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“HUSKS” led the present writer to these results. There is plenty of room for a re-examination of words seemingly as unimportant as “Dove’s Dung” and “Husks.”

T. K. CHEYNE.

### *THE TWENTY-THIRD PSALM.*

It is not easy to speak to any one about those things which he knows best and loves most. They have, among his associations and affections, a setting which no one but himself can appreciate, and which even the most sympathetic words of another must in a measure alienate and disturb. The slightest, subtlest change of atmosphere or tone will react keenly upon the heart when habit and affection have made it sensitive and tender. No one can speak, so as quite to please us, about our own father or our chosen friend, or about our favourite garden or picture or song.

Nor is it easier to speak about things that are very simple and yet very perfect. Some things are, we know, too elementary to admit of analysis, and too obvious to need explanation; but that is not what we mean in this reference. There is another kind of simplicity still more difficult to touch with words—that simplicity, namely, to which men of creative genius, by an alchemy of their own, reduce the results of their intensest thought and their farthest research. The longest pains of the musician and poet and painter issue in what seems the spontaneous growth of an hour; and, at its best effort, all their rare power results in the production of some little thing of simple beauty. All that the men themselves have been and are, all that they have won and know, sooner or later is reduced to a final process, and seems naturally to realize itself in one supreme moment when they are at their best and yet their simplest. Day and night, summer and winter, storm and calm, soil

and sky in their life, as in the tree, bring them at last to a plain beauty like that of the wild blossom or the wild berry ; and who can say much about what is so perfectly simple and beautiful as these are ? It is easier to speak about Browning than about Keats ; easier to analyse Meredith than Scott ; easier to explain St. Paul than St. John.

Both these difficulties present themselves together when we try to speak about the twenty-third Psalm. No words in any language are more familiar than those of its verses, and none are more hallowed. They are words with a living voice in them ; they have spoken to the church's heart ; they have affected the sub-consciousness of the human soul. They are, in our life, like a brook that runneth in the way ; which is heard even when hidden from our sight, and has a peaceable influence over us though we sometimes forget that it is there. They put a music into our life from its morning to its evening ; they murmur in our memory with the double power of a cradle-song and a requiem. Strong men in the mid-strife of life's busiest day grow tender and will falter over them, so associated as they are with the hours of clean white thought and holy fancy around a mother's knee ; and, at the close of the day, they are the last low croon of tired souls when they soothe themselves to the long sleep.

But though it be difficult to speak about these verses because they are so familiar and so dear, yet this is not all nor most. There is another difficulty ; for this psalm which all men love is simplicity itself. It speaks about things which everybody knows, and it is of itself complete and all-sufficient. It is a plain little psalm—a singing psalm of common grey wing and homely feather ; and, like the singing of those birds that give music, the one to the morning and the other to the midnight, its perfection and sweetness baffle words. Yet we all feel it, we each understand it, in a moment—the child as immediately as the man. It thrills

us ; its emotion becomes part of us, as if its suggestion came from within rather than from without ; and it is so spontaneous and natural that we feel as if we ourselves had thought and said it all. There is no effort in it any more than in the prattle of a child ; and, in the elementary and most highly-sanctioned use of the word, it is *sensuous*, winning its way to our soul as easily and gently as a fragrance or a flavour wins its way to a sense. Its effect upon us is more like the stirring of an instinct than the record of an experience.

These considerations make our duty in dealing with this psalm both delicate and tender. Even though we regarded it merely as a bit of Hebrew literature, a thing of rhythm and measure, a lyrical survival of earliest spiritual art, there is no good in pouncing upon it, and tearing away the spirit from the letter, and stripping it bare to the bones. We should only spoil and silence if we anatomized what is so complete and perfect ; and we should "offend against the generation" of the saints if we dislodged them and it from their familiar and dear relations to one another. We would rather here touch the notes—one by one and all—and ask each of you to listen to the response of his own soul. This plain-song of human life is set to music which is awakened within ourselves by the words ; and, if we are in spiritual tone and have the complete equipment of all our finer powers, every stave of the psalm will make melody in our heart. It does more than charm us ; it tests and proves us. We shall one day need all the trust and all the comfort and help of which the psalm tells ; and we may now learn, by means of it, if the connection and attachments between our soul and God hold good and sure.

