

THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

SOME years ago Dr. Llewellyn BEBB edited a selection from the sermons preached in the University Pulpit of Oxford. The volume contained notable names and notable sermons. For when the scholar is a preacher he is the best preacher. A selection has now been published of the sermons preached in the University Pulpit of Aberdeen. It also contains notable names and notable sermons.

The title is *Sub Corona* (T. & T. Clark; 4s. 6d. net), for these discourses were delivered beneath that crown which is the architectural glory of King's College in Aberdeen. It is not a volume of war sermons. There is only one sermon on the war in it. That is by Sir George Adam SMITH, the Principal, and is notable enough. But it stands alone. The rest are such sermons as may encourage undergraduates to 'trust in God and do the right.'

One of the sermons is by Professor James STALKER. Why single it out? It is singled out already. It is unique. No other preacher addresses himself openly to the women undergraduates of the University. Professor STALKER has too much of the preaching instinct to address himself to women only, there being nearly as many men before him. His sermon is for the undergraduate, for the life that is opening to the

problems and responsibilities of being and of serving. But he deliberately chooses a woman's text and recognizes the woman's place.

We have guessed the text already: 'Verily I say unto you, Whosoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her' (Mt 26¹³). We have guessed the text; have we guessed the title? The title is 'The Advocate.' We shall see its pertinence in a moment.

But first observe the opening sentence. How much hangs upon the opening sentence of a sermon! Dr. STALKER'S opening sentence errs in length. But it is arresting. 'Preachers have to search for their texts, and sometimes, it is said, they have no little difficulty in finding them; but here is a text made to every one's hand; it is evident that Jesus desired it to be taken by every preacher of the Gospel; and we may surely expect His blessing when we thus fulfil His will.'

There is not a word of apology for the choice of the text. Certainly not. There is no recognition of its choice as purposeful. Certainly not. The men are watching. The women are alert. The text has opened expectation. The first sentence of the sermon has removed all suspicion

of sensation, and has struck the note of responsibility.

But the title. The title is 'The Advocate.' For: 'Whenever I read this incident, it reminds me of a rare title of Christ, occurring, indeed, only once in Scripture—the Advocate. To some this title may have been suggested, as a topic for pondering, by their own profession; but the best comment is to look upon Jesus Himself in the very act of advocacy, as we do here. Mary, His friend, had performed one of those actions which, scattered at rare intervals along the tracts of time, indicate the emergence of new powers in human nature; but so much was it misunderstood and misjudged that, had not Jesus intervened, it would either have been consigned to oblivion or remembered as a scandal. The Advocate, however, was on the spot. It was a woman that had been attacked; and all the chivalry of His nature rose up to protect her. There is unmistakable heat in His first words, "Let her alone; why trouble ye her?" And then His strokes fall, blow after blow of argument and rebuke, on the heads of her opponents, till she is not only vindicated but raised on a pedestal for the admiration and imitation of all generations.'

That is the work of the scholar and the preacher. It is not too long an introduction. It is informative, it is arrestive; above all, it brings preacher and hearer together. The young men and women have lifted their heads to listen, their heart and their preacher's beat as one.

The first lesson follows immediately. 'In thus vindicating His friend, Jesus was vindicating *the Beautiful against the Useful*. This is founded on the words, "She hath wrought a good work on me"; for the word translated "good" is literally "beautiful." Dr. STALKER looks at the matter a moment from the point of view of the utilitarians. He estimates the value of the box in 'our money.' Some forty or fifty pounds' worth! Was it not sinful extravagance? It was 'beautiful,'

replied Jesus, as if no further defence were necessary.

He uses this illustration. 'In speaking of literature, Coleridge once said that, whenever you come across a passage of which the wording is unusually beautiful, you may conclude that the thought beneath the words will be rare too; because it is the beautiful thought that makes the beautiful words. And I would venture to add that, whenever you come upon a beautiful action, you may expect the motive beneath it to be beautiful also.'

