

The Measure and the Motives of a Noble Life.

An Address delivered under the auspices of the Y. M. C. A., in Acadia College Hall, Wolfville, Sunday evening, May 24th, by Rev. J. D. Freeman, M. A.

The question of supreme importance to every human being is, or ought to be, "How shall I make the most of Life?" In order to answer the question wisely it is necessary to carry in the soul a clear and true conviction concerning the value and design of life. No architect builds better than he plans; no poet sings nobler than he dreams; no painter puts on canvas more of beauty than his soul conceives; and no life rises in nobleness above the thoughts of life which reign within the soul. So it seems to me that at a time and place like this, we cannot be more profitably engaged than in considering in a serious way the theme which I have chosen; viz.: "The Measure and the Motives of a Noble Life."

I would have you accept as a guiding principle, that the true measure of a noble life is first the quality and after that the quantity of the service which it renders to the world. This was the unit of measurement employed by the Son of God, who came to set up on the earth the standards of the skies. He gave Heaven's measuring rod into the hands of men when He declared, "Whosoever would become great among you shall be your minister, and whosoever would be first among you shall be your servant." Moreover, by that same rule, He sought that men should measure Him. "He took upon Himself the form of a servant." Though He dare stand up before earth's lordliest and cry "I am a king," He declined not to bend before earth's lowliest and say, "I am in the midst of you as he that serveth." While He regarded it not above his right to claim, "all authority in heaven and on earth," He deemed it not beneath his dignity to wash His disciples feet. "The Son of Man," He said, "came not to be ministered unto but to minister." No man ever lived who was less a time-server than Jesus, but no man ever lived who so grandly served his time. He was never servile, but He was ever serving. As a servant He taught and healed the multitudes. As a servant He hung upon His cross. As a servant He sits today in the upper sanctuary, at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. It is on the ground of service rendered to humanity He claims the love loyalty of the ages. According to the Christ, unquestionably the true measure of nobleness is service.

In facing this conception it is important that we discriminate intelligently between service and labor. Service means more than labor. A man may perform herculean tasks and yet render no true service. One of the saddest things in life is the fact that so much of the world's toil falls, from one cause and another, to class as service. Much of the world's work for instance, is done in a careless, slovenly, slipshod way. The mason daubs with untempered mortar and the wall is ruined. The physician makes a faulty diagnosis and the patient dies. The machinist passes over a flaw in a car-wheel and the train is wrecked. The preacher omits the vital elements of the Gospel and immortal souls are left in darkness and impotence. This is not service but butchery if not butchery. Again, many of the works of men are designedly destructive and devilish. Napoleon, that fiery prodigy of war and conquest, was the hardest working man of his day, but he was the scourge not the servant of his time. Or, labor may be essentially selfish and again it falls below the rank of service. The fountain and the whirlpool both toil ceaselessly but to wondrously different effects. The fountain yields up its contents for the blessing of the world, pouring forth its streams to make the grasses grow and slake the thirst of man. The whirlpool, though doomed to an endless round of action gives nothing forth, but draws all things that come within its reach into its own vast vortex to feed its insatiable maw. There is an immense amount of activity among men of the whirlpool sort. We may call it work, but it is unworthy the name of service. Still again, a man may work under the sheer compulsion of necessity and now he is no more a servant but a slave. Forced labor is serfism not service. The unwilling toiler is a thrall. Christ's thought for man is that he shall be neither a drone nor a drudge, but a workman with a free spirit, a clear vision, an unselfish aim. Yes, service is vastly more than labor. As one has well said, "Service is labor baptized, anointed, inspired, lifted up out of greedy ruts and consecrated to large and beneficent human purposes."

I would remind you at this point, that what I have just termed the true measure of nobleness was also, in Christ's day a new measure of nobleness. The common sentiment of his contemporaries ran directly counter to this high conception. To live at ease; to lie in warm baths; to loil on soft couches; to be lulled by dreamy music; to be sprinkled with delicate perfumes; to be fanned by attendant slaves; to be garlanded with flowers; to feast on ingenious dishes; to sip rare wines; to view spectacular displays in the arena; to levy tribute upon the whole world for one's personal enjoyment—such was the sensual, selfish, rotten ideal of life throughout the Roman Empire in the first century. And it need not surprise us to find it so. It was the legitimate product of the religion of the time. The pagan supposed that even the gods themselves were lapped in luxury and ease. If his gods lived for self-indulgence, why should not he? Tennyson delineates with a true hand the idea of deity

which prevailed in the first century, when he makes the lotos-eaters.