The origin of this psalm must always have an interest of its own. A stream so comforting and so constant makes us think of the fountain, whence it flows and wherein is the hiding of its power. The mildest use of the historical

method in this instance seems to give happy results. For, when we follow this psalm up historically, we do not come to an open source bare and unconcealed, where anybody may have dug—it matters not who! We are not brought thereby to an artificial well, built in—by whose uninteresting hands we care not, if only the waters flow! We find what is more fascinating than that. We are led up into the scenery of a life where all around are the suggestion and the outgrowth of quick and varied human experiences—the rapture and peril of many lives in one. There is a *genius loci*, where this psalm springs. It rises in a haunted wood. There is maze and thicket, and gloom and glade. The place is veiled and fringed with mystery; it is full of whispers and shadows; it is peopled with memories; it is like a multitudinous dream. The wood has its secret, and the psalm knows it; and that is why at its source it breathes and trembles so. For beneath and behind its flowing there is a heart that is trying to say, and cannot say *all*.

Whilst the psalm of itself seems naturally to lead up into the life in which it takes its rise, yet even there it has woven around it a little beautiful mystery. The stream makes the path to its own well-head; but the well in the wood has its first and innermost secret hidden and guarded by fine powers. The passion of spring, and the patience of the autumn, and “many a summer’s silent fingering” have been there to seclude and protect; and over and around are grass and tangle, the bending branch and the briar, and trailing tendrils of leaf and flower. So this psalm is not allowed merely to disclose itself to us, breaking soil at our feet and, before our eyes, issuing on its own open and unattended way. There is here not only a delicate and suggestive concealment of the fountain, but the course of the psalm becomes at once as interesting as its source. For it has found or stirred so many spiritual affinities, that it is all clustered round with the growth of congenial life;

and we cannot disentangle the fine fretwork of association and experience which now entwine around it. These accessories have a vital relation to the verses; for the sympathies and fidelities of human nature seem to have such essential attachment to the psalm that they cling to it as if saying, "All our well-springs are in thee." So the psalm has been giving and *getting* these thousands of years. It is now far richer and more wonderful than its author left it. It is ours in a larger sense than it is his; for humanity claims and has appropriated it as its own. It is truer even than its author knew; for the Church has verified it.

Though it be true that, in the largest sense, this is a psalm of the church rather than of any individual saint, yet it, more than most, seems to demand and suggest a life and personal circumstances. Its authorship never can be quite so indifferent a matter as some say. The weather does count when we estimate the love and hope in the breast of the bird that sings in a wet and wintry day; and it does make a difference—the *kind* of life out of which this song of humanity arose, and of which it is the finest and fullest expression. The character and complexity of the elements that were mingled in the secret vats do count with us when we estimate the truth which has been thus—to use the word literally—*expressed*. We shall feel neither the grip nor the tenderness of the psalm until we distinctly realize the stress and pain in the life regarding which it is the harmonious and complete and final utterance. Historically or imaginatively we must see a face, when we hear this voice; and, by either process, there is only one face to see.

By every spiritual test, and in spite of there being some Bacon-Shakespeare men among Hebrew critics, the authorship of this psalm is indisputable. It was written either by David or (so to say, if only we may say it without too much levity) by some one else of the same name: we must here

accept David or create him. There is a "lifelike" of experiences finding interpretation and outlet here. It is not any part, but it is the whole of a life that is involved. A shepherd minstrel does not here whistle along the hillside a careless song, nor a minstrel king sing at ease "in an house of cedar." Beneath and behind and all around this sweet wildness as of native notes lie the trials and struggles, the sins and sorrows, the agony and the prayers and the tears of a sore and stormy life; but here is the calm, mature, and highest reading of it all:—"The Lord is my Shepherd"! Every man has got the truth of his life when he has found the Divine thought which runs through it, and which explains, and justifies, and unifies all its parts. From some men we receive it as a philosophy, from others as the poetry, of human life; the one is the precipitate, the other is a fragrant distillation, from the same severe process of consciously living a life under the power and pressure of the Eternal. Of the two results, poetry is not the less essential though more ethereal, nor less real because the more intangible; it is truth in its most diffusive and universal form, and at its finest power; it creates an atmosphere; it becomes an inspiration; it quickens. The deepest meanings of life, when revealed to the rarest souls, become a Divine message to mankind, and, when most adequately spoken, will make music. The poetry of God becomes music on David's lips here; and, with his high message, he still comes about the doors of human life. The song he sings is simple and sweet to hear; but in it life calls to life in its far recesses. He is his own lyrist, and the heartstrings are very tense; and none to whose heart his words go home will be content till they have seen and know the minstrel; nor will they love the sweet singer less when they know him as a man of sorrows.

