

THE
CHURCHMAN

FEBRUARY, 1893.

ART. I.—LESSONS FROM THE CHARACTER OF THE
MOTHER OF OUR LORD.

A QUIET DAY ADDRESS.

Part III.—Conclusion.

MEELINESS, reverence for independence, intellectual integrity, self-suppression—these are the features we have considered. They meet in one character, and they mutually give support to one another. Meekness of spirit reverences the varying methods by which the one Spirit fashions and matures in diverse ways the souls of men for their work. Intellectual integrity, honestly seeking to know the meaning of God's will and purpose, helps the contentment of soul which is ready to be nothing or anything that may advance the good of the world and the high purposes of the God of Love. Thus does one grace strengthen another, and under their embrace littleness, meanness, and grudgingness of distrust, impatience and pride, will be strangled and die. Armed with such graces, we may be the more fitly prepared to bring forth Christ to men, and to nourish into fuller and ampler life those in whom it will be our anxiety to see, not our likeness, nor the resemblance to any earthly teacher or nursing-mother, but the resemblance to Him who set before us and ours no lower aim than this, that we should be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect.

This woman, so unselfish and so reverent of the high and Divinely given charge, reaped her reward in the deep tender sympathy, and the quick and ready mutual apprehension which the story shows subsisted between the mother and Son.

She understood Him, so far as human love and human knowledge could understand. She had, at any rate, that crown of humility which understood Him enough to be content not to understand Him wholly. This in later times must have been her joy; here, too, grew and strengthened her faith, helping her through those dark and inscrutable times when all seemed lost, and the chaos of wild revenge obliterated for a while the indications of righteous order.

The reward she won was this power to understand and see that there was in Him a wondrous beauty above the power of the world to understand; that He had a mission which He must be left free to fulfil.

In the fulfilment of this mission He accepts no guidance. And once, at least, He gently but firmly told His mother so. This seems to be the true significance of His words at Cana of Galilee. My work stands outside the range of human influence. No bond however strong, no tie however sacred, must come between Me and My mission. He who afterwards said: "He that loveth father or mother more than Me," knew that in the discharge of any trusted duty, no sense of kinship should influence our actions. No weakness of affection should mar the noble impartiality with which public duties are discharged. The rebuke of what is called nepotism lies in His words: "What have I to do with thee?" It is a phrase which carries, as I need not remind you, no disrespect in it: but it declares the unquestioned principle that in the exercise of His mission no other tie than the sense of right could be allowed to bind His action. Yes, apart from the plaintive influences of tender memories, and the imperiousness of ties of blood, He must act, bound by bonds which were greater. He must be true to Himself and to His work.

She understands Him. With her love's quickness she sees that it is not her suggestion which He puts aside, but the principle which might be inscribed in her making a suggestion. She sees that though He claims independence of action as a principle essential to His inward life and outward mission, He is alive to the needs of the household at the moment; and with a confidence born of her loving perception of these things, she prepares the servants for His command: she bids them now receive their orders from Him. "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it."

There are moments in the necessary growth of the world when even the good and gentle, without any fault of their own or others, must meet with pain. There are times when we have to surrender authority and influence; when those whom we have cared for and guided take their life into their own hands, and even while we feel the pain of surrender, we feel

the inward conviction not merely that it must be so, but that it is better so. We who are clergy must have felt this often. The young people whom we have trained outgrow our training; they come under other influences than ours. We are troubled, perhaps piqued. But for pique and pain of this kind we may be consoled. The ways of Christ with men are not always the same. If our function, in a sort, resembles that of Mary, we must recognise that the Divine Son works His own work in His own way. We must be ready to surrender the right of guidance and ordering to Him; and to those whom we have been privileged to direct, we must be ready to say, Obey Him; yes, rather than follow any way, follow the way He sets before you. Do not what I wish, but what He bids; yea, whatever surrender I must practise, and whatever loss of influence I may seem to sustain, at all cost, follow Him. Obey Him. "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it."

This readiness to surrender guidance imparts a nobler faith both to ourselves and to others. It tells us that when people pass out of our hands, they do not pass out of Christ's; it tells us that though Christ's love is the same, His ways are different with different people; it tells us that rather in His strong hands and His unfailing power than in any human strength must we rely, and those also whom we have sought to train for Him. He knows after what fashion to lead, discipline, and develop faith in human hearts. We must be content to be nothing, that He may be all in all. The ministry must ever so shape itself, and our spirit so chasten itself, that in all things He may have the pre-eminence.

Reward.—We have spoken of the character of the Blessed Virgin, and of the quick and sensitively sympathetic bond which grew up between our Lord and His mother. The quiet watchfulness, the noble self-repression, won its way to a quick understanding of the ways and thoughts of Him who was her Son and her Lord.

