

THE WARFARE OF THE KING

Meditations for Good Friday on the Seven Words from the Cross.

By CANON VERNON, Halifax, N.S.

AND I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war. . . . And He was clothed in a vesture dipped in blood; and His Name is called the Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen white and clean."

Thus the poet-prophet of the Book of the Unveiling saw and described the moving picture, cast upon the curtain of the vaulted skies, of the warfare of the King, and the warfare of the King's loyal followers. Wherefore as Passiontide comes round with each revolving year the Church sings with undying devotion:—

"The royal banners forward go,
The Cross shines forth in mystic glow;"

and chants that other hymn of Fortunatus,

"Sing, my tongue, the glorious battle,
Sing the last, the dread affray;
O'er the Cross, the Victor's trophy,
Sound the high triumphal lay,
How the pains of death enduring,
Earth's Redeemer won the day."

The warfare of the King was a lifelong struggle, but "the last, the dread affray," was fought and won on Calvary. The spirit with which the King fought, and the purpose of His fighting are revealed, perhaps, as nowhere else, by the King's words upon that blood-stained field of fiercest fight and glorious victory.

THE FIRST WORD—THE CONQUEST OF HATE.

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

The true warrior, the soldier whose cause is faithful and true, who makes war in righteousness, must count as his first triumph and the earnest of all future victories, the conquest of hate. The passion of hate blinds the judgment, chokes the affections, and enervates the will. Impeded by it the warrior's blows are misdirected, his vision dimmed, and his success impossible. The King's first victory then upon Calvary's Hill was the hard-won conquest of that instinct to hate the evil-doer rather than the evil. The King's followers, if they would tread in His footsteps and win with Him the well-fought day, must learn that the first triumph to be won lies in literal obedience to the King's command, "Love your enemies."

"By the spirit which could render
Love for hate and good for ill,
By the mercy, sweet and tender,
Poured upon Thy murderers still:
Crucified, I turn to Thee,
Son of Mary, plead for me."

THE SECOND WORD—THE VISION OF VICTORY.

"To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise."
"Lord, when Thy kingdom comes, remember me;
Thus spake the dying lips to dying ears;
O faith, which in that darkest hour could see
The promised glory of the far-off years."

And the reward of faith was the promise and the gift of vision, the greatest, possibly, of all gifts for the warrior, the ability to see in the gloom of midnight, the coming glory of the dawn; to hear in the hour of bitterest fighting the music of the glad triumphal lay. For the gift of vision is it which makes progress possible, defeat impossible and victory certain. In the very Valley of the Shadow of Death, the Crucified could see, and by His seeing make real to the eye of faithful followers, the radiant calm of Paradise the blest. Amidst the jeers of mocking priests, the taunts of the impenitent thief, and the ribald jests of the populace, the King could hear and make audible to the ear of faith the chanting by the celestial choirs of the triumph song, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in."

THE THIRD WORD—THE KNIGHTLY INSTINCT.

"Woman! behold thy Son. . . Behold thy mother."
Since at least warriors have worn the symbol of the Crucified, the true warrior has been marked by courtesy to all, gentleness towards women, consideration for those in distress. True chivalry was one of the fairest products of the religion of the Cross. The true soldier has ever the knightly instinct:

"Whose glory was, redeeming human wrongs."

The bravest warrior is ever the truest knight; the leader in the battle line, the first in courtesy and sympathy. The King in the very thick of the last great fight found time to give the tenderest of messages to those he loved above all others, His mother and His friend. The Christian warrior will learn of the King that the fierceness of the fight must never lead to forgetfulness of others, that in the most momentous of all moments, love and sympathy, courtesy and kindness, have their place.

THE FOURTH WORD—THE SEEMING DEFEAT.

"My God! My God! Why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

"Throned upon the awful tree,
King of grief, I watch with Thee;
Darkness veils Thine anguished face,
None its lines of woe can trace,
None can tell what pangs unknown
Hold Thee silent and alone.
Silent through those three dread hours,
Wrestling with the evil powers,
Left alone with human sin."

The Warrior King has tasted all the agony of seeming defeat, has known what it is to be cut off from all human succour by the forces of the enemy, hemmed in on every side, alone with the myriad hosts of evil, no help save that of God, and the call upon God seemingly unanswered and unregarded. Yet in the moment when overwhelmed by the opposing hosts, He yet remembers that God is His God and calls upon Him "out of the depths."

What strength should come to the King's follower, who tastes the bitter cup of loneliness, of failure, of defeat, when he remembers that the great Captain of His salvation has drained the same bitter cup to its bitterest dregs. "O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done." "The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?"

THE FIFTH WORD—THE ENDURANCE OF HARDNESS.

"I thirst."

"His are the thousand sparkling rills
That from a thousand fountains burst,
And fill with music all the hills;
And yet He saith, 'I thirst.'
All fiery pangs on battle-fields
On fever beds where sick men toss,
Are in that human cry he yields
To anguish on the Cross."

