

In the Study.

The Seven Words.

VI.

Christ's Perfect Work.

'It is finished.'—Jn 19³⁰.

THERE is a certain mysterious fulness in these words. The Sufferer does not say what is finished; it is something filling His mind and heart, something that has filled his mind and heart for long, some great familiar thing which He does not need to name, something the end of which has come at last—an end hard to reach and greatly wished for; and He both describes this great thing and expresses His relief at its completion when He says, 'It is finished.'

What, then, is finished? The hours of excruciating agony? Yes, but something more. The thirty-three years of earthly existence? Yes, but something higher. It is His work that is finished. As He said the night before, 'I have finished the work.'

It is evident throughout the Gospels that Jesus was constantly under the pressure of a sense of mission. He felt that He had a work to do. As He emerged from boyhood into manhood, He heard the call to work and heeded it: 'I must be about my Father's business.' When He set His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem, He was under the compulsion of a purpose to be fulfilled. Could that purpose be fulfilled only through suffering? Then He is eager to suffer: 'I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!' As He was about to die, He glanced over His earthly life, and summed it up in terms of work done, 'It is finished.'

¶ The way in which our Redeemer contemplated this life was altogether a peculiar one. He looked upon it, not as a place of rest or pleasure, but simply, solely, as a place of duty. He was here to do His Father's will, not His own; and therefore, now that life was closed, He looked upon it chiefly as a duty that was fulfilled. We have the meaning of this in the seventeenth chapter of this Gospel: 'I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.' The duty is done, the work is finished.¹

I.

ENDED.

There are two senses in which we use the word 'finished,' and the death of Jesus illustrates them both.

Finished may mean 'ended.' In this sense, what was finished?

1. *His suffering.*—The entire life of Jesus had been one of sorrow; but now at last He has drunk the last drop of the bitter cup which His Father had put into His hands. Indeed, He had no sooner uttered the despondent wail regarding His sense of being God-forsaken than the bitterness of death was past. He has borne a burden of pain and woe which no other son of man could bear, and now it has been lifted from His heart for ever.

2. *His sacrifice.*—Jesus came into the world to be our High Priest. 'Every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer.' If we ask, 'What did He offer?' the answer is, 'Christ, through the eternal spirit, offered himself without spot to God.'

3. *The Dominion of sin.*—'Finished,' too, was the empire of Satan. The first mighty blow was given to it in the Incarnation. It was followed up by the Victory over the Tempter in the wilderness, and by that almost greater conquering of sin in the Garden of Gethsemane. It was now brought to an end in this Sixth Word on the cross.

4. *Death.*—And Death was finished. All His life He had looked forward to this hour. We all know that we must die, but with Him this common calamity was combined with a strange foreboding. He was strong and courageous; that is plain. When the moment came He met it 'as a brave man meets a foe.' But He dreaded it exceedingly, and with much more than the ordinary fear of death as an entrance into the unknown. His words to Nicodemus at the beginning show how it was in His mind: the Son of Man must be 'lifted up.' His frequent warnings to His disciples as the end approached show how His thoughts dwelt upon it. The agony in the Garden as He passes

¹ F. W. Robertson, *Sermons*, iv. 316.

at last into the awful shadow of it shows that there was something singularly terrible about it. This death which is now accomplished is no common death.

No; it is our death also, as well as His, which is here finished. Death itself is here met and conquered. It is not abolished; we know that only too well. But it is shown to us in its true meaning. It is made to read its ancient riddle. It is a visitation not of dread but of blessing. Jesus died upon the cross for us. To save us; to put an end to death and dread and sin, He died. For those who give themselves to Him, everything that is bad is finished. All things are become new. Death is finished; pain and grief are finished.

5. *His revelation of the Father.*—When He spoke of going to the Father, a disciple exclaimed: 'Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us!' Having seen Him, they would be content. Ah, we should all be content then. All hearts would hush, and turn to the Father who made us in love. This is the cry of the heart, Show us the Father. It is around Him that the darkness gathers. It is against this darkness that we grope in anguish, and fear, and terrible longing. This is the cry, if only articulated, of all the unrest of men; and their wars; and their migrations, and their art and science, and their many times irreverent thronging the threshold of the Unrevealed, and impious guessing of what is within: 'Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us'! Let us hear the words of Christ: 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father'—seen the Father!

6. But even yet we are very far from having exhausted the unfathomable word. It takes in the whole history of the world. The cross is the central dividing point of history. The course of the ages, the chronology of the human race, is summed up in Christ, and finds its demarcation in two letters—B.C. or A.D. All the past leads up to it; all the future proceeds from it. The crisis of history is, in a sense, finished.

Suppose, for a moment, that our Lord, on whom this work was laid, had failed to accomplish it; suppose He had not been able to say of it that it was finished; suppose the Divine justice which that work was designed to satisfy had still remained unsatisfied, and the Divine wrath against the sinner which that work was designed to avert still hung over the world, what had been the fate of our race, what the condition of each one of us this

day? The very mission of Christ had proclaimed that without an atonement there could be no remission of sins. His appearance as God in our nature to save sinners announced that the last expedient for man's redemption was put forth. From the necessity of the case this provision was unique and final. Only once could the Son of God appear to 'put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.' If He did not accomplish His work on the first attempt, He never could resume it. How unspeakably important, then, for us to know that He *did* accomplish it, that of it He could say ere He gave up the ghost—'It is finished!' In uttering these words He proclaimed that the work of human redemption was complete.

