

MY MOTHER.

A Sermon

BY

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN,

PREACHED IN THE EAST LONDON TABERNAACLE, ON
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“Her children arise up and call her blessed.”—Proverbs xxxi. 28.

TWENTY-ONE years ago my father returned home from the bank earlier than was anticipated. He had told the family that he should not be home till rather late, and therefore they were all out at a week-night service. He returned, however, as I have said, earlier than was expected, perhaps through feeling ill, but why, we never learned; and when the family came home they found him stricken with paralysis, and powerless to utter a solitary word. For six long weeks he remained dumb. Many were the prayers that went up from loving hearts that before he was taken he might be enabled to speak to us. That prayer was never answered, but a blessed equivalent was granted, for, though he never spoke *to* us, he was allowed of God to speak of his dear Lord *before* us. It was on a Wednesday night. My mother was kneeling by the bedside of my father, praying, and as she rose from her knees the tongue that had been dumb for six weeks spoke with all its usual clearness, and the utterance was, “In the name of the Lord Jesus,” as if to let us know that it was in the name of the Lord Jesus in answer to a wife’s prayer that the wonder had been wrought. From that moment, and during the following Thursday, the words that constantly

fell from his lips were, "Precious Jesus, blessed Saviour, peace, rest;" but he was never once conscious of the dear ones round about him. On the Thursday afternoon, the tongue, still clear in its utterance, exclaimed, "Hear His praises! Hear His praises!" and then added, "With Christ; with Christ."

These were the last words uttered, and my father's spirit passed into the glory. Just twenty-one years have rolled by since then, and last Friday week, on the tenth of this month, at Hastings, the dear one who was kneeling by that bedside herself passed away to glory, surrounded, I thank God, by nearly all the members of her family. Her children were grouped around her. Some of them are here this evening. Never will that night be blotted out from the memory of any of us. Oh, how God seemed to be speaking! It was a wild night. The wind roared. The sea thundered as it washed close up under the window. The rain descended in a torrent. Without were noise, whirling waters, and stormy winds; but, within, the perfect quiet and peace of God. Shortly after the dawn of that Friday morning, "one gentle sigh the fetter broke," and mother mounted to her God. Perhaps there may be some here, though I can hardly imagine such, who are ready to say, "But why, Mr. Brown, do you make any reference to this death more than to any other? We know that it is not your custom to preach funeral sermons." It is not, but I think that I shall be able to show you in a very few minutes that the mention, in a special form, of my mother, is no intrusion, and can be none, in this place. Her name is interwoven with all the work that has been accomplished here in the name of Jesus Christ; and I should be a traitor to my own deep heart feelings, I should be a traitor as a son, I should be false as a pastor, if I did not take this opportunity of carrying out my text, and rising and calling my mother "Blessed." As we expressed it in prayer, there are hundreds of you here far more closely linked with her than you imagine. This building is the true monument to my dear father; but all the spiritual work that has been wrought here is so intimately linked with her who has been the very inspiration of my life, that it will be impossible, long as memory

lasts, to think of the work of grace in this place among you and not think of her who is now before the throne.

I want this evening, first of all, to speak on *mother*,—mother in the general meaning of the word. Then I shall have a few words concerning *your mother*; and then I shall close by a tribute unto *my mother*.

I.—For a few minutes let me speak on this word MOTHER, the very sweetest word in the whole of the English language. And, if there be no sweeter name, there is assuredly no more potent name either. The mother makes the man, for, in nine cases out of ten, it is the mother's influence that moulds the child. A wise man was asked when the education of a child should commence. His answer was significant. Twenty years before its birth, in the education of its mother; and so is it, and it would be easy, I doubt not, to find a thousand illustrations of that truth in our gathering here this evening. Solomon, the wisest of men, seems to hint at that when, in the Proverbs, you have over and over again this suggestive expression, "the law of his mother." Yes, there may be "the commandment of the father," but it is ever linked with "the law of the mother." There is not one word, so far as I have been able to study the theme, that gathers up into itself such a wealth of meaning. I know that there are some sad exceptions; but my point this evening is not what some mothers are, but what God's ideal of the mother is, and what, blessed be God, the vast majority find "mother" to be. It has seemed to me as if the whole field of the different virtues were reaped and gathered up into one sheaf, in that word "mother." When you speak of "mother," you mean something infinitely more than the one who simply gave you birth. In giving birth she *becomes* a mother; but, oh, she never ceases to *be* the mother! You never hear anyone saying of a living mother, "She was my mother." It is always, "She is my mother," for, when she becomes the mother in fact, God by a marvellous arrangement of wisdom makes her become a mother in spirit for all time. And what that word "mother" covers, who shall say? I believe—and I speak frankly—that it takes years to find out what "mother" means. You often

