

More Value than Many Sparrows.

BY REV. ALEXANDER MACLEAY, D. D.

Yes, the sparrow hath found a house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young even Thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King, and my God.—Ps. 84:3.

The well-known saying of the saintly Rutherford, when he was silenced and exiled from his parish, echoes and expounds these words. "When I think," said he, "upon the sparrows and swallows that build their nests in the kirk of Anwoth, and of my dumb Sabbaths, my sorrowful, blind eyes look acquit upon Christ and 'present Him as angry.' So sighed the Presbyterian minister in his compelled idleness in a prosaic seventeenth century Scotch town, answering his brother away back in the far off time and in such different circumstances. The Psalmist was probably a member of the Levitical family of the sons of Korah, who were "doorkeepers in the house of the Lord." He knew what he was saying when he preferred his humble office to all honors among the godless. He was shut out by some unknown circumstances from external participation in the tabernacle rites, and longs to be even as one of the swallows or sparrows that enter and dwell around the sacred courts. No doubt in his faith was much more inseparably attached to form than it should be for us. No doubt, place and ritual were more to him than they can permit us to be to those who have seen and understood the great charter of spiritual worship spoken first to an outcast Samaritan of questionable character; "Neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem shall men worship the Father." But equally it is true that what he wanted was what the outward worship brought him, rather than the worship itself. And the psalm which begins with "longing" and "fainting" for the courts of the Lord and pronouncing benedictions on "those that dwell in Thy house," works itself clear, if I might so say, and ends with "O Lord of hosts! Blessed is the man that trusteth in Thee," for he shall "dwell in Thy house," wherever he is. So this flight of imagination in the words of my text may suggest to us two or three lessons.

I take it first as pointing a bitter and significant contrast.

"The sparrow hath found a house, and the swallow a nest for herself," while I do not know what the Psalmist's circumstances were, but if we accept the conjecture that he may have accompanied David in his flight during Absalom's rebellion, we may fancy him as wandering on the uplands across Jordan and sharing the agonies, tears and sorrows of those dark hours, and in the midst of the little company hurried either north or south for safety, thinking with a touch of bitter envy, of the calm restfulness and serene services of the peaceful tabernacle.

But pathetic as is the complaint when regarded as the sigh of a minister of the sanctuary exiled from the shrine which was his home and from the worship which was his occupation and delight, it sounds a deeper note and one which awakens echoes in our hearts when we hear it, as we may, the complaint of humanity contrasting in unrest with the happier lot of lower creatures. Do you remember who it was that said, and on what occasion He said it, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have roosting places, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head?" That saying, like our text, has a narrower and wider application. In the former it pathetically paints the homeless Christ a wanderer in a land so peculiarly "His own," and warns His enthusiastic would-be follower of the lot which he was so lightly heartily undertaking to share. But when Jesus calls Himself Son of Man He claims to be the realized ideal of humanity, and when, as in that saying, He contrasts the condition of "the Son of Man" with that of the animal creature, we can scarcely avoid giving to the words their wider application to the same contrast between man's homelessness and the creatures' repose which we have found in the Psalmist's sigh.

Yes! There is only one being in this world that does not fit the world that he is in, and that is man, who is the foremost of all. Other beings perfectly correspond to what we now call their "environment." Just as the soft mollusc fits every convolution of its shell, and the hard shell fits every curve of the soft mollusc, so every living thing corresponds to its place and its surroundings, and with them all things go smoothly. But man, the crown of creation, is an exception to this else universal complete adaptation. "The earth, O Lord, is full of Thy mercy," but the only creature who sees and says that is the only one who has further to say: "I am a stranger on the earth." He and he alone is stung with restlessness and conscious longings and needs which find no satisfaction here. That sense of homeless-ness may be an agony or a joy, a curse or a blessing, according to our interpretation of its meaning, and our way of stilling it. It is not a sign of inferiority but of a higher destiny that we alone should bear in our spirits the "blank mingles" of those who, and I include myself among those, have blind feelings after "worlds not realized," which elude our grasp. It is no advantage over us that every flying dancing in the treacherous gleams of an April sun, and every other creature on the earth except ourselves, on whom the crown is set, is perfectly proportioned to its place and its surroundings and possessions absolutely contented.

"The Son of Man hath not where to lay his head." Why must He alone wander homeless on the bleak moorland, while the sparrows and the swallows have their nests and their houses? Why? Because they are sparrows and swallows and He is man, and "better than many sparrows." So let us lay to heart the sure promises of the blessed God, the stimulating exhortations, which come from that which, at first sight, seems to be a mystery and half an arraignment of the divine wisdom, in the contrast between the restlessness of humanity and the reposeful contentment of those whom we call the lower creatures. Be true to the unrest, brother, and do not mistake its meaning, nor seek to still it, until it drives you to God.

II. These words bring us a plea which we may use, and a pledge on which we may rest.

"Thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God." The Psalmist's confidence upon the fact that creatures who do not understand what the altar means may build beside it, and who have no notion of who the God is to whom the house is sacred, are yet cared for by Him, and he thinks to himself: "If I can say, 'My King and my God,' surely He that takes care of them will not leave me uncared for." The unrest of the soul that is capable of appropriating God is an unrest which has in it, if we understand it aright, the assurance that it shall be stilled and satisfied. He that is capable of entering into the close personal relationship with God which is expressed by that eloquent little pronoun "King" and "God"—such a creature cannot cry for rest in vain, nor in vain grope as a homeless wanderer, for the door of the Father's house.

