**BROOKS BY THE TRAVELLER'S WAY - ADDRESSES BY JOHN H. JOWETT**

**12. BEAUTY IN THEHEIGHTS by JOHN H. JOWETT**

*"He maketh grass to grow upon the mountains."*

*Psalm 147:8*

"He maketh grass to grow upon the mountains." Unless we read the words in the right tone, we can never apprehend the trend of their suggestion. The words are uttered in a tone of great surprise. They are much more than a descriptive record of a certain feature in a vast assemblage of natural things. They express the unexpected, the unique. The Psalmist is profoundly surprised to find grass growing upon the mountains. It would have been ordinary and commonplace, arousing no wonder, to have found it in the vale, but to find it away up in the heights where barrenness usually reigns, affected him as the suggestion of exceptional power, and stirred him into profound amazement. He discovered what he thought to be a native of the valley, dwelling upon the mountain tops. Have we any similar surprises on other planes of being and life? Are we sometimes startled by encountering the unexpected in the heights? Let us see.

**1.** "He maketh grass to grow upon the mountains." I am not surprised to find piety at the Carpenter's bench, but I wonder to find it in the midst of the Throne. I am grateful that Christ has in these recent days had the opportunity to reveal to the world what He can do in the neighbourhood of a Throne. He frequently reveals to the world the spiritual beauty with which He can grace the Poet. It is almost a commonplace for us to behold His workmanship in the production of some pure and noble merchant. But only rarely is He permitted to display His sanctified power upon the occupant of a throne. Now the claim of the religion of Jesus is this, that faith is effectual everywhere. The Lord can grow His flowers in every place. His converts are not taken from any particular place or vocation. He can make them anywhere. He can grow His flowers in palaces or in garrets, but I am not quite sure that they are grown with equal ease. The Master has told us that there are conditions in which it is very difficult to rear a saintly life. "How hard is it for them that have riches to enter into the Kingdom." It is inspiring therefore to know that even in the hardest places He can redeem and beautify His people. "He maketh grass to grow upon the mountains."

It is a wonderful conjunction to find piety upon the throne. Study the conditions in which the choice temperament has to be begotten and reared. The occupant of a throne is the centre of a most lonely Majesty. All who are round about her pay her obeisance. All who draw near unto her bow the knee. The altar of homage burns without ceasing. Is it any wonder that in conditions so intoxicating the monarch should be "lifted up" in perilous self-dependence, and God should be exiled from the thought? But in our own day the Lord has made it plain to us that even on these far and lonely heights He can rear a saint. Piety is blooming about the seat of majesty. The Queen, to whom everybody bowed the knee, herself bowed the knee to a greater. She reverently recognised God. She has, by the intimacy of her fellowship, and by the fervour of her devotion, made the hallowed words upon our coins infinitely more than members of a legal and official phraseology. She has transfigured them, and made them shine as radiant truth. Of her it may be said that she was "Fidei Defensor," as Paul himself was able to say "I have kept faith." Of her, too, it is well and true to say she was sovereign "Gratia Dei," for the grace of God was the empowering energy in her long and beneficent career. In these stupendous heights of majesty I marvel to find a soul upon its knees. I wonder to find a flower of piety blooming in the mountains.

**2.** I am not surprised to find lowliness adorning a subject, but I wonder to find it dwelling in the very heart of sovereignty. It is a rare thing to find lowliness in the heights. What do we mean by lowliness? It is a word which is grievously impoverished, and much misunderstood. It is sometimes associated with the shrinking spirit; a little less frequently it is regarded as synonymous with the cringing. Its meaning is far otherwise. A man may shrink from a high calling, and may not be lowly. His shrinking may be the child of his pride. The New Testament uses the word with quite other significance. Perhaps if we call to our mind the figure of a carpet or of a rug, we may be helped near to the New Testament conception of the word. When the carpets are up in the house there is a sense of general forlornness and discomfort. The hollow sounds in the house make the home sepulchral. When things are put straight again how comforting it is to have the carpets down. Or recall the comfort which the use of a rug gives to one in journeying. Or call to mind how refreshing it is to leave the hard dusty highway, where your feet have become weary and sore, and to turn on to the fringe of grass which now carpets the wayside. All these figures will lead us to the central suggestion of the meaning of lowliness. It is a laying down of one's sympathies and affections, and making as it were a carpet or rug of them, that the chills and pains of the world may be removed. The man who is lowly has kind purposes, friendly feelings, beneficent deeds, and these are spread out before the lives of others, that the bareness of living, and the coldness of living, and the soreness of living, may be partially taken away. A man who "lays down his life" that he may bring rest and comfort and joy to another, is essentially a lowly man. A man who offers the leisure-time of his days to ministering to bruised and broken lives, is graced with the Christian robe of lowliness.

Now this kind of lowliness is a commonplace among the poor. I am not surprised when I find a member in one of the poor courts of a crowded city, spreading out her affections and her sympathies for another to rest upon. But I am amazed when I find this disposition allied with sovereignty. Power usually makes for pride. It creates a spirit of exclusiveness. It often issues in cruelty. One can frequently trace the evil influence of power in a master who has just been created out of a working-man. The transformation is often creative of hardness, and sympathy is narrowed or destroyed. Young mistresses, intoxicated with the sense of power, are often thoughtless towards their servants. Power of any kind is apt to "freeze the genial currents of the soul," and to be a great enemy to the spirit of lowliness. But the Lord can grow this grass in the heights.

**3.** I am not surprised to find the virtue of temperance in conditions of scanty or moderate affluence, but I am surprised to find it in conditions of sumptuousness and wealth. "How oft the sight of means to do ill deeds makes ill deeds done." To behold the means to gratify the appetite often leads to the gratification. Appetite often sleeps where the means to please it are not abounding. It is so easy for those who are sumptuously placed to spend their lives in eating, drinking and merry making. It is so easy for the wealthy to become morally vulgar, and to lose their virtuous self-control. I therefore wonder when one meets the grace of a rigid self-control in circumstances of overflowing affluence. But the Grace of God can accomplish it. He can grow this flower in the heights. He can cultivate souls of puritan temperament in conditions which appear to be intensely hostile to its creation. In the midst of all manner of sensational enticements He can keep the pleasures simple, natural, and homely, and in a land which flows with milk and honey, He can preserve the appetite in healthy self-restraint.

"He maketh grass to grow upon the mountains." If the Lord can do this on the mountains, what may He do in the vales? If He can grow choice temperaments in the heights of majesty and power, what may He grow in the quieter places of obscurity and seclusion? The majority of us are children of the valley. We are not called upon to occupy any conspicuous place. The blasts that shake the heights do not disturb us. God has not called us to the supreme difficulty of an exalted station. Let us ask ourselves the searching question--have we permitted the Lord to beautify the vale? The plain may be a desert, or it may blossom like a rose. Let us ask the great Renewer to take us in hand, and clothe us in His own unspeakable beauty.