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THE CHURCHMAN

A Monthly Magazine and Review

CONDUCTED BY

CLERGYMEN AND LAYMEN OF THE
CHURCH OF ENGLAND

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Preachers' Pages.

HOMILETICAL HINTS AND OUTLINES.

[Contributed by the Rev. S. R. CAMBIE, B.D., B. Litt., Rector of Otley, Ipswich.]

Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity.

Text : "Naaman, Captain of the host of the King of Syria, etc."
—2 Kings v. 1 (First Lesson : morning).

In this familiar chapter we have a whole series of portraits—the portraits of various persons "set under authority."

I. THE SERVANT OF THE KING OF SYRIA. Here is the full length picture of a distinguished soldier, the hero of many fights, a court-favourite and the idol of the populace. But, as we say, there is a fly in the ointment—he is stricken with a terrible but typical malady. Is the moral leprosy of sin curable?

II. THE SERVANTS OF JEHOVAH. (1) *The little captive maid*. She was the servant of Naaman's wife. True, but the more important fact is that under trying conditions she maintained her steadfastness as God's servant. No matter how humble the position we occupy, we may all do the same. At the same time we may be thankful if we enjoy the advantage of helpful circumstances, the ministry of the Word and Sacraments, Christian influences, etc. Of all such she was deprived. She did more than fulfil her duty to God : she remembered that she was servant, and that as such it was her duty to serve an earthly master and mistress. Perhaps she was not always treated with fine consideration, but she bore no malice. She kept a heart free from bitterness, full of sweet thoughtfulness and tender grace. (2) *The Prophet of Jehovah*. He maintained a quiet dignity. He was not dazzled by the magnificence of the Syrian warrior and his retinue.

III. THE SERVANTS OF NAAMAN. A group of Syrians, none of whom are known to us by name. There was evidently a happy relationship between them and their master which, by the way, reflects credit on him. The man who can take a rebuke from the person whom he considers beneath him exhibits a pleasing grace. But it needs also tact to play the part these servants played !

IV. THE SERVANT OF ELISHA. One word characterizes the ministry of all the other servants of whom we read in the chapter—

reliability. So there is one word which describes the unfortunate Gehazi—he is *unreliable*. Elisha excepted he enjoyed greater advantages than any of the others. Like Judas he was covetous and grasping, and this led him to his downfall. Like Balaam, he “ran greedily after reward.” A terrible story: if sin indeed be forgiven we must remember that there are some of its inevitable consequences of which we cannot rid ourselves, they cling to us and to our seed after us.

Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity.

Text: “I have anointed thee king . . . that I may avenge the blood of my servants.”—2 *Kings* ix. 6-7. (See also Evening Lesson chap. x.).

The story told in the two chapters, the first lessons for the day, contains some gruesome incidents which we can hardly read or hear without a shudder. Jehu, the chief actor, is a forceful, pushing person, full of energy and “go.” His driving was said to be “furious,” and that seems to be characteristic of the man. We are reminded that no wrong passes unnoticed or goes unpunished, 1 *Kings* xxi. 17-24. Jehu, the product of a rude rough age, is set before us as the chosen instrument of the Divine vengeance. We see—

I. HOW AND WHY JEHU DID THE WILL OF GOD. Just because it well suited his purpose to do so. In order that he might be secure in the tenure of his throne it was desirable that all possible aspirants of the seed of Ahab should be cut off. So he addressed himself to his sanguinary task with what he was himself pleased to call “zeal for the Lord” (chap. x. 16), and carried out the sentence “the whole house of Ahab shall perish” (x. 11) with a thoroughness we are bound to admire. But we fear his zeal was, in a measure at least, zeal for his own cause! It is so easy to do the will of God when it is altogether in line with our own. We can with little difficulty be religious *up to a point*, until our religion seems to clash with other interests which weigh with us. Then comes the testing. If, for instance, it seems to be advantageous to us to carry on our business on the Lord’s Day we have to make up our minds whether or not we will obey at all costs. Unless our devotion carries us along the line of duty to the very end, whether it be agreeable to us or disagreeable, it is a travesty.