¶ The honour of God, the perfection of His character, the sufficiency of His power, the veracity of His word, and, with these, the stability of His government, all hung suspended on the issue of the Saviour's working. God had committed His honour into the hands of His Son, and He had pledged His word that the ends contemplated by His work should be secured. Had Christ, then, come short of what He had engaged to do; had He shrunk from any of the requisite parts of His work; had He, either from weakness or fear, or indolence or forgetfulness, left unfulfilled any of the predictions God had given concerning Him, or any of the pledges God had given to men, through Him, unredeemed,—the consequences to the universe would have been unutterably fearful. All confidence in the Divine infallibility would have been destroyed. The wisdom, the power, the veracity, of God would have stood impeached. The basis of His moral government would thus have been undermined and shaken. Angels would not have known when to trust Him; devils would have learnt that there was a limit beyond which there was no need to fear Him. The universe would have become a meaningless, a purposeless, existence; and from its extremest bounds there would have gone forth the wail of its horror-stricken tribes towards the dishonoured throne of its Maker and Ruler.¹

II.

COMPLETED.

1. Finished may also mean 'completed.' There is a sense in which this short saying might be the commentary on every life, for every life is closed by death, which finishes all its activities. Death is the last act. It brings release from the obligations of daily duty. And of every weary and laborious life we can imagine it being said with something of relief, 'This is the end; all is over.'

But the life of the Lord Jesus was not a common life, and the words, 'It is finished,' from His

¹ Archbishop W. L. Alexander.

dying lips had a larger and a more glorious meaning than this. For His life was *complete*, as no other life of man has been. A short life it was—thirty years of preparation and three of ministry: that was all, yet full and perfect. It was not a complete life, indeed, in the sight of men; it seemed to be cut off just when hope was fairest and the promise of achievement in course of fruition. To those who knew Him best and loved Him and served Him most loyally His death seemed the destruction of their best hopes for the world and for themselves. Yet, in the sight of God, who sees so much further than men see, His life was complete.

¶ Completeness in life is not a thing of quantity, but of quality. What seems to be a fragment may be in reality the most perfect thing on earth. You stand in some museum before a Greek statue, imperfect, mutilated, a fragment of what it was meant to be. And yet, as you look at it, you say: 'Here is perfect art. It is absolutely right; the ideal which modern art may imitate, but which it never hopes to attain.'¹

2. Whatever Christ came into the world for was finished. His work was not cut short by death. Death did not come on Him, as it comes on us, paralyzing us in the midst of our work, so that the tools fall from our hands, and we are changed and carried away. How many pieces of human work are thus for ever suspended, and hands that have acquired skill through a lifetime's exercised pliancy become rigid, and the work that was all but executed is postponed for ever, and humanity fails to reap a portion of its destined harvest of beauty or of goodness! But death did not surprise Him or suspend His work; it came to perfect Him and to finish His work. All that is expressed in Christ's appearance—the coming nigh of God to men, the unveiling of the mysteries of our life, the reaching back to the hidden springs of all that God does—all this was but sealed in Christ's death. 'God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.' That which He came to do had reached its end in His death; He made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness. He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

¶ How different is God's judgment from ours! how different His valuation! Much which we account to be failure is success, as He sees it. Much which we consider

wealth is but pitiful poverty. They alone shall save their lives, He says, who are content to lose them. Here in the darkness and ignominy of the cross, amid the reviling of enemies and the forsaking of friends, was ended the life of one who in the sight of men had met defeat; but in the sight of God this crucified man had won the victory of victories.²

3. What is there for us to learn from this? Have we no work to do for God? Did God send us into the world, give us life and strength and talents for nothing? No, indeed; we too have to do the will of our Father which is in heaven; we have to use the gifts He has given us—our time, our opportunities, our knowledge, our talents to His glory; we have each of us our special work which no one else can do, which we were designed for; we have much to learn from this example of a finished work.

(1) The labourer or the tradesman, or the professional man, the woman in the home, or in the office, or in the factory, may be doing a work as truly God-given as was Jesus' work when He was teaching the people or healing the sick or dying on the cross. The man or the woman who is doing honest work well in this world, which is God's world, is doing God's work—is a fellow-labourer with God.

¶ If we would think more of the work to which God has called us, each one, and less of ourselves—if we would remember that God's work can only be done through that willing self-sacrifice which is the very seal of the Christian life, then indeed would we be in the way of hastening the Kingdom of God. 'It is finished' marks the consummation of the work of CHRIST, but only the beginning of the work of His Church. That work will not be finished until the whole world has been brought to the foot of the cross and until all men have been made to see in the Death of CHRIST that which alone can give them victory over sin and death. It is in that work that we are called to be fellow-workers with God.³

(2) And does not this completed work of Jesus Christ, which brings such priceless blessings to man, suggest to him the thought, 'What have I finished?' Alas! how incomplete and imperfect is everything which man attempts! Who has performed the tasks which he determined years ago to do? Who dares to lift up his hands to heaven and say, 'I have finished the work which Thou hast given me to do'? What a record the past contains of neglect and of failure to accomplish the things which we ought to have done! Every one must admit that he is an unprofitable servant.

