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# THE SEARCH FOR GOD

## *AND OTHER SERMONS*

BY

ROBERT EYTON

RECTOR OF UPPER CHELSEA, PREBENDARY OF ST PAUL'S  
SUB-ALMONER TO HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN

SECOND EDITION

LONDON

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1895



TO THE

REV. H. SCOTT HOLLAND,

CANON OF S. PAUL'S,

WITH THAT ESPECIAL AFFECTION WHICH ALL  
HIS FRIENDS FEEL FOR HIM.



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## SERMON I.

### THE SEARCH FOR GOD.

“Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know?”—JOB xi. 7, 8.

THERE is no more wonderful and soul-stirring voice, out of the past, than the book of Job. “One of the grandest things ever written with pen,” says Carlyle, “a noble book, all men’s book, our great statement of the never-ending problem of man’s destiny and of God’s ways with him here on earth.” Its form presents analogous features to the Books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes to such an extent as to lead many critics to assign it to the same era, viz. to the time of Solomon. That was an age very like our own in this one particular, that men were then as now endeavouring to humanize the existing religion and to spiritualize its precepts. The distinctive note of the literature of that period, commonly called the Chokmah literature, to which the Book of Job belongs, is its dissatisfaction with the mere dry bones of theology, and with mere formal rules of conduct—its ceaseless endeavour to reach that fundamental stratum of moral being, in which the Jewish law and

the human conscience find their unity. Its underlying spirit presents some analogies to that of the modern Cambridge school of theology, which has in much the same way endeavoured to spiritualize Church tradition.

Let us look at some of the circumstances of the time. During David's reign the Hebrew Commonwealth had stretched itself in various ways. It had entered into new and wider relations—political, mercantile, literary—it had come in contact with many of the nobler and more cultivated movements of the time, very much as we have come in contact with the religions of the East—and, as Godet points out, “in the court of Solomon this expanding interest and contact bore fruit.” There grew up a school of wisdom and of moral philosophy which set itself to search more deeply into the origin of all things human and divine. “Beneath the Israelite they tried to find the *man*”—beneath the Mosaic system, with its rules and formulas, they tried to find that universal principle of the moral law, of which it was a temporary expression. This was a new spirit in the world—adapted to its new conditions—and it developed a literature peculiar to itself, not only in moral tone, but also in its form, viz.: the proverbial or parabolic. The leading minds of the Solomonic era delighted to utter their wisdom in short and picturesque sentences, which if they sometimes seem to incline to sententiousness, yet really attempt to grapple with the

moral problems, which in every age interest the thoughts of men. You have only to compare them with the wild lyrical cry of some of the Psalmists,—*e.g.*, the authors of the forty-second, seventy-fourth, and seventy-ninth Psalms—to become aware of the immense difference which separates the two.

The book of Job then belongs to the Chokmah period both in spirit and in form, and is its most perfect and original specimen ; it bears close affinity in style and mode of thought to the Book of Proverbs : it bears strong internal traces of the character and grace, which the genius of Solomon gave to that age. The most probable hypothesis of its origin is that the story of Job, his sufferings and his patience, was handed down by tradition from patriarchal times, till in the age of Solomon,—the most cultured and literary period of Hebrew history—a gifted and inspired poet threw the tradition into the dramatic shape in which we now possess it. Just as the tradition of Ulysses—preserved for centuries by Greek bards—found its shape in the writings of Homer, so the story of Job passed from generation to generation till, in the literary age of Solomon, the poet, who could give it form, arose and wrote it down for the edification and delight of all who should come after him. Therefore, though the form of the book of Job belongs to the age of Solomon, in the story itself we have the ancient wisdom of Idumæa with all its speculations on the problem of life ; we

have a debate "on the eternal problem of good set over against evil, around which all nations have struggled, suffered, doubted and believed."

And unchanged to this hour the problem remains. No work, no amount of industry, has been too great to give to it, yet it remains unsolved. Every one capable of thought, man or woman, sooner or later, is brought up by it, is challenged by that eternal "why." Why has good to fight with evil? Why, if God be good, does He permit us to be the willing or unwilling victims or fighters of evil? Since the book of Job was written, the question has vexed and tormented everyone capable of thought, from the child just arriving at consciousness of pain and suffering or wickedness in the world, to the man who sees the son of his heart, whose training has been his anxious care, inclining to the baser part. Why, oh why, is it so? And even that Word from Heaven, the Eternal Word, that full expression of the Father—even Christ gave us no complete answer. It was not His mission to declare it and therefore He, Who alone could have told us, did not. What He did say in effect was\* "Believe in God your Father and live My life and you will find the answer, if not here—yet hereafter." He did not act like some amiable despot who might remove all difficulties and say to his subjects "You need not work any longer or suffer in working." For He would not make us good by outside force, but He would shew us how to be

\* Cf. Stopford Brooke, "The Spirit of the Christian Life," p. 348.

good in inward character, and help us to be good by our own labour. He threw us back on faith in God and love for man, and said in effect "Work on these lines, and the answer will come." He shewed us how to do the sum, but He did not do it for us. Nor did He say that the answer would come to us here. In fact He seemed to say that the full answer could only come hereafter, could only be found in another world and another life. So that with us the problem is intensified ; we have not only the original difficulty, as to why evil is—that remains with us—but we have another question suggested by Christ's treatment—viz. : Why cannot we find it out, why are we kept in darkness, why has God treated us as He has done ? He has told us many things through Christ. Why has He not told us about this ? Why did He speak in a way in which He never did before or has done since, through Christ, and not tell us about this which we most want to know ? Must we like Zophar, in his tirade against Job, in this eleventh chapter, take refuge in a tirade of specious-sounding and flattering agnosticism—must we adopt the fawning language, tinged with the base spirit and motive of the courtier, in which he eulogises the Wisdom of the all penetrating, all pervading omniscience of God ? Must we plead with him that we will give up the search for God, because God is too high and too deep, too perfect for us to comprehend ?

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The answer is, that if we do so, we may make out a good plausible case like Zophar does, but that nobody will believe in our sincerity and we shall not really believe in our own. These flattering epithets, this bated breath—this base spirit of the courtier which says in effect “Whatever the King pleases, that is right” are really a contemptible and abject surrender of our God-given powers. Its humility is like that of Uriah Heep. “Canst thou by searching find out God? He is as high as Heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than hell, what canst thou know?” The question is but a thin mask which conceals an unworthy unwillingness to take the trouble to think, or to face the problem in the light which Christ has thrown upon it.

The Christian's theory is far higher, and is at least an intelligible one. It keeps to facts, it gives an explanation of them, and an incentive to exertion in the face of them. It says in effect, “This is the question to which a man must get the answer, before he can work against evil and on the side of enduring good, viz.: not, why does evil exist, but why has not God thrown a clear light upon the problem of its existence?” That is the question which he is bound to face or he must be for ever useless—he can never understand God's ways or know God himself. There is a mighty and loving Being Whose object is to educate us into likeness with Himself. That is the fundamental postulate. Why then has He not

told us what we want to know, viz.: why there is evil at all? The Christian answer is that He has given us this problem to work at for the sake of our education, in order that through thinking about it and working at it, certain powers which we call spiritual, might be developed—powers by which we draw near to Him now, and shall come to be like Him hereafter. God did not set us this hard sum to work at merely in order to *puzzle* us. He sets it us in order that we might in our working at it, even through our sense of despair in solving it, become what He meant us to be; that we might be trained in inmost character. When we become like Him, when the conditions of this life are changed into those of the fuller life—the fog will lift, and by means of the fuller life the question will be answered and the problem solved. In the meantime the very question which we took to be a kind of hindrance, because we could not find the answer to it, turns out to be a means of education—is calling out our strongest powers, is preparing us for finding the answer in another life. This is the Christian theory; and, starting from it, vast numbers of men and women are working for good against evil at the present day; they have their share of those difficulties, with a monopoly of which frivolous critics often credit themselves; they feel those difficulties amid surrounding evil and intensified sufferings, and feel them acutely, but nevertheless they



go on living their lives in a useful and a noble fashion; and they recognize that the very existence of this insoluble problem, when once they take up arms and play the man, does help them, does educate them, does call out from them nobler powers and more enduring virtue, and a more resolute patience, than were otherwise possible. It is here as it is so often,—*solvitur ambulando*; if only we are moving on and not wasting our time in dreams, we know that the very toughness of the problem is calling out and developing our best selves. We are not full grown yet. Ah, with what surprise and almost amusement it may be, those who were lately here are now recognising that fact, that here they were only growing—living amid half lights, catching glimpses, seeing the light of God “peep through the blanket of the sky.” I cannot but think, when I say this, of one whose gracious and yet deeply thoughtful personality made so vivid an impression on many of us—the tragic circumstances of whose departure from us are yet fresh in our minds, and who now knows what she loved to muse on here. With what surprise and yet relief do those who have gone from us recognize how the chrysalis state, the partial knowledge, the half lights, the innumerable questions have all really been means of education and training, out of which has come all that is now—all that is precious and full. Here there are faint motions

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in the sleeping frame—the dreams of another life fuller, freer, larger—the dim suggestions of some wonderful new birth—here there are yearnings after beauty—here there are aspirations after goodness—here there are moments of insight—here there are the visions, which come after some soul-torturing struggle, of a possible gain through loss—here there are wrestlings and strivings, a blind battle—here is the chrysalis state—and then one day the case drops off, the wings are opened and there comes the swift flight—the Everlasting Sun, the freedom, the gladness, the rejoicing of the free in mind as well as in heart; and then comes the explanation of the answer which eclipses and blots out all the weariness which the problem has cost.

God is the great Educator. He educates us for a life with Himself and we could not live with Him, unless our powers were tested, our endurance tried, our spirit-life developed. The discipline of life includes not merely personal trials and sorrows, demands not merely exacting labour—the discipline of life includes also the setting of questions before us to which we can hope for no final answer here, but which must be faced because, only through the facing, can we prepare ourselves for the everlasting answer. And only those, who face such difficulties when they come, are honestly using their powers. The subtle temptation to avoid difficulties by dismissing the whole question of God and His ways as insoluble

is as real a temptation as the temptation to steal or to lie. It whispers in our ears the old counsel of Zophar, "Canst thou by searching find out God?" He is high as heaven, unsearchable—deep as hell, unknowable—attend to your business and leave guesses and dreams. It is as much the counsel to walk along 'the primrose path' as when others are tempted to sacrifice principles to gain.

And there are answers not full, but adequate for help in maintaining the struggle. The answer which Job in the next three chapters, in a wild tumultuous fashion, asserts and re-asserts with fierce intensity—that in spite of all his difficulties, he knows God and trusts God—is the eternal answer. Job's answer looks disarranged, a jumble, an outburst of feeling—an impetuous torrent of words, but it has the logic of the heart, and, when once an arrangement is found, its meaning is as clear as the stars. "Look," he cries, "at Nature—ask now the beasts and they shall teach thee and the fowls of the air and they shall tell thee—Who knoweth not that the hand of the Lord wrought this?" They all tell who wrought them. There is design in nature; there is intelligence and life at her base, there is a mighty Spirit moving everywhere, a designer developing nature from change to change! And so through three chapters he pursues the same line of reasoning, proving how in Nature, in History, in Humanity, it is only God Who makes things intellig-

ible; that in these we can know God; that in the secret answer of "my own soul to myself," in that vision which none can gainsay, I know the voice of God, my Friend. "I am punished," he says, "but I have not lost my God:" "though He slay me yet will I put my trust in Him." He is still just. He still is; and that is the only thing I want—the only thing for which I care."

Job's intense clinging to God, the way in which he feels in the midst of his sufferings that all is lost if he loses God, if he ceases to know that He is, and that He is just—is the abiding lesson. That is the one saving element in life—to *know God as good*. This is not vanity, but here and now this is eternal life to know God as good. We may bear any trouble though we see no reason for it if only God is—the knowledge that He is helps us to bear even sickness and death as well as to overcome sin.

\* "It fortifies my soul to know  
That, though I perish, truth is so;  
That howsoe'er I stray and range,  
Whate'er I do, Thou dost not change,  
I steadier step when I recall  
That, if I slip, Thou dost not fall."

To lose the knowledge that God is, and is just, is to have no security, no anchorage—to keep that knowledge is to have that within, which will heal the heart without enfeebling it on one side or

hardening it on the other. To Zophar's question, Can man by searching find out God—we answer, yes: for *God is here*. \* “He is here,” it has been well said, “in the life, the intelligence, the beauty of nature. He is here in the conduct of the world, in human history. He is here in the sense that I have of an absolute justice, even though that justice punish me.” He is here in suggestions of a secret answer to my yearnings, my wants, my prayers. He is here in the Divine touch of Christ's mystic Body and Blood. He is here—O my God, how deeply, how clearly art Thou here — in that undying, that unquenchable trust which no sin or unfaithfulness of ours can destroy—in that ever reviving trust that witnesses within me that “He is mine and I am His for ever.”

\* Cf. Stopford Brooke's Sermons, *supra*, p. 363.

## SERMON II.

### THE DWINDLING OF GIFTS.

“For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.”—ST. MATT. xxv. 29.

THIS is Christ's statement as to the principles which govern His reign on earth. The whole teaching of the parable of the talents resolves itself into the assertion of one great principle that to him that hath shall be given, to him who uses five talents well, five more come: to him who uses two well, two more come, but from him who uses one badly, that one is taken away.

Few people, I imagine, who think at all and do not take everything for granted because “it is in the Bible,” have not before now had searchings of heart about the consecration of this principle. Is it a just principle? Is it a benign law worthy of an All Loving Father—to give to those who have, and to take away from those who have not their apparent possessions? It is clear enough that it is the law in this world. We trace its operation in the accumulation of wealth—“money comes to money” we say,

and the saying is true, and that not only in the matter of inheritance. Wealth comes to wealth because wealth creates openings and gives opportunities, which are denied to competence or to poverty. It comes in the working out of economic laws, nor do any of the schemes for limiting the operation of this law seem to be very workable. We may think in the abstract that it would be desirable to limit individual possessions, but any scheme for doing so seems to fail of justice, and also to be likely to check the production of wealth. The law seems to hold its own here as unquestionably as it does elsewhere. In other fields of intellectual or bodily activity, in manual dexterity, in scholarship, the same law is always being manifested: "to him that hath is given." The storing of achievement becomes the basis of additional achievement, just as the gathering of capital becomes the basis of additional wealth. So it is in the moral world. Nowhere do we see the law so completely manifested, yes and so justified, as in the realm of the affections. There, if anywhere "to him that hath shall be given." The kindly man, the affectionate man, meets kindness everywhere. He is the object of everyone's love. The lonely man who has created his own solitude, or the jealous woman who wants to be loved without loving, looks enviously on him and cries "Why does he get all and I get nothing?" Not only relations and friends but mere acquaintances, people who

only know his face or hear his voice, give him their love and affection, and yet in his own immediate circle he has more than anyone else—"to him that hath" all the treasures of home and friendship, are "given" every day, from every side, the love and regard of thousands. He gets all because he gives all. But if we want further proof of the necessity of this law, we have only to exercise our imagination and to picture what would happen if it were reversed. How full of discouragement for all honest effort and kindly feeling the world would become, if to him that had not were given. Nothing would so lower the moral currency, so damp intellectual activity or weaken manual energy, as the reversal of this law. Directly we look closely into its operation, we see that our hesitations about its justice were unnecessary. It is a just law, a necessary law, a kind law. It makes the world a more just place, it makes for the encouragement of all honest effort, and for the discouragement of all idleness.

And so when Christ takes and consecrates this law, which is ever justifying its necessity in our experience, we need not rub our eyes, as though He had said some strange thing. He is only saying that what is true in nature and in human life is true as regards religion, viz. : that the great stumbling block there as elsewhere is laziness, inertia ; that want of talent for work is never the reason for total failure ; that there is always some talent, some opening ; that



what is wanted is the force, the compelling power of energy. "To him that hath shall be given," because he is the only person capable of really having. The one-talented man who, from idleness or false pride, hides his talent in the earth is a worthless person, unworthy of your sympathy. At first you are inclined to pity him: he looks so forlorn with his story of his buried talent, he seems to have had so little chance—and what he had is taken away and handed over to the man with five talents, who has surely enough already. But directly you begin to think a little, you see what a failure he really is, that he has no real claim on your sympathy. He suffers from a loathsome disease called self-disgust: he is too proud to do the work before him, he is too lazy to work at all, and he tries, out of his false heart, to lay the blame on his master. We cannot really waste our sympathy upon him. If his example were to rule the world, all the power and force of life would vanish. When the other comes with his faithful work and offers it to the Lord by Whose help he did it, you see that his is the true humility. He has taken the work which God has given him, and done it; there are no sulky evasions about his attitude—he has done it by God's help, and he comes and offers it; and we feel at once that he has laid a foundation for more perfect service, we recognize the Divineness of the law, "To him that hath shall be given."

In point of fact this law alone makes the attainment of goodness possible. Goodness among us men cannot be created full grown—goodness comes by degrees, in spite of many antagonisms, through much tribulation. Actions harden into character. The voluntary actions of all life go to produce the final result. “To him that hath shall be given.” The sow’s ear will not become, all at once, a silk purse. The growth of habit, in spite of antagonisms, is regular and orderly. Things appear when they can, not when we demand them. Great occasions, unexpected calls elicit from human nature a result which at the time seems extraordinary, but which is really only the result of long hidden forces. We may look from the outside at some spectacle of heroism, some noble revelation, and say half enviously “If I had only had his chance.” But if you had had it, could you have used it? Only if you had prepared yourself for it—for only “to him that hath shall be given.” So, for none of us is it a real question *Can we be good?*—for all of us the question is, *Will we take the trouble to be good?* On our answer to that question everything depends. We try to escape from this in all sorts of ways. We complain of circumstances; we envy the conditions under which others have to work; we want to go to heaven without following Christ—but at the end of it all, we must come back to face the question, do we care enough about good-

ness to make efforts? "To him that hath" that desire, that care, that hunger—"shall be given." There is no escape from the exigency of that law in religion, any more than in a game of chess or in scholarship or in conduct.

And if we try to find refuge in the "plausible lies of our understanding," and, by way of escape from the dilemma, fly to some difficulty about the limitations of Revelation, and make that a stumbling block, we can do so; but in our secret souls we know that we are not acting like honest men. Conscience may be what you like, as long as you are dreaming; it may be even "inherited utility that has lost its memory and changed its name." But when you become practical, you have really no kind of doubt about the authority that makes its dictates binding, about the fact that it is the law of God within your heart. And conscience is the most ready illustrator of this law. Act on its behests and you will come to see many things that were dim before, even to see that you can do without seeing. Act on its counsels and its clearness is ever increasing. "To him that hath shall be given"—clearness of mind and vision—"If any man will do His will he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." But, on the other hand, refuse to listen to its voice and you will hear it less and less; treat it as a mechanical operator and it will soon become one. In that way you can darken your vision in a way that no speculative

difficulty ever darkened you yet—"from him that hath not shall be taken away even that he seemeth to have."

The most deadly form of unbelief is moral paralysis—the state of inertia, the state which has not, because it does not care to have. It is a state of heart and feeling which dislikes strain and effort and trouble, which turns away from what is beyond to what is just before it—immediate interests, immediate pleasures, present luxury, current conventionalisms. It is the unbelief of carelessness, of deadness of soul, of lazy selfish indifference to anything but comfort—which cannot understand taking pains for the sake of the unseen—which cannot bring itself to think that even God is in earnest and means what He says—the unbelief that comes of wanting to avoid trouble, of being too idle to think, too lazy to remember, too slothful to lay to heart.

A young man begins to feel, as he grows up, the divine life stirring within him. He wants to do something to help in efforts for good around him, to take his share in bearing burdens. But he goes into business or enters a profession or devotes himself to society, and by degrees all the pulses of divine life beat more slowly; he loses an aspiration here—he loses a scruple there—he makes an excuse about that; and his life begins to dwindle, and after a bit, he becomes like a bicycle going down hill—the

law of accelerated motion asserts itself,—and in the day of trial or of opportunity he is found wanting, and useless. “From him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he seemeth to have.” If only he had taken up some little bit of self-denying work—if only he had given himself to one thing in which he could help others, if only he had had the self-forgetting element within him, then in him too the law “to him that hath shall be given” would have asserted itself—he would have been saved in the truest sense.

The whole matter may be summed up thus. God does not take away our gifts arbitrarily. He gives them to be used, and if they are not used they dwindle, they vanish—the power goes, the will becomes like an unused muscle—paralysed, useless.

Oh awful warning! oh strange sad power that is in man! that God should give the gift and that man should make himself incapable of its exercise! that God should give the light and man should keep in his self-chosen darkness! That God should open His treasures of grace and offer them to us, and that we should remain poor and destitute and naked in the midst of abundance!

Of all miseries perhaps the keenest is the sense of wasted opportunities, of gifts unused. This was the misery that drew tears from the eyes of Christ, and that forced from His lips that most pathetic utterance, “If thou hadst known the things that belong

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to thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes," hid by self-caused blindness—hid because "from him that hath not shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have." This is the misery that makes men turn unsatisfied from one interest after another, from one occupation after another—which leaves them barren and useless. Over their restless lives, upon their weary faces, in their heartfelt sighs, is written the warning, "from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he seemeth to have."

The fact is, life is too serious a thing to bear being trifled with. An earnest worker in any department of life whether he be lawyer or doctor, artist or artisan, clergyman or politician—an earnest worker has but one feeling whatever he is, that his work is a holy thing, a sacred thing—that out of it comes to him all that he values most, that in it all the best part of himself finds its development. The earnest find that they grow; the triflers find that their powers rust and fade. Awake then, thou that sleepest, while yet there is time. Some whole-hearted purpose will redeem your wasted frivolous life even yet. The longer it is put off, the harder it becomes to undertake it—the more hopeless grows the outlook. And it is useless—it is worse than misleading for you to suppose, as many do, that you can be religious without in some way using your

talents, your own peculiar gifts and opportunities : it is through faithfulness in these things that you will arrive at the possibility of any real communion with God. Otherwise you will lose your talents by rust and decay ; the law of accelerated motion will set in, and from you who have not will be taken away even that which you have—your capacity to serve God and man.

Let us start at once, and do what we can and what we ought. For judgment is coming, not only at the end, but at all times. Every day to him that hath the will to serve God, to help great causes, the power is given increasingly—every day from the fop, the idler, the dilettante, the loungeur, the mere butterfly, is taken away what he seemeth to have. Every day the power that we will not use is failing us. Every day God's voice, speaking through the moral necessities of our lives, is enforcing the world-wide law, viz. : that only to him that hath shall be given, and from him that hath not,—that shows no sense of possession—that does not choose to use—shall be taken away even that which he seemeth to have.

## SERMON III.

### LOST OPPORTUNITIES.

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“Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail; because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets :

“Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern.

“Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was : and the spirit shall return unto God Who gave it.”—ECCLES. xii. 5-7.

ANOTHER Christian year is ending this week, and we are all of us one year nearer death and judgment. Next Sunday we begin over again to think of the coming of the Lord, we follow Him from His Birth to His Ascension. To-day we stand, as it were, for a moment between the past and the future—the irreparable past—the available future. To-day the message of the Lord, Whose words never fail us, is “Gather up the fragments that remain that nothing be lost.” They are fragments that are left—fragments of time, fragments of opportunity, fragments of health and strength; even for the youngest, the whole is not before any of us, none of us can say that nothing is behind, that everything is before us. It is well to face the fact. The time behind us was rich in opportunities—opportunities of cultivation, of holi-



ness, of forming good habits, of loving others, of learning to know God. The time before us can never be quite the same, however rich its opportunities may be, for what is past has not left us where it found us. Every hour wasted, every opportunity neglected, every temptation yielded to, has weakened our power of using the remnant that is left. The sins of the flesh, sloth, intemperance, impurity have sapped, it may be, our bodily powers, our mind powers, our heart powers. Think as you look back from middle or old age, or even from youth, on your childhood's capacity—think of the possibilities of innocence, the strength of the kept heart—think of the habits, the virtues, the graces, which you might have gained, which would have sprung quite naturally out of what you once were—think what you might have been if you had never yielded to idleness—think what your memory might be, if you had stored it with words of great writers, Shakespeare and Milton and a hundred others—think what your heart power might have been if you had yielded to all your generous impulses, and seized all your occasions of service, and cultivated your sympathies by going amid misery, instead of keeping away from it or trying to forget it. Ah, what living men and women we might have been instead of the dried up machines we often actually are! And then look on to what is left—only fragments, at best—our capacities, our memories, our affections, our spiritual powers, are only fragments,

little bits of what they might have been. Every day has had its work—every day has come and asked us to use its opportunities and sunk into night and nothingness again. And we have been so often asleep or indifferent.\* Like the marble statues in some garden through whose hands or lips water flows in a perpetual stream, and the marble stands there cold, passive, immoveable, making no effort to arrest the gliding water. So time runs through our hands—it pauses not till it has run out—and there stand we in a marble sleep not realising what it is till it has passed away for ever.

And so it may go on till the messengers of Death arrive with their unmistakeable summons—till that moment comes which it is in vain to try to realize now, when it will be at last felt that everything here is over—our chance, our trial is past. The moment from which we have shrunk and put away from us—the moment of death—here it is upon us—it passes too—and with un veiled eyes we look back upon what life really was from the vantage ground of life beyond.

Let us think this morning as well as we can — let us think for once of death as an end of this life's opportunities. Let us try to realise it, to make that last hour real for a moment. We must die—it is the one certainty of the future—and death is the end of opportunity as we know of opportunity.

\* Cf. Robertson's Sermons, Second Series, p. 289.

