

Yet, there are some here, doubtless, who can remember the time when if a woman had stepped out to do good beyond the circle of her own family or her immediate dependents she was thought hardly to atone by the extent of her beneficence for the boldness and impropriety of her conduct—the time when many women either frittered away their lives in childish pleasures, or at best sat with folded hands, tied up and shut up by the prim decencies of a conventional respectability from usefulness, from charity, and, I had almost said, from Christianity. Then, if a woman had been told that she did not use her talent, she might have replied with reason that no one had ever told her she had a talent to use. But, thank God, the buried talent is brought to light, and the fetters which the world at first had forged are now broken through. Is it not far better to see women doing good in their generation, not in the place of men, but in their own place which they alone can fill, than to see them merely useless dolls, or mechanical puppets? Is it not far better to see them coming into the foremost place when poverty, and sickness, and distress, ay, and when vice itself needs the tender hand and the loving heart to soothe and to restore—to see them breaking through the prejudices of sex, and claiming their place as the comforters both of souls and of bodies—to see them spreading the beneficent power of medicine, the most sacred of human sciences, or banding themselves together in their holy sisterhoods, rightly named, of mercy and of charity—to see them thus tending the sick and dying, and reclaiming the erring and the outcast, than to see them petted and pampered as the mere luxuries and ornaments of society, and contemptuously complimented with their very inability to do all those things which alone can make their lives an acceptable service to the Lord Jesus Christ?

But, once more, it is not only to be remembered that we all have a talent, but often and often it needs to be called to mind, that the same man may have talents differing in amount at different periods of the same life. God may either diminish the five talents to one or he may increase the one to five. Now, if He increases it, of course, the recipient is bound to show a proportionate increase to his Master; but if it be diminished let us not think that because our opportunities of doing good may be smaller than they were, we are justified in ceasing to do good at all. It often happens that a man loses as life goes on, in God's dispensation, some portion of the gift of wealth, or heat or vigour of mind that was once committed him; and then if ever the temptation is strong upon him to become an unprofitable servant, he must remember that God may be served with the smaller talent as well as with the greater. *"They too may serve who only stand and wait."* How difficult, but

how necessary, for many to learn that they must endeavour to be useful and to do good by their counsel, if they cannot any longer by their active personal work, by their aid, if they cannot any longer by their large and liberal contribution—thus to do good even when their opportunities of doing it are smaller than they were. How difficult, but yet how noble and how Christain-like, to see a man still as profitable a servant with the one talent as he was with the five; not wasting the remnant of his days in the idleness of perpetual complainings, or the bitterness of disappointed expectations, but turning to good account a position lower and humbler than that which he once occupied, or which he once hoped to attain, to see him still pressing on, not abating one jot of heart or hope, but holding on the golden road of faith and love, true, and patient, and steadfast unto the end.

Lastly, my brethren, if it be true that the Heavenly Master has committed to each one of us a talent, let us remember that those talents are given to us, not to boast of but to use. As St. Paul has said of the greatest of all gifts, the gift of the gospel:—"What hadst thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" So may we say of all other and inferior gifts:—"Why dost thou boast? Why art thou birth-proud or purge-proud, or proud of your intellect, or proud of your independence and your liberty? Why dost thou boastfully compare what thou hast with what others have, as children boast each that his own toy is bigger, or brighter, or noisier than the others?" These things were given to you not for to show, but to use. "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal," not to feed conceit, or to pamper vanity; and remember that all these gifts may not only be possessed in lavish measure, but they may be even used to the admiration of the world, and yet in the sight of the giver they may only have been abused, because they have lacked that which alone can make their use acceptable—the element of Christian charity or love.—"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, yet if I have not charity, I am nothing;" and the essence of charity, brethren, the essence of Christian love, believe me, is the spirit of humility, the Christ-like spirit which is content to take the humblest room, and which compresses all its wants and pretensions into the smallest space, that it may leave the larger room for the wants and weaknesses of its brethren. Those gifts which men fancy that they owe to their own merits and that they have to thank themselves for, they will use boastfully and proudly, and, therefore, to themselves, at least, harmfully; but when they have learned to acknowledge in all the hand of the Great Giver, without