

The Great Text Commentary.

I COR. X. 13.

There hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear.

1. THE words of this verse form the climax of a long and memorable digression of which the leading thought is distrust of self, trust in God—distrust of self as a cause of watchfulness, trust in God as a ground of hope. Like most of St. Paul's words, real and burning words as they always are, they acquire a yet intenser significance from the sequence of thought with which they are connected. He has been speaking of his position as an Apostle, and claiming his right to be supported by his evangelizing work. But he reminds his Corinthian converts that he had deliberately waived that right. He had followed that rarer and nobler course which is so hard to learn, and which he urges so often on all Christians, of calmly and habitually being content, if need be, with less than is their due. And therefore, instead of accepting the maintenance to which he was so clearly entitled from the bands of his converts, he had laboured with his own hands to meet the modest wants of a disciplined and simple life. Yet he did not boast of this great self-denial; he had done it, not for glory or for gratitude, but for God. What he had done he could not help doing. The sacred hunger for souls had absorbed his energies; the burning impulse of love had swayed his soul; his labour had been its own reward, because it had been done for the Gospel's sake, that he and they might alike be partakers of its benefits.

And there for a moment he pauses. The thought arrests his attention. The word 'Gospel'—the thought of sharing with them its awful privileges—arrests him; he is suddenly startled at the grandeur of his own mission, and stops to warn them that even he, their teacher, even he called to be an Apostle, even he with all his perils and labours and sacrifices, needed, no less than they did, unsparing, constant, anxious self-discipline, lest he should become a castaway. He reminds them that the mortification, the conflict, the self-mastery which were necessary for him who would wear heaven's wreath of amaranth, were far more intense and continuous than the severe

training which the young athletes of their city must undergo before they could win those coveted and fading garlands of Isthmian pine. He reminds them too of the awful lesson involved in the history of their fathers. They, by glorious privilege, had been guided by the fiery pillar, had been baptized in the parted sea, had quenched their thirst from the cloven rock—yet all had been in vain. In spite of all, their hearts had lusted after evil things. Some had committed fornication and fallen in one day to the number of three and twenty thousand; some had tempted the Lord and been destroyed of serpents; some had murmured and been destroyed of the destroyer. Oh let them beware, for all this dark and splendid history was written for their example. It was no dim revelation of God's will, no uncertain utterance of His voice. And its lesson was, 'Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.'

But then, at once, after those stern and solemn messages, the heart of the great Apostle breaks with tears. He yearns to comfort his children. 'Why *should* they—why *need* they fall?' The thought flashes across his mind too rapidly for utterance, and, leaving it unexpressed, he continues, 'There hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it.'

2. 'There hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear.' Some commentators would understand the Apostle to mean, 'Your previous temptations have not hitherto exceeded your strength.' Others prefer to take the meaning, 'Up till now you have not been very greatly tempted' (Edwards: 'It has not yet gone' the length of blood, of persecution; He 12^d). The A.V. reads 'such as is common to man' where the R.V. gives 'such as man can bear.' The word so translated means in the original simply 'human.' As we speak of human nature, human life, so the Apostle tells the Corinthians, 'There hath no temptation taken you but such as is human.' Suppose the Corinthians, impatient of the Apostle's exactions, should in their ill-humour express themselves thus: 'We should require to

be angels to live as he demands!' 'No,' Paul would answer; 'I do not ask of you superhuman sacrifices in the name of your Christian profession. Your faith has not put you into a situation which a weak man cannot bear; but God is faithful, and He measures the temptation according to the amount of strength.'

Taking the first part of the verse, then, by itself, we may view temptation in the following aspects:—

- I. Temptation that is to be avoided.
- II. Temptation that is inevitable.
- III. Temptation that is necessary.
- IV. Temptation that is to be conquered.

I.

TEMPTATION THAT IS TO BE AVOIDED.

1. St. Paul warned the Corinthian Christians not to calculate too much upon their strength or safety. According to his teaching, we have no right to rush unnecessarily into circumstances which increase the temptations of life. If in the performance of our duty, if in deliberately obeying Jesus Christ, we come into contact with temptation, be it so. He whom we obey will sustain us. But if, merely for the sake of pleasure or the satisfaction of our own will, to say nothing of passion, we come into contact with temptation, we have no right to expect in such circumstances the aid of Christ. His sustaining grace is promised us only in the path of duty, in the way of His commandments. 'Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.'