We have all seen death from the outside—we have knelt by the dying with that terrible sense of impotence, when we would have given all we had to keep them—we have seen all that is visible of death, the quickly caught breath, the gradual ebbing away of life, the peaceful calm—we have seen it in others, perhaps been deeply moved by it; but to see another die is not to die oneself. To die, what is it? It is to meet God face to face—to see Him and to see oneself as He sees oneself; to die is to meet oneself—to face one's memories, to see one's chances, to see where, when, why one chose the lower path, the path of inclination instead of the path of duty; to die is to see what our self love blinds us to now, to die is to leave behind illusions, to die is to see one's possibilities, all one's capabilities, all one's powers of heart, mind and will, as they might have developed—as they are. Just think what there is that you would so deeply regret and wish to be otherwise—your waste of time—your many aimless or self-centred thoughts, your care in heaping up money, your stinginess in almsgiving, your niggardly shillings given to God, your freely spent hundreds of pounds upon yourself—your sharp, bitter speeches—the wounds you inflicted on gentle souls—the deeds of which the memory makes you tingle with shame—your hours of care about your clothes, your little thought about the garment of righteousness—

your miserable stories about others—your imputation of low motives, your love of scandal, your quickness to take offence—and over against that, what you might have been, a fountain of noble words, and of gracious, kindly deeds, and generous acts. Oh, if only I had taken a fresh start, you will say,—if only I had begun again to pray and to think, to confess and amend ; if only I had kept out of that temptation—that place or companionship ; if only I had acted on my better impulses—if only I had set to work and done something by contact with or service of others, to soften my heart and make their lives better and happier, in His members to visit Christ—what might I not be now ! Christ said to me so often that He Himself was in the sick and the poor, and I would not look at Him or go near Him. I said I had home duties or that I was afraid of infection or that I was shy. I left the poor in their lonely misery and never saw that I was leaving Him. If I had only gone when I heard the call, what might I not be now !

And then the means of grace—the unread Bible, the untasted Sacrament, the unsaid prayers—everything that witnesses against us—what might these not have done for us ? The knell of death is not the funeral bell, it is the voice that tells of lost opportunities. Ah, what is all else—what are the vain things that charm us most ? What matters it if men praise you or blame you—what profit if they

erect monuments to you and write on them lying inscriptions? What a torment they must become! If out of that other world you can see these false words how you would agonize to blot them out, how you would bless them who would write on your tombstone some cry for mercy, some petition that might for ever go up—how you would bless them who would still pray for your soul as Paul prayed for his convert—that you might still find “mercy of the Lord in that day!” What would you think then of your present shrinking from men’s blame, where duty is clearly involved? What would you think of your shame at owning Christ? What a pitiful thing the scorn, contempt, abuse of a poor blind world would be! If people have laughed at you for doing right, would not that laughter be then the sweetest music that your ears could hear? Ah, it is a true a real a kind light, that Death throws upon life—it shews us that the real misery of life is waste of opportunity—not the poverty we fear—nor the scorn we shrink from—nor the doubt that may purify us—nor the malice that hurts us—nor the fact that others are promoted and we are passed over—nor the sense that our best efforts fail, nor the anguish because others disappoint us—but the misery of life is waste of opportunity, the misery of life is to have had time, talents, cultivation, gifts of mind, and to have misused them—to have let our minds lie fallow; the misery of life is to have twisted and soiled our affec-

tions by debasing or perverting them, to have let our consciences be drugged by worldly maxims; the misery of life is to have failed to use the gifts of God—to have made oneself incapable of reasoning or of taking a clear view of things—to have made oneself a stereotyped machine or an incompetent idler or an interfering busybody or a captious critic—to have stopped oneself on the side of growth, and to have let every wind and storm stunt one into an ever deepening recklessness.

Imagine the awakening that death must sometimes be. Think of the veils we can so easily weave and hang up between ourselves and our sins, between our eyes and our real selves. Think what it would be to see that one's life (and this is only too possible) had been one long mistake—one long act of self-worship, one long procession in honour of self—one long effort to minister to self. You cannot help seeing sometimes that it may be so in others—their mincing gait, their studied attitudes, their painted faces, their efforts to win admiration—what do they mean but self-worship? You know how possible that is; you have known women whose every word and look betrayed their vanity, who cannot even sit down in a room without trying to pose as ornaments—you have known men who were utterly selfish in their own homes, of whom it was known that, whoever else went without anything, nothing must interfere with their comfort, and that not be-

cause they were loved, but because they were feared; men at whose coming the voices of their little children ceased to prattle, whose presence was like a cloud, whose entrance was like a threat, and yet if you had asked them about it they would have said that really some one must keep order in that household, that regularity and not their own convenience was what they cared for, and you would have felt, at once, the falsehood of it and the hopelessness of convincing them of the falsehood."

Or again, you have seen how men deceive themselves about religion. They feel the claim it has upon them, they have heard the voice of the Lord God calling, Where art thou? And like Adam they have hid themselves. They have hid themselves behind the difficulties raised by others—they have taken up a position, which they take up about nothing else, that religion must be able to answer every question which they may choose to ask, or that it has no claim upon them—and so they have drowned the voice of the heart and the conscience in the confusions which reason has succeeded in raising. They have insisted, in defiance of all God's warning, that the way to Him is intellectual and not moral. Or to take quite another case, you have seen how easy it is to use religion for a cloke, beneath which one may prosecute one's own ends—you have seen how easily religious language can be skilfully used to cover private ends and to vent personal grudges,

you have seen how men and women will be earnest even in religious societies merely out of combativeness. If you have ever been so unhappy as to see behind the scenes in religious societies that have a combative tendency, you will know how easily men allow themselves to pursue a tortuous policy in order to outwit ecclesiastical antagonists. Think what it must be to awake and see that all one's ideas about religion have been wrong—that one has missed the true mark—that all our difficulties have been self-caused—that all our professions have been insincere.

How, let us ask, are we to escape this terrible awakening, how are we to learn here and now to see ourselves as we are, to repent, to be changed? By here and now honestly judging ourselves. "If we would judge ourselves we should not be judged of the Lord." We cannot repent, unless we know our sin—we cannot believe fully in God without seeing how much we need Him, for in belief there is trust and insight—the trust of the weak in the strong, the insight that comes from measuring the distance between ourselves and Him. How shall we know ourselves here and now, so that we may be better able to meet ourselves when it is inevitable? We must recognize the fact that self knowledge does not come without effort. We are getting on in life perhaps, our habits are growing more stereotyped, we can bear less to be put out—that does not help us to see ourselves. No men are so self-blinded as



those who live in a groove. We are in a position which helps us to gain the regard of others—that does not help us to see ourselves. Or strong passions disturb our souls like a storm disturbs water, there is no calm within to reflect the light from Heaven; as a man cannot see his face in ruffled water but sees it distorted, so eager worldliness, envy, anger, pride, prevent self knowledge. Think how envy blinds a person, who is possessed by it, to another's virtues, and then think how much it may blind you to yourself. Then again we hate reproof, we shrink from it as a man shrinks from a sharp knife which would remove some cancerous growth. We hate it because conscience has said something of the kind before—we hate it because we feel it is so true—we say that we hate it because so and so has no right to reprove us, but if we had a clean conscience we should bear it patiently. "*Cantabit vacuus coram latrone viator.*" We put the reproof on one side, we lose the chance of seeing ourselves as we are—we grow harder till the time comes when every reproof is treated as an insult.

Or we blind ourselves by excuses—we don't believe in them, and we know others are not taken in them, but they are too polite to say so. We say that things are against us—we accuse God. "*The woman whom Thou gavest me, she tempted me.*" We charge the jury of our self-esteem in our favour and we get an enthusiastic acquittal. The very reserve

of civilized society—valuable as it is in other ways—the very absence of the rough and harsh criticism of the more roughly speaking classes is against our ever seeing ourselves as we are. I am not sure that it would not be good for other people besides candidates for election to Parliament to be occasionally exposed to the criticism of popular audiences. It might conceivably be more wholesome than the monotonous drone of approval and admiration which characterises their own domestic circle—it might lead to self-knowledge.

Sometimes God gives such men a chance ; sometimes in His mercy He breaks in upon our self-approval, and shews us to ourselves as we are. Another, a son or a daughter commits our besetting sin and we see it in all its hatefulness, and while we are condemning we hear a voice within too loud to be silenced, ‘Thou that judgest another judgest thou not thine own self?’ Or another comes to you and acknowledges to you some sin, of which you yourself have been guilty, and you see in his sin something which lights up your own. Or you hear some strong condemnation of crime from a judge in a law-court, and you feel a wondrous sense of deserving it as much as the criminal. Or you drop into Church expecting to be gently soothed by the anodyne of that virtuous act of propriety, and you hear yourself described as if the preacher had been with you in your most secret moments—and yet he never heard of

you. These are some of the thousand ways by which the great Father of souls deals with us and tries to lead us to self-knowledge—tries to save us from the blindness that leads to destruction.

What shall we do to be saved from the self-destruction that must follow this inward blindness?

I. Let us use, as far as it goes, the judgment of others,—the judgment of others that looks like an enemy and is so often a friend. What would others say to us if they spoke out? What weakness would they point out? The more it hurts, the more true it is certain to be. What is there in ourselves that we have to dress out and make to look fair, in the same way that a poor maimed man tries to hide some bodily defect? There is the place to begin at. Others will not tell us to our faces, but we know what they would say; and human judgment, though we may be utterly careless of it when we are consciously doing right—the judgment of others is probably a great deal truer than our own on our weak points. “Wheresoever the carcase is there the eagles”—of human judgment—“are gathered together.”

II. And let us look again at ourselves—let us make renewed efforts at self-examination. What has God made us, what powers has He given us, what use are we making of these powers of thinking, feeling, loving, choosing? They have an object—every one of them. What ought I to be in con-

sequence of them? Construct an ideal of yourself—suppose you were to use your faculties and capacities, to direct your will in the highest way, what might you be? What are you?

Or think of others—their claims upon you so overlooked, so forgotten; the claims of home, the claims of the people whom you employ, the claims of your servants, how much do you think of them as mere machines to do your bidding—how much as living personalities, as brothers and sisters? Think of the claims of the great unpitied multitude around you, the claims of those who wake up in this great city morning after morning with eyes aching for a help which no one seems to know how to give, and ears hungering for a word which no one seems to be able to say. Think of the claims on you for kindness, care, sympathy, sincerity, faithful dealing—how are you meeting them? Which of them are you meeting? Are you meeting any of them? Or is absorbing selfishness making you deaf and blind, and becoming the law of your being? Above all, how are you treating God? Think what He has been to you and what He is. Think of His love, His mercy, His compassion, His patience, His forbearance. He enfolds you, He surrounds you, He protects you. Invite His eye, recognise His presence, be bathed in His light, cry to Him to shew you yourself: “Try me, O God, and seek the ground of my heart. Prove me and examine my thoughts,

look well if there be any way of wickedness within me." Cry to Him thus and He will hear you. He will send out His light and His Truth. He will shew you Himself—He will teach you so to live to Him now that you may know yourself,—so to live to Him now that when you come to die, you may commit yourself, if with awe yet without terror, into His all-merciful hands.

## SERMON IV.

### HINDRANCES.

“Woe unto the world because of offences!”—S. MATT. xviii. 7.

IF one were to be asked to point to any special words of our Lord, which prove conclusively that His insight into human nature was keener and truer than that of any other moral teacher, one might very well point to the words before us. They are very wonderful words when we consider their real meaning, or when we let ourselves read into them the experiences of our own life. “Woe unto the world because of offences!”—*i.e.*, hindrances, stumbling blocks—because of people that are in the way. They are words wonderful in their insight, they give light all through the tangled forest of life’s journey. To praise or blame single actions, or lines of actions, is one thing; to give warnings that throw a light upon all life is quite another, a far greater thing, a far more powerful thing. For a man to denounce any great sin, pride, or lust, or persecution, or dishonesty, makes little impression upon us; we feel that it is so palpably true that these things are wrong; we feel perhaps that a fierce denunciation of them shews little sympathy with human weakness;

we feel perhaps, too, that the trade of denunciation is one that hardly becomes any of us ; we are awed, but we murmur under our breath—"Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." But when we come to consider words like these; when we hear that the great woe in the world, was pronounced by the Lord of Life not on murder, or cruelty, or lust, or envy, but on hindrances ; that the great curse working on earth is not any particular sin, such as drunkenness, but the curse of stumbling blocks—it makes us think ; it compels us to see how much deeper the words of Christ are than those of any other teacher. To hinder good, to be in the way, to be an impediment—that is what Christ pronounces to be the thing that curses the world, that in itself brings "woe unto the world." We begin to understand the warning in the exhortation of Holy Communion—"If any of you be a hinderer of God's word, let him come not to that Holy table." For the world-wide curse is "hindering." Our selfishness, our jealousy, our envy, our malice, our lust, our pride are bad enough in themselves, but they are worse when looked at in this way, they are hindrances—offences—they bring woe upon the world. Words like these clear up our ideas and shew us our real dangers. When we first think of the foes of Christ's religion, our mind goes back to the persecution of past days, to the violence, the hatred, the cruelty that characterised it ; or to come to modern times, we regard

the scoffer, the infidel lecturer, as Christ's enemies. And yet the great curse that works against Him is none of these ; the Lord of Life denounced none of these as He did hindering and the hinderer.

The curse of hindering—how strange it sounds in our ears as the prominent evil of the world, as the great woe to mankind. Who could have thought that the mark of the highest perfection is always to be helping and never hindering, that the greatest curse is to be in the way? What a revelation for us to carry into our lives, what a light upon them, what a starting point for the heart searchings of Lent! What is the effect of my life upon others? How does my perpetual self-seeking, my worship of self affect them? How often does my bad example cause them to stumble? How far do the sins which I excuse as the outcome of weakness, how far do they reach, where do they stop in their hindering influence? How much does my unconscious influence, the influence I exert by living, stop others? How far does the self-seeking element, even in my love for others, complicate their lives? Am I only in the way? Was Christ thinking of lives such as mine, when He looked so sadly on the world and pronounced its one great woe to be those that hinder?

Let us work out the thought a little on this Sunday before Lent.

I. Look how it affects home life. As members



of a family we live close to one another ; parents and children, masters and servants ; what a wide field this close intercourse opens for offences. Are we hinderers ? How narrowly those in subordinate positions watch us ! Do we ever think how easy it is, in the compulsory intercourse of home, to be an hindrance ?

In family life, after a certain time, criticism ceases to be outspoken, it keeps its complaints to itself ; it is often no doubt quite active, though smothered ; but hindrance does not cease with complaints about it. Take a common case. There is the right and wrong before you ; but if you do the right some one will make a disturbance ; you acquiesce for the sake of peace, you stifle your conscience, you refrain from what is right, but he or she who causes you to do so is the hinderer, the stumbling block. Who shall say how often that is the case, or to what length it reaches, or what occasions of self-deception it causes ? How easy it is to mistake the ' anything for a quiet life ' disposition for Christian meekness, for the peace-loving temper ! Again, look how fertile example is in hindrances—look at the example of ill-temper. What a hindrance your bad temper may be to those whom you employ—what a stumbling block ! What woe it brings in any household ! Or again, look at it in this way ; we make up our minds to bear the defects of those we live with partly because we must, and partly perhaps, because

we have a dim vision of the blessedness of burden-bearing ; we set our faces to bear and to endure evil that we cannot cure in others—we can pity, we can tolerate where we cannot love. Life goes on. The hindrance as regards ourselves grows less. But then there comes that horrible crisis, when we see the deadly influence of an example which does not affect ourselves, but which is blighting and withering young lives—fascinating them by an easy-going libertinism which we are powerless to arrest ; and then, in the desolation of our own impotence, of our own powerlessness to avert the evil from those for whom we would gladly die, we cry out to God to undo this awful curse of hindrances. “O God,” the cry goes up, “protect the children from this stumbling-block.” Ah ! then we realise how penetrating was the wisdom of the Master when He pronounced this as the one great woe—“Woe to the world because of offences.” The echo of that warning goes up from earth to heaven, day by day, in the cry of anguish that is wrung from every poor woman who sees her son gradually sinking into the ways of his drunken or dissolute father, whom she has learnt to tolerate ; or who marks the gradual loosening of her influence, the untying of those knots that love and tenderness had tied so carefully—it goes up at this hour from many a one into whose soul the iron has entered. We can bear with wickedness ; we can tolerate infirmity which has ceased to hinder us ; but when it

begins to blight the lives of those we love, when it begins to be a hindrance, an offence, a stumbling-block to those who have not our experience of its peril and its inevitable result, we can tolerate it no longer, and in our almost madness at our own impotence we cry out in the very words of that Divine Pity Who saw it all so clearly, "Woe unto the world because of offences!"

II. And then, short of the offence of direct bad example, there is—what so often strikes us—the hindrance of useless lives. People who have nothing to do and have never found anything—those who are thrown off as the dregs of a high civilisation—whose ideal of life seems to be to go where they can be looked at or can fritter away their time in the gossip of the day—what hindrances they are in the uselessness of their lives! The kind of men who lounge in clubs all day, and do nothing which any one in the world would miss, if they were to die to-morrow, except perhaps their butcher and baker and tailor—what do you suppose are the effects of their lives? We are severe often on the loafers at the street corners, the men who live by their wits, who are out of work because they won't work, but they are, I suppose, only the reflection in a somewhat dirty looking-glass of those idle men who happen to have inherited enough to enable them to be idle, and whom we hail as eminently desirable companions and friends. And yet surely the hindrance of being useless be-

comes worse, the more money you have or the more cultivation you have! Did Christ ever utter a more severe sentence than the one which He uttered on the useless man, "Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground." The mere loafer, the do-nothing, the hinderer,—not in an active, but in a passive fashion,—it is his sentence which is pronounced in the bitter words, "Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground." It is so contrary to our natural judgment about such people. We try to excuse him. "He is doing no harm, poor fellow! he is only amusing himself." And yet to do no harm, if it were possible, is so deadly; to cumber the ground is to get ready for the axe; to do nothing is to be in the way—to bring on oneself the woe pronounced on the world because of offences. And this seems to make it so imperative on Christians in these days to hold up a high standard of honest conscientious work in the widest sense of the word. There are, I am thankful to say, thousands who do feel this where hundreds felt it a few years ago. There are many who give to God's work hours of labour, after they have done their daily work. Great is their reward. But what we have to insist upon is that everywhere there is a cry for workers, and that here in the west end so many are living useless lives. As long as that is true in any degree, the hindrance of uselessness will stand recorded against us. The idle useless life of any society will permeate to the bottom just so long

as justification is pleaded for it at the top; it will, alas! prove, again and again, the truth of Christ's warning that the great woe in the world's life is the curse of hindrance. To be useless, to do nothing—this is to be a hindrance. But what can we, what must we say of those who, living it may be in daily contact with useful, earnest lives, do their best to wear them out, to distract their attention, to destroy their peace by intruding their own petty jealousies, or by trying to provoke quarrels, or by any of the thousand methods which Satan suggests to a vacuous mind. Nothing seems so strange in human life as the baleful powers possessed often by poor commonplace natures to be hindrances, to worry the lives of those who are working for the good of mankind. Alexander, the coppersmith, was not a great person, but he contrived by petty malice to do much evil to the greatest man of his day. Alexander, the coppersmith, has his representatives in every place, in many homes—representatives who do not consider, while they imitate his example, that there rests on his name always the horrible stigma that he was a hindrance to the man in the world who was doing God's work most completely.

III. So far we have considered the danger. Let us pass on to consider how we may avoid it for ourselves. One thing needs to be said, that, though it may be well from time to time to ask ourselves some straight questions on the effect of our lives, yet it is

of no use to torture ourselves by a perpetual self-consciousness as to the result of our actions. We know really very little where the results of our lives reach. If we begin to enquire, we are piteously disappointed to find how little we have effected where we have tried to do most. We have been trying to help people's difficulties and have only succeeded in increasing their doubts ; or we have been trying to reason with them about their faults, and only succeeded in rousing their tempers. The one straight rule is to look at what we ought to do, and never to allow sloth or dislike of consequences to affect us in doing it. The stronger and clearer our recognition of this becomes, the more fixed the plan of our life will be. The man who makes it the aim of his life never to give offence will find himself in very great difficulties ; while the man who makes up his mind to answer the clear call of duty, and never to allow sloth or dislike of consequences to affect him, and who yet tries to consider others as far as possible, may be absolutely careless about giving offence. For we cannot always direct effects, or avoid being stumbling blocks to the kind of people who, if there is no stone on the pavement to fall over, will always contrive to find one in the road. There are such people, and they are sufficiently trying with their wounded vanity and hurt self-love. They hug to themselves the delusion that it is others who cause them to stumble, while really they themselves are the most perilous of stumbling-blocks. It is of

little use then to consider effects. The straighter our look at duty and at what has to be done, the better. We may leave the consequences in God's hands. Two things in ourselves we have to watch carefully. One is the fear of consequences—misplaced prudence—the hindering question, if I do that what will happen?—and the other is personal dislike.

What a hindrance to your own growth personal dislike is. When truth comes to you through people whom you dislike, or in disagreeable ways, is it not so often the case that though you know it to be truth, you will not allow it to be truth to you? You will not give it your sympathy, you will not welcome it, and so the truth never gets into you. You dislike the quarter whence it comes, and the thing remains outside you, and from that want of sympathy you become a hinderer, your resisting attitude places you in the way. To accept what is right, even while we hate the effort, hate the quarter whence it comes, hate the circumstances, is a proof of real conscientiousness. The power of an act of simple welcome to duty, even though it be an odious duty, is untold. Everything is hidden in it. Just as the whole promise of May, and the loveliness of June, are hidden in the brown fields and hedges of February, and only need the sun and the showers to bring them out, so it is with the hard and bitter struggle to accept unwelcome duty. The bare grain that resists now will be nurtured into the flowers and fruits by

the Divine influence. But God can do nothing for us without this struggle to do unwelcome duty, or to accept truth from quarters we dislike. Even He cannot force us into the one or the other.

And if this applies here, so it applies in all our relations to others. Life wants space and to be left alone. We may be hindrances to others, not only by intrusive meddling or opposition, but we may hinder people through chilling them by mere coldness. Dislike or coldness or selfish hardness is cramping, and makes a feeling of effort and scrambling to become a sort of law of life. Without atmosphere the delicate plants cannot grow. If you encourage your dislike, if you do not force yourself to find points of sympathy, you starve the moral atmosphere, you become a hinderer.

Lastly, one or two words on the positive effect of life. It is a commonplace that we cannot live in poisoned air, and the air is poisoned if it is full of hard judgments. If the tone of your society be mean and coarse and cold; if sneers and hindrances and offences are the order, and likes and dislikes the law; if you are always on the lookout for your own rights, then by your unconscious example you are stifling the good around you, so that much of it never can grow. You may know nothing about it, but it is you who keep the sun off others with your peevish querulousness. You will never avoid being a hinderer unless you make



yourself tender and sympathetic, unless you find out the great secret which is hidden in Christ's words, "He that loseth his life," flings it away, "alone shall keep it unto life eternal." As long as you are careless and selfish, you must do harm; as long as you let what you like to do and not what you ought to do remain the aim of your life, you must be a hinderer. There is only one way of avoiding doing harm, and that is to do good. No negative efforts, no mere "Thou shalt not," will effect much. "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh." The Divine life is a positive thing. How much one man who lives the Christ life and works for Christ's sake, may do to those who never saw him, is a thing which we have known again and again. \* The life of an earnest, truth-seeking, duty-loving man is like a great strong fortress in the land, it protects and encourages hundreds who never come near it. It is like a trumpet-blast sounding in the night, caught up again and again, echoing from top to top, passed on by a grand inarticulate power in the heart, telling, by its mere sound, of readiness to fight any wrong. Such is the power of a life that loves truth and duty. Give your own space. Write in your hearts, this great law—"Love truth and do your duty"—and you will never again, by God's help, be a hinderer. Act on it, and you will never again stifle or blight the lives of others.

\* Philips Brooks' Sermons.

## SERMON V.

### TRIUMPH OVER HINDRANCES.

“And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.”—S. LUKE xiv. 20.

NO one can read this parable without being struck with the difference between the terms of this answer and those of the two former refusals. The reasons given in those cases are reasons which only suggest delay. One has got an estate and he wants to go and see it; another has made an important purchase and wants to see how it will turn out; in each case the invitation comes to those who may yet respond, and who do not pretend to think that the reasons for their refusal are compulsory or arise from any necessity. But in this case the refusal is not only abrupt and peremptory, but there is a plea of necessity advanced; the man has got into an *impasse* and sees no way out of it—he cannot come; it is not that he wants to do something else, but that somebody else, from whom he cannot escape, wants him, and that he sees no way out of the situation. The call to a higher life is met by an allegation, which is meant at any rate to prove that

\* S. Luke xiv. 18, 19.

any response is impossible ; that circumstances are too hard ; that there is no way out ; that the refusal is not a matter of choice or inclination, but of stern, grim necessity. And no one who knows the possibilities of mutual hindrance, which are incidental to married life, will think that the instance is a forced one, or that the excuse has not some show of reason to allege for itself. Things do seem too difficult at times on either side ; and not once or twice, but again and again, the response, the seemingly unanswerable response to some demand made by Christ on the higher nature is "I would do this if I could, but I can't, because of my husband or my wife" ; "I have married a wife," or I have married a husband—for the overpowering sense of the hardness of the situation, the consciousness of hindrance may be as truly felt on one side as on the other,—  
"and therefore I cannot come."

Nor is the difficulty, caused by the particular relationship mentioned, anything but a representative one. It may be viewed as being typical of many a situation in single life as well as in married life. It represents the attitude of people in every situation where things seem to get too hard for them, or beyond their control ; when they are inclined to sink down before the apparently insurmountable obstacles which their situation in life seems to present, and to throw blame on the situation—it may be wife or husband, it may be anything else ; where men and women

are crushed by their surroundings, and seem as if they cannot get above them ; or where every alternative seems to have some bad element in it, and any way is a choice of evils, *e.g.*, when to stay in someone's society is demoralizing, while to leave them seems to be a failure of duty. Of all such cases, and of many more, the attitude of this man is representative. Many of us know perhaps for ourselves the kind of situation in which he finds himself, though our experience may have come from some other relationship of life—that is not the essence, but the accident ; for the essence of the situation is the state of mind ; the accident was his putting his wife forward. What is really represented, is that the man has got into an *impasse*, and that he sees no way out of it ; that though others may rise to higher things, he sees no possibility of them before him. Such is the state of mind implied in the case before us. We often listen to the same accents now, not always pleading the same hindrance, but giving the same sort of excuse for failing to respond to the higher call ; the excuse that witnesses to the conviction, that things have got beyond their control ; that men might, should, and would be different if only heredity or environment, or some constraining evil influence, were not dragging them down. In some shape or other, the same plea is advanced, "I have married a wife and therefore I cannot come."

