

Dominus Illuminatio Mea.

SCALE HOW "MEDITATIONS."

No. 23.

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

(*S. John vi., 36–45.*)

"THE BREAD OF GOD."

II.

(v. 36.) Our hearts yearn sometimes for the grace granted to these Jews, that we might see with our own eyes Christ in the flesh. "Seeing is believing," we say, and we think that a stronger passion of conviction and devotion would have been ours had we been amongst those more favoured who saw Him face to face. But perhaps in the things of Christ seeing is not believing; only those who see beyond the outward and visible look with the eyes of faith. These Jews saw and yet believed not.

(v. 37.) "All that which the Father giveth me shall come." Here we are brought face to face with that doctrine of election which, as we understand it, is trying to our sense of justice. Let us be sure when that is the case that we understand amiss; if favouritism is a vice in an earthly ruler, let us boldly say that divine favouritism is impossible. Let us note here that any feeble coming to Christ of which we are aware, any resting on Him in our weariness, any turning to Him in our distress, is a joyful indication that the Father has had us in His divine counsels and has given us to the Son. Do we fear for the future? Do we tremble lest this should prove a passing phase of feeling? Do we think that we are not worthy to bear the name of Christ? We need not fear—"Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out."

(v. 38.) "Not to do Mine own will." We all like to be credited with that work which is especially ours, but our Lord prefers always to take the subordinate place of one carrying out a commission. He tells us nothing of His own goodwill towards us, but speaks only of the will of the Father which brings us to Christ. Here, too, may His followers find a key to their lives, and a test of their faithfulness. Do we choose to do what we like; to follow our own inclinations: then are we wilful, and are not following our Master. Do we choose to do or even to suffer the will of our Father—

"holding as creed,
That Circumstance, a sacred oracle,
Speaks with the voice of God to faithful souls";—

then are we faithful to Him Who is meek and lowly of heart, and Who came, not to do His own

will, but the will of Him that sent Him.

(v. 39.) “This is the will,” etc. It is good to rest upon the steadfast faithfulness of our God. The unrest and anxiety which belong to things of this life do not disturb us here; all is safe that has been given into the stewardship of Christ. Observe, it is not said that He will lose no one, but even *no thing*; and *it* shall be raised. We get here a glimpse of the fulness and richness of the life that shall be. No heroic impulse, no inspiring thought, no conception of beauty, no act of service to each other, no single thing instinct with the life of Christ, shall be lost; but all this “treasure laid up in Heaven will go to the fulfilling and enriching of the broader, deeper life”: (see *Abt Vogler*, concluding stanzas). Nay, may we not hope to find again all ready for fulfilling those “good intentions” which get scant credit here?

“All instincts immature, all purposes unsure,
That weighed not as his work yet swelled the man’s amount.”
(See the whole of *Rabbi Ben Ezra*).

(v. 40.) Here we get the resolution of that problem of election which is to many of us a “hard saying.” Who are those whom the Father gives to the Son? The Father sent the Son, we know, to be the Saviour of the world; it is the divine will that all should believe; but here we see where the election comes in. It is we who choose. “For this is the will of My Father that everyone that beholdeth the Son.” Here our Lord describes, by the use of another verb, that act of fixed attention of the soul by which we recognise and apprehend Christ, that act of meditating, thinking upon Him, which our Lord requires of us in the blessed Sacrament—“This do in *remembrance* of Me.” “And believeth”;—our Lord here indicates the two stages of the act of faith; first the fixed, humble, and open-minded attention; and next the sure and satisfying conviction which comes of beholding Christ; which is eternal life, because it is “to know the Father and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent.”

“And I will raise him up at the last day.” It is as if Christ felt the pulse of His audience, the sceptical thought rising in the hearts of even the faithful—“All men die; what is this about eternal life?” Christ’s answer is again the promise of the joyful resurrection.

(v. 41.) “The Jews therefore murmured, etc. [sic] “The Jews,” *par excellence*, does not imply the nation as a whole but those of the Jews, Scribes, and Pharisees, whose lives were devoted to the keeping of the ceremonial law, with its infinitesimal and never-ceasing observances. By their superior “sanctity” these men had obtained a hold over the people [sic] and, wherever Christ taught, there were they, probably hanging on the outskirts of the crowd, waiting, not to learn, not to receive and believe, but to criticise and condemn, to do what our Lord describes as “murmuring.” They are evidently men of trained minds; they know how to lay their finger on the salient point of the discourse. They raise no question about the gift of eternal life, nor even about the resurrection. What offends them is, that Christ should give Himself out to be the sustenance of His people; their present life and therefore their life eternal, that divine “meat” which came down from heaven.

(v. 42.) “And they said, Is not this Jesus the son of Joseph.” Here we have an epitome of all destructive criticism. It is quite conclusive, “Whose father and mother we know,” and yet it does not touch the point; the Christ who laboured to reveal Himself to these slow of heart in His intimate relation with every one of them was not to be known in the flesh. His earthly home

and up-bringing had nothing to do with the matter; they conceived that they knew all when they knew nothing. The spiritual descendants of these Jews are active to-day. They credit Christ with a just life, even claim Him as their highest example, but that He “came down from heaven?”—no; are not all the conditions of His life as a man among men fully known? Why entertain the superstitious and idolatrous notion that a man among other men should be as God? So they continue to murmur among themselves; keen of insight after their kind, but blind to all those things of the Spirit which are spiritually discerned. Where this destructive criticism does not consciously touch the Son of God, it is all the same in our midst. We all live in houses made with hands, but about us, wherever we are, in the family or in our vocation, is also a house not made with hands. We can take this house to pieces stone by stone, and as we pull it down look at each stone and say—“this is no house, no home, for my soul,” or we can abide where we are called to be, in our special sphere, in our Church, in our country, and say with Jacob “Surely the Lord is in this place and I knew it not.”¹

(v. 43.) “Murmur not among yourselves.” Here is a counsel for our lives, too; it is not by the murmurings of destructive criticism that wrongs are remedied, failings corrected, or truth discerned.

“No man can come,” etc. Our Lord reiterates what He has said before, as His custom is; but in each repetition a further truth is revealed. The divine Father Himself draws the willing soul to the divine Son: our hearts bow down in reverence before the tenderness and beauty of this thought: may He awaken our ear to hear and our hearts to respond to the secret drawings of the divine Word.

“And I will raise him up at the last day.” The third assurance of the joyful resurrection given on this one occasion as if for strongest confirmation.

(v. 45.) “And they shall all be taught of God.”² Our Lord reveals what this teaching shall be; they shall be taught to see God manifest in the flesh in the face of Jesus Christ. “Everyone that hath heard from the Father.” “Heard from”—delightful, familiar, phrase, that we use of letters from absent friends. Just so, does not one hear from the Father in the written letter of His Word, in the inner whisperings of His Spirit? and always the message is one; everyone who “hath heard,” says our Lord, and “hath learned” cometh unto Me.

¹ Genesis xxviii., 16.

² See Isaiah liv., 13.