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and "without difference in kind."<sup>1</sup> The "orthodox" and "catholic" Church of the East was, of course, assumed to be the nearest planet to the central Sun. Substitute intelligence and spirituality and consciousness of our expressing the best life of our race for those stale contentious terms "orthodox" and "catholic," and the Russian dignitary's conception will satisfy our need. If there be still cavilling as to which Church is nearest the Divine centre, we shall have the Master's warrant for the test: "By their works shall ye know them." We shall not, indeed, so get to theories of "inerrancy"; but we shall get as near all necessary doctrinal truth, and all high ideals of godliness, as is possible for the Church militant as distinct from the Church triumphant.

ARTHUR C. JENNINGS.



#### ART. IV.—THE WITNESS OF THE BEAUTY OF NATURE.

"Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin. And yet I say that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. . . . Wherefore be not anxious."—*ST. MATT. vi. 28.*

AT a time when many have left the dusty towns (and the majority of the population of England is urban) for the fair sights and sounds of the country, I would like to give my readers a few hints from our Lord's own thoughts which may be useful to them as a guide in the interpretation of those beautiful things which they have gone out to see.

Any glimpses of the personal tastes and habits of our Blessed Lord in His human nature are extremely interesting to us His worshippers and followers who are called by His name. We count up these little things about Him. As the true Son of Man, He is intensely human. He went to the wedding-feasts, and helped the harmless enjoyments by making an enormous quantity of wine. He describes Himself as coming eating and drinking, so unlike John Baptist, that the Pharisees scornfully and slanderously call Him a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber. He went to a Pharisee's entertainment on the Sabbath-day. Martha and Mary and Lazarus were His friends. When He saw the grief of the sisters at the death of their brother He wept. Twice He shed tears over the city of His fathers. He liked John, the son of Zebedee better than the other disciples. He was fond of

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<sup>1</sup> Palmer, "Visit to the Russian Church," p. 271.

being alone on high mountains. He took great notice of things in Nature, the sky, the wind, the hills, the birds, the sower, the trees, the plants. And here He speaks deliberately and calmly of the flowers of the field, with a warmth of love and feeling after which the strongest compliments which could be paid them by poets would seem tame. "I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." "Study deeply the lilies," He says, for that is the meaning of the word. It is stronger than the word "consider." Think of our Lord sitting there on the grass of that mountain in Galilee, talking to the people, and calling their attention to these lovely emblems of God's pity and care. We know even quite well what flowers they were at which He would be looking. The hillsides of Galilee in spring are very rich in their heavenly clothing. There is the crown imperial, with its gorgeous hues and delicious scent; the golden amaryllis standing up amongst the long glossy green shafts of its leaves, and crimson tulips, such as we delight to have in our hot-houses and on our lawns and in our rooms, and brilliant anemones of all shades, from scarlet and yellow and blue to white, to say nothing of the commoner buttercups and dandelions and daisies. All these our Lord means when He speaks with a sweep of His hand of the lilies of the field. All these, with what we may reverently speak of as a love of Nature, the Lord tells His disciples to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest; to study as it were by heart, till they have realized every beauty of structure and form and hue.

God might have made the earth bring forth  
 Enough for great and small,  
 The oak tree and the cedar tree  
 Without a flower at all.  
 He might have made ten times enough  
 For every want of ours,  
 For luxury, medicine and toil,  
 And yet have made no flowers.  
 The clouds might give abundant rain,  
 The nightly dews might fall,  
 And the herb that keepeth life in man  
 Might yet have drunk them all.  
 Then wherefore, wherefore were they made,  
 And dyed with rainbow light,  
 All fashioned with supremest grace,  
 Upspringing day and night?  
 Springing in valleys green and low,  
 And on the mountains high;  
 And in the silent wilderness  
 Where no man passes by?  
 Our outward life requires them not;  
 Then, wherefore had they birth?  
 To minister delight to man,  
 To beautify the earth,

To comfort man, to whisper hope,  
Whene'er his faith is dim ;  
For Who thus careth for the flowers  
Will much more care for Him !

Such are shortly some of the things we may learn from this small part of the beauty of Nature—the beauty of God's mind and thoughts, His loving-kindness to man in giving us such sweet company, His delight in order and beauty even in the smallest things ; the lessons of comfort, hope, trust, content, peace, humility, tranquillity, serenity.