hear the little ones who lose their mothers in their infancy greatly pitied, and I marvel not at it ; but no child knows the worth of a mother as does a grown up son or daughter. It is as the years roll by that one gradually discovers the manifold beauty that lies wrapped up in that matchless word. When God Himself would let men know what His tenderness is—(I speak with reverence), it seems as if He Himself had to bring in the word “mother.” He says in the 103rd Psalm, “Like as a father pitieth his children.” Oh, yes, but I want something more than pity. I often want consolation ; I want comforting ; and God says, through His servant Isaiah, “As one whom his mother comforteth so will I comfort you.” All the way down the ages you have illustrations of this. The mother stands in a position altogether unique. When there is a need for gentleness, compassion, solace, comfort, who can take the mother’s place ? I have often smiled inwardly at the shrewd common sense of that man of old whose record is found in the Second Book of Kings. You remember that he goes out into the harvest-field and there is his little boy toddling after him, and the hot eastern sun strikes down upon the child. As long as the boy was all-right the father could look after him splendidly. Yes, we fathers can all do that. But the moment that the little one began to cry, and say, “My head, my head,” what is the father’s recipe ? He said, “*Carry him to his mother.*” Ah, and I trow that there are hundreds here to-night who are ready to say, “Carry me to my mother,” when sorrow is in the heart, or pain is in the head, and when trouble is round about. “Carry him to his mother” seems to be the instinctive suggestion that God has put deep down within the breast. I can take even a higher illustration. Our Lord and Master meets that funeral procession as it comes out of Nain. With one word of Deity He says, “Arise ;” and the young man lives. What will Jesus do with a young man who lives by His word ? He did not know anything better to do with the young man than to give him to his mother. “And He delivered him unto his mother.”

I can say before God that I have not the slightest intention

of speaking a word which can be construed into anything disrespectful of other forms of love, but, in my judgment, the mother's love is the highest type of love. Other loves may be as high hills, but here you have the Himalaya peak of heart affection. Think of its power, its heroism, its majesty. When man fails the mother's love stands strong. Have you ever marked its constancy *even against all the discouragements that may arise in the object beloved?* Selfishness cannot chill it; utter worthlessness cannot weaken it. It cannot be stifled by ingratitude. Let the object beloved become unfortunate, and it is the mother who will love it all the more because of its misfortunes. Let the child even become a disgrace, and, almost inexplicable as it is, you will often find that the mother seems to cleave more to that disgraced child than to any other. A husband or wife may seek a divorce, but you have never heard of a mother even wishing that a divorce could be obtained from her most fallen and depraved child. And when the whole world may turn against the boy, you will find that it is the mother who will become all the world to that boy. As it has been beautifully put, a mother's love is like the vine that will cling to the tree after it has been blasted by the lightning; and the blasted tree that has no leaf of its own shall yet be wreathed and festooned by the vine that puts her own beauteous fruit upon its bare boughs. When other love becomes withered, the mother's love abides ever green. There is one passage that lights up this subject, and I know not that I ever realized its power as I did the other day. It is this: "And there stood by His cross His mother." That is just where the mother always stands. When others have fled, when Peter has lost his courage, when the disciples have turned faint-hearted and left, when others are busy mocking, and when the man is crucified before the eyes of the world, in shame and ignominy, there is one who will stand even by his cross, and love, and that is "his mother."

