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I Am A Stranger On The Earth

“I am a stranger on the earth” (Ps. 119:19).” Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul” (1 Pet. 2:11).

When a child is born, it is spoken of sometimes under the designation of “a little stranger!” Friends calling will ask if, as a privilege, they may “see the little stranger.” A stranger indeed come from far! From the immensities. From the presence, and touch, and being of God! and going—into the immensities again—into, and through all the unreckonable ages of duration.

But the little stranger grows and in a while begins to take vigorous root. He works, and wins, and builds, and plants, and buys, and holds, and, in his own feeling becomes so “settled” that he would be almost amused with anyone who should describe him as a stranger now.

And still life goes on, deepening and widening in its flow, and holding in itself manifold and still multiplying elements of interest. Increasingly the man is caught by these, like a ship, from which many anchors are cast into the sea. He strives among the struggling, rejoices with the gay, feels the spur of honor, enters the race of acquisition, does some hard and many kindly things by turns; multiplies his engagements, his relationships, his friends, and then - just when after such preparations, life ought to be fully beginning, and opening itself out into a great, restful, sunny plain - lo! the shadows begin to fall, which tell, too surely, that it is drawing fast to a close.

The voice which, soon or late, everyone must hear, is calling for "the little stranger" who was born not long ago, whose first lesson is over, and who is wanted now to enter by the door called death, into another school. And the stranger is not ready. He has thrown out so many anchors and they have taken such a fast hold of the ground that it will be no slight matter to raise them. He is settled. He has no pilgrim's staff at hand; and his eye, familiar enough with surrounding things, is not accustomed to the onward and ascending way, cannot so well measure the mountain altitude, or reckon the far distance.

The progress of time has been much swifter than the progress of his thought. Alas! he has made one long mistake. He has "looked at the things which are seen" and forgotten the things which are not seen. And "the things which are not seen are eternal." And so there is hurry, and confusion, and distress in the last hours, and in the going away. Now, all this may be obviated and escaped, thoroughly, if a man will but say, I am a stranger in the earth; hide not Thy commandments from me.