, and with the result, when fully produced, of the consequences, wrapped up in the person of Him who was there (looked at in their proper fruits), and they celebrate these consequences. Manifested evil should disappear His holy rule should banish all enmity and violence. Jesus, mighty in love, should reign, and impart the character in which He had come to the whole scene that should surround Him in the world He came into, that it

might be according to His heart who took delight therein (Prov. viii. 31).

This quotation leads to a glorious apprehension, both of what was then doing and of our blessing. The special interest of God is in the sons of men; wisdom (Christ is the wisdom of God) daily Jehovah's delight, rejoicing in the habitable part of His earth before creation, so that it was counsel, and His delight in the sons of men. His incarnation is the full proof of this. In Matthew we have our Lord when He takes His place with the remnant, as this is fully revealed; and it is in the Son's taking this place as man, and being anointed of the Holy Ghost, that the whole Trinity is fully revealed. This is a wonderful unfolding of God's ways.

The means of this — redemption, the destruction of Satan's power, the reconciliation of man by faith, and of all things in heaven and earth with God—are not here pointed out. Everything depended on the person and presence of Him who was born. All was wrapped up in Him. The state of blessing was born in the birth of that Child.

Presented to the responsibility of man, man is unable to profit by it, and all fails. His position thereby becomes only so much the worse.

But grace and blessing being attached to the person of Him just born, all the consequences necessarily flow forth. After all, it was the intervention of God accomplishing the counsel of His

love, the settled purpose of His good pleasure. And Jesus once there, the consequences could not fail. Whatever interruption there might be to their fulfillment, Jesus was their surety. He was come into the world. He contained in His person, He was the expression of, all these consequences. The presence of the Son of God in the midst of sinners said to all spiritual intelligency, "Peace on the earth."

The third thing was the good pleasure,* the affection of God, in men. Nothing more simple, since Jesus was a man. He had not taken hold of angels.

It was a glorious testimony that the affection, the good pleasure, of God was centred in this poor race, now afar from Him, but in which He was pleased to accomplish all His glorious counsels. So John i., "the life was the light of men."

In a word, it was the power of God present in grace in the person of the Son of God taking part in the nature, and interesting Himself in the lot, of a being who had departed from Him, and making him the sphere of the accomplishment of all His counsels, and of the manifestation of His grace and His nature to all His creatures. What a position for man; for it is indeed in man that all this is accomplished! The whole universe was

* This is the same word as when it is said of Christ, "In whom I am well pleased." It is beautiful to see the unjealous celebration by these holy beings of the advancement of another race to this exalted place by the incarnation of the Word. It was God's glory, and that sufficed them. This is very beautiful.

to learn in man, and in what God therein was for man, that which God was in Himself, and the fruit of all His glorious counsels, as well as its complete rest in His presence, according to His nature of love. All this was implied in the birth of that Child of whom the world took no notice. Natural and marvellous subject of praise to the holy inhabitants of heaven, unto whom God had made it known! It was glory to God in the highest.



“THE SPIRIT AND THE BRIDE SAY, COME.”

Beloved! often it is given to us to sing with yearning, joyous hearts:

“The days are passing by, the years flow on apace.

Lord Jesus, Thy return draws nigh; *we long to see Thy face!*”

and, nearing the close of another year—another year of grace, long-suffering, *not slackness*, on the Lord's part. (Oh! still unsaved one, if this should meet *your* eye, mark it well—“the day of the Lord *will* come.”) Another year marked as ever with the patience and the grace of the “God of patience” (Rom. xv. 5) and the “God of all grace” (1 Pet. v. 10) in His ways with us, His own. It is a rare joy to us, His called ones (called unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus), to trace adoringly the continuity of *His* way with us, manifesting the stedfastness with which He pursues His purpose and with which He will pursue it unto the full fruition thereof, and this is as His

strong wine for our heavy hearts, in view of the rapidity of the declension in the House of God upon earth—a declension which in its impetus threatens to carry everything before it ; but faith can still speak exultingly of Him who is able to keep us without stumbling, and He has assured us, “ My counsel shall stand, and I will do *all* my pleasure” (Is. xlvi. 10).

If it was given to a Moses in a day of impending ruin to pray, “ shew me now *Thy* way, *that I may know Thee*,” how blessed for us now to discover His way, His undeviating way ! As witness it prefigured in the history of Eleazer and Rebekah in the words so fraught with meaning to us, “ the servant took Rebekah and went *his way*.” And what was *his way* ? Naturally we would have looked for a graphic description of the desert journey, its dangers, and the way through them all ; but no such account meets the eye. We see the espoused one equipped for the journey in such manner that she is to be carried across at the cost of the father for whose son she had been bespoken, that father’s house having furnished full provision for the whole way. The start is made, told out in the words already quoted, “ the servant took Rebekah and went his way,” and then we read these heart-stirring words, “ and Isaac came.” Ah ! my soul ! if this was the way of the servant, simply to bring Rebekah and Isaac together, what is the way of the Servant of the Father and the Son (the Holy Ghost) to-day, but to accomplish, as accom-

plish He will, the meeting between the Royal One ("the root and the offspring of David") and His bride. And, as the eye is lifted to take in that heavenly vision, the scene in that eastern land of old fades from view, and its imperfections are apparent. Isaac's voice could not be heard by Rebekah on the journey across ; but oh ! spouse of Christ ! what ravishing sound is this that greets thine ear upon the way ? "I, Jesus, have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright and morning star." What will thou say to this ? If the presentation to Rebekah's heart of the unseen and unheard Isaac, the father's son, produced the unhesitating reply, "I will go," what hast thou to say to that voice that sets in motion every chord of thy heart, for it is "the voice of my beloved ! behold He cometh ?" Ah ! what canst thou say but, "Come" ?

But, mark, if thou art to be in *His* company shortly and forever, in whose company art thou the bride found travelling onward now ? Ah ! thy heart would have played the laggard's part long ages ago in thine encounters upon the desert way if thou hadst not been furnished, by the Father who desires thee for His Son and by the Son who yearns for thee, with such an Escort, for it is thy divine Escort that keeps thine eye uplifted and thine heart attuned. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come." Long has He led thee on, but thou art not travel-worn—thou hast been carried all the

way, through varied scenes. Pentecostal glories once were thine manifestly below. He was then with thee. What shall be said of thy place below now when those glories are no longer visible? Ah! thy fickle heart! But He, thine Escort, and thy Guide, He has been journeying on with thee all through, is still with thee, and ever shall be; and, in concert with Him, thou dost raise the cry, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come."

And this is His way as truly now as when He came forth from the Father.

"The Holy Ghost is leading,
Home to the Lamb, His bride."

Listen yet again as at the last expiring hour of another year that voice, well known to thee, in its eternal unchanging sweetness, speaks to thee, "Surely I come quickly." And as thine eye beholds that coming One, thou dost not need to put the question to thy Guide, "What man is this?" But again, *thy* voice is heard, as, led onward still by the way of the Spirit, thine undeviating Escort and Guide—His Paraclete, His Comforter, His Advocate within thee—thou canst not forbear to burst forth, "Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus."

Nor is the provision for the passage across the sands of the desert yet remaining rendered scant, because of the length of the way thou hast already been brought, as is evidenced by the words thy Guide speaks in thine ear as He still leads thee on—even these, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."