---

A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

## ART. IV.—"THE STRENUOUS LIFE."[1]

IF I may give a somewhat wide interpretation to the word *sermon*, then I have no hesitation in commending this volume as a collection of extremely practical sermons of a remarkably high degree of merit. They are the utterances of a man who is evidently inspired by lofty principles, and who also possesses both a wide knowledge of, and a keen insight into, many various conditions of life at the present time; and I feel the more justified in regarding the book in this particular light because the author himself, in its very first sentence, claims to occupy not only the position of the "preacher," but of the preacher who has a very clear and definite "doctrine" to put before his hearers.

"I wish," he says, "to preach, not the doctrine of ignoble ease, but the doctrine of the strenuous life, the life of toil and effort, of labour and strife, to preach that highest form of success which comes, not to the man who desires mere easy peace, but to the man who does not shrink from danger, from hardship, or from bitter toil, and who out of these wins the ultimate splendid triumph."

This sentence, which gives the title to the book, may be said to describe at once its purpose and its contents. It is one repeated trumpet-call to men to *be their best* and to do their best for the sake of their fellows, regardless of the cost of toil, self-sacrifice, or misunderstanding to themselves.

If I have one fault to find with the book it is that in parts, and especially in the first address, it is a little too "militant" in tone; but this may have been inevitable in the case of one who has been a soldier, and who has taken an important part in active warfare under extremely rough conditions.

I do not wish it to be supposed that President Roosevelt too highly exalts the place of the soldier or of the "soldier-spirit" in "the strenuous life," either of the individual or of the nation—no one could speak more plainly of the duty of doing everything to avoid war and to promote peace—still, in wishing for peace it may be possible to lay too much stress upon the policy of *parare bellum*. The motives of the following sentences, which are only examples of many similar ones, may be entirely right; still, the advantage possessed by those who are in a position to apply (if necessary) the policy of force is made somewhat too prominent.

1. "If we stand idly by, if we seek merely swollen, slothful ease and ignoble peace, if we shrink from the hard

[1] "The Strenuous Life," by Theodore Roosevelt.

contests where men must win at the hazard of their lives and at the risk of all they hold dear, then the bolder and stronger peoples will pass us by, and will win for themselves the domination of the world" (p. 20).

2. "Scant attention is paid to the weakling or the coward who babbles of peace; but due heed is given to the strong man with sword girt on thigh who preaches peace, not from ignoble motives, not from fear or distrust of his own powers, but from a deep sense of moral obligation" (p. 31).

With this single reservation I think the book may be generally and most warmly commended, and especially to those who, by religious, social, or philanthropic work, are seeking to benefit their fellow men and women.

One of the best chapters in the book is that upon "Civic Helpfulness," in which, speaking from personal experience, President Roosevelt bears testimony to the immense amount of practical good being done by religious people and religious institutions at the present time. Starting with the assumption that "the prime worth of a creed is to be gauged by the standard of conduct it exacts among its followers towards their fellows," he is sure that, tried by this standard, the religious teachers of the community stand most honourably high," and that "it is probable that no other class of our citizens do anything like the amount of disinterested labour for their fellow-men." That this is not more generally realized and admitted he believes is due to ignorance, because "to those who are associated with them"—*i.e.*, the religious teachers—"at close quarters this statement will seem so obviously a truism as to rank among the platitudes." Still, this ignorance is widespread, and he realizes that "there is a far from inconsiderable body of public opinion which, to judge by the speeches, writings, and jests in which it delights, has no conception of the real state of things. If such people would but take the trouble to follow out the actual life of a hard-working clergyman or priest, I think they would become a little ashamed of the tone of flippancy they are so prone to adopt when speaking about them" (p. 92).