The mother's love is all-excelling, for this reason—that there is so much *self-sacrifice* in it. A great deal of our love is love that feeds on what it receives. The mother's love seems to feed on what it gives. Why, from the very moment that we

first drew breath, our mother's love has been one of self-sacrifice, but of such a perfect kind that she would feel insulted if you suggested to her that it was a sacrifice. How many hours of sleep will a mother cheerfully give up for a sick child. How much personal comfort will she surrender without a thought. Little children give their mothers headaches, and big children give their mothers heartaches, but mother willingly bears with them both, and never loves an iota less. "Mother"—oh, it is the sweetest word in the English tongue; and, I would like to say plainly and frankly to all the young men and the young maidens that are here, *Honour that word*. God's most beautiful creation lies within that cradle of language.

II.—Now, only for a moment: YOUR MOTHER. I cannot speak of her. I do not know her. *You* must come on to this platform to tell of her. But I joy to think that there is one thing in which we are all one this evening. I do not know that I could select any one subject which so perfectly knits us into fellowship as this. However we may differ in other respects, there is none of us here but either has, or has had, a mother. I want to say a word on behalf of your mother.

O sons and daughters, do not be a burden to her. Read at your leisure the 1st verse of the 10th chapter of Proverbs. There is a strange pathos about it. "A foolish son is the heaviness of his mother." I looked at those words only yesterday, until I found that it was difficult to see them, for the eyes became dim. The heaviness of a mother! O God, it were better, I think, to die than live to be the heaviness of one's mother. Am I speaking to anyone here who has made his mother sigh, or has put an extra load upon that loving heart? May God forgive you, dear young fellow. You do not know what you are doing. If there is a sin under all heaven that is a cruel one, it is the sin of weighting the gentle spirit of her who gave you birth. God knows, she has enough to bear without a wayward son adding to the load. Or am I speaking to someone here—(and I wish that I could speak lightning and thunder on this point)—who has fallen into what I advisedly call the damnable sin of this age, a lack of rever-

ence for father and mother? You must have your eyes closed if you do not see that this is one of the most patent and dreadful characteristics of this day. It is enough to make one shudder when we hear the father glibly spoken of as "the old governor," and when we hear that dear woman, the mother, spoken of as "the old woman." If any of you have fallen into this evil, may God show you your sin. Have you ever made a joke at your mother's expense? Have you ever thought and spoken lightly or despisingly of her? If so, perhaps you would like to know your character. You can find it in the 15th chapter of Proverbs, and the 20th verse. It is *the fool* that "despiseth his mother." I wonder whether there is anyone here who says, "Well, but my mother is getting so old." Is she? Then you ought to love her all the more. Has her brown hair become silvery? Has that clear brow become furrowed? Are there, about the mouth, lines that used not to be there? Are you sure that you are not responsible for a single grey hair or furrow? But do you say, "Mother is getting into her second childhood?" Is she? But how you ought, then, to bear with her, as she bore with you in your first childhood. The Holy Ghost seems to have a word for every possible condition, for I find in the 23rd chapter of Proverbs, and the 22nd verse, that the Holy Ghost, anticipating such a thing as this, says, "Despise not thy mother in her old age." If you kissed her brown locks, stroke softly her silvery ones. The young mother is fair to look on, and well may you love her; but perhaps the holiest sight that the angels look down on is the mother who has been a mother to her children until her hair has become white as snow, and her brow marked by the ploughshare of time. Your mother—I do not know her, but my prayer is this: may your mother be blessed in her children. May your mother find her joy in you, and when she goes, as my mother has gone, may you be able to take the same text as I have selected, and say, "Her children arise up and call her blessed."

