

Gains and Losses.

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I.

LIFE familiarizes us with the laws which underlie gains and losses. Everyone is either gaining or losing. One is winning distinction in scholarship, another a position in the political or social sphere; another is discovering some secret which Nature has locked within her bosom, and which will bring him wide and lasting reputation. And, on the other hand, others are losing—losing friends, losing money, health, reputation, and everything. Now, whilst it is true that there are exceptions, yet, on the whole, gains and losses are governed by a law which we recognize to be just and fair. Diligence, self-sacrifice, and industry, are in the main responsible for the gains; laziness, indulgence, and selfishness, for the losses. Successes are sometimes long in coming, and ruin does not overtake all at once; but in the long-run the industrious are rewarded and the idlers fail. The man who, like Edison, will work for eighteen hours out of the twenty-four is sure to win the secret he labours to discover; the self-indulgent trifler with life, like Tito Melema, is certain to be engulfed in the pit which his selfishness has made for him. All this is everywhere acknowledged, and there is no necessity to labour the point any further.

But, again, not only does life point out a law by which the brave deserve the fair and God helps those who help themselves, but, further, it emphasizes the fact that the results then attained are out of all proportion to the pains taken. When the painter is asked how he produced the great picture on which the eyes of the world are fastened, he may reply, "I mixed my paints with pains"; but he will probably also add that he cannot tell how his skill and insight were obtained. The hours he has spent with his pencil, the days he has given to careful

observation, when nothing was done but a few sketches, seem wholly inadequate as causes for that which to him is a perpetual joy. The scholar's renown, the inventor's discoveries, appear to them more as gifts than achievements which they won by their own hard work. Indeed, the greater the position won, the less is he who has attained it inclined to put it down to his own merit and work.

And, again, all through the work which wins the prize there runs a law not unlike that which we call justification by faith. It is this, indeed, which distinguishes the successful worker from the mere drudge. The latter looks only to his wage, his penny a day. His work is only a means for obtaining a livelihood; he has no particular faith in it; it gives him no special pleasure; he would leave it to-morrow if some other offered higher salary. He is a drawer of water, a hewer of wood, to the end of his days.

On the other hand, the man who wins, wins because he believes so confidently in the spirit of the task to which he has committed himself. In this he never doubts. He may have hesitations about his own fitness, may often question the accuracy of his own investigations, but he never doubts that, if he plays the game well, the victory will be his; that his faith will be justified he is sure, and it is this confidence that spurs him on. As his friends who desire his company watch his endeavours and his apparently slow progress, they constantly assail him with the question: "*Cui bono?* Why should he be wasting his life on an object which he may never see?" Why lose the opportunities of sport and society in the expectation, which may after all prove vain, of some achievement in art and science? But such temptations are of no avail. His confidence in the law of progress that belongs to all true labour is undaunted. He knows the truth that he seeks to express will prevail, the whole world notwithstanding.

II.

Now, believing as we do that there is but one God, who governs this life and the next, that the association of the two worlds is much closer than we imagine, we should naturally expect that the law that governs progress here will guide it there; that as the lad who passes to the University finds the same discipline and order with which he was familiar at school prevailing in the larger life, so he who passes from the school of life here to the larger life beyond will find, perhaps to his surprise, that the principles he knew here are observed there. The doctrine of rewards and punishments is frequently criticized, because it seems so different from any disciplinary order that we have found here. And yet, looking more closely into what we are told, we find just those features which have been claiming our attention.

We find again and again, not only in the Old, but also in the New Testament, what might be called a doctrine of good works. The good are to be rewarded, the wicked are to be punished. The penny a day is meted out to all alike. No one will be disappointed of his wage. The Judge will be found to be strictly just. Everyone shall receive the things done in his body. Those on the right hand are those who have succoured the needy, fed the hungry, visited the prisoners, relieved the sick, clothed the naked; those on the left are the selfish, the failures, those who found no time for works of mercy. The worker who by his diligence has made ten talents out of five has rule over five cities; whereas the diffident and lazy, who was too cowardly to make a venture, too self-indulgent even to inquire how he might use his power, is condemned to the bondage and darkness he merits.