The President then proceeds to adduce instance after instance from his own personal knowledge of the truth of his contention. Speaking of Christian work in the slums of great cities, he states that the misery which is found in these places "must be met, above all, by the disinterested, endless labour of those who, by choice and to do good, live in the midst of it temporarily or permanently." Of this work the world generally knows little and thinks little; it is "only those who have seen something of such work at close

quarters who realize how much of it goes on quietly and without the slightest show outside. . . . I could enumerate among my personal acquaintances fifty clergymen and priests, men of every church, of every degree of wealth, each of whom cheerfully and quietly, year in and year out, does his share, and more than his share, of the unending work which he feels is imposed upon him alike by Christianity and by that form of applied Christianity which we call good citizenship" (p. 95).

And President Roosevelt does not forget the noble work which individually and as members of various societies Christian women are doing; he speaks of women who "devote their entire lives to helping girls who have slipped and would go down to be trampled underfoot in the blackest mire if they were not helped, or who, by force of their surroundings, would surely slip if the hand were not held out to them in time. This is the kind of work the doing of which is of infinite importance both from the standpoint of the State and from the standpoint of the individual." Then he speaks plainly of the duty of those who do not take any active part in such work: they "ought to feel a sense of the most profound gratitude to those who with whole-hearted sincerity have undertaken it, and should support them in every way" (p. 100).

But Christian teachers and workers will not only obtain appreciation from President Roosevelt, they will gain much valuable advice upon the principles and methods of their work itself; for he evidently knows the life—the conditions and temptations—of those needing help just as intimately as he knows the labours of the workers. The following are only a few examples of what I mean:

(*a*) "Undoubtedly the best type of philanthropic work is that which helps men and women who are willing and able to help themselves. . . . Every man and woman ought to prize above almost every other quality the capacity for self-help, and yet every man and woman will at some time or other be sorely in need of the help of others."

(*b*) "The average individual will not spend the hours in which he is not working in doing something that is unpleasant, and absolutely the only way permanently to draw average men or women from occupations and amusements that are unhealthy for soul or body is to furnish an alternative which they will accept. To forbid all amusements, or to treat innocent and vicious amusements as on the same plane, simply insures recruits for the vicious amusements."

(*c*) "Anything that encourages pauperism, anything that relaxes the manly fibre and lowers self-respect, is an unmixed

evil. The soup-kitchen style of philanthropy is as thoroughly demoralizing as most forms of vice or oppression."

In the chapter upon "Character and Success" President Roosevelt shows a very penetrating insight into the conditions and tendencies of the present time; he sees where the special dangers lie, and how best to guard against them. He warns us against an undue exaltation of the merely intellectual—possibly there may be a greater danger of this in America than in England; on the other hand, he strongly deprecates the excessive importance now attached to bodily exercise, as seen in the altogether disproportionate devotion to various forms of sport.

"Bodily vigour," he writes, "is good, and vigour of intellect is even better; but far above both is character . . . in the long-run, in the great battle of life, no brilliancy of intellect, no perfection of bodily development, will count when weighed in the balance against that assemblage of virtues, active and passive, of moral qualities, which we group together under the name of character."

Some of the judgments uttered in the course of this chapter seem particularly useful and wise; *e.g.*: "The average man, into whom the average boy develops, is, of course, not going to be a marvel in any line; but, if he only chooses to try, he can be very good in any line, and the chances of his doing good work are immensely increased if he has trained his mind." Or the following: "It is a good thing for a boy to have captained his school or college eleven, but it is a very bad thing if, twenty years afterwards, all that can be said of him is that he has continued to take an interest in football, base-ball, or boxing, and has with him the memory that he was once captain." Or again: "All kinds of qualities go to make up character, for, emphatically, the term should include the positive no less than the negative virtues. If we say of a boy or a man, 'He is of good character,' we mean that he does not do a great many things that are wrong, but we also mean that he does do a great many things which imply much effort of will and readiness to face what is disagreeable."

In a short paper (which originally appeared in the CHURCHMAN[1]) upon "The Best and the Good," we have some extremely wise criticism upon the way in which some people, possessed of the very best intentions, often actually prevent most necessary reforms from being obtained. The paper commences with a tribute to the excellent work of Bishop Doane, of Albany, who had brought to President Roosevelt's

[1] American.

notice a letter of Archbishop Benson's in which these sentences occur: "I do not want the best to be any more the deadly enemy of the good. We climb through degrees of Comparison." These sentences form the "text" of the President's paper.

