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In the Study.

Virginibus Puerisque.

His Master's Voice.

BY THE REVEREND STUART ROBERTSON, M.A.,
GLASGOW.

'I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.'—Ph 4¹³.

THAT title at once makes us think of the clever picture we have seen on a hundred gramophone records: a dog hearing his master's voice, recognizing it, and looking down the trumpet to see where it is coming from. It is not about that I wish to talk, but it is a dog story I want to tell you. I think all girls and boys are fond of dogs, and every one likes a good dog story. Some of the best stories in the world are about dogs.

There is the story of Ulysses: how he came home after all his adventures so changed that nobody knew him, not even his wife, save only two—his old nurse who knew him by a scar on his knee, and his dog who knew him by that strange instinct which makes a dog such a faithful friend of man.

There is the story of Llewellyn's dog, Gelert, who killed the wolf and saved the baby, and was killed by his hasty master. It happened long ago, but still in North Wales there is a place called Beddgelert, where people go to see Gelert's grave—a dog's grave.

Scotland gives us the story of Greyfriars Bobby, the little Scotch terrier who lay every night for years on his master's grave, couldn't be driven away, and at last died there. The children in the shabby houses that overlooked the graveyard cleaned their dirty windows because they wanted to see 'Bobby,' and their homes were more full of light, and perhaps their hearts were more full of love, because a little dog was faithful to his dead master. When he died, a drinking-fountain was set up with his statue on it, and all the city did honour to the loving faithfulness of 'Wee Bobby,' and to-day 'Bobby' is the favourite name for Scotch terriers.

Well, it was just such another little Scotch terrier in a city street. He had rambled and raced out of his master's sight, and his master, missing him, went to look for him. At last he saw him being hounded and pelted down the road by a lot of noisy children. He was desperately frightened, his tail was down, and he looked wildly here and there for a way of escape. What could he do

against these boys? How big they were! How loud their voices! So he was running and running hard.

Then he heard a voice call, 'Jock!' He stopped and pricked up his ears. It was his master's voice! He couldn't see him yet, but he knew he was there and would stand by him. He was not friendless or forgotten. Up came his tail half-way and wagged like a semaphore, as much as to say 'Message received.'

Then up went his tail like a standard of battle. He didn't whine now, but gave one joyous yelp and turned on his tormentors, barking furiously. He ran now, not from them, but at them. Now it was they who ran, for boys that would pelt a little dog are great cowards. He chased them down the street in headlong rout and then came back to his master, his tail waving like a flag of triumph, barking exultantly as if to say, 'We've done it! They were too much for *me*, but they couldn't stand up against *us*.' Such heart did the sound of his master's voice put into a little dog and made him more than conqueror through one that loved him.

Girls and boys, we, too, have a Master who loves us and can make us more than conquerors. He never leaves us, but we often leave Him and then we get into difficulties and think we are alone and forgotten. But He cannot forget. He is watching. Do you remember the disciples in the storm? It was dark. The wind was contrary. They weren't making any headway, and worst of all, 'Jesus was not come to them.' They were afraid and losing courage. Then He came. They heard His voice. They 'willingly received him into the ship and very quickly the ship was at the land that they were going to.' I think that just means that His voice put heart and strength into them and they mastered the waves and won to the shore.

'I can do all things,' says St. Paul, 'through Christ which strengtheneth me.' Long ago in Scotland, when the people were fighting a sore and desperate battle against the power of the Church of Rome, they said about John Knox that his voice 'is able in one hour to put more life in us than five hundred trumpets continually blustering at once in our ears.'

So the voice of Jesus has brought cowed spirits to their feet again, and made faint hearts brave to win back lost battles. In the ship in the storm

when every one was afraid, how was it that St. Paul, not a soldier, nor a sailor, but just a man who till then had been frightened like every one else, could suddenly stand up and bid them all 'be of good cheer'? Read on, and you will find out. It was because he had heard the voice of Jesus saying, 'Fear not, Paul.'

Stand up! stand up for Jesus!
The trumpet-call obey.

The voice of Jesus is the trumpet-call. It never sounds for retreat, but always for victory.

The Lutine Bell.

BY THE REVEREND T. CROUTHER GORDON, D.F.C.,
B.D., PITLOCHRY.

'There is joy in the presence of the angels of God.'—Lk 15¹⁰.