But with this doctrine of works there runs also quite as plainly, if not more so, the principle of justification by faith. Work as mere work has little value, but work as an expression of faith in eternal purposes receives abundant reward. It is not because the man succours the needy that he finds himself

near the throne of God, but because he does it in the belief that he is helping forward Divine purposes. God is at once the Inspirer and the Recipient of charity; and it is the man who has spiritual insight sufficient to see that suffering and pain are part of God's plan, and that it is his privilege to help God in working it out, that can share God's throne. It may be said, So long as the work is done, what matters how it is done? And yet we have seen before that the spirit of faith in which the worker works matters everything. The world is full of Gibeonites who are doing work without any particular interest in it, and they have their reward, but it is not the reward of the children of the Covenant, who have an enlightened faith in Him who is the Source and Spring of every good work.

III.

But what is this reward? It is strange that so little is generally thought about it. Owing to the severe criticism that "other-worldliness" has received, especially from the hands of George Eliot in her essay of that name, teachers have been shy of speaking of rewards or punishments. In the first days it was not so. Christians recognized quite as fully as we do that virtue has its own reward, that the just live in peace in spite of poverty or persecution; but they also recognized and taught that there was something beyond this—that there were thrones, and powers enabling their occupants to fill them worthily; that they were not only taken to a sphere of wonderful attractiveness, but given a body that would enable them to realize it. The risen body was the climax to life. Till the resurrection of Christ, this climax was confined to the region of thought. The body was felt to be a hindrance to knowledge and happiness; and death, which was always signaled by the separation of body and soul, was looked upon as the door by which the faithful worker would enter into those fuller mysteries of life, which were too spiritual to be realized in the body. The doctrine of the Resurrection made an enormous difference in this respect to those who held it. And they preached it as almost their sole message. Teach-

ing on the immortality of the soul had necessarily been vague and speculative. What could anyone say as to his possible future experiences without speech, hearing, sight, and activity? Could it be certain that we should indeed be the same persons without these things which go to make up the expression of our personality? But here from these new teachers was a very different doctrine: "not unclothed," they said—for they shrank from that, as a man shrinks from going out naked into the cold, raging storm—but "clothed upon" with "a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens . . . that what is mortal may be swallowed up in life." And they would illustrate their thought by the fact of Christ's resurrection (Acts iv. 2): "They proclaimed in Jesus the resurrection from the dead." In His risen body they found the model, the adequate picture, of what resurrection was like. In His case "what is mortal had been swallowed up in life." The old body they had known was still there, to be recognized by its marks; it could be touched and handled—*i.e.*, it was not vaporous or ghostly, as they at first supposed. And yet it was under a new power. The risen Master could do what He pleased with it. That was the wonder! It was as supple to His hand as the clay to the potter. It had always had, indeed, extraordinary powers. After a period of six weeks without food it still retained strength and vitality. By the flashing forth of inner light that overawed, or by some unknown power of concealment, He more than once escaped the designs of those who would murder Him. It overcame the natural power of gravitation and walked upon the water. It was the perpetual instrument of healing, restoration, and strength to others. And there was once seen a prophecy of coming glory. Those who witnessed the Transfiguration, when a glorious light from within—glory from His Person—illuminated the whole outward expression, so that face and clothing were dazzling as the sun, did there see an anticipation of the resurrection. But these were abnormal conditions. Ordinarily His body was like ours—tired, hungry, thirsty, faint with heat, pinched with cold and exposure, a cumbrous instrument

to the Spirit that dwelt within it. Now the link between the normal and the abnormal was the Spirit-power was always within. It was a real temptation to Him to throw Himself from the pinnacle of the Temple, for He knew it could be done without harm; and when men pressed for a sign of His Divine commission He knew of a hundred startling manifestations. But at the Incarnation He limited Himself—"emptied Himself," and, true to its principle, His body was a perpetual source of self-limitation. The resurrection removed these hindrances. The body became the willing servant to the Spirit of the Divine King. What was before exceptional now became normal. The earthen vessel became an instrument of glory and power, and an expression of what resurrection meant.

