

us the value of importunity. You will remember them, no doubt. One of the importunate persons was a widow. She had an adversary who had wronged her. As she had no natural guardian of her rights, some insolent man had taken undue advantage of her lonely condition, and had, in some way unknown to us, invaded her legal position, and wrought her mischief. Stung by her unkind neighbour's unrighteous deeds, the widow had appealed to the law. Day after day she presented herself in the court of justice with her one suit on her lips, 'Avenge me of my adversary.' Day after day she only did so to meet a contemptuous rebuff. The adversary was perhaps some man of importance, who thought his wealth and position had raised him above, and would screen him from, the reach of the law. He may have been well known to the judge, as a man whom it was dangerous to meddle with—a violent, overbearing person, who would not scruple, if offended, to hire a cut-throat for the purpose of avenging his own quarrels. And therefore, or for some other reason of his own, the judge would not interfere, and the widow went home after each session still smarting, as before, under the sense of a wrong for which she could find no remedy. But she had a spirit of the right sort within her—a spirit that would take no denial—a stubborn patience and perseverance which rose superior to every failure. Every time she was foiled by the judge her resolution only grew the more fixed, and she declared to herself that she would continue to make her complaint in court until she had wrung from the unjust judge a verdict in her own favour. And her dogged persistence had, at length, its reward. The judge, though a sorry example of what a judge ought to be, though a time-serving, timid, selfish, and partial administrator of the law, was driven, by the sheer force of the widow's persistent clamour, to do the right thing, in spite of himself. He was fairly wearied out of his indifference and inaction, and one day, after seeing and hearing the plaintiff, he gave orders that she was to be righted. She had, therefore, gained her cause, not because the judge was honest, not because he pitied her forlorn condition, not because he felt one flash of indignation at the ill-treatment she had suffered from her powerful neighbour, but solely and simply because she had been importunate.

The other parable is highly interesting (as, indeed, both are), from its giving us incidentally an insight into some of the circumstances of those who dwelt in the Holy Land at the period of our Lord's sojourn upon the earth. We have been into an Eastern court of justice, and have seen the judge dispensing his tardy and grudging judgment. We next are taken to a house, whose inmates are buried in the deep sleep which falls upon men at midnight, and prepares them by its blessed oblivion for a manful struggle with the cares and labours of the morrow.

There ever have been belated travellers; men who, from some cause or other, have miscalculated their power, or lost their way under the misleading shades of night. Such a one is represented by our Lord as coming at the hour of midnight to an intimate friend's house. Let us imagine the wayfarer as weary, dust-covered, and almost fainting from hunger. He knocks at the door, and is admitted: and, after a few words of explanation, he asks for something to eat. But