I. Let us boldly face the question this morning.

Are circumstances ever too strong for us to rise above them? Is there such a thing as getting into an *impasse*? Is such an excuse, as that implied in this answer, ever to be seriously made for oneself or sincerely accepted on behalf of others? There are cases, no doubt, where circumstances are very difficult. Some professions seem sordid in themselves; some kinds of employment present perpetual difficulties in the way of aspiration. Men who come in contact with others chiefly in the way of business—men, who have to deal with attempts to deceive or with gross stupidity or ignorance, are likely to become hard and unfeeling. Again, every profession has its conventional morality, and that morality does not often come up to the standard of right and wrong set forth in the Gospel, and the temptation to live content with the standard of one's own profession is a very strong one. Or, again, men drift into apparently exhaustive dilemmas, where they must either continue in sin, or seem to fail in the discharge of honourable obligations—leave others to perish, while they swim safely to the shore themselves. Or men lose their character, and there is nothing more difficult to contend with than a damaged reputation; nothing seems more demoralising than the fact of an old accusation, which is always rising to the surface. Especially is this the case when conscience within re-echoes the charge; but even where there has been a mistake, it is hard to live above a damaged repu-

tation. Or certain occupations seem to degrade men inevitably. Take the extreme case of a public executioner; it is hard to conceive a man engaged in such a capacity answering to Christ's call; it seems as if his conscience must become seared by the defiance of other men's opinions of his calling. And yet his calling is a lawful one, he may have a sense of duty to support him; but public scorn makes it very difficult; he is reckoned an outcast, he comes after dark, and leaves no one knows how; he would probably respond to any call to a higher life with the excuse, "I am an executioner, therefore I cannot come." Circumstances seem to take away character, and to take away character is to take away all—to stigmatise is to ruin. There is no cheating so terrible in its consequences as cheating a man out of his good name; the slanderer, the discovered slanderer, man or woman, is a person more worthy of social ostracism than the man who cheats in any other way. To be cheated out of your good name is far worse really than to be cheated out of your money; for what is your money, which is yours to-day and gone to-morrow, compared with your good name,—the one thing with which you dare not part? There is no power committed to men so awful, so capable of use and abuse, as the power of restoring or damaging reputations. Unquestionably, therefore, the hardest situation is the one where a man has become hardened through the loss of reputation.

But once again, when reputation remains unstained, past sin makes fresh sin so much easier. Why should we pause, men ask, when all is hopeless, why not add one more to such an infinite number, why begin to be prudent when bankruptcy is upon you? It is not only that habit makes things easier, it is that every time we sin wilfully we respect ourselves less, we get disgusted with ourselves, and self-disgust is like a fury at our heels, urging us on with ever-increasing malignity. "How is it possible for such an one as I am to hear Christ's call? I have lost my self-respect, I hate myself, I despise myself, I am little in my own eyes, therefore I dare not come."

Worse then, even than a damaged reputation, is the loss of self-respect. We need some one in such an hour to say to us, "Remember what you are, God's child, the object of the Father's love, of the Son's atoning mercy, of the Holy Spirit's Presence, and let your past have been what it may, still respect yourself for what you are—for your imperishable relationship to the Highest, and you may yet rise above all that you have been."

II. We have looked the difficulties of an apparently inevitable situation in the face, let us glance at some of the means of overcoming them.

Whatever hindrances we may be conscious of, we have this to learn first, that we must make our own way out of them. It sounds a hard thing to say, but

it is utterly true; there is no way out but the way we make for ourselves. No man ever walks out of his difficulties by the same path which others tread before him. There is no rough and ready method; no chart that fits all voyagers. The rocks shift, the quicksands appear in different places, the breeze is not always from the same quarter. Each man, who struggles out of the hindrances of his life into a higher realm, is the first in one sense that ever sailed into that lonely sea. Every life is a new life; no books, no systems, no forecasts provide for all cases; every case is a new case. Peculiar means are needed for special difficulties, but no register can be kept of the means. Good biographies help us, because they shew the temper of mind in which to meet hindrances, but none entirely fits our own case; we must live to God first-hand, we must find out by inventions and expedients how to overcome our special hindrances. Every situation has its loophole somewhere; it is only a question of hunting long, and hunting earnestly to find it; we shall not find it in books or systems, but in living to God first-hand. "Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left."

No doubt certain expedients will occur to every experienced person. If a man is tempted to hardness by his position, generous almsgiving should at once commend itself to him as a means of checking



the tendency ; if his difficulties arise from another's influence, or irritating effect on him, he should find times of escape in which he could store strength for renewed effort ; but beyond all these things, and as directing all these expedients, he must work his own way and cut his own path through the dark forest, not unmindful of the experience of others, but certain that he must never expect to find in any other's experience the entire solution of his own difficulties.

This, then, first—we must work our own way out. And yet it is God that works in us, and until we are convinced of that great truth, all else will be a failure. We do not seek God, God seeks us. “ We love Him, because He first loved us.” There is a moment when the seeking becomes reciprocal—when the Divine Presence is dimly felt, when amid all the confusion and bewilderment, and disappointment of life, we become conscious that God is seeking us in and through all these things ; at that moment we begin to seek God. “ Behold, I stand at the door and knock ; if any man hear My voice, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with Me.” That is the doctrine of grace. God is always beforehand with us, hunting for the lost sheep on the mountain, standing at the door, knocking till we open. The call to Himself is the eternal fact—the everlasting yea—the hindrances around us, the *impasse* that we are in, are the difficulties only of the moment. We have married a wife, or

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a husband, and therefore we cannot come ; we have got ourselves a bad name, we have lost our character, and we think that we cannot rise above it ; but all that is the seeming, the temporal, the call to God is the eternal reality. It is not, in the first case, a question of will ; we are saved by grace, not by will. God is first in the matter. He comes to us self-invited, "before they call I will answer." He names us by name ; He isolates us from the crowd ; He sheds over us the sense of personal recognition ; He pronounces on us His own blessing, "God, even our own God, shall give us His blessing." He draws us with the power of His sympathy, we feel that we are known, that our difficulties and hindrances lie open before Him, and we rise with a kindled self-respect to meet them, to grasp them as our cross, and to triumph over them. "Lord" we cry in our bewilderment, as system after system leaves us with no help, as preacher after preacher leaves us hopeless, and our questions unanswered, "Lord, to whom shall we go ; Thou hast the words of eternal life." We cannot confide in others, because they do not understand, or if they do, they cannot help us. We have sought the soothsayers, consulted the literalists and formalists and dogmatists in vain ; they have their rules and specifics, and we have tried them perhaps, but we are where we were before. "Lord, to whom shall we go ; Thou hast the words of eternal life." "O God, Thou must save me, I cannot

save myself." And what then? Will God come and take away hindrances, or deliver me from what is behind? Shall I be able to see Him do it? Shall I watch Him as if I were watching another man's experience? Have I nothing to do but simply sit still and be delivered? No, that is not God's way; He does not take away the Cross, but He makes the Cross carry us: He does not deliver us from the situation that seems so hopeless, but He shows us a way through it and out of it—not by our own struggle, nor by His external help alone, but by a new power made up of God and ourselves working together. If a man, for instance, wants to escape from the slavery of some terrible sin he will find the means to do so, not by mere resolution of his own, nor by merely calling upon God and standing still to see Him work a miracle, but by putting his will into God's hands, and making use of the ways which He seems to point out, by grasping the notion that difficulties are means of advance, by not only enduring His Cross with peevish resignation, but by taking it up and carrying it, by putting himself into God's hands and asking Him to guide him—so and so alone, will he be delivered.

God seeks us before we seek God. That is the everlasting yea! the reason why no situation is hopeless. But God will not save or purify a soul by mere omnipotence, neither here nor in any other

world will He do so ; only when the soul will work with Him can He deliver it ; only when the new unit, God and man reconciled, is really formed, can final deliverance come. And this unit, formed of God and man reconciled, is the solvent of apparently irretrievable situations. I can do nothing of myself. "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come," but—"I can do all things through Christ Which strengtheneth me."

III. One word in conclusion. Often we must be struck by the apparent difference of opportunities—by the inequality of spiritual advantages and disadvantages ; they seem so disproportionate, often so unfair ; some seem so heavily weighted by temperament and circumstances ; others seem to be born not only to every advantage, but to the temperament which uses every advantage. It is difficult to compare those sweet gracious souls, whose inclination seems always to guide them to love the paths of righteousness, with the victim of some vile hereditary prepossession, whose villainous forehead or sensual mouth tells its own tale only too plainly. But when everything has been said about the contrasts of outward lot or inward disposition ; when every apparent disadvantage has been estimated at its full value ; every hindrance made the most of, the question still remains, "what are we here for ?" Are we here like students at an examination to qualify for another life, by gaining so many marks

here? If it were so, the hindrances which beset so many lives would be really unjust; but where have we a hint of such a thing in the Gospel? Is it not rather true that all that is effected here is a certain tendency of the will and heart towards the higher or lower; that almost all the development has to come after; that here and now all that can be done is to fix the direction, and is it not at least conceivable, that adverse circumstances, against which we have to battle, may fix that tendency much more securely than smooth seas and an easy course? Doubtless in very humble scenes and as the result of very common-place struggles to "resist the evil and to choose the good," a foundation is being laid which will stand the shock of judgment and become the main-spring of great achievements and noble activities in the world beyond. The real sowing here is done for the most part in those secret conflicts with besetting sin and weakness, which may seem to outsiders to be piteous in their necessity, and only to result in very barren victories; but He, and He alone, Who knows the bitterness, the hardness of those lonely struggles, may be trusted to gather the fruits thereof from the most obscure places, in the day when He "makes up His jewels."

Meanwhile our faith remains, and must remain, firm and unshaken, that any circumstances, however hard, can be made to bend to the raising of the

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affections and the strengthening of the will; that there is no situation so irretrievable that we may not, in spite of it, obey that call to a higher and better life which on this and every day is sounding in our ears.

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## SERMON VI.

### WASTE.

“ Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward.”—S. LUKE xvi. 2.

THESE are the terms of an announcement which any day may ring in our ears. It is well from time to time to brace ourselves, to correct our slackness, to rouse our inattention, by reflecting on some of their meanings. We are all of us stewards, from the Queen on the throne down to the dwellers in the work-house ; we are all stewards—there is no such a thing really as ownership. We all hold everything that we have in trust ; we are life-tenants—we hold it for our unseen Lord. We have inherited some things it may be, and earned some things by work or by skill, but even these are not ours in one sense ; for whatever we have comes from the cultivation, in ourselves or in others, of the gifts of God. Our life is a gift—our powers are gifts—our capacities are gifts—this truth is a most elementary one, yet most easily forgotten. We so easily get into the way of treating things and relationships as indefeasible rights, as reflecting lustre upon ourselves, that it is good from time to time to bring ourselves face to face with the reality

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that we did not confer these things on ourselves, that God gave them to us ; and further, that we shall have to answer for them—that sooner or later, as regards all we have to use here—time, money, mental gifts, social gifts all alike—the same account will be demanded “ Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward.”

We are then trustees, stewards of the gifts of God, responsible every day to Him for the way in which we use them, responsible to Him ultimately for the whole effect on ourselves and others which our stewardship has produced. In what direction does the danger lie ? Surely the peril is lest we waste what we have. God, Who gave us our gifts, looks now for a return, and will ultimately come to reckon with us ; and in that day might it not be said truthfully of us as of this steward, that we have wasted our Master's goods ? At any rate there is a danger which it is wise to face.

I. First of all there is waste of mental ability, whether it be of a higher or a lower kind, be it talent, sagacity, insight or memory ; these mental powers, which we have, are God's gifts to us. To let them lie idle in children, to refuse to educate any child in early years is a thing condemned by public opinion, by the conscience of the community. We do sometimes perhaps speak to children about the waste of their mental gifts and the neglect of those golden and for ever irrecoverable opportunities which youth pre-



sents. But alas! how easily we ourselves learn to acquiesce later on in what is really a throwing away of all the results of our own education. Is there not, at any rate, a constant and great danger lest a young man or woman of twenty-five, who has no immediate and pressing call for using his or her mind, should by total disuse of study, by giving amusement completely the first place in life, fall actually into the position of a steward wasting God's goods? Suppose such a man to have been educated, *i.e.*, to have been put upon a platform on which he is able to discover the nature of his God-given talent—is not there a real danger—unless the need to work for bread comes in—that he should content himself with knowing that, if he chose to work at this or that, he could succeed in it, and should never go on to think, I must cultivate that gift because God has given it to me; I am His steward and must give an account for it; I must work at it diligently, because God has given it me? It is as though the voice of the great river beyond were waiting for our little stream to replenish it, but its voice was never heard in our ears. We “stand all the day idle,” our gift unused, our abilities untested, our powers grown rusty; memory fails, insight becomes blurred, talents fail from disuse, and we become more and more useless even for ordinary things. Every time we forget or make mistakes, the very omission accuses us before God that we have wasted His goods, misused our memory,

dulled our imagination by dwelling on our own grievances or on unlovely pictures. Again and again every success of others in that, which we know to be our characteristic talent, reproaches us. The pictures which we see condemn our idle fingers, or the music which we hear reproaches us with our neglected practices; the books, of which perhaps we read reviews instead of reading the books themselves, reproach our desultory idleness. We make excuses perhaps, we say that we have no time, yet we have time to see sights all day and dance all night, and have we no time to use the highest and best gifts which God has given us? We are daily accused, by our idle moments, that we are wasting the goods and the talents with which He has entrusted us.

II. Or again, look at the waste of social gifts around us. Socials gifts are intended for great ends. Two things strike us especially in these days: on the one hand, the immense power of social gifts where men and women use them unselfishly—the power of elevation and attraction which they possess; and, on the other, the exceeding rareness of any serious attempt to make real use of them on the part of their possessors. Wherever people who have such gifts will stray from the beaten track, they reap an abundant reward owing to the interest which they arouse and the good which they do among those who are less fortunate than themselves. And yet how little have we learnt to act upon Christ's precept for

social intercourse ! How strange in the middle of a London season Christ's words on the subject of social influence sound in our ears, "When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours, lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee"—how literally true His description is of what many do—"but when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind ; and thou shalt be blessed, for they cannot recompense thee ; for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just !"

The power of influence which belongs to social gifts is enormous—the waste of it is terrible. Indolence, timidity, thinking of popularity more than of usefulness, are the enemies with which we all have to contend. It is piteous beyond words to hear people complaining that their lives are empty, merely because they have not got what they think that they want, when all the time there is in them a power of sympathy, dulled, it is true, by selfishness, present but yet dormant ; and a great cry for that sympathy is rising up from every side. There are the unconscious needs of mankind all round ; there are works of mercy and compassion languishing for help ; and yet you, to whom God has given cultivation, and the power of doing something, are content to read novels, or to indulge in the "insensate sociabilities that do not recreate, but only tire

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and vex you." Meanwhile every unconscious need around you that is not satisfied, and every work of compassion that is discouraged, is accusing you before God that you are wasting His goods. One of the most depressing thoughts for any worker is the terrible waste of social gifts in London. For nothing is more certain than the good which we may do by unselfish exertion, by sharing our social advantages; by remembering that tie of human brotherhood, which it is often so hard to recognise, but which is the one thing that lasts when all other distinctions have faded away. King or beggar, prince or pauper, there comes a time when each is but one thing, not his royal highness, nor a poor vagabond, but "our dear brother here departed." It would be well if we realized that fact more often, before our "dear brother" has passed beyond the possibility of welcoming that recognition.

III. Or, again, there is the waste of money, a thing which it is perhaps easier to think about than the waste of mental gifts or social influence, because money is a more tangible thing than talent or social gifts, we can count it up and distribute it with more appearance of accuracy than our other talents. The waste of money appeals to the eye and to the imagination most strongly. The young heir, who ruins an old estate by gambling and excess of every kind, points the moral of many a tale in each generation. Everyone deplores his waste of money,

but at any rate there is this to be said about him, that neither money nor estate can be in worse hands than his, and that they may possibly get into better. It is not, however, these startling instances which claim our attention, for they point their own moral. It is rather the waste of money which does not always lead to outward ruin though it goes on every day around us in so many forms, that demands our notice. One way of wasting money (to which we have had our attention especially drawn by a recent painful episode) is gambling. Unquestionably to gamble is to run the risk of wasting money ; it is to prove that you are unworthy to be trusted with it. You would not trust any man with money that belonged to the widow or the orphan if you knew that he was going to gamble with it ; you would say that he was not to be trusted. And all money, however earned, is in reality a trust—a fact which any gambler must ignore. I am aware, of course, that there is considerable risk in some forms of mercantile enterprise, but no man who does not want to confuse his moral sense would mix up such matters with betting at races. The real evil of gambling (by which I mean risking any considerable sum on uncertain issues unconnected with business or trade), is that it implies an absence of the feeling that money is a trust. It may, of course, lead to other forms of evil, *e.g.*, it may induce a man to become dishonest in other ways ; but it need not do

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this, and it is unfair to represent this as its inevitable outcome. There are gamblers who are every whit as honest as the most irreproachable of mankind. To class them with thieves is unfair. The real evil of gambling lies in the wrong view about money which it involves. Money, be it little or much, is a trust ; and we are trustees. We should all agree that we have no right to speculate with trust funds ; if we ever did such a thing, we should reproach ourselves bitterly. And the highest point of view about the money which we have—whether we have inherited or earned it—is that it is a trust ; it is lent to us as God's property, to be used for our own good and the good of others, and to be accounted for before God. Food, clothing, reasonable recreations, opportunities of cultivation—all these come into the right use of it ; but risking any appreciable amount of it on the question whether one horse can run faster than another, or whether a card is red or black or is a six or a nine, can never be consistent with any serious conviction that money is a trust. This point of view is enforced in the Parables of the Talents and Pounds. Beyond that, the New Testament says very little about money, except that "the love of it is the root of every kind of evil." It is hard, indeed, even to find any condemnation of gambling in the New Testament, except from the point of view that gambling involves breach of trust.

If a man regards money seriously as a trust he will

make a division—so much for necessary expenditure, so much for works of charity, and so much for reasonable recreation. Of course, it may then be argued that as everyone spends some portion of their income on amusement, and as speculation of some kind is the only form of recreation which some men find attractive, therefore it follows that if you only risk the money which you spend on recreation, you may gamble with it. And if it is the case that any man severely limits himself to the amount which he would spend on amusement, the question is fairly arguable whether there is any wrong. At any rate such a thing is not to be confounded with the risk of appreciable sums, the loss of which involves serious consequences. But as a matter of ordinary conduct, it must be laid down that the tendency of gambling is always to weaken a man's sense that money is a trust; and that, when indulged in by persons of high social station, it sets a most pernicious example to the young and to those who are dependent on them, to servants and others. It would be hard to say how many servants and employes have taken the first step towards dishonesty in consequence of the bad example set them by those to whom they naturally look up. It is terrible to think how much gambling goes on both in public-houses and in political or social clubs, which is the direct result of the bad example of the upper classes. Certainly those who start such institutions as political clubs

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ought to remember the great responsibility attaching to them, and to see that the rules against gambling are enforced ; otherwise great mischief ensues. Moreover there is this serious question, whether systematic gambling must not inevitably lead to evils in others, which those, who thoughtlessly set the ball rolling, would be the first to deplore. The ground all round us is strewn with such evil effects, which are patent to the eye. It has defiled one of the noblest of our English sports ; it has caused irreparable ruin and distress in thousands of homes ; its growth at the present time is tending to lessen the appetite for honest work. When a man thinks he can win a day's wages by the throw of the dice, he does not care to work for a day. In wider ways, too, the gambling spirit which has pervaded the commercial world is causing suffering and distress to thousands of innocent people, who have put their faith in great names, and have believed in specious prospectuses. Those who have money to invest have again and again suffered only too grievously from the gambling spirit which has infected commercial enterprise. In short, the gambler, wherever he goes, brings ruin and misery. The rich man who persuades others to play for sums which they cannot afford to lose is a social pest of the worst kind ; he drags after him numbers of imitators of whom he has never seen or heard. Whatever be his other attractions, he ought to be shunned by everyone



who wishes to see the truth and honesty of our national life remain untarnished.

For ourselves, the real ground on which to base our self-restraint in such matters is that we cannot treat our money as our own ; it is a trust, and if we gamble with it we shall forget our trusteeship. How shall I answer for this? How shall I account to God for the loss—if it be lost—of what was meant for high and great purposes? How shall I dare to meet the sight of those good works which God prepared for me to walk in, but which I have put out of my power by gambling?

But let it not be supposed that gambling is the only way of wasting money. The man, who never plays for sixpence, because he wants all his sixpences to spend on himself, may declaim with righteous indignation against the gambler, and possibly all the time be a much worse man. He treats his money as his own, whether he spends it on himself or hoards it ; he does not use it as God meant him to. Certainly the west end of London affords many instances of wasting money which do not come under the head of gambling. Every man, in some way or other, wastes his money who does not take a conscientious view of it, who does not own his trusteeship, who is not "rich towards God." "Rich towards God!" What an odd sound it has in our ears, and yet it is our Lord's expression. "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is

not rich toward God." God has but one sentence for such an one, and that a bitter one—"Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee, then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?"

If we are treating money as our own and giving to God less than the tenth, which the Jews were bound to give (and surely Christians are bound to aim at giving as much as Jews); if we are recognizing no responsibility in the matter of the cost of amusement; if we are doing nothing for works of usefulness, secular as well as religious; though we may seem to prosper, though no one may be able to interfere with us, yet day by day, behind the veil, the sentence is being formulated with increasing distinctness, first, "Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward," and then, "Take the talent from him" who will not try to use it, and "cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness." God's judgments do not always announce themselves beforehand, but sooner or later they make themselves known. "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ." "There is nothing hid which shall not be manifested."

It has been said that public men may be divided into two classes—those who believe in the day of judgment, and those who do not. What was meant was that in all the language and actions of a public man you might trace the presence or the absence of

that solemn sense of responsibility which that belief involves ; the belief that life, and work, and position, and power, and money are all things for which an account must be given. The remark applies to us all. We all of us are stewards ; we all have something of which we are trustees. Mental gifts, social gifts, money, are those which I have mentioned—but there are many more. Our business is to “make friends of the mammon of unrighteousness,” to consecrate wealth, powers, opportunities, which may be only occasions of ruin, to high and great ends. Do not let us deceive ourselves; life is not an ownership—it is a stewardship, for every part of which we must give account. And if we wish to claim that indulgent mercy which we all need, we can only hope to do so by honestly and boldly facing the question, “How ought I to alter my life?” and then, by endeavouring in every detail, so to act upon the answer, as to shew that we do recognise the claim of God upon ourselves and upon all we have.

## SERMON VII.

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### THE SHADOW OF DEATH.

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me.”—PSALM xxiii. 4.

WE meet to-day under the shadow of a great national sorrow,\* which, while it binds us all together and intensifies, as nothing else ever can, our national unity; yet brings to each of us the sense of a personal loss, as well as the demand for a sympathy with a family, in which we are all interested.

Few more tragic events are recorded in the long history of the English monarchy; seldom, if ever, has the heart of the nation been so stirred. We had but just uttered our heartfelt congratulations; we were just preparing to celebrate a wedding which aroused our sympathies in no ordinary and formal fashion, and which all alike felt to promise bright and happy days for those immediately concerned, as well as to spread on all around those blessings, which flow from an English home-life. And, suddenly all is changed; we are face to face with that never changing mystery of death—of life, as we know life

\* Preached on the Sunday after the death of H.R.H. the Duke of Clarence.

in this scene of visible sense, cut short; we are mourning with a deeply affectionate family; we are feeling, with an intensity from which no one escapes, the cruel bereavement that has fallen upon the bride that was to be, upon one who has in a thousand ways especially endeared herself to the English people.

It is useless to use such an occasion in order to moralize over the instability of things around us, but the contrast between what was to be and what is cannot fail to strike us—

“All things, that we ordained festival,  
Turn from their office to black funeral;  
Our instruments to melancholy bells;  
Our wedding cheer to a sad burial feast;  
Our solemn hymns to sullen dirges change;  
Our bridal flowers serve for a buried corse,  
And all things change them to the contrary.”\*

At such times we can only offer our respectful sympathies and our earnest prayers for those with whom we feel so deeply. At such times we feel the terrible haltingness, the inadequacy of all our attempts at consolation. We all feel that this is no occasion for any graceful sentiment or the extravagant language of courtly flattery. What people feel to-day throughout England and the Colonies is a real sense of sympathy. A mighty wave of deep compassion runs through the whole English race; our differences are silenced; our noisy party cries

\* *Romeo and Juliet*, Act iv. Scene 5.

are stilled ; we feel in the presence of a great national sorrow, that we are all Englishmen, and that the English heart is after all really one ; that the monarchy, no longer the symbol of mere tyrannical power, has become the symbol of national unity—that it binds us all together as nothing else does. Every man you met in the street on Thursday, stranger or not, told you one thing ; and told it in a way that made you feel that you were his brother. There was no conventionalism about it ; and this leaves us so little to say directly on the subject—save to express what everyone is feeling, the sense of a great personal sorrow. As to condolence, we feel at such times its inefficiency ; we know that Death is death, and, as has been said, “all the preaching since Adam has not made death other than death.”\* And yet it may be well to let this sad experience speak to us, and to face the fact of that death, which none of us will escape.

