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Mountains and Valleys
in the
Ministry of Jesus

By

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"The Simple Things of the Chris-
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Prayer," etc.



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"And seeing the multitudes, He went up into the mountain: and when He had sat down, His disciples came unto Him: and He opened His mouth and taught them. . . . And when He was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him. And behold there came to Him a leper."

MATT. 5: 1, 2; 8: 1, 2.

"After six days Jesus taketh with Him Peter, and James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart: and He was transfigured before them. . . . And as they were coming down . . . there came to Him

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a man, kneeling to Him, and saying, Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is epileptic, and suffereth grievously."

MATT. 17 : 1, 2, 9, 14, 15.

"But the eleven disciples went into Galilee, unto the mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw Him, they worshipped Him: but some doubted. And Jesus came to them and spake unto them, saying, All authority hath been given unto Me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and disciple all the nations."

MATT. 28 : 16-19.

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IT is impossible to study the records of the life of Jesus without noticing how often He retired to the mountains. Amid the loneliness of their silent strength, He seemed to breathe the atmosphere of the ages, and to enter into communion with His Father in special degree. It is equally impossible in such study to fail to notice His loyalty to the valleys, and the places where men gathered in crowds. It would be

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quite true to say that He loved the mountains, but lived during most of His public life in the valleys.

A yet closer examination of the records will reveal the fact that there was ever a most intimate connection between His visits to the mountains and His work in the valleys. To the mountains He carried the interests and needs of the valleys. To the valleys He brought the measurements and atmosphere of the mountains.

This is a theme full of suggestiveness and value for us, not only as revealing the methods of the

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Master, but also because such revelation becomes illumination of the pathway of our service, as in His name we go forward to carry on His work, according to His commands.

The passages which we have read at once illustrate the theme most perfectly, and give such limit to our meditation as will result in the possibility of concentration. The mountain heights to which they bring us may with all fairness be termed the Alpine summits in the ministry of Jesus. Neither of these mountains is placed geographically by the writers. There have been many speculations as

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to which mountain He sat upon to deliver His manifesto of the Kingdom ; as to which He climbed to be transfigured before His disciples ; as to which He went to, meeting His disciples by appointment, in order to declare His authority and utter His commission. We do not know, and it is quite unimportant that we should. It may be that the three events happened on the same height, but it would be waste of time to stay to discuss the supposition. There is indeed, for our purpose, a value in the fact that they are not named. We can now more completely abandon ourselves to a consideration of the events, and so come

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more perfectly to an understanding of the distinctive quality and value of each.

AS a result of such consideration I should personally describe these mountains as the summits where Light, Life, and Love, are supremely revealed. The height upon which the King uttered His manifesto is always to me the Mountain of Light. The height upon which He was transfigured so that His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment glistened in whiteness, is ever to me the Mountain of Life. The height upon which He stood surrounded by His disciples, and from which

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He sent them forth with the great Evangel to all the nations is pre-eminently to me the Mountain of Love.

I have spoken of these as the Alpine summits in the ministry of Jesus. Let me press the symbolism a little.

I come to the first, and as I listen to the words of His moral conceptions and requirements, I become conscious that I am breathing the rare and awful atmosphere of heights above the snow-line. I look at Him, and know that I stand in the presence of Incarnate Purity, in the awful light of un-

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sullied holiness. It is the Mountain of Light.

I pass to the second, and one sentence which I have already quoted from the description gives tone and colour to the whole picture, "*His face did shine as the sun.*" It is still an Alpine summit, the snow is as white and awful as before, but the light of the sun is on it, and it flashes in all the warmer tints of which the whiteness is the inclusive whole. That which was cold, and rare, and terrible, has become warm, and attractive, and tender. Jesus, who enunciated the ethic, now manifests in His perfected humanity its final

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meaning. The law is incarnate in a life to which I am related by the bond of a common humanity. It is the Mountain of Life.

When I come to the last of these heights, the snow is still glistening in whiteness, and the sun is still shining in radiance ; but these give evidence of storm and tempest past, and the snow from the hills is flowing in fertilizing rivers to the valleys beneath. It is the Mountain of Love.

