

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE SACRED MOUNTAINS.
Mt. of Olives.

BY REV. J. T. HEADLEY.

The Mount of Olives stands just without Jerusalem, over the little stream of Kedron. Its height and magnitude would not entitle it to the name of mountain, as we use the word; but being called such in the Bible, it belongs among the "Sacred Mountains." In moral grandeur it towers above all the preceding mountains that rise along the horizon of history.

It is difficult to recall any scene vividly that has been so often described and so long familiar to us as that which transpired on the Mount of Olives. The mind is prepared for every event in it, and hence cannot be taken by surprise or held in suspense. But there are moments, when the heart forgets all that it has ever heard, and seems for the first time to witness that night of suffering. The indifference which long familiarity has produced disappears before rising emotion, and that lonely hill top—that midnight prayer—that piercing agony, with bloody testimonial, and the rude shock of Roman soldiers all, all swim before the swimming eye, with the freshness of first sight, till the heart thrills and throbs at the wondrous spectacle.

But as morally grand and moving as that scene was, it caused but little talk in Jerusalem. The streets of that proud city were filled with careless promenaders—parties of pleasure were assembled—dissipation and revelry were on every side; and the quiet of the staid citizen's home was not interrupted by the tragedy Mount Olivet was to witness. Everything moved on its accustomed way, when, in an obscure street in the upper chamber of an inferior dwelling, a group of coarse clad men sat down to a table spread with the plainest fare. The rattling of carriages and the hum of the mighty city were unheeded by them, and you could see by their countenances that some calamity was impending over their heads. Few words were spoken, and those few were uttered in a subdued and saddened tone, that always bespeaks grief at the heart. At the head of the table sat one whose noble countenance proclaimed him chief there.—He had won the love of those simple-hearted men, and now they sat grouped around him, expecting some sad news; but O, they were unprepared for the startling declaration that fell from those lips; "This night one of you shall betray me." "Is it I?" "Is it I?" ran from lip to lip, in breathless consternation. At length all eyes centred on Judas, and he rose and went away.

I will not speak of the conversation that followed, but amid words that thrilled every heart were heard such language as, "This is my blood shed for many;" and as the bread crumbled beneath his fingers, "This is my body;"—strange language, and awakening strange sensations in the bewildered listeners; and a mournful sadness rested on every face, as through that silent chamber rung those tones of tenderness.

Gradually the great city sunk to rest, the noise of wheels grew less and less, and only now and then a solitary carriage went rumbling by. It was midnight, and from that solitary chamber arose the voice of singing. The victim at the altar—the sufferer by the wheel, struck up a hymn at the moment of sacrifice. Was there ever a hymn sung under such circumstances!

Through the darkened streets those twelve forms are slowly passing towards the walls of the city, cared for and noticed only by the police, whom the betrayer has put upon the track. Kedron is passed, and they reach the garden of Gethsemane. "Sit you here," says Jesus, "while I go and pray yonder," and taking with him only Peter and James and John, he ascended the slope of Olivet. As they paused on the solitary summit, the human heart threw off the restraint it had put on its feelings, and burst forth in indescribable mournfulness—"My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death; stay here and watch with me." Every prop seemed falling beside him, and in the deepening gloom that surrounded him, he reached out for sympathy and aid. Then, as if recollecting himself and the task before him, he broke away even from those three remaining friends, and they saw with speechless grief and amazement his form disappear in the darkness.

Jerusalem is sunk in slumber and security, and nought but the tread of the watchmen is heard along the streets. The disciples in the

garden of Gethsemane are quietly sleeping below, and all is still and solemn, as night ever is when left alone; and the large luminous stars are shining down in their wonted beauty. Kedron goes murmuring by as if singing in its dreams, and the olive trees rustle to the passing breeze as if their leaves were but half-stirred from their slumbers. It is night, most quiet night, with all its accompaniments of beauty and of loveliness.

But hark, from the summit of Mount Olivet, rises a low and plaintive moan, and there, stretched on the dewy grass, his face to the earth, is seen the dim outlines of a human form. All is still around, save that moan which rises in a deep perpetual monotone, like the last cry of helpless suffering. But listen again: a prayer is ascending the heavens; and what a prayer, and in what tones it is uttered. Such accents never before rung on the ear of God or man: "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." It is still again, and nature herself seems to gasp for breath: and lo, there arises another voice, in tones of resignation sweeter than angels use, "Father, not my will, but thine be done." O, what inexpressible tenderness is poured in that word "Father"—the very passion and soul of love is breathed forth in it. Wearied and worn, that tottering form slowly rises and moves through the gloom towards where the three friends are sleeping—going, in its humanity, after sympathy. The pressure is too great—the sorrow and despair too deep, and the human heart reaches out its hands imploringly for help. "What, could ye not watch with me one hour?" falls on their slumbering ears, and the lonely sufferer turns again to his solitude and his woe. Prone on the earth he again casts himself, and the wave comes back with a heavier and a darker flow. Bursting sighs, and groans that rend the heart, again startle the midnight air, and adown those pale cheeks the blood is trickling, and the dewy grass turns red, as if a wounded man were weltering there. The life-stream is flowing from the crushed heart, as it trembles and wrestles in the grasp of its mighty agony. Wo and darkness, and horror inconceivable, indescribable, gather in fearful companionship around that prostrate form, but still the prayer goes up, and still the voice of resignation hovers amid the tumult like the breath of God over a world in chaos, ruling the wild scene.