Do you know what 'A1' means? If you hear your Daddy refer to a new pair of boots, he will say 'They are A1.' Now you know what he means by that—they are very good. They are first-class. There is nothing better. 'A1' means the front rank.

But where does 'A1' come from? I will tell you. There is a big office in London called Lloyds, where the name of every ship has to be written in a big book, and against every ship they put a letter, which shows whether it is a good ship or a bad ship, and when they put 'A1' against a ship it means that is the best kind of ship afloat. It is registered 'A1' at Lloyds.

Now supposing you and I were to go walking through this big office in London, we should come to a very important room, where there are a great many men walking about, doing business. And in that room we should see a bell hung up. If we looked close at the bell, we would see the name 'Lutine' inscribed on it. This bell belonged to a ship called the *Lutine*, which was shipwrecked sixty years ago. But it was a valuable ship. It was full of gold. The gold was not in sovereigns and half-sovereigns, but in chunks. It was rough and heavy. So valuable was this cargo that they sent down divers, who brought the gold up and with the gold they brought the bell, and this is how the bell was saved.

But, you ask, what good is a bell in a big office in London? It serves a great purpose, for the people ring the bell at certain times. When all the men are walking about and talking business, suddenly this bell will be rung, and the whole place will be dead still. Everybody stops talking.

For when that bell rings, it means that a ship is lost. Away out on the sea, where the waves are mountains high, some ship is going down. Or perhaps away in the fog and mist some ship has lost her way. And all the people stand still and silent when the bell rings.

You and I, boys and girls, are all little ships. We are sailing across the ocean of life. There are storms to face. There are fogs and mists to meet. We are carrying with us very rich cargo. It is far richer than gold or silver. It is called character. And there is a place where people are standing still and silent when we are lost. It is called heaven. Jesus told us that there is joy in the presence of the angels when we turn to God and are saved, and so there must be sorrow when we are lost. When we give in to some mean desire, when we tell a deliberate lie, because we hate somebody, when we play truant at school, these are the times when we are striking the rocks and our little boat is lost. Then the bell rings in heaven, and Jesus looks down, with all our friends in heaven, and He is very sad and sorrowful. It hurts Him to think that we are going down.

Into the night, forlornly bright
There came a little ship of gold,
Without a name, she passed in flame,
With cargoes never to be told,
Out of a port unknown,
Swinging to death alone.

But the work of the bell is not finished. Bells are made for joy as well as sorrow. Nothing is so sweet as the marriage bell. And when this Lutine Bell is struck the second time, all the men in the big office are delighted and glad. They smile to each other. Sometimes they shake each other by the hand. There is joy everywhere, because when the bell is struck the second time it means that the vessel is reported safe and sound. It means that a boat that had been given up for lost has returned to port again.

And, we are told, it is just the same in heaven. When we give up our wrong ways, and guide our little ship of gold back to the right path, when we are very sorry for all the wrong that we have done, when we say that we will do better in the future, then the bells of heaven are ringing and there is joy in the presence of the angels.

But do you know that the bell in heaven has got an echo? The echo reaches all the road to us. Have you never heard it? What a pity! A little boy I know was walking along the street one day in a big city, when he saw a blind man

standing on the pavement. The blind man wanted to cross the street, but he was afraid of the traffic. So the little boy rushed forward and, grasping him by the hand, took him to the other side, and when he went home that day the little boy heard the echo of the bells of heaven in his heart.

The Christian Year.

SEXAGESIMA.

The Crowning Quality.

'He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.'—Mk 13¹³.

1. *Life's increasing test.*—The greatest and most enviable form of power in human experience is staying-power. Life seems peculiarly designed for the discovery in us of such staying-power, for most lives grow harder and harder as the years multiply. There is a sense in which the experience of Jesus is the epitome of that of all mankind. The tragic last phase, with its unspeakable agony in the Garden and upon the Cross, was but the final unfolding of the meaning of the first temptations and of the repeated tests of His loyalty to God and man which studded the path of His life. And perhaps of all the wonderful things He ever said none was more welcome to Himself than His cry of victory from the Cross, 'It is finished.' Most lives tend towards the same type of experience. Perhaps there are exceptions—lives that begin in storm and stress and seem to ride for the rest of their days in a calm and pleasant roadstead. Yet even of these one suspects that in their success and in their serenity there may be a more subtle test of their spiritual condition than they suspect; and one that is the harder, therefore, to meet and satisfy. But for most of us the fight gets harder; life becomes more complicated, not less, as the number and responsibility of its relationships increase. As the powers of the body move forward to maturity, revealing the full strength of animal passion that is in the best of men, and as they just as steadily begin to wane, bringing the further complication of failing health, life often becomes a pitiful struggle.

