

LEAVES FROM A PROPHET'S NOTE-BOOK.

III.

If a man be born more of an ass than a philosopher it is his misfortune, but here the inequality should end, for he should be allowed, equally with his more-endowed brother, both the right to hold his own opinion on any matter, and also (should be able to secure an audience) the privilege of expressing it, always remembering that what may be meat for him may be but poison and thistles for another. If you are a "new man," standing up from the ranks of obscurity to state your opinions for the first time, you may always defy the worst by commencing with "It seems to me." With this preface one may open his mouth boldly with words, whether they be wise or whether they be foolish. From here, as from a fortress or behind a shield, he may shoot arrows whether they be blunt or keen; or striding boldly into the midst of the foe, come out with a whole skin.

IV.

Variously gifted, as we all are, with both good and evil in us, the two not fused but mingling, should we not recognize how we each have given to us an individuality, and, moreover, how, in order to maintain that individuality, every man in his dealings with others should try to be true to himself—in all that is not vicious—true to his own nature, feelings and convictions? If truth is manifold (I suppose it is, only *humanly speaking*), it is only because different minds see different sides or faces of truth. To more than this we cannot attain here. Man is not God. God only knoweth the whole; and to us here, full often, these must be, as Job says, "but parts of His ways" to us who see so little and know less, to whom life is full of problems which we cannot solve and the world has a thousand cries of distress which cannot be appeased, so that often, while some are concluding this and some that, at best we can but go on blindly, as we seek the stars, until that which is perfect is come. For observe that if a man says he can see both sides of a thing, still he is unable to combine them; if he declares he can see both sides at once, behold he "cannot reconcile" them! And not till we come back from mystery upon mystery, from asking again and again, do we finally learn that we are human, and the great lesson that is set us.

But I believe that every man sees *some* truth, at least if he will consider, and that every man has some good in him, *i.e.* exemplifies some form of goodness, so that we are in a way *complementary* to each other, as, perhaps, by a limited comparison, the Apostle Barnabas may be said to have been to St. Paul, and, therefore, I do not want yet to tell me what I think, but what you think. You be yourself and not I, while for you, I will be myself and not necessarily you. We are not acting parts in a drama—or, rather, we are performing the character that has been assigned us in life: accepting it, let us make the best of it. Like an army, our aim is one and

common; but we carry different weapons. The soldier does not handle all arms, yet, in the fight, or after it, he recognizes, and owns himself indebted to all. We are all journeying together towards life's Sabbath—*quam fluctus diversi, quam mare conjuncti*. We will strictly maintain for our own rule what we regard as the right; but, while disagreeing with, we will give credit to each other, not only for honesty, but also for seeing some side of truth, however narrow. Bishop Wiiberforce said that every heresy owed its success to the germs of truth it contained, and many a man has labored and died in a strange land and done no more than remove some of the stones from the path of him that should follow. But what about the feelings of others when we assert our own individuality? Why, is it not the very soul of friendship that we should say what we think, what we feel, to each other? Is not this true love? In whatsoever or whomsoever found, I know not what is more estimable than sincerity. Yes, and we can be kind without conforming; polite while yet declining, while not necessarily subscribing.

V.

The following notes upon sermons and preaching are made rather from experience than from reading. If the ideas are old and have all been said before, at least it is something to know that they have been run through the mill of experience and found to contain some practical truth.

(1) WORK.—I do not believe much in inspiration, for inspiration in composition, even with the greatest genius, most emphatically requires to be *worked up*. When your mind is at a white heat, then you are inspired. No man ever got up from sleep or from dining and straitway ascended and brought down to us "the heavenlies." No man ever "surpassed himself" in cold blood. The most powerful passages now before the world have been evolved *after* a good deal of stuff that the author would not like to show. The charm of perfect oratory! It has all the fascination of music; we listened, eye and ear, intellect and emotions delighted, were carried away and pronounced the orator inspired. He *was* inspired, for he was wrought up to it by the mental activity or excitement of perhaps many hours.

But more frequently, and more to our present purpose—and this applies both to poetry and to music and to all powerful prose—the finest passages that have charmed the listening, worshipping world, and live forever have (prosaic term!), been *constructed*, and they on whom most fame has breathed, have been *laborers*. And even when, in the sense named above, a writer *is* inspired, and his mind gushes with rich ideas and striking expressions, too rapidly perhaps for his pen to chronicle—even then the best of his results thus rapidly obtained must be pronounced capable of further improvement by calm, deliberate labor, study and criticism, without which they will appear verbose or crude. Look at