¶ A ship was one day sailing through the Straits of Magellan, away to the south of South America. The passage through the Straits is very dangerous, because there are so many rocks, and if a storm comes or darkness falls, a ship may be wrecked. Just as the ship was entering, it was hailed by another, which signalled, 'Will . . . you . . . let . . . us . . . keep . . . you . . . company . . . going . . . through . . . the . . . Straits?' But the captain of the first ship was surly, and replied, 'If . . . you . . . do . . . not . . . know . . . the . . . way . . . out . . . you . . . have . . . no . . . business . . . to . . . go . . . in.'¹

¶ A converted drunkard was returning from his work on a Saturday afternoon, and had to pass seventeen public-houses. At each the craving for drink came back; after passing several he was at last yielding and turning into one. At the threshold he seemed to see the form of the lady who had

¹ W. V. Robinson.

been the means of leading him to his Saviour, and he seemed to hear her voice saying, 'If you go in it will be over my heart.' He turned, and, to the surprise of the passers-by, ran as fast as he could to his own home. From three o'clock till midnight he was on his knees, wrestling with the temptation, until the assurance of victory came; and he never felt the craving again. When he told the tale, he had been for many years a respected member of a Christian Church.²

2. 'Lead us not into temptation,' our Lord taught us to pray. That petition in the prayer which our Lord taught His disciples to pray is prompted by a recognition of human frailty and weakness. Our Lord knew how easy it was for the strongest to fall; how Peter the rock may become a blasphemer; how an enthusiast like John Mark may turn coward; how a zealous and hearty worker like Demas may succumb to the world's seduction. And, realizing the terrible power of temptation and the weakness of the human heart, He taught His disciples of every age to pray, and to pray it every day of their lives, this prayer—'Lead us not into temptation.' The truly brave man is not the man who laughs at temptation, but the man who is brave enough to recognize his own weakness and be afraid of it. The truly wise man is not the man who is always trying to see how near he can come to the edge of a precipice without falling over, but the man who keeps as far away from the edge as he can. And, in exactly the same way, the truly brave man is the man who fears temptation and gives it a wide berth.

¶ We want above everything else a baptism of 'godly fear.' We want courage enough to be able to say, when invited to do this or that, 'I cannot—I am afraid.' Mr. Fearing, in John Bunyan's allegory, reached the Celestial City in safety; but the last view we have of Presumption is in that valley but a little beyond Interpreter's House, where he lies fast asleep and with fetters on his heels.³

3. There is a danger of trifling with sin, and of letting our thoughts play round it till it comes to lose its guilty character. There is a danger, also, of failing in heart when the struggle is long, and of reconciling ourselves to defeat as something inevitable. Too often this springs from a secret love of what we pretend to avoid, or from being but half resolved to surmount the obstacle that stands in our way. We do not venture to taste the forbidden fruit, but we are very unwilling to forgo the possibility of its enjoyment, or the pleasure of keeping it within our reach. Few Christians indeed have intended to transgress, compared with the number

² Alfred E. Garvie.

³ J. D. Jones.

of those who meant only to tread upon dangerous ground. But it is perilous to try how closely we can come to the line that separates us from actual transgression without stepping to the other side. Rather let us turn our eyes in the opposite direction, and see how far we can put ourselves from the region of danger. For if no temptation that emerges in the pathway of duty is to be fearfully shrunk from, lest duty itself be sacrificed in consequence, yet there are, so to speak, standing temptations which are to be carefully shunned, as one would flee from a fever-haunted swamp or a plague-stricken city.

¶ I believe there have been men who have ridden a long way to avoid a rencontre, and then galloped hastily back lest they should miss it. It is the favourite stratagem of our passions to sham a retreat, and to turn sharp round upon us at the moment we have made up our minds that the day is our own.¹

II.

TEMPTATION THAT IS INEVITABLE.

1. Temptation is the normal condition of mankind; it reaches men in palaces, it reaches men in cottages, it reaches the educated in one form and the untaught in another, it reaches men who are in the stern excitements of the world, and it reaches men in solitude. And so Christ Himself when He came to share the common condition of human life was sharply and severely tempted to sin. We have, then, to take it for granted that this is one of the elements inseparable from our condition in this present life. We must not resent the presence of temptation; we should not be surprised that we are met continually with strong inducements to turn aside from the Diviner forms of life and positively to transgress God's commandments. We must not be at all astonished, we must not be at all inclined to complain if we find real difficulties in the way of doing right. Let us start with accepting this, let us remember that we are never likely to escape from it.