David is in this psalm at his fullest and best as a man and a poet. As a man his earlier and later years are

“bound each to each by natural piety”; and as a poet he is at that simplest which is his best, and his song, which is lyrically and artistically perfect, is the result of a supreme hour of his creative mood when his work seems artless and effortless, and yet is “of imagination all compact.” Yet the combined and unique strain of his whole life is in this quiet result. There have been deep life soundings taken to find this pearl of great price; and it is the equivalent of his vast wealth of character and genius. There is one life—the poet’s own—running through this psalm, and animating it from first to last, and there is one pleasing and tinted figure giving the whole its imaginative shape and hue. It is a unity, and yet there is a difference between the first and last halves of its perfect whole, for there are youth and age in the psalm just as there are in life itself. We would defend the poet’s work. It has had rough usage. It is prosaic treatment of the psalm to dovetail the latter part into the earlier, making the two halves adhere in a mechanical way. It is a dull suggestion that the thought and fancy of the poet are in two sections, separate and distinct and different. There are no sections in a poet’s work! It is not put together, and it cannot be taken to pieces, in sections! It is the artisan, and not the artist, whose work is “mortised and adjoined”! There is here grafting and growth of part to part; it is living work. One life pervades and is fulfilled in the new and the old, the first and the last; and one living and harmonious effort reaches all through it to the one result in fragrance and fruit. It is harsh and incongruous to introduce blood revenge or the hospitality of couch and table into an open-air song of the shepherd and his sheep. The critical brain, sharp though it be, is too blunt a tool to apply here. A slight poetical impulse and some spiritual sympathy will carry us along the living length of the little psalm without doing a single line of it hurt, or putting strain on a single



word, and will enable us to feel the thrill of its spirit all the way. We know that,

“ A lover would not tread  
A cowslip on the head,

Though he should dance from eve to peep of day”;

and a touch of interpretative fantasy may at a time stand the critic of the Psalms in good stead. The shepherd is as plain in the midst and last of this psalm as in the first of it—just the dear, familiar shepherd doing his shepherd duty with his shepherd surroundings! A little more alert than leisurely, and with club swung round to his hand instead of his staff, but the same shepherd, brave and wise and good in paths of fear, as he who sauntered with his flock beside the still waters! His sheep huddle around him, as he leads through the gloomy ravine, and share his sense of peril. And what would he there in a place so haunted of wolf and bear? “In his heart are the ways” of one who leads from the good to the better, and who measures all his goings to some higher end. Beyond that valley of shadow and fear is the place he seeks—a true shepherd’s garden, a little paradise for his sheep. It is a garden enclosed, and the valley is its gateway. There, encircled by the rocks where prowl the foes of the flock, is the fair spot, knee-deep with grass and flowers—nature’s own table spread with food convenient; the odorous trees, shedding their gum, are there to refresh and alleviate; and there, the bright-eyed spirit of all the happy place! is the unceasing well—ever with careless hands spilling its gift of waters—not caring how it gives, if only freely enough! Such an end justifies the shepherd’s means—the valley, the shadow, and the fear! And the contentment and peace of the flock seem to say: “Thou spreadest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; Thou hast anointed my head with oil; my cup runneth over.” Thus the whole psalm is purely pastoral, a musical parable of a good shepherd and his sheep. From

first to last its note, its scenery, its breath, are all and only Arcadian. We are out of doors the whole time.

This beautiful unity in the composition of his psalm is an unconscious testimony on the part of the author to the unity which he saw that the purpose of God had made in his chequered life. It is pleasing to find that David was able on review to attach his severest and sternest experiences of life to his gentlest and sweetest; and that he could so set and see them all alike in the light of the far away and the Divine, that there was actually no difference between them. The tragic and the terrible were subdued to the same idyllic beauty and tenderness as lay on the hills of his youth. He could sing of them together; they went to the same tune. On the same strings, and to the same key, he was able to sing the whole story of his life—only glowing a little as he went on, and accentuating with an added spiritual emphasis his assurance of the goodness and mercy which had led him from less to more, and was leading from the good to the best. There *are* two parts in the psalm, and they are different; an old man could not have written the first part, and a young man would not write the last. But by looking at the very difference between the two parts, at a deeper level than that of words and form, we shall the better see their spiritual affinity and find their essential oneness.