I. Death is death. It is the oldest punishment, the most universal experience, the consequence of sin, the end of our career in this visible sphere which we know about and in which we are at home. The unknownness of what is beyond is the difficulty raised by death—is the lion in the path. If we were sure that we were going to pass to the immediate company and the welcome society of those whom we have loved and lost, if we were as certain of it as we

\* J. R. Lowell.

are that in a few hours we shall be in our own homes, if there were no other thoughts connected with it than these, then the thought of death would lose much which makes the young at any rate, and often too the aged, shrink from it. We are Christians ; we believe in the Resurrection of our Lord ; we believe that He came back from that other world and assured us that He was the same Who was in this world before ; we believe that, by our mysterious oneness with Him, we shall rise again and live in the world beyond. We believe that ; we realize it with more or less intensity. Few of us I suppose, if any, would not assent to it when stated in that fashion. We believe in a larger, fuller life growing out of this—not disconnected with it—but growing out of it like the flower out of the seed ; we believe that in that life there is no death, no parting, no sorrow, no separation.

And yet, is it not often the case that in the presence of death, when we are feeling the bitterness, the hardness of death, the loneliness of separation ; when we catch sight of the little things that belonged to a dead child ; when we are aching all over with that sense of being shut away from our heart's treasure—all this about the future, which seems so real at other times, brings us just then little or no consolation ? It seems like the cure for the sorrow of children, which was supposed to be contained in their being told that "it would be all the same a

hundred years hence." No doubt it will ; but even a child feels dimly that it has nothing to do with a hundred years hence, but with the present here and now. So it is in moments of bereavement—the present is everything, the future nothing. The days may come, we feebly think, when something else will come back to us, but those days are not yet. The chill, which the presence of death brings, is upon us ; the narrow limits of our present knowledge oppress us ; we know nothing of the details of that scene to which our loved ones have passed, and it is details that help our poor minds and our limited faculties to grasp realities. The fact of Christ's Resurrection—the certainty of our own in view of our oneness with Him—is a thing to rest on, but there remains the fact that Christ told us little or nothing of the details of the world beyond. He left us with the general and blessed revelation that life there is "life with Him" ; but beyond that, it is as though He had said it is better for you not to know, it is better for you to rest on the general fact that those who die are with Me. And unquestionably it is better ; let no one for an instant suppose that we would question it. But when we are bowed down with a sense of separation—when we would give worlds for one look, one word, one pressure of the hand, even for a little knowledge or glimpse of where *they* are—then when the grim dark silence of death rises like a wall between us and them—then it is hard, almost impos-



sible except for the highest faith, to feel that it is better.

The outward phenomena of death all contribute to obscure the idea of resurrection ; the coldness, the stony stare, the gradual decay of the casket which was the shrine of the spirit, all oppress the imagination ; we murmur out the words of the Psalmist, forgetting that he had no authoritative revelation of a future life, "In death no man remembereth Thee, and who will give Thee thanks in the pit."

Yes, death is death ; and nothing will make the hard, grim outward fact of death different to those who, groping vainly to pass beyond it, try to realize the present life, in all its details, of those who have gone. Death is a terrible thing to come near when it seizes the young, the happy, the fortunate ; it oppresses the imagination, it rends the heart, it staggers faith ; it all seems so grim, so cruel, such a disappointment, such a blank, such a hard sentence, such a blotting out of high hopes and great promise of usefulness—

"Twilight and evening bell,  
And after that the dark."

Ah ! some of you perhaps will say, ' We cannot understand you ; we never felt in that way ; we knew that they who had departed were with Christ, and we were so certain of His love and goodness that we could never doubt Him ; we knew that

He Who faced death Himself, and felt its power so bitterly, would be with our loved ones in that dark hour; we knew that to depart and be with Him is far better; we knew that in that invisible world He was training those dear ones whom we had trusted to Him for higher, better, nobler lives—for greater possibilities of usefulness than any that they could achieve here.' Happy and blessed souls! happier and more blessed than all others, for they have not seen and yet have believed. Happy and blessed souls, who have the faith which is insight—"the realization of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Cling to those high visions, for they are true; and if you can cling to them, they will make you a strength and a blessing to others, for faith like yours propagates itself by contact. But oh! remember there are those who for some mysterious reason—it may be from their own imperfection, it may be as a result of weakening their faculty of faith by sin, but it may be as God's last trial of His own children—there are those who are not able to see at once all this which is so clear to you; who in the first sense of catastrophe cry with the great Sufferer, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" Why this awful desolation? Why does faith fail, at the moment when its support is most needed? You will not grudge them, from the vantage-ground of your own clear faith, what little help may come from the words of one who would show them that he has felt

their difficulties and knows their trial, and would, if he might, help them to conquer the one and to bear the other.

II. What is the remedy for this oppression which death exercises on the imagination? How are we to rise to the blessed vision of life in death and life beyond death? There are those whose only remedy is to take refuge in the language of a conventional pietism and to say that every death is the Will of God, and therefore we must accept it. And this kind of attitude has so successfully passed itself off as the only religious one, that it is difficult to uproot it. But it is founded on a misconception; it is untrue. Death is not the Will of God, "It is not the will of your Father that one of these little ones should perish." If we treat death as the Will of God, we must go back and say that disease is the Will of God; and further back still, and say that imprudence and recklessness about health are the Will of God; that bad drains and insanitary surroundings are the Will of God, instead of being, as they are, the works of the devil, which the Son of God came to destroy.

Is not our Lord's whole attitude towards sickness and death founded on the consciousness that He came to destroy them? Why, if sickness is the Will of God, did He spend so much of His precious time in healing it? Sickness and death come not from God, but partly from natural causes in a sinful world—causes with which He does not interfere as a rule,

though no doubt He can do so—and partly from preventible causes, which it is our highest duty to join in endeavouring to exterminate. Sometimes it is hard to say from which of these causes sickness and death come, but to ascribe the sickness and fever that come from bad drainage to the Will of God is an abuse of language—if it be not a wicked blasphemy. No doubt God reigns over all, but His reign does not seem to interfere, if we study its methods reverently, with the working out of natural laws. And therefore, to attribute every kind of death to the Will of God, and to try to get rid of the natural feeling about it in that way, is to palter with one's sense of truth, and to take refuge in a mere aqueous pietism which contains no real elements of comfort. No doubt this view has been the common refuge of preachers. The temptation of the pulpit has always been to substitute high-sounding phrases for real attempts to explain what is difficult. S. Jerome tells us\* that, when once he asked his master Gregory for the explanation of a difficult word in S. Luke, Gregory replied humorously that he would prefer to explain it in the pulpit, because when there is an applauding crowd around you, you are compelled to know that of which, in fact, you are in ignorance. The absence of applause does not remove—nay, it intensifies—that temptation of the pulpit to explain without understanding, to gloss

\* Quoted from Gore's "Bampton Lectures," p. 27.

over difficulties by plausible phrases. It is not true to say that death is due to the Will of God, or that the cure for the desolation wrought by death is submission to that Will. What then? Shall books teach us the remedy? Shall the assurance of others make it clear? Shall the arguments of reason—shall even reading the Bible make it certain? No. We can only rise to the blessed vision of life in death and life beyond death by the inward communion of our spirits with the Spirit of God. We must turn our faces away from memories; we must resolutely set our minds in another direction. We have that power; we exercise it sometimes. When we really do pray—not utter passionate exclamations—but when we speak to God and wait to hear Him speak to us, when we hold converse with God, then we know that life is eternal, that life now is deeper than the accidents that surround it, that there is that within us that cannot die. “He that believeth hath”—not shall have—“hath eternal life,” here and now. “This is eternal life, to know Thee, the only God.” To know theories about God, to know doctrines revealed by God, to know what is said about Him in the Creed or the Bible, or by preachers, is not enough. To know God, that is the essential thing; to wrestle and struggle, as Jacob did at Jabbok, with the demand on our lips, “Tell me Thy Name,” tell me Thy nature, Thy inmost self, “I will not let Thee go until Thou bless

me" — that is the spirit which holds God to His promises, which brings to a man the certainty of his own eternal life. When, after long wrestlings and battlings, spirit meets with Spirit—when in our innermost souls the Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are sons—when that blessed and gracious influence, the Holy Spirit of God, makes His presence felt, when we speak to Him, and He speaks in us—then we know that life is life, and that no death can affect it; that life is a reality, and death, with all its grimness, is but a seeming. True, even then death does not cease to be death; it remains a shadow, and we still strain our eyes and see no details about the life beyond; but a great trust has taken possession of us, and we can wait for the details. We can dare to say, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for Thou art with me, Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." The valley remains a valley—we cannot feel about it like we do about the hills; the shadow remains—there are nothing but half lights and dim guesses about details; but a great, strong, clear trust is behind, and around, and within us. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, Thou art with me"—therefore life is divine, therefore life is extinguishable. "Thou wilt not leave my soul in Sheol, neither wilt Thou suffer Thy Holy One"—the spirit indwelt by Thee—"to see corruption." To be in conscious communion with God, to know God,

is eternal life. David had no authoritative revelation of life as we have, yet he arrived at this certainty because he felt within him the divine life of the Spirit. He could turn away from the awful silence, the hideous coldness of death, to this inward assurance, "Thou art with me." For he knew God ; and to know God is eternal life.

It is thus, and thus alone, that we shall be able to face death for ourselves and others. Let then this great national sorrow speak to us and bring us to the Father. If we never pray earnestly, if we are content with repeating a form of words, if we do not wrestle in prayer, if we do not wait for God to speak to us, we shall never hear Him. When we die we shall meet a stranger ! Oh ! terrible awakening ! Oh ! awful vision of love disregarded and rejected ! And when others die, we shall sit in stony grief and black misery, with no insight, no vision, no sense of communion with them in Him, "in Whom all spirits live." Only in and through knowing God, can we bear the death of others or be of real help to any in their bereavement. We men left to ourselves have but little to offer ; nothing oppresses us more than the sense of our limitations, of the little we can do to shew our sympathy with those for whom our hearts are aching. Believe me, if we grow nearer to the Father we shall carry them there with us ; " mankind are one in spirit " and men may carry each other upward, for "no man liveth unto himself."

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Let us then beseech the great Father of all to sanctify this trouble to the sorrowing parents and family, to her whose grief so touches our inmost hearts, to the Queen whose example has been such a blessing to this country, and whose sorrows seem so to intensify her claims on our loyalty and affection, and to this whole nation ; to draw us all through it nearer to Himself ; to cause this English nation to fulfil more completely that high destiny, to which we humbly believe that it is called ; and to bring us at last to that true home where 'the "former things shall not be remembered," where sorrow and death and parting shall be no more known.



## SERMON VIII.

### LEANNESS WITHIN THE SOUL.

“And He gave them their desire, and sent leanness withal into their soul.”—PSALM cvi. 15.

IN almost every life—even, I suppose, in the most apparently uneventful—there is a crisis, a turning point in the road of life which is of decisive importance. There comes a day or an hour when perhaps an apparently small choice—a yes or a no, or even a word spoken or a silence obstinately maintained—governs everything that follows; some act or word which, when we look back on it from eternity, will be the signal either of unutterable thankfulness or of overwhelming shame. It bewilders us to think of it; it is so hard to think that one word or one act may be the signal of committing ourselves; it is so difficult to distinguish the importance of one from another. The fact is, we are too close to such things to get a true view of their proportions; we cannot “make our history and write it at the same time.” Yet to everyone, as well as to Cæsar, comes a time when we pass the Rubicon, when a choice—the result of years of preparation—is the signal for a new departure; and in the calm stillness of the world beyond we shall see this, as we cannot now.

We have formed perhaps, on the bidding of mere impulse, some friendship or alliance of which the consequences are only too lasting. Or we have weakened by our want of principle the saving influence upon us of some strong character; or we have formed after a struggle of years some habit of truthfulness; or we have let a festering falseness eat its way into our inmost self. And a decisive moment comes which declares the ruling impulse; and there follow a set of consequences—not irreversible, I admit, but so probable as to be almost certain. Like Paul on the road to Damascus, we see light at last and follow it with steady perseverance to the end; or like Samson in the arms of Delilah, the fatal secret comes out and weakness and ruin is ours to the end. “Lord, open our eyes that we may see.” This assuredly must be our prayer when we think of the consequences of yielding to the attractions or the repulsions, which we feel or of which we become conscious, of the habits which we are forming every day, of the crisis into which perhaps we are drifting.

To Israel in the desert such a crisis came. “Lust—the lust of food—came upon them in the desert.” They did not care for what God sent them or for being His own people, fed by His own hand; but they desired something else, they murmured for it, and at last it came; the critical moment arrived and down came the quails so that their feasts were replenished. “He gave them their desire,” but with

it there came what no food could ever fill, "leanness within the soul"; low aims, low desires, a low view of God's purposes, low associations, misery within which drove them to dark deeds and to despising God's promises, so that "they thought scorn of that pleasant land and gave no credence unto His word, but murmured in their tents." And this, too, for forty years, that is, for the life of that generation; an existence of sin and trouble, of misery and wandering, of rebellion and oppression; and all the time Canaan before them, "the land flowing with milk and honey"; and they with no heart even to wish for it because of the "leanness within their soul."

"Leanness within the soul"! It is a terribly suggestive picture of an inner life without interest in anything but self—without faith, without hope, and without love—bad enough if we think of it as it is in itself, worse if we think of it as self-caused, as being all the result of a man's own desire—of letting himself go on one side of his nature, of murmuring till the crisis comes. The day comes when he gets what he wants, and gets with it "leanness within his soul." What a picture it suggests of narrow interests and cramped imagination, of selfish affection and stifled intellect! What a terrible thing it is to discover in others, to live with in the house! How much more terrible to think that it should all be the result of the man's own desire, the outcome of low

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aims and bad wishes and self-caused degradation ! For this is not an hereditary disease, it is a self-caused state. A man is not born to it ; he produces it in himself. Narrow circumstances do not produce it, nor does scanty intellectual power ; there is always the possibility of self-expansion in any circumstances or out of any disadvantages. "Lean-ness within the soul" is one of those moral diseases which correspond to certain outward diseases, for which a man has no one but himself to blame. From what does it come ? From selfishness, from grovelling tastes, from low associations, from a habit of looking at the worse side of everything ; from a featureless amiability that gives up all strong feelings about good and evil, from sacrificing everything to the pleasure of the moment. "Leanness within the soul" ! You know the horror, the ghastliness of external emaciation brought about by illness, when man or woman becomes literally skin and bone. What a suggestion such a sight conveys of the possibilities of inward emaciation. Beneath the sleek, prosperous, well-fed, comfortable appearance, what if there be, hidden from men but open before God, a horrible emaciation in a man's real self—leanness within the soul !

How are we to avoid the creeping over us of this insidious disease ? The Apostle shall answer :—"Set your affections on things above." We shall conquer by the force and direction of desire. Desire

is, in the moral world, like the law of gravitation in the natural world—it determines man's relations to beings and objects round him. Desire is the raw material of goodness or wickedness, and thus it has everything to do with the formation of character. It influences conduct and character in a greater degree than reason does, for reason may be very active and yet leave very little trace of its activity behind it. But desire cannot be active, without powerfully moulding the character in some direction. This consideration makes young life so interesting. Desire is not yet determined as to its direction, for the most part, in young people ; it is moving towards true objects or the reverse ; successive desires are leading them upwards or downwards, but the crisis has not yet come, the direction and drift of life is not yet for the most part ascertainable, or at any rate fixed with certainty, and much may be done now in the education of desire. Much may be done during early years to attract desire to higher things. Much may be done by presenting God and Christ and the Holy Spirit, and the beauty of goodness, in some living way. Much may be done by getting rid of dark and cruel conceptions of God, by dwelling on the essential and innermost feature of His character—that God is Love—and that too not in any soft or sentimental fashion, but by pointing out in Him that which will awaken real love within us.

To teach the young “to know the Father” is to

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awaken within them a desire for Him. To teach them to know Jesus Christ, as S. John or S. Peter knew Him, not as a mere name, but as a living Person towards Whom they can feel as One Who is "like unto His brethren," is to help them to desire Him. To speak to them of the Holy Spirit as of that inner Guest Who is the unfailing guide and friend—Whose aid never fails us—Whose support never ceases, is to quicken a new sense of want within them. So far as we come to see in the highest, the best, the noblest here, reflections of God, resemblances of His uncreated loveliness ; so far as we recognise in everything here which provokes love and enthusiasm, that which inevitably suggests and manifests Him ; so far as we see in the brother, whom we have seen and love, a likeness, in all that is good and noble in his character, to the God Whom we have not seen—we learn to desire God. We tune our life in the true key ; we rise through all that is good here to the one Fountain of all good ; we rise, through all that tells of Him, to Him Whose existence is the explanation of all, and we learn to say as a distinct result of a reasonable survey of all the facts of life : "Whom have I in heaven but Thee ? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee." Such is the force of desire, when once really roused, that it keeps the soul true to God. There is no power like it. Hence, the importance attached in the Bible to strong

wishes: "Ask, and ye shall have;" "Seek, and ye shall find"; "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Wishes in truth are prayers. You do not only pray when you utter conscious prayers. Every time you wish for anything, your Father understands your wishes. Which way then do our secret wishes tend? If they always gravitate in the direction of earthly things, money, fame, or some transient object; what does it prove but that our real prayers are for earthly things, that our heart is not set on things that are more excellent, that we have no real longing for God and goodness?

What a light it throws upon ourselves when we look upon our secret desires as the surest test of the kind of character which we are forming in ourselves! Into our acts all kinds of motives enter, but our secret desires tell their own story. What a light, too, it throws on what we might be, if, instead of complaining in a purposeless way about our sins and shortcomings, we were really to try to desire goodness, to think and wish and pray for it, to wish to be good, to be spiritually-minded, to be full of faith! Do we, let us ask ourselves, so desire? Or when we ask God to make us better, does the picture of a sort of deadness, as the consequence of being better, rise before us and stifle our prayer, till, like Augustine, before his conversion, we pray: "O God, convert me—but not yet"? Let us not be so unjust to the power of goodness to interest us; let us look facts in the face.

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In reality the highest, the best life is the fullest of interest, is the least barren ; there are better things in Canaan than we can see as we gaze upon it from a distance. To be spiritual does not mean to be empty, and to be good does not mean to feel dull. When then you ask God to make you good, do not be terrified at the bare notion of Him taking you at your word, but ask Him as if you meant it. Dare, O weak and faltering soul ! to desire, to wish, to ask for as your chief good, to be like Christ ; to have reproduced within yourself that loveliness of character, that tenderness of sympathy, that strength of endurance, that calmness under suffering, that patient self-possession which characterised Him. You cannot see in His life anything but beauty. Dare to wish, to long, to pray, to struggle to be like unto Him, and He will give you your desire, and send fulness undreamt of—the fulness of love, and faith, and strength and patience—into your inmost soul.

But if you persist in setting your life in a lower key, if you never try to elevate your wishes, or to seek anything higher than the mere passing interests of society or fleshly satisfaction, it is better to face the fact that there can be only one result. God will give you, sooner or later, your desire in some way or other—you will probably get what you want—but with it will come no blessing, only the horror of inward emaciation, of leanness within the soul. If your



only aim in life is to make yourself comfortable ; if he only notion of duty you have is the duty of self-preservation at any cost of suffering to others ; if your ideal is to avoid trouble and to put yourself out as little as possible ; if the chief way you affect the lives of others is by consuming what they with toil and hardness produce ; if no spark of sympathy ever goes out of you and cheers some other soul ; if you, in a word, live for self—why, then, you may get your desire ; but you will get it with the most damning of accompaniments and the most clinging of complaints—leanness within the soul.

Brethren, let us look at the question honestly, like men and not like self-deceivers. Whither are our desires tending ? In which direction are they bearing us, upwards or downwards ? Are we letting ourselves drift towards some crisis which is the culmination of a gradual deterioration, and which may leave us with what we want (or think that we want), at the cost of everything which makes life worth living ? Is desire more and more concentrated on the material, the sensuous ? Is some accomplishment or some passing interest utterly possessing us, and are we becoming lean within—without faith, without sympathy, without self-respect, without generosity, letting others minister to us without giving aught in return ? If so, it may be well to look on to the end. A day and hour will come when desire will be manifested ; when the true,

deep-seated desire of each soul will be seen. Now, there are restraints that hinder its manifestation; there are all sorts of considerations and motives which are keeping us back and causing us to hide our real desires. Then every man's true aim and object, as well as every man's work, will be manifested; each one, freed from constraint, will turn to his own way. The lips of the Judge need not open to pronounce any sentence. He but lifts off each constraining law, each limiting infirmity, each instrument of education, and the result speaks for itself. \*Each soul, by its own inner tendency, seeks its own place. Father and son, brother and brother, sister and sister, wife and husband, each with the old habitual restraints lifted off them turn to their own place—the one goes by an inner power to the right, the other to the left. It needs no angel to guide or urge them on. Each one turns to its own desire, to fulness or leanness, to heaven or hell.

May God in His mercy grant us never so to tempt Him by selfish and low desire, as to give us that most terrible of all gifts—our own desire, what we are secretly longing for—and with it, that most loathsome of all diseases, leanness within the soul.

\* Compare "The Candle of the Lord" (Phillips Brooks), page 198.

## SERMON IX.

### RELIGION AND MORALITY.

“ One of them, which was a lawyer, asked Jesus a question, saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”—S. MATTHEW xxii. 35-40.

THIS was a question put in good faith by one whose disposition and attitude towards truth won for him the commendation, “Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.” It was a representative question, framed wholly in the spirit of current Jewish theology—a theology not of principles, but of rules laid down and questions settled. With the exponents of this theology neither nature, nor reason, nor human instincts went for anything. What men observed and deduced from their observations was nothing—what men felt and suffered was nothing—what men desired and yearned for was nothing to them. There was the law—there were the books of Moses—there were the records, so scrupulously observed, so diligently studied; out of them all deductions were to be made, by certain laws of consequence, and these

would govern all human life. The holy oracles of God had become so many statute books. The letter of the statute was everything—the principles of the jurisprudence, which lay beneath it, were nothing. The principles lay buried and forgotten, while the doctors argued with the most exhaustive subtlety on the letter of the statutes.

It was a period such as often appears in the progress of a nation that possesses any literature and cultivation—a period when men accept the statements of that literature as binding on thought, and without asking for any reasons for those statements, occupy themselves in their application to all received facts and practices. Such a period recurred in the West, between the 13th and 15th centuries, in the age of the schoolmen. One can imagine the mind of S. Thomas Aquinas formulating questions in the same fashion. In very much the same spirit which animated the scholiast, the lawyer puts to this new Teacher, Who professed to ground all His teaching on the theology of the sacred books, a question much mooted and variously solved in the schools of that time, viz., which of the portions into which zealous textualists had broken up the law of Moses deserved most attention?—which of the six hundred and thirteen precepts should stand first? Though as their saying was “God had more care for the letters and syllables in the Law than for the stars of heaven,” yet still some

stars were of greater magnitude than others. In the same way the precepts of the Law would be of unequal rank and dignity; which, then, among them was the greatest?

It was a question keenly debated, and variously answered, and this was the mental attitude from which it proceeded. The answer of Christ accepts the questioner's hypothesis in a remarkable fashion. 'There is one sentence, indeed,' says our Lord in effect, 'which does stand first—one precept deserving to be called great, and there is yet another, which to apply the term familiar in your schools is the *δευτέρωσις*, the secondary commandment. But it is not, as you have determined, the injunction to be circumcised, nor the law of the Sabbath, nor the ritual of the Paschal festival, nor even the morning and evening sacrifice; but it is this verse of Deutoronomy, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might'; that is the first precept, because a perfect direction of all the faculties towards God is the first principle of all religion; and the second is this verse of Leviticus, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,' because the principle of all morality is the due equilibrium of the selfish and disinterested affections.'

Thus the whole system of gloss and interpretation was ignored and banished; from confusing themselves in a network of deduction men were recalled to the first principles which must underlie all religion; the

simple axioms are rescued by a single word from the mass of artificial casuistry by which they were overlaid, and replaced, with all their faultless purity, in their true position. 'On these two commandments depend everything else, and without these two nothing else can be understood or preserved in its right proportion.'

To-day, I want to call your attention to two of many points which this answer suggests—viz., the permanence of the principles that underlie it, and their necessary cohesion with one another.

I. As to their permanence: they are Old Testament principles. No doubt the claims of the Old Testament have been distorted at times. No doubt a recent unhappy declaration of unreasoning hostility to all that criticism or historical research has to teach us about the Old Testament, does much to aggravate its undoubted difficulties, by presenting an impossible dilemma for our acceptance. To be willing to stake our whole faith on the accuracy of the records of the Mosaic tradition of creation is to take up a dangerous position. But on the other hand, to take up the position that, because the Old Testament does not anticipate the discoveries of modern science, or because its method of history-writing is not that of our own day, therefore it has nothing to say to us; that it is entirely superseded and blotted out by the New Testament; that its

morality is exploded or left behind like a forgotten poem out of date—to take up such a position is a proof of very little insight as regards its real teaching.

The ethics of the New Testament are at once the same as and different to those of the Old Testament, but the difference is in the development; the identity, as our Lord shows, is in what are really the fundamental precepts. There is identity of principle between the moral teaching of Moses and of Christ. The Old and New Testaments both start from the same axioms. They both represent God as absolutely just and righteous, as One Who is for virtue and against vice; in the one, as in the other, as Bishop Butler says, “there can be no doubt on which side He is.” But the development of these ideas is, no doubt, as different as it must be in the childhood, as compared with the manhood of the world.

The manifestation of the principle in the earlier covenant, was rather in outward and material conditions, while in the later, it lay rather in an inward and spiritual presence; but the principle remains unchanged. To love God involves every relation of man to God. To “love thy neighbour as thyself” involves every relation of co-ordinate beings. “The mental progress of thirty centuries has added nothing to the oracle delivered from that far remote and shadowy past concerning the spiritual relations and the spiritual obligations of our race.”

