

**SERMONS, FROM THE FOWLS OF
THE AIR AND THE LILIES OF THE
FIELD, OR LESSONS OF FAITH,
BESIDE THE COMMON PATCH OF
LIFE**

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Sermons, from the Fowls of the Air and the Lilies of the Field, or Lessons of Faith, Beside the Common Patch of Life by Jr. Nott

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JR. NOTT

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FROM
THE FOWLS OF THE AIR
AND THE 100948
LILIES OF THE FIELD,
OR
LESSONS OF FAITH
BESIDE THE COMMON PATH OF LIFE.

BY SAMUEL NOTT, JR.

SECOND EDITION.

I thank Thee that the levelness of earth,
Higher than earth can raise me *Mrs. HEMANS.*
Whoso is wise and will observe these things, even they shall understand the
loving kindness of the Lord. *PSALM CVII.*

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INTRODUCTION.

It is a remarkable characteristic of our Savior's discourses, as indeed it is of the whole Bible, that they leave the hearer amidst corresponding lessons in the open temple of the earth. They admit no vacancy when the preacher's lips are silent, or the book is closed, because the same lessons are urged and applied by Nature and Providence at every turn of life. After we have heard Him, "who spake as never man spake:" after we have read the Bible, the earth with all its scenes and occasions utters no longer a mere Natural Theology, but the full and glorious gospel. What folly, after Christianity has shed its light around us, to read the book of nature and Providence, in the mere moon-light of the Pagan world! The gospel, no doubt, discovers what could never have been known without it; but when its light is shed abroad, it is reflected in full beauty and glory from the world on which it falls: and the whole scene is no longer a dim revelation of nature, but a bright communication from heaven. To us, Natural Theology declares, not merely that "God is," but that "He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

But as our title intimates, we not only call attention to the lesson, but commend the *place* and *circumstances* in which He who gives it, urges it on our notice. The lesson meets us *beside our common path*: — amidst our occasions of anxiety as to food and raiment: —

amidst the necessities and blessings of every day. The lesson is given where man craves and claims it, and where he has every conceivable opportunity to learn it. The earth was not constructed to produce presumption and dependency ;— was not cast out unbegged as the wilderness of base passions and conduct, from which all the heirs of holiness must be separate. It is a school for heaven, where the lessons of faith and hope are learned :— where holiness is attained by contact with its proper occasions. Christianity, not only gives its reflection from the whole earthly scene, but casts the light upon the whole path of human life. This world, is not a prison to the soul of man : from which his only desire and effort should be to escape : but the temple for the transforming prayer, “ Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

The beautiful portion of our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, which we have taken as our guide, is the finest conceivable illustration of these remarks. How near the lesson to the paths of life ! The fowls of the air and the lilies of the field are with us repeating and reflecting the lessons of the word, from Sabbath to Sabbath, and from the morning dawn unto the shades of the evening ; amidst all the wants and cares of our earthly state. — And birds of the night sing us to sleep, after fatigue and anxiety, in His arms who “ only maketh us to dwell in safety ; ” — and the crowing cock wakes us, amidst new plans and toils of life, to behold the day dawn, and the day-star arise in our hearts.

If the pulpit and the religious press would render their proper service in the production and nurture of faith, it must be not so much by the power of their own immediate lessons, and of their own peculiar opportunity ; as by directing attention to the lessons which remain : by which God gives line upon line, precept upon precept, beside the common path of life. And on the other hand, must they be in fault, in so far as they adopt principles, or employ methods which divert attention from the various appeals which God is con-

stantly making to the conscience and the heart of man : which leave a vacancy of inspired instruction, and silence the full and glorious gospel, beside the path of life where God appointed it to be heard. The great object of this work is to *make religion more earthly—more intimate with the necessities and blessings of earth* ; to show to man that the best lessons are given him at the best occasions of piety ; — that piety, springing up and growing on the soil of earth, is the piety of heaven, — a plant that will never die.

On this point we need to be corrected. How many of our religious applications are on the contrary ground ; — that the common path of life is quite unsuited to the walk of faith — that business, and care, and uncertainty, and plans, and efforts, and disappointments, and success, must needs hinder the rise and growth of faith in the heart. How current the claim, that piety must begin and grow by seclusion from the business and cares of life — by indifference to all earthly things.

Perhaps, (and we speak it with diffidence,) the error in question can scarcely be said to be avoided in any other religious book but the Bible, — so remarkably liable has Christendom been to adopt the ancient and modern error of the Gentiles ; — so tenacious have Protestants been of that inherited error of the Catholic church. The Bible, with all its purity and perfection of principles and motives is among us : meets us on our daily path ; at every juncture of our life ; and *there*, is profitable ever for our reproof and correction, and instruction in righteousness. But many of our best religious treatises, and biographies of excellent men, are far from following the wisdom of that divine Book ; calling us away from the very opportunities which God has appointed : and requiring an indifference to earthly good and evil, which renders nugatory the providential occasions of faith. We could name books with reverence and gratitude for benefits received by their repeated perusal, which, nevertheless, we should adjudge guilty of the error in question. The more we have read