The true secret of the Creation is given us in those few words of the Book of Genesis: *God saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good.* It was the expression of His own thought, the realization of His own ideal. And so we are led to think of the created universe as only the veil which covers the true and living God, the expression of His thoughts, the outcome of His will, the sign of His presence, the vesture of His mind ; and we remember with what deep wisdom and meaning St. Paul wrote: "The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made." All Wordsworth's life and poetry, which made such a turning-point in our times, were one long commentary on this thought of St. Paul's. From moor and lake, from wind and cloud, from tree and flower, from rock and brook, he tried to catch the thought which God had in creating it, and arranging it in such beauty as he saw it. Thomson, too, in his "Seasons," and Sir Walter Scott and Coleridge and Southey, and in our own times, Kingsley—they all were earnest with the same purpose. And though their interpretations of Nature may sometimes seem fanciful and forced, and more than the particular view or passing phase of Nature would bear, still their object was a lesson which we should all do well to take to our hearts ; because if the natural world is the revelation of an all-thoughtful and all-wise and all-beautiful Creator, there must surely be, in much of what we see, that which will comfort and console and inspire us, as well as the mere scientific explanation of the laws and the causes by which all these things are worked in God's government and machinery. It is this wealth of perfection, this meaning, this message from the Divine and the Unseen, that our landscape-painters, who are the glory of the English school of painting, are always doing their best to interpret.

I said just now that people in the country are more open to this kind of influence than we of the town, and that it is good for us at times to seek that influence again, and to speak with Nature. It has been said that the country-people in general

have little or no feeling for its beauty. But the contrary is strongly upheld by an eloquent Scottish writer.<sup>1</sup> "They have eyes and ears in their heads, and all the rest of the seven senses: and is it denied that they have hearts and souls? Only grant that they are not all born blind and deaf, and that there is a correspondence between the outward and the inward worlds, and then believe, if you can, that the song of a bird and the scent of a flower is not felt to be delightful by the simplest, ay, rudest heart, especially after a shower, and at the coming out of the rainbow. They do not flee into raptures at rocks, like town folks: but they notice all the changes on Nature's face, and are spiritually touched, believe me, by the sweet and the more solemn, the milder or the more magnificent, for they never forget that Nature is the work of an Almighty hand, and there is no poetry like that of religion. And all the Christian world alike more dearly loves the lily of the field for the sake of a few Divine words. Simple folk never think of expatiating on the beauties of Nature. A few touches suffice for them; and the more homely and familiar and common, the dearer to their hearts. The images they think of are never far-fetched, but seem to be lying about their very feet. But it is affection or passion that gives them unwonted beauty in their eyes, and that beauty is often immortalized by genius that knows not it is genius, believing itself to be but love, in one happy word."

If it will not burden this paper to quote a little more poetry, here are a few more lines which put very plainly these thoughts about the way in which God wishes Nature to affect our minds. They are not by any of those poets whom I have already mentioned, but by a Scottish peasant.

The seasons came and went, and went and came,  
 To teach men gratitude; and, as they passed,  
 Gave warning of the lapse of time, that else  
 Had stolen unheeded by: the gentle flowers  
 Retired, and, stooping o'er the wilderness,  
 Talked of humility and peace and love.  
 The dews came down unseen at eventide,  
 And silently their bounties shed to teach  
 Mankind unostentatious charity.

With arm in arm the forest rose on high,  
 And lesson gave of brotherly regard.  
 And on the rugged mountain brow exposed,  
 Bearing the blast alone, the ancient oak  
 Stood, lifting high his mighty arm, and still  
 To courage in distress exhorted loud.  
 The flocks, the herds, the birds, the streams, the breeze,  
 Attuned the heart to melody and love.

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<sup>1</sup> Professor Wilson.

Mercy stood in the cloud, with eye that wept  
Essential love ; and, from her glorious bow,  
Bending to kiss the earth in token of peace  
With her own lips, her gracious lips, which God  
Of sweetest accent made, she whispered still,  
She whispered to Revenge, "Forgive ! forgive !"

The sun rejoicing round the earth, announced  
Daily the wisdom, power, and love of God.  
The moon awoke, and from her maiden face  
Shedding her cloudy locks, looked meekly forth,  
And with her virgin stars walked in the heavens ;  
Walked nightly there, conversing as she walked  
Of purity and holiness and God.

Fear God, the thunders said ; fear God the waves ;  
Fear God the lightning of the storm replied ;  
Fear God, deep loudly answered back to deep !

But after all, what words could give us clearer sanction for using the wonders of the universe as signs and teachers, than that sublime language of David of old : "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard." In the glowing words of that other Psalmist, "O Lord my God, Thou art very great ! Thou art clothed with honour and majesty. Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment ; Who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain ; Who layeth the beams of His chambers in the waters ; Who maketh the clouds His chariots ; Who walketh upon the wings of the wind ; Who maketh His angels spirits, His ministers a flame of fire. O Lord, how manifold are Thy works ! in wisdom hast Thou made them all : the earth is full of Thy riches ! The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever ; the Lord shall rejoice in His works !"