Of the Archbishop's dictum, he says: "This is really a description, as excellent as it is epigrammatic, of the attitude which must be maintained by every public man, by every leader and guide of public thought who hopes to accomplish work of real worth to the community. . . . Mere desire to do right can no more make a good statesman than it can make a good general. . . . The possession or preaching of high ideals may not only be useless, but a source of positive harm if these are unaccompanied by practical good sense, and if they do not lead to the effort to get the best possible when the perfect best is not attainable. . . . Every leader of a great reform has to contend, on the one hand, with the open, avowed enemies of the reform, and, on the other hand, with its extreme advocates, who wish the impossible, and who join hands with their extreme opponents to defeat the rational friends of the reform."

How frequently, even in recent years, have we witnessed (and suffered from) examples of the spirit and conduct here rebuked! How many reforms, both social and ecclesiastical, have been put back, some, perhaps, for a very long period, simply because the extremists, the so-called enthusiasts, would not join in seizing an opportunity of advancing just one or more steps in the direction of the goal which they were anxious to attain! Of these extremists—"men who are really striving for the best, but who mistakenly, though in good faith, permit the best to be the enemy of the good"—the President writes both strongly and wisely: "Under very rare conditions their attitude may be right, and because it is then right once in a hundred times they are apt to be blind to the harm they do the other ninety-nine times. These men need, above all, to realize that healthy growth cannot normally come through revolution. A revolution is sometimes necessary, but if revolutions become habitual the country in which they take place is going down-hill. Hysteria in any form is incompatible with sane and healthy endeavour. . . . In moving forward we must realize that normally the condition of sure progress is that it shall not be so fast as to insure a revolt and a stoppage of the upward course."

Upon the much debated question which may briefly be stated as that of "The Man *versus* the State," or, in another form, that of the value of legislation for alleviating the evils whether of the individual or society, the President speaks

very clearly in the chapter on Promise and Performance—a chapter which may be warmly commended to the study of all who seek any kind of office. Evidently in America, as in England, the art of trying to catch votes by large promises of future legislation is widely practised. President Roosevelt's advice is, accept from your public men no promises except such as you feel confident it is within their power to perform. "The man who promises an impossible good to the community may be a well-meaning but unbalanced enthusiast, or he may be a designing demagogue. In either case, the people who listen to and believe him are not to be excused, though they may be pitied. Softness of heart is an admirable quality, but when it extends its area until it also becomes softness of head, its results are anything but admirable. . . . People really fit for self-government will not be misled by over-effusiveness in promise, and, on the other hand, they will demand that every proper promise shall be made good."

It is immediately following upon this last sentence that we read what the State can and cannot effect for the individual citizen: "Wise legislation and upright administration can undoubtedly work very great good to a community, and, above all, can give to each individual the chance to do the best work for himself. But ultimately the individual's own faculties must form the chief factor in working out his own salvation. In the last analysis it is the thrift, energy, self-mastery, and business intelligence of each man which have most to do with deciding whether he rises or falls. It is easy enough to devise a scheme of government which shall absolutely nullify all these qualities and insure failure to everybody, whether he deserves success or not. But the best scheme of government can do little more than provide against injustice, and then let the individual rise or fall on his own merits."

The two final chapters upon "The Labour Question" and upon "Christian Citizenship" are among the best in the book. Both are dangerous subjects, either for speaker or for writer, because with both it is so terribly easy to deal upon second-hand information and to content one's self with a "mere glittering generality, a mere high-sounding phraseology," and to appeal in a spirit of mere emotionalism.

