

*by nature* have no written revelation." Benjamin Wills Newton seizes with eagerness upon the transposition, in order to get quit of the idea that there is anything Divine in "nature." But the Apostle was no advocate of atheism in "nature." Such a notion is exegetical impotence. And certainly the apexesis contained in the concluding clause of the 14th verse, and the first clause of the 15th—"these having not the νόμος are a νόμος to themselves, who shew the work of the νόμος written in their hearts"—is demonstration that the Apostle maintained that there are Gentiles, concerning whom it may be assumed that they do *by nature* the things of the law. They "work righteousness." Only it must never be lost sight of that when the Apostle speaks of "the things of the law," his reference is not to immaculate holiness of character, but to such faith, and such works of faith, as might be reasonably hoped for in the midst of "the true light that lighteth every man coming into the world." In the presence of this light God has not anywhere left Himself "without witness," and evangelical witness; so that men everywhere are "without excuse," if they keep their eyes closed against the Light, and their hearts double-bolted within against the entrance of Him who, though having the right to take full possession, yet patiently stands outside and "knocks."

JAMES MORISON.

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## A DREAM.

*To the Editor of the Expositor.*

SOME seven years ago I ventured to send you a slight account of a discourse on "The Rich Young Ruler," which I chanced to hear on a week-evening in one of our Midland towns.<sup>1</sup> I was in the same town a few weeks ago, on the same evening in the week;

<sup>1</sup> See *The Expositor* for 1877: First Series, Vol. vi. pp. 229 ff.

and, as I had a little time on my hands, I found my way into the same large room at the usual hour for worship. The aspect of the room was slightly changed. Across one end there ran a long table "covered with a fair cloth," on which stood an array of tea and coffee urns; while at the other end, round a large fire, sat some seventy persons of either sex. When I entered, they were gathered round tables, adorned with flowers, and engaged in friendly and animated talk over their cups. But in a few minutes silence was asked for, and the Preacher whom I had heard before rose, and standing on the floor in the middle of the room, made a few remarks, from which I learned that I was "assisting" at a social meeting, held once a Quarter for friendly intercourse and conversation. "A family gathering for homely talk," he called it. And after speaking for a few minutes on the private affairs of the Church, he proceeded to say that last Spring, as they would remember, he was laid aside from work for many weeks, and that, much against the grain, he was compelled to leave them, and seek for health in a more southern climate. During his absence, he had had a dream, a dream about *them* and his work among them, of which, since they were interested in it, he would now tell them as much as he could. And then, in a quiet serious tone, he went on to relate a dream, in which those of your readers who liked his Discourse will, I think, be interested, and of which therefore I venture to send you the best report I can. It went somewhat thus:—

Like most men who work with their brains, I sleep but ill. Like most men who sleep ill, I dream much and often. And, as a rule, my dreams are not of a kind to make them welcome to me; nor do they, so far as I can judge, accord with my natural temperament and bent. Naturally of a somewhat sanguine and hopeful temper, I am, nevertheless, in my dreams, oppressed with a constant sense of failure and obstruction. I am not unpunctual, as you know; yet in my dreams I am for ever too late, and too late on occasions on which it is of the last importance that I should be in time. A lover of order, in my dreams I am the prey of the wildest disorder and confusion. And though I can thankfully acknowledge that I have more than reached the

modest aims with which I set out in life, yet in my dreams I am the perpetual victim of defeat in aims of the gravest moment.

But now and then it happens that I have dreams quite out of my ordinary and standing course, dreams so happy and instructive and bright that they leave a cheerful and stimulating influence with me for many days. Twice in my life I have even dreamed sermons which I could recall when I awoke, and did recall, and write down, and even print ; sermons which seemed to me the immediate gift of Heaven. But I have much oftener lost the good things which God has sent me while I slept, either because they left only an indistinct impression behind them, or because I did not take the pains to get up and write them down while the impression was still fresh and clear.

Now about this time last year, while I was staying in a country house in the South, and sorrowfully waiting for the East wind to blow itself out, and give me back the voice of which it had robbed me, I woke up one night so calmed and thankful and glad that for a few moments I hardly knew myself, and could not at all make out what had befallen me. But, then, my dream began to come back to me ; and, remembering how often I had lost all recollection of night thoughts which at the time it had seemed impossible I should ever forget, I got up, and by the dim flame of the nightlight wrote down the few sentences I could recall. Going back to my bed, other sentences recurred to me, and these too I secured. Three or four times I repeated this operation, till I had some five or six pages of note-paper scribbled over with my pencil. In the morning I threw them into a consecutive form, and had then a tiny MS., which I resolved that I would read to you on some convenient occasion. Unfortunately, however, I put it into my writing-case with a large number of other papers ; and in sorting them when I got home, and destroying those

which were no longer of any use, I destroyed by mistake the very paper I wished most to preserve. And so the main substance of my dream fled from me for ever. Nor could I ever after recall more than its general outline, and the one sentence on which all turned. This, then, is all I can give you to-night.

