

present enjoyment he gives away and despises his right of birth. But the next event is a sad and painful one. Isaac feels that he is dying, or at least that death is drawing near, and like a wise man he wishes to set his house in order before he dies. I would have most of you who have got wives and families to remember that. Here was Isaac, an old man who lived many years after this, yet he makes his will. But he made his will wrongly. Under the Divine disposition it was a right one, but so far as he and Jacob and Rebekah were concerned it was wrong, and we see in it a warning to us not to put off that important duty of life until a time when we are unable to do it rightly, and so make a proper disposition of the things of this life which are under our control. Esau takes his father's blessing, and then comes the slight of Jacob. Esau remained at home, marrying amongst families altogether out of sympathy with his own. The daughters of Heth were a grief of mind to Rebekah; she was fairly wearied out with them. I suppose they were troublesome to her, as sometimes daughters-in-law are troublesome to mothers-in-law; and if we had the testimony of the daughters of Heth we should doubtless hear very much the same thing about Rebekah. But, still, there they were, altogether out of the way of life, and Esau was slowly separating himself from his father's gates to Mount Seir where the two brothers are reconciled, and then he turns to Mount Seir again, and for ever goes out into the darkness of oblivion, and we lose sight of him altogether. What became of him we know not; how he ended his life we know not. We see him strong, stalwart, impulsive, everything which we like about a man, and he occupies a large place in our hearts, and then passes away from us a striking and solemn lesson.

In the first place, he was a man of strong physical nature. He was a hairy man. You all know how common is the thought that a very hairy skin is associated with great physical strength. It was so in the case of Sampson with his abundance of hair. The energies of his nature expressed themselves in his love of the chase and athletic pursuits. He was a man of passion with little self-restraint. This is often associated with great activity of body, and some of the ancient legends bring that out markedly, showing us strong physical power linked with very much of passion in men led chiefly by the desires of the flesh and the lust of the eye. To have a healthy mind in a strong body is a high philosophy in life. But though a strong body is much to be desired, it is carefully to be guarded against and kept under, or it may very often lead to great wrong, as in the case of men like Samson or David; because, although when we think of David we recall his great culture, his fine sympathetic nature, and his religiousness, we cannot forget that he had many of the moral weaknesses that are found in company with strong physical powers. Esau is hungry; he cannot endure that, and so parts with his birthright. He goes out into the desert and meets the daughters of the Hittites, and he cannot overcome the temptation, but is led astray by them into ties and entanglements which break up his relations at home. You see the emotional nature of the man burst forth when he loses his birthright. He exclaims—"Bless me, even me also, O my father," and he lifted up his voice and wept. That cunning hunter weeping like a babe! And we are constantly seeing that it is not those with the strongest physical natures who are the men of the greatest moral force. Some of those who have exerted the highest moral force in this world have not been physically strong. I do not know (and I cannot help referring to it again) anything more painful and humiliating than the orgies which are very often associated with the great efforts of the boatrace-day. You know the night of the boatrace is often very disgracefully spent by men who are intimately related to those athletic sports. Go out into the fields and enjoy those sports, but keep them pure; do not be tempted into licentiousness; do not let those strong bodies of yours become means whereby the devil may gain your souls and deceive you at last. He will tell you that you have plenty of physical strength, whilst all the time you are undermining and wasting it. Many societies which have met for the purpose of sport have been altogether destroyed because they have disobeyed moral laws, and retribution has come upon them, and the whole thing has been spoilt and the members themselves ruined.

Again, this man was a man of swift impulse. He is hungry—"Oh," says he, "I am dying; give me something to eat." "I will give you something to eat for your birthright," is the reply. "Very well," says Esau, "let us have it." And he satisfies his hunger, altogether unmindful of what is to become

of him. Then, again, he has been wronged by Jacob, and he instantly nurses revenge in his heart. "I will wait till my father dies, and then I will slay him." There was a recklessness about the man; he did not look round or pause to think; he never asked himself—Is this a part of a Divine purpose? Is there anything about which I should wait a moment and cautiously consider? No; he only sees he has been wronged and will avenge himself. There is something very affecting about these impulsive natures. We are constantly saying of so and so—"That's another mistake he has made, but he is so very impulsive." Men are willing to make allowance for people of impulse. But the man who is cautious, scheming, far-sighted, if he slips and falls there is no forgiveness for him. "No, no," we say, "that is not his manner of doing things—there must be something altogether wrong about him." No, men are often very kind to these people of impulse. Sometimes these impulsive men gain their ends with startling and complete effect. When Alexander the Great came to untie the Gordian knot, which had baffled so many, he simply took out his sword and cut it. "That," said he, "is the way I cut it." But the best work for the world is not the work of impulse. Men who have come in more sober fashion amongst their fellows and have gone slowly about their work have left not perhaps a greater and more splendid name, but have done greater and more splendid work. Impulse may achieve much, but after all it is not to be compared to that patient, quiet, plodding, far-seeing perseverance which sees its end and goes on to it day after day, week after week, and month after month, till the victory is gained. It is true every man has his peculiarities of nature, and yours may be a nature of impulse. But you must watch it narrowly and guard it on every hand, lest your impulse should be your destruction.

Then, again, he was a man reckless of consequences. The present, the immediate, arrests him. He was, as I have said, more like his mother in nature; and yet, strange to say, his father loves him whilst his mother bestows her affection on Jacob. There is a want of keen perceptive power about men of Esau's type; they do not think of what is to come; they do not seem to see the right and wrong of things, and that is the reason perhaps why we do not judge them very harshly. In other cases it is a want of moral culture. The man has never trained himself, and has never calmly sat down before each new possibility and asked himself—"What will this lead to—what will be the outcome of it—what is the moral worth of it?" Such men may become truly great in a certain sense—they may become Gideons in some emergency, but after all there is no purpose in their lives; they are tossed about like a barque without a helm, and their end will be utter shipwreck, and not a gallant entrance into the haven.

And then, lastly, the man does not seem to have any sense of spiritual things. You know there are two ways in which we look at men—as they are natural and as they are spiritual. There are men for whom we have a very high regard simply on the natural platform of things; men whom you cannot help admiring and loving, and Esau was one of them. There was very much about Esau altogether nobler in character than in Jacob; he was a more generous man—a man who was more forgetful of self; yet you cannot help seeing that Jacob has a sense of spiritual things. There is something in him indescribable and undefinable which you do not find in Esau. I have sometimes known a man with fine physical gifts, and a warm and generous nature, and yet his whole course has been downwards, till at last it has ended in ruin; and I have known another man who, put by his side, was not to be compared with him; he was never at the head of the school, never made friends like the others, and was one whom nobody liked, but strange to say, at last he grows up, and you find him, by some mysterious process, toned and moulded and beautified and ready to be gathered into the garner of God. The one man is the Esau going down and the other is the Jacob going up—a Divine culture in one and not in the other. Very frequently that will explain the difference which you have, no doubt often found between religious young men and other young men. Religious young men in society are frequently not very popular. Ah! but you forget what they would have been but for the religion in them. There are some things about Saul that are magnificent and splendid in character, and some day I hope to bring the whole life of that man before you. There was much about David that there was not about Saul; David was a great deal more bloody and cruel, more relentless in his purposes, which were sometimes carried to disastrous results; but there was in David that which there was not in Saul—a Divine spirit purifying