LET us now examine these mountains a little more closely in their relationship to our Lord. The first I have described as the Mountain of Light.

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Neither have I the time, nor is it necessary for me to attempt any detailed examination of the great Manifesto. We have a general familiarity with it, which will suffice for the purpose of the present study. Without making any quotation from it, let us recall its atmosphere. There are many ways of studying it, all of them valuable. There is, however, one way I am afraid all too seldom adopted ; that of reading, not for purposes of intellectual apprehension, but rather with a view to moral correction. To test life honestly by its revelation of requirement, is to become conscious of failure and to be filled with shame on account of sin. To

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stand in the light that streams from the mountain where Jesus enunciated an ethic which requires heart purity, is to know and to be compelled to confess, how grievously we have sinned. The standards of men are revealed and guarded by a police force. The standards of Jesus are erected in that inner, secret shrine of the desire, where none enters other than God and the spirit of a man. To come to the manifesto of the Mountain of Light only in order to see the ideal of a new social order, and to be solaced by the vision, is to treat it partially and therefore dishonestly. The first activity of the soul should be that

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of personal submission to its scrutiny, and acceptance of its judgments. To do that, is to be compelled to lay the hand upon the lip, and to cry, "Unclean ! Unclean !" I cannot live on that height as I am. The air of the snow-clad mountain is too rare and searching.

WE pass to the second mountain. Here I propose to pause long enough for a few words about the place of the Transfiguration in the life of Jesus, because I am convinced that much of value is lost here, as the result of inaccurate interpretation. A superficial reading of the story has given rise

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to the idea that what the disciples saw was the opening of the heavens, and the irradiation of the person of Christ by light falling on Him from without. That, however, is certainly not what is recorded by either Matthew, Mark, or Luke. The word they used to describe the event is in itself suggestive; and it may help us, if we render the Greek word which both versions translate "transfigured" in its anglicized form, *metamorphosed*.

That at once makes it clear that the change was wholly within His own person. He was not made to appear different by light

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effect, as from without. He was actually changed, and, therefore, of necessity, appeared so.

It has also been affirmed that on the Mount the essential Deity of Jesus flamed through the veil of the flesh. I equally join issue with that interpretation. The Deity of Jesus was never manifested except in the fact of His humanity. That is the mystery of Incarnation. The only *unveiling* of Deity possible to the eyes of humanity was that of its *veiling* in human form.

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WHAT then did take place on the holy Mount? That phrase of Peter, the "holy mount," is in itself suggestive. In the hour of transfiguration, Jesus of Nazareth came to the ultimate perfecting of His human nature. The process culminating there, may be recalled in the simplest of statements. In His being and birth He was sinless. In childhood He was innocent. Through youth and manhood He was holy. At last, standing on the mountain He was metamorphosed; He reached the final state of perfect humanity, and was ready to pass

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out into the larger life, without death. He stood upon the holy mount in the white light of holy character, unafraid of heaven's glory, because participating in its nature. The inhabitants of the place of justified spirits came and held converse with Him. He might have passed directly from this world and the life of probation, into the larger fuller life of heaven. There was no gate to exclude Him; no flaming sword to bar the way. He had won His way into the ultimate life, by victory over all temptation, and in absolute sinlessness.

That is indeed then the Mount

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of Life. In the first account of man in my Bible I read the Divine word "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." I would fain see that man, but I never do so in ultimate perfection until I come to this mount of Transfiguration. Everywhere I see men in the image and likeness of God, but image and likeness are alike defaced and battered, until the likeness is unlike. Here alone is a Man, passing through all the processes of human testing, until at last the Divine image and likeness are brought out into flashing glory, whiter than snow, above the brightness of the sun; a Being ready for the age-abiding habitations.

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The vision is an awe-inspiring one. It affrights me as did the light on yonder Mountain of Light, yet not altogether so. There, the white light falling on my life was cold and searching ; but here, it is warm and healing. Even though this man is so unlike me that I fear to gaze on Him, He is also so like me, that I know Him kin. On that mount I see life, my own life. There is explained to me the possibility of my own being. I am not that, and yet mine eyes have seen my life as it might be. The vision gladdens me, and saddens me ; fills my heart with desire, and with despair.

