

Ecclesiastes - Commentaries by James George Deck

Hymns and Sacred Poems, Vanity of Vanities! (1:2)

"NOTHING BUT BLANK."

Lines in answer to a poetic lamentation in an album, that "All was a blank, nothing but blank!"

HAVE you found life a "blank"? what! all nothing but "blank"?

I'm sorry, my friend, at your fate:

But perhaps in your ear, if you 're willing to hear,

The cause of your "blanks" I '11 relate.

Suppose you should go to the regions of snow,

To rear there the fruits of the sun;

In vain would you sow, not a seed there would grow,

Naught but "blanks" when your labors were done.

Suppose you should toil to win harvests and spoil

From Afric's hot deserts of sand;

Would you wonder, I trow, if the shares of your plow

Were bootless worn out on such land?

In the lott'ry of life, with its turmoil and strife,

After pleasure, and riches, and rank,

'T is no wonder to find, that an earth-grov'ling mind,

Has found every ticket a "blank."

Let me ask you to look into Solomon's book,

At the lesson he teaches so plain;

That though all else is "blank," wisdom, riches, and rank,

There are still richest prizes to gain:

For "the fear of the Lord," as revealed in His Word,

Is "Beginning of Wisdom" below;

When this you have tried, though all "blanks" be beside,

A prize beyond rubies you'll know.

I once groaned like you, while proving how true

That all without God was a "blank.;"

Now I sing with delight, both by day and by night,

Since these living waters I drank.

Oh, attend to His voice, and your heart shall rejoice,

It will meet all your troubles so rife;

Then lift up your eyes, to a home in the skies,
All else with corruption is rank;
And then you 'll agree, my dear poet, with me,
His favor's a prize, not a "blank."
Hymns and Sacred Poems, All Is Vanity (1:2)

"Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity!"-
Eccl. 1: 2.

YES, it may sparkle, the festive bowl,
The song of the minstrel sound;
The smiles of beauty bewitch the soul,
And her eyes beam bliss around:
These joys I followed in youth's gay hours;
I sought to gather the choicest flowers,
Of every clime and sky:
Soon as they bloomed their freshness wasted;
The cups were dry as soon as tasted:
'T was Vanity! all Vanity!
The laurel wreath may gird the brow;
But withers even there;
Though it shine with fame and honor now,
'T will be furrowed soon with care:
The monarch's crown may now dazzling gleam,
With the pearl, and the diamond's mingled beam,
Like stars in the cloudless sky;
But it cannot shield from shafts of woe,
It cannot guard from the last great foe:
'T is Vanity! all Vanity!
The poet may strike his golden lyre,
And the nations enraptured stand;
But age soon quenches the poet's fire,
And palsies the minstrel's hand:
And fame at best is a fleeting breath,
Its voice unheard in the vaults of death;
A meteor, it passes by:
How mad to value a thing so frail,
Fickle, and false as the summer's gale!

'T is Vanity! all Vanity!

Thou joyest now with thy bride of youth,
Her beauty and charms delight;
Her fervent love, and her plighted truth,
Make thy happy home shine bright:

This joy I 've tasted,-the sweetest one
That 's left for mortals beneath the suu:-
But thy bride may pine and die;

"The light of thine eyes" be laid in the tomb,
The close of thy life be a night of gloom:

'T is Vanity! all Vanity!

Children may gladden thy fireside now,
With their sunny mirth and glee;
The blooming cheek, and the open brow,
Promise years of joy to thee:

But the sweetest bud may first decay,
The loveliest flower first fade away,

'Neath this world's inclement sky:

Heartless neglect may thy love repay,
When thy strength is spent, and hair is gray:

'T is Vanity! all Vanity!

A voice is heard from th' ivory throne
Of Israel's wisest king,
Who had fully proved, and sought, and known,
The worth of each earthly thing:

Is there, then, nothing here below
To fill the mortal mind?

Can it only drink of the cup of woe,
And illusions and ciphers, find

The bubble's sparkle, the meteors gleam,
The lightning's flash, and the morning dream,
And the breeze's fitful sigh:

Are these the types of all we cherish?
Must all we toil and hope for perish?

All Vanity? all Vanity?

The King of Israel speaks again,
His warnings of wisdom done,
To turn our eyes from this world of pain,

To the regions above the sun:

The preacher was wise; his words were truth;

His proverbs many for age and youth;

Though sharp, they were goads of love,

To awaken souls from the sleep of death,

And seeking a portion in things beneath,

Instead of the joys above:

In the "Song of songs" he would bid us rise

To joys and pleasures above the skies,

All heavenly and divine;

To fountains, gardens, and pleasant flowers,

The winter past, and perennial bowers,

And "love better far than wine"

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