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## STUDIES IN TEXTS.

Suggestions for Sermons from Current Literature.

BY THE REV. HARRINGTON C. LEES, M.A.

## IV. GOD'S JEWELS AND THE DEVIL'S SWINE.

*Text*: "Cast not your pearls before swine" (St. Matt. vii. 6).

[*Book of the Month*: JESUS AS THEY SAW HIM<sup>1</sup> (St. Luke), by J. A. Findlay =F2. Other reff. Part I of same =Fr. *Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible*, and of *Christ and the Gospels* =HDB. and DCG. *Expositor's Greek Testament* =EGT. David Smith's *In the Days of His Flesh* =DS. Rendel Harris' *Sidelights on N. T. Research* =RH. *Biblical Educator* =BE.]

"It appears," says John Ruskin, "to be one of the ends proposed by Providence in the appointment of the forms of the brute creation, that the various vices to which mankind are liable should be severally expressed in them so distinctly and clearly as that men could not but understand the lesson. . . . When men desire to indicate the same vices in connexion with human forms, they can do it no better than by borrowing here and there the features of animals."

Christ frequently makes similar references. See His serpents and doves, sheep and wolves, dogs and scorpions, and the fox (Matt. x. 16; xv. 24, 26; Luke x. 19; xiii. 32). And so Tennyson:—

"Move upward, working out the beast,  
And let the ape and tiger die."

F2 has a striking passage on this. "We have a cento of passages about pigs, which may be taken in the following order: Matt. vii. 6, 2 Pet. ii. 22, Luke xv. 16, Mark v. 13. The first means that some people behave like pigs, and should be dealt with warily; the second that dirt sticks; the third that, however much a man may look and act like a pig, he can never settle down to be one; the fourth that, when the Saviour comes this way, the man becomes a man again, and the pig-spirit goes, no matter where, so long as it goes for ever" (F2. 131). To this we may add another in St. Luke

<sup>1</sup> Published by J. A. Sharp. 2s. 6d. net. Part II of the work noticed in March; amazingly full of careful work, and always provocative of thought, especially on Synoptic problems.

xiv. 5. “ ‘ Son or ox ’ (R.V.)”. “ In this verse we must accept Dr. Harris’s emendation ‘ pig or ox ’—‘ pig ’ and ‘ son ’ are written in identical Greek letters in the older Greek MSS.—the word for ‘ son ’ being only distinguished by a line over the top, and this was sometimes omitted ” (Fz. 175). “ The word for ‘ son ’ in a MS. is commonly abbreviated by two letters which exactly express ‘ pig ’ (*hyios* being abbreviated as *hys*)” (RH. 206). We may compare the well-known proverb quoted by Macrobius when Herod the Great, who bred prize pigs, had murdered his sons Alexander, Aristobulus, and Antipater, “ It is better to be Herod’s swine than his son.”

Let us then glance at these five passages in Gospel story, and F’s suggestions.

I. THE LAW OF DIVINE RESERVE. “ *Some people behave like pigs, and should be dealt with warily* ” (St. Matt. vii. 6).

“ The swine trample under foot what looks like peas and acorns, but turns out to be uneatable ” (EGT. I. 130). “ We must not treat all people alike, and show our valuables, religious experiences, best thoughts, tenderest sentiments, to the first comer. Shyness, reserve, goes along with sincerity, depth, refinement ” (EGT. I. 129). “ The people to be feared and shunned are those represented by dogs and swine, regarded by Jews as shameless and unclean animals ” (EGT. I. 129). “ The ‘ holy ’ and the ‘ pearls ’ must define themselves for each individual in his own experience ” (EGT. I. 129).