The second lesson is that 'in defending His friend, Jesus was vindicating *the Original against the Conventional*. This is founded on the words, "The poor ye have with you always, but me ye have not always."

'The utilitarians immensely strengthened their position by bringing in the poor. The suggestion came from Judas; and for a moment it seemed as if Judas were a better friend of the poor, not only than Mary, but even than Jesus Himself. Jesus did not suffer Himself to be betrayed into uttering a word on this occasion against the habit of giving to the poor. On the contrary, He re-affirmed the duty of so doing; but, at the same time, He took occasion to point out that this is not the only kind of giving.'

'There are two kinds of giving, the one of which may be called ordinary or conventional, the other extraordinary and original. Both correspond with kinds of giving on the part of God; for all our giving, whether of the heart or of the purse, is merely a response to the antecedent giving of God. On the one hand, there is His ordinary giving—daily bread, and daily happiness, and daily grace—and with this ought to correspond our ordinary giving—to the poor, at the church door, and the like. But God's giving is not restricted to what is ordinary; if He gives rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, year in and year out, He, in addition,

gives some days when merely to be alive is a delight; if He sets men in families and upholds the pillar of the domestic tent for a lifetime, He gives, besides, such incidents of domestic joy as make the dates on which they happen red-letter days in the calendar of memory; if He blesses a land with the Gospel and gives opportunities of worship Sabbath by Sabbath, He also sends occasional times of blessing, when the breath of the Spirit goes forth over the land, and everything begins to blossom with the freshness of a spiritual spring. Now, the heart ought to respond to such extraordinary giving on the part of God with giving of its own which is extraordinary.'

The third lesson is that 'in defending His friend, Jesus was vindicating *the Particular against the General*. This is founded on the words, "She hath done what she could."

At this place the scholar is needed and makes himself felt. For, says Dr. STALKER, 'You have heard sermons on these words in which they were interpreted as if the meaning were that she had done the utmost that it was in her power to do, and as if they were intended to encourage all, but especially the humble and ungifted, to do all they may be able, even if it be but little. In reality what Jesus meant was exactly the reverse—that Mary had done what she alone was capable of doing—and the message is not to the ungifted, but to the talented, to place all their talents at the disposal of the Saviour.'

Two modern thinkers of the highest distinction have put forward two different conceptions of duty. One has said, Act in such a way that all other human beings may act with advantage in the same way as you. The other has said, Do the thing in the world which you alone can do, or, in other words, develop your individuality. Professor STALKER does not think that these two principles, laid down respectively by Kant and Schleiermacher, are contradictory. 'On the contrary, it is the man or woman that acts most habitually according to

universal laws who, when the occasion arises, is most likely to do something unique and original. It is the soldier, for example, that is acting all the time most in accordance with the duty of a soldier who, on a sudden emergency, will perform a feat of bravery that will earn the Victoria Cross.'

Mary's act, although an inspiration of her own genius on the spur of the moment, may have been due to what is mentioned as a habit of her piety. If she had not sat often at Jesus' feet she would never have anointed His head. 'The lesson, therefore, is that if anyone has a special talent, whether of eloquence, or song, or art, or social attractiveness — anything rare and unique, like Mary's box of ointment—it is not to be left behind or thrown away when one becomes a Christian, but consecrated in some way to the Master's service.'

The last truth is that 'in defending His friend, Jesus was vindicating *the Unconscious against the Conscious*. This is founded on the words, "She is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying."

Do the words mean that Mary was aware of the nearness of the end? Had she fathomed that secret of God's providence which none of the Apostles knew? Dr. STALKER does not say it is impossible. 'But it is so unlikely as to lead us to ask whether the words of Jesus may be taken as expressing not what her act was to herself, but what it was to Him. He looked upon it as the anointing aforehand to His burying. Perhaps all beautiful actions have meanings beyond the conscious intention of those who perform them; and our feeble efforts, when taken up into the web of God's mighty purposes, may have effects of which we have never dreamed; just as a shapeless daub of paint, when laid on a picture by a skilful hand, may form a point of dazzling beauty at which generations will come to wonder.'