David's boyhood days would be full of spiritual visitings and questionings. From his pious ancestry religion would be in his blood. He says that he "set the Lord always before him," I suppose whether he had harp, or sling, or shepherd's staff in hand. The only literature of his youth would be his fragment of our completed Bible, with its suggestive snatches of early Hebrew song; and it must have been the supple brain of his youth that was trained to such a deft after-skill in verse. He must have begun young, and his first rhymes would be of his God. It is

difficult not to enter into the thought of this sensitive boy in the solitude of his pastoral hills, to whom the Scripture of his home, and the word of his peasant father there, alike had given the one supreme and awe-inspiring conviction that God had the constant control and care of his life; and it is easy to imagine how, in his fine leisure by night and day, this inevitable thought of God would haunt him—oppressing, harassing him, and teasing him “out of thought, as doth eternity”—until he got the mastery of it by bringing his own thoughts into a happy relation to it, and his life into alliance with it, and then was able ever after to draw from it his liberty and his joy. This higher mood came to him, one may well conceive, in “the sleep that is among the lonely hills,” when he made his flock to rest at noon and when all the hills were dreaming dreams and when he too had his dream. Then he saw all the mystery with clear eyes in the lower light of his own relation to his sheep. “What do these silly flocks think of me? What can they say of my concern for them, and my constant eye upon them, and my shifting of their pasture, and my so often compelling them to go whither they would not?” Then it all flashed upon him in a moment. He said it—he was so happy that he sang it, and his song has filled the world—“The Lord is my Shepherd.”

A poet's youth is littered with scraps of early verses. They may be fragile and slight, but they have for him a charm all their own—they have the spell of his life's faërie. David having begun would not easily stop; and we daresay he threw away many a sweet verse that cost him some pleasant poetic pains, just as any shepherd-boy flings away the chaplet of wild rushes that he has woven:—

The while his fingers plait the scentless wreath,  
He finds some pleasure in his idle skill;  
At even he leaves it withering on the heath,  
Or strews its fragments on the moorland rill.

The first lines of this psalm have upon them the dew of their poet's youth. The sunny cheerfulness of them; the light, swift measure; the careless, gliding, easy rhythm; the naturalness and the grace all suggest that they are a reminiscence of his youth—a fragment of verse which David found when he was traversing in later years his earlier memory; and with what pathos he would pick up and treasure what once he so carelessly threw away! Yes, sure enough, this is a young man's voice: "I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me beside the still waters." The sunshine of morning is glittering on these dewy lines still, and a light heart in them is treading life's paths lightly! But this is an old man's use of the early lines. The words of his youth take a soberer tone on the lips of his age. They mean more than he at first knew. They were still true, but truer than he at first supposed. He accepted them from his earlier self, and with a trembling hand set his seal to them as true; and in their larger meaning he consecrated them with the tears of his age. Happy is the man who, like David, can in any way bring through an unclouded memory the sunshine of youth to relieve the shadows of age, and who from the same source can glorify the severest realities of after experience with a touch of the ideal!

But life had grown a far more intense and serious thing than David ever dreamed of in his youth. From no great depth of his being he sang his early song of God; it was an emanation from the sunshine and open-eyed integrity of his young being. God elected this man to tell the truth of life in deeper strains out of the darker depths of his own soul. The still waters flowed softly at first, but afterwards the life was so deeply pierced that they ran blood awhile; and since then, in fiercer volume, they have tumbled and been broken in many a gorge. So his later song is coloured by experiences which he never anticipated at first:—

Heartache, care, distress,  
Blighted hope and loneliness.

He had known the perils by Saul's throne and around his own, the peril of friends and the peril of foes, the pain of the wound that the traitor gives from behind, and that which a son can give when the father takes him to his bosom. The step in life suggested by the verses is still strong, but no longer light. The singer's measure is still pastoral, but it is slower. The shepherd thought is still kept, but it is now grave and serious: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." That is not the way a young man feels or speaks about either life or death. That is an old man's voice, and an old man's thought and word. From his sunny retrospect, under sunny memories, he turns to this solemn forecast and faces all the shadows as they darken to one gloom.