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AND now I come to the last of these Alpine summits. There stands the same Person, and yet there is such a difference that the effect produced upon His disciples is recorded by Matthew in the words, "When they saw Him they worshipped, but some doubted." The very naturalness of the declaration is presumptive evidence of its truth. The two statements have been spoken of as contradictory. As a matter of fact they constitute a sequence. His presence was Kingly, His person was in a new sense visibly Divine; He was declared the Son of God with power

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by the Resurrection ; therefore they worshipped. Yet the change in Him was so great, that some doubted. The Person they saw, they were compelled to worship ; but could it be Jesus of Nazareth !

In order to enter into all the values of this last mountain height we must remember what had passed since He stood the perfected and glorified Man, alone in the victory and splendour of His triumphant humanity, on the Mount of Life. From thence He had passed to the valley ; and with face set towards Jerusalem had gone in the strength of a greater love than tongue can tell to the green hill outside the city

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wall. There upon the brutal and accursed Roman gibbet He had died, the butt of the scorn and scoffing of priests and soldiers, and of men in whom the Divine Image of love was almost entirely obliterated ; had died with a prayer for mercy on His murderers, followed by a wail of heart-breaking anguish, the meaning of which defies the final interpretation of saints and scholars alike ; “ My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me ? ”

As in reverent imagination I stand with the men who saw Him die I am amazed ; for the fair and glorious image and likeness of God as it was seen upon the Holy

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Mount, is bruised, battered, and broken in the agony and cruelty of death. With them I am more than amazed, I am affrighted; and in the presence of the supreme tragedy of the ages I, with them, take hopeless refuge in flight, and astonished and terrified hiding.

Then followed the days of darkness, of mystery, of wonder, of despair, until the strange news began to circulate that the Dead was alive. He was seen of Mary; He appeared to Cephas; He walked to Emmaus; He presenced Himself visibly in the upper room amongst His own; and now He stood upon the mountain of appointment in

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well-loved Galilee, and uttered the command of sovereign supremacy ; and it was the speech of love, urging His disciples to bear to all the waiting nations the Evangel of His Kingship ; a Kingship based on victory won, and acting in healing and salvation.

All the purity of the Mount of Light is here also ; all the glory of the Mount of Life is shining still ; but Love is triumphant, for by the way of His descent to darkness He is shining in light that drives darkness like mist before the rising sun ; and by the way of His death He is giving men His life for the cure of all their paralysis. By the triumph

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of His Love, the messages of Light
and Life are for all the nations.
This is in very deed the Mount of
Love.

AND now we pass from these
mountain heights to the
valleys; and this, not be-
cause we have chosen to put these
things into contrast, but because in
following Him we are compelled
to do so. Immediately following
every revelation of the mountain,
there is an application in the
valley.

Passing from the Mount of Light
with His disciples He was immedi-
ately confronted with a superlative

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and awful manifestation of darkness in the presence of a leper. This meeting was more than accidental. There is very much incipient blasphemy in the careless speech, even of the children of God. Such speech would say that He happened to meet a leper. A more careful consideration will reveal profound suggestiveness in that meeting. The One whose standard of life can only be symbolized by the purity of eternal snow, stood face to face with a leper. This fact, and His action become the more remarkable when we call to mind the place of the leper in the economy of Moses, whose moral standards were now

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superseded by the more severe requirements of the ethic of Jesus.

A leper was the one man to whom the law had nothing to say in the nature of hope or help. In the Book of Leviticus, in chapters thirteen and fourteen, we find the law of the leper. Its only activity in the presence of leprosy was that of discrimination. The duty of the priest in the case of supposed leprosy was that of careful examination in order to determine whether the trouble was actually leprosy. If it were, then the leper must be cast out; he must not be so much as touched; his fellow men must have no fellowship with him. The

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leper is the embodiment of uncleanness. For him there is no cleansing by law. The last thing the law has to say of the leper is that he is beyond hope, and for the sake of others must be cut off from his people. That is the last thing the law has to say in the presence of the leprosy of sin. Very much has been said at one time or another about the remedial nature of punishment. As a matter of fact punishment is never remedial, nor can it be. Law can make it difficult for men to sin, and it does that when it removes temptation, and imprisons the sinner. But for the sinner it provides no healing virtue, no saving grace. It can only ar-

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rest him, and shut him away from other men for their sakes. For the time being it also prevents in his case the acts of sin, but his nature remains unchanged.