² G. Hodges, *Cross and Passion*, 63.

³ J. H. Bernard, *Verba Crucis*, 60.

¹ F. G. Peabody, *Mornings in the College Chapel*, i. 163.

We have made so many beginnings to which there can never be any endings at all. We have framed so many unaccomplished plans. What old man has done what he hoped to do when he was young? Our path in life is strewn with our failures. We might put as a sort of universal epitaph on every tombstone, 'This man began to build, and was not able to finish.' Who of us will dare, as he lies on his dying bed, to lift up his hands to God and say, 'I have finished the work Thou hast given me to do'? Shall we not rather say, 'My work is unfinished. I wish I had a few more years of life, healthful and vigorous life, to finish that work which I have in hand. I wish I was not obliged to leave those affairs in such an unfinished condition. I wish I had been more diligent in serving the Lord. I wish I had been more forward with my work, as I might have been. When I think of the many things I have left undone, I shall almost forget the things that I have done. The end will have come to me, but the work will remain unfinished'? No, it is not for any child of Adam to sound the note of triumph on his dying bed. A note of penitence will be more suitable far, 'We have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and we have done those things which we ought not to have done.'

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Virginitus Puerisque.

I.

March.

MARCH DUST.

'Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. And I will give her her vineyards from thence.'—Hos 2^{14, 15}.

March has come at last! We are glad. But somehow, when we have really reached it we catch ourselves still looking forward: is it not so? March is not like June. We long for the 'Merry month of June' to come, and when it comes we want it to go on for ever. Once, a group of boys in a Sunday class told me they were perfectly happy; they never wanted to grow any older; they even went on to say that they wished they might go on living always, just as they were doing. That was on a June Sunday afternoon.

There are good things, however, that come round to us in March. The green grass appears, the birds sing, and I know you boys love its football games and matches. You are ready to say you would like March quite well, if it were not for the weather. March has, as we know, its rainy days, and its cold winds that drive dust into our faces—dust that gets into our eyes, into our hair, and even into our mouths if we don't keep them shut. March dust is certainly not a pleasant thing.

But there is one person that likes to see it. That is the farmer. There is a farmer's proverb that says, 'A peck of March dust is worth a pound of gold.' He wants to get down his crops, and he does not care how hard the wind blows, or how much dust there is about, so long as it is dry weather. The dust does not annoy him—a farmer would laugh if you asked if he felt the wind disagreeable.

Now, I want you to think about the dust in a more general way than as we see it and feel it in March. Dust has been spoken of a good deal by learned men within late years. Like the farmer, they are high in its praises; but it is for a different reason. They do not think of how it will help them to make money. The dust of the great sandy deserts of Asia and Africa is what interests them. You have all heard of these deserts, and you may think of them simply as being the habitations of cruelty, loneliness, and misery.

Listen to something that a great explorer has said about them. 'There is one power, and one only, that brings sound and movement into these dreary, lifeless wastes, and that is the wind.' In the deserts there are great mountains of sand built entirely by the wind; there are great cities buried by it. No wonder that they fascinate some people by their very mystery. There are men who have spent their lives digging and digging, year after year, in the attempt to find out the stories of peoples whose homes have been buried there long ages ago.

But the wind does better and kinder work than merely that of burying cities. It has been discovered that this earth would not be at all a pleasant place to live upon without the great sandy deserts. Scientific men, in fact, tell us that a certain kind of dust is even necessary to keep you and me alive. It is akin to the March dust we despise so much and that keeps blowing hither and thither till we are very tired of it indeed. This dust brings about the production of the clouds from which the rain comes, the rains themselves, and the mists. In every drop of moisture there is, we are told, an infinitesimal mote of sand. The motes are so small (we cannot see them with our eyes) that they are called atmospheric dust; that atmospheric dust comes from the desert, and it is sent to us by our good friend the wind. We are therefore surely much mistaken in thinking of deserts as being but blots upon the face of the earth.

Ruskin loved only the beautiful things of life; he cared little for science. A friend told him of this discovery of how a mote of sand was in every drop of rain. He was very unwilling to believe it; and with his beautifully childlike way of looking at things, he met the information very simply. He answered his friend just as some of you might have done. 'Of what substance,' he asked, 'is the beneficent dust made of, and how does it get up

there and stay there?' Another time he wrote: 'I will grant your motes for raindrop centres (though I don't a bit believe in them yet).'

Do you begin to see the meaning of the text? Do you see that indirectly the people of warm countries get their vineyards from the wilderness? By and by, we shall learn more new things about this wonderful world we live in. It is a big place, but it has only one heart; no one part of it can do without the other.

March dust may make you feel annoyed; and you think of the desert as a place of terror and loneliness, while all the time it is bringing blessings to us. It helps to make our world beautiful and worth living in. If we have not vineyards, we have cornfields: they also come from the wilderness. Isn't it strange and wonderful?