O, is this the form that a few days ago stood on this same height and looked off on Jerusalem sleeping below, while the sunlight around, and the fragrant breezes loaded with the scent of the pomegranate and vine, visited in kindness his brow, and the garden smiled up in his face from beneath, and garments were strewed before him, and branches of palm waved around him, and "HOSANNA TO THE HIGHEST!" shook the hill? Alas, what a change has passed over him. No hosannas greet his ear, but deep within his soul are voices of terror and dismay, striving, but in vain, to shake his constancy or darken his faith.

At length the sacrifice was paid, the fearful baptism endured, and the brow prepared for its chaplet of thorns. The agony was over, but the Son of God, weak and exhausted, lay helpless on the earth, when lo, a bright wing flashed through the gloom, and "an angel appeared strengthening him." O, no wings ever before passed the portals of heaven with such lightning-like rapidity, not even when the birth-song arose from the manger of Bethlehem, as those which sped away for the Mount of Olives, and never before did they so joyously enclose with their bright foldings a human or divine form, as when they wrapped the bloody, exhausted body of the Son of God.

The first act in the fearful tragedy had now passed, and the second was soon to commence. There was, however, to be an interval of insults, scorn and mockery.

Christ arose from the earth he had moistened with his blood, and stood beneath the stars that still shone on as tranquilly as if all unconscious of the scene that had transpired in their light.—Kedron still murmured by, and the night air stirred the leaves as gently as ever. All was sweet and tranquil, when torches were seen dancing to and fro along the slopes of the hill, and the heavy tread of approaching feet was heard, and rough voices broke the holy quiet of nature; and soon Roman helmets flashed through the gloom, and swords glittered in the torchlight, and a band of soldiers drew up before "the man of sorrows." "Whom seek ye?" fell in languid and quiet accents on their ears. "Jesus of Na-

zareth," was the short and stern reply. "I am he," answered them, but in tones that had more of God than man in them, for swords and torches sunk to the earth at their utterance, and those mailed warriors staggered back and fell like dead men. It was not the haggard and blood-streaked face over which the torches shed their sudden glare, that unnerved them so, for they were used to scenes of violence and murder; it was the God speaking from the man. "But so it must be that the scriptures may be fulfilled;" and the betrayer and his accomplices take up their fallen weapons, and free them from the sudden awe that overwhelmed them, close threateningly around their unresisting victim. With their prisoner they clatter down the declivity of Olivet, cross Kedron, and their heavy tread resounds along the streets of Jerusalem as they hurry on to the house of the high priest.

The night wanes away—the morning—the last dreadful morning approaches, and the scenes of Mount Olivet are to disappear before the terrible tragedy of Mount Calvary.

The Lukewarm Christian.

1. Lukewarmness in a redeemed sinner is eminently unreasonable and ungrateful. The character of God is perfectly lovely, and angels are never lukewarm. But the relation of a Christian to God is more interesting than that of a holy angel. Ask a lost angel what he thinks of it, to whom no Saviour was ever offered. Ask a lost sinner, whose days of grace is forever closed, what he thinks of it. Ask the holy angels in heaven what they think of it. Among all these can you find one indifferent? Not one. All heaven resounds with songs of glowing love. But ask the lukewarm Christian, over whose conversion God and all heaven once rejoiced, what he thinks of his own salvation, and of his Saviour and of his cause, and hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, he has but half a heart to give to God! He is lukewarm and neither hot nor cold; neither a decided friend nor a decided enemy of his God. What shall we say of such conduct? What can be so unreasonable, so ungrateful? What can he ask to excite his feelings, if a view of his redemption and relations to God cannot? Do not the claims of God appeal to every emotion of honor and right? How can he help feeling? "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider."

2. It is entirely needless. God has provided in his word and Spirit, and in a vital union to Christ, all needed means of keeping alive holy love, and on every side there is enough to do for Christ. The Spirit is ever ready, and never leaves a Christian willingly. He is grieved to depart. Christ does sincerely desire all of his people to give him holy and ardent love, and is ready to be to them wisdom, righteousness, and sanctification, as well as redemption, but they refuse.