To be what the law demands is to be as an Angel of God ; it is to be as man was at first, and will be again when he regains the destiny proper to his nature. However mankind may develop morally and spiritually, it will only be by a working from the primary principles laid down in the law. He may learn to love God in new ways, to love Him with the intellect, to love Him with a more personal affection, to combine reverence and passionate attachment more completely, but he will never get beyond that which is really contained in the principle laid down in Deuteronomy. So he may learn to love his neighbour as himself ; he may find more completely the exact equilibrium between the self-regarding and self-forgetting affections—between what he owes to himself and to others : he may find out all kinds of new ways of regarding mankind, which will make war, and perhaps even competition in trade, impossible ; mankind may advance into the actual experience of that vision which earnest-minded men have seen, when poverty shall cease because no man calls what he possesses “his own” ; mankind may advance to that far-off day when what is now called charity will be recognized to be justice ; and still it will never get beyond what is implicitly contained in the old pages of Leviticus, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”

Think how you love yourself. Do not we recognize



at once the fact that, if we loved everyone like that, it would revolutionize society? Yet this is the commandment of Moses—the moral ideal of the old law. The principles, which underlie that commandment, are eternal; they can never be changed, whatever form the development of them may take.

II. And this brings us to the second point. These great principles, embedded in the old law, buried and forgotten for centuries, re-asserted by Christ, and illustrated by His own life, cannot be separated from one another, any more than they can be superseded. No moral or spiritual progress can be made apart from either of them, for everything hangs on them both. Any attempt at separation would be mutilation, and would mean, ultimately, ruin. The spiritual obligations and the spiritual relations hang together. The duty to man and the duty to God act and react upon one another; they are the systole and diastole, the contraction and dilatation of a perfect system.

Sometimes the temper of the times has led men to lay emphasis on the one to the exclusion of the other, or, at any rate, to the large ignoring of it. It was so, on the one side, in what is sometimes called the theological period of the seventeenth century. The tendency then was to insist on the first and great commandment—the duty to God—and to ignore the second. Puritanism in all its earlier and more legitimate manifestations, is consistently remarkable

for ignoring the *δευτέρωσις*—the second commandment as laid down by Christ. There was presented to mankind in the history of that period, on the one hand, a picture of devotion to God and to His supposed honour, which has been scarcely equalled ; and on the other, an absolute disregarding of every human tie of honour, and sometimes even of natural affection. We have studied it, most of us, in the pages of romances, whose author, by temperament and education, was little likely to do justice to its nobler side. Yet unquestionably, Puritanism had a nobler side than that of which Scott's novels give us a glimpse ; and that nobler side grew out of its stern and unshaken loyalty to the first and great commandment. Its weakness, its cruelty, its hideous assassinations, the revolting excesses which obscured its nobler tendencies, arose from an ignoring of that second commandment, which is like unto the first—like it in origin, and only inferior in its absolute dependence on it—"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

In our own day the tendency is just the other way. The service of man is proclaimed and inculcated with a passionate enthusiasm ; we are exhorted to find in it our one and only religion. "If we would learn about God we must study man," cries one writer, and on the same lines we are being told every day, that the only revelation of God that makes any impression on mankind is that of a self-

devoted and self-denying human life.\* There is much that is true and much that demands recognition in all this, though it is often stated in a negative and destructive fashion. It is not well to let the undeniable beauty and charm of many of its presentations blind our eyes to the real question which is raised by its exclusions. That question is, "Can the love of man, can duty to man permanently exist without the love of God, without duty to God?" Will men go on keeping the last six commandments if we quietly agree to drop the first four as beyond us? Or, to put it in the plainest way, Can morality exist without religion? Is the high moral teaching of Christianity—which is a development of the first principles laid down in the law—is this high moral teaching likely to be permanently maintained if one of those first principles be quietly dropped—with not much said about it of course, no violent outbursts of declamation, no wild proclamations of atheism which might loosen accustomed sanctions—yet still dropped? Cannot we go on with the old routine, using the old Bible language, conforming to old religious customs, but quietly in our education and in our dealing with others dropping out the element of religion, ignoring rather than rebelling against it?

Or to put it another way: Is it possible to extract

\* Cf. Cecilia de Noailles. I hope that I do not do injustice to the gifted author's idea by stating it thus.

all the light and sweetness and beauty of Christian intercourse, all the high level of Christian morality—even to improve upon it—without adding the burden of a mysterious and complicated religion which baffles our understanding, while it tries to regulate our course? At first sight it seems as if this could be. There are men and women who are moral from choice—just, pure, and generous, because they instinctively love these virtues, but who refer none of them to religion. Morality, says an increasing school, rests ultimately not on the commandment of God, but upon the experience of men. Morality is obligatory, religion is a matter of choice; the *δευτέρωσις* "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" is a matter of necessity, it will last on and be accepted as a necessity without the incumbrance of the first and great commandment.

III. What shall we say to these voices? In the few moments that remain let me put a few considerations briefly before you that tell against our first and favourable impressions of their reasonableness.

(a) The fact of morality in some cases surviving the loss of religion is nothing. The course we sail along is very much marked out by previous influences; the very motive power is provided in advance. Existing morality is so entangled with Christianity that it is very difficult to separate them. We may reject the Creed and the Church for ourselves as individuals, but both Creed and Church

will continue to affect us by a thousand subtle influences ; the air we breathe is charged with them ; they create a public opinion which is always impinging on us, they colour the social atmosphere which we breathe ; our very antagonism to them bears witness to their strength. It is not so easy to de-religionize life as it looks. The sceptics who are profoundly moved by the discoveries of professional scientists who have "searched the heavens with a telescope and declare that they find no evidence of a Creator," and who affect to cast off religion, find the mental atmosphere teeming with little influences, which their teachers have not been able to banish, and have indeed often laboured hard to preserve. It is not easy to de-religionise life in a country like England—it might be easier in a new country—except by some violent means which undermine morality as well as religion. So that we are not really in a position to tell how long morality would endure the loss of religion ; but there are ugly indications of the probable result in the lives of George Eliot and John Stuart Mill, and in the poetry and novels of the secular school—there are ugly indications, which warn us that morality would soon lose its hold if it were dissociated from religion.

(b) And another observation : There is a universal instinct among men, which powerfully supports morality, that the consequences of actions remain and pass beyond this life. But if we are pressed to

state on what that instinct is founded, we are forced back upon religion, upon the fact that "God has said so." Our observation and experience do not for the most part tell us anything of the kind, except that it is represented to be so on the stage or in poetry and romance. In actual life right doing too often goes unrewarded and wrong doing is not punished. "The ungodly" now, as in David's day, "flourish like a green bay-tree"; they have the largest houses, they make and keep the most money, they win the greatest attention, "they come in no misfortune like other folk," they care nothing for the sorrows of their own flesh and blood while they feast and frivol; they look upon the rights of property as the only rights worth preserving, and yet they flourish and abound. It is the rarest thing to hear of their downfall. "The righteous perisheth and no man layeth it to heart," but as for the ungodly unless it be true that "they will be rooted out at the last," unless you can say that "there is a God who will judge them"—they will undoubtedly have the best of it, as far as outward things go. They devour widows' houses in a thousand ways which human law cannot touch. Horace wrote—

"Raro antecedentem scelestum  
Deseruit pede poena claudo,"

but to our seeing rarely does punishment with its very lame leg seem to come upon them here and now.

In fact we talk about poetic justice or dramatic consequences to express roughly our convictions that this justice and these consequences only happen in poetry and on the stage, not in real life. And all this tells powerfully at first with the young. But then they are taught that there are consequences beyond this life, and something within them tells them that that is true—that it must be so. Leave this untaught; inculcate morality without religion and it needs no prophet to predict that by the second generation every vestige of morality, that is not convenient, will be lost.

Brethren, the wisdom, the experience of thirty centuries is on our side against a few theorists. Morality will not endure the loss of the sanctions of Religion. "To love thy neighbour as thyself" is an ideal which attracts us all in our best moments; but in the struggle with our own selfishness, in the dreary long grind against lust and avarice and contempt of others, we find that it is after all only the second commandment; that unless the whole nature, heart, soul and strength, be given to God; unless all the faculties be given to their highest exercise, it will be impossible to attain to it. The more we dwell on the first and great commandment, the more truly does its reasonableness strike us. A voice within re-echoes it. This is life indeed, this is life worthy of man; "to love the Lord thy God with all thy

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heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."

And then all else follows ; then comes the δευτέρωσις, where, in its consequent position, it can be maintained. For "the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."



## SERMON X.

### THE INDIVIDUALITY OF THE SAINTS.

“O God, Thou art my God.”—PSALM lxxiii. i.

YESTERDAY was All Saints Day, and its lessons and songs are still about us. We all feel its influence and its attraction; no other festival, except Christmas and Easter, seems so full of joy. It is so ennobling to think of the long chain of holy men and women, who being in the world have not been “of the world”; who have used it and advanced it but have not yielded to it; who have been unworldly, not desiring to clutch its good things but willing to forego them for great ends, not inclined to insist on rights but to claim duties as a privilege; who have realised the eternal in the present, and have seen and felt God walking with them. It is such a joy, too, to feel the oneness of all that is great and good with our own unworthy selves; to feel the spiritual sense of touch with S. Peter and S. John and Blessed Mary and S. Paul, and then in later times with Athanasius and Bernard, and again with Francis and Anselm, and again with those white-souled men who have so lately “crossed the flood,” Dollinger and Newman and Liddon—to feel our association with them, to

feel that when we bless God "for all His servants departed this life in His faith and fear" we are asserting our oneness with them; to feel that we are heirs of the same promise, children of the same Father. Surely, if there is a prayer that comes home to us, as we count up the memories of saints known and unknown, it is the one which we say to-day, that we may "so follow God's saints in all virtuous and godly living that we may come to those unspeakable joys which He has prepared for them that unfeignedly love Him." And this feeling extends even outside the church. A living American poet has powerfully expressed the secret of the attraction of this feast of All Saints :—

" One feast of holy days the crest  
I, though no churchman, love to keep  
All Saints—the unknown good that rest  
In God's still memory folded deep." \*

Such are our general feelings. It may help us to-day to add distinctness to these feelings if we analyse a little closely the elements of the saintly character—those strongly marked features which we expect and demand, as conditions of our reverence. There are certain root ideas in relation to goodness, necessary and indispensable, with which it is always well to saturate ourselves. Otherwise we so easily become slipshod and wrong-headed in our appraisal of goodness; we tie it up with observance or

\* J. R. Lowell.

we credit it to circumstances, or we demand of it the impossible.

What is it, let us ask, that lies at the root of saintliness, *i.e.*, of surpassing goodness? Strong individuality, an individuality as undoubted and as real as in the case of a great thinker or a great artist—an individuality that impresses itself upon us and intensifies itself as we grow closer to it. We demand this as a condition of our homage. We cannot reverence or get up our enthusiasm over heroes of the type depicted in the Heir of Redclyffe, or over the amiable inutilities who are often presented to us in current religious biographies. We demand something better than mere aqueous pietism with its ever-recurring burden of dull commonplace religious maxims, and its aphorisms which leave human nature out of account. The great names, that have drawn the affection and homage of mankind in any and every age, have been the names of men who, however differing, were alike in this, that they were clearly defined persons who could never be confounded with one another, *e.g.*, Bernard and Francis of Assissi stand out as strong in their intense individuality, in the absolute impossibility of their being confounded with one another, as do Raphael and Murillo in art, or Dante and Shakespeare in poetry. And as they were, so they *are* still. As "one star differeth from another star in glory, so also is the Resurrection of the Dead."

This is a truth often forgotten or ignored. We recognize, without difficulty, the differences of certain types of genius. We do not confound literary taste and accuracy with rhetorical power and high gifts of imagination. We recognize individuality in art and in literature and in constructive ability ; but do we, do many around us recognize the intense individuality that characterizes the real saint? Individuality—not in the sense that he poses as a pattern or a leader, still less as an eccentric, but in the sense that he is *himself* and could not be any one else, that his goodness is *his own* copy of the Christ-life and not some one else's, that he has brought himself, with his powers and limitations to the feet of Christ and surrendered himself there, and that he is a different man from anyone else with a different lesson to teach us.

This is a subject on which it is worth while to insist in the face of existing currents of thought. Many around us, almost in despair, are looking forward to the day when everything shall be done for everybody by the State, when the conditions of life for the masses shall be made better and more healthful than they are at present. Some of us possibly share such aspirations ; but whether we do or not, the very fact of such ideas being in the air makes it the more necessary to insist that, as regards all moral and spiritual progress, the individual will still have to struggle, to fight his own battle, to grow on his own roots, to

maintain his own individuality. Whatever men, as a mass, may do towards realizing fraternity, towards bearing one another's burdens; however much the State may make things easier for the weak and better for the poor, this will remain eternally and unalterably true, that in moral and spiritual struggle "no man may deliver his brother," that "every man must bear his own burden." Let us not be persuaded by any dreams of a possible millennium,\* when we shall eat our dinners without paying for them, and join in worship without the trouble of going to Church—let us not be persuaded by such alluring prospects to surrender this one firm conviction that no circumstances, however well ordered, will dispense with the necessity of the individual self-improvement; that character is and will remain the last and only true and real thing; that we can never be so lost in the mass as to float with it, in some easy stream, towards a haven of righteousness. It is more necessary to insist on this, because there are now, as indeed there always have been, things that tend to obscure individuality. The first outlook on the world is not one which brings the importance of the individual into prominence. We see vast masses of men streaming along the street, like clouds along the sky, like the leaves which make up the foliage of the trees, like the grains of sand which form the sea-shore. *We* see them; our fathers saw

\* Cf. "Looking Backwards," by J. R. Bellamy.

the same thing; so will our children. The great masses of human society remain the same; they differ in composition, but it is possible to imagine a hundred years hence that much the same sort of looking people will pass up the King's road every morning on their way to their work, as pass now. The mass seems to remain unchanged; the individual disappears, yet the form remains as unchanged as it does in nature. Everyone must feel the contrast between the permanence of nature and the transitoriness of human life as Wordsworth felt it—

\* “Still glides the stream, and shall for ever glide,  
While we, the brave, the mighty, and the wise,  
We men . . . must vanish.”

That is the first aspect of human life, and it is a very real one. It colours our whole attitude towards our fellow-men. In half our thoughts of others we ignore the individual: he is a servant, or a workman, or a soldier, or a policeman to us, but of the man, of his soul, of his character, of his joys, his sins and hopes, we know nothing. We go into a school, one of our great elementary schools, with twelve hundred children there; how little can we realize the life of each separate child—his home influence, his character, his future, all he has to go through to the last moment; we think of them as a mass, to be treated as a mass, trained and educated in the mass. What is the soul of each one among such an infinite number?

\* The River Duddon, xxxiv.

From the very first the Christian Church has set itself to work to counteract this first impression, to insist on man's individuality and on the importance of maintaining it. That God has His eye on each unit in these innumerable crowds, that He made each one with his own life to live, his own character to develop, that each separate life has a separate relation to Himself, its course to follow, its destiny to fulfil, its calls and gifts in accordance with the Master's purpose, its own hopes, its own responsibility—this has been her unvarying message. Singly and alone, God speaks to each one, not to his family, or his people, or his own household, but to himself. Singly and alone each one has to go out into life, like Abraham, not "knowing whither he goes"; singly and alone he is proved and tried, and either crowned and blessed, or disowned at the last; singly and alone, as if there were none else in the world—each running his own individual course. The sea of life that surges around us early and late, that forces itself on mind and eye and desire, makes it hard to remember this. We seem to belong to the crowd; we seem to have to take our chance in it along with others. It is so easy to think of ourselves as one of a body, so hard to remember our personal singleness, our personal responsibility; so easy to say, We all do this; so hard to face the question, Why do I do this? Or, again, if we belong to a religious family it seems to give us a sort of personal security.

Insensibly we take credit for the goodness of others, we think we must be what they are, and the very conditions of acting and working with others make it easier to slide into this point of view. We have to work with others and for others, for great purposes and for aims far beyond ourselves: for others and with others the best part of our earthly work is done, and yet, first, before we can work for or with anyone to any purpose, we must face the great fact that we stand singly and alone before the Everlasting, singly and alone before the Cross of Christ, singly and alone before the Divine Spirit—by ourselves—as being what we are. All the great Old Testament heroes learnt this primary lesson: Abraham, Moses, Elijah, Isaiah, Job. So did all the New Testament saints: Mary, Peter, John, Paul. The soul of each knew itself alone with God before it could work with or for others; no words could tell to others the incommunicable secret, but each soul knew itself alone with God. This is the first condition of service, the root of real religion; this is what comes in our heart of hearts, in the deep certainties of conscience; that in spite of all that meets the eye and is not ourselves, “there are but two beings in the whole universe—two only supreme and self-evident beings—our own soul and the God who made it.” \*

This was what the saints, one and all, faced and

\* “Newman’s Sermons,” vol. i. p. 23.



knew as a foundation truth ; they had a deep sense of their own individuality. They were able to estimate man's nothingness and man's greatness—his nothingness in the great universal, and still more in the Presence of God—his greatness because God Himself made him ; because he is the work of His Hands, endowed with gifts from His own excellence in order that he might live and be perfect, knowing that he is valued, trusted, blessed by Him. This the saints realized : it was the fundamental thing about them ; they stood face to face with God ; they realized that they were single and alone in His sight.

There is nothing here below which brings home this sense of our separateness to us so much as the sight or even the thought of death. If you have ever watched another dying, watched the strength gradually ebbing away—this has been borne in upon you while you hold his hand, while you cling to its grasp, that you cannot share his trial ; he is going where he must be alone. In that hour, the sense of the separateness of each soul comes home ; there is no being lost in a crowd when death comes. If not before, at least then, we shall realize our separateness, our individuality, what we are, what we have done—we in our own selves.

Death then brings this fact of our separateness home to us ; but the thing is as true now, as it will be when we come to die, and we need the conviction of it before we die. We want it in life to elevate,

consecrate, purify life, to give it truth and nobleness. Whatever others are or do, we want to be ourselves, and know that we are ourselves, and that what we do, we do ourselves. We want this overpowering and thrilling conviction—‘I am myself and there is none other save God.’ Sometimes it comes to a man suddenly at some crisis of life, on some occasion which has forced him to unaccustomed prayer ; sometimes it comes in some awful moment of temptation ; sometimes in the agony of bereavement, when no one can enter into his sorrow ; sometimes in the hour of joy ; sometimes on the morning after a great sin ; but it is well to seek to know it, before it comes home to us in some terrible fashion—it is well to seek to know it before sorrow or trial comes. Amid smooth things we must learn to say, “O Lord, Thou hast searched me out, and know me ; thou knowest my down-sitting and mine up-rising ; Thou understandest my thoughts long before ; Thou hast fashioned me behind and before and laid Thine Hand upon me : lo, there is not a word in my tongue, but thou, O Lord, knowest it altogether.”

This is the first lesson of the spiritual life. This is the great means of opening the eyes to reality. The foundation of all greatness and goodness lies in the certainty that our surroundings are not ourselves, but that there is self and there is God, and that, in one sense, those two are the only beings in the universe.

We have to think and work with others and for others ; amidst it all we are—we must be ourselves ; we must, before we can do anything that is worth doing, realize our singleness, our solitude, our separate individuality.

II. And thus realizing *ourselves, we are able* to give ourselves to Christ and to others. Self-devotion is only possible when you realize yourself. Would it not be a true thing to say that many live a life of barren selfishness because they have never realized themselves ; they do as others do, copy their faults and vices—regard, in a half-unconscious fashion, self-pleasing as the only duty towards themselves, and live a barren, useless life of selfishness ? Are not such lives all around us ? Now and then they dream dreams, and are haunted by aspirations, they want to do this and do that ; but it is so hard, it involves self-giving, and to give oneself, one must have realized oneself. One cannot give oneself as part of a crowd, doing as others do, like sheep going through a stile, shouting with the larger crowd, with no thought about the righteousness and the justice of the cause for which one is shouting. But once realize self, and the foundation is laid for self-devotion. There comes the moment, when like Paul, with that great and intense individuality which he had, even as a persecutor, we meet Jesus, and meet Him, as the One who can claim us in our individuality, as “ The Son of God, Who loved me and gave

Himself for me." The one Voice that can never be mistaken or forgotten, rings in our ears, "My child, give Me thy heart." It sounds and claims a response; and we are able to give that response because we have realized ourselves.

All the long preparation becomes intelligible when that voice is once heard. Paul the Jewish Rabbi heard it; Francis of Assissi, with his wild imagination, his mingled playfulness and earnestness, heard it; Bishop Wilson, amid the stiff fashions and straight-laced decorum, the formal reserved dryness of the eighteenth century, heard it. Each heard that one Voice, and hearing, gave himself, because he possessed himself. One and the self same thing became the ruling and shaping power of such different lives. It was the overflowing tenderness of the Father; it was the wondrous bond between the Man of Sorrows and a troubled world; it was the sense of His atoning Love that bound them, and that has bound and binds and will bind man after man, who has realized himself, to the obedience of Christ, to devotion to Him and His Brethren. This has laid hold of individual strength and kept it true; this has renewed earnestness, enforced duties, refined strong manliness, widened sympathies; this has been the motive power of the strong fibre of the Christian character. The highest of all affections, love for the unseen Christ, has attested its own power; has asked and received the sacrifice of life after life to hard un-

congenial tasks. And surely that appeal, the voice of that love that can never fail, has not yet lost its power. It speaks to each of us and calls us as we are, being what we are, single, alone, individual, to give ourselves to Him and to His work among others. It does not bid us plunge ourselves blindfold into some religious system, think as our party thinks, do as our party does, condemn as our party condemns, but it says, "realize yourself, you are one and God is one and in a sense there is none other."

What then of yourself? What is your talent? What is the seed cast into you by God? How can it grow? What can you do? The call comes to all alike, "Go work to-day in My vineyard; use your powers, widen your sympathies, do your own bit of work, be yourself and yet be Mine." Brethren, it is impossible not to feel that this is emphatically the lesson for our own day. We may believe that the State can do much to raise the lot of man, and ought to do more; but the very presence of such a conviction, ought to put us on our guard against ever imagining that we dispense ourselves from a strong individualism as regards our own work, and our own response to Christ's call. It takes a man to win a man, and under whatever conditions, it always will. It takes a man—not one of a crowd—but a man, who has realized himself, to help a man in his deepest self. We must be individualists here; we must face the primary conditions of life. That there is a balancing

truth I am perfectly conscious, but this is not the time to state it. Face to face with the Saints, questioning them as to the foundation of their goodness, we find that to realize oneself as single and alone, as an individual, as one that has a separate, single work to do, is the first necessity. Face to face with those, who have left with us the contagion of their own enthusiasm, we must be certain of this, that we cannot move one step along their path, or begin to do our work, till we have faced the preliminary question of our singleness and aloneness.

No great schemes of regenerating darkest England must be allowed to blind us to the one great constraining fact, which all experience and all history enforces, that it takes a man to win a man and to help a man; that all great works have been done, not wholesale, but by individuals working, each at their own bit and on their own lines; *e.g.*, by men like Howard, who threw the whole strength of his individuality into the reform of one crying abuse, who felt that he was called to do that, and did it with all his heart. If the sore and hard problems before us are to be faced or mastered, as we trust that they will be, it will be by men who have first realized, this essential element in all greatness, their own selves, their singleness and separateness—and then have taken the Apostle's vision as their one constraining motive, "The Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

To-day let us cleave to this first principle. Let us remember that each one of us is by his life writing his own history ; and that the history of each of us is the history, not of one of a family or of a body or of a State ; but the history of a man or a woman, of a soul by itself, which must have a distinct relation to Him Who made it, which must be, before all else, alone with the Alone, the One God, the Author of its being.

## SERMON XI.

### THE DEATH WITHIN.

“ Dead in trespasses and sins.”—EPHESIANS ii. 1.

DEAD in the midst of life, dead in the midst of a thousand activities, dead amid the whirl of social duties, dead in a fashion which none of these outward energies can affect—dead within—dead in life, “ dead in trespasses and sin.”

S. Paul often uses language of this kind, and it makes us see that there must be some other deeper meanings in the words ‘ life ’ and ‘ death,’ than those which we commonly give to them, than that first meaning about which the most ignorant know. In one sense life and death are the most easily distinguished of all facts. The man whom we see is alive : every movement, every respiration assures us of his life ; we cannot be mistaken about it. Or he is dead ; he ceases to exist in that sense, and every glance assures us of it ; every effort which we make to think it otherwise accentuates the stern reality. Life and death ! Yes, we know their meaning in that sense, we know the awful contrast even between the sick friend whose life is feeble, and the dead friend whose hand yields no answering pressure, whose eye gives no responsive glance. But that is only the



first meaning of the words death and life, and the closer we get to the great mystery that is contained in them, and the more conscious we become of their endless scope, the less does that primary meaning, that strikes our senses, content us. Life and death! There are wonderful secrets contained in the very words; we own their endless range and extent by our common language;\* we talk, without any sense of inconsistency, of the life of a plant or a tree, of the life of birds and fishes and animals, and of the life of man; we use one word, with no feeling of incongruity, in order to describe the life of grass and of man; we call all different things by different names, but that inward power which builds up all those different shapes we call by one name—life. What do we know of it? How can we know anything of it? How can there be any knowledge of what issues and is manifested in so many different things? So again, when we come to man, we talk of a bad life and a good life, and use the same word. We talk of life coming to us through music or speech; ‘it put new life into me’ we say, and that life is as different from the life that comes from food, as the life that comes by food is from the life of the plant. Yet we use the same word, we have not even the *βίος* and the *ζώνη* of the Greeks. We use the words life and death so conventionally and thoughtlessly that we fail to understand Christ’s saying, “He

\* “Thring’s Sermons,” vol. ii. p. 263.

that believeth on Me shall never die." All men die ; yet He seems to say that the death of those who believe on Him is not death, but life going on undisturbed. We call it death and often fear it, but Christ says it is not death, that it in no way breaks His gift of life. So that we really know as little of death as of life in Christ's sense ; we are misled by our common use of the words.

