

NOBILITY AND BLESSEDNESS OF WORK.

"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."—Ecc. ix. 10.

The wise sayings of great men are a guide and help to us in life. When they are the result of their observation and experience of life, they are very valuable to us. We are often led astray by our raw and hasty reflections. They have been made on such a narrow basis of experience, that on the day of testing we can find no support in them. They break down, and we break down under their guidance. To think deeply and act nobly in life, we need large and continued and varied experience. It is out of an experience that has touched life at all points and under all circumstances that Solomon speaks to us here when he says, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." It is not the enthusiasm of youth, nor the hot haste of first successes that addresses us here, but the calm, deliberate, judgment of one who knows what is worst and best in life. Solomon had gone down to the deepest depths of lust, and had risen up to the highest mountain peaks of the religious life, and as the result of it all, he gives this message to humanity, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." When we were in the distraction and confusion of the Crimean war, Dean Stanley, who was only a Canon then, and Carlyle were walking together, when Stanley said to the Sage of Chelsea, "What, under the circumstances, is your advice to a Canon of an English cathedral?" And the great preacher of reality paused for a moment, and looking at his young friend, replied, "Whatsoever a man findeth to do, do it with thy might." Work for Carlyle was the solace and joy of his own life, and he knew that there could be no better thing for ardent and gifted young life. Has he not said, "Two men I honour and no third. First the toil-worn craftsman, second the inspired thinker, who conquers heaven for us. If the poor and humble toil that we may have food, must not the high and glorious toil for him in return, that he may have light and guidance, freedom and immortality." It is this gospel of work that Carlyle preached so successfully to his generation, and he lived what he taught. Whether we work by the brain or by the hand, the Divine direction for us runs—"And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men."

What a power there is in work to keep the mind free from distraction, the avenues of the soul open to God, and our hearts shut against the temptations of life. Against material greatness, luxurious idleness, moral decay, and false views of life, the King preacher could suggest no better remedy, no higher comfort, than work. It is the finest body-guard of protection against the evil influences of our age. God Himself works in the fields of creation, the spheres of Providence, and the mysteries of redemption. The Divine life is not one of masterful inactivity, selfish enjoyment, and cold indifference to the fate and fortunes of His creatures. Speaking of those outer and inner relations of the Godhead, Christ has said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." God worketh in the life of the universe, the laws of nature, and in the preservation of every human being. Not only does the Father work, but the Son also works. When He came into our world, there never was a life so spent as His was in the service of God and man. When He went back through the loneliness and agony of the Cross to Heaven and His throne there, He only rose to a new and higher sphere of work. There is no pause and no break in His mediatorial work. He is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh interces-

sion for us." With work stamped upon the face of the universe, with nature renewing her life and continuing it through work, with God ever working and Christ ever continuing His work, and with the conviction that the best things in life can only come to us through work, how is it that work has been despised by so many races, and looked upon with such disfavour by so many people, and often treated in civilised countries as the badge of degradation and slavery? The reason is because so many nations and large sections of society in all lands have fallen away from God, His life, ideals and practice. It is those Governments and peoples that are despotic and military, spendthrift and idle, speculating and gambling, cruel and oppressive, that despise work, and - near at those who do work; for the inner article of their creed is that a gentleman is one who does not work. But through the new conditions of modern life, labour has regained its lost place, and it is now the great driving and uplifting force in civilisation. Invention and discovery, machinery and legislation, social and industrial life, humanity and Christianity, have all joined hands to elevate and ennoble work. "There is a perennial nobleness and even sacredness in work. The latest gospel in this world is to know thy work and do it. Blessed is he that has found his work; let him ask no other blessedness. All true work is religion."