And had she no other reward? Love like hers, so carefully and tenderly observant, so nobly unselfish, asked no recompense; yet the recompense of natural fruition was hers. She found her joy in Him and in His work; she found her blessing in His tender thoughtfulness for her. The urgency of work; the loftiness of His aims; the magnitude of His responsibilities; the multitude of His sufferings; the bewildering, recurrent, and irritating assaults of His enemies; the agony of the cross itself, cannot banish from His heart and mind the love which remembers to think and plan for her. It is on the cross, after the long weariness of a sleepless night; the hurried and nerve-wasting scenes of the double, nay, treble, trial; after the horrors of the scourging, the pain and insult of hands that

buffet and tongues which scoff; after the piercing nails had torn their way through nerve and muscle, and in the midst of the torture of the cross, that He says the words which show His unshaken love and His unflinching care for her who had cared for His infant years: "Son, behold Thy mother! and woman, behold thy Son!"

Can there be nobler tribute of love, more exalted evidence of undying thoughtfulness, than this? The fruition of her care and love and self-forgetfulness finds its highest expression in a love which neither pain nor weariness, racked nerve nor impending death, can destroy. Henceforth all generations may indeed call her blessed whom He remembers so tenderly in His agony.

And now what shall we say, as we draw our meditations to a close?

Brethren, imitate the features of that life and devotion which even in its anguish was so highly blessed. In your work of watching over the Christ which is to be formed in the hearts of men, show *meekness, intellectual integrity, reverence for the spiritual independence of others, and noble self-suppression* like hers.

1. In meekness of self-restraint and quiet patience continue your work, instructing with tranquillity and forbearance those who are dull or defiant.

2. Maintain—nay, cultivate with more urgency than heretofore—the mental quality of *intellectual integrity*. Too much our Church has suffered from opinions hastily adopted and harshly expressed. Little books, cut-and-dry manuals, the perusal of which saves us the trouble of thought or much intellectual exertion, have been too frequently the mental pabulum of those who, being teachers of others, are bound to say only that which in the sight of the Lord is true. One-sided views can only express one side of truth. The winning of convictions which have reached maturity, slowly ripening under the influence of reverent thought, is a priceless gain. It delivers us from those crude and confined conceptions which tempt men to believe that their way must be God's way, instead of endeavouring to make God's way theirs. It saves us from the partizanship which withers charity, divides Christ's Church, and dishonours Christ's name. It rescues us from the crowning unfaith which cannot believe that there are differences of administration and but one Lord.

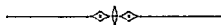
Resolutely face the necessity of variety and you will learn to respect the special independence of others, even of those souls which have grown up under your special care. You will begin to see, and you will rejoice in the sight, that the Divine Spirit works really and abidingly in the world, and that as

there are diversities of gifts, so the Lord gives to everyone grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

And as the key of all, the crowning grace of Christian character, cultivate that self-suppression which is essential to deep and enduring work. Remember, too, that this self-suppression is not to be won by beating down or by curbing in violent fashion our thoughts and feelings, but rather by seeking to possess such love to Christ that our joy is found when Christ is all in all to others as well as to ourselves.

Ah! here is the secret of power and the secret of life. If Christ has been all in all to us; if His character, His name, His Person, His Presence have grown strong and sweet in our experience; if the child Christ has been the tenant of our hearts, the desire of our eye, the object of our devotion, the inspiration of our lowliest and lordliest service, then we shall be content that our people shall think less of us, if only they think more of Him. We shall be content to watch the way He leads them, and able to set aside our annoyance, even though that way should not be our way. If He becomes more in their lives, and more to their hearts; if He becomes to them their Lord and their Saviour as He is ours, we shall be glad. Our work will be achieved, our joy will be full; we may be ready to sing our *Nunc Dimittis* when our people have learnt to sing their *Magnificat*.

W. B. RIFON.



ART. II.—THE LATE CANTERBURY HOUSE OF LAYMEN.

BY the dissolution of Convocation, concurrently with Parliament, in the summer of last year, the second House of Laymen for the Province of Canterbury came to an end after an existence of six years. Its predecessor, owing to the speedy collapse of the Parliament of 1885-86, enjoyed a life of barely as many months, and no conclusion as to the success of the experiment could be formed from its career. We are now, however, in a position to judge how far the scheme of an informal consultative lay body, which was adopted by both Houses of the Southern Convocation in July, 1885, has answered the purpose which it was designed to fulfil.

The House of Laymen, according to the original scheme, can sit only when Convocation is in session. This means, ordinarily, from Tuesday to Friday inclusive during one week in February, another in April or May, and a third in July. As a matter of fact, the House has usually only sat