3. It is eminently injurious. Nothing so paralyzes the power of the church. It removes the convincing power of Christian example—an argument which nothing can resist. It renders hopeless the occurrence of revivals of religion; for how can God work with those whom he loathes! It weakens the holy. It discourages ministers. Open opposition, slander, and persecution, the people of God can sustain. But who can endure the paralyzing influence of a lukewarm friend of God? It is a moral palsy, an utter paralysis of the soul.

4. It is an entire discord with the feelings of God. He does love his people, whether they realize it or not, and does seek their love. And ask now, had you saved a beloved friend from death at the hazard of your life, and did you feel towards that friend pure and ardent love, and desire a corresponding love, could you endure a lukewarm return, arising rather from an indistinct sense of duty, than from a warm and glowing heart? Against entire ingratitude you might fortify yourself, and not open your bosom merely to be wounded. But to open wide your own heart, and then to receive a feeble and lukewarm return, who can endure it? Such are the feelings of Christ. He has loved his people with a love stronger than death. The height and depth and length and breadth of his love no language can utter. And he opens wide his heart and longs for a full reciprocation of his love; and can he endure a feeble and lukewarm return! O no! His feeling of mingled grief and indignation at such treatment are as much

more exquisite than ours, as he is greater, more pure, and more ardent in his feelings than we. No language can describe the emotions of Christ in such a case. It is not a man who uses the language of the text, but God, and he addresses it not to his enemies but to his church. Think what a being God is, and then tell, if you can, how much he feels, and how much he means when he thus addresses a church of his own. "So then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." O could a lukewarm Christian see and feel the import of this language, he could not live. It is hard to bear such rebukes from an earthly friend. But from God, they would wither and consume the spirit, like the rapid lightning of heaven, should the full import of his language enter the soul.—Dr. Edward Beecher.

Causes of our slow Progress.

1. *Our course is so crooked.* The shortest distance between earth and heaven is a straight line. When we deviate to the right and left, and are never in the right path except when crossing it, we lose much time, and advance but slowly. A dissolute husband came home late at night, and was ironically accosted by his wife respecting the length of the way that he must come. "No my dear," said he, "it was not the length, but the breadth of the way that made me late." He who keeps in the narrow way will save the most time, and make the greatest progress.

2. *We fall back so much.* The frog in the well had to go over much of the space a second and even a third time. So we, by our relapses and backslidings, greatly increase the distance which we have to travel. We leave our first love, and are compelled to retrace our steps to the spot where we left it so that in repeating and doing "the first works," we expend much time and strength, and advance but little in the divine life.

3. *We carry so many weights.* Instead of laying them aside, we retain them, and every year incumber ourselves with still more, so as to render our progress slow and difficult. He who would so run the heavenly race as to obtain the prize, must be unentangled, unburdened and free.

4. *We are so much occupied about trifles.* We have a crown of righteousness to gain, and that we may win it we must finish our course by pressing towards the mark. It differs little as to the result, whether we stop by the way to pluck violets, or to dig for ore; whether we look at a picture, or go to a concert, or attend a political caucus. They all divert our attention from our proper object, and interfere with our spiritual advancement. "This one thing I do," said an apostle, and by doing it he went rapidly onward to the goal of his hopes.

5. *We take so much time to decide whether we are in the way.* By carelessness as to our religious course, our hopes become clouded, and we are under the necessity of halting, and devoting time and labor to self scrutiny. "Am I a Christian?" is a question which we have repeatedly to answer, and the investigation often takes a turn most unfavorable to spiritual progress. Why should we not settle this matter once for all, and then "go on unto perfection?"

Gems from Hopkins

ON THE COMMANDMENTS.

Ark of the Covenant.—The ark was a famous type of Christ; and the keeping of the tables of the law in the ark, what doth it mean, but to prefigure to us how the law was to be kept and observed in Him, who fulfilled all righteousness? And when God again writes his law on our hearts, we also keep them in Christ our ark, whose complete obedience supplies all our imperfections and defects.

Examples of beautiful and apt metaphors:

Sarcasm.—This is usually an applauded sin among the more refined sort of men, who take a pride and glory in exposing others and making them ridiculous, thinking their own wit never looks so beautiful as when it is dyed in others' blushes.

Anger.—He that goes to bed with anger boiling in his breast, will find the scum of malice upon it the next morning.

Jealousy.—As love is the most soft and tender affection of human nature, so jealousy which is the souring of love and turning it into vinegar, is the most wild and furious.

Consequence of an irreverent use of the name of God.—"Thy name," saith the spouse, "is as ointment poured forth." But certainly, if upon every slight occasion we break the box, and expose the name of God to common air, it will in time lose its fragrance and virtue; and when we have most need of it, we shall find no refreshment, no comfort in it.