2. *Continuity essential.*—We come face to face, therefore, with the necessity of continuity if the soul is to be saved. The standing of the last test, of the worst and the fiercest test, is essential. Not upon good beginnings, nor even upon steady continuings, but only upon solid endings can God place the seal of success. What avails it that we turned to God in our youth and held on to Him

through years of severe struggle if now we are going to give way? It is not what we *were*, but what we *are* that makes us safe. Could there be any greater condemnation, any more shameful condition for a soul that has once seen the vision, once felt the fire of God within him, than to qualify for that caustic description of Scripture: 'Ephraim is a cake half-turned'? This is a warning that our age needs peculiarly. We live in such a hurry that we worship swiftness rather than strength. As a writer has said:

The fault of the age is a mad endeavour
To leap to heights that were made to climb,
By a burst of strength, by a trick most clever
We plan to forestall and outstrip time.

Yet to covet the prize and shrink from the winning,
To thirst for glory yet fear to fight,
What can it lead to at last but sinning,
To mental languor and moral blight?

What can God Himself do for the soul that wants only the end, but not the endurance? As Ibsen says, through his great character, Brand, concerning the peasant and his son who would not face the storm with him:

Were it but the power you lack
I would have borne you on my back.
My weary back, my feet that bleed,
Had gladly answered to your need;
But help is useless to a man
Who does not *will*, save where he can.

3. *The way of victory.*—Yet, providing we are willing to endure, however much we doubt our strength, there are considerations of great inspiration that can be brought to our aid. In the first place, the increasing test of life is not wanton, it has its purpose. It is everything to feel that the test is not opposition but opportunity. Readers of Hugh Walpole's great novel *Fortitude* will remember the motto that its hero Peter learned to cherish early in life, 'It is not life that matters, but the courage you bring to it,' and they will recall how at one point in his troubled career the true interpretation of all his tribulation was brought home to his soul. 'You are worth it, you are too valuable to be left in peace,' was the message that came to him.

But a further consideration of overwhelming importance is that the power which can come only by the practice of endurance is the very substance of salvation. 'In your patience,' said Jesus, 'ye shall win your soul.' Here is the very

soul of life's meaning, to receive for one's own possession the character that is divine. As a great poet has so beautifully declared :

Endurance is the crowning quality
 And patience all the passion of great hearts :
 These are their stay, and when the leaden world
 Sets its hard face against their fateful thought,
 And brute strength, like a scornful conqueror,
 Clangs his huge mace down in the other scale ;
 The inspired soul but flings his patience in,
 And slowly that outweighs the ponderous globe,
 One faith against a whole earth's unbelief,
 One soul against ' the flesh of all mankind.'¹

QUINQUAGESIMA.

The Cup Jesus would not drink.

' They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall : and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink.'—Mt 27³⁴.

This draught of vinegar mingled with gall, or, as Mark more accurately expresses it, ' wine mingled with myrrh,' must be distinguished from the sponge filled with vinegar and put upon a reed in the last hour in which Jesus hung upon the Cross. This draught was offered to Him as He stood by the Cross before He was nailed to it. The spongy of vinegar was given in response to His cry : ' I thirst.' The draught was a cup of spiced wine. It contained a drug intended to stupefy. It was the rude chloroform of the day. The other was only a sop to cool the burning fever of His tongue.

There was in Jerusalem a society of benevolent women whom gentle pity moved to a gracious ministry to the outcast and the criminal. It was their custom to provide this draught of wine mingled with myrrh that the felon on his cross might have the agony and horror of his crucifixion dulled and his senses deadened, while death was making the slow conquest of his life. The cup filled with this spiced and stupefying wine was set down at the foot of the Cross. It was placed in the hands of Jesus.