2. THE LAW OF HUMAN GRAVITATION. “ *Dirt sticks* ” (2 Pet. ii. 22).

“ The Egyptians consider the pig to be an impure beast, and, therefore, if a man, passing by a pig, should touch him only with his garments, he forthwith goes to the river and plunges in: and, in the next place, swineherds, although native Egyptians, are the only men who are not allowed to enter any of their temples ” says Herodotus (ii. 47). “ Dr. Rendel Harris (*Story of Ahikar*, p. lxxvii.) may have discovered the original proverb in the following, appearing in some texts of Ahikar. ‘ My son, thou hast behaved like the swine which went to the bath with people of quality, and, when he came out, saw a stinking drain, and went and rolled himself in it ’ ” (EGT. V. 141). “ In 2 Pet. ii. 20 we have what looks like a com-

mentary upon this parable (Matt. xii. 43F.) or something like it, while in v. 22 we have a reference to 'the true proverb' about a dog and a pig. The pig comes from *The Story of Ahikar*—rediscovered at Elephantine, and familiar to readers of Æsop and the supplementary *Arabian Nights*—certainly one of the books known to our Lord and His apostles. There a sow is taken to a luxurious bath, and afterwards proceeds to wallow in the nearest gutter, the reason presumably being that she is possessed by the unclean spirit associated by many Oriental peoples with swine and swine's flesh" (Fz. 131). "A friend of my own, with a knowledge of animals, tells me that the pig is often washed in certain forms of dishealth, to open the pores of the skin. The animal, being unprotected by hair, finds the sun's heat disagreeable, and wallows again in the mud for coolness. The dried mud protects the skin from the rays" (EGT. V. 141).

And so the tendency to slip back, or what Darwin calls Reversion to Type runs right through nature, and man is no exception.

3. THE LAW OF SPIRITUAL ASPIRATION. "*However much a man may look and act like a pig, he can never settle down to be one*" (Luke xv. 16).

There is a Moslem saying; "Jesus, passing by a swine, said to it, 'Go in peace.' They said 'O Spirit of God, sayest thou so to a swine?' He answered, 'I would not accustom my tongue to evil'" (DB. 351). But the beauty of the words of Jesus is that they 'bring the man back to himself' by bringing him to HIMSELF. And so we have,

4. THE LAW OF DIVINE INTERVENTION. "*When the Saviour comes this way, the man becomes a man again, and the pig-spirit goes, no matter where, so long as it goes for ever*" (St. Mark v. 13).

"There is strong evidence to show that Jesus did believe in the reality of demon possession, and we who are appointed to live in an age which often seems to be demon-ridden, are not so ready as were the men of the last generation to scout the idea as mere superstition" (F. I, 45). "The madman had watched the Roman legions thunder past his lair, and that was what, to his wild mind, his own life had become—an endless succession of tormentors trampling him down. In the expressive Syriac phrase, 'They rode upon him,' and he carried them about with him everywhere,

for he was they, and they were he. The man's name for himself was quite enough to show that he was not beyond the consciousness of his own condition" (F. 1, 44). "The man believed in his possession by six thousand demons and in the feasibility of their transference to the swine, and when he heard the Lord's command. . . . he was assured of his deliverance, since, according to Jewish ideas, the sea was one of the three doors into Gehenna" (DS. 193). "What more natural and seemly proceeding could there be than that he and his clan should be housed in the swine—according to popular belief, their native element?" (F2. 131). "Even as He directed a shoal of fish into the net of His disciples, so He compelled the herd of swine to work His will" (DS. 193).

5. THE LAW OF FINAL EMANCIPATION. *The Saviour can never leave any one in trouble* (Luke xiv. 5). "The most beautiful case of irony in the New Testament. For it means that our Lord said in the first instance to the objecting Pharisees 'Why, if even your pig (!) fell into a pit on the Sabbath, you would pull it out!' The picture of the Pharisee and his pig must have caught the fancy of the people" (RH. 206). And remember Psalm xl. 2.

Charles Kingsley has said "The great mysticism is the belief which is becoming every day stronger with me, that all symmetrical, natural objects are types of some spiritual truth or existence." "The life of man is the middle between angels and beasts: if a man takes pleasure in carnal things, he is compared to beasts: but if he delights in spiritual things, he is suited with angels" said St. Augustine.

" No longer half-akin to brute,  
 For all we thought and loved and did,  
 And hoped and suffered is but seed  
 Of what in them is flower and fruit.  
 Whereof the man that with me trod  
 This planet, was a noble type."  
*(In Memoriam cxxxi.)*