Jesus was preoccupied with His death. 'Mary's

anointing came within the sweep of this preoccupation. As kings and other great men lie down in their graves on beds of perfume, so would He stretch Himself out in the tomb, wrapped in this woman's mighty love; and she was only the first of ten thousand times ten thousand who would love Him for the same reason. Now His enemies might do their worst: for love they might give hatred; their passions might rage around Him like an angry sea; their sin might crush Him; but Mary had counteracted and defeated them beforehand, enveloping Him in mail which they could not penetrate. Thorny was the bed on which Jesus lay down, yet it was smoothed to roses by love. Thus did the fragrance of Mary's ointment float round the cross, and that was fulfilled which had been written of old, "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied."

Under the title of *The Great Hereafter* (Clarke & Co.; 1s. net), the Rev. J. D. JONES, D.D., has published an address in which he makes confession of the faith that he has for those who have fallen in the war. He is most concerned about the young men. Amongst the fallen in this war there are thousands who are little more than lads—anywhere between eighteen and twenty-one. They had hope for this life. They had ambition. Many of them had made special preparation for special work in it. But when the call came they left all and went forth. To what?

Not to annihilation. The first thing that is clear to Dr. JONES is the fact of immortality. 'A German theologian has ventured on this prophecy: "For the religious consciousness of the present, the hope of immortality falls ever more into the background and becomes secondary, so that one has no difficulty in prognosticating for this dogma an easy and natural death."' Dr. JONES does not agree. 'It is like a great many other German anticipations—it is about as mistaken and false as it can be. The dogma shows no signs of that "easy and natural death."' 'What we are witness-

ing now is not the death of the faith in immortality, but the *resurrection* of that faith. "You have preached your last sermon," said a friend to Maurice, the great theologian, as he lay a-dying. "In *this* life," was his whispered reply. That is all that is finished so far as our lads are concerned—their activities in *this* life of time and sense. But *life* is not at an end.'

Not to bliss. That is the next thing that is clear to Dr. JONES. 'The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness and do immediately pass into glory.' Perhaps: Dr. JONES was not educated on the Shorter Catechism. But in any case they were not believers. Very many of them were not. We know that they were not; and it does harm to us, and no good to them, to pretend that we think they were. 'The condition of eternal blessedness,' says Dr. JONES, 'is faith in Christ. The Kingdom of Heaven is open to all *believers*.'

But there is such a thing as instantaneous conversion. Is not conversion always instantaneous? Much may go before and be preparation, but the act is always momentary. 'In a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, a man may look to Christ and give in his allegiance to Christ, and when he does that he passes out of death into life.'

And then there is the readiness of reception. 'While he was yet a great way off, his father saw him.' 'And so,' says Dr. JONES, 'I can rejoice to believe that in the very act and crisis of death men may have called to Christ to save, and that of multitudes of them what Katherine Tynan says may be true:

Between the saddle and the ground,
Was mercy sought and mercy found.

Yea, in the twinkling of an eye
He cried, and Thou hast heard his cry.

Between the bullet and its mark,
Thy face made morning in his dark.

And while the shell sang on its path,
Thou hast run, Thou hast run, preventing death.

Thou hast run before and reached the goal,
Gathered to Thee the unhoused soul.'

Certainly not to eternal woe. That is the last thing that is clear to Dr. JONES. Does Dr. JONES believe in universal restoration, then? He is inclined to believe in it. But he is not chiefly concerned with it. Whether or not *all* shall be gathered in is not the point he wants to make. His concern is with these young men. If they were not believers; if they did not accept Christ on the battlefield, what then? That is the question he is concerned to answer.