Why would not Jesus drink of this cup ? He did not usually disregard any gracious service done to Him. When He sat by the well of Samaria, He eagerly sought and gratefully accepted the water from the woman's hand. When hunger pressed Him, He went in with simple gratitude to meat. In the garden of Gethsemane He earnestly entreated the companionship and the solace of

men. Nay, when He found Himself fainting under the weight of His Cross, He willingly allowed it to be placed on the shoulders of Simon of Cyrene. But now, when He is spent with hours of fasting, when He is face to face with the agony of the Cross, He refuses the cup offered to Him by kindly hands. *Why ?* Because He will not have His senses drugged. He will not have His mind clouded. He will not suffer any unspiritual aid to be given to His resolve. He will be fully master of Himself. He will go through the valley of the shadow of death with every sensibility in keen tension, with every faculty in unclouded clearness, with body, soul, and spirit poured out in the act of dying before God.

I. Mark the *light this incident casts on the purpose of Jesus' death.* The purpose of Christ's death is a subject of vexing contention for Christian thinkers. Its depths remain unfathomed for many devout souls. Its uses and issues are perplexities for many who love His name. The most unthinking reader, however, can see that it occupied the place of supreme importance to Christ. It was the event towards which He looked ; the goal towards which He strained ; the hour for whose coming He waited. As often as the prevision of the Cross came in upon Him, His soul was troubled, and in this closing day of His life, His thoughts and desires turn towards it, as the thought of a lover to his beloved, or the desires of a runner to his goal. His very face shines with the foregleams of mingled suffering and triumph when He sets His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem for His dying hour.

If it was the burden of Christ's heart before it was accomplished, it was the chant of the disciples after Calvary was past. No other subject so possesses, inspires, exalts these apostolic men. One of the wonderful things about the Epistles is their scanty reference to Christ's life and words. We are eager to dwell on that life of loveliness and grace. But Paul and Peter and James and John have their hearts more set on the risen Christ, and His coming again.

Why has the death of Jesus this place of pre-eminence ? Surely not because it was the final and dramatic seal to a life of righteousness. Surely not because we may thereby be touched and emotionalized into a strenuous morality. Surely not because of its pathos and sorrow, that we might love Him for the dangers He has passed with the love pity deigns to bestow. No ; the death of Christ was His supreme work—the work He desired with anguish to accomplish ; the work for which He took our flesh and veiled His Godhead.

¹ A. D. Belden, *The Religious Difficulties of Youth*, 144.

In that dying act He assumed our sins, He bore our guilt, He suffered our penalty, He offered Himself our sacrifice. As He stands beside the Cross, He is laying Himself down on the altar of God, and He will do His great deed in the full might of a willing, conscious, unclouded sacrifice. He will not lay down His life with a torpid body, half-dead sensibilities, a dulled mind, a clouded spirit. He will do this great deed, as it required to be done, in full self-consciousness, and thereby make a perfect sacrifice.

2. Mark the *light this incident casts on the value of Jesus' dying hour*. Let us conceive that Jesus had yielded to this temptation, that, face to face with the agony of the Cross, He had drained the cup, and so passed under the influence of that rude chloroform into death. Conceive what would have been lost—lost to those men who heard Him pray for His murderers; lost to that centurion, whose soldier's heart was taught how to die; lost to the mother, who looked up into His face, whose submission He would never have seen, whose need He would never have considered; lost to that malefactor, that man of piercing vision and daring faith, whose face was turned to Him, who passed hand in hand with Him into the kingdom of heaven! Ay, think of a wider area of loss. Seven great words—seven words of love would never have been spoken.

The value of Jesus' dying hour is not exhausted when we think of the gracious deeds He did, and the conscious words He spoke as He met the last enemy. All His people come to their dying hour. We shall come to that passage of the soul, when we shall breathe our sigh of relief, and say, 'It is finished,' and pass through the vasty hall of death. Precious in His sight were the deaths of His saints. His horizon was not bounded by the faces of that Jewish mob who watched the end, or by the walls of that city under whose shadow He died. He saw the faces of the men and women who should die in His faith and for His love. He would fain teach them and us how to die—with eyes uplifted to God, with unclouded heart, with a great word of Scripture on which to stay the soul, and a prayer of blessing for men upon the lips. He would do more than that. He would comfort His people by the knowledge that there was no experience He had not passed through, no travail He had not endured.