TO return. Jesus, fresh from the enunciation of His law, stood face to face with a leper. Our interest is profound, and we wait to see what He will do. Without hesitation He touched him, and immediately his leprosy vanished.

The picture is a parable and a prophecy. In that act the King is unveiled. He is more than King, He is Saviour. He not only gives

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light, He imparts life. He enunciates an ethic, and communicates dynamic. The dynamic flows backward, destroying the poison, and thrills forward, ennobling the life. That is the abiding truth concerning Him. He is the final Lawgiver. Sitting on the mountain above the snow-line, He fills the heart of men with fear by the awful purity of His demands; but He comes down from the mountain into the valley and puts the hand of His purity upon the leper, and the leprosy passes, and the healed man is lifted into the atmosphere of the snow to a life of purity.

Let us move on to the Mount of

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Life. Again He passed to the valley and again His first activity was full of suggestiveness. He came with His disciples to the multitude, and "there came to Him a man, kneeling to Him, and saying, Lord, have mercy on my son for he is epileptic and suffereth grievously; for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oftentimes into the water." Luke tells us that this father not only said "my son," but further described the boy as "mine only child," or quite literally "*mine only begotten son.*"

At once, the situation becomes full of meaning in the light of this contrast. Jesus was the only be-

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gotten Son of God, and that not only fundamentally and eternally by reason of His essential relation to the Father; but also by way of human fulfillment of the Divine ideal. In the genealogy which Luke places at the commencement of his Gospel he speaks of Adam as the son of God. This ideal was never realized, nor its meaning manifest, until the Man of Nazareth lived. Now He, the only begotten Son of God, having revealed the full glory of human life on the Holy Mount, passed into the valley and there met the only begotten son of man, devil possessed, the violence of indwelling passion bruising and destroying him.

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The meeting was symbolic and suggestive, and we wait to see the issue. He rebuked the demon, healed the boy, and gave him back to his father.

On the Mount of Life I saw in radiant splendour the meaning of my humanity. It was a great vision, but unattainable. I dwell in the valley, in the grip of evil forces by which I am undone. But as my heart is filled with despair, the Son of God leaves the glory crowned height, and descending to the place of my despair, casts out the forces that harm and spoil, sets me on my feet, and enables me for the attainment of that

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life, the meaning of which He has revealed.

Glad is my heart that Peter's blundering request was not granted. Even while the glory of the Mount had almost blinded him, he yet desired to remain there, placing his Lord among others, as perhaps the supreme Example. Had the request been granted the only begotten son of man would still have been demon-possessed. If Christ had done no other for man than reveal the ideal, He had but mocked his impotence, and left him helpless upon the wayside. He did infinitely more. He turned His back for the second time upon

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the Heaven of His right. He did that first, when He laid aside the *form* of Deity suitable for manifestation to unfallen creation, and took a *form* suitable for revelation to sinning men. And now in perfected and glorified human nature, He who might have ascended to the everlasting Hills, descended to the valley. Thus in Him, God and Man unite in self-emptying; and bruised and broken men can be set free for a new beginning.

THUS we come finally to the Mount of Love. All the valleys of human sin and degradation and ruin lie about its base. All the mists and mys-

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teries ; all diseases, pains and travails ; all the wounding and bloodshed ; all the strife and tears ; are gathered in the abysmal depths. The whole story may be gathered into the sighing, sobbing language of the Apostle, "the whole world lieth in the evil one" ; "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain." The contrast is still evident, but it is vaster. In the valleys lies the lost Kingdom of a lost king. Man, made for dominion, has lost his sceptre, and the whole territory of his kingship suffers with him, and supremely in him. On the mountain stands the King. He has been into

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the valleys at their deepest, and there has fought the fight which opens the door of the prison house, and already the prisoners have commenced their exodus. Through the mystery of a death, the signs of which are still upon Him, He has breathed a new life into creation, and already there is a stir of regeneration through all. By the crushing of the crown of thorns upon His brow, He has won the crown of renewed empire, and already instead of the thorn there is coming the fir tree. In the barren, trackless desert He has made a way, and already the rose is blossoming.