"Swear an oath, and keep it with an equal mind,
In the hollow lotos-land to live and lie reclined,
On the hills like gods together, careless of mankind,
For they lie beside their nectar and the bolts are hurled
Far below them in the valleys, and the clouds are
lightly cur'd!
Round their golden houses girdled with the gleaming
world!
Where they smile in secret, looking over wasted lands,
Blight and famine, plague and earthquake, roaring
deep and fiery sands,
Clanging fights and flaming towns and sinking ships
and praying hands,
But—they smile."

Place that conception of deity over against the revelation of God which Jesus Christ brought into the world, and what an utter contrast you have! Take those pictures in the gospels which represent incarnate deity opening the eyes of a blind beggar, or healing a loathsome leper, or weeping at the grave of Lazarus, or dying on a Roman Cross to redeem mankind from death! These ideas of Godhood are as far as the poles asunder. If they move men at all they must move them in opposite directions. Would you compare samples of their produce? Think of Paul, toiling, suffering, preaching, praying, penning immortal epistles, and then think of Nero, puffed and pampered, with painted face and lyre in hand, drunk with the adulations of the rabble in the theatre. I will not ask which you consider the nobler picture, which comes nearer your ideal, but I will ask you to remember that each of these men was what his religion made him. Each was true to the motto of his life. Paul's motto was, "I owe myself to the world, and he lived up to it. Nero's motto was, "The world owes everything to me," and he lived down to it. Hence it came to pass that Paul lived for achievement; Nero lived for enjoyment. Paul's ambition was to serve; Nero's to be served. The one is of the essence of Christianity; the other is of the essence of heathenism.

I have been pointing to the fact that before Jesus came there was no place for a true measure of nobleness in the prevalent conception of God. It should be remembered also that there was no place for such a measure in man's thought of man. Every doctrine of God has its congruous doctrine of man. The idea of service as the measure of greatness is founded upon the conception of the universal brotherhood of man, and that in turn, is the product almost exclusively of the gospel of Jesus with its revelation of the fatherhood of God. As a matter of fact, the idea of humanity as a race of brethren was scarcely mooted in the pre-Christian ages. Prof. Max Müller says, "The word 'mankind' never passed the lips of Socrates or Plato or Aristotle." It is true that as the smaller states of the old world were gradually swallowed up in the Roman Empire, the idea of a world state and a world citizenship began to dawn, and a few noble humanitarian utterances were inspired. Cicero once said, "Nature prescribes that a man consult the interests of a man for the reason that he is a man." Marcus Aurelius Antoninus said, "My nature is rational and social. My city and country, so far as I am Antoninus, is Rome, but so far as I am a man it is the world." And the poet Terence once shook the Roman theatre with applause as he cried, "I am a man and whatsoever concerns man concerns me." Grand says these, but for the most part sayings only. They never became general, they never fruited in beneficent action, they were not embodied in humanitarian institutions. They were simply so many green blades here and there, shooting up from good seed which had fallen upon the rock, and because they had no deepness of earth they withered away. What was needed to give rootage and body and vigor to the idea of service as the measure of life, was an underlying conception of the unity of the human race. This was Christ's gift. He taught that men were brothers and because they were brothers they should serve each other. They were kinned to one another, therefore they should be kind to one another. He conceived of the human family as a vast organism in which each individual was a member with some part to perform for the common good. Hence he denied to any man the right to be an idler amid the tasks of humanity. His doctrine aims at sweeping away all parasites and excrescences and calls upon every man, in the name of humanity, to fill a useful place, to act a noble part, to render an adequate service. It is only when we accept the Christian idea of man that we are ready to accept the Christian idea of service. The story of Diogenes and his lamp is often quoted as indicating the degeneracy of Greece in the philosopher's day. I think it should be made to do a different duty. That old story speaks not of a degenerate Greece, but of a blind Diogenes. The secret of the philosopher's difficulty lay not in the worthlessness of the people he met but in the miserable lamp he carried. He carried the smoke-blackened lamp of a heathen conception of humanity, and for that reason his search was fruitless. Had he looked upon his countrymen in such a light as streams from the gospels, he would have found men all about him, to serve whose interests he might even have abandoned his tub.