It was Sunday morning; and, as usual, I came down to preach to you. But, what is not usual, you were *all* in your places when I entered the pulpit; and as I looked round, I could see you all sitting in your characteristic attitudes, and listening with fixed and earnest attention—which I am thankful to say is by no means unusual. Without pausing for any preliminary service, and as if it were the most natural thing in the world, I instantly opened the Bible at one of the Gospels, and gave out this text, which you will not find in any of the Gospels, though I don't think you would be much surprised to find it in one of them.

*And as He passed through the temple, one of them that stood by cast a flower at his feet. And Jesus, stooping down, took up the flower, and said, Blessed be thou of My Father.*

From this text, which I can remember word for word, I preached to you, without note or book, for a full half-hour, though it did not seem more than a few minutes to me, so happily did my thoughts flow and the fit words come. But, alas, I remember nothing of my sermon save the text, at least in the exact form in which it was delivered. All I can recall is that I began by saying that, though we were not told who it was that paid this kindly act of homage to our Lord, and no hint of sex was given us, yet surely it must have been *a woman* who had this delicate inspiration: a woman who, seeing Him look pensive and sad perhaps, longed to wake a smile on his pure face, or seeing the love in his looks, the benediction in his eyes, yearned to acknowledge and respond to it, and so, with shy reverence

and timid involuntary sympathy, dropped at his feet a flower.

And, then, I went on to say that, though we were not told what flower it was she offered Him, yet surely it must have been a *wild flower*—some lily or anemone from the downs, or a wild rose plucked from the hedge, not one of the rare and choice blossoms of the Jerusalem gardens; since there is a beauty, a purity, a sweet and wholesome fragrance about these children of the field and the wood which lift them far above “the proud and perfumed beauties of our hothouse harems,” a charm far above that of “voluptuous garden roses,” which would make one of these natural blooms a far more appropriate offering to lay at *his* feet.

But, of course, the main body of my homily was taken up with an endeavour to enforce the lesson of this singular text; which lesson I took to be, the immense worth of those half unconscious acts of love, those slight “attentions,” those delicate and reserved courtesies by which we minister to each other’s finer susceptibilities; and to shew you how they often carry a sweeter and more efficient comfort to the heart, and render a more precious service, than actions which bulk much larger in our eyes and in the eyes of the world, and are held to be of much higher value. In many ways I tried to convince you that just as, in all probability, the Lord Jesus was more refreshed in spirit by the gentle flower-giving courtesy of a woman who was a stranger to Him, or by the love and sorrow and insight which moved Mary of Bethany to pour the fragrant nard—some faint odour of which still lingers in our hearts—on his sacred feet “against his burying,” than He would have been by some act of daring or devotion on the part of Peter or of Thomas; so we may often do more for our neighbours by apparently trifling manifestations of a thoughtful love, by attentions that cost us very little, than by larger-looking deeds of service which the world would notice and praise. But what

these ways of thoughts were, and how I trod them, and what illustrations I culled as we passed along, I have quite forgotten, and must leave you to imagine for yourselves.

All else that I can remember is that, when I woke, I could not but think that, even to me, God Himself had deigned to shew one of those gracious and kindly "attentions," in sending me this happy, unsought for, unexpected dream, and in letting the sermon sing itself like a song through my weary and disheartened mind,—preaching to me who have so often to preach to others, and secretly shedding energies of life and peace into my soul. For such delicate and happy adventures as this dream of mine may be common enough with innocent children and pure loving women; but with men they are rare, and therefore precious, and to be received with thanksgiving.

And then, finally, I thought: If God can even now fill this time-hardened and sense-fouled soul of mine with a pure and quiet gladness, and hush it into a holy tranquillity by a mere dream,—what joys must He have in store for those who love Him, when that which is mortal in them shall be swallowed up of life?

O, the pretty wild-flower God had given me while I slept! Should I not look up and bless his Name?

There were tears in the Preacher's voice as he closed his report of this striking Dream, tears too in the eyes of some of his auditors: and perhaps, Sir, you may think it not unworthy of a wider audience than that which listened to his words.

CARPUS.

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