¶ To avoid an occasion for our virtues is a worse degree of failure than to push forward pluckily and make a fall. It is lawful to pray God that we be not led into temptation; but not lawful to skulk from those that come to us.²

¶ Ugly and deformed people have great need of unusual virtues, because they are likely to be extremely uncomfortable without them: but the theory that unusual virtues spring by a direct consequence out of personal disadvantages,

as animals get thicker wool in severe climates, is perhaps a little overstrained. The temptations of beauty are much dwelt upon, but I fancy they only bear the same relation to those of ugliness as the temptation to excess at a feast, where the delights are varied for eye and ear as well as palate, bears to the temptations that assail the desperation of hunger. Does not the Hunger-Tower stand as the type of the utmost trial to what is human in us?³

¶ In 1630 the plague swept away one-half of the Vaudois population, including fifteen of their seventeen pastors. The places of these were supplied from Geneva and Dauphny, and the whole Vaudois people learned French in order to follow their services. More than once their number fell, by unremitting persecution, from the normal standard of twenty-five thousand to about four thousand. In 1686 the Duke of Savoy ordered the three thousand that remained to give up their faith or leave the country. Refusing, they fought the French and Piedmontese armies till only eighty of their fighting men remained alive or uncaptured, when they gave up, and were sent in a body to Switzerland. But in 1689, encouraged by William of Orange and led by one of their pastor-captains, between eight hundred and nine hundred of them returned to conquer their old homes again. They fought their way to Bobi, reduced to four hundred men in the first half-year, and met every force sent against them; until at last the Duke of Savoy, giving up his alliance with that abomination of desolation, Louis XIV., restored them to comparative freedom—since which time they have increased and multiplied in their barren Alpine valleys to this day. What are our woes and sufferance compared with these? Does not the recital of such a fight so obstinately waged against such odds fill us with resolution against *our* petty powers of darkness,—machine politicians, spoilsmen, and the rest? Life is worth living, no matter what it bring, if only such combats may be carried to successful terminations and one's heel set on the tyrant's throat.⁴

2. Because temptation is 'common to man,' it is not therefore to be taken lightly. It may be a very bad thing, a very whisper of the Evil One, to tell one who is troubled about himself, about his own moral failures, that nearly everybody is in the same position, that nobody is really good, that we are only human, meaning that we are less than human, that therefore we are not to expect very much of ourselves. There is no more insidious snare, nor one which more often succeeds with us, than the suggestion when, for some reason, we are profoundly disappointed in ourselves, and disheartened and angry with ourselves—the suggestion that we are making a mountain of a molehill, that everybody beneath the surface is alike—alike in having such feelings and alike in being unfaithful to them. When St. Paul said, 'There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to

¹ R. L. Stevenson, *Virginibus Puerisque*.

² George Eliot, *Adam Bede*.

³ George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss*.

⁴ W. James, *The Will to Believe*, 48.

man,' he did *not* mean that it is quite hopeless for any of us to rise above it, that we never can be anything but a poor set from the moral point of view. He did *not* mean that because temptation is universal, therefore we should submit to it, and take no course for our safety; that because it is universal, therefore it is not serious. He meant the very contradiction of all that.

¶ A man is always exposed to temptation, whether he be a Christian or not. There is no room in religion on earth for the featureless dullness of an untempted life. This is just to say that in the life of grace a man is always free. On the other hand, no man has a monopoly of specially urgent temptations. Every man's special temptation has such an insistent onset, and presses itself upon him with so forceful an impetus, that he feels as if he had been selected for singularly grievous assault, and he is ready to complain and cry out and half to yield. But there hath really no temptation taken him but such as is *common to men*. He is not alone. Around him are the hosts of the tempted in all stages of victory, delusion, and defeat; and the truth probably is that the pressure of the moral atmosphere is as nearly constant among them all as the pressure of the physical atmosphere.¹

3. It is some comfort to know that temptation is 'common to man.' It keeps us from despair; it may keep us from that self-contempt which Shelley speaks of as 'bitterer to drink than blood.' The chief burden of temptation, perhaps, is its loneliness, the sense of isolation that it gives. The effect of such an impression is to drive the soul in upon itself at the very time when it is most essential that it should be drawn out of itself; it makes us brood in secrecy and self-contempt; it prevents our confiding in any one lest we be misunderstood and call down nothing but a reprimand upon ourselves; and so we take pains to conceal our own private torment, and carry our burden about in silence and solitude. There is a way of escape from that intolerable sense of loneliness, and it comes to us with the discovery that ours is no singular trial, no unique distress, no temptation that cuts us off from our fellows, but rather one which unites us with them, giving us a sense of comradeship in the stern conflict. 'There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man:' its very humanness is a relief; the very fact that it is common helps us to escape from the sense of isolation, which is itself a source of weakness, and renders us liable to more insidious assault.

