

handed over the corn or oil to a slave or other accredited messenger of a well-known client, and when he was called on to produce his accounts he hurried up and collected the outstanding documents. His master would find his accounts all right and would therefore commend him for doing business well. The whole story is a very commonplace one, just like the other parables; it is merely the story of a lazy slave who did his work in a slovenly way, but became lively and keen directly he found his master's eye was on him. Human nature then was what it is now. Have we not ourselves the proverb—There is none like the master to do the work? The slave showed his business capacity and proved that he was worth selling or pledging as a house slave, which was all he wanted to do.

What, then, is the point of this parable? It is to be found in the two words 'mammon' and 'unrighteousness.' Mammon is the pursuit of gain either as the profits of trade or as the interest of the usurer, while unrighteousness is evading the spirit of the law by ingenious juggling with the letter. To gain his master's favour and the approbation of other traders the steward showed energy, skill, and keenness. 'And I say unto you: Make to yourselves friends by the methods of the mammon of unrighteousness.' Be as energetic in the pursuit of righteousness, as a trader in pursuit of profit.

The steward was unrighteous not only as a trader, but also as a servant. He only did his duty towards his master when he had something to gain by it. Faithfulness and honesty is the least part of a righteous man's equipment, for if he cannot be faithful in the performance of his duties he cannot even begin to pursue righteousness. The steward's dishonesty to his master was the outcome of the same spirit of profit-seeking which guided

his future conduct; he only studied his master's interests when it paid him to do so. A righteous man would have done his duty without any thought of profit, because 'no servant can serve two masters.' He must either love God and his commandments, or he must love profit. 'Ye cannot serve God and mammon.' This was most unpalatable to the Pharisees, 'who were lovers of money, and they scoffed at him,' whereupon our Lord once more emphasized the difference between the law and their commentaries upon it. Nothing can be clearer than the law on the subject of usury as expressed in Dt 23¹⁹ *et seq.* A spirit of humanity and consideration for others breathes through it, which is totally lacking in the action of the steward. The contrast between the seeker after profit and the seeker after righteousness is made more striking by the Parable of The Trader and the Beggar, which follows immediately. The trader is a successful man of business, and like traders in all ages and lands indulges in fine clothes and banquets, while the beggar has nothing, not even food or health. The trader has pursued gain, while the beggar has not. They pass together into the land of departed spirits, where the beggar is happy, because he has love and comfort, who before had nothing, while the trader is in torment, because he has lost everything he set his heart upon. When he pleads for mercy, he is told, 'Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now here he is comforted, and thou art in anguish.'

In modern language this may be summed up as follows. To do your duty faithfully is the first and least step towards righteousness. Strive after the will of God in all things, instead of gaining wealth. High dividends are not compatible with the kingdom of heaven.

The Great Text Commentary.

THE GREAT TEXTS OF CHRONICLES.

2 CHRON. VI. 8.

But the Lord said unto David my father, Whereas it was in thine heart to build an house for my name, thou didst well that it was in thine heart.

1. WITH the assistance of Hiram, king of Tyre, a palace of cedar had been erected for David on

Mount Zion. It was a remarkable contrast to the shelter of Adullam's cave, or even to any house he might have occupied during his stay at Hebron. It was a great contrast also to the temporary structure which served as a house for the Ark. One day the impulse suddenly came to David to

realize a purpose, the germ-thought of which had probably been long in his heart. Calling Nathan the prophet, now mentioned for the first time, he announced to him his intention of building a house for God. For the moment, the prophet cordially assented to the proposal; but in the quiet of the night, when he was more able to ascertain the thought of God, the word of the Lord came to him, and bade him stay the king from taking further steps in that direction.

