

IRREPRESSIBLE CHRISTIANITY.

This is a strong declaration—that the apostles “could not but speak the things which they had seen and heard”—as it stands in the English tongue. It is even stronger in the terse beauty of its original Greek—there literally reading, “*For we cannot not speak* the things which we have seen and heard.” There is an irrepressibleness in the case amounting to a physical impossibility. Silence is out of the question. The head-waters of feeling crowd so hard on the fountain of speech that no stoppage of commandment, and no pressure of conventionality, and no sealing of courtesy, can keep down its upward rush, and smother its overflow. The law of Nature annuls all other laws; and it is a law of Nature that the full mind *shall* speak.

How invariably we see this as the rule of conversation—where there is no stern self-repression enforced by pride or conscience. If one feels strongly about anything, his talk will be full of it. The enthusiast in any science, or art, or new discovery, or social plan, as we all know, is unable to be long in any presence and keep it secret. It is for this very reason, in part, that society has shaped the proverb, “Beware of the man of one book and one idea,” because when one thought has taken violent possession of a man, it is apt to drive him whithersoever it listeth, with little consideration of the propriety of time, and place and circumstance—of the feeling and convenience of others. He “cannot not speak” the things which he loves, which are the subject of his daily thought and his nightly dream. He wants everybody to take the same view which he takes; wants everybody to enjoy what he enjoys; to awaken to the enthusiasm which stirs his breast and dominates his life. And all this the more especially, if the welfare of others is at stake in the matter, so that all the best feelings of his nature co-work with his enthusiasm to impel him to bring others to his own state of mind by the conviction that they are imperilled by a failure on their part to see as he sees, think as he thinks, feel as he feels, act as he acts.

This being true, there is also a converse, contrary truth. The calm, impulseless inert man, is a man with no great thought in him. Nothing possesses him. No enthusiasm impels him. He drifts with the tide, where the other drives on like the *Great Eastern*, with paddle-wheels and screw, and all sails set. You can tell whether there is fire in the furnace of a steam-boiler or not without opening the furnace-door, or looking at the top of the chimney, or coming into the glow of the radiation of the heat; you can look at the steam-gauge

and listen at the safety-valve. And if the needle of the one points to zero, and the hiss of the other is still, there is no pressure and no power within. All is dead and empty, and dull ashes cumber the grate which was made to glow under its fiery burden.

Apply, now, these principles to men in their relation to religion, and we may draw an inference of value from them. Peter and John had a fire shut up in their bosoms—a fire of faith, and love and duty; and their own soul glowed with it, and the steam-pressure of it showed itself either at the engine, in the sturdy revolution of hard work, or at the gauge and the safety-valve—when work was interrupted for the moment. They *could not not speak* any more than the safety-valve can help its hoarse utterance, when there is a raging heat underneath.

They had become Christians. Christ had chosen them out of the world to be his; had filled them with his spirit; had given them to see how magnificent a thing it would be for all men to become Christians; had revealed to them the fearful danger which overhangs the world without a Christ received by faith; and, having experienced in their own case the blessings of faith, and its results, they wanted all men, and particularly their Jewish fellow-citizens, to take the same view which they took, and enjoy the same joy in which they rejoiced. They saw now that Christ was the Messiah, the Lamb of God come to take away the sins of the world. They saw of what infinite consequence it was for the world to become aware of it, and to receive him and his doctrine. They felt that on their little company had devolved the responsibility of interesting men in this great salvation, and persuading the world in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God. They loved Jesus, and they loved his cause, and they could not bear to think of men's neglecting him, or that that should falter. And so they “could not not speak.” They *must* preach. They *must* work miracles. They *must* do all their possible endeavour. They *must* free their skirts of blood. If they were laughed at no matter sneered at still no matter hated, all the better, since hatred involves an excitement of the mind towards a subject which is more hopeful than dead, listless indifference. As Paul afterwards said of himself, so all the apostles could say: “We are made a spectacle to the world, and to angels and men. We are fools for Christ's sake; we are weak, we are despised. We both hunger and thirst, and are naked and buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place; and labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless: being persecuted, we suffer it: being