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And now He sends forth His messengers, with light for all darkness, with life for all death, with love for all loneliness, and His final words are their strength as they go, "I am with you alway, even to the consummation of the age."

FINALLY let us enquire what is the application of this meditation. In attempting to reply, it is well that we first recognize that there are values in the study which can have no application to any other than the supreme Lord who is the central figure on all the heights and in all the depths.

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In eternal youth He is yet ever the Ancient of Days, and His throne for ever and ever will be high lifted in light, which no man can approach. In the awe-inspiring service of all the ages to come, when the redeemed lift their passion-song of blood, He will create and lead the music, not as one of the redeemed, but as the Redeemer, whose life by its absolute perfection was equal to the suffering which made Redemption possible. When love answers Love in the deathless worship and service of the far flung splendours of Eternity, He will still be the fountain and sea of its mighty river, for unto Him is all authority

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given in the Dominion of the love of God. Moreover, in all the depths, until the sweep of the circle shall be perfected, by the bringing low of the hills to the valleys, and the lifting of the valleys to the heights, He is the One Worker. It is only by His touch that leprosy will pass ; only by His word that demons will be cast out ; and only by His presence that creation will be remade.

Nevertheless, His command to His followers on the last of the summits of His earthly ministry, was to go forth upon His errands ; and, as, under the sway of His authority of love, in the energy of

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His life bestowed, and in the radiance of His light shining, we desire to obey, we may be guided by this meditation on His personal ministry. From this meditation then, we reverently gather two applications of preëminent importance. These let me state, in brief words, and then by illustration and enforcement.

(i) In order to meet the need of the valleys we must be familiar with the mountains.

(ii) In order to maintain fellowship with Christ, we must leave the mountains and serve in the valleys.

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AS to the first. The first qualification for dealing with sin is the acceptance of the standards of Jesus. Such acceptance will be a perpetual safeguard against the awful and cruel heresy of treating sin as though it were a matter of small moment, an accumulation on the surface, rather than a poison in the depths. To sit by the side of the leper and to soothe him with a caressing touch, assuring him that his leprosy is of no serious moment, and that in time it will work itself out into purity, is to lie to him ; and he knows it. It is more. It is to contract the leprosy. To condone

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sin on any ground is to sin. Already the loathsome disease has fastened upon the man who dares in such way touch it. Only the man who lives above the snow-line can dare lay his hand upon the leprosy of sin. He knows its virus, and by the purity of his life is at war with it. So, and only so, can he deal with it in others. Let there be no kid-glove, rose-water fooling with sin. First let us ascend to the Mountain of Light, in subjection and in heart-break; and then by the way of the ultimate mystery of the power of the Christ in the life, let us pass to the valleys, and the lepers for their healing.

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So also there can be no casting out of devils save in the actual power of the life of the only begotten Son of God. The sons of Sceva attempted to cast out evil spirits by using the name of the Lord Jesus, and the answer of the demon was, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?" Immediately the demon-possessed man leaped on them, mastered them, prevailed over them, so that they fled naked and wounded. That also was a parable and a prophecy; its teaching being, that naming the name of Jesus is not sufficient, where there is no sharing of His life; and its prediction has been fulfilled in countless in-

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stances in the passing of the centuries. First let us ascend to the Mountain of Life in submission; and then by the way of that life received through death let us pass to the valleys and cast out devils.

And finally and comprehensively, we have no gospel for the valleys of the world save as we stand on the Mountain of Love, and receive it from the lips of the crowned King of Love. We may have a philosophy which satisfies a mental mood; we may have a speculative system of ethics which appears as though it ought to work; we may have some social dream, which

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would be better defined as mirage, but we have no gospel. We may sing songs of finest metre, set to strains of perfect music, but they do not inspire, nor can they, unless they tell of power available for paralyzed men, of life for dying men, of cleansing and renewal for polluted and ruined men. Therefore ere we pass to the valleys, let us betake ourselves to the mountain where the One is enthroned who passed to His crowning by the way of the Cross, and receiving from His lips our commission, go forth with the evangel of His love, "who Himself bare our sins in His own body on the tree, and by whose stripes we are healed."

