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LIFE'S PORTRAIT GALLERY

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THE Bible is, sometimes and justly, likened to a picture-gallery, on the walls of which hang portraits from the hands of great artists. Of course, the portraits are not produced upon canvas. The artists' tools were not those which the painter uses, whose handicraft adorns the galleries, whither the feet of the student and curious traveller resort. The portraits which the Bible preserves are word-pictures, appealing to the imagination rather than to physical eye-sight; but they are none the less portraits for all that, inasmuch as every effective writer or speaker is a verbal artist. Unless a speaker or writer paints pictures which, unseen by the bodily eye, are visible to the imagination, he partly fails to achieve his purpose. The charm and magnetism of the Bible lie largely in its pictorial character. I would call your attention to three Bible portraits, which you will find well worthy of careful study:

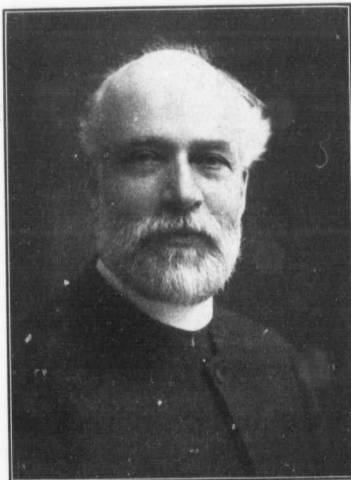
I. *The Portrait of the Unoccupied Life.* Luke 11: 24-26. Here, under the figure of a house, swept, garnished, and empty, our Lord describes the condition of many a life—a life without an occupation or worthy occupant. Purposeless lives are thus portrayed. Such lives fall under the strong condemnation which Jesus always pronounces against idleness. To Him, an idle life, a life unfilled with noble endeavor, is sinful, even criminal. But no life can long remain unoccupied. If it be not tenanted worthily, it will become the abode of tramps, of evil thoughts, unholy desires, base purposes. An empty, garnished and swept house will speedily attract the unclean spirit, who will bring with him other spirits worse than himself.

II. *The Preoccupied Life.* Luke 2. 6. "There was no room for them in the inn." It is not charged that the guests were evil-disposed men and women. We may well believe that they were honest, respectable, some of them godly persons, perhaps. But their preoccupation of the inn robbed it of an honor too great to be characterized; had there been room in that inn, it would have been the

birth-place of the Son of God! What a portrait of countless lives! They are far from unoccupied; on the contrary, they are too crowded to admit of the indwelling of Christ. The great temptation of the majority of those who may read this page lies just there. Your danger is not that you shall fill your hearts and lives with what is positively bad. It is that good may be to you the enemy of the best. Innocent and even worthy ambitions and employments may banish Christ and His cross from the supreme place which they must have, if the life realizes the Divine purpose concerning it.

III. *The Portrait of the Divinely Occupied Life.* Acts 11:24. "Barnabas . . . was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit, and of faith." Here is a life which escapes the temptations and perils suggested by the companion

portraits. It is a life filled with goodness. The secret of that goodness is the Divine infilling through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. And the secret of the infilling is faith; faith in Jesus Christ, the faith of obedience, which not alone cleanses the heart, but protects it against its foes, by reason of the Divine occupancy which it guarantees.



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