If now we raise the question how far this idea of service as the measure of nobleness has won recognition among men during these Christian centuries, we shall not lack evidences of its widespread influence. One most interesting and significant fact is the extent to which the idea has stamped itself upon and wrought itself into our language. The energy and popularity of an idea may be pretty accurately gauged by the place it wins for itself in the language of a people. Language is the warehouse where thought products are stored. I was interested the other day in a little word study by one who was showing how the thought of service as the test of greatness had ruled in the selection of English titles of distinction. The king, for instance, is etymologically, can-ning, the man who can, that is the able man, the man best fitted to serve. The Duke is dux, the leader, that is the man who serves at the fore-point. The marquis is the man appointed to patrol the boundaries or marches of the enemy and hence the first to meet invasion or advance against the foe. The earl is elderman or alderman, the man of fundal experience and wisdom, and hence fitted to be the shield and counsellor of the people. Baron is from heron, to bear, the original sense being that of one who could bear, as being strong and robust. Prime Minister means, of course, head servant. It may be freely granted

that these titles are often worn unworthily, yet this does not rob the fact which we have noted of significance. These titles with their noble meanings as standards set up in advance of our actual social system beckoning us to better things. It is related that on a field of battle a color sergeant advanced with the regimental flag far beyond his own lines. The officer commanding the regiment, fearing the loss of the flag, yet unwilling to attack the enemy, shouted "Bring that flag back!" But the sergeant, with the battle spirit flaming in his heart, waved the flag above his head and shouted back "No, but bring the men up to the flag!" It is doubtless true that the idea of service as the measure of nobleness is a banner waving far in front of our lives today, yet it is a banner which shall never be furled, nor borne back in retreat, nor borne down in defeat; a blood-stained banner, upheld by the pierced hand of the Captain of salvation, inciting a redeemed race to even nobler deeds; a banner which after it has led the church of God to her final victory here, will be planted on the ramparts of the City of the Skies, to cheer the Church triumphant in her higher service through unending years.

I have dwelt at length upon this thought of service as the measure of nobleness, because I am addressing young men and women who are acquiring the ability to serve and at the same time incurring the obligation to serve in a special degree. The College exists for the development of power. The College is not a patent running machine for spouting a specified amount of knowledge into more or less empty heads as one would pack sawdust into a barrel; the College is rather an incubator at whose warm, throbbing breast the embryonic powers of young life are quickened and brought to the birth. This College, because it is a Christian College, aims to do even more than that. It addresses itself to the magnificent task of not only arousing life to potency, but training it in sympathy with the mind of the Master. It would not only command and discipline the energies of its students, but enlist them for service under the banner of the Cross. I regard it as a singularly beautiful thing and the finest compliment which the Class of '98 could pay this College, that it has so far apprehended the relation between culture and service as to hang above our heads the motto, "Studentus Servire." No coming Class can ever strike a finer note than that. It pledges this Class to the employment of the noblest means for the attainment of the noblest ends. It represents a discovery which this Class has made during its undergraduate career, the discovery that culture means power to serve, and power to serve involves obligation to serve.

Few young people enter College with a true idea of the responsibilities of education. They enter these halls with the thought that education promises place and power and emoluments and pleasant affinities. A great and lasting work has been achieved if between matriculation and graduation the student learns and accepts with thankfulness the truth that education means obligation. No student ever graduates free of debt. You may pay your tuition fees, your board and laundry and tailor and book bills, but you go out from the College loaded down with debt. In debt to the College, in debt to the country, in debt to the world. If you want to keep out of debt stay out of College. But then you would need to stay out of everything else that has any educative or quickening influence in it. You would need to stay in your cradle. The only absolutely debt free human beings are new born babes and idiots. Knowledge is power and power is debt. The more you know the more you owe to God and man. And yet, as we have seen, this is not a gloomy prospect. Herein lies the very dignity and value of human existence. To own our debt, to pay the interest on it promptly and cheerfully, day by day, in the golden coin of willing service, and then when death forecloses the mortgage to surrender body, soul and spirit to the God who gave them that he may do with you as seemeth good to Him—to do this is to take life at its highest and best. Culture obligates to service, but service is the measure of nobleness.

