

the war at all, than to do so ignorant of your own strength, and the strength of the enemy. And better in religion not to vow, than to vow and not perform.

And therefore when he calls on all men to follow him, when he holds forth the crowns and the thrones, in store for them that love him. When he tells of the cup filled with blessing for any one who will come to him, and drink, he tells as well of the stern conditions; that to be worthy of receiving the cup in Heaven, we must drink first of that bitter one of which he himself drank; that to wear the crowns of glory and victory, we must prepare to suffer from a crown of thorns; that to sit beside him on thrones prepared for us, we must reach them as he gained his, through warfare, self-denial, cross-bearing.

This is what we are taught in this text, the hearings of which I propose now to lay before you. If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me."

The two things our Lord here prepares us for in the Christian life are *self-denial* and *cross-bearing*. To some degree the one is implied in the other but I shall treat of them separately and in succession. *That* then of *self-denial*. "If any man will come after me let him deny himself." I would have you remark this *general truth*. *That self-denial is a condition necessary to the attaining of anything worthy.*

There is no summit of greatness in this world but presupposes a course of self-denial. No prize of genuine worth, but self-denial is part of what we must pay for it. Whatever the path, whatever the field of science, of art, of morals, whoever the master spirit we follow, this one condition of our success remains. *Self-denial*. Is it the profession of the *soldier*? Is there no self-denial implied there? Yea at every step he must exercise it, from the hour when at first leave taking the old home and familiar faces plead with him to stay, till when once more in old age, he buckles on his armour. That bitter giving up of much dear to him, that hard life, those bloody battles. Is it not one continued series of self-denials?

Is it the prize of the *student*? He gains it but only after days and nights of wearing work. When the bright sunshine and the singing of birds, and the merry game invited him out, when every instinct of the young heart bade him give rein to pleasure. Self-denial said *No*. *Work* is for me *now*. *Rest* for me *hereafter*.

Is it the eminence of the *successful tradesman or merchant*? He has attained to much honor, wealth and influence. But how? Was it by some royal road, some pleasant path along which fortune has pulled him? No. In some few cases it may have been so, but the rule is, that who would reach such an eminence must fulfil the God-appointed con-

dition, and give himself to plodding, self-denying work.

That in which the character of a great man in general differs from the commonplace men around him, is very much this, his power of denying himself to everything save the one purpose he is resolved to carry out.

Just as yon tree has shot up so high and strong, because by lopping off its lower boughs, its latent forces have been directed upwards to the maturing of the one stem. So by denying yourself to every little minor impulse, you cause the latent energies of your soul to be concentrated on some one design truly great.

If you would follow the great masters to the perfection they have shown in the in the studio, the laboratory, the workshop, to the rewards of the bar, the senate, the pulpit, you must be prepared to fulfil the condition in much patient self-denial.

And this which is so manifestly true of these common attainments of greatness, is equally so of that which is of all greatness the most worthy, the greatness of being good. This which was the summary of all excellence in Christ's character, was attained and is attainable only on the same condition. "Even Christ, we are told, pleased not himself." Many things there were, constraining him to give up his life-long struggle. But no; he had come *not* to live a life of ease, of indolence, of self seeking, he had come *not* to do his own will, but the will of him that sent him, *not* to gratify every wayward impulse, but to finish the work given him to do.

And this which he underwent, he prescribes to every follower. He offers a like reward, but requires the same condition. Far above the little eminences of earth—far above the highest height to which the master spirits of this world have ever risen—far above the thrones on which fame has set the laurelled great, Christ sits in the glory of a crown, such as may rest on the head of the lowliest on earth, and through the clamor of struggling worldliness, faith can hear him calling still, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself."

But let us define particularly what this Christian self-denial is, and to that end, you may remark first *what it is not*. It is not an indiscriminate denying of oneself to everything good or bad, pleasant or unpleasant. It does not mean that we are to practise an austere asceticism for its own sake, shutting ourselves in from all the world, refusing to receive its general influences, closing our eyes against the things of beauty around us, closing our ears to the minstrelsy of nature, the innocent laugh and song, the pure gaiety of life. It does not mean that asceticism practised thus for its own sake is acceptable to God, and good for the soul.

The self-denial the fast God delights in, is not the mortifying of the body for the sins of the soul. "Not for a man to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and