

found in the words of my text and in many other passages of Scripture. The definite promise, "Thou shalt tread upon the lion and the dragon," was a reference not only to reptiles and wild beasts of outward evil, but to evils in which the deadliness of vice is concentrated in our individual hearts—evil thoughts and deeds and habits which assail and hurt the soul. When the Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews says of some of the Old Testament characters that they stopped the mouths of lions he doubtless meant his words to be understood metaphorically as well as literally. So, too, does St. Paul, when he says that he fought the beasts at Ephesus, and that God delivered him out of the mouths of lions. So, too, St. Ignatius, when he says that on his way to martyrdom he was fighting with wild beasts all the way, and describes the Roman soldiers as ten leopards with whom he was travelling. So when David speaks of the jawbones of the lion he is not thinking of actual lions but of human and spiritual enemies. If, therefore, we can adopt the metaphor, we are no more guilty than these of using language which is fantastical or sensational language, and the fitness of the metaphor is shown by the fact that we find it also in the heathen mythology. Let us not follow the ignorant prejudice which would regard the thoughts of the heathen as if they were not worthy of our Christian interest. We have learned more and more in our own day that there is an Ethnic as well as a Hebrew inspiration. The noble study of comparative religions is widening the horizon of our thoughts, and revealing to us that God spoke in old times to the Greek and the Roman and Persian and the Hindoo, as well as to the Jew. All wisdom is not hid in Moses' law. Now in the old and uncorrupted springs of Greek mythology we

find the purest moral intuitions of that wonderfully gifted race. If there was one virtue which the ancient Greeks admired above all others, it was sober-mindedness, which is also earnestly impressed upon all, especially upon young men, by St. Paul and St. Peter. Now, if Paul, even on the Scripture page, quotes the Greek poets, why should we not also refer to the pure lessons of Greek mythology, and the Greek type of this noble virtue of sober-mindedness, the ideal type which they set before themselves, of a life strong in self-control and almost divine in its self-sacrifice? The type of a deliverer of the world is their hero Hercules. Grossly as that idea was dwarfed and stunted by the polluted imaginations of the later poets, the hero stands in the old mythology as the grand representative of toiling, suffering, persecuted, victorious manhood—the embodied conception of a life raised to immortality by mighty toil for the good of others. And they saw, as we see, that he who would indeed conquer evil in the world must first conquer it in his own heart. To him it must never be said, as to the Pharisee of old, "Thou therefore that teachest others, teachest thou not thyself?" This is the meaning of that fine apologue of the Choice of Hercules. The young hero, in his opening manhood, makes his choice of self-denying virtue, and not of unlawful pleasure. But the moral is yet more finely conveyed in the legend of his conquest of the Nemean lion, which is the first of his great labours. The great hero in his adolescence is always represented as arrayed in the pelt of this conquered wild beast. Doubtless the slaying of an actual lion is something. The Scriptures deem it worthy of record that lions were slain by the youth Samson and the youth David. But neither Samson nor David wore the lion's skin in memory of their victory all