His answer is that they shall have an opportunity afterwards. He is quite sure of that. The texts are inconclusive, but he does not build his belief on texts. He builds it on the character of God. 'So let me say for myself that when I think of the fate of these lads, some of whom were so young that they had scarcely begun responsible life, some of whom had few chances in the way of their upbringing—when I think of them in the light of God's character, I feel driven to demand a life of probation after this life is done.'

'Our Protestant fathers swept away the doctrine of purgatory. It is not surprising, seeing the abuses associated with it. It became in the hands of a corrupt and grasping priesthood an excuse for extortion and greed. The length of a man's stay in purgatory was made dependent upon the amount of money paid to get him out. It was all of a piece with that traffic in pardons which stirred Luther's soul to such holy wrath, and which was the match that kindled the fires of the Protestant Reformation. Nevertheless, it may be permitted to a sturdy Protestant to say that when our fathers, in their revolt against the abuses of purgatory, swept away the very idea of a probationary life, they went too far. There was a real truth in this doctrine, which had been held by the

Church for centuries. No doctrine which persists throughout the generations can be dismissed as wholly untrue. There is no principle of vitality in what is a mere falsity. If a thing endures it is because, mingled very likely with much that is erroneous, there is a real truth at the heart of it. And now that the fierceness of controversy has died down, Protestant theologians are returning to a belief in a probationary life after this one.'

Professor James Hope MOULTON is one of the few who have been able in this life to master more interests than one. He is a supreme authority on the language of the New Testament, and he is almost as supreme an authority on the religion of the Parsis.

Professor MOULTON is at present in India. He went to India on the behalf of Christian missions. Now the problem of Christian missions has become extremely complex in our day. Professor MOULTON understood that he was fulfilling his duty in visiting the Parsi community in Karachi. He has sent a letter to *The Methodist Recorder* which shows how complex the missionary problem is, and how impossible it is for any one to do effective missionary work without a knowledge of its conditions.

After a three weeks' tour in North India, Dr. MOULTON crossed the dreary wastes of the Sindh desert to Karachi, 'the Land's End of India.' In Karachi there are over two thousand Parsis, their Dastur or High Priest being Dr. M. N. Dhalla, a scholar, trained in Columbia University of the United States, and already well acquainted with Professor MOULTON and his Parsi scholarship. 'When I stepped out of the train,' says Dr. MOULTON, 'last Sunday morning, with twenty-four hours of railway dirt upon my person, I found Dr. and Mrs. Dhalla, Mr. Framroz, President of the Parsi *Anjuman*, and a dozen other ladies and gentlemen to meet me. It became embarrassing when Mrs. Dhalla put a garland of roses and other flowers round my neck, which fell to my feet, and a beautiful bouquet in my hand.'

'But the warmth of this reception,' he says, 'was even exceeded by that of my send-off on Friday night and by the social meeting on Wednesday, when I was invested with a Dastur's shawl of sumptuous Indian workmanship, as a kind of honorary degree. With all this there was the large Parsi attendance at my lectures at the Government College, the Parsi Institute, and finally even the Y.M.C.A., where I had intended to give distressingly apathetic European Christians a straight talk on the inseparableness of Christian profession and Missionary zeal. Half my audience being Parsi, I had to vary my style, though not my subject, and explain frankly why we could not as Christians abstain from telling our brothers and sisters of that which had become for us the most precious thing in life. That even this did not diminish the cordiality of our personal relations shows that the hearts of the Parsi community are very open to the messenger, and this at least opens the door for him.'

But what about the message? 'I am under no illusions,' says Professor MOULTON. He asked Dr. Dhalla how his people would talk among themselves about the Christian message which he had been offering them. Dr. Dhalla classified the Indians in their attitude to the Christian missionary. Some are bitterly hostile. Why should alien missionaries come to disturb hereditary beliefs and force on India what she does not want? Some resent even the work among the depressed classes. Leave the Dom to Hinduism—it will attend to him by and by. And this, says Dr. MOULTON parenthetically, when Hinduism has not a temple at which the Doms may worship! The most enlightened (and these the Dastur politely signified would be Dr. MOULTON'S audience) welcome Christian education and social work among the lower classes, but as for themselves—they remembered that Christianity is a proselytizing religion and were tolerant.

