

Two Brothers' Notes of Sermons preached by S. A. Tipple.

I.

14th April, 1901. Text: Romans xv. 13—"The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope."

Readings: Job xi. 14-18; Psalms xliii. 1-4; lxiii. 1-3; lxxi. 8-12, 14-19; Lam. iii. 21-26; Jer. xxix. 10, 11; Rom. v. 1-5; viii. 18-22; Eph. i. 18-21; 1 Peter i. 3-9; 1 John iii. 1-3; Heb. vi. 18, 19.

I dare say, I doubt not, I am putting more into the text than Paul meant. It was thrown off as he caught up the word "hope." The utterances of genius always carry new meaning for every one who reads them.

It suggests to me that joy and peace are necessary to hope. We must be sunny ourselves before we can find sunshine without us. Much depends, for example, on the frame of mind with which we rise in the morning. For the cheerful, sanguine spirit the wilderness and the solitary place shall be made glad. . . .

"The God of hope" suggests that hope is the secret of the universe; evolution its working out—from the dragons in the slime, through maternity, the dawn of the spiritual, up to the heights of the present. Not the expression of a blind force. Everything proclaims divine anticipations.

"In believing"—whether in the soul of goodness in things evil, or the possible fine uses of adversity. . . . Not in things but in thinkings do we find joy and peace.

"Hope." We can say of everything "it is good"—but there is better yet to be.

* * * *

22nd June, 1902. Text: Luke xxi. 29-31—"And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; when they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand."

The old Hebrew bards and prophets were close observers of Nature, and many of the finest psalms owe their beauty and impressiveness to the way in which they are imbued with this spirit of awe and adoration at the works of Nature. Jesus

Christ, their transcendent follower, excelled even them in the close attention He gave to natural phenomena, and in the love He bore to Nature herself.

The ancient prophets were impressed by the greatness and majesty of Nature. But to Christ she appeared in a different aspect. Nature to Him was a mystical similitude of a super-sensuous reality, a . . . parable of human life. She was intimately related to humanity. She touched and reflected human life at many points.

Since Him, none, perhaps, have had this feeling so nearly as the modern poet Wordsworth. . . .

This devotion and attention to the works of Nature is entirely absent from the writings of the Apostles. The reason for this we may take to be their belief in the immediate return of their Master and their consequent concentration on their work of spreading the Gospel.

False deductions often drawn—as when a doctor diagnoses a disease that is not present, or mistakenly foretells recovery; as we in England this year, beholding the reddening tops of the elm-trees, the expanding buds of the horse-chestnut, the orange green of the poplars, said to one another, “Summer is coming”; but a spell of cold and wet weather intervened and delayed the eagerly-anticipated season until the burst of sunshine but a few days since; as Christ Himself would appear to have been deceived for a moment when, on being told of certain Greeks who were desirous of seeing Him, He exclaimed, “The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified.”

It has been said that progress takes place in three ways: by force of moral impulse, by self-seeking, and by the natural course of events; and it is the part of wisdom to allow the latter an unimpeded and undisturbed path and to stand on one side with folded arms. Too much stress can scarcely be laid on the importance of this principle of non-interference, lest with fussy impatience, in an endeavour to hasten a movement in progress, we deflect and wreck it.

But on the other hand, how often has the Kingdom of Heaven been missed, as it were, by a hair's-breadth—when a man is arrested, impressed, in a quiet hour in church maybe, or by some printed page, and he has gone back to his work and the vision has faded away. The Kingdom of Heaven—when here and there a small group of men in an obscure place are working patiently for the gradual uplifting of the common ideal—when the lonely thinker lights upon a new truth, though his announcement of it be disregarded by those around him, occupied, as they think, with more important things. . . .

6th July, 1902. Text: Revelation xxi. 24—"And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it."

John's dream of an ideal city—just as the Greek philosopher, Plato, dreamed of an Ideal Republic.

Two points to notice: (1) The ideal city of the apocalypse is not represented as undergoing, or having passed through, a period of growth, but as being complete—coming down from heaven in a perfect, finished condition. If it be true that whatever of worth wrought by human effort is the result of accumulated trifles, the product of gradual processes, the summit of a series of steps, it is also in a sense true that whatever *is* existed or ever it began to be; the promise of the thing to be is fully fashioned ere its fulfilment is bodied forth. (2) It came down from a new heaven to a *new earth*—as though a renovated environment were necessary for the perfect setting forth of the lustre of the city.

1. "The nations shall walk in the light of it." It is true that Christianity has not been the only factor in the evolution of character and morals; but supposing everything which owed its existence to the direct or indirect influence of Christianity were eliminated, how little indeed would remain of a purifying and elevating quality.