The Bible is always startling us by its use of the words "life" and "death," and encouraging us to pierce their deeper meaning. "He that saveth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it." So that there is life that is death, and death that is life. Men find this out at supreme moments and act upon it. Men die for duty or honour. Why? Because they are convinced that death is life, and that life under such circumstances would be death. Or again, men injure others, and feel within them the biting tooth of remorse. What is remorse but the witness to the fact that no present prosperity in life can overcome the deadly sense of guilt, or make it otherwise than virtual death to go on living, so that suicide has seemed a less evil than the death within preying upon the soul? There are a thousand witnesses around us to a life that is death, and a death that is life. When once they have spoken to us, we see how narrow and misleading is our ordinary use of the words death and life. Life is at any rate some-

thing more than existence here in the sight of others.

And so there are other kinds of death than that one which the grave hides. There is a death here and now, a death which grows in proportion as feeling and power diminish ; a death that dates from the fall of man—a \* worm-life as compared with a man's life ; and a worm-life compared with a man's life is death. Ignorance of good is death ; that blindness to good around us, which is really blindness to God, is death. Ignorance of God is death, death in life, death in the midst of a glow of health, and a thousand activities. Worship of self is death : when the thoughts are one long pœan of self-congratulation, when the one consuming anxiety is lest others should fail to put us first. If the living forces, which are meant to go out and sustain other lives, are allowed to lie idle, or are turned back on self, then there is death within. Death then, in its deepest sense, does not involve at all the perishing of the temporary dwelling, it involves the destruction of the higher life ; the loss of God's image. All the visible effects of continued sin bear out and enforce this view. Follow out the growth of one sin where its consequences are very manifest, very easy to trace ; look at the death in life of the drunkard. He begins full of life, full of strength, full of manly power ; he begins in the charm, the activity, the glory, the freshness of youth ; by and

\* Thring's Sermons, p. 268.

by he falls into the sin of excess, he is led into it by evil companions, he is shamed into it by foolish raillery, or he is drawn into it by an unhealthy physical craving. He thinks at first he has found new life; a life, in which his pulses beat faster and his imagination is brighter; but it is a hideous parody of life—a life that is no life—a mirage that fades into physical misery and mental shame. In reality he has let death in and it is working its way into his blood gradually but surely. First the symbols go; the activity wanes, the strength is sapped, the muscles relax, all that binds and holds fast his strength crumbles away. Then he ‘goes to pieces,’ in our expressive language; the hands begin to tremble, the eyes grow dim, the brain becomes besotted, and at last a bloated mass of corruption is all that is left of that strong life of promise, all that remains of the once agile frame. Rottenness creeps over him, even while he is alive; he is a living corpse. That is what you see and mourn over and strive to prevent. To that the wretched wife sees her husband, whom she used to love and respect, come—to that ruin. That is what the agonised parent sees creeping over his son whom he brought up to drink champagne, and before whom perhaps, in his folly, he permitted jokes about drunkenness, or himself made a mock of that most terrible sin. And that is only what you see—terrible enough—but there is far worse behind. Think of the inner life of the drunkard.

First common-sense crumbles and is destroyed, and a reckless acceptance of misery takes its place. Love and honour go next; an insatiable craving that has no feeling for wife or child takes the place of all the highest impulses of his nature. The home breaks up; the symbols go, the sheltering roof, the cheerful fireside, the clothes and food, and then worse still the realities go; the mutual affection, the respect, the happy family union all go for there is death within. Nor does it end here: the death goes on spreading. It is like a leprosy in the life of a community or of a nation; it preys upon others; it costs millions in workhouses, it spreads disease and helpless corruptions, it becomes the author of tainted blood and enfeebled bodies. Nor does it end there; it goes on and produces crime. We complain of the rates for education. Why do we not complain of, and reform our fatal licensing system which undoes the effect of education, which makes paupers and scatters temptation far and wide among those least able to resist it? Why do we make a party question of what all good men groan over and lament? Death—the death of drunkenness in the home has become death in the community, and unless it is arrested who can foretell the end of its terrible workings?

Who can foretell the end? Death in life has no end. It survives the grave. It is carried on in its festering pollution, in maimed bodies and

tainted minds. This is what anyone may see on earth—an endless stream of death ever renewed in lower and lower states.

Shall I trace it again in the twin death of sensuality, from the first vile thought suggested by some book or companion, on through the cherishing, the fondling of that thought, the recurrence to it in weak moments; on through the opportunity, the fall, the first great reaction, when shame and self-respect and all God's forces rise up; and then the bitter folly of the self-chosen temptation, the places and persons that are too powerful in their influences—till the death sets in—the death that leaves its mark on expression and feature, the death that works so persistently, that pollutes imagination and heart alike; the death that makes gulfs of ice between the man or the woman and all pure love and all sweet and tender affection; the death that slays souls by its looks, and poisons by its very presence; the death that becomes so blind that it can see no virtue and believe in no purity; the death that loathes itself and wishes itself alive again, and yet seems impelled—forced along to do the sins it loathes.

“Whosoever committeth sin is the slave of sin”: and sin brings forth death. There is an awful cogency in past evil deeds that seems to lead men's steps where they would not go, even while they shrink in horror from the thought suggested. With them, as

with Macbeth, the horror comes even before the deed, yet like him they are constrained to do it. You remember the words:—

“Is this a dagger, which I see before me,  
The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch  
thee :  
I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.  
    . . . Art thou but  
A dagger of the mind ; a false creation,  
Proceeding from the heat-oppressèd brain ? . . .  
Thou marshal’st me the way that I was going.”

So the sensualist toys with temptation until he becomes beset with vile imagery. All lovely things are defiled for him : he sees others, but they seem to have no reality about them—they are instruments, toys, playthings, false creations. They marshal him the way that he is going.

“Dead in trespasses and sins” is the sensualist—dead even here and now—the heart dead, with no shudders for itself, because it does not feel how deaf it is to all higher voices, to the whispers or the trumpet voice of God ; deaf to conscience ; dumb in self-accusation, excusing his own sin ; blind to all workings of life around him ; blind to duty, to the privilege of helping others ; blind, deaf, dumb. Surely that is death ; that is death indeed. “If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die”—die here and now.

And what is to be the end? Is the death of the body to be the end?—is it reasonable to think that

it can be? The forms and workings of death here belong not to the body—they are long in killing it; they seize first upon honour, love, holiness, self-respect, and defile and corrupt and destroy them. Why should the death of the body put an end to those diseases which are not bodily? Will not the corrupting, destroying power of the death, which has reigned within, go on corrupting, crumbling, destroying after the bodily end? There is no need of arbitrary punishment; no need for the Judge to order this or that penalty—the death within works on with its downward, ever downward, growth. Love of evil has established itself in the nature and goes on choosing evil; and so we see nought but a dim and awful vision of lower and ever lower states of loss and misery—an inward-working curse of evil loved, and evil chosen, ever producing more awful depths of degradation and of self-inflicted misery. And all from such tiny beginnings—all from what we call such little sins, all from self-worship, self-love, self-indulgence, all from letting ourselves go, thinking all the time that we could at any time we chose turn back.

“Dead in trespasses and sins.” Is it true of any of us? Is it that we have a name to live, and are dead—dead in selfishness—dead through that most fatal of all soul diseases, an imperturbable self-satisfaction—dead, so that any call to a higher life sounds strained, a piece of preacher’s rhetoric, a



thing which is said of course, but cannot be taken as being true and real, like yesterday's events. Take one thing among the less suspected causes of hardness of heart, of deadness,—take idleness. Work is the salt that preserves life from corruption. Work puts the soul in the way of health. Idleness is like a stagnant pool, which breeds corruption. It is the palsy of will and heart; when it is in the man or woman evil flows in unchecked. Let us hear a description of the field of the slothful. “I went by and lo! it was grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall was broken down.” Oh! terrible picture of the desolation of the deadness of the idle soul, in which the weeds of evil grow unchecked and choke the grace of God. The field of the slothful! Is it a picture of ourselves? Lounging about with nothing to do, dropping into a club or drawing-room out of sheer weariness with one's own inactivity, wasting hour after hour in idle talk, unkind talk, with no regard for truth, no reverence for high things, not even for purity; talking about the fringe of religious questions, some last novelty of ritual, frittering away our mornings with the last new novel, dreaming away hours in visions of self-importance, spending hours over the question how we shall clothe our bodies or prevent the honest marks of advancing age from becoming visible. What have you done in the morning?—Nothing. What have you done in the afternoon?—

Nothing. What have you done in the evening?—Nothing. Nothing that can really be said to be worth doing. No reading, no prayer, no study—a dead level of uselessness—there you lie even now “dead in trespasses and sins.”

Oh, let us rouse ourselves, while there is yet time, and listen to the call of the great Father of our spirits which in this Lent is sounding so loudly in our ears. Let us turn to the Cross of Christ where our shame and our hope meet, and hope conquers shame; let us lay ourselves bare before Him; let us cry to Him, “Lord Jesu, Who didst die for me, save me from death within, give me here and now that life of Thine which alone can conquer the death that is working within me, the death that is growing on me through my luxurious habits, my self-indulgent schemes, my stingy alms, my selfish pleasures, my aimless, purposeless, idle existence, save me from the death within. ‘Make me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.’” Cry to Him thus, kneel before Him in that spirit and He will come near you, He will lead you into the path of true repentance; He will teach you how much you lose even now by your sin, by your idleness, your selfishness, your anxiety, your pleasure loving; how you lose the sense of sympathy with man, and the peace of God in your heart. He will show you your work, what He means you to do for others, and in your work you will find your deepest union with Him. He will show you the greatest and

best and most glorious of all sights ; He will show you Himself, the Life of your life ; He will let you feel that fellowship with Him which is the everlasting reward of His saints. Yes, the promise is sure. "And you hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sin, blotting out the hand-writing of offences that were against you" ; you will He quicken this Lent if you will but let Him. Redemption, Salvation, Life are yours here and now—no ornaments to be worn hereafter but possessions now—they are the lot of every one, boy or girl, as well as man or woman, who wills ; they are the glorious possession by which we throw off corruption, gather strength, steep ourselves in hope, and live.

Let us begin our Lent with a real attempt at self-knowledge, with a humbling of ourselves before God ; but let us also begin it with that certainty which alone can save us from the cankerworm of hopeless despair, from the death of hope within us ; let us begin with that certainty which no depth of sin can darken or obscure ; let us begin by thinking of and dwelling upon the Love of Christ till it sinks into our very soul, till it makes us long for the transforming Life which flows from that Love ; let us begin with some such words as these, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." And then, because, so far as we know, no one is worse than ourselves, let us add this word, and let us mean it while we add it, "of whom I am the chief."

## SERMON XII.

### FROM DEATH TO LIFE.

“ We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.”— 1 S. JOHN iii. 14.

WE have been thinking of the death within, that is possible even in life—the death that follows on irreligion, on profligacy, and self-indulgence. We have come to the point at which we can lay down a great principle about life and death within, viz., that *whatever kills love kills life*, and that that is true even if what kills love dresses itself in the garb of religion and uses its outward forms. Whatever kills love kills life, for life is love and love is life, and there is no death where love is. There may be weakness, misgivings ; there may be temporary states of stupor ; there may be for the moment a sinking, even a fall ; but where there is love there is life, and death cannot establish itself within.

Is not this what we are always learning ? Is not every sin, if you trace it back far enough—is not every sin the outcome of some principle which excludes love, and is at war with it ? Is not all deadness of the spiritual being the consequence of some principle hostile to love being enthroned within ?

Take the growing practice of gambling—a practice of which the hardening consequences are patent to all, except to the gambler himself. The gambler becomes hard and selfish, he isolates himself from all healthy associations; he seems to lose interest in anything except the gaming table; all sense of his duties to others gradually ceases; in his case the passion for making money without working for it excludes love—his very existence becomes a death in life. It is a terrible thing to see the passion for gambling getting its grip on a young man. No doubt it is true that “a fool and his money are soon parted,” and one always feels that the money could not be in worse hands than in those of the fool. Not the loss of money but the deterioration, the depravation of character which ensues is the worst result of gambling.

Or take the more common case of the man or woman who think that they have a grievance, some real or fancied wrong, or who indulge in some corroding jealousy. Possessions of this kind are doubtless known to many of us. They seem especially to affect people with much leisure or natures with that variety of sensitiveness, which so easily lends itself to personal vanity. Who does not know by a bitter experience how certainly they kill all higher qualities? The great withering influence in many natures is jealousy; it depletes the character of generosity. We speak sometimes of the mortifica-

tions to which it gives birth ; they are real mortifications—mortifying, deadening influences, for they kill the higher nature. Jealousy engrosses the thoughts ; it sits like a horrible nightmare on the imagination ; it colours every simple action of others with a meaning ; it taints all opinions and purposes ; it incapacitates for every healthy action ; it deadens the whole soul ; it kills love, and love is life. Nothing but real love can drive out jealousy ; if we would be saved from the death within, which it causes, it will be by one means only, by love. And this holds true all through character. All true believers in Christ are rescued from death because in Christ they learn to love ; they pass from death to life under the influence of that transforming power of love, of which the Life and Death of Christ are the most perfect examples. We know how some strong human affection will come into a barren and selfish heart and for a time, at any rate, ennoble it ; it will arrest the workings of death, and even the selfish man will wake up to the fact that there is a self within him, which can deny itself and be happier for the self-denial. We know the infinite power of some strong natural affection to elevate human life, when spirit answers to spirit, thought to thought, feeling to feeling, when there is the systole and diastole of perfect understanding ; then the true qualities of the higher life which is within every man become visible. There are men whose experience, amid all its later

mud and tarnish, ever retains the memory of some early self-forgetting attachment, in which they saw visions and dreamt dreams—unrealised perhaps—yet visions and dreams which still haunt their memory and disclose to them their possible selves. Once in the light and the glow of some early attachment they knew the possibilities which belonged to their now dwarfed and stunted nature; once they passed from death unto life; once they were self-forgetting; once they could count things, that otherwise had seemed loss, to be gain; it was in the time of some first, pure, heart-whole attachment. Once they felt that sense of the fulfilment of real sympathy that always lies, if we only knew it, in common worship. Life for a time was spiritualised in a way and to a degree, which now seems almost impossible. Perhaps now it has all faded away. They moralize over it or possibly smile at the recollection; they have gone back to the herd who live only for animal enjoyment or physical excitement; a good dinner, or an amusing play, or a comfortable arm-chair, are the goal of their aspirations; but now and again, it may be when they see others who are feeling what once they felt, they find themselves sighing even amid the consciousness of their present degradation, because they remember that once life opened out before them with nobler visions and higher aims through the influence of some strong attachment. And still, even still, the hardest natures are touched,

the almost dead are raised to life again by some strong affection. No doubt an unbridled sensuality does in time kill the capacity for feeling strong affection—that is its terrible Nemesis. It settles on the tendrils of the heart like a blight, and causes them to wither ; but other hardening influences which at first sight seem insurmountable, do yield to the influence of pure love, as the frost does to the sun. You remember that description perhaps the most powerful and elevating portrayal in modern fiction, of the gradual softening of the heart of a miser.\* He lived alone, a man isolated from his fellows by unjust suspicions, hardened by bitter disappointment, with no faith in God or man, living his dreary, lonely life—alone, unloved, misunderstood. And one day he finds his gold gone, and in its place a little motherless child left on his hearthstone; and you remember with what exquisite and unrivalled power the story is told of how the beauty, the innocence, the helplessness of that unexpected visitor stirs the buried life within him. The hard crust that had lain over his better nature, the frost of greed that had bound up the springs of his affection, cracked and melted in the sunshine of that sweet presence. His interest in mankind started up again, and grew from this centre wider and wider. He passed from death unto life because he loved once more. And surely our own experience

\* “*Silas Marner*,” by George Eliot.



somehow tells us that such a story is no piece of romantic fiction, but enshrines a truth of common life. We have seen, perhaps, the busy man, who was hard to deal with in public affairs, melt and thaw in the presence of his children's love, and we have felt that here was the influence which kept the living heart within him. You have known, perhaps, for yourself how you would have grown utterly hard under disappointment, or affliction, or undeserved slander, had it not been for some noble and ennobling friendship, some purifying love, which has been to you, as it were, a new spring of life, as well as a source of untold happiness. As heart goes out to heart in some real self-forgetting sympathy, it still melts the gathering hardness, for love is life. Yes, man can do much for man by that God-implanted power of love; he can bear burdens, and bind up wounds and heal sores, and make whole, by the exercise of this, the highest power within him.

Even the hardest phases—the selfishness of the too prosperous, the conventional religionism of the partisan, the greed of the money maker, have one and one only hope before them. All the preaching in the world won't touch them; the only hope is that, some day and somehow, the power of love may make itself felt by them and show them that there is a higher world and a nobler life.

All this, and much more than this, is in S. John's mind when he speaks of the love for the brethren as

a passage from "death to life." All this—and more than this, for he is thinking of a love that is deeper, wider, more abiding than any passing manifestation; a love that does not fasten upon a single object, and so escapes the selfishness of exclusions; which is manifested to friend and foe alike; which is open to all: a love that shrinks from nothing; that goes wherever there is a pain to be soothed, or a sorrow to be comforted, or ignorance to be taught, or poverty to be helped, or a just cause to be aided. Wherever the cry of humanity is heard, thither it is drawn—there its object is found. It seeks no excuses, it draws no distinctions, it evades no difficulties; it asks not Who is my neighbour? but, Whose neighbour can I be? and its answer is prompt and conclusive: whoever is in trouble, whoever wants me—he is my neighbour.

This is the wider love for the brethren which S. John speaks of, this love which is the reflection of His love Who is the Son of Man. This is the response to that ideal of love which was presented in the Incarnation, the Life, and the Death of Christ; it is the carrying on through the ages of the Christ-life. In Christ, love ascended its true throne as the power of life; since Christ, it has reigned a new power, a new creation, a new ideal of duty. Its watchword has been, "Beloved, if God so loved us," as He proved that He did in Christ, "we ought also to love one another."

Brethren, this divine faculty of love which renews

life is in us ; we may be stifling it, forgetting it, ignoring it, but it is there; we can feel for others, think for others, live for others; and as far as we do, life is quickened, sustained, and growing within us. Let us devote ourselves—if we are conscious of the power of an inward death, if all seems dark and dreary within—let us devote ourselves to the cultivation of this divine faculty. It is no hard philosophy which we have to study; it demands no superior intellect; it needs but to have the will to help others, and then to remember the lessons which the trials, the experiences, the occupations of life teach us; it needs but to think these over, and we can be the helpers, the saviours of others. No brilliant flashes of self-denial, no startling acts of heroism are called for. Love in its very nature is simple and untheatrical. Its cultivation begins in considering those about us, in thinking about them, trying to get inside their thoughts and feelings. Love grows by self-restraint. When you curb the rising passion that is stirred by some petty annoyance, or the disdainful scorn that is kindled by some real or imaginary wrong, you give love room to grow within you. When you deny yourself the utterance of some withering sarcasm that might blight another's fame, or the sharp retort that might wound another's heart; when you forego the innocent amusement that casts a stumbling block in the way of Christ's little ones, you cultivate the faculty of love. When you give up the well-earned

leisure, or postpone the looked-for enjoyment that you may visit the poor or the sick, or contribute to the pleasures of others, you cause the plant of love to germinate within you. Love is always practical—it is never theoretical; and through poor and kindly deeds unnoticed by man, yet treasured and blest by God, it grows. Repeated acts, awkward and clumsy at first, beget the habit; the habit moulds the character, and the man—the weak man, the sinful man, the man who was dead within—is alive again, and becomes a power among others. And so it will come to pass that at last, from out of a deep inward experience, the truth of the Apostle's words will come home to you, "We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren." To learn this great lesson is what our life is given us for.

"For life with all its yields of joy and woe,  
Of hope and fear,  
Is just our chance o' the prize of learning love;  
How love might be, hath been indeed, and is."

This, then, is at once the cure for death and the business of life—to learn to love; and if we would learn, we must practise. Life is full of opportunities: the world is a schoolroom, not a playground. Life is not meant for a protracted holiday, but for an education; and the one lesson necessary for us all to learn is how we can love better. And nothing but practice will help us to learn it. We learn to love every day by taking our trials, by standing our

vexations, by bearing with the sordid and petty souls by whom, perhaps, we are surrounded ; 'above all by trying to help them, by trying to understand their unconscious wants. There are ten thousand unconscious wants around you—in the stupid people who bore you, in the frivolous people who disgust you, in the malicious people who revile you, in the pleasure-seeking rabble who offend you ; deep down there are wants in all. The curious thing is that they never feel the wants, never interpret them, until the time comes when the indescribable sense that they are cared for supplies the want that it seems to create. Love does still work miracles. It raises dead souls to life, it deepens character. Every day opportunities arise for developing it in ourselves. You say that you are too much surrounded by troubles and difficulties and obstacles, but these are your choicest opportunities. Remember the saying of the great German, "Talent develops itself in solitude, character in the stream of life." For prayer, for meditation, for seeing the Unseen, you need solitude ; but character grows in the stream of life, because there men learn how to love with a love that is no mere fancy or sentimental passion, but a self-devotion.

Why need I say more? Those who want to know will know it ; those who have ever really known it are saying, "It is all so true. I know it. I never learnt what love meant, or what it could do

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for myself and others, till I began to try. I know that I 'have passed from death unto life, because I love the brethren.'"

As formal rules pass away, and the tests of life sweep up, we see that the giving of love is not a favour but a privilege, and that the withholding of it is the denial of the Spirit of Christ.

This we shall see, too, more clearly than ever, when humanity is gathered together, and that great spectacle of the judgment—the unpitied multitude, the unhelped mass—is before us; it will either welcome us as its friend, or condemn us by its silent look to utter condemnation. For now and always the real test of true religion is not religiousness, nor orthodoxy, nor anything else, but love.

## SERMON XIII.

### JOSEPH'S METHOD WITH HIS BRETHREN.

“And he searched, and began at the eldest, and left at the youngest; and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack.”—GENESIS xliv. 12.

JOSEPH'S treatment of his brethren was one of the puzzles of our childhood; and some of us, perhaps, stumble over it still, especially over the pain which he caused to his favourite brother, Benjamin. The key to his whole method is that he was trying to find out whether they would behave in the same fashion that they had done before, and to prove to them, as well as to himself, that they would not. The essential feature of his method is that he kept them utterly unconscious of the fact that they were being tried. So it often is with us when we are tried by God; at the time we know nothing about it, and yet we are being tried and put to the proof. Every generation has its occasions of judgment. In every age, each nation has its opportunities of rising to its true mission in the world, or of sinking into hopeless and helpless uselessness. Every individual is constantly being tried by unwelcome proposals, or by opportunities that seem to come by chance, or by all sorts of occasions, of which he, perhaps, never discovers the importance. Nevertheless, he is being tested;

his heart is probed ; the inclination of his life is laid bare ;\* the personal movement declares itself decisively one way or the other. We, like Joseph's brethren, do sometimes get into positions in which we once failed ; we are tried whether or no we will repeat our early mistakes, or whether we have learnt anything, and all the time we, like them, have no idea what is going on. In God's best opportunity we often see some tiresome proposal. In God's special message of love we see a piece of luck. In the best influence of our lives we see an unwelcome interference. Things pass by us unheeded ; angels cross our paths in strange disguises, and we do not know that they are angels, nor can we trace their coming and going. Look how this was once shown to be the case ; and read in this strange story what happens again and again.

Joseph's brethren had, we know, let death come into them in the shape of envy—envy which had led them to a deed of dark cruelty and to a course of deep deceit. Imagine them, during those long years that had elapsed since that day, growing more selfish as they grew more rich, and more unfeeling as they grew older ; seeing their father suffer under their cruel lie, and yet content to let him still be deceived. But twenty years after their sin found them out. Twenty years after they stood before their brother, the mightiest prince in the known world, and knew him not. Then he tries them—



puts them to the proof. Will they do the same thing over again, or are they different men? So he demands their younger brother, and the demand brings back the remembrance of Joseph; they are certain that their father would look upon Benjamin's going with them, as though he were losing Joseph a second time. How will they behave? Are they the same reckless, unfeeling men who sold Joseph? Or have the searchings of heart—the times of remorse which they must have experienced—had any effect on them? And then Joseph increased the mystery and the fear, by taking Simeon and putting him in prison. Doubtless Simeon's voice had been loudest for murder in the old days. They felt the strange mystery of his selection. Then, again, the money found in their sacks increased their sense of mystery; they go home with failing hearts, saying, "What is this that God hath done to us?" And after that came the meeting with Jacob without one son; and, worse still, the having to demand Benjamin from him. When Reuben cries, "Slay my two sons if I bring him not unto thee," he has to feel, in his turn, his father's old sorrow, and to make the bitter discovery that he is not trusted; that his father has never forgotten his old unfaithfulness. So everything—Joseph's demand for Benjamin, their father's grief and reproaches,—all concur to call up the old sad scene; they see it acted over again as in a parable. At last the famine presses, and they

set out again full of fear—fear of the old sin that seems coming back so vividly upon them ; fear at having Benjamin with them ; fear of meeting that stern ruler who had put Simeon in prison ; fear about the questions he might ask concerning the money returned in their sacks. And this fear increased—their sense of some mysterious dealing with them grew—when they were invited to the palace of the great unknown prince, and found themselves, by the same secret knowledge that took Simeon, set in order according to their age, as if God Himself was sorting them. Then came the terrible agony as they saw the cup taken from Benjamin's sack, and heard the judgment which took him so hopelessly from them. As they had done to Joseph and their father, so had this strange, mysterious doom done to Benjamin and themselves. Did they now envy Benjamin—their father's favourite—as they had envied Joseph twenty years before ? Were they ready to go back with another heart-breaking story to Jacob—a story this time only too true ? The whole crime was being acted out over again before their eyes ; the whole circumstances were being called to life again, except that they had not so far risen against their favoured brother.