With his experiences of life, David's experience of God has correspondingly increased and intensified. At first he thought that the great Shepherd was doing all His shepherding for "His own name's sake." With an easy heart he trusted God in youth; one of many, only one of all, in the flock, he was content with the general care which God has of His own; he accepted the pleasant situation, "He leadeth me; He restoreth me; He maketh me to lie down; He is doing it all for His own name's sake; it is the Shepherd's own great and gracious way." But now he has come to feel quite differently; and, in his age, he sings as it all had been done by God "for my sake"—so intense and personal is his sense of God's consideration and care.

With extraordinary spiritual delicacy David veils his most sad memory of the Shepherd's tenderness and help, and softly here turns that reminiscence into this forecast. He knows where and when he so learned the comfort of the Shepherd's rod and staff, that he can now trust Him in

any valley of fear ; but he does not say. He allows no one to traverse with him his gloomiest memories, nor to look down his life's darkest path ; and he leaves hidden that passage in the past where, under its own shadow and amidst its own scenery, sin wrought out its own consequences, and where "mine enemies" had him in their fullest power. Yet there it was that the psalmist learned, when the Shepherd transacted with him face to face and hand to hand alone, to feel, "He loveth me, and giveth Himself for me ; and He does it for my sake." And out of this bitter root in a buried memory has grown this lily of heavenly peace which has seeded itself along all our paths of death. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil : for Thou art with me ; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me."

David's life had gone astray. He had been as a lost sheep. He had known the paw of the lion and the bear. And the Shepherd had left the ninety and nine and gone after the one that was lost. This had changed and deepened his whole feeling towards God. The Shepherd and he had come to closer quarters. Their relation had become intensely personal. David had needed, and had had, the Shepherd all to himself. They had been in perils together alone ; and there, when bruised and helpless, David had learned that he was beloved of the Shepherd. David "had dwelt in safety by Him ; He had covered him all the day long, and he had dwelt between His shoulders." So, at the memory of such mercy, and out of so intimate an experience, the song grows more intense, and the throb of new heart pulses come out, as he says : "*Thou art with me*" ; "*Thy rod and staff comfort me*" ; "*Thou spreadest my table*" ; "*Thou anointest my head.*" It had all been so personal, and there had been so much patience and such pity—the Shepherd had been like a father to him !

There, then, lies before us David's retrospect of his life !

“All the days of my life” are spread out to sight as he sings—his boyhood and his manhood, his shepherd years and his years as king, his days in green fields and by still waters, and his days of drift and fear in mountain gorge and mountain gloom. The scenery and the biography of the psalm are strangely blended; it is all delicately allusive and spiritually suggestive, as it is inimitably artistic and perfect—those happy fields at first, and now these ravines of death-like shadow! Is life always like this—the green and then the gloom—the sunshine and then the shadow—the shining morning fields and then the black crags at night—the open freedom at first, and at last a blind journey in a narrow pass? Though it be so, David can yet sing of it, and tune and time his steps by this song of the past into life’s farther and future distances. Goodness and mercy had followed him, and would follow him. David had doubtless seen, some who read may have, we ourselves lately saw by Ben Nevis, a rainbow that was resting, on the one hand, among fields and streams, and which spent with green and gold all the happy plain; but, on the other, it was thrusting its glory like swords into the clefts of the rocky hill. It glistened and beautified here; it dazzled and amazed up there. That rainbow is around our life. Goodness and mercy have followed us. Goodness is mere goodness—quiet, peaceful, constant; it is the common sunshine attending everybody, but now and again “doing wondrously” for a little while in order to arrest our eye and teach us how it does wondrously for us always. But mercy is goodness, and something more; it is the little over which we had no right to expect; it is goodness accentuated and heightened by circumstances, like sunshine and rain “on the wilderness” given, as if for the pure pleasure of giving, “to satisfy the waste and desolate ground”; it is not merely a general care, but personal considerateness of us on the part of God; it is provision in spite of our faith-

lessness and thanklessness; it is love finding us in forbidden places, and guiding us patiently in spite of the waywardness and wilfulness of the wandering. Surely in all this the thought of the psalmist is transcending the thought of shepherd-goodness and shepherd-care, and is catching the light of the unrisen and unrevealed truth of the Divine Fatherhood! For this mercy which has followed him has been like a father's when he pitieth a child.