III.—As well as I am able, for it is a difficult matter for me to speak, I want to say a few words about MY OWN MOTHER,

Her father, that is, my grandfather, dear old Job Heath, a member of a family that for two hundred years belonged to the Baptist body in London, came of age in the year 1802. On that day his mother, my great-grandmother, sent him a letter. He read that letter, and it was the turning point in the whole of his career. That was, as I say, in the year 1802. Mothers, listen. This may encourage you. Sixty-seven years afterwards, that is in 1869, as he lay dying, what was it that was in his hand? A thin, worn sheet of paper, torn in many places, but carefully patched together, the writing faint, yet still legible, and this was the very letter that he had received sixty-seven years before from his mother. That was the last thing that the dear old man of over eighty had in his hands before he passed away. Ah, mother, thou mayest write to thy boy a letter which shall bear fruit more than half a century afterwards. He was thus blessed by *his* mother; and then my own precious mother in her girlhood, and under the holy influence of that home, found peace in the Lord Jesus Christ, and confessed His name. She inherited the blessing that a mother had passed unto her father; and I, in company with my dear sisters and brothers, rejoice to say that she, in her turn, has passed that blessing on to us; and God grant that we, in our turn, may be the means of passing it yet further on.

I tried to think of my early days as I was turning this subject over, and what memories came flying from the past! Oh, the wonderful *tenderness* of my mother! I go back, and I can see, as if it were only yesterday, a scene which happened while I was a little child. I had been poorly, and I remember that they brought a cot downstairs out of the bedroom, and put it into the breakfast-room. I can remember that, and I can remember having a troubled, feverish sleep, and waking up to find that there was a hand holding mine, and, when I looked, I saw my dear mother kneeling by the cot and praying over me. Oh, a great many similar scenes come back! I remember her teaching me to say after her,

“Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,
Look upon a little child.”

I cannot recall the hour in which she did not point me to the Saviour ; and may God grant that many mothers here may follow her in this respect. She lived *a life of prayer*. After my father started for business in the morning, I noticed that my mother always went upstairs, and I used not to see her for some little while. Like most boys, I had a dash of curiosity in my constitution, and I remember saying, "I wonder why mother always goes and locks herself in that room." I remember so well standing outside the door one day, and listening. I knew then. I could hear her praying, and praying for her children by name, one after another, for in those days she always prayed aloud. There never was a day in which she did not have that time alone with her Lord, to spread the cases of her children before Him. In her life there was a *transparent simple-heartedness*. What she felt she said, and everything she said was actually felt. I suppose that for my mother to act a part would have been a sheer impossibility. She was clear as transparent glass, and always arrayed in the *sweetest humility*. I know that if my dear mother could only speak now she would say, "Archie, do stop." Any reference to herself seemed really to be a pain to her: she was so conscious of unworthiness, so bowed down in lowliness before God. And with that sweet humility there was *a heart that throbbed for every sorrow*. You had only to tell her about anyone in trouble, and she felt it all. Her heart sent out an echo to every cry of distress. *She lived upon the Word of God*. Ah, this was characteristic of her. When she wanted to make this church a little present, as we emigrated from the old Tabernacle, this pulpit Bible was her choice. I read here, "Presented by Mrs. J. W. Brown to the church and congregation under the pastoral care of her son." This book was everything to her. Oh, how she fed upon it,—how she knew it! If ever I called in unexpectedly at the home at Denmark-hill, I was sure to find the Bible either in front of her or close by her side ; and as she neared the end of the journey the Word of God became more sweet to her. Not long since I said, "Mother, have you read this book?" and her

answer was, "Do you know, Archie, I feel now as if I want to devote all the time I have left to the reading of God's Book."

