

tractive is of equal importance with its grander features. Now in this parable there were two phases of human life to be depicted; one that of the sinner who had gone wilfully astray, had become penitent and was forgiven; the other, the far more uncommon one of the man, who from his youth up had served God with an honest and true heart, and who therefore needed no such forgiveness. But they are in each case human beings, who are the types of the two classes, and the best of such is far from perfect. The feeling of jealousy, therefore, which the elder brother manifests is not to be understood as his distinctive characteristic, it is only as I said of another part of the parable, on a previous occasion, one of those slight touches which show the Master Hand of Him who delineated the character. He *is* represented as well nigh perfect; as much so as mere man could be. He were more than man if he were faultless. And remember, it is after we have suffered that we learn sympathy, after we have erred and received pardon that we grow willing to forgive. This experience he lacked. And that he did fail in this matter, we may almost be thankful; for if it had not been so, neither he or we should have heard, at least on that occasion, the gracious words of the text. And there is yet one word more to add before we proceed to the consideration of them. It is this, to bid you observe that after these words were addressed to him by his father all remonstrance ceased. The sense of his own higher privileges, and more blessed state, must at once have dispelled his gloom, made him also willing to welcome the prodigal, and not grudge him his share of their common father's love. For though I know that the opposite view is more commonly held, I pray you to notice that Scripture is silent on the point, and the supposition that he still continued in his unloving disposition is mere assumption, and, I think, inconsistent with the character of one so highly blessed because so nearly perfect.