

## A MAN OF THE WORLD.

A SERMON

BY THE REV. LLEWELYN D. BEVAN, LL.B.

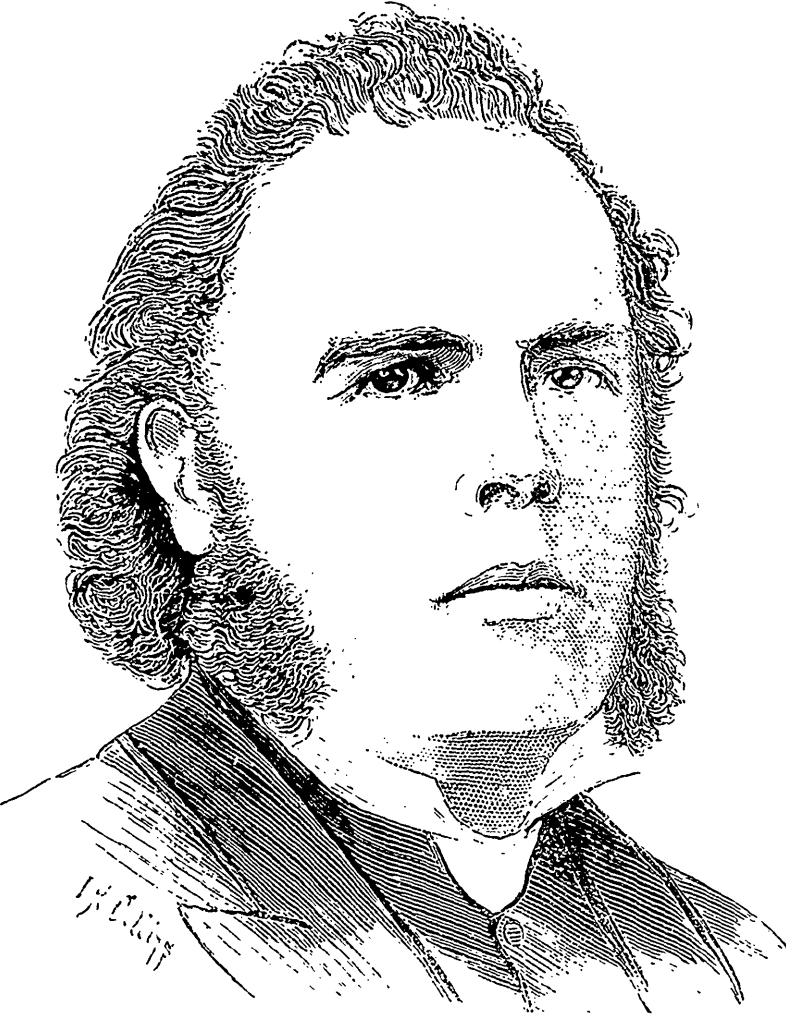
And Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field."—Gen. xxv. 27.

I PROPOSE to look at the life and character of one of two brothers—Esau, the man of impulse, the man who was "a cunning hunter and a man of the field." Let me very briefly remind you of the history of the man, and then in a few words attempt a sketch of his character. In the first place, then, in the life of this man, we are told that there was a struggle before the birth between the two brothers, Esau and Jacob. This, of course, was typical of the antagonism of life and character which would mark them. They were not in any way alike. Esau took after his mother, and Jacob after his father. The impulsiveness of the woman seems to be marked strongly in the son; she who was so ready to go into the wilderness, who would have no delay; she who, the instant she saw Isaac, "lighted off her camel" to meet him—all these little traits about Rebekah come out in Esau, whilst Jacob, the younger, was more like his father. And yet the mother's love was fixed on Jacob; Esau was his father's favourite. It is a thing which you find every day in almost every household, this favouritism on the part of parents towards their children. The evils of it are well taught in the Bible story. Foolish parents may study with advantage the families of Isaac and Jacob, and see the ill effect of regarding one child rather than another. And so the two grew up. Esau became a bairry, ruddy man—a man who looked every inch a huntsman; he belonged to the open air; he loved manly sports, and delighted to chase the wild beasts of the wilderness. Jacob, on the other hand, was more quiet, more self-restrained; there was a good deal of the underhanded and scheming about him—a prudent, sharp dealer—a typical Jew who represented the mercantile spirit of the race. The other man, the elder, had more of the masculine about him; a grand man if he had only had the grace of God in his heart—a man of great physical strength, who might have been raised into a noble power, but who, as we shall see presently, went utterly to wreck and ruin—a faithful picture of many a young man who listens to me now. How many of you, I wonder, belong-

ing to places where numbers of men resort—colleges, shops, archouses, and so on—how many of you were interested in the boat-race yesterday! I do not know whether any of you went to see it, but considering the weather there must indeed have been a passion for boating in any who did go. There were many whose interest in it arose simply from a love of the sport, whilst there were many others who had "something on it." It is a poor thing to hear men talk of these athletic sports as a means of making money. Good-bye—good-bye to the worth of any game as soon as it is turned into gambling. If there are any of you who take a good, honest, manly interest in the courage, the discipline, the strength, the self-denial, the forbearance, which these men have to exercise to fit them

for their task, we can admire that—it has in it some of the character of Esau; the other is the character of Jacob. If there had been races in those days, depend upon it Esau would have been found pulling hard in the boat, and Jacob would have been found betting on shore. One day the elder comes home, tired and worn out; his brother has made a pottage, a kind of savoury soup, and Esau asks him to give him some; but Jacob will not do that, he will only sell it to him. I have seen children develop that sort of disposition. There are some little ones who from the very earliest age were always buying and selling and making money even out of their toys. Some lads of this stamp are the money-lenders of the family; they are always getting pocket money at home or at school, and they are always lending it to their brothers and sisters or play-fellows, and getting a little interest on it. And this is a thing that cannot be too much discouraged. But to return to Esau. He comes home worn out, and asks Jacob

to give him of the pottage; but Jacob will only do so if he will sell him his birthright. Now a birthright in these early days meant a great deal. It did not mean only a possession, but the good use of the possession; and it was so sacred a thing that when it was once given there was no revocation of it, for you will remember the words of Isaac, "I have blessed him and he shall be blessed." But Esau is fainting, and wants to be satisfied, and he says, "You shall have my birthright, only give me something to eat"; and so the Bible strikingly says—and what meaning there is in those few words—"Then Jacob gave Esau pottage of lentiles, and he did eat and drink and rose up and went his way: thus Esau despised his birthright." For a mere present need and



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From a Photograph published by J. W. Allingham.