Let us stop a minute and see what wonderful things these Old Testament stories are. Take them out of their Oriental garb, and is there anything to be found like them ? Are they not in themselves

enough to make men believe in God, and His providence, and His overruling love? Could 'anyone have invented them?

The world has moved on in many ways since the days of Joseph, but where shall we find a character which, amid all our progress, strikes us, when we study it, as more wise, more self-controlled, more patient, more Christ-like in its justice and in its desire for the real repentance of his brethren? He tried them by a wondrous glass, which reflected again the old sin and the long-sleeping sorrow. And they knew nothing about the fact that they were being tried—they knew not that the eye of the brother, the man whom they had so deeply wronged, the only man besides themselves who knew the history of that cruel day, was upon them—watching them, seeing their countenances change, reading their very thoughts, hearing them mutter, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear." They were unfolding their inmost hearts by look and word in the presence of the one man who knew all, the man against whom they had sinned, the man who was their judge. Had they faltered, had they shown a sign of excusing themselves, had they let the old envy creep out, the old lie repeat itself, had they shown that the death was still within, what was before them but banishment, misery, and ruin? There they stood before the

calm, resolute, though loving-hearted prince—the image of God in His mercy and justice—looking on them, searching them, reading their inmost thought. What awe they must have felt afterwards when they knew all ! Their lives had trembled in the balance, and they had known nothing of what was happening. What thankfulness, mingled with what awe, must they have felt that they had been able to put away the suggestions of escape through meanness and falsehood, which doubtless had occurred to their minds ! How thankful must they have been for Judah's manly words ! It must have sent a strange thrill through them afterwards to recollect that, all unconscious as they had been, they had in fact been passing their own sentence ! Surely they drew breath as men who had come by a hairbreadth escape out of a great peril. It was as though a man in the dark had all but lain down on a serpent and known nothing of it till light returned. By such trials God deals with men, and brings them to their better selves. As they had sold a favoured brother, so now they had to redeem another—a favoured brother—at the seeming cost of their own lives ; as they had despised their father, so they had now to show that they revered him and put him above their own liberty ; they judged themselves, and so they were not condemned. They were brought to self-knowledge ; it was worth anything to them to find that they could be faithful to Benjamin and Jacob, that they

had other feelings than selfishness and jealousy, that they would submit to anything rather than abandon Benjamin. They gained thereby the possibility of that renewed self-respect which is the foundation of a better life.

And this brings me to what I want to press upon you to-day on the subject of forgiveness, as a sequel to the thoughts that have been before us. Joseph made his brethren unravel their great crime, and, with great pain, go over and undo its guilt, and prove that the guilty heart was not in them. "They passed from death to life" because they had learnt to "love" Benjamin and Jacob more than themselves. This was the condition of their forgiveness. Joseph might have forgiven them without all this; he might have fallen on their necks and wept at once and said, "Let bygones be bygones." Most persons would have called that a straightforward, manly course; his brethren would have had no objection to express any amount of regret; it would have chimed in with our often shallow ideas about forgiveness, if he had done so; but there is this to be remembered, that if he had acted thus, he would have never brought them to real repentance, to a change of heart and character, still less, to a recognition of what was true, good, and noble in themselves.

It was not to please himself that he acted as he did; he had no wish to visit consequences upon

them, he had no ill-feeling—that had gone years before if it ever existed—but he could not forgive, in the sense of letting go all remembrance of their wrong, till they desired it. It was not in his power to do so ; it belonged to them to effect that, not to him. He could not have lived with them, unless he had known that their hearts were free from envy, and were really going out towards him. He could not forgive unless there was a true heart in them. He could forgive, so far as not punishing was concerned ; but it is one thing not to punish and quite another to live with men and to love and trust them. It is so with ourselves. Life is not arbitrary, even among ourselves. A friend is not a friend because we choose to make him so, but because he is trustworthy. We cannot love except where we can trust. We cannot make ourselves love a false heart ; we may be merciful, and pity, and not punish, and be forbearing, but we cannot give back at our will the lost place in our heart. It must be won back, just as Joseph made his brethren win back their lost place by leading them to imperil their lives in order to save Benjamin and to shield their father from grief. Shallow-minded people, frivolous people, often miss all this ; they think that good and evil, the blessing and cursing of life, are all chance and caprice—luck which may alter at any time. They think, like Balak, who tried to persuade Balaam to bless his projects, that to bless is an act of power, and to

curse is an act of power, and that if they can persuade God, and those who, like Joseph, have God's spirit, to bless, they will be blessed. Most miserable of all deceptions. Forgiveness in its essential character is reconciliation, making at one again, and how can there be oneness between the true and the false?

If Joseph was to live with his brethren, it could not be by the exercise of his own will merely ; it must be by the real oneness in heart of his brethren with himself. And to prove that this had been effected, to bring it out and to strengthen it, was the secret of his method with them. Banishment from his presence and his love was the only alternative.

Carry it up higher ; so it is with God. God uses strange methods ; we pass perhaps from death to life by works of self-forgetting love ; we minister to the great unpitied multitude, yet we get no compensation ; we feel no thrill of life within us. God is trying us whether we have really forsaken old sins. He lets the consequences of past sins hide Him and His face from us, because only thus shall we learn to hate sin. It is often a hard thing to watch dying people who seem to get no comfort from religion ; but, without knowing their whole story, one can easily see why not to be comforted may be the truest blessedness, because it makes one's heart proof against the old sin. It may be that one must lack comfort in order to make one hate sin. God forgives freely, when we let Him ; but, like Joseph

with his brethren, He must be one with us. He will not send us away with the sin left there within us to fester and grow, and then tell us at the end, that, as the sin remains, we must be banished from His presence and His love, and that the corroding sense of ceaseless crime must remain in the heart. If that would not be hell, I know not what hell can be. Is it pardon, if the pardoned turns away from the great Throne with the death still within him, with hatred and lust and envy and pride still working their deadly works within him, year after year, and century after century, and age after age? Truly a horrible prospect! If blessing or cursing, forgiveness or reprobation, at the end, be mere acts of power and arbitrary will, then, the forgiven, who still love their sins, will be of all men most miserable. Left to fierce passions and to desires that ever create barriers, that make each an enemy to his fellows; unbearable to all that meet them; an ever deepening curse to themselves and to others; this is what is before sinners, if blessing and cursing be mere acts of power. For how shall we live with God, if the whole life and being revolts from Him; how shall we live amid holiness, when there is no approving voice within us? Ah! but it may be said, we shall be changed. But who can change us, except we ourselves choose? Who can unwind out of our heart-strings the threads of hate and envy and selfishness, that we have been so busy in weaving? We cannot be changed unless



we will be changed. Forgiveness is no arbitrary gift. It can only be really bestowed when it is already in the forgiven.

And so we get to see again the great truth about life and death. Things are not finished off, when we leave this world, they are carried on. Heaven is only earth on a nobler scale, amid wider opportunities, with power to deal with them. The ruler over ten cities will have to employ the powers which he gained on earth, to exercise the moral control which he learnt here. The judges of the twelve tribes of Israel will have to exercise the same powers which they did on earth. The talents will be given back only to be used again. In that great festival of reunion, in the marriage feast of nations and worlds, how shall we, brothers of the true Joseph—our Lord Jesus Christ—stand round His throne, if we have not on the wedding garment of love ; if we have not laid aside our envy, our jealousy, our hatred of our brother, and proved to ourselves that we have done so ? How shall we stand there, the brethren of the true Joseph, where heart answers to heart, and thought flows into thought, in a ceaseless movement of goodness, love, and power—unless the guilty thread be untwisted and torn out of our hearts ? We should be desolate amid the happiness around us ; even the blessedness of making others happy by everlasting active interchange of help would have no attraction for us. If we are faithless in that which is

not our own, in the copy of the inheritance—in the imitation of the truly heavenly wealth—in the things by which we are tried—who will entrust us with that which must be, if we have it at all, our very own? —

“He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much. If, therefore, ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?” The trusts of earth are the preparation for the possessions of heaven. We have to take every power and every feeling with us into that other world, and to live with them there in their developed state. We have to live on; not merely to be pardoned and then dismissed to get on as we can, but to live a continuation-life—to live a most active life in the exercise of the same feelings and the same faculties that we have been learning to use here, as parts of the great harmony which finds room for and brings together all peoples, nations, spirits, and worlds. We must learn to live a preparation-life here, if we are to live in a world of love, and that is why to learn to love is a prize—“the prize of life,” as the poet calls it.\* “Joseph's brethren must bring loving hearts, or they cannot live in Joseph's glory.”

\* Cf. Thring's “Sermons,” vol. i. p. 109, to which I owe many of the thoughts of this Sermon.

Death is not merely a rest, to imagine it to be so is a delusion, that often leads men to suicide. Death is the beginning of intensified life. There—in that world beyond the grave “We shall know even as we are known.” Our last clinging to sin often goes, when we see that we cannot shake it off, now or hereafter, by any arbitrary method, when we catch a glimpse of that great truth—the oneness of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

When once we discard the figment of a different life, lived by someone, not ourselves, we are brought up by the tremendous question—Should I care to live on as I am, could I carry my habits into a world where all things are naked and open to all? Must I not change here and now, or for ever regret it? Does it not force us to pray, “Cleanse Thou me from my secret faults”? If we would know the life which is life indeed, when our bodies die; if we would enter without hindrance, into that wider, inconceivably greater life that awaits us, it will be by doing our best now, while we can, to untwist the guilty thread from our hearts, by putting away the sin that makes us lonely and dissatisfied here, and will, if it is persisted in, keep us for ever desolate and dreary there.

## SERMON XIV.

### THE LESSON OF CALVARY.

“I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.”  
—S. JOHN xii. 32.

YEAR by year, as Lent draws on to its conclusion, we pass away from the mystery of sin to the mystery of redemption. The first tendency of our Lenten thoughts is to deepen the consciousness of sin, to help us to find out our true selves, to get at the bottom of the inward mischief, to trace the road of repentance, to arrive at true sorrow—not mere barren regret for an unchangeable past, not mere sighings and moanings—but sorrow that “worketh repentance not to be repented of,” sorrow which, as in the case of Joseph’s brethren, proves its reality by making us act differently under the same circumstances. And then as we pass on our eyes are cleared, our vision strengthens, and we can bear to see the sight which seemed so impossible before—the vision of the God we long for. That dual consciousness of a longing desire for God and of the presence of death within finds its reconciliation in the Cross of Christ. The God, for whom our heart longs, is before us, and He is the Judge Whom our consciences were just now fearing. Just now we cried, “Oh wretched

man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? ” for the consciousness of guilt was upon us. And now we boldly say “ There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus ” : now all other longings melt into this, “ that I may know Him and the fellowship of His sufferings. ” It is a very wonderful solution of an otherwise inexplicable contradiction, and it is real in proportion to the strength of our consciousness. The Cross of Christ is the most unmeaning, the most unreasonable thing in the world to those who have not the consciousness of the working of a death within, who know nothing of the deep spiritual wants which are met by Him. Nothing is really intelligible, however true it is, when we divorce it from its conditions. Christ came, and lived as He did, and died, as the answer from Heaven to the deep unrest of sin ; while at the same time He satisfied man’s longing for an ideal. If we have never felt the unrest and the longing, if we have not been using Lent in the way marked out for us ; we cannot understand Passiontide, we see “ no beauty ” in that wondrous tale of love and woe “ that we should desire ” it. But it is far otherwise in the case of those who are struggling with their sins. In that long weary battle against, perhaps, some heritage of woe bequeathed by vicious ancestors, or in that unequal struggle against surroundings which, if they do not tempt us to vileness, chill us and starve us by their insincere worldliness ; in the inward agony

of the war that never ceases against vile tendencies once indulged, there is first a gleam of light and then a clear vision of new hope in the Cross of Christ. In that Cross there is fellowship, there is the will to love, the will to redeem, the will to be at one; in the Crucified there is the unflinching resolution "none shall pluck them out of My hands"; there is the God, for Whom we yearn, at last revealed, at last made known, not as dreary omnipotence, but as Self-sacrificing Love. We see at last that which reconciles the dualism within man which has been and is his torment—on the one hand a consciousness of sin that seems to degrade him, and on the other a desire for goodness that comes from God Himself. Even if we cannot put it into words, we know, as we gaze on Him Who is lifted up, that "mercy and truth are at last met together" in Him, and that, in that perfect offering, we can find not only pardon and peace, but that which alone will preserve pardon and peace as perpetual possessions, viz., the power to offer ourselves with Him, the motive and the power to work with Him for the good of others.

Let us take to pieces as it were, this morning, some of the elements that go to make up the power of Christ on the Cross to "draw all men unto" Himself. We seem, for a while, to have done with sin, we leave it behind us; He draws us out of its meshes to Himself. True, the battle is not over and the old

struggle will return but we shall gain a fresh power and a fresh earnestness from a steadfast gaze on that spectacle which still exercises a magnetic power on all those who yield themselves to its influence. It will bear inspection, its beauties will only shine brighter as we examine them more closely.

"I, if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto Me." So Christ shews us the Father, and draws men to Him Whom they are blindly seeking. He shews us too the divineness of what seems so unnatural, *i.e.*, voluntary suffering for the sake of others. We all naturally shrink from suffering, we would gladly escape it; yet it goes on. The many suffer and die, that the few may prosper and live. The law of vicarious suffering runs through all forms of life as we know it; all down the scale of animal being. But the difference is that the animals do not and cannot suffer willingly; they fight, they struggle against it, they only yield to superior force or cunning. There is in them no pity, no remorse, no care for others, no shrinking from unfair advantage. No doubt animals sometimes become wonderfully humanized by association with men. Their conduct sometimes almost startles us by its apparent elevation. \* If a dog will not eat because its companion is sick, it strikes us as very wonderful, it seems a sort of forecast of some higher life which we thought to be the monopoly of man. As a rule, suffering even in human beings is not consciously vicarious. Men

\* This actually happened, to my own knowledge.

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suffer in the order of nature but there is nothing consciously vicarious about it; when there is, it always extorts our admiration. This is especially the case when there is some great contrast, when the strong life gives itself for the weak, the useful for the apparently useless, the worker for the idler. "For a righteous man one might dare to die," for a great thinker or a great worker, but for one of the common herd, for the weak, the imperfect, the diseased, the ignorant, the foolish, would not life be thrown away in vain? Is not the life of the strong worker worth far more than that of the weak and suffering? Is not the survival of the fittest the law of nature? Would it be right for you (a useful citizen) to imperil your life for some *gamin*, some street vagabond? There is only one answer for those who believe that the interest of mankind is more advanced by sacrifice than by anything else, viz.: the answer of Christ. Only a few years ago we were all struck by the heroic self-devotion of a young doctor at Bristol, who sucked the patients' throat at the sacrifice of his own life. On any estimate but one his life was worth far more than that of the poor creature whom he died to save, and yet do not all of us feel the power of the action? Are we not all the richer, the better, are we not all fuller of self-respect, is not mankind the gainer by that act of self-devotion? Attempts have been made from many quarters to represent the working out of this law of love as most undesir-



able, as promoting the survival of the unfittest, as keeping alive, by medical skill and science, the weak and bad constitutions, which otherwise had perished. But human nature revolts against such theories however powerfully advanced. Even the greatest biologist of our day gains—in spite of his intellectual claims,—but few adherents to his loveless creed, when he protests against the tendency of modern philanthropy to promote the survival of the unfittest. We feel that, if that protest prevailed, it would hopelessly deteriorate human life. We feel that nothing more elevating, more worthy of our nature, is ever taken in hand than the care of the weak and helpless at the sacrifice of time, labour, even of life. Mankind still feels that the heroic claims its admiration, its enthusiasm, wherever it is displayed in any true fashion; and that that kind of admiration and enthusiasm belongs to the highest part of our nature. The world may change in many ways, but it may safely be prophesied that it will never get beyond the feeling that the true hero is not the most intellectual nor the richest man, but the man who acts most entirely on the law of love, who gives his best service for others and never stops to ask “Is it worth while?”

And Christ has ensured the perpetuation of this ideal; He died the Just for the unjust, and it is felt that though in moral worth the Victim is unapproachable and unapproached, yet that He brought Himself into touch with and gave sanction to every act

of self-denying service of others. He loved us, and gave Himself for us. Ah! we feel even at our lower levels the joy of that self-surrender, the sublime joy which He felt in the consciousness of His power — that tremendous power, so hardly earned—to give Himself; we feel the transcendent dignity in His words, “I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again” . . . “No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself.” Above all we are fascinated by the love which He displays on the Cross. We are attracted by this gathering up into one supreme ideal of the manifold workings of the law of love. His life seemed to be more fruitful, more precious than any other, yet He gave it for the poor, the weak, the characterless, the backsliding, yes, for the men who were torturing Him, for you and me and all those who have betrayed Him over and over again for less than thirty pieces of silver. And that constitutes the strength of His claim on you. Oh ponder the words, “He loved me and gave Himself for me;” dwell on them till they sink into your very soul, till they make you feel the attractive power of that heroic self-devotion, till they draw you to His feet, till they send you forth with the glow in your soul to go and in some way, somewhere or somehow to do likewise. For this power to give oneself, this power to do something for others is a divine power; and when it is gained, it makes life really worth living.

And this attractive power of the Cross becomes intensified when we consider its infinite sweep and range. An act of moral heroism always wins our admiration and gratitude; it calls out, as did Gordon's death, from all who are cognizant of it, even from the most unlikely quarters, applause and approval. After all, man can do much for man is our reflexion; he can in a sense, deliver his brother. There are, thank God, in London a thousand centres of influence, where men in some way or another are giving themselves for their brethren, amid squalor and wretchedness, and ruin, and misery, but the influence of each centre is narrow and limited and the needs seem so great. Nothing is so oppressive as for men to feel that they are just touching the fringe of things; that they do their little bit, but beyond and all around there open out vistas of lives which seem to be untouched, because the brotherly touch has never made Christ real to them; they feel that they must go on in their little corner, but its insignificance compared with the great whole sometimes must weigh heavily upon them. In such moments it is the breadth of Christ's interests; the absolute infinity of His appeal that at once seems to give courage and power. His cause was no sectional cause; His interest was limited by no party divisions. He not only blesses His enemies, but He has a heart open even to the indifferent. The world that resists Him, the votaries

of sin and selfish pleasure ; the easy-going, comfortable man of the world ; the passer-by, who just stops to think that it is Good Friday, with a passing memory—to each and all His love goes forth. There are still no limitations to its interest ; no opposition neutralizes His claim ; no indifference causes His appeal to be withdrawn. “You,” He cries, “you who oppose ; you who deny ; you who feast and trifle ; you who care nothing ; you too are Mine, while you were yet sinners, I died for you.”

This is Divine love. We feel it must be so because its reach is boundless ; its embrace knows no limit. The lost, the wandering, the outcast, the sin-stained, the defiled, the characterless, the worthless ; to each the appeal comes direct, personal, individual, “I want you—in a particular way, as I want none else but you.” The reach of that desire is as wide as the world and as enduring as the ages.

To each of us who are here, the call comes—the heart-appeal of Christ. What answer are we making ? What single thing are we doing differently, because of the love of God ? How is He drawing us ? Ah ! when we feel the claim of that love, how miserable and poor and weak our life seems ! how thin the disguises of self-love ! how poor and tawdry our best deeds seem to be ! how mean and stingy our gifts to God’s causes ! We thought we were liberal, self-denying, charitable, and we have seen His giving, and what does our own look like now ?

This is certain that, if that love once takes possession of us, it will not let us stop in mere selfish ends or in mere observance—in mere church-going as an end ; in mere listening to sermons, and then going away and being the same as before—it will grip us till it makes us somehow and somewhere workers. This will ring on in our ears like some well-known melody, “if He laid down His life for us, we ought in some way to lay down our lives for the brethren.” Yes, lay down our lives—die in one sense ; die to self-love, to self-will—die to these for the sake of others ! You will go on then to do something to help others ; not merely by putting your hand into your pocket, but by learning and putting in practice the great truth of our own time, viz. : that God can only reach man through man ; that He does want man, wants you and me and all who call themselves Christians, in order that through us He may reach the indifferent, the helpless, the miserable, who are outside. “Why,” you would say, “I cannot preach.” No, but you can feel ; you can open your heart ; you can influence, you can go and become His ministers in the truest sense, without ever taking Orders ; you can shew to men that which they don’t see in us Christians often enough—the Spirit of Christ. The days are gone when the Church can influence by persecutions, or by inventing new dogmas, or by threats of any kind. Threaten men with hell and they will laugh in your face ; they feel that your

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threats are impotent and partly arise, not from your love of their souls, but from your impatience at their opposition. But the days of the Church's true influence are never gone and never can go, for the days will never come when the heart-appeal of Christ, translated into actual human life, will not win a response; when men, who in the spirit, lay down their lives for the brethren will fail to win those brethren. Only in these days mere religious machinery has no power; you may build a church and read the service and preach sermons and produce no effect. Christ must be made actual in human life; it is not enough to read to people about Him out of a book, or to use His Name to enforce mere decency and social order and respectability. The only hope of making His living force felt is by the translation of His principles and methods into our own life. This is what men are feeling and thinking all around us, and our only hope for the Church of England is that she may be able to rise above those ecclesiastical questions, that are always apparently agitating the minds of leading churchmen, lay and clerical, and to face this. Mankind still craves for God, even amidst its sin—even amidst its indifference; but it is not for a god who is merely the synonym for the last force on the side of things as they are; it is not for a mere figure-head who can justify the cheap cant of our own day; it is for God revealed in Christ; it is for God Who

gives hope to men through human hearts, which feel like Christ felt and will carry on His ministries. 'When Christians thus catch the spirit of the Cross, religion will become a power again in our great populations. There is no other method of propagating it. Men must see Christ again before their eyes, as they do see Him sometimes now, thank God, in those who have learnt the meaning of the Cross, and who, in spirit and in act, every day lay down their lives for their brethren.

## SERMON XV.

### A RASH INVESTMENT.

“Blessed is he that considereth the poor.”—PSALM xli. 1.

THERE are many ways in which one may endeavour to earn this blessing. There are ways of doing what seems good to the poor which may not involve what David means by “considering” them. For instance, you may give money to the poor, and the person whom you are really considering may be yourself. You may give because you do not like to seem stingy, or because you cannot bear the sight of distress; or, even if that be not the case you may make mistakes in giving, which a little consideration would have avoided.

To consider the poor is to possess and to exercise an intelligent sympathy with them. So the Latin version which is quoted at the head of the psalm reminds us—“*Beatus qui intelligit.*” Broadly speaking, it may be laid down that no one can consider another who has not in some way endeavoured to understand him; and to understand the poor thoroughly requires two things which are not easy, self-knowledge and self-discipline. Christ Himself is here, as everywhere else, our great Example. He considered the poor because He had an entire



sympathy with them ; and, if we wish to learn the true spirit in which we may hope to do good, we must study His methods and His principles. And this applies to all schemes for helping the poor. Unless we consider them, we shall take a leap in the dark and injure others as well as ourselves. In such matters we have to listen, not merely to the promptings of our hearts, but to the conclusions of our best intelligence, assisted by all the experience we can gain.

There is a great scheme \* at the present time before us which proposes to deal with the most poverty-stricken portion of the community—with a class which is, and has been, the despair of philanthropists. That class is described in the book which has been written on the subject as the “submerged tenth” ; and a harrowing picture is drawn—in which there is much real truth—of their condition. The class is below the class of working people—partly a criminal class, and partly a class which is continually creating what we may call a criminal atmosphere. The causes of the existence of such a class are set forth in this work to some extent, but I cannot think that they are adequately described. About the first cause, *i.e.*, drink, everyone who knows anything of the matter must be entirely at one with the writer of the book. Before anything can be done to permanently affect the class in question, the

\* This Sermon was preached with special reference to the social reform scheme of the Salvation Army.

drink traffic must in some way or other be dealt with. \* I believe that the conscience of the nation is slowly waking to the necessity of some drastic means of dealing with that great evil. No doubt there are many influential persons who, from various motives into which we will not enter now, are interested in supporting the drink traffic ; but I do not believe that the conscience of the nation will much longer allow private interests to bolster up a system which is so demoralizing and which affects so disastrously those who are the least able to resist temptation. Unquestionably the curse of drink is the principal factor in the creation and perpetuation of the submerged tenth. There are other causes, and I will indicate two which the book does not appear to touch upon. First of all, the miserable dwellings in which so many of this class are reared from earliest childhood, in which decency is impossible, and, therefore, unknown. We have to welcome, in the recent action of the London County Council as regards a portion of Bethnal Green, the first indication of a disposition on the part of the community to deal with this undoubted cause of degradation. I hope we shall live to see the day when the duty of the community will be fully realised in this matter. As to the other cause, I think that it must be laid to the credit of those who make the administration of the compulsory clauses of the Education Act very difficult as regards the

very class who need compulsion most sorely. The author of the book makes a most unfair attack on the ordinary education given in our Elementary Schools. He says that the children are not educated, but forced through the standards, and he implies that the education given in the Elementary Schools does nothing to affect "the children of the Lost." As a matter of fact, an infinitesimal number of the children who regularly attend our Elementary Schools sink down into this class. It is largely recruited no doubt from the irregular attendants, and the real responsibility for the continued existence of this perpetual recruiting force must be laid on the right shoulders—on the shoulders of the magistrates who, again and again, refuse to give effect to the law which prescribes compulsory education.\* That much moral and

\* The following resolution was recently forwarded to the School Board by the Committee of Representative Managers of the Board Schools, who are perhaps in a better position than any other persons to judge of the real difficulties which beset compulsion as at present carried out. It supports entirely my own firm conviction, grounded on five years' work in the School Board, that until we have magistrates who will enforce the provisions of the Education Act, we shall never be in a position to judge of the real effect of education on this class.