The strength of the psalm, however, is in its pressure towards the future. These memories feed hope. The pause to accumulate past experiences increases the psalmist's power to advance on the unknown. The "carry" of his song is towards far horizons. His faith, which has crept so long past hindrance and hazard, at last takes flight and bears away, for love and hope are now its wings; and he casts himself at the end without fear upon God's ampler provisions for life, and sings himself out of sight to this note, "And I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." Surely our imagination may rise a little higher here than to the notion of a temple in Jerusalem! Surely we are here to think of that more elementary and essential idea, of which the temple was but a stately, but temporary, expression! Surely we may dare to believe that the feeling of the Fatherhood of God was upon David's heart here! He is at a more simple and primary way of thinking and speaking than that of wishing for a temple and its service. He has been feeling and speaking as a shepherd; he is on the lines of his earliest life; he is a boy again in simplicity of desire and of words to utter his large natural wants; and, above all things, he wanted a home.

The last is the shepherd-boy and shepherd-king's word *for himself*. By a spontaneous and pleasing touch of fancy, like a musical transposition, the shepherd-singer transfers the thought of the needs of the flock to that of his own need. The wandering about by day even in pleasant places



and the sleep by night in tent or cave; the adventure and victory in the dark and even the affectionate watching of the flock at noon; the vigil of the fold when it was late, and the pastoral *réveille* at daybreak, all alike had in them elements of trouble and something of fret; and, after all the experiences of the wood and field, the return to his father's house would be a welcome and supreme hour in David's early life. So the last word in the psalm of his life is about home. It was a life of ups and downs; it was here and there; it was to and fro; it fatigued and worried and strained; it had conditions of unsatisfactoriness and unrest in it, and the shepherd needed rest as much as the sheep. But all these experiences of fatigue and strain were, after all, only the incidentals of life in the lower rooms where the son is as one who serveth. And here is the breathing-out of the larger desire and the larger hope in one, "And I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." What a wide and welcome door thus stands open at the end of it all! After the wandering and weariness, after the dark pass under the shadow, after even all the goodness and mercy of the way—a Father's house, a home *for ever*!

In this interpretation of the psalm we may seem to have intruded on New Testament ground, and from Jesus Christ carried back some truths and assigned them to David. We have not meant to do so, and would justify what we have done. For the closing stanza of the psalm demands a larger interpretation than it usually receives. It suggests an emotion and hope in David's heart which anticipated and went forth to meet what was revealed only long afterwards in Christ. The ardour of his soul quickened the wish that God might be his Father into a daring thought of the Fatherhood. But, as with his spiritual thought of sacrifice, this thought of God appeared before "the times were ripe." It was a real and true thought to him; it came

to his soul as a divine surprise ; but the season for it in God's great year was not yet ; and, when it was planted out, it took no root, it faded of the frost. In this, however, when an adventurous instinct thus moved, David's soul had a moment's reminiscence of Father and home, and there was not only affinity, but connection, between him and The Christ. The Divine idea, entrusted to Jesus for complete unfolding, grew quick in David's soul, and on his lips gave this sign, and took its own shape in his life, thus long before its full time was come. Does not this throw some light on the mystical words of Jesus Himself, "I am the root and the offspring of David" ? This partial and implicit thought of the Fatherhood, which we here find the Spirit "saying in David," was perhaps one of the many which Jesus came not to destroy but fulfil, translating its "Doubtless Thou art our Father" into His own "Our Father which art in heaven" ; and this passage might be one of those which Jesus gave His disciples when He told them what was written "in the Psalms concerning Himself."

We certainly know that the Master's lips, when the fullest grace was poured into them and when they spoke His two most perfect prose-poems, were framed as here we find that David's were. For His revelation of His Father and of Himself, in its two most touching utterances, is found in His pathetic little idyll of home life with its story of a father's love and a wandered son, and in His pastoral narrative of the Good Shepherd. In these two parables together we have the evangel of salvation elaborated by Jesus to its most irresistible charm. Indeed, Jesus seems almost to take suggestion from David and rise from the Shepherdhood to the Fatherhood, verifying David's desire and dream, when He declares "I and the Father are one," and combining the two thoughts to a higher power when He says "My Father is greater than I, and no one is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand."