Shortly before his death the late Earl of Leven and Melville bequeathed a sum of £30,000 to restore the ruined Chapel of Holyrood, and make it a fitting house of worship for the special services of the Ancient Scottish Order of the Thistle. Architectural difficulties, however, prevented the carrying out of the work, and the bequest was therefore adjudged to fall through, and the money to revert to Lord Leven's heir, the present Earl. But so strongly was the latter animated by the desire to carry his father's intentions into effect that he devoted the money to the building of a new chapel on another site. The result was the addition to St. Giles' Cathedral of the beautiful side-chapel known as the 'Chapel of the Thistle.' This little gem of architecture was inaugurated by King George, as head of the Order, on 19th July 1911, and at the impressive dedication service held in the Cathedral immediately preceding the inauguration, every one present must have felt the appropriateness of the Old Testament lesson, read by one of the King's chaplains: 'Now it was in the heart of David my father to build an house for the name of the Lord, the God of Israel. But the Lord said unto David my father, Whereas it was in thine heart to build an house for my name, thou didst well that it was in thine heart: nevertheless thou shalt not build the house; but thy son that shall come forth out of thy loins, he shall build the house for my name. And the Lord hath performed his word that he spake.'

2. It is a common saying that hell is paved with good intentions. But it is not the last word on the subject. For a good intention may remain unaccomplished through no fault of the person having it. Its fulfilment may be thwarted by circumstances over which he has not complete control, or by the entrance of a nearer duty, or even by the approach of death. In all such cases it is well-pleasing to God that the intention was formed — 'Thou didst well that it was in thine heart'; and it may be said with reverence that with such good intentions not hell but heaven is paved.

I stood in Christ Church, Zanzibar, the cathedral erected by native Christian labour on the site of the old slave market, and read the inscriptions on the simple memorials of the heroes of Africa's discovery and redemption. One was erected to the memory of 'David Livingstone and other Explorers'; another to the 'British Sailors who have died at this station in the service of their country, for the cause

of freedom'; others to missionaries and Government officials.

But amongst them there was one which seemed more profoundly suggestive than all the rest. It was a simple brass plate bearing these words: 'To the memory of Charlotte Mary Key, who, having desired to join this Mission, was called to her rest on the day appointed for her farewell to England, 26th October 1881.'

At once there flashed into my mind the words, 'Thou didst well that it was in thine heart,' and then Browning's familiar lines:

'All I could never be,
All, men ignored in me,
This, I was worth to God.'¹

Not on the vulgar mass
Called 'work,' must sentence pass,
Things done, that took the eye and had the price;
O'er which, from level stand,
The low world laid its hand,
Found straightway to its mind, could value in a trice:

But all, the world's coarse thumb
And finger failed to plumb,
So passed in making up the main account;
All instincts immature,
All purposes unsure,
That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man's
amount:

Thoughts hardly to be packed
Into a narrow act,
Fancies that broke through language and escaped;
All I could never be,
All, men ignored in me,
This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher
shaped.²

I.

GOOD INTENTIONS MAY BE THWARTED.

1. Good intentions may be interfered with by other and more urgent duties. David was bent upon building a house unto the Lord: he was denied that privilege: but who will say that his life was therefore a failure? David, after all, was permitted to do a nobler work than building a sanctuary for God, great as that privilege would have been. He sang out the hymns which were destined to become the inspired psalter for all ages. David was prevented from doing what he would gladly have done in one direction; but he was permitted to render a service quite as glorious in another. David's life was not a failure. It was limited and finite in its scope, doubtless; and every man's work, even the noblest, on earth

¹ G. W. Thorn.

² Browning, 'Rabbi Ben Ezra.'

must partake of the limitations with which God has encompassed his life.

Being again troubled after service by the lurking fear that there must be something materially wrong in my preaching or my state of mind, because I find myself used more in the way of guiding and helping God's people and inquirers, than in awakening the Christless, I went directly in prayer to the Lord about it. Soon after, though I did not notice it at the moment, the text on one of my papers was shaken out of my Bible, and I took it up and read, 2 Ch. vi. 7-9: 'Thou didst well that it was in thine heart,' etc. The Lord has different instruments, and reasons for these too. This has quieted my mind very much. I seek to go on saying, 'Even so as seemeth good in Thy sight.'¹

3. Good intentions may be thwarted by death. There has been only One in the world's history who accomplished everything He set out to do. Jesus came forth from the Father to redeem the world, and He redeemed it. He offered the one full and perfect oblation and sacrifice, so that in dying He could say, 'It is finished.' But for the rest of us—we never finish. Death always comes to us too soon. We want more time. Our tasks are never done.