Great men towering in lofty isolation above their fellows seem to do little to advance the age. They seem at so hopeless a distance; their ideals transcend the imagination of common men, just as their character and deeds are of such a quality that ordinary lives seem dark and insignificant in comparison. But they have a wide influence if not seemingly a strong one. They exert a leavening force while they live, and their memory lives and works after them. Men are deterred from evil deeds, are lifted, even if but for a moment, to a higher level, are rendered *somewhat* less coarse, and disposed to be slightly more generous and forbearing.

The influence of one member of a group or family in modifying in some degree the lives of the others.

2. "The kings of the earth bring their glory and honour into it." Christianity has been fed by many streams, many from unlikely and even apparently anti-Christian sources. It is a river issuing indeed from the throne of God, but modified, moulded, coloured by very many tributaries. But a short distance from its source it encountered the stream of Hellenic ideals and philosophy, and much of its subsequent form and character was owing thereto. The laws of Rome, the art of Greece, contributed their quotas. The man of peace and the bloody babel

of war have alike helped towards the coming of the time when war shall have ceased. The service rendered by science. It has revealed the immutability of Natural Law, sublime and infinite. It has cleared away myth and legend, changed our point of view in many things, enabled us to get deeper down towards the rock, has made the Bible a new and living book.

Art, Beauty.

Not prophet and preacher only, but musician, writer, painter, poet, yes, even "the idle singer of an empty day" are—in Shelley's line—

[Quotation missing.]

NOTE.—Mr. Tipple preached again from this text in February, 1905. The *Sunday School Chronicle* for the 23rd of that month reported as follows: "John, said the preacher, thought of the Divine city as a heavenly settlement amongst men. The colony of holy souls sent forth no missionaries. They simply lived before the world until the pure radiance of their conduct awoke to shame and a consciousness of higher things those who walked in its light. So a new earth was gradually created. This was the method of Jesus. By the saving of individual souls and their leavening effects on the mass, society was to be redeemed. The Christian ethic shone like a city of God before the nations, who until now had walked *in* its light rather than *by* it. During the last thirty years six so-called Christian nations had spent £8,000 millions in war! But slow as the world was in applying Christ's principles to life, we were to continue bringing into that ideal city the best wealth we had. Each must perfect himself for the good of all until a harmony was established between individualism and the claims of society. Then would the dream of Christ be fulfilled. This is the bare outline of a great and inspiring sermon."

* * * * *

13th July, 1902. Text: 1 Peter i. 12—"Which things the angels desire to look into."

It is very noticeable throughout the various books of the Bible that the lives of men, the actions of the human kind, are represented as being displayed in the presence of mysterious beings of a different nature, belonging to a higher order.

Why should the angels desire to look into the things of men? Was it from ennui, weary of a monotonous, uneventful existence with its perpetual placidity?

There is a disreputable curiosity . . . and there is a curiosity that should be cultivated. Let us be more curious towards those about us, seek to know and understand them better—not by talking politics, or discussing the state of people's health or pockets—no, no, that's what they do at the club, at dinner parties and afternoon tea—but let us exchange ideas and sentiments, open our hearts to one another, try to discover the deepest and best in our fellows.

Some things the angels would not understand, their prying

would be futile . . . for who knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of man that is in him?

* * * *

20th July, 1902. Text: 2 Timothy i. 14—"That good thing which was committed unto thee, keep."

So writes Paul the aged to the young bishop of Ephesus. He might have urged him to press on to further attainment, as indeed he does in other parts of his letters; but here he counsels him to keep and preserve that which he already has.

The "good thing" was probably the words and sentiments he had learned from Paul, of which verse 12 was a "sample" or "pattern." ("Form of sound words," a bad rendering.)

In spiritual things, as in material things, we must e'en hoard if we would progress, must retain if we would attain.

Things to be kept:—

Health a possession of great value. Youths and maidens endowed with strong and vigorous frames, religiously keep and cultivate your bodily equipment, not squandering it by careless indifference or foolish indulgence in habits which can only be indulged in at heavy cost, or, what is worse, distorting and maiming it in servile obedience to the dictates of fashion.

Laws which serve us according as we concur and live in harmony with them. Men rail at Nature, not seeing that it is their own rough-hewing, and not Nature, that is to blame.

Some things we cannot keep, are not meant to keep. Our moments of rarest vision, when only the ideal is real.

A Westmorland girl at the corner of Wood Street, Cheapside, hears a thrush singing in its cage.

'Tis a note of enchantment; what ails her? She sees
A mountain ascending, a vision of trees;
Bright volumes of vapour through Lothbury glide,
And a river flows on through the vale of Cheapside.

Green pastures she views in the midst of the dale
Down which she so often has tripp'd with her pail;
And a single small cottage, a nest like a dove's,
The one only dwelling on earth that she loves.

She looks, and her heart is in heaven; but they fade,
The mist and the river, the hill and the shade;
The stream will not flow, and the hill will not rise,
And the colours have all pass'd away from her eyes!

Wordsworth: *Reverie of Poor Susan*.