This, then, was the prize that was offered—that our body of humiliation, with its weariness, pain, hunger, thirst; with its obvious limitations, slower than the bird or fish, weaker than the horse or dog, was to be made like the body of His glory, able to communicate itself here or there in a moment of time, to pass through material obstacles as the bird through the air or the fish through the water, and yet to have those old associations with the world which had been so inestimably precious. Such preaching created widespread curiosity. Even in intellectual Athens men begged St. Paul to give some discourse about it. It ran, of course, counter to the philosopher's hope of being freed from the body, and was combined with the uncomfortable doctrine of repentance; and the natural contempt the Greek had for the Jew did not make it easier to receive. But it won some adherents even in a city whose wisest men and greatest teachers could be mustered against it.

Of course, it was liable to misrepresentation. It was at once said that the Christians taught that the body we put aside at death was to be raised up, and many sneering questions were asked as to what happened to the bodies of Christians that the lions devoured, or to those which were burnt, or to those which became the prey of the sea. St. Paul, who was the leading exponent of this new philosophy of the body, was impatient with

those who so misrepresented what they held. It was, of course, natural to argue in that way, because their only illustration had been taken from the risen body of Christ, which had seen no corruption. But though this was unavoidably their only picture as to what resurrection was, it must not be pressed too far. That was exceptional in the one respect of the identity of the risen and buried body ; such an exception, for which there was ample reason, could not be expected in general. The dissolution of the body was in every case but this a necessity, as could be proved by what we see in Nature: "That which thou sowest is not quickened except it die"—that was one fact to which Nature testified—"and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not the body that shall be . . . but God giveth it a body . . . and to each seed a body of its own" (1 Cor. xv. 36-38)—that was another fact. And yet, again, every body was not alike. There were bodies of the earth and there were blazing bodies of suns and stars ; there were natural bodies and there were spiritual bodies. And the natural body was first in time, then the spiritual body. All this was given to correct the misrepresentations that had been made of his teaching.

As we look back and contrast the curiosity that was everywhere awakened by this surprising news with the indifference to it of our own modern thought, we are not astonished that the Church's progress is so slow compared with what it was in days when, in the course of thirty years, much of the civilized world was covered with churches. The strong, stirring doctrine of a new body, with infinite powers and capacities, offered as a prize to the earnest Christian, has given way to a weak, hesitating promise of immortality, meted out with unrecognizable differences to all alike.

IV.

And yet it was as a prize only attainable by some that it was first preached to the world. Whether the resurrection of the unjust, which was also preached, meant anything more than their immortality, with consciousness of eternal judgment, is

not clear. If their doom was the denial of the body, then we can understand what is meant by the darkness and gnashing of teeth which characterized it. For to exist apart from the body—*i.e.*, from such self-realization as we know by sight and touch and hearing—could hardly be better described than by darkness. And the gnashing of teeth would necessarily express the misery and bitter disappointment of those who had lived in the body, and were now to live without it. And, terrible though the judgment would be, it could hardly be said to be inapt for those who had fallen under the dominion of matter instead of conquering it. The lazy, self-indulgent, and pleasure-loving, who had greedily snatched at every material good they could find; who had never refused a single gratification of their senses, whether by food, perfume, art, or music; who had ignored the spiritual realm altogether, with its mysterious powers of prayer and communion, could not complain if they were not entrusted with a new and infinitely delicate organism, only susceptible to spiritual faculties, and vested with extraordinary powers, every one of which must be used unselfishly if it was to be kept intact. No chemist would allow some untrained friend to use the powers of his laboratory as he wished. "You must first know what you use before you use it," he would say. There is everything, I think, to point to the ultimate loss as self-inflicted, rather than arbitrarily ordered. It is the awful loss of power such as the invalid knows as the disease gets stronger and stronger hold—a voluntary slipping back and back into the self-appointed tyranny of a nature that we were intended to rule.

But whether that be so or not, there is no doubt that the only risen body of which we know anything at all is a prize, and not the natural sequence of life here in the spiritual sphere.