A few years ago, in a west of England city, a young man became seriously impressed by the call to give his heart and life to the Lord Jesus Christ. After conversation with two ministers he joined the (Congregational) Church. Though but eighteen years of age, he developed into a most useful and active leader in several branches of work.

Cycling into the country one afternoon about two years later, on a visit to friends, he never arrived! His body was found by the roadside, his bicycle beside. An unsuspected weakness of the heart was the cause. As his mother was turning over a few books and papers in her lad's room, she discovered a slip of note-paper in his handwriting. It read as follows:

'28 March 1910.

'I promise now before God to work hard to train myself for a profession and also to improve my mind. I will try to "follow the Christ the King," to live pure and speak true.

H. LEONARD HORDER.'

He did well that it was in his heart.²

One of the noblest of modern Englishmen was the late Sir Wilfrid Lawson. He gave his life to the cause of temperance. A sober England was his dream. And how nobly he toiled for it! In face of ridicule, scorn, opposition of every kind, he fought the good cause of temperance reform. And it looked as if the wilderness years were past for him and the promised land was near. For his last public work was to introduce a deputation of members to the Prime Minister to urge the cause of temperance reform. Never had such a deputation been seen before. Its very size and importance were an augury of success. And that deputation had the

joy of hearing the Prime Minister pledge himself and his colleagues to a wide and drastic measure of temperance legislation. It seemed as if brave old Sir Wilfrid was after all to see the fulfilment of his dreams; that the grand old warrior would in his lifetime be acclaimed as victor. The Promised Land gleamed before his eyes that day, his feet were on the very threshold. And yet he never entered it. He died 'in Moab.' He died without seeing the salvation for which he had fought and laboured.³

II.

IT IS GOOD TO HAVE GOOD INTENTIONS.

1. It is good for the man himself. Doubtless the whole character of David was raised and ennobled by the ideal he had so long cherished within his heart. The secret conception may have chastened his fierceness through years of battle, and when at last it was revealed that the completion of his noble plan must be delayed, what a spring of prayer, unselfishness, and thanksgiving it opened up within him! How it unlocked the very heavens, and disclosed God's grace and favour descending from the heights of glory and encircling the long line of his family and descendants as with the splendour of the shechinah cloud, till at last the old man's heart could contain itself no longer, and he breaks out, 'Who am I, O Lord God, and what is mine house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? And yet this was a small thing in thine eyes, O God; for thou hast also spoken of thy servant's house for a great while to come.'

The rejected candidate to the missionary society stands upon a higher moral platform than those who were never touched by the glow of missionary enthusiasm. For a woman to have loved passionately, even though the dark waters may have engulfed her love before it was consummated, leaves her ever after richer, deeper, than if she had never loved, nor been loved in return. That a plant should have dreamt in some dark night of the possibility of flowering into matchless beauty stamps it as belonging to a higher family than the moss that clings around the stump. 'Thou didst well that it was in thine heart.'⁴

One prayed in vain to paint the vision blest
Which shone upon his heart by night and day;
But homely duties in his dwelling pressed,
And hungry hearts that would not turn away,
And cares that still his eager hands bade stay.
The canvas never knew the pictured Face;
But year by year while yet the vision shone
An angel near him, wondering, bent to trace
On his own life the Master's image grown
And unto men made known.⁵

¹ Andrew Bonar's *Diary*, Monday, 12th October 1863.

² Gomer Evans.

³ J. D. Jones, *The Gospel of Grace*, 224.

⁴ F. B. Meyer, *David*, 163.

⁵ Mabel Earle.