II. WE SEE, AGAIN, WHERE JEHU FAILED. He smote Jehoram,

slew Jezebel, exterminated the house of Ahab (x. 17), and destroyed the image of Baal and the idolatrous priests. But he left the golden calves that were in Bethel and Dan (x. 29). It suited his purpose to do so. They seemed to make for his security: he preferred that his people should have as little connexion as possible with Jerusalem. It was the same question that weighed with him that, alas, weighs with so many of us—"What will pay me best?" How terrible if we should gain the whole little world for which we live and in the end lose our souls. Jehu's failure is recorded in these words. "He took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel *with all his heart*"—it was a divided heart. *And did it pay?* Unfortunately the evening lesson ends at verse 31. Verse 32 records this significant fact—"In those days the Lord began to cut Israel short"—literally "lessened the boundaries"—and defeat followed defeat. This is ever the bitter fruit of half-hearted service.

Half-hearted, false-hearted! Heed we the warning!
 Only the whole can be perfectly true;
 Bring the whole offering, all timid thought scorning,
 True-hearted only if whole-hearted too.

Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity.

Text: "He trusted in the Lord God of Israel . . . and he prospered."—2 *Kings* xviii. 5, 8 (Morning Lesson). The story of Hezekiah is a refreshing oasis in the desert. It is with a sigh of relief that we turn to it from the account of the disgraceful career of Ahaz, who not content with the idolatries he found when he ascended the throne, seems to have set to work to discover new forms to introduce, and there is no indication of his having learnt wisdom by the punishments that befell him. He is one of the very few of whom not one good word is said. At the outset our attention is drawn to—

I. HEZEKIAH'S RELIGIOUS PRINCIPLES. His piety may be regarded as somewhat unexpected, considering the evil influence of his father, but many a pleasant plant flourishes in uncongenial soil. (a) *It may have been the result of a not unnatural recoil.* He had been the witness of his father's ruin (2 Chron. xxviii. 23). If the spectacle of a discreditable life and an exhibition of its terrible consequences are not enough to warn a man, nothing will. (b) *It may have been in some measure due to his mother's influence.* Her

name is given here in a shortened form—Abi, “my father”; but in the parallel passage (2 Chron. xxix. 1.) it is given in full—Abijah, “Jehovah is my Father.” How much there is in many of these O.T. names, which were not given for mere caprice or euphony! Some identify her father with the Zechariah of 2 Chron. xxvi. 5—“who had understanding in the visions of God.” It seems to be the almost invariable rule, in these historical narratives, only to record the mother’s name in the case of pious sons. Anyhow, we can hardly doubt that Hezekiah, like many another, owed much to his mother’s training.

II. HEZEKIAH AS REFORMER. He acted with promptitude—“the thing was done suddenly.” (2 Chron. xxix. 36), and his method was twofold. (a) *Destructive but at the same time discriminating*. He swept away the idolatries that had been introduced from other countries and destroyed the brazen serpent which had become an object of veneration and called it by its proper name—“Nehushtan”—old brass. But he left untouched other representations, so that his action can hardly be quoted in defence of an iconoclasm which would rob us of all art in the sanctuary. (b) *Constructive*. It is easier to pull down than to build up. But Hezekiah at once addressed himself to the exacting task of renovating the Temple and reinstating the ministry. The arrangements detailed in the passage in Chronicles are in many ways suggestive. They would require separate treatment and can only be referred to in passing. The story of his life is well summed up in the text. The root was “*trust*”—the fruit “*prosperity*.”

Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity.

Text: “The King’s cupbearer.”—*Neh.* i. 11 (Evening Lesson).

This lesson introduces us to one of the most remarkable figures in Hebrew history. A man of singular gifts and unobtrusive piety, he carried a great enterprise to a successful issue. Here is—

I. A STRANGE SPHERE. The court of Artaxerxes was not a place where we would expect to find a servant of Jehovah. But we have other conspicuous examples, *e.g.*, Joseph, Obadiah and Daniel. Such positions are hardly to be desired, but they need not be deserted. St. Paul makes this clear in 1 Corinthians vii. 20, 24.