¹ G. A. Johnston Ross in *Youth and Life*, 171.

¶ There are men and women all around us who have got to meet the same temptations that we are meeting. Will it help them, or not, to know that we have met them and conquered them? Will it help us, or not, to know that if we conquer the temptation, we conquer not for ourselves only, but for them?²

Shall I tell you about the battle
That was fought in the world to-day,
Where thousands went down like heroes
To death in the pitiless fray?

You may know some one of the wounded
And some of the fallen when
I tell you this wonderful battle
Was fought in the hearts of men.

Not with the sounding of trumpets
Nor clashing of sabres drawn,
But silent as twilight in autumn,
All day the fight went on.

And over against temptation
A mother's prayers were cast
That had come by silent marches
From the lullaby land of the past.

And over the field of battle
The force of ambition went,
Driving before it, like arrows,
The children of sweet content.

And memories odd and olden
Came up through the dust of years,
And hopes that were glad and golden
Were met by a host of fears.

And the hearts grew worn and weary,
And said, 'Oh, can it be
That I am worth a struggle
You are making to-day for me?'

For the heart itself was the trophy
And prize of this wavering fight!
And tell me, O gentle reader,
Who camps on the field to-night?

III.

TEMPTATION THAT IS NECESSARY.

To 'tempt' means to try, and temptation is a trial. All sorts of machines with which it is proposed to accomplish important work are tried or tested by those who make them. Nature does the same to plants and animals, the weakest often perishing in the trial; the fittest or strongest surviving. There is, however, an important difference between the testing of a machine such as a cannon, a steam-engine, or the like, and the trial of that which has life. If a gun is tested by having a

² Phillips Brooks.

heavy charge fired from it, though it may bear the strain triumphantly, it is nevertheless a little less strong than it was before it endured the test. In other words, the testing or trying of a machine is not intended to strengthen it, but only to try it. On the other hand, a tree standing exposed to the winds of heaven, if it is not blown down by them, is made stronger instead of weaker by having to resist their violence. So, too, a certain amount of exposure to hardship toughens the fibre of animals, and enables them to endure more cold, or heat, or fatigue, than they could have endured if they had lived a life of ease and luxury. So with the soul of man; it must be tried.

1. By speaking of 'such temptation as is common to man,' St. Paul tells us that temptation is God's appointed discipline. Though we may not court temptation, yet it is God's will that we should be subject to it, that we should learn to bear it, to resist it, to escape from it uninjured. For only so can our principles be tested, the sincerity of our faith proved, only thus can we know whether it will enable us to 'overcome the world.' We must not therefore complain if we are assailed by temptation, any more than a soldier must complain if he is sent into danger.

2. Temptation—what is its simple intention? It is intended as a call to the soul when in danger of yielding to inferior impulses which for the moment are strong, to listen to the voice of God, though for the moment God takes no measures to enforce His authority. The choice lies before us—whether we will fall in with the custom of men or stand fast by the Divine law; and we are free to make our own choice whether we will yield to the baser instincts of our nature or whether we will be loyal to those purposes which have been formed within ourselves when we have been haunted by an ideal perfection and have seen the face of God. This is the virtue, this is the characteristic virtue, to be disciplined here, and when that discipline is complete, God will receive us home.

There's a strife we all must wage,
From life's entrance to its close;
Blest the bold who dare engage,
Woe for him who seeks repose.

Honoured they who firmly stand
While the conflict presses round,
Right's high banner in their hand,
In its service faithful found.

What our foes? Each thought impure;
Passions fierce that tear the soul;
Every ill that we can cure;
Every crime we can control;—

Every suffering which our hand
Can with soothing care assuage;
Every evil of our land;
Every error of our age.¹

3. There is another reason why temptation is necessary. In his letter to the Ephesians (3⁹⁻¹⁰) the Apostle says God is bringing to light 'what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: *to the intent* that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God.' That is a conception that should fill us with courage—the principalities and the powers are watching with intense interest the conflict that is going on in that home, on board that vessel, in that house of business, on that Exchange—the struggle between the forces of evil and the forces of good. This world is the theatre, the arena where 'the principalities and powers' are learning something every day which they cannot learn in the upper world. Lessons which they could never learn among their peers they are learning through our lives, and from our hours of temptation. 'The manifold wisdom of God' is shown in the Church of God, and we should remember in our hours of temptation that the spirits of immortality are brooding over us, that they will rejoice in our strength and fidelity, and be disappointed in our sinful yielding to that which is base and evil.