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That is an evangel indeed, and wherever it comes, to North or South, to East or West ; of city, of country, or continent ; men hear it, and hope ; and rising, are healed ; whether they are in penitentiary, or university, high or low, rich or poor, noble or ignoble.

AND now as to the second of our lessons. We cannot continue in close comradeship with Christ if we tarry upon the mountains. He is perpetually going down into the valleys, and to be near Him we must accompany Him. One of the perils of our age is that of desiring to stay upon mountain heights,

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Keswick, Northfield, Southport;
Conference, Convention, Summer
School. To stay in such places is
to stay alone, for Christ is descend-
ing to the leper in the valley, to
the devil-possessed son of man, to
all those who sin and suffer the
whole world over.

The air of the mountain heights
is bracing, its vision is clear, its
sense of sublimity is restful, and we
are ever tempted to sing :—

My willing soul would stay
In such a frame as this,
And sit and sing itself away
To everlasting bliss.

To those who have borne the

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burden and heat of the day such a song is permissible. As they tarry on the margin and await the King's home-call, such a frame is fitting. But to those whose eye is bright, whose step is elastic, whose strength is full, such singing is little short of blasphemy.

Back to the valleys ! The lepers are still there. The sons of men are still devil-possessed. The sob and sigh of the groaning creation is still to be heard. And these all are appealing to the heart of Christ. He will not tarry on mountain heights until the saving work is completed. And yet, oh, solemn and awful wonder, He cannot

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reach those needy souls save through us. Sometimes in strange vision I seem to see the Christ to-day, lonely and hindered. He withdraws from the company of those who bear His name, because they selfishly choose to tarry in the places of peace and quiet. He cannot reach the valleys for lack of media of communication. This explains the deadly inertia of the Church, and the slow progress of His victories in the world.

The picture is appalling! And what can I do? Very little; and yet He can make of my very little His very much. I can remember that the mountains prepare for the

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valleys; and the valleys demand the service of the mountains. I can carry the valleys with me to the mountains for light on their darkness, for life for their death, for love for their loneliness. I can carry the mountains with me to the valleys, illuminating, energizing, saving.

Not by the saintship of selfish enjoyment of spiritual blessings in heavenly places, can we be the friends of Jesus; but only by the service of sacrifice which suffers, and through suffering saves. And yet there can be no healing of earth's sorrows save by Heaven's Saviour.

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To the mountains, O my soul,
For Light and Life and Love,
To the valleys, O my soul,
In company with God.

THERE remains one brief word which must be uttered. We have no place at the feet of Jesus on the Mount of Light ; we have no right to gaze upon the glory of the transfigured Man upon the Mount of Life ; we have no appointment with the authoritative Lord upon the Mount of Love unless we have obeyed His first word. The perpetual method of His ministry was that of sifting the curious crowd, and seeking for such as would follow Him. To them His word was, " If

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any man would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." That is still the first thing. We cannot sit at His feet as Teacher ; we cannot see the ideal of His perfect example ; we have no part in His commission to evangelize the world ; until we have yielded to Him the homage of our hearts, the surrender of our lives.

Some one feels the force of the word, and desiring fellowship in life and service with the Lord Christ is yet afraid. To such the King of the Mountains of Light, of Life, of Love, comes with hands outstretched, and with the promise

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of Life. Look into His face and say, O Jesus, King most wonderful, by the perfection of Thy Law, by the glory of Thy Life, but most of all by the Love of Thy Cross Thou hast conquered.