President Roosevelt's treatment, on the contrary, has at least the advantage of first-hand knowledge. In the first of these chapters—an address at the Chicago Labour Day Picnic—he describes to his hearers his "intimate companionship with men who were mighty men of their hands in the cattle country of the North-West"; after that he "got

thrown into close relations with the farmers"; then by force of circumstances he came into "intimate contact with the railway-men"; and, lastly, "into close contact with a number of the carpenters, blacksmiths, and men in the building trades; that is, skilled mechanics of a high order." As he deals with these various classes he tells us how, on the whole, he came to form a very high opinion of their members; and at the end of these various experiences he says it began to dawn upon him that, whatever difference there might have been in his own ideas of them, that difference "was not in the men, but in my own point of view"; and, finally, he states as his conviction that "if any man is thrown into close contact with any large body of our fellow-citizens it is apt to be the man's own fault if he does not grow to feel for them a very hearty regard, and, moreover, grow to understand that on the great questions that lie at the root of human well-being he and they feel alike."

Those who would understand intelligently the problems which lie beneath the Labour Question must realize as fundamental truths, that while (1) "different sections of the community have different needs," yet (2) "the gravest questions, the questions that are for all time, affect us all alike." Moreover, "it is just as unwise to forget the one fact as it is to forget the other. The specialization of our modern industrial life, its high development and complex character, means a corresponding specialization in needs and interests."

Neither this truth itself nor the extent of its operation is, I think, realized by Christian workers as generally as it should be. We must remember (1) all kinds of very specialized work tend to narrow a large part of a man's *interests* by directing his energy in a special direction. Thus, he is apt to regard life and the world almost entirely as they affect him, his work, or his particular trade. This is one reason for the growth of *sensitiveness*, and so of commercial combativeness among workpeople at the present day. The remedy is, of course, an introduction to a circle of wider interests. (2) Largely owing to the attention and energy of the workman being concentrated for many hours a day upon some work of very narrow interest, there comes, when the work is over, an extremely strong rebound. This rebound is often not in a healthy direction, and it is not always under reasonable control. A man let loose from his narrow task desires some other interests—some form of excitement. This he too often finds in gambling and betting or in drink. The great part played in the liability to temptation by these from the desire of some pleasurable excitement is frequently forgotten, as is this other factor—viz., from sheer want of

wider interests the inability of the working man to find this pleasurable excitement in more healthy directions.

Then the President points out another truth too often forgotten—that is, the greater *dependence* of the town workman compared with the countryman. " In the country districts the surroundings are such that a man can usually work out his own fate by himself to the best advantage." On the contrary, "in our cities, or where men congregate in masses, it is often necessary to work in combination—that is, through associations—and here it is that we can see the great good conferred by labour organizations, by trades-unions."

The value of such organizations he believes depends entirely on the manner and spirit in which they are worked. " If handled with resolution, forethought, honesty, and sanity," then it would " be hard to estimate the good they can do."

It is impossible even to mention the " many burning questions of the present " and the many questions pressing for solution which are touched upon in this speech; I cannot, however, forbear from quoting the following sentences: " Though the conditions of life have grown so puzzling in their complexity, though the dangers have been so vast, yet we may remain absolutely sure of one thing, that now, as ever in the past, and as it ever will be in the future, there can be no substitute for the elemental virtues, for the elemental qualities to which we allude when we speak of a man as not only a good man, but as emphatically a man. We can build up the standard of individual well-being, we can raise the national standard and make it what it can and shall be made, only by each of us steadfastly keeping in mind that there can be no substitute for the world-old, humdrum, commonplace qualities of truth, justice and courage, thrift, industry, common-sense, and genuine sympathy with and fellow feeling for others."