2. It is good for others. It was well that David, when he died, had cherished this purpose. It lived after him. It was well, too, that, in his later days, he cherished such a purpose. Great purposes, as a rule, are originated in youthful days, and whenever an aged man purposes a great thing he shows the youthfulness of his spirit. It was well that Moses, as the deliverer of the Lord's people, guided them through the wilderness, though he himself was not permitted to enter Canaan, or even to see them enter it. It was well that some of our fathers fought for liberties which they themselves never enjoyed. It was well that they laid down their life, and therefore were never permitted to see the results of their self-sacrifice, in vindication of principles which now we have inherited as our birthright. It was well that we have had fathers ready to do and to suffer not for their own sakes, but for the sake of God, and their children after them. Do not think that an unfinished work is a work to be despised or underestimated. It may be the beginning of greater things, a prediction of a happy consummation.

They hanged John Brown at Charlestown because he dreamed of a free America and dared to labour to translate dream into fact. Would it have been better that John Brown had never dreamed such a dream? Would it have been better that he should have been content to see the negro enslaved? Was it all in vain that he and his sons perished in the cause of freedom? No, it was not in vain. John Brown dreamed, and others caught the vision from him. In a few years thousands of young men from every town and village in the North were marching out to battle for the slave, and as they marched they sang, 'John Brown's body lies mouldering in the grave, but his soul goes marching on.' He did well that it was in his heart, for out of that noble dream there has sprung the emancipated Republic of to-day.¹

A beautiful story is told of the way in which Dürer's 'The Folded Hands' came to be made. Two companions Franz Knigstein and Albrecht Dürer began artistic studies about the same time. Albrecht had genius, but Franz had only love for art without real artistic skill. After some years they planned to make, each of them, an etching of our Lord's Passion. When their works were finished and compared, Franz suddenly realized that he could never be an artist. Only for one passionate moment he buried his face in his hands, and then said to his friend, 'The good Lord has given me no such gift as this of yours. But something He yet has for me to do. Some homely duty is somewhere waiting for me, but now, be you artist of Nuremberg, and I . . .'

'Still! Franz, be quiet one minute,' cried Albrecht, and seizing paper and pencil, in a few moments he sketched his friend's hands still held together.

'Why did you draw them?' asked Franz.

'I sketched them,' said Albrecht, 'as you stood there making that surrender of your life. I said to myself, "Those hands which will never paint a picture can now most certainly make one." I have faith in those folded hands, my brother friend. They will go to men's hearts in the days to come.'

3. It secures God's approval. 'Whereas it was in thine heart to build an house for my name, thou didst well that it was in thine heart.' Many a man would have said, 'Ah, poor David, all the inspiration of a great purpose, all the patient planning, and all the earnest endeavour to accomplish the task on his part, have been useless. The Divine veto has put an end to all.' Nay, not so. David does not occupy the same position Godward or manward that he would have occupied if he had never designed so devout and exalted a scheme. There was, in the first place, the divine approval of the motive, which itself exalted his life and filled it with light.

Of all the myriad moods of mind
That through the soul come thronging,
Which one was e'er so dear, so kind,
So beautiful as Longing?
The thing we long for, that we are
For one transcendent moment,
Before the Present poor and bare
Can make its sneering comment.

Still, through our paltry stir and strife,
Glow down the wished Ideal,
And Longing moulds in clay what Life
Carves in the marble Real;
To let the new life in, we know,
Desire must ope the portal;
Perhaps the longing to be so
Helps make the soul immortal.

Longing is God's fresh heavenward will
With our poor earthward striving;
We quench it that we may be still
Content with merely living;
But, would we learn the heart's full scope
Which we are hourly wronging,
Our lives must climb from hope to hope
And realize our longing.

Ah! let us hope that to our praise
Good God not only reckons
The moments when we tread His ways,
But when the spirit beckons,—
That some slight good is also wrought
Beyond self-satisfaction,
When we are simply good in thought,
Howe'er we fail in action.¹

4. And by a law of God's universe every unfulfilled godly desire shall yet find its fulfilment.

¹ J. D. Jones, *The Gospel of Grace*, 229.