In the Bible there are stories of people going to the Wilderness to learn. Moses went and kept Jethro's sheep at the back of the Wilderness, before he led the children of Israel out of Egypt—those children of Israel who afterwards wandered in it forty years. Jesus Christ Himself went into the Wilderness, did He not? And in a boy's or a girl's life there may come times that correspond not only with the discomfort of March dust, but with the great deserts of the earth. I have seen a boy lying hopelessly ill as the result of a school accident. Haven't you seen a soldier who had been wounded in battle, so that he could never hope to walk about again? An Army Chaplain tells of visiting a lad of seventeen who had been wounded in the first Gallipoli landing. Nothing comforted him so much as having a story told. He was greatly taken with one from the book called *The Sky Pilot*. It was about a girl called Gwen. She loved reckless riding and adventure. One day she had a terrible accident, and was told she would never ride more. She felt very rebellious. And then the man called the Sky Pilot came to see her, and told her the story of the great valley in the Rocky Mountains. How the Master of the Prairie came down to see his flowers, and missed some of the most beautiful; and how the prairie said that the scorching wind made it impossible for them to grow. Then the master spoke to the lightning, and the lightning smote the prairie until there was a great gaping wound. But the rain followed, and sent little rivulets streaming down, and the birds brought seeds and dropped them, and presently fair ferns

and flowers, covered the raw wound and the master saw his plants in perfection and beauty. The soldier boy understood the meaning of the story. Gwen had been sent into the Wilderness.

God sometimes does send troubles to you boys and girls, or He puts you into trying surroundings; but it is that you may be fitted for the great work of life. We need the March dust; we need the wilderness. Your text in Hosea is very beautiful. It is a text for big people, but I hope I have been able to make you understand it a little bit.

'Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. And I will give her her vineyards from thence.'

II.

The Right Kind of Eyes.

'And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?'
—Lk 6⁴¹.

To-day I am going to speak about the right kind of eyes. You know there are a great many people in this world who have some defect in their eyes, and who cannot see properly. Some of them are sensible and wear eyeglasses or spectacles, which help them to see things in the right way; but many do not know that there is anything wrong with their eyes, and they imagine that it is the other people who are seeing wrong. Some people are colour-blind, and will tell you a thing is blue when it is green; some see things larger or smaller than they are; and I once knew an old lady who saw things double. If one boy walked down the street past her window she declared that two boys had gone past, and she got quite cross if anybody contradicted her!

Jesus once preached a sermon about bad eyesight. He said that some people went about trying to pick little motes out of their brother's eye, and all the time they did not seem to know that there was a beam blurring their own vision. Now what are motes and beams? A mote is just a little speck of dust, so tiny that you can hardly see it, and a beam is a log of wood some inches thick and several feet long, the kind of log that would be used for supporting a floor or the centre of a roof.

Perhaps some one will say, 'How could a great big log of wood get into any one's eye?' Well, that was just a way of speaking in the East. The Rabbis had a saying about a mote and a beam,

and so, when Jesus wanted to draw a contrast, He used a picture or parable, as we say, that the people could understand. You remember on another occasion He spoke about swallowing a camel, but of course it would be quite impossible to swallow a camel wholesale.

What did Jesus mean when He spoke that parable about motes and beams? Well, what He meant was that there were many people going about the world picking faults in others, and all the time they were quite unconscious of their own much greater faults. The very fact that they were looking out for other people's faults made them blind to their own.

Now fault-finding is one of the commonest failings, and the worst of it is that most of it goes on behind the back of the person whose faults are being discussed. What possible good can it do to that person, and what harm can it not do, if he comes to hear how he has been criticised? How would you like to have *your* character torn to shreds? The boy or girl who finds fault behind another's back has very rarely the courage to tell that other his failings to his face. It is a poor, mean, cowardly sort of thing to do at the best. It is like stabbing a man who has no weapons. The one who is being criticised is not able to defend himself.

1. I am going to tell you some reasons why we should not find fault with others. And the first is — *we are not perfect ourselves*. The Indians have a proverb—'Said the sieve to the needle, "You have a hole in you."' Just fancy the sieve, riddled with holes, having the impertinence to criticise the needle! Make sure you are not the sieve and the other boy or girl the needle. It's just a case of the mote and beam over again or the pot calling the kettle black.

2. The second reason why we should not find fault is that *we do not know enough to judge*.

Once, among a great crowd of people in a French town, a man named La Motte trod upon another man's foot. The man who had been hurt turned round quickly, and aimed a violent blow at La Motte's head. But La Motte said quietly, 'Sir, you will surely be sorry for what you have done when you know that I am blind.' The man reddened with shame. He had taken La Motte to be a rough and rude fellow. He had judged without knowing, and his judgment had led him to do a mean act.

We may be making just the same kind of mistake about other people. We may be seeing faults in them that they haven't got at all. It is very, very easy to do so. You know how often *you* are blamed for things you never even thought of doing.

3. In the third place, *fault-finding does an infinite amount of harm*—it does an infinite amount of harm to others, and it does an infinite amount of harm to ourselves.

It does an infinite amount of harm to others. How many of you like to make a snow man in winter-time? One of the best ways to form the body of the man is to make a little snowball with your hands, and then lay it down on the ground and roll it over and over in the snow. You know what happens. The little snowball grows bigger and bigger until it is big enough to form the body of the man. Now that is just the way with another's faults when we begin to speak about them. They grow bigger and bigger in our imagination, until at last they are so big no one would recognize them as the original faults.