II. A SUCCESSFUL CAREER. When we first heard of him he is what the world calls “a made man.” How came he to be holding

an important, comfortable and influential post? We are unable to trace the steps that led him up to this office, but there must have been at least two contributory causes—(a) *The possession of administrative ability.* The power of organizing, a head for details, a capacity for leadership brought him to the front. (b) *A reputation for reliability.* He had undoubtedly natural gifts, but he had also a fine integrity—he was a man who could be trusted. The others named above were all fashioned of the same stuff!

III. A SUFFERING PEOPLE. The story brought to him by his brother Hanani (see ver. 2 cf. chap. vii. 2) was sad in the extreme—a woeful story of (a) destruction, (b) desolation, (c) distress (ver. 3). As such it stirred the soul of Nehemiah. See Psalm cxxii. 9.

IV. A SUPPLICATING SERVANT. He who serves Artaxerxes so well is also the servant of Jehovah and of His people. He served them—(a) *By the ministry of intercession.* All through the book are evidences of a prayerful spirit. See 1 Timothy ii. 1. This is a duty we owe to one another. This first chapter contains the longest of these prayers. It reveals—(a) the man who appreciates the Divine character (ver. 5); (b) the penitent (verses 4, 6, 7); (c) the patriot (verse 6); (d) the student of Scripture (verses 8, 9). (b) *By personal effort and the organization of labour* (chap. iii.). This suppliant is a forceful man of affairs, and when he had *prayed* he set to *work*. He might have persuaded himself that he was only required to fulfil his duties worthily in the state of life to which God had called him. If he had done so we should never have heard of him and this book would never have been written.

Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity.

Text: "Seek . . . if ye can find a man."—*Jer. v. 1* (Morning Lesson).

The prophets are not merely men whose ministry was a revealing of the things that were to be in the "hereafter," indeed this forms but a small part of their message, and in some cases it is almost entirely absent. They were the revivalists of their respective ages, and their chief work was to stir up the faith and fervour of God's people. If Jeremiah appears to be somewhat of a pessimist, is it any wonder? It needed no "seer" to perceive what was coming. We must remember that in this lesson we are back again behind the times of Nehemiah (see above), at the other side of the

captivity of Judah. This national disaster looms large and terrible on the horizon.

I. A STINGING CHALLENGE. "Run . . . seek . . . if ye can find a man." It is not "homo" but "vir": not the *kind* but the *quality*, not the man of muscle but the man of moral fibre, the man of high principle and fine integrity. Such men were, alas! too scarce then as now. The world round us is full of failures (not as men count failure), men upon whom chastisement produces no good effect—"Thou hast stricken them but they have not grieved." "Seek . . . if ye can find, etc." The suggestion is that such a man was not to be found. Ten were to save Sodom (Gen. xviii. 32), but there is no hope of finding that number—the question is—can *one* be discovered somewhere? Observe the urgency of the quest—"run." The circumstances of our time call out loudly and insistently "Give us *men*." We shall not be able, in the England of to-morrow, to do with the place-hunter, the time-server, the political mountebank—we shall want *men* of character and conviction.

Give us men,
Strong and stalwart ones;
Men whom purest honour fires;
Men who trample self beneath them,
Only let their country wreath them
 As her worthy sons
 Worthy of their sires;
Men who never shame their mothers;
Men who never fail their brothers;
True, however false are others;
 Give us men, I say again,
 Give us *men*.

II. A SOLEMN WARNING. "Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" (ver. 9). God brings no vague, indefinite charges against His people. He charges them with (a) *Idolatry*. (Verse 7) They have "sworn by them that are no gods." How many subtle forms of idolatry are found even in Christian lands? Think of the popular idols of fashion, business, pleasure, and the worship of the most popular of all—self. Most of the sins men commit are committed for the gratification of the god-*self*. How many sins did we commit last week to please any one else? He charges them with (b) *Immorality*. "Assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses." Look at the state of our streets

at night. These sins cannot go unpunished (verse 9). They have defied His authority, denied His name, and disregarded His messengers, but He will not be silenced. The captivity is announced (ver. 15).