Nature still is as fair as when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy. Let me paraphrase some thoughts on the interpretation of the loveliness of Nature from a novelist who died last year, and whose love for phases of scenery will be his lasting title to fame. I mean William Black. I shall not quote him word for word, but adapt his ideas. "Fall'n all beside," says Keble. In this our strange journey through the world, from the unknown to the unknown, where may we most naturally look for safe and close companions, whose intimacy cannot be torn away from us or altered by the changes and chances of this mortal life ? Surely in those grand and beautiful things around us which we know to be lasting. Of course, our first interests are human, in going about doing good like our Master, and in loving our neighbour as ourselves. But the longer we live the more we

shall find how imperfect human nature is at its best ; we shall all of us meet with much of ingratitude and disappointment and discouragement. Nature has not fallen ; man has fallen. Nature is like God, is like heaven. Our time is all too short for probing the mysteries of the human heart. We are very likely grasping a Will-o'-the-wisp in staking our happiness on anything so fleeting and unstable as human affection. What is there so variable, so liable to change and to cease ? But in loving God in His works and in studying deeply His beautiful gifts we are in some sense loving and studying Him. "If the beautiful things of nature can become our friends and loved ones, then securely year after year can we greet the reappearance of the flowers. We shall grow old, but year after year there will come up the snowdrop and the crocus, the primrose, the hyacinth, and all the long and glorious pageant of the ever-young flowers. They will be peeping forth as young and fresh centuries after these bodies of ours have become mould, and have been turned up again and again by the ceaseless toil of the earth-worm, to make the soil for their roots. Day after day we can welcome the wonder of the dawn. However bitter our griefs, we can be soothed by the murmuring voice of the sea, or roused by the healthy joy of its roaring tumult. The friend whom we have trusted may disappoint and betray us ; loving eyes may grow cold and find others more responsive than our own ; but he who has chosen the winds and the seas and the colours of the hills for playmates and constant companions need fear no change. The most beautiful human face will fade—nay, death may step in and rob us of our treasure ; but the unworldly tender loveliness of the sunrise remains, and the scent of summer woods, and the ripple of the rivulet down through the spacious meadows. Only this companionship has to be wooed as a gift of God before it can be won ; this secret voice has to be listened for ; the eye must be trained by the love of all that is Divine and pure to know this wonderful beauty that does not fade." Happy those who live in the country and can see the changes month after month ! But even we of the towns may look for it. We can from time to time bring the thought of it into our minds. "Friends may prove false ; but there is no discordant note in the music of the lark. The suspicions and envies and enmities and follies and madneses of mankind may appal, but there can be nothing to doubt in the heavens upbreking from the earth beneath when the hyacinths clothe the golden oak-wood." And even those who, like us townsfolk, have to linger in the fight until perhaps we are sore stricken with toil and wear, may find solace in retiring to these solitudes and seeking out these secret companions, in considering the lilies and musing

on the wonderful and glorious works of God; "letting the seasons, that each speak of Him, go by peacefully to the appointed end, when we, too, shall see the new heavens and the new earth, and the heavenly city of which all earth's loveliness is but the type and foreshadowing—'Then are they glad because they are quiet: so He bringeth them unto their desired haven.'"

William Black has reached his desired haven: the green pastures and the still waters of that ideal paradise which he saw and read behind the manifold changes of the glorious face of material nature. We are still here. And we of the town cannot be always amongst the works of God. Human friendships and interests, human sympathies and experiences are very dear to us as well as streams and woods and flowers and the voice of the sea. But all the same, the world is too much with us. The human interests press too strongly. The unrest of an age of ceaseless activity affects us with its own nervous excitability. It is imperative that we should be sometimes far from the madding crowd, and from the roar and bustle of the vast social machine. God has given us the hillside, and the sweeping river, and the blessed flowers for the very purpose of tranquillizing us, and leading us to destroy all care and anxiety by putting our trust in Him. Only let us take with us the true spirit. It will be most unwise to seek the same amusements, the same occupations, the same ceaseless employments, as crowd upon us here. We will take with us rather the spirit of contentment and peace, the spirit of awe and reverence, the spirit of love and gratitude. So the days of recreation will fulfil their purpose, and make up to us for all that we have lost of thoughts of God by living in the busy turmoil of the town.

Alas! of thousand bosoms kind  
That daily court you and caress,  
How few the happy secret find  
Of your calm loveliness!  
"Live for to-day! to-morrow's light  
To-morrow's cares shall bring to sight;  
So sleep like closing flowers at night,  
And Heaven thy morn will bless."

WILLIAM SINCLAIR.