And fault-finding does an infinite amount of harm to ourselves. It leaves stains on our own character. We cannot judge others without becoming a little harder, a little more unkind. It twists our nature until we grow crooked and deformed. It spoils our eyesight until we are able to see only the ugly things about people.

The other day I read a story about a man who lived in a room with two windows. One window looked out on a bright flower garden and beyond that to a splendid view of moor and river, the other window looked on to an ugly backyard. One day this man invited a friend to see his beautiful view. The friend went to the window that looked out on the backyard and said he did not see anything that he could admire. Can you guess what was the matter? He was looking out at the wrong window.

If we want to get a beautiful view of things we must look out at the right window, we must look out for the good points in our friends, and not for their failings. It is told of Peter the Great of Russia that when he heard any one badly spoken of he would say, 'Tell me, has he not a bright side?'

'But how,' you ask, 'am I to see the beam in my own eye? How am I to know that it is there? It is impossible for a person to see their own eye.'

Just think a minute. If you wish to see your own eye, what do you do? You look in a mirror. And that is just how we are to discover the beam in our eye. We are to look in the mirror of Christ's perfect life. If we look long enough into that mirror we will see ourselves so black that we shall never again wish to pick faults with others.

III.

Much or little is made of the children's sermon, according to the fancy of the preacher. The children take three minutes' amusement or ten minutes' instruction indifferently—provided the instruction is as interesting as the amusement. The Rev. Will Reason, M.A., makes it so. He has gained a reputation as a preacher to children by taking the children's sermon seriously. He looks upon it as an opportunity to use to the utmost of his ability, and the reputation which he has gained he will not lose. These sermons in *The Wonderful Sword* (Scott; 2s. net) will stand reading and re-reading. Take one to prove it.

THE CHANGED MUSIC.

One of the songs that Shakespeare made, and which people still sing, says that:

Orpheus with his lute made trees
And the mountain-tops that freeze
Bow themselves when he did sing.

That is one of the oldest of the stories which the ancient Greeks used to tell. There was another, about the Sirens. These were creatures that looked from a distance like beautiful women, and they sang so sweetly, that those who heard them were drawn irresistibly to run to them. But these Sirens had great claws instead of human feet, and only used their ravishing voices to snare men within their grasp, when they could be seized and eaten. Two men, however, managed to pass by the place on the rocks in the sea where they had their home. One was Ulysses, who stopped the ears of his men with wax, so that they could not hear at all, and had himself securely tied to the mast, ordering the sailors on no account to let him loose, whatever he might command them by gesture, until they had got clean away.

Orpheus was the other, and he used quite a different method. He was with Jason and the men who went to fetch the Golden Fleece, and as they were passing this dangerous place in their

boat, called the *Argo*, he took his own lyre and played and sang such music as mingled with the Sirens' song, and made it more beautiful still, but quite harmless. By this means the crew were able to go on with their own business without any of the madness which came to those who heard the Sirens' voices only.

Well, there are plenty of things which act upon us like the Sirens' songs. We call them temptations, and all of us know something about them. Of course they seem beautiful to us at first, or they would not be temptations. It is only after the mischief is done that we see how disgusting they really are. But we ought to have enough common sense to know that if other people who have listened to them have come to grief, the same thing will happen to us. Then, if we still have to go where they are, one or other of these two plans will prove very useful, either that of Ulysses or that of Orpheus. For most of us, it is best to use the wax in the ears, so that we hear nothing of the fatal music at all. That is why, in the Letter to Timothy, the advice is given, 'Flee from youthful lusts,' and why Jesus said, 'If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee.' Of course it maims you, but it is better to be alive with the loss of a hand than to have the whole body destroyed. In this case, it is better to be deaf altogether than to be torn by harpies.

But it is better still if, instead of cutting something off, we can *add* something to the temptation itself, which makes it harmless, as Orpheus did when he played and sang those other notes which took away the maddening effect and increased the beauty of the song. But you have to be really wise before you can do that, and most of us are not. Yet we can learn from Jesus how to do it with our temptations, if we will, for that is exactly how He Himself met the Great Tempter.

You remember how Satan quoted what was really in the Scriptures, for one thing, about God giving His angels charge to see that His Son should come to no hurt. 'Now,' said Satan, 'you can therefore easily show these people what you are. Throw Yourself from this pinnacle of the Temple, and let them see You come floating safely to the ground.' It was a very strong temptation, for as far as it went it was true, and you know how, if you really can do anything out of the common, you are eager to do it, if any one suggests that you cannot. Jesus, however, simply added another

truth, and the whole thing looked different at once. 'It is also written,' He said, 'Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.' So, instead of God sending His angels to save men from their own folly, we see the much more beautiful picture of the angels coming to meet His needs when He had done the will of God.

I think that if we knew everything, which we are very far from doing, we should find that all evil things were evil, because something important has been left out, or because they are not in the right harmony. At any rate, in the common things of life, we mostly change the evil nature of things by adding something to them, or by rearranging them.