¹ James Russell Lowell.

The man who sets Christ before him and presses towards the mark of his high calling—even though in this life he never reaches the mark—that man does not fail. What is heaven? It is the place where our noblest hopes are fulfilled and our noblest purposes realized. Do you remember those great lines of Browning's:

All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good shall exist;

Not its semblance, but itself; no beauty, nor good, nor power

Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for the melodist

When eternity affirms the conception of an hour.

The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too hard,

The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the sky,
Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard;
Enough that he heard it once: we shall hear it by-and-by.

And Browning is quite right. Heaven is the place where all high failures are seen to be true successes. And above everything else it is the place in which men who have aimed to be like Christ shall find their ambition fulfilled, and shall be clean every whit.

We need not weep over the sad memoria]s of disappointed zeal and arrested service in our missionary graveyards, and of which, indeed, the broken shaft in every graveyard reminds us. That force has all gone up into God's keeping.

Every tear is treasured above. We can track the spiritual force no longer, but do you fear that it is quenched? Has it rushed into perpetual oblivion? Has it reached a stage of absolute and everlasting quiescence? No; it must live as long as there is a God in heaven to hear prayer, record consecration, and knit up all pleading sympathies into that last grand throbbing of force which shall make all things new, and bind heaven and earth into one by Christ Jesus. The value of your ideal can only be measured against the high spiritual values of the golden future that is coming to the universe. 'Thou didst well that it was in thine heart.'¹

About fifteen years ago, a young Scots minister, named James Slater, a man of more than ordinary ability, resolved to devote himself to the work of the Church of Scotland Mission at Blantyre in British Central Africa. In the course of the service [in Holborn Parish Church, Aberdeen], at which he was ordained on the eve of his departure for Africa, he himself read the Old Testament chapter; and it happened to be that passage in Isaiah, in which the prophet tells that he heard the voice of the Lord, saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' and that he had answered, 'Here am I: send me.' With these words, and followed by the prayers and hopes of his friends, Slater set out for the mission-field; but before he reached the end of the long sea-voyage, he was stricken with fever, and had to be put ashore at the port of Beira, in Portuguese East Africa, and there he died. His missionary purpose was unfulfilled, he was not spared even to begin his chosen work; and yet may we not believe that his life was fruitful and of the highest worth in God's sight, because of his self-surrender, and the earnest purpose he had longed and striven to fulfil.²

¹ T. G. Selby, *The Imperfect Angel*, 299.

² H. S. Mackenzie.

Recent Foreign Theology.

Modern Christological Discussion.¹

CHRISTOLOGY is as much the subject of modern as it was of ancient controversy. All discussion respecting Christianity finally turns upon it. 'Who do ye say that I am?' is the test of all confessions. Dr. Faut's account of the course of recent discussion on the subject is admirable for its fullness, fairness, clearness, and strong argumentative style. The object, indeed, is to show that Ritschlianism is the logical issue of modern development. But the reasons on which this issue is advocated are so fully stated that every theological reader is able to form his own judgment. The advocacy, too, is

¹ *Die Christologie seit Schleiermacher, ihre Geschichte und ihre Begründung.* Von Dr. S. T. Faut. Tübingen: Mohr, M.3.

conducted in a reasonable, non-aggressive spirit. After a brief summary of modern Rationalism, to which Christ is only a teacher and Christianity is independent of its Founder's personality, the author first describes and estimates the attempts to rehabilitate the old forms of Christological dogma with the Kenotic modification, the philosophical treatment of Christology in the hands of Hegel and Biedermann, and the Mediation Christology of Dorner. All this exposition and criticism will be found fresh and suggestive. Then the new departure of Schleiermacher is admirably sketched. Despite the author's just criticism, that even Schleiermacher tried in vain to combine the religious and the philosophical standpoint, no one doubts that the outcome of Schleiermacher's work was as beneficial for religion in Germany as was