Then comes the problem. At the heart of it lies Theosophy. Just when the Hindus were

opening their eyes to the filthiness and the folly of their ancient scriptures, Mrs. Besant came and showed them how to accept the filth and even the foolishness by a mystical interpretation. The Parsi was not immediately affected. In the Avesta there is nothing for which any one need blush. But the Avesta has its explanation of the Universe, out of date and ridiculous. Mrs. Besant would prove that it is an up-to-date manual of Cosmogony at one end and of sanitary science at the other.

'It is this kind of leech that has fastened on the body of Parsiism in these days of reaction. A religion which need not have gone outside its Founder's noble hymns, three thousand years old, and unintelligible to over ninety per cent. of those who recite them, is feeding itself on Mrs. Besant's chaff. Every attempt to bring its obsolete elements into line with modern ideas is bitterly resented. To hold a Zoroastrian Conference for the discussion of religious and social problems is a device of Ahriman. To place a pulpit in the fire-temple and give instruction to the ignorant; to pray in any other language than that which became extinct two thousand years ago—Ormazd apparently does not know Gujerati, and it is damnable heresy to suggest that the worshipper ought to pray with the understanding—all this and all other innovations are altogether of the Evil One. A Parsi Judge from the bench amiably stated that a scholar who took a view to which any intelligent, unbiassed person is driven perforce was actuated by mercenary motives. And a subservient public, afraid to differ from one of public standing and emphatic, if not always consistent opinions, duly bans that scholar's memory.'

There is a serious problem waiting us when the men return from the war. It is not the problem of finding them employment. That may exercise our patience. It may even tax our conscience. For some of them cannot and some of them will not take up the work which they laid down to go

to the front. But there is a far more serious problem before us than that. And it will have to be faced, not by the politician or the merchant, but by the Christian and the Church.

The problem is this. What are we to do with the instinct which finds its expression in war? That instinct has not been recognized by Christianity hitherto. We do not say that it has not been recognized by Christ. By the Church it has been ignored or antagonized right through the Christian centuries. We may call the instinct Patriotism. Is it a fighting instinct? It is also a loving instinct. It is roused into activity by the thought of national danger. It calls to its service the virtues of courage, loyalty, endurance, faith, self-sacrifice. It lifts a country, so many square miles of land, into the place of an ideal to die for. It often outpaces in passion the saint's love of God. That instinct, so powerful and so dangerous, has hitherto been disregarded by the Church of Christ.

Are we to disregard it still? God-given and God-preserved, it has found almost its only opportunity hitherto in war. It has often been the cause of war. It has always been the possibility. When peace comes what becomes of the patriot? What does he do with his courage, his loyalty, his endurance, his faith, his sublime self-sacrifice? Are we to take no account of them? In war we recognize their existence and marvel. Are we to suppose that when peace comes they simply cease to exist?

There is a dangerous little book which has been published under the title of *A Substitute for War* (Macmillan; 2s. net). It is an American book, written by a certain Mr. Percy MACKAYE. We shall see why it is a dangerous book. Meantime we notice that its author recognizes the patriot and sees how necessary it is to make a way for his patriotism in peace. This is the reason, no doubt, for the Prefatory Letter which Viscount BRYCE has contributed to the volume.

'You have touched upon a deep problem,' says Viscount BRYCE, 'which has long occupied my mind and doubtless many minds: How is the world, and especially how are the poets and balladists, to get on without War as a theme?' That is the problem as it presents itself to the artist. And Lord BRYCE is right when he says that artists must 'set themselves to consider what charms of imagination and embellishments of art can be used to make peace and its ways and emotions as attractive as warlike deeds have been since the war of Troy and the battle of Deborah and Barak against Sisera the captain of the hosts of Jabin, king of Hazor.'