From great cities there is every day a huge accumulation of foul stuff passing through the sewers. If this is let into the streams and rivers just as it is, it poisons the water, so that those who drink from it lower down get typhoid fever, or other diseases, and the fish cannot live in those rivers. But nowadays those whose duty it is to deal with this matter put into the foul mass other substances, and all the parts take on a different arrangement. The foulness becomes clean, and what passes into the stream is as harmless as clear water.

Suppose, again, a wasp has stung you. That means it has pierced your skin and let a drop of acid poison into your blood through the hole. If you can get at it at once and suck the poison out, that is a good way. But you cannot always reach the place with your mouth, for wasps do not think of your convenience when they sting. Once I was stung badly on the sole of my foot, and found that quite out of reach! So, as the poison is usually not able to be taken out, we put something else in to make it harmless, because the two things together make an altogether different thing. The poison is acid, so if we put on some ammonia, which is what chemists call an alkali, it is as if all the atoms let go of hands and joined up again in a differently arranged pattern.

It is in something the same way that Jesus, the Great Physician, destroys our sins. He does not want to make us less, by taking away any part of our life; but if we will let Him, He adds His own Spirit. If we are covetous, so that our life is 'choked by the care of the world and the deceitfulness of riches,' He gives us an understanding of what are better riches still, the treasure of the Kingdom of God, and a love of other people, so

that we want them to be really well off, as well as ourselves. If we are apt to be carried away by strong passions, He adds the spirit of self-control, so that we are not weaker, but even stronger than before. If we deceive others and are deceived ourselves, because we are using only part of the truth, He gives us the spirit that leads us into all the truth.

And it was by pouring His own strong, precious life into the feeble and confused and disorderly life of the world, that He set about that mighty work of salvation which we are assured will not stop until everything is brought into true order and power and beauty.

So, while it still remains a good thing for us sometimes to do something like destroying our hearing or cutting off a hand, because we are not wise enough to add the thing that is needed, we can often try to imitate Jesus in the other way, as He has shown. When things get very trying and troublesome, add a little patience and good temper; the results are quite astonishing at times. When you feel that you simply cannot resist doing something that is very attractive, though you know that it will turn out all wrong, ask Jesus to add His help; turn your thoughts to Him. I have often known the mere thought of Him to put things straight that had got into a very bewildering tangle.

Remember that good things are the real things, and the bad are either perversions of the good, or else lacking something more than they have got so that the power in them does harm instead of good.

'This corruptible must put on incorruption.'

IV.

A book of readings for a month intended for young children has been published by Lady Cunliffe under the title of *A Book for Little Soldiers* (S.P.C.K.; 1s. 6d. net). This is one of its chapters:

THE GIRDLE OF TRUTH.

'Having your loins girt about with truth.'—Eph. 6⁴.

Truth is to be our girdle, like the strong military belt around us, giving us strength and firmness. We might almost say it is the arm of Jesus around us, for He has said, 'I am the Truth.'

Every morning you should ask in your prayers that you may be made true, like Jesus.

Truth means so much, it is hard to explain, and yet it is very simple.

It means realness, wholeness, it means Light, and all the Beauty of God. There is no pretending, no deceiving in Him. Sometimes you may see something glittering on the ground so brightly it looks like a diamond; you go near and see it is only a little bit of glass—you were deceived.

Some people pretend to be very brave, they boast of their courage, yet when danger comes they run away. They were not true, so they failed in time of trial.

A piece of wood may look lovely and sound, and yet be rotten at heart, and break when any strain is put upon it. It was not true. Some pieces of money when you ring them on the table do not give out a clear sound, they are made of base metal. They are not true gold.

God expects His soldiers to be true. He desires 'truth in the inward parts,' true hearts, true lives, true lips; true to what is right and brave and like Jesus. Fasten this girdle firmly around. Be strong.

Never tell a lie even to save yourself from punishment. Tell the truth, and tell it all, not half the truth but the whole.

'Be valiant for the truth.'

Point and Illustration.

Rowland Bateman.

Mr. R. Maconachie, late I.C.S., has written the biography of one of the most estimable missionaries or men that ever lived. It was probably not an easy biography to write. There was nothing wonderful in the way of single adventure, though every day that Rowland Bateman lived was really a day of adventure and wonderful enough when judged by the average man's way of living. Nor was there even anything in the way of crowds of converts to report. And yet it seems probable that when this man returned home bringing his sheaves with him he had a harvest which will put that of most missionaries to shame. His method was peculiar. It was personal. He buttonholed men. He held them, and would not let them go until he was the means of blessing them. The most persistent sinner had scarcely a chance with the persistence of this man's goodness.

All over the Punjab he was known as 'R. B.,' and to know him was to feel for him a peculiarly intimate kind of love. 'One of his gifts,' says the biographer, 'was, so to speak, an insatiable sociability—a faculty which I have sometimes called

Socratic, in that, as is said of Socrates, he "talked to all comers, questioning them about their affairs, about the processes of their several occupations, about their notions of morality; in a word, about familiar matters in which they might be expected to take an interest." Socratic, too, he was in the way he tried to elicit moral lessons by question and answer, and in using the broad humour of humanity in illustration or in enforcing a point. But all such talk was with a purpose—that of "spying out the land," as he would say, so as to "get a shot in" somewhere. His manner in doing this was so manly, and simple, and engaging, that offence was not easily taken, and his great-hearted optimism enabled him to meet non-Christians with cordiality, even though he knew they might soon turn against him in bitter abuse. This was not the outcome of a slack good nature; it was the humanness of his sympathy with and comprehension of men as men.