Even St. Paul himself, perhaps the most energetic spiritual nature that the world has seen, was anxious lest he should lose some opportunity which, if not taken, might hazard the prize. "I count all things but loss . . . if I may attain to the resurrection of the dead. Not that I have already attained" [and he was now past sixty], "but press on that I may attain." As he

is the great preacher of the doctrine of the risen body, so he insists most sternly on the necessary conditions for winning it. And it is at least significant that in one passage he speaks of the necessity of keeping under his body, lest in the end he might be unable to bear the test under which all pass, an evidence of that to which we have already referred—that only those who have learned to control and govern matter here will be judged worthy to use it hereafter.

But, independently of that passage, there is an exclusive note struck when the resurrection is mentioned, which ought to have received more attention than it has. Our Lord speaks of it no less than three times in His great discourse in the synagogue at Capernaum (St. John vi. 39, 40, 44)—first, as though it was limited to those whom the Father has given Him; secondly, as belonging only to those who eat His flesh and drink His blood, which act, I need hardly say, is not confined to the Holy Communion, by which we partake of His life, but expresses that perpetual communion of mind and spirit which leads to such moral identification of the soul with Him that we abide in Him and He in us; and thirdly, as being bound up with that eternal life which belongs to those who behold the Son and believe on Him.

He also refers to it in the great declaration that He makes at the grave of Lazarus, where He declares that He Himself is the Source of resurrection and life, and that the believer in Him as such will participate in the privileges He has to give.

Indeed, the Gospel of Christ as it was preached was the Gospel of the Resurrection, and those who rejected it were not so much the condemned of God as the condemned of self, judging, as St. Paul says, that they were “unworthy of eternal life” (Acts xiii. 46).

V.

Now, this estimation of the last things is in line with the estimate of things here. The righteous who obtain the prize are those who have shown by their life that in a sense they

deserve it. They have voluntarily given up a great many of the material advantages that life offers and taken the narrow path, because they found that without this apparent narrowness they would not have been able to make that progress in the knowledge of God and of those spiritual principles and laws which in the end would be found to govern matter. Their contemporaries thought they were making a great mistake in devoting time and thought to that which could only serve a limited purpose; they, on the other hand, replied that it was their friends who were "blind . . . seeing only what is near."

Again, it is true that prayer, spiritual communion, sacramental communion, and spiritual acts of devotion to the poor and suffering, seem absurdly inadequate as conditions for so great a gain as that of the resurrection body and the wonderful powers and honours attached to it; but, in the first place, we do not know what the effect of prayer and communion is on the spiritual self, and we know still less what is the effect of participating in the body and blood of Christ; and, secondly, inadequate as they certainly seem to be for compassing so great a result, we have already seen that the ends of life always transcend the means employed to attain them. Only habit could deaden the sense of surprise which we ought to feel when we realize how, through food and air, the speechless infant becomes a grown man, able to think, act, and influence others. Nor is the result in the clear and powerful mind of education less out of proportion to the simple steps of reading and writing which lead to it.

But though in this way we have been laying stress on the natural result of spiritual processes, the power of the doctrine of justification by faith must not be lost sight of. All through life there is not only an undercurrent of powerlessness, a sense of absolute dependence on Christ to bring us to the final end, but a still deeper sense of guilt, which seems to bar the way. The processes which ought to be bringing us forward are thrown back, as it were, by the hindrances of sin and the burden of expected punishment. The prize is for the worthy, and we are not worthy. It is when we are haunted by this overhanging

judgment that the Bible tells us that God, loving Father as He is, is ready to take the general tendency of our lives as an equivalent to actual good deeds; that when we genuinely lay hold on the Cross and say that is what we want our life to be, we are excused for our failures, and the upward movement towards the perfect life of self-sacrifice of itself effects changes. For it is a response to the life of Him in whom we live. The aspiration comes from Him, through His Spirit, and by our wills we make it our own. All is in Christ—the remission of the ill deeds which frustrate our endeavours, as well as the victorious power that carries us forward.