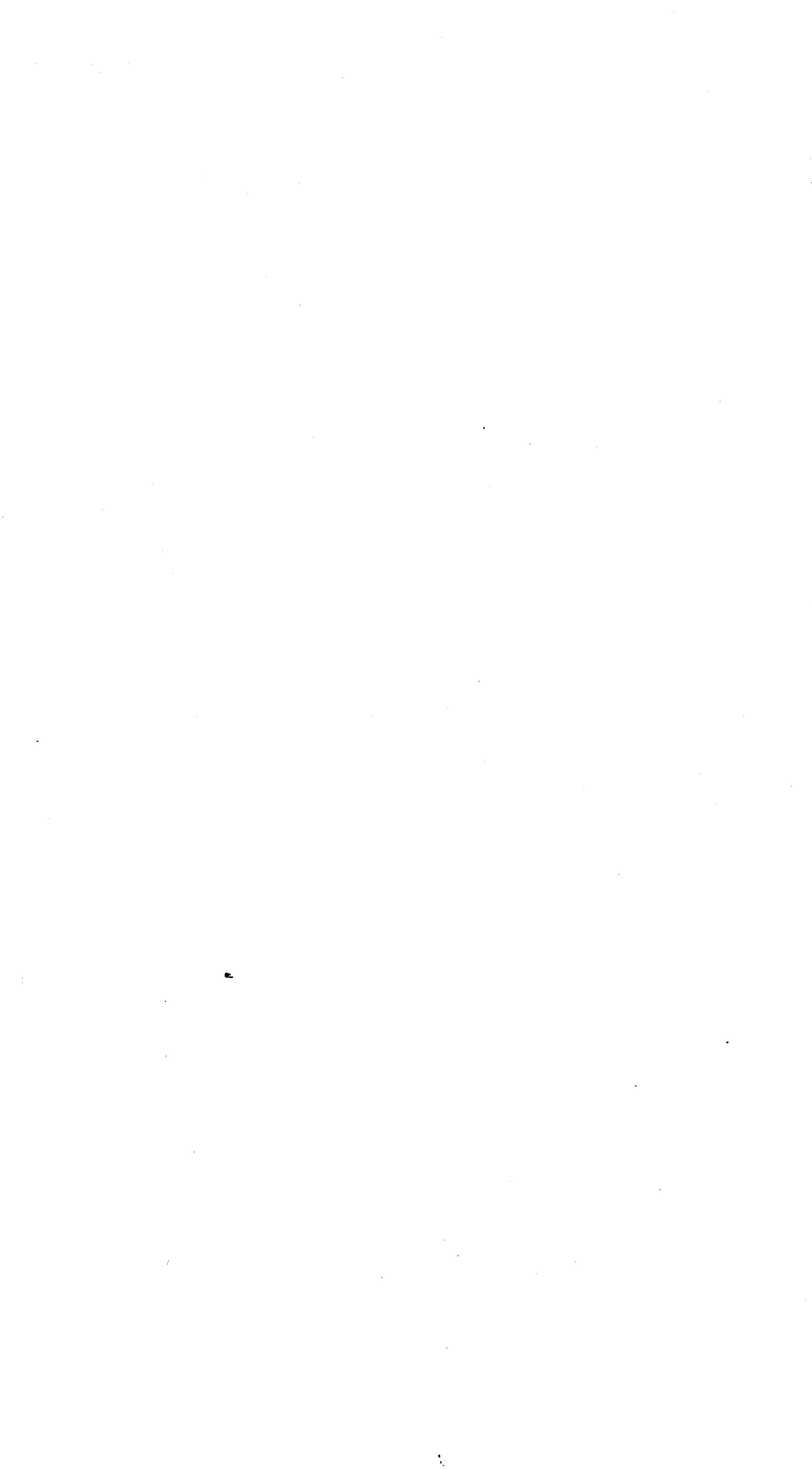
“ Just as I am without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bid'st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come.

“ Just as I am, Thy love unknown
Has broken every barrier down ;
Now to be Thine, yea, Thine alone,
O Lamb of God, I come.”

His answer to such surrender will be that He will enroll you as one of His own ; giving you the value of His death, the virtue of

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His life, the victory of His resurrection. Then He will gather you about His feet on the high mountains, and lead you into valleys of service until that glad day comes when His victory being won, the new Heaven and new earth shall be to the praise of His name for ever and ever.



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