'As he went on in years doubtless his experience widened, and his knowledge of Indians and their motives in action deepened, but the fresh human charity and outgoing hopefulness were conspicuous from first to last. I remember once in Narowal, as we were going about the town, I was struck with the cordiality with which all the townspeople seemed to greet him and his more than equal return made in kind; and, further, as I expressed it to him, I did not see any difference in his treatment of Christians, and those who were not Christians. "Why should I make any, my dear fellow?" answered he. "If a man is not a Christian to-day—he may become one to-morrow!" On that very walk he pointed out to me a spot where, he told me as he came by, once in earlier days, a woman had caught up her little child who was enjoying himself in the gutter, with the exclamation, "*Shaitán aya*" (Satan has come), and hurried off with him so as to prevent R. B. from working him harm with his "evil eye."

The title is *Rowland Bateman: Nineteenth Century Apostle* (Church Miss. Society; 3s. net).

Prayer for the Dead.

When the war broke out we could not wait for a complete account of the Christian doctrine of the life to come. Our losses began at once. The trial to faith was as hard and needed as delicate handling as any in all the course of the war. And

so there came at once a sermon here and a pamphlet there, many of them most helpful and enlightening. But the systematic treatise had to come. For this subject of the future life is a great perplexity, and even the writers of sermons and pamphlets are apt to go astray. The Rev. E. Griffith-Jones, B.A., D.D., Principal of the Yorkshire Independent College, has written the book that was looked for. Its title is *Faith and Immortality* (Duckworth; 5s. net).

Dr. Griffith-Jones is a great scholar. Whatever he does, he does as thoroughly as a German would do it. But he writes as lucidly as an Englishman can write. And he is always in close touch with that Christian truth which has done so much already to redeem the world from iniquity. He divides his book into three parts, one critical, one historical, and one constructive. In the critical part he deals especially with the effect of the study of physical science on the belief in immortality. In the historical part he traces the history of the immortal hope through the Old Testament, the Gospels, and the Apostolic Church. In the constructive part he states his own belief and gives his reasons for it.

We note just one thing which may be unexpected. It shows at least that Dr. Griffith-Jones is open-minded. Let us quote the passage. 'During the long and weary months of this War thousands of devout fathers and mothers, wives, sisters, lovers, in all lands, have been besieging the throne of heavenly grace with passionate prayers for the safety and spiritual welfare of their dear ones at the Front. No one can put a limit to the prevailing influence of such prayers, nor what they mean for those on whose behalf they may rise as a sweet incense into the Unseen. *Many such prayers have continued long after many a lad whose fate is unknown has passed into the Unseen.* Have these prayers been useless and in vain? Do only those count that were offered before the hour and article of death? If so, then indeed the question is closed. But who, save those who are hedged in by doctrinaire presuppositions of the finality of death, would venture on such a statement? And if not, why should not those prayers be continued in faith that, in some unknown way, they form a link between us and those who are for the time lost to sense, but who may still be united to us by the secret benefits of loving supplications? Let those who feel thus follow their heart's instinct in

trustful faith, whatever others may say. Nor can we pass judgment on those whose traditions and upbringing are too stubborn to enable them to break away. In this region of delicate feeling and shadowy intuition, we cannot lay down any rules or regulations for common guidance: all must follow the light within, in the secret place where the soul has its most intimate fellowship with the Father of Lights, who is also Lord of Death and the giver of immortality.'

Canon Danks.

When the late Canon William Danks on one occasion preached before the University of Oxford, a well-known scholar declared that his sermon was the best he had ever heard from that pulpit. That is enough to attract our attention to a posthumous volume of sermons published under the title of *The Gospel of Consolation* (Longmans; 4s. 6d. net). The volume is introduced by a preface from the Dean of Canterbury, an appreciation from Bishop Boyd Carpenter, and a memoir by the Rev. H. D. A. Major. The memoir has this striking thing in it.

'After his death a letter was found among his papers written some twelve years before and addressed to wife and children (a son and two daughters)—it concludes with these lines:

"I have been happy in having received nothing but good from those I love most, and I die in the hope that—

We shall all meet again;
Not by wood or plain,
Nor by the lake's green marge:
But on some greener shore,
We shall all meet once more
With our souls set at large."

Are the sermons worthy of all this interest? Yes, they are worthy. For once a man's work seems to have been not less than the man himself. But we shall be content to make a quotation out of one of the Oxford sermons. Its subject is our filling up by our sufferings that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ (Col 1²⁴).

Let us call the quotation

THE SIGN OF THE SON OF MAN.