He, who in the battle of life, had often not where to lay His head, knew in the fiercest and the final battle all the agonies of thirst. The good soldier must learn to endure hardness, his body must be in subjection, and in enduring hardness he is but following in the footsteps of the King. All who would "manfully fight under His banner" must be content to have the Cross marked not alone upon their banner, or their foreheads, but on their lives.

THE SIXTH WORD—THE HOUR OF VICTORY.

"It is finished."

The longest and the fiercest battle has its conclusion. The agonizing struggle of the King is not unending. The perfect life of the perfect warrior, "without fear, and without reproach," the atoning battle waged on Calvary's Hill, is finished.

"The strife is o'er, the battle done,
Now is the Victor's triumph won.
Death's mightiest powers have done their worst,
And Jesus hath His foes dispersed."

The Christ Himself can say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course." But what of the battle we are waging? When that is closed, shall we too, as good soldiers, have fought a good fight? Or shall we, as recreants and cowards have yielded to the enemy, and basely surrendered the post the King gave us to hold, if needs be with our life's blood.

THE SEVENTH WORD—THE KING'S RETURN.

"Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit."

Sweet is the hour of victory, the moment of conscious triumph, but sweeter yet the warrior's return. Glorious indeed is the triumphal entry

of the victorious hosts. Splendid the victorious return of the King and His triumph, laden with the spoils of the vanquished. But sweeter yet the warrior's entry into His home, the Father's welcome to the victorious Son, the calm, sweet gladness of the home-coming, and all the victory and all the hardships retold and yet retold. We can picture to ourselves the triumphal entry of the warrior soul of the Warrior Christ into the calm of Paradise the blest, and see the glad welcome that patriarch and prophet, warrior and wiseman, all the armies of Jehovah's Israel, give to great David's greater Son, the Anointed of Jehovah. Such a triumphal welcome to the glad fields of Paradise will be the lot of every faithful warrior of the Cross. The vision of this must nerve the arm and fill the heart with hope.

"And when the strife is fierce, the warfare long,
Steals on the ear the distant triumph's song,
And hearts are brave again, and arms are strong.
The golden evening brightens in the west,
Soon, soon to faithful warriors comes their rest;
Sweet is the calm of Paradise the blest."

And even greater triumphs are to follow for the Warrior King and His warrior followers;

"But lo! there breaks the yet more glorious day,
The saints triumphant rise in bright array;
The King of glory passes on His way."

May the King bring everyone of us to that glad day; to the Crown, the only road to which is the way of the Cross.

Had Primitive Man a Religion?

THIS was the subject discussed by the Rev. D. Gath Whitley in a paper read before the Victoria Institute on Monday, February 15. By "Primitive Man," Mr. Whitley wished to designate man of the earliest Stone Age, man of the Pleistocene period. It has been emphatically denied that the men of this age possessed any religion at all, but it is evident that the fact that no religious memorials had been preserved to our times would not in itself prove the absence of religion in any particular people. Tasmanians, now extinct, believed in a supreme God with minor deities; they practised prayer, and sang religious hymns, and believed in a future life, but they left no temples or other religious monuments. If Europeans had not been contemporaneous with them in their country we should have had no evidence of their religious belief. But the progress of discovery has shown that there is some direct evidence that Paleolithic Man not only possessed a religion, but probably had in some cases a recognized priesthood. Thus seven small statuettes were found in the cavern of Brassempouy, in a deposit clearly paleolithic. Of these seven, the most important represented a completely clothed human figure, kneeling in the attitude of prayer, with arms folded on the breast.

Mr. Whitley's main argument is concerned with the proof that Primitive Man buried his dead, and he brings forth a number of cases of paleolithic burial where the skeleton had been buried with food, weapons, ornaments and paint, placed by its side. These are instances of cave burial, and appear to point to a belief in the existence of the soul after death. The chief instance of burial in graveyards is that of Solutré, where the enormous number of the remains of horses, together with the skeletons of men, buried with their implements and carvings suggests that, like the Tartars, the men of the Stone Age sacrificed the horse at the funeral feasts of their chiefs. Numerous figures of animals, carved on slabs of slate, or pieces of bone or ivory, have been found, which may be interpreted in different ways, but the representation of the sun with divergent rays, on carved batons of manifest importance, may indicate a form of sun worship. A remarkable picture of a fragment of reindeer horn in the cave of La Madelaine appears to represent the sacrifice of a horse to propitiate the sea-god as indicated by a gigantic serpent. The occurrence of serpents, carved with such care on the sceptres of the paleolithic age, is remarkable, for the serpents of that time were very small and insignificant, so that the emphasis placed upon the serpent form seems to imply that some special symbolic value was attached to it. These traces of some sort of worship and of a belief in the conscious existence of the soul after death are, it is true, only slight, but it is more remarkable that any such hints should be found, than that there should be so few. If the natural deduction from these facts is adopted, it follows that Primitive Man was a higher and nobler creature than many theorists have imagined; for religion, however debased, is the sign of Man's special nature—the possession of religion is characteristic of Man alone.