3. Mark the *lights it casts on the ideal of a Christian life*. For what is Christ doing here? He is doing what He did when He veiled His Godhead, when He went down to the wonderful obedience and

long seclusion of Nazareth, when He refused the easy ways of life, when He chose the path of holy self-denial. He is facing the duty which must be done, He is fitting Himself for doing it in a supremely noble way, and He is doing it, cost what it may to body and to soul. And that is the ideal of a Christian life.

To-day we have ceased to realize the moral grandeur and the spiritual exaltation of such an ideal. We have ceased to realize that it is the ideal of Jesus. All the sterner stress of His life has fallen out of view. His great words about self-denial and cross-bearing are emptied of meaning, and His hard sayings are discounted. We feel that for us to say we 'are crucified with Christ,' would be to practise cant, and the words are not found upon our lips. The Christian life is not a cramped, mean, narrow round. Every faculty should be sanctified and ennobled by Christ. 'The kingdom of God is righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost,' the three most desirable and most satisfying things in the world. But Jesus insisted that life should first be safe, and then broad, and no liberty was ever given beyond the narrow way of holy and needful self-denial.

4. There is one last lesson which may direct and strengthen some who are in special need. All of us come to times of crisis in our lives. We are called upon to choose or to reject some proffered gift, to take a step which determines all our future, or to accept some limiting conditions. Some burden is placed upon our shoulders which shall slip from us only at death. Some message is given us which shows only a chilling prospect in days to come, or points to a narrowed and straightened life. How many have missed all that makes life worth living, because they have not known the meaning of their hour, and have not seized its blessing. But a still subtler peril—a temptation yielded to every day—is to take up the cup of wine mingled with myrrh; to escape with some easier, and indulgent fulfilment; to find some ignoble palliative; to drug the soul with some base expedient; to escape from a hard life by a loveless marriage; to accept a duty, and fulfil it with meagre sacrifices; to leave the path of a limiting poverty, under the temptation of an unrighteous reward; to lower the ideal of life because it is difficult in new circumstances—these are ways of drinking the cup of wine mingled with myrrh. As we stand at the foot of our cross, let us accept it meekly, and with a holy disdain for all that would unfit us for it, and we shall find it a source of redemption for others, and the very exaltation of

ourselves. Let us remember how Milton met and accepted his great calamity when smitten with blindness and his life little more than half-spent. Well might he have thought that God had shut him up in prison, and so, in sullen despair sunk into apathy, or, in unworthy rebellion, craved some anodyne for his pain. He nobly writes :

God doth not need
Either man's work or his own gifts. Who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best. His
state
Is kingly : thousands at his bidding speed,
And post o'er land and ocean without rest ;
They also serve who only stand and wait.¹

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

'As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.'—Ps 103¹².

This Psalm is one of exceptional exaltation. It combines the ideas of greatness and splendour so as to give a sense of magnificence all through, and it blends with this an exquisite and delicate tenderness. It is natural that such a Psalm should have the question of sin in the heart of it. Until that question has been faced and answered, neither the magnificence nor the tenderness of God can be clear.

Every one who knows himself or who knows life at all has to reckon with the fact of sin. Pride may separate a man from sin, but his mood will change and he will sacrifice pride to indulgence. Time and forgetfulness may seem to leave it on the farther side of a great gulf fixed between it and our present life. But sin can overleap that distance, and in a moment be at our conscience and our heart across a lifetime of intervening years.

But when God enters amid the tumult of fear and hope, of desire and renunciation, all is changed. For the past He brings forgiveness, the mightiest proof of love. For the future, 'God has seen the saint in the sinner,' and what He has seen, the world will yet see. Then comes the supreme moment in a man's experience, the sudden flight of sin beyond the farthest horizon. 'A Greek poet implies,' says Lytton, 'that the height of bliss is the sudden relief from pain ; there is a nobler bliss still, the rapture of the conscience at the sudden release from a guilty thought.'

We are not accustomed to so complete a dealing, and the Bible seems almost to exhaust language in expressing it. We are so accustomed to tinker-

ing with sin, to half-repentances and compromise and recurrence, that few of our moral battles are fought out to a finish and the field cleared from the outposts of the enemy. So the colours are glaring—'crimson and scarlet,' 'white as snow.' God is seen 'coming over the mountains of our transgressions,' and casting them 'into the depths of the sea.' And in this passage East and West stand for a corresponding sense of extreme distance that is meant to tax the imagination. The imaginative power and stretch of the appeal are seen along two lines.

