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The Evangelical Churchman

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THE TREE GOD PLANTS.

(Republished by request.)

The wind that blows can never kill
The tree God plants ;
It bloweth east, it bloweth west,
The tender leaves have little rest,
But any wind that blows is best.
The tree God plants
Strikes deeper root, grows higher still,
Spreads wider boughs, for God's good-will
Meets all its wants.

There is no frost hath power to blight
The tree God shields ;
The roots are warm beneath soft snows,
And when spring comes it surely knows,
And every bud and blossom grows.
The tree God shields
Grows on apace by day and night,
Till, sweet to taste and fair to sight,
Its fruit it yields.

There is no storm hath power to blast
The tree God knows ;
No thunder-bolt, nor beating rain,
Nor lightning flash, nor hurricane—
When they are spent it doth remain.
The tree God knows
Through every tempest standeth fast,
And from its first day to its last,
Still fairer grows.

If in the soul's still garden-plot
A seed God sows—
A little seed—it soon will grow,
And far and near all men will know
For heavenly lands he bids it blow.
A seed God sows,
And up it springs by day and night ;
Through life, through death it groweth right,
Forever grows.

MY TALENTS HIS MONEY.

The word "talents" has come to be applied to all that God has committed to our charge to be used for Him; and it has therefore a very wide range of application. It has been so applied, of course, from its use in our Lord's well-known parable related in Matt. xxv. 14-30.

The parable was spoken in reference to His Second Advent. He likens his return to that of a master from a long journey, who at once asks of his servants an account of money which he had entrusted to their care, for use in trading during his absence. The usual interpretation, that these talents represent the various graces, gifts, and opportunities with which we are entrusted, is no doubt the right one; and we cannot help thinking that we may very profitably consider the Consecration of these to the service of God from this point of view. We shall not, however, deal with those endowments which we usually speak of as Christian graces; but we shall confine our attention to the natural gifts of mind and body, and the opportunities of usefulness within our reach.

Before entering into detail as regards a few of these, we must recollect some very essential truths which are common to all alike, and which may be gathered from the parable of the talents. And firstly, we must think of them all as represented by a sum of money; there is much to be learned from this as to their value and their use.

Money has a specific value of its own, settled by common consent, and not left to each one's judgment to determine. It is, as regards itself, as valuable in the hands of those inexperienced in its use, as in those of the merchant who trades with it successfully. It is just as precious whether its value is known or not. But where its value is not understood, there is loss to the owner, and to those to whom it might have been made of use. So it is surely with all our talents. They have their value, and an unspeakable value it is. This is quite apart from any opinion we may form of them. Their value is in themselves. Whether recognized or not, it remains the same. But where it is not recognized, loss, serious loss, is sure to follow both to the owner, and to the many who might have been benefited by them.

But further, money is not only of value in itself; it is also for use. In the parable, all but the slothful servant 'traded' with it. However great its value, considered only in itself, it is perfectly unproductive unless use is made of it. Indeed, unused, nothing is more useless. Thousands of pounds locked up and put away are of no use to any one. Their owner cannot enjoy them. But, on the other hand, nothing so repays the using of it as money. Put out to use, it is capable of steady increase. Money used makes more money. And not only does it multiply itself; but it is capable also of producing an endless variety of most useful results. It is so also with all our talents. Their usefulness depends not upon their intrinsic value, but upon the use which we make of them. Neglected or unused, they fail to produce their proper results. Used, they increase by exercise and experience; they literally multiply themselves. And over and above this, there is no end to the blessed and happy results which flow out to others on every side of us, when our talents are rightly employed.

And this brings us to another most important

consideration. In using money, it is most essential to use it to the very best advantage. We mean by this much more than merely using it well, as distinguished from making a bad use of it. There are many ways of making a good use of it; and some yield a more profitable return than others. The right use of money is an art, which requires thought and study. It must be laid out in the best markets, in the best way, and in the best time. The same amount of money will do much more in some people's hands than in others'. From one point of view, both might be said to make a good use of it; but from another point of view one of them makes a much better use of it than the other. So, again, it is with all our talents. Among those who endeavour to use them well, some make so much more of them than others. Some scarcely seem to know how to use them at all. Some who have much more talents than others make far less mark with them, simply from not using them rightly. Talents of all sorts should be laid out to the very best advantage, so as to secure the largest possible returns.

And this thought leads us on to another which is equally important. The best use must be made of our talents, for the simple reason that they are not our own. In the most solemn sense they are entrusted to us. They are like the master's money in the parable, which was entrusted to his servants to employ for him, just because it was actually his, and not their own. Even the unprofitable servant, who made no use of it, still recognized that it was his master's, and not his own, money (Matt. xxv. 25). And the master so distinctly recognized it as his property, once calling it 'my money,' and once 'mine own' (ver. 26). But we are so slow even to recognize all our talents as not our own, but belonging to the Master. We take credit for them, and accept praise for them, and forget to hand on all praise and credit untouched by us to Him. Nay, we sometimes feed our own pride by dwelling upon the points wherein we may excel another, as if our talents were the produce of our own ability and efforts. And in our use of them, we too often have our own aims in view, instead of endeavouring to discover what He would have us do. Very often to satisfy a conscience which would not be at rest, if they were not employed at all, we lay them out just anyhow, instead of thoughtfully considering how we may do so to the very best possible advantage. All this arises from forgetfulness that they are 'our Lord's money.'

Hence arises the need of a very real Consecration of them to Him. And in doing so, let us remember the great secret of all the believer's Consecration, which is clearly to recognize that all absolutely and really belongs to Him already, whether we have recognised it or not. Consecration is not an act on our part, making anything His which was not just as really His before. It is simply the practical and sustained recognition that it does so belong to Him, and must therefore be used only in His service. The talent of the unprofitable servant, wrapped in the napkin, and buried in the earth, was just as truly 'his Lord's money' as if he had been using it for his master. The Consecration of the other two servants was not any act of theirs by which they made over the money to him, for it was his already, but merely the recognition of his ownership, and the using of it accordingly for him.