"Poor vaunt of life indeed
Were man but made to feed
On joy, to solely seek and find and feast;
Such feasting ended, then
As sure an end to men;
I'ks care the crop-fall bird? Frets doubt the maw cram-
m'd beast?
Rejoice we are allied
To that which doth provide
And not partake, effect and not receive!
A spark disturbs our clod;
Nearer we hold of God
Who gives, than of his tribes that take, I must believe."

Shame on the youth who goes out from an institution like this into an age like this to dawdle his days away; to stroke with soft fingers the velvet side of life; to lounge about in easy places; to coddle his passions; to nurse æsthetic fancies in life's cosy corners! He is a consummate fool. He may be able to jabber in French, or lisp Italian, or bray in Latin but he is an ignoramus, and a disgrace to his Alma Mater. Such a creature is no true member of society. He is but a parasite, an excrescence upon the body politic, and the best thing that can happen to him is to be so squeezed between the thumbs of poverty on the one hand and contempt on the other that his foul humors may be expelled and his power to harm reduced to the minimum. If any man would be great among you let him serve.

I have spoken thus far of the Measure of a Noble Life; let me now place before you what I conceive to be the Motives of a Noble Life.

First, Faith in God.
"I believe in God the Father, maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ His Son," is the first article of the Apostles' Creed. And it is the first article in the Creed of every life that spends itself in service.

"There are 'mid this loud stunning tide
Of human cares and crimes,
With whom the melodies abide
Of everlasting chimes;
Who carry music in their heart
Through dusty lane and wrangling mart,
Plying their daily tasks with busier feet,
Because their inmost souls some holier strain repeat."

Send your ear to these lives and listen and you will discover that the "holier strain" is this: "I believe in God and in Jesus Christ His Son!" It was by the instigation

of faith that Gladstone in an age when it was tedious of the Bible is reverential awe. Who stepped aside into the bared head and on b in Jesus Christ His S faith has ever been muscles and paraly Faith threads the sou was by the power of service to humanity pressure of his work doing it for God. H the thought that sweet satisfaction gave Him to do the earthly toil and we faith in God!" It v before your soul the visualizes the invis finest issues. Witho creak and grind like levels. Under the n are alleviated, drudg belted with power fro upon a higher and cl its true range and a chariot of toil to the The second motive Man.

This service is a "hope." Write it dov tained servient out of rendered is by patient he only has heart for tinueance. Pessimism doing for the world songs, tills no fields, Pessimism stalks thro scare men from their whatever it touches. man. Like the Ven cōntrive but no hand should we have to thought than that w played out world? If of gold has gone, and to think of the earth with the ashes and b is to lay an icicle ac all warm enthusiasms no place to pessimism of hope. When tem a pilgrimage to Calv its crimsoned cross! ment of the Redeem is the battle standar the sun-dial of the ag ing, not up but down is that vibrant tuning catch and evermore; the ground tone of th the universe with pra the century that is a splendid optimism of that the world is wor capacity for God, that ever humble, shall be gives life its true rang range forward, hope n past, but of the ages strain of our serving, Quaker poet prophet:

"Hail to
Hail to
Forward
All that
Ring, bel
The joy
Sound, tr
Your tr
Parcel an
I keep
Fore-reac
And sh

The third motive is man. This last is th "If I have not love faith," It rocks a c else can stoop so low, toll so long as love.

That is the lesson of Jesus rendered was pre Christ has taken hold many cords. He appr imagination and the which he puts the hea the power thrills that of sin is the central co the heart. Jesus migh mount every morning walked upon the sea, transfigured himself be. Each noon he could h revealed his form stan things, nor all of them truth and goodness J Jacob's well, and the g grave, and the blood o His whole life proclaim is the supreme power

This also is the testi mony of all true literat book that has won a p affections of the world heart of love. Who is Ulysses sailing over sto fies, but Eumæus, t loyal to the humblest t "Little Minister?" I man who hovers about humble, patient, gentl