Was the trial sore?
Temptation sharp? Thank God a second time!
Why comes Temptation but for man to meet and master
And make crouch beneath his feet,
And so be pedestalled in triumph.²

IV.

TEMPTATION THAT IS TO BE CONQUERED.

'There hath no temptation taken you but *such as man can bear.*' This does not imply that we shall always overcome whenever we are tempted, but it does imply that we always may. 'It is one thing to be tempted, it is another thing to fall.' That the devil rings my bell, that he knocks at my door, that he whispers insidious enticements

¹ S. G. Bulfinch.

² Browning.

through the keyhole, all counts for nothing; everything depends on whether I lift the latch and let him in.

1. Every temptation *can* be overcome. We must make that belief our very own if we are to emerge victorious out of our conflicts with temptation. To those who are down, who are dead beat, who are almost tempted to give up, we must say again and again, every temptation—without any exception—every temptation is to be overcome.

¶ Henry Drummond tells, in one of his books, a story about the Duke of Wellington in the Peninsular campaign. He was trying to get his troops into a place of safety, and between him and their safety ran a deep and rapid river. Neither bridge nor ford could be seen, and it was a hostile country; he sent his men up and down the side of the river to hunt for a bridge or a ford, and they found none. So the Duke himself went to the top of a hill and looked through his telescope, and far away down the riverside he saw a town, and on the other side of the river he saw a straggling village, and he said, 'Now, between that town and that village there must be a bridge or a ford.' So when night came, he sent his soldiers in the silence and darkness to see, and they brought back the report: 'Yes, there is a ford.' He passed his army over that ford that night, and next morning they were all in the land of safety. The danger besetting us may be manifold and formidable, but remember this—*there is always a ford!*¹

¶ The firm resistance of temptation to every form and degree of injustice and unfairness in the practical affairs of life is after all a greater thing than the clearest apprehension of a great truth or the completest victory over a haunting doubt.²

2. If we cast our eyes back over the centuries, have we not ample evidence that every temptation can be overcome? Is it possible to live a holy life amid unclean surroundings? Yes, it is. For we read of some even in wicked Sardis who did not defile their garments; and we read of saints even in Cæsar's vile and unspeakable household. Even amid the rank corruption and unbridled profligacy of Charles II.'s court, Mary Godolphin grew up like a pure white flower. Is it possible to stand one's ground as a Christian in face of adverse circumstances? Yes, it is. For we read of one Antipas, who was Christ's faithful witness even in Pergamum where Satan's seat was, and we read of the noble army of martyrs—Polycarp, Ignatius, Blandina, Felicitas, Ponticus, and others who 'braved the tyrant's brandished steel, the lion's gory mane,' but who held fast their confession; and of others who

had trials of mockings and scourgings; yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment (of whom the world was not worthy), but who never denied the Name.

3. This is St. Paul's encouragement to us. We need not fall. Our temptations are well within the scope of our power to struggle with. When a ship is going down in the angry sea, is it any comfort to the drowning, struggling mariner to think that all his comrades also—all whom he has honoured, all whom he has loved—are buffeting hopelessly with those overwhelming waves? But how if we could tell him that though *some* may perish, all might escape? How if we pointed him to the life-buoy floating near him on the billows,—to the life-boat straining towards him through the storm?

¶ If we would kindle a soldier into daring, would we point out to him his spiritless, defeated comrades,—the victorious, insulting foe? Would some French general—a Chanzy or a Bourbaki—cheer on the despairing armies of France in the hour of battle by telling them of the retreat from Moscow or the rout at Waterloo? Would he not rather fire their memories with the heroisms of Valmy and of Marengo, with the glories of Jena and of Austerlitz? Would he not tell them how, exhausted by drought and weariness, their glorious fathers had shattered the magnificent chivalry of the Mamelukes at the Pyramids, and how, ragged and shoeless, yet irresistible, they had swept through the storm of fire to hurl the German artillery from the Bridge of Lodi? Even so, in a world of sin and sorrow, in a moral world which has its own disgraces and defeats, St. Paul would point us not to those sad pale multitudes of wasted and ruined lives—not to the retributive diseases of desecrated bodies, or the gnawing Nemesis of guilty souls—not to the chain of the felon, or the cell of the lunatic, or the grave of the suicide—ah no! these with an infinite pity, these with a faith that transcends and tramples on the petty Pharisaisms of dogma, these, sorrowing but not scorning, compassionating but not condemning, we leave with infinite tenderness in the tender hands of God,—but no! he points us to the glorious company of the high and noble, of the pure and holy; to the white-robed, palm-bearing procession of happy human souls; to those who have fought and conquered, to those who have wrestled and overcome!³

4. How, then, shall we meet temptation? Successful resistance of temptation seems to consist of three fairly distinct movements of the mind.