But, further, we believe, as we have said, that the power given with the new body will be the gift of far-reaching influence over natural forces: it is difficult to see what else a spiritual body can indicate. But unless the soul had learned during its progress here, under every conceivable variety of circumstances, to be obedient to Christ, the possession of such powers might work as much harm as the powers of electricity in the hands of lawless Nero. The redeemed will, however, have learnt this. Again and again in darkness, pain, loss, and death, their faith in Christ as living, as absolutely righteous and loving, has been tested and approved; and now the meaning of their strange experiences is made clear.

They have so well learnt their lesson that, like the angels, they cannot disobey, nor for a moment be disloyal, and are, therefore, fit to be entrusted with awful powers, in the effects of which myriads of beings, it may be, are concerned. It is their faith in Christ as the Giver of all things, as their Redeemer, who, by His incarnation and death, has restored to those who believed the powers God eternally destined for all men, that justifies. So the strangely limited teaching of such a passage, “of the many called, but the few chosen,” seems to receive its fulfilment. It may be said that this Gospel is hard measure meted out to those who wish to believe and are unable, but this is taking the word “believe” in a narrower sense than intended. Each will receive what he can receive, and between

those who are condemned to the loss of the body—if such be the condition of some—and those who have all the powers of a perfected body there may be, as there are here, infinite grades. In one place our Lord seems to hint at such, as where He says, “It is better to enter into life maimed rather than having thy two hands to go into Gehenna, where the worm dies not and the fire is not quenched.” We arrogate to ourselves too much knowledge when we assume that all the saved are alike, no matter what their characters may be—that all are equally perfected. There is a right and a left of the throne reserved for those for whom it is prepared, and there is government over two cities and five cities; and for the infinite variety of those offices that suit the full-grown energies of the spiritual bodies, there is doubtless as infinite a variety of form and faculty as here differentiate the babe and the grown man, the weak and the strong, the lame and the straight, the blind and seeing. The first become last and the last first. Infinite love provides infinite life to each so far as he can receive it. Each is perfected after his own measure, but only after his own measure.

Now that we have grown out of the mediæval doctrine of a burning hell and a useless heaven, we need a truth at once severe and gentle, calm and bracing, which will make men understand that, as there is a motive for every good work here in this life in the success it brings, so there is a motive for spiritual energy bound up with our love for Christ and our fellow-man in the promise of an exceeding great reward. This reward can partially be understood, because it is illustrated by the risen body of Christ. And it may be that one of the reasons why we have records of more than one appearance is that we may see how great the prize is. It is true that we cannot understand how such things as are described can be, but two facts emerge—the one, fulness of life beyond anything we know here; the other, the subordination of matter to spirit. The thought of such an extraordinary opportunity as is offered by a body fashioned like His glorious body fills one with boundless hope on the one hand and awful dread on the other—hope

that we may attain to it, dread lest we should lose it. To all who may criticize such hope on the ground of its materialism we may say that it does not spring from conjecture or imagination, but from the natural interpretation of Holy Scripture. It will find no favour with the enlightened Sadduceeism of a materialistic age, but to those who read the New Testament with the simplicity with which it was written, and in humble obedience to the same Divine Guide who inspired it, it may bring a confirmation of an expectation, that once was fresh and vigorous.

There is no promise to the slack, idle, and lazy. There, as well as here, they find that they have lost. But to those who overcome, or who all their lives are trying to overcome, and the promise is confined to them, the reward of which we have been speaking is described by our Lord in His last message in various ways (Rev. ii., iii.). Now it is Divine food from the Tree of Life, now a bright crown, now the new expression of character which will be a passport through the universe, now rule and authority, now white garments, now unchangeable glory, now a share in the reign of Christ. The world ignores it all, as we should expect, but it is strange that the Christian Church should in these days have made no attempt to try to realize what these metaphors and images mean, and press them home to men, for it is in our comfortable, easy-going, pleasure-loving age that we need a clear witness to their reality.



The Spiritual and Literary Affinities of the Epistle of St. James.

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THE Epistle of St. James is in many ways remarkable. Of all the Epistles in the New Testament, it approaches most nearly in style and thought the utterances of our Lord; and in its open-air freshness and gnomic form it presents a