1. Geographically, East and West were the extreme points of known distance. It was in the temperate zone of the northern hemisphere that history began and civilization spread. Accordingly the stretch of ancient geography was wider between East and West than between North and South, and the ancient maps of the world were oblong. As thought travelled westward it saw the dim coasts and islands of the Mediterranean, and perhaps the mountain of Teneriffe in the farthest distance. As it travelled eastward, it passed through the ring of neighbouring nations across the Jordan ; saw the wandering encampments of desert tribes ; then Mesopotamia, with Nineveh and Babylon guarding its rivers ; then the mountains of Persia and the dream-like lands of India and China beyond. At the utmost limits, mountain-pillars upheld the world, or the edge of its oval disc fell sheer into the waters of the nether deep upon which it floated.

One can realize the wonder and relief of such a man as this writer, as his conscience follows his imagination across the whole enormous breadth of the world. There, where the mountains of the dawn or sunset hardly break the skyline with their faint and shadowy ranges—there, over the edges of the flat earth where all things end—there, and no nearer, are his sins.

Geographically, science seems to have changed all that. For a long time travel and exploration increased year by year the distance between East and West, flinging out the horizon line farther in each direction. Yet in doing so, they actually brought them together by their discovery that the earth is round, so that a man fleeing across the world to escape his sin must at last run into its arms. And that is a curious kind of allegory of what our modern thought has done with the sense of sin. Apparently it has removed it. It has drawn away men's attention to other interests, and it has relaxed the ancient tension of conscience. Yet, in very truth, as men escape from sin under the

¹ W. M. Clow, *The Day of the Cross*, 213.

guidance of scientific theory, they rush unawares into the arms of their sins again.

Natural science has revealed the connexion between the physical and the moral natures. Its doctrines of evolution and heredity tend to a view of sin as natural tendency, defective or excessive vitality, a hereditary taint of blood. While, at first sight, these explanations seem to put sin away from conscience, yet they bring it infinitely nearer too. Instead of being a casual or isolated product of mere independent acts of will, they pronounce it native, and part of the necessary system of things. Sin has come home to the very heart and flesh of man, a thousandfold nearer than ever.

What has God to say to all this? Exactly the same old words, 'As far as the east is from the west.' Whatever truth or error may lie in these accounts of the origin of sin, our faith knows only one unchanging fact—the living God. Our conscience has to deal not with theory, but with one great will and love. Against Him, Him only, have we sinned. Here and now, whatever be the story of life behind us, whatever the ultimate scientific definition of sin, we have to meet the eyes of God as Christ reveals Him. By His command, by His forgiveness, by His redemption, He tears sin away from His children and holds it apart from them now as of old. When God has intervened, we repudiate our lower nature, and lay hold on our nobler manhood. Thus, in the Cross of Christ, we see still that great act of God, that is ever repeated when a penitent child turns to his Father. It is the act of justification. Sin has not been slurred over, nor forgotten, nor suffered merely to drift away. 'As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.'

2. East and West are not mere points in the compass; they stand for peopled lands, and even in very ancient times their racial distinctions were recognized. Israel had already touched the outposts of Greece, and had heard of the young power of Rome—not indeed in any close contact, but yet closely enough to perceive the contrast between Europe and Asia, between Aryan and Semite. East and West represent different types of humanity. The East is dreaming, the West running to and fro. The East values a thought for its beauty and its mystery, the West for its practical value. The East fears immortality, and longs for the death of desire, the West rebels against death and seeks for life more abundant. The East lies back in fatalism, the West stands erect in strength of human will.

All this lends a richer significance to the text. We need to be separated from our sins not merely

by distance, but by a change of standard and desire. When God enters, and a man deals with Him regarding sin, racial differences of moral standard and constitutional taste disappear. Jesus Christ, standing on that Syrian soil which has been the historic meeting-ground of East and West, changes the views of both, and creates a higher patriotism strong as the lower and far more true. Then men of all races, learning the will of God and His love, take these for their native country, the homeland of their spirit, and sin becomes alien and foreign to them.

What is this but *sanctification*, in which sin is removed not merely by the forgiving act of God, but by the change of man's desire which is the work of His Spirit? No longer regarded as merely dangerous or foolish or wicked, it comes to be literally hateful—uncongenial and utterly alien to his desires and tastes.¹

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

Jacob and Israel.

