

MODERN TEKOKITES.

SHORT SERMON BY W. H. ALLWORTH, PARIS, ONT.

Next unto them the Tekokites repaired; but their nobles put not their necks to the work.—NEHEMIAH iii. 5.

WE are forbidden to speak evil of dignities, or we should say some noblemen are very mean men.

It is mean to evade a duty we hold in common with others. What is alike the duty of all, should be felt to be the duty of each. Mean men are often developed when they are under joint obligation with others.

A charge is made in the text against *certain noblemen*. Who were they?

Some men are noble by hereditary estate, and title, heraldic crest, and shield; while others are Nature's noblemen, born with high aspirations, to do great, and noble deeds, born to forget themselves, and in a life of self-sacrifice, to aim only at the happiness of others.

These nobles of the Tekokites were probably nobles by descent, some of the leading families of their tribe.

These men are handed down to us as having evaded their honest share of the work, while they enjoyed a full share of the benefit.

Now, in every church are good and holy men, who do much less of church work than others, and who yet do more than their share. A penniless widow, in giving two mites, may give her all, and thus give more than they who give largely from their abundance, and yet luxuriate on a large surplus.

All honour to the self-denying poor who do what they can.

The Tekoite nobility, however, did not put their necks to the work. The wall had to be built; they were quite willing to let who would build it, like a balky horse, who hangs back, and lets its willing companion pull the load, and drag him too. It would seem there have been men of this stamp aforesaid, and the race has not died out to-day. Some of them are in every church, and are commonly developed when there is work to be done, like some horses who only balk when it comes to the pull.

It is not always an evidence that a horse is balky when he shrinks from the collar; his shoulder may be galled, or there may be some other cause. So there may be just reasons for a church member refusing to put his neck to the work. But those of the Tekoite nobility may be known by their use of the word "they," and "them," and "theirs," instead of "we," and "us," and "ours," when speaking of the church and church work. They may be known further, by their various methods of avoiding duty. Sometimes they object to improvements, and the doing of anything that involves labour, or responsibility; then they decline work, because they did not vote for the object. Others, of the Tekoite breed, will raise no objection to any scheme requiring money. They simply get out of the way when the work is to be done, or responsibility assumed.

The Tekoite nobles knew the wall would be built, and that they would enjoy the protection it afforded. They were quite willing that somebody should build it, but not they.

So, in the churches, there are usually some who do not like your *way* of raising money, or your *time* for raising it; they leave you to pay the church debt, and do the church work, but they will look on and find fault. The Tekokites will not work, and they disapprove of all ways of raising money for religious objects. They do not like to be asked for subscriptions. They do not approve of the meetings. They disapprove of bazaars. They think socials are a nuisance. Appeals from the pulpit are clap-traps which they hate. Personal appeals are a worry. And collections should not, they say, be made on the Sabbath. They believe in *faith* like Muller's, which never gets anything from Tekoite nobles. They like any method that will afford them the opportunity of slipping out of church work, and church responsibility. Anything to save their own necks.

But, as Christianity from its inception by Jesus Christ, till the present time, has consisted in self-

denial, and [self-sacrifice, for the good of others, it is a fair inference, that they who will not put their necks to the work of their Lord have no interest in Him, and none of His Spirit; and, if any man has not the spirit of Christ, he is none of His.

THE CITY OF GOD.

We stand to-day in the quarry,
Hewing with anxious care,
The blocks with which, to-morrow,
We would build life's mansion fair.

Stately and grand in proportion,
It rises with pillar and dome,—
Its walls of the snow-white marble,
Its base of the solid stone.

Fretted each marble column
With devices so cunningly wrought;
The marble speaks for the builder,
And utters his glowing thought.

It breathes of our life's fulfilment;
Of the ills we will conquer, not bear;
Of the paths of joy we shall walk in,
Of the bays that our brows shall wear.

We forget that "the days are evil,"
That the way at best is long;
That the bravest heart grows weary,
And silent the gladdest song.

That wisdom, and strength, and honour,
Must fade like the far sea-foam;
And nothing hath walls enduring
But our far-off beautiful home.

There "our elder brother" waiteth,
Its streets his feet have trod,—
'Tis "the City which hath foundations,
Whose maker and builder is God."

WHO IS MY NEIGHBOUR?

"Who is our neighbour?" Now, I don't think it is hard to find out. I want to know if we here in this church to-day do not know something about the man who fell among thieves. I think you'll find that the road leading from Jerusalem to Jericho has no ending, and takes in all our railway routes and turnpikes. Jerusalem was the city of peace; Jericho, as a city, was accursed, and the road from Jerusalem to Jericho was all down hill. How many there are travelling it to-day, and falling among thieves who strip them of their raiment, and wound them, and leave them for dead!