ILLUSTRATIONS.

[Contributed by the Rev. J. W. W. MOERAN.]

Wanted— “When war breaks out, it’s not recruits we want :
Soldiers ? not it’s soldiers we want : that is if our object is to win
Recruits. the war as speedily as possible, and to lose as few
 lives as possible ” (*Ordeal by Battle*, Preface). These words were spoken by one of Ireland’s finest soldiers, the late Brigadier-General Gough, V.C. Every soldier has been at one time a recruit ; it would be almost, if not quite true to say that every recruit does not become a soldier ; it would certainly be true to say that no soldier whose service is worth anything to his country has ever been content to remain a recruit ; neither his own sense of duty nor his company commander’s requirements would allow that to be possible. Yet in the ranks of that great army which is enrolled under the standard of the Cross, what a host of recruits there are, how few real soldiers ! The recruit becomes a soldier by surrendering himself unreservedly to the Cause of his King and Country, by submitting to that course of training and discipline which fit him for the hardships and dangers of real battle. The name of the recruit I am speaking of was enrolled at his Baptism. He answered the roll-call at his Confirmation, when he renewed his baptismal vow, “manfully to fight under the banner of Christ, against sin, the world, and the devil ; and to continue Christ’s faithful soldier and servant unto his life’s end ” (*Baptismal Service*). But is it uncharitable ? nay, rather is it not true to say, that in far too many instances, the recruit never does anything worthy of being called a soldier at all ? because he has made no complete surrender to the Cause of our King and “ His Church Militant here on earth.” He cannot say that his one object in life is to help in winning the war against Satan and sin. Would that every baptized and confirmed member of our Church might learn to believe and to say, “ It’s not recruits, but soldiers that the Captain of our Salvation wants ; and by the help of His Grace I will be one of His true soldiers ! ”

Trench Warfare.

One of the distinctive features of this war has been the way in which each side has been tied to its own line of trenches, without being able to make any forward movement. This has proved a great trial to the patience and endurance of our brave men ; and gloomy critics on this side of the English Channel became very down-hearted over it. To them nothing could be counted a success by our army except an advance through the opposing lines followed by the utter rout of the enemy on his own soil. Those who understand better the real conditions and difficulties of the struggle said that to have held our positions so long against forces which at one time far outnumbered us was virtually a success. Every time the foe attacked, as at Ypres, and was repulsed with heavy losses, he became weaker in *moral* and material, whilst our men became relatively stronger. Thus the way was being prepared for eventual victory. In the spiritual conflict to which the Christian, by the vows of his Baptism and Confirmation is pledged, there is often an experience of the same kind. The soldier of Christ finds that easy victories over the power of temptation and triumphant marches through the entrenched positions of sin do not fall to his lot. There is the foe always near, sometimes pressing him sorely ; every now and again making vigorous assaults on the outworks of his soul ; never, it is true, succeeding in capturing his citadel nor forcing him to surrender his position ; but still, there all the time. He grows discouraged because he cannot slay his temptations outright, and leave them dead on the field behind, as he presses forward. Because he advances slowly or seems not to advance at all, he sadly wonders if he is ever going to win. Let such a man not be downcast. It is not given to every one to achieve (at least outwardly) quick and brilliant conquests in the domain of Satan. The strategy of the arch-fiend and his emissaries varies according to our temperament or position in life. To repel the onslaught of a fierce temptation is for some men a real victory ; and every time that is done the foe becomes weaker and the soul proportionately stronger. Never lose confidence in the power, or the wisdom, or the love of the Captain of your salvation. Be obedient to every command of Jesus your Lord ; and in the long drawn-out struggle your character will become strengthened until the time comes for victory.