'And Jacob dreamed, and behold a ladder.'—Gn 28¹².

'And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.'—Gn 32²⁴.

There is a story of a Sibyl which we used to read in our Roman History. It tells how that strange prophetess came to one of the early kings of Rome, Tarquinius the Proud, and offered him, at a price, nine precious rolls of parchment. But when the king would not pay the price, she went away. Presently she came back, having destroyed three of them, and offered the remaining six to him for the same price. The king once more refused. But again the Sibyl returned; this time with only three books left. Then the King, amazed at her persistence, bought the three for the same sum as that for which at first he could have had the nine.

Like the books of the Sibyl is the story of Jacob:

There is a tide in the affairs of men
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.

Twice that tide flowed for the patriarch, but not with equal force; the first one he missed, and when the second chance was given him, he found, as Tarquin found, that it had far less to offer, and its demand was therefore higher.

¹ J. Kelman, *Ephemera Eternitatis*, 67.

1. There is surely no more mixed character than Jacob's in the Old Testament. The fact that, like St. Paul, he is a man of two names, shows us, as clearly as anything can do, that his life was broken in two in the middle—that there was a definite change, a fresh beginning, a new birth. And the very name by which in his earlier life he was known, Jacob the Cheat, is enough to show what there was in him which would make all honest men dislike him.

But what matters now to us, what makes his life so fascinating as a human document, is that he had in him something quite different from all that. Like so many of us, he was two men even from the first. It was not for nothing that on the very night that he was driven out from home, lying there on the bare and rocky hillside, with a stone for his pillow, he dreamed the dream which has been the delight of childhood and of age ever since. It was not for nothing that there, in his misery and loneliness, he saw the ladder whose top reaches to heaven, and heard God's voice speak to him. It is the first of the two great crises of his life. The whole of the Sibylline books with all their words and their wisdom were offered him there at Bethel. But he would not pay the price. The flow of the tide would have carried him right out on God's ocean; but he missed it. It is so much easier to do great things, to make great resolves to dedicate life to a high purpose, before one is twenty-five than it is afterwards. But, though he knew the ladder was there, though he had seen it mounting step by step up to the throne of God, he would not begin to climb it. His dream remained a dream. He went on his way, saying, 'How dreadful is this place'; he journeyed on alone when he might have had all those angels for his companions. Nay, he even tried to make a bargain with God: if He will be with me and give me food and raiment and bring me again in peace, then this God shall be my God. That was the first crisis.

2. Now fourteen years have gone past and Jacob is on the way home again; he was poor then, he is rich now. He had gone out alone to the ravine, where far below the river Jabbok wrestles its way downward, as its name means, among the rocks. And now, as he stands there, having done all he could for safety, the whole of his life passes before him; just as, when a man troubled with insomnia lies awake in bed, he sees his character stripped bare and naked. The house of lies he has built at the cost of his soul is tumbling about his head like a house of cards. Not his wealth

only, not his own life only, but the life of those who are dearer to him than himself, is in danger. Perhaps that is his salvation; perhaps that one unselfish thought was the door through which God came to him. However it was, there as he stood alone in the darkness, he was conscious of a power wrestling with him, a power so real, so intense, that it was just as if a man whom he could not see had met him and grappled with him, face to face, and heart to heart; and gathering all his strength, Jacob rose and wrestled, wrestled on, even when he was spent and weary; wrestled on, till the new name was given him, and he had won the blessing which now he longed for more than he longed for all beside.¹

The anthropomorphism of this story is astonishingly frank and vivid; but it is clear that the Genesis writer intends us to see in it an allegory of inward strife. He is spiritualizing an older and cruder form of the story, which still determines the shape of it; but the soul of it is a new thing in his hands. And later ages have inevitably taken this weird and sombre tale as an allegory of the soul's struggle in prayer. Charles Wesley has so fixed it once and for all in his noble hymn, 'Come, O Thou traveller unknown.' And Francis Thompson, in his essay entitled *Sanctity and Song*, links up the Old Testament story with one of the Canticles attributed to St. Francis of Assisi, which figures the soul's prayer as a warfare with Christ, in which the soul falls to the ground pierced by Christ's lance, only to be raised again by Him:

So keen fresh that I
That moment could have scorned
To join the saints on high.