(1) *The Method of Flight.*—The first step in successful resistance is obviously, and always, of the nature of a recoil. The mind starts back from the evil suggestion at least so far as to plant itself more firmly down in the attitude of resistance. I say the *mind* does, for of course the movement begins there. But the honesty of the whole warfare

¹ J. D. Jones.

² *The Life of R. W. Dale of Birmingham*, 143.

³ F. W. Farrar.

is involved in the degree of sincerity with which the recoil is, if I may so say, carried out by the whole man. When it is genuine it means the resolute standing back from the occasion of sin, and, as far as possible, from the thought of it. There is an obligation upon the tempted man to ignore the occasion of sin, to reckon himself indeed *dead* unto sin. He must not dwell upon it in thought, or talk much of it. All forms of morbid experience, physical and moral, run to garrulousness. Some of us have been nearly lost because we talk so much about sin—talk not only to others, but to ourselves. But we are to be dead unto sin. *Now the dead do not talk.* Oh, there are Christians enough who babble of their weaknesses, and their struggles, and the fierceness of their temptations! Let us be honest men, and be silent: resolutely endeavouring to exclude what allures to evil even from our thoughts.

(2) *The Method of Recollection of God.*—The second step in resistance is obviously the reaching for and grasping one's weapon. First the mind recoils, next the mind recalls. Opposite the alluring suggestion it places the steadying word from the mind of God. 'Shall I say, Father, save me from this hour?' said our tempted Lord. But His recoiling mind recalls, 'For this cause came I unto this hour.' Now, what shall *we* recall? For us all the mind of God is gathered up in Christ; the full glory of that mind shines in the face of Christ. In a moment we may recall the loving-kindness, holy purity, strong sympathy, and present grace of the Supreme. For the Christian man, for the man who believes in the

ubiquitous, ready presence of 'grace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,' the claim of goodness is instantaneously recalled, the help of Divine strength instantaneously summoned, by one single gesture of the spirit.

(3) *The Method of Preoccupation.*—But now this positing over against the temptation of the counter-claim of goodness must be a genuine act. Beginning in the mind, it must go out into the life. And carried out into the life, following God's thoughts thither—*they* never stay in the realm of ideas, but are all deeds and programmes—this recollection of God becomes preoccupation with His interests. To follow after God's thought, to pursue it through the mazes of human interests and enterprises, to be absorbed in the desire for its realization, to chase it for a clearer sight of it, to work for its translation into redeemed lives of men and redeemed nature—that is the last part of successful resistance of temptation. It is the hardest bit of all, for it means thinking of others' needs as much as of one's own. Now all of us tend to be egocentric in our view of life, but when a man is hard beset by temptation his egoism is nearly egomania. It is hard to escape into interest in others' lives. Yet see how it is in sorrow: reeling under the blow, it is a man's instinct to retreat within himself, nursing his grief alone. Yet it is notorious that for real healing he must come forth and step out into sympathy with others, and in that kindly preoccupation discover the secret of a quiet spirit. So it is in temptation: the field of victory is the field of battle for others' good.¹

¹ G. A. Johnston Ross in *Youth and Life*, 175.

Plato to the Preacher.

A GREEK PHILOSOPHER ON THE ART OF PUBLIC SPEAKING.

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IT is not to a Greek philosopher that we should instinctively turn to find helpful suggestions on the art of public speaking, yet Plato has some delightfully suggestive things to say about it. After all, this is not so very surprising; for, philosopher though he be, and first master of the art of written prose, Plato was, nevertheless, more characteristically a teacher than a writer, and as a teacher he

ever valued the spoken above the written word. Curiously enough (from our modern standpoint) he compares a book to thoughts written in water, while the spoken word is like a seed sown in the ground; there is vitality in it, and it is not unfruitful. 'Only in principles of justice and goodness and nobility taught and communicated orally for the sake of instruction, and *graven on the soul*, which