So this psalm seems to carry the Father's pity as well as the Shepherd's care, and can stand without strain a Christian interpretation; it even suggests the Shepherd sacrifice as a means to the Father's salvation. It is a Christian hymn as much as it is a Hebrew psalm; its imagination is more penetrative than picturesque; it has in it the wisdom of the Eternal and the love of the Divine ready to realize themselves through death in human salvation. Those great elemental and formative thoughts of man and God, which religion with every new revelation can only recast and recombine, are here in their power; and so deep a mystery of truth was never said more simply, and so Divine a comfort was never sung more sweetly, than when David had this inspiration, "The Lord is my Shepherd."

From the psalm as a whole we may learn to take a simpler thought of our life. It is not so complicated and contradictory as it seems. Each life is the expression and working out of a Divine thought. God is there working through the real towards the ideal. Bring the simple thoughts of a shepherd and a father and a home into our life, and they explain and inspire. The Shepherdhood of Christ and the Fatherhood of God are the two most comforting assurances of Scripture; and to acquiesce in the Shepherd's way is to fulfil the Father's good pleasure. Every life needs shepherding; and a shepherd knows his sheep by their weakness and faults, and measures his care of them thereby; and when the Good Shepherd calls His own sheep, He calls them by the name which suggests at once their failing and His help, and His call thus becomes a tender appeal, for it is both a remembrancer and a promise. But our life has even finer shepherding than that, for He is "the Shepherd . . . of our souls." He knows our wandering thoughts and our unruly impulse and our misleading desires, and "maketh" all these "to lie

down" as quietly as the cloud-flocks of a summer sky "shepherded all day by gentle winds." He gives all who follow Him of His own life every day; and, in all His word and way with them, there trembles the responsibility of His Father's love and a silent reference to His Father's face. "Of all whom Thou gavest me, I have lost none."

We may further learn to take a hopeful view of life. We are saved by hope; and the mother-thought of this psalm is hope. "Goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." Provision is promised against want and weariness and wandering; and each dark valley through which we pass is made a door of hope to some larger room of life made ready with some new good, the last and darkest leading to the largest and best. "For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall be their Shepherd." We may not get all we want, but shall have all we need. God transacts with us largely on the principle of compensation, and He has great reserves in Eternity. There is a splendid indifference as to detail, and an assurance of hope worthy of one whose trust is in God, when this psalmist teaches us to say, "I shall not want"—I shall want for nothing! True faith casts everything on a boundless hope.

We may also learn to introduce into our life the power of the Eternal. The words "*for ever*," when heard along a man's life, awaken his instincts and call up the reserve powers of his soul. They co-ordinate and graduate all his interests and all his faculties. First things stand first, and his powers take rank according to their dignity. Passing powers are devoted to passing things, and eternal powers to eternal things. And when passing interests and passing powers fail, the exercise and play of the Divine become more constant and free. Men begin to live above the world by living above the flesh; and, at the level of the Divine life, they live in its power. To those who live in the Spirit, eternity becomes desirable and attractive; it is the natural

and only outlet for lives which Jesus Christ has shepherded and inspired. And when their souls prompt them most towards some land that is very far off where their life may have its true combination and full expansion, men have to rise very high and sustain their faith at high levels by strong love and hope, like the birds that migrate which bear up into air above the attractions and currents of the earth, the easier to speed them on their far way.

ARMSTRONG BLACK.

ON THE RELATION OF THE DISCOURSES OF  
OUR LORD RECORDED IN S. JOHN III.  
AND VI. TO THE INSTITUTION OF THE  
TWO SACRAMENTS.

THE place assigned in the doctrine and Liturgy of the Church of England to the Sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion may be marked by the words of the Catechism, that Christ ordained them as "*generally necessary to salvation.*" To very many, within as well as without that Church, such a place appears out of proportion to the place they fill in the teaching of Christ, and the place He would have assigned them in His Church. And with regard to the Holy Communion in particular, such a place seems disproportionate to the place it fills in the Apostolic writings of the New Testament. Let us for a moment put ourselves in their position. Those of them who study the Acts and Epistles with regard to Holy Baptism—they are lamentably few—turn to the Gospels and say, "Why, S. John does not even record the institution; in S. Matthew there is the order to baptize, we grant; the words in S. Mark xvi. 16 require it too; but there is no positive mention of water as an essential sacramental means; while the teaching of S. John the Baptist, ratified by Christ in Acts i. 5, speaks