And thus revived, the soul returns to the conflict; and, at last, 'I conquered Christ my Lord.'

Ay! for so love teaches us, through its disciplines of pain and piercing, to win that hardihood of utter self-abandonment which makes God yield Himself to our importunity.²

Let us end with two thoughts. We must not let any dream go which God has given us. Those dreams of youth which come to us as we read of some noble life, as we go out to start upon our profession; dreams of marriage and heroism, of pity, of service and generous self-sacrifice, of love and devotion, are all meant to be translated into the prose of common life. He who sees the vision and goes on his way is a worse man than he who

¹ G. H. Aitken, *Fellow-Workers with God*, 180.

² L. Johnson, *The Legends of Israel*, 98.

never has seen it at all. Every vision is not only a call to action but a promise that, as we strive, we shall attain ; as we seek, we shall find.

But though we have no right to put away the conversion of to-day, because we think that to-morrow will do, yet Jacob stands here to bid us never lose hope for any man. It is false to say that no one is ever really changed after he is thirty. Right on into old age God is seeking for the souls He loves, the souls which Christ died to win for Himself. Here it is God with whom man's fight must be fought, not Apollyon, or sin, or temptation, or his evil self. For it is the final truth of

life that God is always following us ; the love of Christ is always waiting to comfort us, through some great call or some great sorrow, through the failure which wrecks our self-confidence, through sickness and the shadow of death, God may come face to face with any one of us. And when He comes, the whole question will be : Do we care enough ? Have we the will, in spite of all the careless years that have gone before, have we the will to rise and wrestle ? For, if we do that, we shall prevail ; and, when the morning comes, on our forehead too, however faintly, the new name will be written.

The Revised Edition of Sir George Adam Smith's Exposition of the Book of Isaiah.¹

BY PROFESSOR JOHN E. MCFADYEN, D.D., UNITED FREE CHURCH COLLEGE, GLASGOW.

IT is hardly too much to say that the publication of Sir George Adam Smith's *Isaiah* thirty-nine years ago marked the dawn of a new epoch in the exposition of prophecy. The fuel was already there, gathered by the patient toil of many a scholar, but it had not been kindled into light and heat. That is what those volumes did. Here was a writer who combined broad and delicate scholarship with an exquisite literary gift and who, besides, already stood in the front rank of British preachers. The volumes broke upon the English-speaking theological world with all the force of a revelation, and the preachers of that day felt like Keats' 'watcher of the skies, when a new planet swims into his ken.' The prophets, major and minor alike, had been to most preachers practically a *terra incognita* ; those volumes revealed the breadth and beauty and fertility of this unknown land. Praises were showered upon them by scholars and literary men, praises which have been gratefully endorsed by four decades of preachers on both sides of the Atlantic, who were not slow to recognize in them a supreme expository achievement.

It were superfluous to repeat the praises lavished upon those volumes on their first appearance ; suffice it to recall the tribute paid them by Mr. H. Jeffs in his *Art of Exposition* (James Clarke & Co.), after they had been in circulation for more than twenty years. 'The glory,' he says (p. 80), 'of

¹ Two volumes (Hodder & Stoughton ; 10s. 6d. net).

The Expositor's Bible series is Dr. George Adam Smith's two volumes on Isaiah and his two volumes on The Book of the Twelve Prophets. These approach as near to perfection in their combination of the fullest and finest scholarship, the vividly dramatic style, the penetrating psychology, the illuminating analogies between the social and spiritual conditions of the prophetic times and our own, and the intensely practical application to present-day problems, as we can reasonably hope anything to come. Dr. Smith has been the making of many a preacher, and dullard indeed would the man be who was not a better preacher, and a keener and more intelligent reader of the prophets, after he had revelled in Dr. Smith's books. Dr. Smith has wonderful intuition of the Oriental mind. The expository preacher who, while maintaining his own independence of thought and style, lives much with Dr. Smith, will be living with a supreme master of the craft, and cannot fail to catch something of the master's zest for the Bible, and through that zest he will be brought spirit to spirit with the great souls to whom the inspiration came which gave to us the Bible literature.'

When it became known that Principal Sir George Adam Smith was engaged in the revision of his work on prophecy, expectation and curiosity were immediately aroused as to the form which the revision would take. It was felt that the homiletic treatment, resting as it did upon