St. Paul is, after our Lord Himself, the earliest and greatest of the interpreters of the Cross; and

I would leave with you two of the interpretations which were nearest to his heart. The first and plainest meaning of the Sign is that suffering which to a Jew was a mark of God's wrath and to the Greek or Roman a mark of a man's helplessness in the hands of fate—to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness—is and always has been bound up with some eternal purpose of mercy and uplifting. The dark thread of pain which runs through the ages is in some sense the clue by which the world finds its way to the light. The sense of tears in human things is the sense by which we learn our deepest lessons. In the groaning and travailing of Creation lies the promise of its future deliverance. Black, tragic, unspeakable as are some of the things that happen to flesh and blood, the suffering of this present time is not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed. When to a waiting world God gives a Sign, it is the Sign of the Cross. If the Cross is, as we believe, an interpretation of the life of God, then it is a sign that suffering is a part of that life as it is a part of ours. God suffers and travails with His suffering and travailing world when calamity befalls us; perhaps it is truer to say that He bears it with us than that He inflicts it upon us. The redemption of a world is by the path of pain, even to omnipotence. The world's sorrow is God's sorrow, and He like us passes to the victory of Love by the way of the Cross. Henceforth all suffering is consecrated. While a new hope brightens over the dark places of our lot, we are bound to be infinitely tender to all who suffer, and to regard them as bearing, consciously or unconsciously, their share in the great redemptive work, in the accomplishment of the Divine purpose.

And as the first meaning of the Sign of the Son of Man is hope for the world and light on God's great purpose in Creation, so the second meaning is direct, intimate—personal hope and light for every soul. It is that burdens borne willingly, trustfully, devoutly, in humble yet proud fulfilment of God's will, or in love for those whom God loves, are the supreme sacrifice in which He draws us near to Himself and whispers to us the secret things of His Spirit. This is the inward experience which has gladdened saints and martyrs in the extremity of their anguish and given trust and fortitude to those who have died in the fulfilment of duty. This is the experience which is given to you and me when we give ourselves wholly to His

holy will and work. This was perfectly and entirely the experience of Jesus Christ, because He alone of mankind gave Himself perfectly and entirely to the will of God and the love of men. And all those to the latest time who in spite of their failures and shortcomings, their sins and backslidings, try to endure in His Spirit and to share in His redeeming work, are filling up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ. Let us follow the Sign.

'Christ leads us through no darker rooms
Than He went through before;
And he who to God's Kingdom comes
Must enter by this door.'

A Johnson Calendar.

The Johnson Calendar (Clarendon Press; 2s. net) is a very clever piece of work. It contains a quotation from the Life and Writings of Samuel Johnson for every day in the year. And such is the range and such the skill of choice that it will

be profitable as well as pleasant to have this much of Samuel Johnson every morning throughout the whole year. The editor, Mr. Alexander Montgomerie Bell, has scrupulously given the source of each quotation, and has added an occasional note from other sources. Take one quotation, from Mrs. Piozzi's *Anecdotes*:

'COME OUT AS I DO, AND BARK.'

As he liberally confessed that all his own disappointments proceeded from himself, he hated to hear others complain of general injustice. I remember when lamentation was made of the neglect shewed to Jeremiah Markland, a great philologist as some one ventured to call him—'He is a scholar undoubtedly, Sir (replied Dr. Johnson), but remember that he would run from the world, and that it is not the world's business to run after him. I hate a fellow whom pride, or cowardice, or laziness drives into a corner, and does nothing when he is there but sit and *growl*; let him come out as I do, and *bark*.'

The Denials of Peter.

BY SIR W. M. RAMSAY, D.C.L., LL.D., LITT.D., D.D., EDINBURGH.

V. THE PROPHECY OF JESUS ABOUT PETER'S DENIAL.

THAT Peter would deny his Master was foreseen and predicted by the latter. The prophecy (or perhaps the forecast of what Jesus saw in Peter's nature) throws some light on the fulfilment; and the occasion of the prophecy must be carefully examined. The examination takes us back into the earliest days of the little assembly at Jerusalem. The tale of Peter was famous from the first day, and was discussed in every group of Christians. The exact facts were settled by comparison. The meaning was canvassed: what did the mysterious words of Jesus hint at? As the days passed their meaning was established. The story, as Mark records it, is the tale that fixed itself in the memory of the first congregation. It takes us back to the beginning of things, and is a witness to the mind of the earliest Christians in the earliest days after the Crucifixion.¹

¹ The idea that Mark wrote the Gospel as Peter knew it, taking it from Peter's lips (the account in Eusebius, *H.E.* iii.

We have then to attempt to establish what Jesus in this prophecy seemed to the disciples to have in mind; but they thought differently at different times. They knew afterwards that they did not understand His words at the time they were spoken. They perceived later the meaning that lay in them; but, moreover, they did not suddenly attain to a right understanding. They made tentatives; and they even came sometimes to wrong interpretations, which lasted for a time. This is perhaps the most important result which emerges from the present study: it is not a study of illusions and fancies; it is a study of the progress of human souls towards better comprehension of facts and truth.²

39, from Papias), seems not to be justified by the character of the Gospel according to Mark. This is the Church's first Gospel, and gives the Church's earliest belief about facts. In this lies its transcendent value. Luke knows it, and sometimes improves, or at least alters, it in reliance on some specially authoritative individual.

² The idea often occurs in the Gospels, 'their eyes were holden that they should not know him' (Lk 24¹⁶, Jn 20¹⁴ 21⁴).