That is precisely the way in which the problem presents itself to Mr. MACKAYE. He is a dramatic artist. He sees the patriot 'following the drum.' Give him the drum in peace and he will not be compelled to associate it with war. That is Mr. MACKAYE's argument. And he has an elaborate scheme for using 'the charms of imagination and the embellishments of art' to make peace as attractive to the patriot as war.

He tells this story. 'On a battlefield of northern France the sun had just set. After hours of bloody fighting, the enemy had retreated. Except for the dead and dying, the field was almost deserted.

'Seated on a round, stumplike object, one lonely figure, huge and forlorn, loomed in the crimson glow.

'He was dressed in gorgeous regalia, almost unscotched by the grime of battle. His big shoulders drooped. In one hand he held a little rod of dark wood. He stared at it dumbly.

'Suddenly out of the dusk a detachment of French troopers approached and surrounded him.

'"Surrender, or be shot!"

'The figure stirred with slow dignity, but deigned no reply. Instead, he raised the little rod to his bearded face and kissed it.

'Struck with curiosity, the Frenchmen—who

were peasants—examined their prisoner more closely: scarlet, blue, gold, orange—a superb uniform; the breast and shoulders gleaming with decorations, badges, and prismatic emblems!

‘Here was no common soldier in grey field-clothes. Not so; unmistakably he had the air of a commander—a dreamy pathos, a disdainful scorn of their presence.

‘Their Gallic imaginations took fire. They whispered together.

‘Whom could they have captured: a general?—a prince?

‘He carried no weapons, but—that little black rod: he had kissed it!

‘Might it be——? [They had heard of scepters.] Might this really be—a king?—or the war-lord of some imperial principality, scornful of flight, grandly stoical in defeat?

‘Their peasant hearts fluttered.

“‘Who are you?” their leader asked in German.

“‘Who *I* am!” retorted the huge figure with

melancholy disdain. “My God! I am the Imperial Band-Master.”’

‘That anecdote,’ says Mr. MACKAYE, ‘cabled last autumn from the front to the American press, whether it be truth or fiction, conveys an apt symbol for the theme of this article. Those French peasants showed a subtle intuition in their awed estimate of their prize. They had caught—not King nor Kaiser, to be sure, but a far mightier personage.’

We need not consider Mr. MACKAYE’s proposals for using the Imperial Bandmaster in peace. They are the proposals of a dramatic artist. They demand a liberal recognition of the theatre. They are wholly absorbed in things spectacular. That is partly why the book is dangerous. But more than that, it is dangerous because it recommends a superficial satisfaction for a deep-seated desire, a purely secular attraction for an instinct which is given by God and can be satisfied only in Christ.

The Bookshelf by the Fire.

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I.

George Herbert’s ‘Country Parson.’

It is only a small shelf, but it has a character all its own. No borrowed books are on it, nor books about the war, nor any that are called ‘books of the hour.’ Nothing is there merely because it ‘ought’ to be there, because without it no library is complete, or because it has a place in one of those terrible lists of ‘The Hundred Best Books.’ It is not the rarity of the edition, nor the richness of the binding, nor the excellence of the printing, that has determined the choice. Indeed, some of those to whom have been given the chief seats in the book-lover’s synagogue may look but mean and ragged fellows. Why, then, are they there? They are there for their own sakes—for that and for nothing else. They have helped us in the past, and when we go back to them they help us still.

They are not simply friends or acquaintances; they are lovers. They may be of any age or any language or any Church. To others they may say nothing, and be nothing, and our friends may sometimes smile at what they think our foolish ways. It matters not; they have found us and that is enough.

It is of a few of these on my own bookshelf by the fire, and of the men to whom we owe them, that I am to write in these short papers. I begin with George Herbert’s *Country Parson*.¹

¹ The full title is *A Priest to the Temple; or, The Country Parson, his Character and Rule of Holy Life*. But as the subtitle is not only that by which the book is generally known, but is also much truer to its actual contents, I shall not hesitate to use it throughout.