"The Committee of Representative Managers of London Board Schools forward a copy of resolutions, as follow :—

" 'That, whereas a number of Stipendiary Magistrates in the Metropolis refuse to convict the parents of such school children as are legally bound to attend an Elementary School, however irregular their attendance, and however low their standard, it is highly desirable that the question how far such Magistrates are legally justified in their procedure should be brought to an issue at as early a date as feasible by the Board appealing to a Higher Court in one or two test cases.' "

spiritual good is being done every day in both the Voluntary and Board Schools is a matter of undoubted conviction on the part of all those who take the trouble to go to the schools and see things for themselves ; but there is no great work being done of which so little is known, and in which so little interest is taken by the outside public, as the work of our Elementary Schools,\* although there is none more important. But it is in the last degree unjust to endeavour to lay upon the shoulders of the many devoted men and women who are working in these Schools the blame which justly should attach to those who will not give them that opportunity of dealing with the children, which the law meant them to have. If the children who are brought up in bad homes could be regularly subjected to the considerate treatment, the conscientious education, and the salutary discipline in vogue in our Elementary Schools, they would need no shelters in later life. If the Education Act were really enforced, the very class of children which most needs the discipline of our schools would not, as is at present most unfortunately the case, continually slip through our fingers,

\* Another instance of the absolute ignorance on the subject of what is really taught in our Elementary Schools is displayed in page 63. "How many, (it is added) of these mothers of the future know how to bake a loaf or wash their clothes?" A very little trouble would have enabled the writer to learn about the cookery centres so long and successfully carried on by the London School Board, and the recent establishment of laundry centres. How can we help distrusting a scheme which is disfigured at the outset by culpable ignorance !

and grow up to be a factor in the "submerged tenth."

Turning away, from the question of the causes, to the agencies which it is proposed by this scheme to employ—first, we may be thankful that the thoroughly true principle is recognised, "If a man will not work neither shall he eat." The recognition of that great principle is one of the best features of the book, and on that point we have no difference with the writer. Work, steady and regular work, is a moral weapon of the highest power in every class, and if the submerged tenth can be got to work, the day of their reformation is not far off. The second agency is the Christian religion as taught by the Salvation Army, the main principle of which seems to be the violent exciting of the emotions, and an endeavour to sustain them at fever heat. If a man believes in Salvation Army religion, he will naturally take a much more sanguine view of the permanent effect of that agency than my own experience of its results has led me to do. The third agency is the kindling of hope in the victims of despair, and here one is thankful to see a true and lasting principle recognised, that it is of little use to improve men's circumstances unless you endeavour to improve themselves.

Here, then, we have a great scheme, and a scheme, let us observe, which is launched under very strong advantages. In the first place, it suits the age in

which we live because it is big ; and in our age we have, to a certain extent, in England become coloured by an American enthusiasm for everything which is big. In America, everything from a manufactory to a railway accident is interesting in proportion to its size ; and many men among us who have not the adhesive faculty or the industry to work away at little bits of a great problem are attracted by a big scheme which proposes to treat a whole class in the same fashion, in which you might proceed, if you were draining an Irish bog. To propose to reform a whole class is a big advertisement in itself, and catches the superficial by its apparent completeness.

The second advantage is that social reform is in the air, just as fifty years ago political reform was in the air at the time of the great Reform Bill. Now-a-days an increasing number of men are weary of mere politics, of the strife of parties, but they will listen eagerly to, and interest themselves warmly in any scheme which proposes to better the present social conditions.

There is a third advantage, which I will only just touch because the subject is not an agreeable one to think of ; but it must be stated truthfully that the fear of a social revolution is a factor which may influence the minds of some in favour of this scheme. Those, who have great advantages now, may be tempted to think that they will retain them with

more safety if the class which is a perpetual menace to the present social order can be improved. ‘ ‘

Such are some of the advantages which tell in favour of the scheme, and let me say now, quite fairly, that everyone wishes that it may succeed. No dislike or distrust of the means to be employed ought to blind us to the fact that it is an effort to raise to a higher plane of living those who are our brothers and sisters. We may all feel that we owe to the writer of the book a debt of gratitude for reminding us that we have, in a very real sense, “the poor always with us”—a fact which some of us in this neighbourhood may have an increasing difficulty in remembering. As a matter of fact, within two or three hundred yards of this Church, there are to be found in the courts and alleys of Chelsea not a few members of the class with which it is proposed to deal. But before we commit ourselves to a scheme like this, it is necessary to consider the class with which it proposes to deal.

Speaking broadly, this class is composed to a large extent of three sorts of people. First of all it is composed of those who cannot work, who are physically incapable, partly from hereditary causes into which I cannot now enter at length; which to some extent are the result of early marriages, and to a great extent the result of intemperate habits in their forefathers and in themselves. The fact seems scarcely to be recognised in this book (though every experienced worker knows it to be a fact), that there

are a large portion of that class who are physically unable to do any appreciable work, and who ought to be the care of the State—that is the community at large—in some more tender fashion than they are at present. For these I notice no provision in the work before us, and yet they are a distinct factor in the difficulties which the problem presents.

Then again, there is another class which consists of those who won't work, and it is hoped that these will be induced to work by the agencies which I have before described. There is plenty of room of course for difference of opinion on the question whether these agencies will induce them to change habits which are not merely the habits of a lifetime, but hereditary habits also. Members of that class live by their wits in London and often enjoy their life very much. They pick up a living, no one knows how, but they have a very keen scent for any doles which may be going. They always profess to want work if you ask them, but it is the experience not only of myself but of those who have far greater opportunities of judging, that a week is the utmost limit of time for which they will remain at any work which you may get for them. It is always right to persevere in trying to help others, and it is never right to be deterred from treating every new case as a hopeful one by one's previous dismal experience. That is a great principle, and it is one which one has to repeat to one's self over and over again, to assist one in stemming that depressing sense of failure



which is associated with any persistent endeavours to get employment for that class.

As to the third class, those in London who want work and cannot get it, but who would work if they could get it, I confess I am extremely sceptical as to their existence in any large numbers. Accidentally, and for a time, such a class may exist; but the opinion of those who have studied the question most deeply does not point to the conclusion that the labour market is seriously overstocked. Any man who will work, and is tolerably competent, is pretty sure of work at the present time. To manufacture work artificially would probably result in lowering wages, which are low enough already in many cases, and there is no proof of the necessity for such a course.

What then are we Churchmen, who believe in the Incarnation and the Kingdom of Christ, to say to this scheme? Suppose our experience and our reason tell us that it is not likely to succeed, can it be right to add one more to the long weary list of disappointments which do so much harm? Does it then contain within itself the seeds of probable success? It is a scheme, let us say, of a pious and self-devoted man; but other men, as pious and as self-devoted, have launched schemes before and have failed, and brought on others in their failure the miseries of disappointment and disenchantment. Can we say that this scheme, which depends on the autocracy of one man and on the grotesque

performances of the Salvation Army, is a likely panacea for evils which neither Church nor State has yet been able to cure? Let us look for a few moments at the three great blots which disfigure this scheme. First of all, there is its utter ignoring of all existing agencies. That which strikes you as the great feature of the book—and it is a most unfortunate feature—is the lack of modesty from beginning to end. There is no appreciation of the experience of other workers, no recognition of what they have achieved, no trace of deep study of a perplexing problem. It is as superficial in its methods as it is exaggerated in its descriptions. The only cry is, “I am a capable man; give me a million pounds.” Take one instance of this. Frequently in the book you will find mentioned the “Dust-Hole,” as it is called, a district situated in one of the worst parts of Woolwich. In the “Dust-Hole” we are told that two Salvation Sisters are at work, and the inference is that they are the only workers there. How many people who read the book will hold up their hands in dismay at the neglect of the Church, and applaud the heroic efforts of the Salvation Sisters who fill the gap! But the “Dust-Hole” is, I am thankful to say, in the parish of one of the most experienced and devoted workers among the clergy of the Church of England. When I mention the fact that the Rev. J. W. Horsley is the vicar of the parish, no one will need to be told that every single agency—temper-

ance, rescue, benevolent—is at work in that parish. No doubt two Salvation Sisters are at work there, but the book omits to mention the fact that several devoted ladies of the Church of England are also at work there. And this deliberate and most conceited ignoring of existing agencies gives a suspicion about the veracity of the book of which it is not easy to rid one's self. Then, again, there is no mention in the book of the agencies already at work among the class described—*e.g.* of the Prisoners' Aid Society, of the penitentiary and temperance work of the Church and Nonconformist bodies, or of the work of the Society for Rescuing Waifs and Strays with its admirable homes and its hundreds of children rescued from this very class, or of the Church Emigration Society. Speaking roughly, one may say that these societies cover the whole ground which this scheme proposes to cover, with the exception of the shelters and the farm. What are these shelters? They are simply common lodging-houses with the Salvation Army service thrown in. Any man possessing the sum of 4*d.* can at present obtain from a common lodging-house very much what this scheme proposes to give him. Whether the Salvation Army's service would be of additional advantage to those men, who seek these refuges, is a question on which opinions may differ. Many of us who are quite ready to thankfully own the devotion and piety of many of its officers are yet sensible of

the fact that their extravagances and absurdities have done quite as much to discredit the cause of religion, as their undoubted zeal and energy have done to promote it. Therefore I do not see in the Salvation Army's service, so beneficial an addition to the provision afforded by the common lodging-house, as to induce me to give my adhesion to this scheme. But then a further part of the scheme provides that if a man arrives at night without his 4*d.* he shall have his supper and bed if he promises to work out his 4*d.* the next day. Such a promise might conceivably be kept; but, those who have much knowledge of the class in question will have little difficulty in agreeing with me that their normal course on the following day will be to wish General Booth and his officers a very good morning. Then as to the farms. Few things are more attractive to the philanthropic worker in London than the idea of an industrial village. A gentleman has for years been advocating the formation of such farms, and nothing has come of it. Before we proceed to put our faith in such a scheme, let us ask those who have had experience of the particular class proposed to be dealt with, whether they really think that its members would ever be got to stop in these industrial villages. Is it not almost certain that on these dull November days an insatiable craving for the gas lamps in London would carry them back here again? I asked a friend who had a great knowledge of the

East End of London whether he thought anything of this plan of industrial villages, and his answer was short and decisive. "Possibly," he said, "they might visit them for a fortnight in the summer, but they would certainly return to London in the winter." More evidence of their probable success would inspire me with a greater hope about these farms.

A second great blot upon this scheme is that it is a one man's scheme. What is to become of it when General Booth pays the debt of nature? Is there any security for its permanence? Is it to be always under the control of the head of the religious organisation to which he belongs? No doubt an autocracy may often produce great temporary results, if you get a capable man. But, in a matter so liable to degeneration, as a great scheme of social reform, no prudent man would risk its success on the life of any individual, however capable.

The third great blot on the book is the unscientific character of treatment in the cases set forth. There are a number of cases set forth in the book which are certainly designed to work upon the feelings of the compassionate, but they are unsifted cases apparently from beginning to end, and to those who have any experience of this class it is a matter of the most elementary knowledge that an unsifted case is absolutely worthless and even positively misleading. Unverified stories of the kind are the easiest possible things to manufacture; they rarely stand the test of

investigation. The superficial character of the cases brought forward is apparent to any worker on a Relief Committee, and gives some colour to the assertion that the book is only a big advertisement. Undoubtedly, however, many people in spite of these blots, will make General Booth their almoner, and at least it may be said with truth that their money will not do any more harm than it might do if they spent it on themselves.

We live in an age of rash investment : we have just seen a notable instance of its results in the commercial world. The serious question is whether Churchmen are going to divert their contributions from existing agencies which, without sensational appeals and without advertisement, are doing their work well, to help to build a "castle in the air." It seems to me there are two attitudes which we may take up. We may follow the lead already given us by some great names, and indulge in a little emotional sentiment; we may throw ourselves into the scheme on the mere chance that it may do good, we may depress our own workers and may starve existing agencies, or depreciate them so that others may withdraw their support from them. On the other hand we may take up the attitude which reason and experience seem to me to suggest. We may test this scheme by them and then see if we have anything to learn from it.

One undoubted thing we have to learn, and that

is the necessity of consolidation. The completeness about this scheme is not only attractive, but it indicates the true lines upon which we ought to work. At present the multiplication of agencies even within the Church fritters away force. Every parish has its little series of attempts, which are often poorly supported and weak, to deal with the problem presented by this class. If some of our bishops, who have subscribed to this scheme, without giving their reasons for supporting it, would give us a little more help and guidance as to consolidating existing agencies, this book would prove the signal of a great and most needful reform. But as to the scheme generally, let us say plainly, that if any good comes directly from it, we shall be heartily thankful, but that we cannot believe, as at present advised, that it is a scheme founded on sound principles. It is weighted with the serious objections attaching to a one-lived autocracy, and to a parentage which has not enough modesty to learn from the experience of others. It is a scheme to catch the support of those who want to be saved the trouble of thinking out difficult questions, of patiently assisting more solid agencies. There are agencies at work of a sober and sound kind which, though they make no sensational appeals and do not advertise their successes, are dear to the heart of Him of Whom it is written :—

“He shall not strive nor cry ; neither shall any man hear His voice in the streets.”

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There are thousands who are working on quiet, regular Christian principles—Sisters of Mercy, Penitentiary Workers, Temperance Workers, Nurses, as well as a great army of other workers, scattered and disorganised no doubt, but labouring on true lines. There are homes and shelters, at present existing, which are free from the objection which attaches to the compulsory attendance at a grotesque parody of the Christian religion, and if we are stirred to give our money by this book, we had far better trust it to them than to the wild methods of religious fanaticism. The true lesson of the book for those who believe in the Kingdom of Christ and in the work of the Church is "Strengthen the things that remain," "which are" alas often "ready to die."



## SERMON XVI.\*

### LIFE AND DEATH.

“My flesh and my heart faileth : but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.”—PSALM lxxiii. 25.

ONE of the greatest tests of character is to be found in the way in which men meet disappointment and apparent failure. In no other way is it so clearly shewn what a man is in his inmost self—I do not mean what he is in his varying moods, but in his permanent self—as in the way in which he meets some great disaster or even the dread sentence of uselessness. Many a deceiver—self-deceived and so deceiving—is exposed to others, and sometimes even to himself, as he grinds his teeth and curses his destiny after some irreparable disaster. And many men’s lives are spoiled and ruined by some great error of judgment which involves lifelong consequences, while out of the same mistakes other men gather new strength and fresh motives. Everything depends, as we say, on how men take things, on their attitude ; and one of the most real and deep evidences of the power of Christianity lies in its ability to bring out the best side of disappointed men—in the way in which it helps men to endure apparent

\* Some of the thoughts of this Sermon I owe to one by the late Dean of St Paul’s.

failure and to grasp the blessing which is contained in that endurance alone.

A signal instance of power is furnished by the closing scenes of S. Paul's career, it is perhaps the side of his life with which we are least familiar. We are more acquainted with the record of his activities than with that of his imprisonment and desertion. Yet there came a time when that journeying from one country to another to build up the Church of the Gentiles, with the stirring activity which it involved, was over. S. Paul's life closes in prison, at a distance from the scene of his labours; his imprisonment lasted, with only trifling interruptions, till his death. Prison life must be to every earnest man a perpetual weariness; its forced inactivity, its isolation, its monotony, all combine to make it so. S. Paul, with his heart on fire, had to sit still and to seem to do nothing to fulfil the work of his life; to sit still with the sense, too, that men counted that work a failure, and thought of himself as one whose efforts for good the power of his enemies had effectually paralysed.

Judged as we often judge, judged by the rule of appearance, such an ending to his life was a failure. We should expect from him profound disappointment and deep dejection, yet his language at this time is the language of a man whose faith and resolution prevail even over his own physical depression. One of the epistles which was written during

his imprisonment is that to the Philippians, the most joyful of all his epistles. Its keynote is "Rejoice in the Lord." Not that his was one of those stony natures which are unmoved by the opinions and feelings of those about him. There is an undertone of deep sadness even in this epistle of which the leading idea is "Joy"; there are expressions which show that he was human and had his bad moments,—*e.g.*, there is a deep sadness, suggested rather than expressed, in the words, "I have no man like-minded to send unto you, for all seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ." There is a sense of a certain failure, and yet of a deep underlying strength—"My strength and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."

There is no disguising the fact, however, that, looked at from the outside, S. Paul's life at this time did look like a failure. A noble and generous nature like his had thrown itself with all its force into a conflict with the established order of things, and the established order of things was having its revenge; his friends were at a distance, his enemies were active, all round him public opinion pronounced the cause, to which he had given his life, to be an imposture. The painful incidents of slackening friendship and disloyal desertion were his outward lot. "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world"; "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all forsook me," are the words of his last letter.

The ordinary cool critical observer would have said at that time, that he, who has left a name than which no earthly name is greater, had in the issue of his life-work fallen short of its early promise of success.

The Apostle himself, we know, looked through these changes and chances, and saw light beyond them; they were to him, no doubt, the cause of bitter moments, they could wring from him even a moan of sadness; but everything as it came—sorrow, joy, evil report, good report—were only things to be turned to the furtherance of his great trust; whatever appearances might be, his one principle of life remained, “God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” What cared he, who knew “in Whom he had believed,” for the passing sentence of the hour? What cared he, so long as he had faithfully done the Master’s work, whether the scene of that work were the triumphs of his earlier career, or the prison which witnessed his last days? The world pronounced against him, as it had pronounced against his Master; but the world looked only on the things which were temporal: the insight of a faith like his saw the eternal issue fulfilling itself behind the temporal.

Generations have come and gone since the days of S. Paul, and the common judgment of mankind has judged between him and those who then counted

him a failure ; it has judged, and decided in no uncertain or doubtful fashion. Time has shown whose the failure really was ; time has shown that the forces which seemed to overwhelm him were forces themselves ready to perish, already undermined by the faith he preached ; time has shown, even to us here and now, the justification which in every age attends the cause of righteousness, even when it seems to fail. "My flesh and my heart faileth : but ~~God~~ God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." But it is always good to remember his typical case, to reassure ourselves as the centuries pass on, to try to see behind apparent failure and disaster, to distinguish between the temporary and the permanent in the lives of men. Examples of one kind or another, on quite different levels, and in quite different scenes, are always before us—examples, I mean, of the contrasts which often exist between the opening and close of life, the early promise and the late disaster ; and such contrasts are among those facts of our experience which awaken our deepest interests and stir our most profound feelings. Sometimes they come in the saddest way—men prove themselves in their later days unworthy of their early promise ; while sometimes great men struggle through life apparent failures, unnoticed or half condemned, and are only really revered when they have left this scene. The records of such lives interest us strongly, as strongly as the records even of great successes. We read

about them, we try to account for them, we moralise over them—the element of unexpectedness in them gives them such a strange interest, an interest that is surely rather pathetic than morbid. The history of mankind is full of such instances, the drama has portrayed them, fiction abounds in them, our own minds at this moment are full of one of the strongest examples of the kind. \*For no greater contrast can be conceived than the contrast between the heir to a great position for twenty years or more, qualifying himself in every department of public life for the great duties that were coming to him—the idol of the army, the trusted friend of the people, full of capacity, and conscious of it as a really capable man must be, full of hope, full of enthusiasm—that on the one side ; and on the other, the same man come at last to his great position only to be the man by whose sick-bed all Europe has been watching, whose death all Europe is lamenting.

What can equal, or at any rate surpass, the contrast that exists between the highly trained statesman, the capable general, the qualified ruler of even two years ago, and him who when the time came could only write a few directions, could give no word of command, could not even be crowned—the man who had been waiting for and qualifying himself for the position which gave the most splendid opportunities

\* Preached on the Sunday following the death of the Emperor Frederick of Germany.

of usefulness, yet who could only show men, when power came, how to bear voiceless suffering like a hero? Nothing so deeply pathetic has happened in our generation, few things comparable to it in any generation. It touches us all.

The contrast is so great between the earlier hopes so loyally and honestly cherished, the duties so conscientiously embraced, the plans so carefully framed, of utilising his great position to the utmost for the good of others and the spectacle that meets our eyes when at last the moment for action arrives—the spectacle of a brave and beautiful endurance, of a voiceless sick-bed, and a lingering death that has touched us Englishmen as nothing since the death of Gordon has touched us. It is not the case always, alas! that power and position go together with a strong sense of duty, with an earnest determination to use them for the good of others. We know that here, conspicuously and beyond all cavil, they did do so; there was that meeting, which is not found always, between the inheritance of a great position, and an earnest desire to do his best in that position; there was a character, extraordinarily noble, tender, and true, and therefore peculiarly fitted for that position. He had trained himself to be, he meant to be, he doubtless longed to be, the Father of his People; whatever men think about the institution of absolute monarchy, none will deny the illimitable opportunities which such a position gives for good,

and (as, alas ! history tells us only too plainly), for evil also. And the lesson of his life, though it is brought home to us by the greatness of his position, is a lesson that belongs not alone to his position. The lesson of the life of the hero—who trained himself with the utmost diligence, with unwearied patience, for every duty of his future position, and who, when that position came to him, was only able with calm heroism to endure forced inactivity—belongs to us all. Everything that position and opportunity could give lay apparently within his grasp—and yet, lo ! the time has come, and he has not strength even to close that grasp.

How shall we gain the inspiration that undoubtedly comes from such a pathetic contrast as that which his life presents ? There is no doubt an easy and cheap way of moralising that will wring its hands over the fleetingness of life, or maunder on about the necessity of health, or that will make use of his life and of his tragic end as an additional argument for proving that all is vanity. God forbid that we should so poison the wells that lie beneath all brave effort and heroic endurance ! Rather would I have you look deeper, rather would I implore you to try to see in his life and death one of the most touching and at the same time one of the most stirring lessons that human life has ever taught. And while you speak of him remember this : lives such as his are a judgment in themselves ; men will think about such things accord-



ing to the depth of their nature ; a life like his is a test, and every man and every woman who speak of it, in a sense pronounce judgment on themselves. Some may display their own littleness by lamenting merely his loss of wealth or of opportunity of enjoyment, and so lose the lesson of a great and noble life. Others will moralise merely over the uncertainty that attends all mortal things, and be confirmed in their feebleness and in their deficient grasp of duty. There are always those who thus contrive to draw poison out of pure wells. But surely there are some here to-day who will see in this pathetic scene something deeper than the merely apparent failure to fulfil the promise of his earlier life, some life-inspiring motives, some encouragement to persevere in difficult duty, some fresh realisation of the great experience, "My flesh and my heart faileth : but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." For it means a great deal to meet disappointment and apparent failure as he did ; it is a tremendous test of what a man is, of what a man has made himself to be—and we know how he met it. Much as one hates the realism that would deprive the most sacred scenes of that privacy which so hallows them, which introduces the photographer into the chamber of death and the interviewer into the physician's sanctum, there is enough that is known—and known from purer sources than from sensational paragraphs in newspapers—to make us rejoice in

the simple brave heroism, the pathetic tenderness, the calm effort to do his duty to the last that characterised the closing scenes of his life. Europe, since last Friday — Europe, and not only Germany — humanity, and not only Europe, seems poorer from the loss of one who added to a soldier's courage a loyal devotion to his country's real interests, a self-repression singularly difficult, yet eminently honourable — the combination rarely found of a great position, great gifts, and utter faithfulness as regards both one and the other. Is such a life only to be made the subject of a discourse on the vanity of all things here below? Surely it has something greater, deeper, truer, to teach us; surely it will bear fruit in a thousand ways — in a higher public spirit, in a less indolent conception of life on the part of those who are born to great positions; surely it will bear fruit in his own country, in the spread of some of those more refined and gentle elements of character in which the German race may have seemed to be deficient, but which an example like his must do much to recommend. We scarcely know which to admire and learn from most, his loyal and protracted training for the duties of his position, or his uncomplaining and brave resignation, or his never faltering tenderness and consideration for others in the midst of so overwhelming a disaster. God grant us all grace to read the real meaning. There is the outward, the apparent, "the things that can be

shaken," to borrow an Apostle's metaphor ; there is the baffled career, the life that waited and fitted itself, yet never enjoyed ; there is the pathetic sight of an emperor who sank fainting on a sick bed when he came to be crowned—there is that side—let us not stop in it. There is the inward, the real, the permanent, "the things that cannot be shaken, but remain": a lifelong devotion to duty, a self-controlled expectation which threw away no opportunity of usefulness ; and its outcome, a brave and a calm surrender of himself at the very moment of acquisition into the hands of Him Who orders all things on earth as in heaven. Do we believe in God Who "makes all things work together for good to those that love Him," and can we doubt that, out of this apparent failure that seems likely to us to be so disastrous in its consequences, He will bring some higher blessings than we can conceive of, that He will teach men through it, as by an object-lesson, the permanent value of moral heroism, the power that flows from a life of duty and a death of calm and patient endurance ?

And there is more than this : if his death teaches us an obvious lesson, it also forces upon us a much-needed reflection. Is all this trouble, and labour, and care, and self-discipline really thrown away ? Has all this devotion to the interests of his country really come to an end ? Is the pagan view a true one—is the great column snapped ? Is the stream,

violently parted, to flow on in other channels which have no connection with its earlier courses? Was all this care to qualify himself for the highest duties a mere waste of time? Surely we may never dare to think so. To the eyes of sense death is an end of the opportunities of usefulness; but if we let our senses rule us, we have heard to but little purpose the Master's words, "Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things, have thou authority over ten cities." What may be the precise duties and occupations of the world beyond we do not know, and it were useless to speculate; but this is certain, no talent faithfully used here will fail to find in that greater world a scene for its fuller and more complete exercise, no occupation that develops and elevates character but will show its fruit in that world where men will show not what they can say, or even what they can do, but *what they are*. The courage of the soldier, the firmness of the general, the self-discipline and self-control of the heir to a great position, the unselfish devotion of the son, husband, father, none of it is wasted—for there is no waste with God.

May God help us as we stand in thought beside his grave to realise this utter certainty, that we are making ourselves, by our use or misuse of opportunities, what we shall ever be! Here in this world we are not masters of our success; here we can only