A beautiful tradition has come to us of a monk to whom Christ came when he was praying in his cell. His soul was filled with rapture at the sight of his blessed Saviour. He felt an unspeakable joy within him. As he gazed on the adorable Christ, the convent bell rang, calling him to go to the gate to distribute the bread to the poor waiting there. Suddenly a great conflict rose within between his work and enjoyment. Shall he go or stay? then a voice whispered to him, "Do thy duty: that is best, leave unto thy Lord the rest." He did not hesitate—he arose and went, and having faithfully discharged his duty he returned to his cell, and to his unspeakable joy found the vision of his Saviour still there, and when his Divine Master spoke to him it was to say, "Hadst thou stayed I must have fled." "Work is life, and idleness is death," no matter what the pretext may be that excuses it. It has been pointed out that idleness is a three-fold curse—a vice, for it injures the body; a crime, for it injures others; a sin, as it is disobedience to the commands of God.

Not only does the text teach us to work, but tells us how to do it—with our might; that is, we are to do it with our head and heart and hands. There is no place in the workshops of God for scamped and shoddy work, and why should we make room for it in the workshops of man? Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin, that is the work of the Atonement, and it is the atonement that makes the rule for the road of life; for without the shedding of blood and sweat of soul there is no enduring work in the spheres of human enterprise, as well as the Divine sphere; and as it was done in the latter case with conflict, so must it be done in the former. When John Bright was sitting alone in the desolation of his first great family sorrow, Cobden visited him. They talked much, and among other things Cobden said to Bright, "There are thousands and thousands of homes in England at this moment where wives and mothers and children are dying of hunger. Now when the first paroxysm of your grief is passed, I would advise you to come with me, and we will never rest until the Corn Laws are repealed." Bright soon joined him, and he found strength and consolation in working for and saving others. Never were there two men who so nobly fulfilled the command of the text, and who were a greater blessing to their country.

SENT OF GOD.

By Rev. E. H. McIntosh, M. A.

A good bit of scripture wherewith to spur one's self in the day of slackness is that great saying of our Lord, "I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work." It stings us with the splendours of the double thought.

First, I am sent of God to do certain work. I have not happened into this time and place. I have a work to do which none other can perform, which will remain undone, if I do not ply my hand. Sent of God! What a sweetly solemn consideration. It is with something of awe that we read:—"There was a man sent from God whose name was John." What a mighty opportunity! What a terrible responsibility! Yet, if the truth were realized, any of our names might be inserted in that passage instead of his and the noble saying lose not one whit of its force. God needs His heralds yet, and we are sent of Him to do His work.

Then, "the night cometh, when no man can work." We have but a day, comparatively speaking, in which to do our work for Him. How inexpressibly pathetic is this description of our little life. Who has not been thrilled by the touch of the rosy fingers of the morning, the blaze of noonday, the glory of the sundown, the mystery of the gloaming, and the deepening night? Who has not been moved more profoundly far by the charm of childhood, the strength of manhood, the serenity of age, and the awfulness of death? How like the changing face of day is the experience of our life! If we have a work to do, there is but a bare day in which to do it.

We should be as jealous, then, of the passing hours as is the farmer toiling amid the bearded grain. If for a moment a fugitive cloud covers the sun, he bares his brow to the cooling breeze, and looking up, he notes how far the day is spent, and mentally he says, "We have a lot of work to do; we must hurry; it will soon be dark." So let us look up and take an inventory of our years. Our sun, where is it? Have our shadows shifted to the east? Is the day declining? How much substantial service have we rendered? How much urgent work remains to be accomplished? Should not the prayer rush from the heart and tingle to the lips, "O God, let us hasten before the dark comes on. Let me do with all my might whatsoever my hands find to do, for the day is swiftly passing and 'after that, the dark'?"

Antigonish, N.S.

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However dark and profitless, however painful and weary, existence may have become; however any man, like Elijah, may be tempted to cast himself down beneath the juniper-tree, and say, "It is enough, O Lord!"—life is not done, and our Christian character is not won, so long as God has anything left for us to suffer, or anything left for us to do.—F. W. Robertson.