

the rest of their lives. The skin of the lion which the Greek hero slew was held to make him invulnerable and well-nigh invincible. It was difficult to get this hide. The lion must be fought in the darkness and dealt upon without weapons, but by the grip of the throat. What is the meaning of that? It means that the Nemean lion is the first great adversary. Whatever that may be to Hercules or any one of us, then or now, the first monster we have to struggle with and strangle, or be destroyed, is to be fought in the dark with no man helping us, for every man's Nemean lion lies in the way for him somewhere. All future victories depend upon that. Kill it, and through all the rest of your lives what was once terrible becomes your armour; you are clothed with the virtue of that conquest. In the first place, this lion is to be fought in the darkness and in the cavern, and with no earthly weapons. It is not the stout club, it is not the keen arrows which can slay it. You must block up the entrance to its cave, you must plunge through the murky gloom, and there by sheer force of arm and by resolute might, by that will which God has given to every one of you, and which makes it your chief human privilege to say I ought, I can, I will, strengthened as you will be by the grace of Christ, you must fearlessly and pitilessly meet and strangle this lion. The lion is that inward sin, that special impulse and temptation to evil which is most directed against your individual heart. Are you at this time willing, or are you not, to conquer the sin, whatever it may be, which doth most easily beset you? Remember that God will have no reservations. Remember that His law is that you must keep all His commandments. Not all but one. Do not deceive yourself with the fancy that there is one sin which you may cherish for

yourself; one law to be violated with impunity. On the tree of death, as on the tree of life, there are twelve manner of fruits; but God will not suffer you so much as one of them, because in each one of these fatal fruits is infused the deathfulness of all. Millions of men would be saved almost without an effort but for one sin—the drunkard, but for his drink; the envious man, but for his inworking malice; the unclean, but for his guilty love or desecrating vice. And the man who does not struggle and overcome is losing himself more and more hopelessly in the pathless morass; he is sinking deeper and deeper in the unfathomable sea; he is fettering himself with heavier and heavier chains. Therefore, my brethren, as you love your lives, enter with resolution the dark caverns of your hearts and face the lion who is lurking there. Lay aside the fancy that he can lie there undisturbed without destroying, that you can fence yourself round against him by reason or philosophy, or by prudential reserve, or by any procrastination of the struggle. Nothing will save you but a resolute effort, putting forth the gathered force of your life intensified with grace and prayer. Give that lion but one fatal wound, and though its flaming eye may glare upon you, and its relaxing claw may have power to rend you, each tightening grip on its throat will find it weaker, and you growing from strength to strength, until at last you will fling out of his lair the huge and hideous carcass, and turn the cavern into a holy temple and Christ shall enter there. Further, observe the infinite superiority which Christ has granted to us in these days. The Greeks had noble ideals; but their conduct fell as far short of those ideals as ours does. But often their ideals are as grievously corrupt. Human strength and knowledge is at the best but perfect weakness. But it is the mercy