"Doth God care for oxen; or saith He it altogether for our sakes?" "Consider the fowls of the air; your heavenly Father feedeth them: And the same argument which the Apostle used in the one of these sayings, and our Lord in the other, is valid and full of encouragement when applied to this matter. He that "satisfies the desire of every living thing," and fills the world with His lowest creature; and puts the worms into the gaping beaks of the young ravens when they cry; is not the King to turn a deaf ear or the back of His hand to the man who can appeal to Him with this word on his lips: "My King and my God." We grate God when we say that; and all that we see of provident recognition and supply of wants in dealings with these lower creatures should encourage us to cherish calm, unshakable confidence, that every true desire of our souls after Him is as certain to be satisfied.

And so the glancing allusion around the eaves of the temple and the twittering sparrow on its pinnacles may profitably to us, not only the contrast, which is given, but the confidence, which is sweet. We may be sure that we shall not be left uncared for among the many pensioners at His table, and that the deeper our wants, the surer we are of their supply. Our bodies may hunger in vain; but hunger has no power to bring meat; but our spirits cannot hunger in vain if they hunger after God; for that hunger is the sure precursor and infallible prophet of the coming satisfaction.

These words not only may hearten us with their assurance, but they may also satisfy if they are set upon Him, but they point us to the one way by which they come. Say "my King and my God" in the deepest recesses of a spirit conscious of His presence, of a will submitting to His authority, of an emptiness attendant on His fulness, say that, and you are in the house of the Lord. For it is not a question of place, it is a question of disposition and desire. And this Psalmist, though when he began his song, he was far away from the temple, and though he finished it sitting on the same hillside on which he began it, when he had ended it was within the curtains of the sanctuary, and wrapt about with the presence of his God. He had regained as he sang what for a moment he had lost, the consciousness with which he began, viz., that he was with Him on the lone, dreary expanse of alien soil as truly as amid the sanctities of what was called his house.

So, brethren, if we want rest let us clasp God as ours; if we desire a house warm, safe, sheltered from every wind that blows, and inaccessible to enemies, let us, like the swallow, nestle under the eaves of the temple. Let us take God for our hope. They that hold communion with Him, and we can do that whatever we are, and wherever we may be doing, these and only these dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of their lives." Therefore with deepest simplicity of expression, our psalm goes on to describe, as equally recipients of blessedness, those that dwell in the house of the Lord, and those whose hearts are the ways "that lead to it," and to explain at last, as I have already pointed out, that both the dwellers in, and the pilgrims toward, that intimacy of abiding with God, are included in the benediction showered on those who trust in Him. "Blessed is the man that trusteth in Thee."

Manuscript or No Manuscript.

BY REV. W. W. GIFF, MARION, MO.

An extemporaneous speech is one that has not been prepared beforehand. The thought, illustrations and language come to the speaker on the spur of the moment. Few speeches of this kind take high rank. There is sometimes an occasion when a speaker is deeply stirred by the events of the hour and delivers a powerful address without special preparation, but such speeches are rare.

Today the term extemporaneous is also applied to an address delivered without manuscript, however much preparation may have been given to it. Many great addresses are written in full and committed to memory. Such speeches are effective only when the speaker has a good verbal memory. Edward Everett wrote his memorable address and then committed them to memory. Many sermons are prepared and delivered in the same way. A few years ago the retiring moderator of the Presbyterian church delivered his sermon memoriter. An advance copy had been furnished to the religious press and they had the sermon issued before it was delivered. Many of the audience had the printed sermon on their laps while the speaker was delivering it.

Probably the greatest advantage of memorized in part. The most effective speakers without manuscript probably are those who arrange their arguments, facts and illustrations with great care and then trust to the occasion for the language. "My King and my God." We were not fully prepared until he had preached them about twenty times. By repetition he became so familiar with every part of them that they were practically memorized. Charles Sumner was accustomed to give his speeches prepared before delivering them. His servant knew when he was intending to address the Senate by his oratorical efforts in bed. General Garfield wrote his famous memorial address at Arlington Cemetery with the intention of reading it. As the time approached he felt that the occasion was so great that he must not be embarrassed with a manuscript. He delivered the speech almost verbatim from memory. His addresses in general reveal thorough preparation and a full verbal memory.

Macaulay thought out almost every sentence of his speeches and was then able to reproduce them word for word. Dr. John Hall writes his sermons in full so as to mature the thought and illustrations, but trusts to the occasion for the language. It is probable that more than one paragraph is reproduced verbatim from the manuscript. Dr. Talmage is recognized as one of the great extemporaneous preachers of the period. He dictates his sermons to a stenographer. Probably the time approached he felt that the occasion was so great that he must not be embarrassed with a manuscript. He delivered the speech almost verbatim from memory. His addresses in general reveal thorough preparation and a full verbal memory.

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Dr. R. S. Storrs makes a careful study of his themes without writing and then delivers his addresses in classic English. Yet when he wants to be reported accurately he uses a manuscript. Beecher was the most powerful extemporaneous speaker of any age. A recent writer did not speak with extravagance when he said: "I fully believe that nowhere in the tide of time has there appeared on the planet a mightier master of men by speech than Henry Ward Beecher." He was plain and self-possessed in manner, other would do better. He possessed, ready to speech and in perfect command of his resources would dare to do this. Wendell Phillips was one of the most accurate extemporaneous speakers whom this country ever produced. He was plain and self-possessed in manner, other would do better. He possessed, ready to speech and in perfect command of his resources would dare to do this. Wendell Phillips was one of the most accurate extemporaneous speakers whom this country ever produced. 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