

count of it; and if you hoard it covetously, or if you squander it wastefully, you are abusing the gift of God." And it deserves also to be noted by the Church with the most enthusiastic praises, and it deserves to be blessed with the most emphatic blessings, when rich men are found using their talents well, and able to give a good account of their stewardship—when a noble-hearted man in two colossal gifts that would of themselves make a princely fortune, gives not for the good of those of the land of his birth, but only for the poor and the outcast of the city of his adoption. These brethren, are the Christian's investments in those treasures which neither theft nor decay can damage; and in the sight of families raised by such magnificent deeds from animals into men, and in the sight of homes of wretchedness turned abodes of comfort, angels may read the Christian's title deeds to an inheritance in the heavens, "incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

And so the gifts of intellect are, doubtless, great. The danger of abusing these has been a common, but not too common, theme of preachers and moralists in every age; and the responsibility of these has been admitted by all, except, alas! sometimes by those who possess them. But, brethren, though the gifts of wealth and of intellectual excellence are so great, let us not think that because, perhaps, we possess neither the one nor the other, therefore, we have no talent at all. It is the very teaching of this parable, that not only he who has the five talents, or the two, but that he also who has the one is responsible for its use, and must not hide it in the napkin of a false modesty, nor bury it in the earth of a culpable slothfulness.

I will name the two talents which we all possess, and which, therefore, we are all responsible for. First, though you may not be a person of wealth, or station, or eminence in the world, yet that very skill or labour, though it be humble, by which you earn your daily bread, or that very station, be it insignificant that you fill, that is a talent given to you to use. Will you say, "I am only one amongst tens of thousands, who pass through life unknown and obscure in the lower ranks of trade and commerce, or in the inferior offices which the multifarious needs of government require, or, it may be, in the drudgery of some mechanical labour, and, therefore nothing can be expected of me. I can do nothing for the good of my fellow citizens and my fellow Christians?" No. This is a false feeling. We are at liberty to say, if we like, "I am nobody;" but we are not at liberty to say, "Therefore, what I do matters to no one except myself." No; rather it is the lives and the characters of common-place, of ordinary, and even of humble people that form the truest test of the Christianity of a church or a nation; for the Christianity of a church or a nation cannot truly be estimated by the

eminent graces or virtues of those who stand up in mental or moral stature above their fellows, but by the general level and tone of the whole, towards which every one contributes his share, however insignificant he may be in himself. Therefore let no man undervalue his opportunities. Let no man be wanting in that kind of self-respect which teaches him that he is a responsible agent to God. My brethren, the devil counter-working and parodying the work of Christ, as he always does—tho' devil has his servants, too, to whom he commits his talents to be used; and we do not find with them that the smallness of the opportunity leads to a corresponding insignificance of result; rather, we are astonished to find how the young and the insignificant, and those who do not seem to have the capacities for evil on a large scale, are yet able to effect for the hard masters to whom they sell themselves crimes gigantic in their dimensions, and boundless in their influence for evil. And shall the servants of Christ be less true than the minions of Satan?—Shall the men of one talent, who always must far outnumber the others, be found to be unprofitable servants? God forbid; for, most assuredly from the humble and the simple, no less than from the wealthy, and the wise the account of their talent will be demanded, and for them, too, the master will pronounce either the word of praise, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord," or else the word of condemnation, "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

But, brethren, there is another talent that we surely all possess. Every one of us has something that may properly be called his leisure—some space of time over and above what is needed for his work and for his necessary relaxation and rest; and it is one of the hopeful features of our age, that men are learning more and more that in that leisure they have a most valuable talent from which they can reap a most golden harvest. That those who once were condemned to a necessary idleness, or at least, who had no encouragement to use their leisure well, are now learning more and more what good service they may do in all those beneficent works which a practical Christianity engenders, and for which our social needs are daily crying aloud. Let us pray that the same spirit may increase; and you, my brethren, yourselves, seek for this opportunity, for then, depend upon it, you will neither lack the opportunity of doing good with your spare time, nor will you lack the abundant blessing of God upon the way in which you so employ it.

But especially let me beg you to think of one talent that was once buried that has now been brought forth. There is a whole class of the world that in our own country, as Christians were once shut up in the trammels of a conventional inactivity—I mean women.