The final chapter upon " Christian Citizenship " is an address which was delivered before the Young Men's Christian Association, and of which the keynote is an assertion of the truth that " the best form of philanthropic endeavour " is that in which " we all do good to ourselves by all joining together to do good to one another." Or, as in another place he states the same truth somewhat differently: " I doubt if it is possible to over-estimate the good done by the mere fact of association with a common interest and for a common end, and when the common interest is high and the common end peculiarly worthy, the good done is, of course, many times increased." Another point upon which he lays great

stress is that asserted in the saying of Lowell—viz., that for a motto in life it is far safer to adopt "All men up" than "Some men down." "Speaking broadly, we cannot in the long-run benefit one man by the downfall of another." This thought leads on to some very wise words about the dangers due to the feeling of *envy* in modern life. To envy a man his wealth is "to confess that we have low ideals." Again: "Envy is not only a dangerous, but also a mean vice, for it is always a confession of inferiority. It may provoke conduct which will be fruitful in wrong-doing to others, and it must cause misery to the man who feels it." And "it will not be any the less fruitful of wrong and misery if, as is so often the case with evil motives, it adopts some high-sounding alias."

From the extracts I have given it may possibly be thought by those who have not read the book that President Roosevelt, in his strong exhortations to men and women to do their duty "strenuously" in life, has forgotten to remind both himself and them of the means whereby alone duty can be persistently done; that while constantly laying stress upon the various moral virtues, he had forgotten the Christianity which must be their foundation and their motive power. That this is not the case the following sentences from the last two pages of the book give ample evidence:

"The Decalogue and the Golden Rule must stand as the foundation of every successful effort to better either our social or our political life. 'Fear the Lord and walk in His ways,' and 'Love thy neighbour as thyself'—when we practise these two precepts the reign of social and civic righteousness will be close at hand. Christianity teaches, not only that each of us must so live as to save his own soul, but that each must try to do his whole duty by his neighbour. We cannot live up to these teachings as we should, for in the presence of Infinite Might and Infinite Wisdom the strength of the strongest man is but weakness, and the keenest of mortal eyes see but dimly. But each of us can at least strive, as light and strength are given him, towards the ideal. The true Christian is the true citizen, lofty of purpose, resolute in endeavour, ready for a hero's deeds, but never looking down upon his task because it is cast in the day of small things; scornful of baseness, awake to his own duties as well as to his rights, following the higher law with reverence, and in this world doing all that in him lies, so that when death comes he may feel that mankind is in some degree better because he has lived."

This book is one which I believe should be read by all who have at heart the desire to help their fellow men and women.

It is true that it is addressed by an American to Americans. But it is also addressed by a man to men. It is quite possible while reading it to forget the nationality of the author. But it is impossible not to feel that human nature in America is wonderfully like what it is in our own country. There are evidently the same temptations to be faced, the same problems to be solved, the same difficulties to be overcome. In the midst of all these is the overwhelming temptation to individual and national slackness—to let things drift, to be content with being and doing less than our perfect best. It is to fight and overcome this temptation that in page after page the author pleads for the "strenuous life."

"We must gird up our loins . . . with the stern purpose to play our part manfully in winning the ultimate triumph; and therefore we turn scornfully aside from the paths of mere ease and idleness, and with unfaltering steps tread the rough road of endeavour, smiting down the wrong and battling for the right, as Greatheart smote and baffled in Bunyan's immortal story."

W. Edward Chadwick.

## Art. V.—THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION AND CHURCH REFORM IN SPANISH LANDS.—II.

IT may be mentioned that the Irish Council of Bishops exercise a constant supervision of the work of reform through their Spanish-speaking commissary, who annually at least visits the congregations and reports to his chiefs. The commissary has experienced uniform kindness at the hands of the Reformers, and no friction has arisen during his many visits. He has accompanied the Bishop as chaplain, has administered discipline, has attended synods, and has at all times been received with a cordiality that testifies to the perfect loyalty of both Churches—for the Lusitanian Church has its Council of Bishops—to the Bishops who stand by them in their struggles. The place of the Archbishop of Dublin has been supplied by the co-option of the Right Rev. the Lord Bishop of Derry, whose vigorous eloquence and wise forethought have proved an invaluable help to the Churches.

*The Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States.*—It is natural that the great and progressive United States should take a special interest in reform work in their continent. The political Monroe doctrine carries with it an ecclesiastical