The snare of the fowler, the dens of the robbers, are in every corner of your own great city. Look about you and beware! Think how little your churches are doing for those who have fallen by the wayside! We read of the priest who came by and went over on the other side. I can imagine that he was on his way down to Jericho to dedicate a synagogue. That was on his mind, and nothing in the world seemed so important to him as that. He heard the groans of a fellow-creature suffering by the wayside, but he did not mind. Perhaps he pitied the man. Pity is cheap, you know. It doesn't cost much effort to pity.

May be he went further, and gave the man a lecture, telling him he had no business to be travelling alone, and wanted to know what business he had down there, anyhow. He had no doubt begun at once to censure and condemn. Perhaps he went farther, and reported the affair to the police to investigate. Instead of taking hold of the man and lifting him up, the priest very likely resolved to use his influence to have more stringent laws passed. Perhaps he was so impressed that he went to work and organized a society for the prevention of crime. He had no doubt seen that man with his wife and children in the synagogue on a previous Sabbath, but he could do nothing more than reflect upon the reason why God sent sin into the world, anyhow, and decide to use the incident to illustrate a future sermon. If you see a man in the water about to drown, do you begin to argue with him about the importance of a sure footing on shore?

I fear we have too many of the priests and Levites about us. They have no fellow-feeling; they haven't any human sympathy, and if there is anything that is

wanted in the present day more than another, it is humanity. These are times when a little kind act can do more than a hundred sermons. The very essence of Christianity is to get outside of yourselves; to do good to others. In that more than anything else it differs from other so-called religious schemes.

But, really, in these times when people are so selfish and close-fisted with their money, it seems the greatest sort of farce to say, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Yet this is the truth, and Christians will never be what they claim to be, or worth the name, until they enter that life which is in the welfare of others. You know the Jews hated the Samaritans. To a religious Jew there was nothing in the world so obnoxious as the presence of a Samaritan. Any man could enter the communion of the Jews but a Samaritan, and when he was buried he was placed so low that it was hoped the angel Gabriel's trumpet should not awake him on the last day. The hope of pardon was eternally cut off from the Samaritan, and the Jew hated him worse than a pestilence. I'll venture to say that when the priest and Levite met him down the road they did not pretend to see him. They just went right along with their heads ahigh, but, thank God, the Samaritan had a heart, and when Christ was down here He sought hearts, not heads.

When the Samaritan saw the wounded and naked Jew, he got from off his beast and lifted him up. He didn't haul out a lot of manuscript and read the Jew a sermon. The drunkards, and the harlots, and the gamblers don't want you to condemn them. They condemn themselves. They want sympathy and something done to better them, or to touch their hearts. They want us to lift them up. And this Samaritan poured oil into the man's wounds. That's what Christ does. He always has oil to heal the wounded heart and spirit. He gives the poor Jew some wine to strengthen him; he tears strips from his own garments to bind the poor fellow's wounds, and then he tries to lift him on the beast.

This Jew was nearly dead. If he had been a little stronger, he would never have allowed the Samaritan to have saved him. So there are thousands who resist Christ while they have strength, and wait until they are weak, and helpless, and naked, and wounded, before they let Him aid them. Then the Samaritan, after giving money to the inn-keeper, told him if it were not enough, he was coming back and would repay him. You know Christ is coming back, and He's going to reward all these inn-keepers.—*Mr. Moody in a late address at Baltimore.*

"HIGHER."

"Higher" cries the impatient bulb, as the earth rises and opens for its entrance into the fair, bright world above. "Higher" says the clambering vine, as it daily strives to wind one more tendril around its supporter. How gracefully line after line is twined around till the summit is reached, and how tenaciously it clings, as if not to lose the position it has gained! "Higher" laughs the gay, gorgeous butterfly, as it seeks to warm itself into life in the sun's genial rays.

And "Higher" sings the lark in his morning song, as he sails through the fleecy clouds to his airy home. "Higher" sings the school boy, as he daily marks his height upon the wall and half-despairs of growth. "Higher" says the youth, when he first beholds the broad fields of intellectual greatness spread out before him, and finds there is work for him to perform.

This word "Higher" is a noble one, a glorious incentive to action. The Christian owns and feels its influence, and it is easy to imagine that he hears it softly breathed in his ear, as he is about to take the last look of earthly objects. "Higher" it was that prompted him to clasp his parent's knee when endeavoring to rise in his infancy. "Higher" was his motto in childhood; in youth he felt its influence; in manhood it urged him to noble deeds and generous actions. And now, as the light of his mental vision is going out, this cheering word comes to guide him safely to that region of eternal bliss where he will find the realization of his motto fully exemplified and personified even in the "Most High."