The visions fade away, and leave only imperceptible traces in the emotions and the character.

Some things are best kept by being withheld.

Recreations, if we would receive the highest benefit from them, must not be over-indulged in; we must practise moderation and self-denial.

The impression made by a book read years ago, the memory of a delightful holiday, these are sometimes to be best kept by denying ourselves a repetition of the experience. If we would retain we must abstain.

And when we came to Clovenford,
Then said my "*winsome Marrow*,"
"Whate'er betide, we'll turn aside,
And see the Braes of Yarrow."

"Oh! green," said I, "are Yarrow's Holms,
And sweet is Yarrow's flowing!
Fair hangs the apple frae the rock,
But we will leave it growing,
O'er hilly path, and open Strath,
We'll wander Scotland thorough;
But, though so near, we will not turn
Into the dale of Yarrow.

"Let beeves and home-bred kine partake
The sweets of Burn-mill meadow;
The swan on still St. Mary's Lake
Float double, swan and shadow!
We will not see them; will not go,
To-day nor yet to-morrow;
Enough if in our hearts we know
There's such a place as Yarrow.

"Be Yarrow stream unseen, unknown!
It must, or we shall rue it:
We have a vision of our own;
Ah! why should we undo it?
The treasured dreams of times long past,
We'll keep them, winsome marrow!
For when we're there, although 'tis fair,
'Twill be another Yarrow!"

Wordsworth: *Yarrow Revisited*.

Tennyson sings of "the faith that comes of self-control"—and he might have added, "is upheld and kept alive by self-control."

Creeds and litanies antiquated in expression, the words no longer corresponding to the received truth. They need clothing anew.

Men lose their old faiths, or very many of them, but it is only to find others fast-rooted in the depths of their being.

Nothing is capable of working more ill than a religion

founded on creeds worn-out, old and effete, and which is unable to shake itself free from their cramping and deadening influence.

* * * *

27th July, 1902. A meditation on the Twenty-Third Psalm.

Tradition has assigned the authorship to David, and the shepherd-king seems, indeed, the fittest character to have written it, although the precise form in which we have it may not have been finally given until a later date.

At what period in his life did he write it?

Suppose it to have been in his youth.

David tending his flock among the hills and valleys and glens. All round was the tumult and turbulence of conflict, and his own brothers were at the war. Would he not have longed to leave his own quiet existence and share in the activities and excitements? There he would have the chance to distinguish himself, to display his courage and exhibit his fortitude.

The psalm is an expression of fortitude.

He believes that his lot is appointed for him by God and is for the best. He foresees the possibility of trials ahead, of the valley of the shadow, but he has no doubts of himself. He will carry himself bravely and will not falter. So are we all apt to plan for ourselves an easy supremacy, a well-fought battle, leading to victory. It is so easy to be confident beforehand, when we are strong and healthy. But the battle turns out to be longer than we had looked for, and we do not behave as we intended, and victory seems beyond our reach. And so David on the throne found, and in the hour of trial he did not always acquit himself as well as he had anticipated, but sometimes stumbled and fell.

The value of the quiet and retired periods of life.

But, after all, to my mind this is not the psalm of a young man.

Youth can believe earnestly and acknowledge heartily, but is not given to *leaning*. The psalm seems rather to have been written by one who had passed through trials and conflicts and had learned in the school of experience the lesson of trusting.

But, someone will say, is not this psalm too passive and peaceable to have been written by David? David, the man who left his father's home, pushed his way before the king of Israel, and became the victorious champion who slew Goliath! David, the leader of a band of outlaws, successfully eluding those who hunted for his life and ultimately making his way to the throne!

But it is a mistake to suppose that strong and hardy natures

are incapable of quiet and tender emotions. Rather are they likely to have them more finely developed.

The men of activity, constantly engaged in strife and contention, know not only the glory and triumph of victory but also the pain of defeat.

Those who are actively engaged in the battle of life taste not only the sweets of success but also the pangs of failure, the anguish of blighted hopes and frustrated plans, and by this schooling their natures are chastened and tempered to a finer sensibility.

E. J. ROBERTS.

(to be concluded.)

REGISTERS of births, marriages, deaths, were often kept by our churches; occasionally in special books, sometimes in minute-books. A change of law in 1753 obliged all marriages to be celebrated and registered at the parish churches. A legal decision gave a great impulse to the local registration of births and deaths, and many churches opened new books about 1780. Fifty years later it was seen that the Commonwealth plan of a State registration was good. So, in 1837, this was instituted afresh; and ever since, Somerset House has been a repository for such documents. Churches and Societies were invited to place there all their records of this nature; and as these often had additional information, it is a fine place for denominational research. The Registrar-General is celebrating the centenary of his office by an Exhibition of some of these interesting books; and the catalogue is prepared with expert advice. It is to be open for the last week in June and part of July: notice will probably be given by him in denominational papers.

W.T.W.