

The Inglenook

The Demon of Dumbness.

By Salva.

Among the many deeds of mercy wrought by Our Lord during His ministry on earth, not the least noteworthy was the casting out of the spirit of dumbness. We have in the Gospel-narrative a record of not less than four instances in which this was done. When the people heard men speak who aforetime were dumb they marvelled greatly—and well they might. This particular form of Christ's ministry is urgently needed to-day. In our congregations, up and down the land, there is a large number of people who, though possessing many high Christian qualities, are painfully under the sway of the Demon of Dumbness. In the prayer-meeting, in meetings called for the consideration of important business, they seem as if nothing short of a miracle could cause them to speak.

Nowhere, perhaps, is this Demon of Dumbness found in fuller force than in the treatment which those who may be called occasional pulpit supplies receive from officers and leading members of some congregations. It is not at all unusual for such visitors to come and go without receiving any friendly greeting or any kindly word of farewell. It would be a cruel misinterpretation to say that there is a deliberate intention to be discourteous or unkind. But the fact remains that often not a single word is spoken. It may be pleaded that there is a natural reserve, and a lack of practice in speech, and also, that though nothing is said, there is strong and deep feeling. The fair and proper reply to all this is that the sooner this reserve is broken through the better, that to keep silence is not the method to promote the power of speech, and that strong, deep feeling should have light and air, that is, expression. To feel right is a good thing, but to express that right feeling is still better, even though it be in broken, rugged words. The Book lays stress not only upon being thankful, but also upon giving thanks. "Let the house of Aaron now say that His mercy endureth for ever. Let them that fear the Lord both great and small now say that His mercy endureth for ever."

No minister worthy of the name and the position desires to be addressed in fulsome terms nor to be complimented upon having preached an eloquent sermon. That kind of thing is a poor business, profitable neither to speaker nor hearer. But would it not be a gracious

act to meet the minister on his arrival in the vestry, give him a welcome, and express the hope that his occasional ministry might be blessed? A kindly word at parting, of the same simple nature, would be equally graceful. His efforts may not have been very successful, and no one but God knows that better than he does. All the greater need for a few cheery words. If there has been success and blessing there is a proper way of recognizing it. The facts of which we now speak do not come within the range of the committee on statistics, but if the tale could be told it would be a tale of many a noble spirit sorely discouraged, of many a sensitive heart deeply wounded.

A venerable minister, the very embodiment of Christian suavity, speaking on this subject said, with a significant smile: "Certainly our elders are not very effusive." Effusiveness is not to be desired, but there is all the difference between that and absolute dumbness. Carlyle's statement that "Speech is silvery and Silence golden" is not to be taken without qualification. It is no mean attainment to be able to discern by a sort of instinct the time to speak and the time to be silent. "A word in season, how good it is."

The Rev. Walsham How, when appointed Bishop of East London, in 1879, caused at first much amusement with his shovel hat, apron and gaiters, and many wondered who he might be. In the course of time he had the pleasure of hearing it said "That's a bishop;" later on he had the still greater pleasure of hearing it said "That's the Bishop;" at length he had the delight of hearing frequently these words "That's our Bishop." His biographer mentions this as illustrating the beautiful humanity of the Bishop. Soon after his translation to Wakefield he had to preach in an out of the way part of the diocese. On his departure a working man put his hand into the railway carriage window and said: "We like you very well, you can come again." This was a good "send-off." Yorkshire people are outspoken; they are not as a rule afflicted by the Demon of Dumbness. Some of them would even go the length of telling a speaker "We think nowt o' that." But they appreciate honest effort and know when to speak the encouraging word. One of the Bishop's favorite stories was about a verger who said to him, "A've put a platform in t' pulpit, you excuse me, but a little man looks as if he were in a toob." This may be the opposite of

dumbness, but it sprung from a kind heart.

Some years ago there was a big fire in the great city of London. Despite the efforts of the firemen the flames made headway at a terrific rate. Human lives were in imminent peril and their rescue seemed to be quite hopeless. At length some one in the crowd cried out as the firemen were about to give up the attempt, "Give them a cheer." Forthwith there arose a loud hearty British cheer, which was a very inspiration to the firemen, who, feeling as if new life had come to them, made a fresh effort, which resulted in the rescue of the imperilled lives. The moral of that incident lies upon the surface.

In this respect it may not always be easy to apply the formula "What would Jesus do?" But it is certain that He whose exquisite gentleness does not break the bruised reed or quench the smoking flax, and whose words of praise for Mary of Bethany were so emphatic and gracious, would not fail to speak words of cheer to His servants, thus bracing up their drooping, trembling spirits.

Certain it is also, that He who in days gone by cast out the Demon of Dumbness, would not fail, if the conditions necessary for the exercise of this power were fulfilled, to repeat this work of mercy in our day. It is an urgently needed work, and if it were wrought there would be less need for this mournful, desponding strain.

"Oh it is hard to work for God,
To rise and take His part,
Upon this battlefield of earth,
And not sometimes loose heart."

The good men who, in the Providence of God, are leaders in our congregations, have it in their power to help those who minister in holy things, occasionally or statedly, not to lose heart; and among the many forms in which this help can be given, not the least valuable is that of timely, gracious speech. But in order to do this the Demon of Dumbness must be cast out.

A Master of the World.

Of all great men who have leaped upon the world as upon an unbroken horse, who have guided it with relentless hands, and ridden it breathless to the goal of glory, Caesar is the only one who turned the race into the track of civilization, and, dying, left mankind a future in the memory of the past. He is the one great man of all, without whom it is impossible to imagine history. We cannot take him away and yet leave anything of what we have. The world could have been as it is without Alexander, without Charlemagne, without Napoleon; it could not have been the world we know without Caius Julius Caesar.—Marion Crawford.