Oh, if you would live a mother's life after this sort, see to it that you feed upon the Word of God, for, apart from this, it is impossible. If you look to the 26th verse of this chapter you will see her portrait. "She openeth her mouth." Ah, here comes the test. What splendid Christians some of us would be, if only we did not open our mouths. What marvellous influence some of us would have in the home, if only we did not open our mouths. Now, here is a picture of the model mother. "She openeth her mouth with wisdom, and *in her tongue is the law of kindness.*" That is a cabinet photograph of the one that is gone. "In her tongue is the law of kindness." Though I have told you before, I must not omit to tell you now—for this little testimony to my mother will have a wider audience than that gathered here—that *I never heard her speak one angry word: never once.* I am so anxious that some of you may pray that in this matter you may be one with her. I never heard that tongue utter a harsh word; and if she reproved, as reprove she could, it was done with such wondrous love that you felt the reproof all the more. I never saw, nor have any of my brothers and sisters, that brow contracted by a frown. Never have I known that spirit to be so much as ruffled. Any child of hers could run to her at any hour or any moment, and never hear a word that was bitter, a word that was sour, a word that grated. Oh, mother, if you would have your son try to speak of you after you are gone as I am seeking to speak of her, ask God to keep that tongue of yours in holy charge. There are more homes withered by the tongue than by anything else. There are more hearts broken by the tongue than by any other power. There are more spirits stabbed by tongues than bodies by daggers. Ask God to take that tongue of thine, and consecrate it to Himself, so that of thee it may be said, "And in her tongue is the law of kindness."

Now I must draw to a conclusion. Last Friday week she passed away. It was on the Wednesday night that I received

notice at Sandown that my mother was sinking. Thursday was just a race against death. I could not bear the thought of her passing away without seeing her, and I thank God that I was allowed to join the family group gathered round that bed. What was the testimony in death of one who had so lived with Christ during her life? There was the same simplicity, the same absence of all mere gush, the same strong abiding faith. On my taking her by her hand, she looked up, and there was such a smile of welcome. I had a few words with her, and I told her, "Mother, there are thousands in East London praying for you." There was a sweet smile of gratitude in her face. I asked her shortly after, "Well, now, how is it with you?" and her answer was characteristic and beautiful: "I have no rapture, but I believe; and blessed are those that have not seen, and yet have believed." At half-past six on the Friday morning we were led again to say to her, "Mother, heaven is getting near, is it not?" Unable to speak, she just looked up. Ah, her eyes had grown used to looking in that direction. One upward look of such unutterable peace, and that dear old hand that I had just kissed was slowly lifted up and pointed heavenwards. So she fell asleep in Jesus.

But she is represented here. God knows, I am full of failings and full of imperfections. I know it, and, if I did not know it, there are plenty of "candid friends" to tell me of the fact. But I desire to say, to the praise of God, that if I have been made a blessing to any of you, if God has maintained in any measure a testimony for the truth in this place, if ever you think of me in love or gratitude, you must go a step further back, and *thank God for my mother*.

Farewell, then, dear mother. Pure as virgin snow. Tender as a guardian angel. Bright as a morning star. Calm was thy life. Sublime thy simplicity. Christ controlled thy spirit. Heavenly was thy look. Thou livedst in peace. In perfect peace didst thou pass from earth to glory. Sacred is thy memory, and all thy children call thee blessed. Thy son does so now in the midst of this assembly, as in tender love he seeks to place the poor wreath of to-night's sermon upon thy precious name.

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No. 2.—“WORSHIP.”

Text.—“God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth” (John iv. 24). Preached in the Metropolitan Tabernacle.

No. 3.—“MY RESTING PLACE.”

Text.—“Return unto thy rest, O my soul” (Psa. cxvi. 7). “Rest in the Lord” (Psa. xxxvii. 7).

No. 4.—“JUST TO PLEASE HIM.”

Text.—“Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him” (2 Cor. v. 9).

No. 5.—“OUR LORD AND HIS CHRIST.”

Text.—“And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever” (Rev. xi. 15, R.V.).

No. 6.—“CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON.”

No. 7.—“THE QUESTION OF QUESTIONS.”

Text.—“Then Job answered and said, I know it is so of a truth, but how should a man be just with (or before) God” (Job ix. 1, 2)?

No. 8.—“THE MUSTER ROLL.”

Text.—“Whose names are in the Book of Life” (Philippians iv. 3).

No. 9.—“HIS COUNTENANCE AND MINE.”

Text.—“I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance” (Psalm xlii. 5). “I shall yet praise Him who is the health of my countenance and my God” (verse 11).

No. 10.—“WHO BEARS THE PILLARS?”

Text.—“I bear up the pillars of it” (Psalm lxxv. 3).

No. 11.—“THE NEW TESTAMENT PENTATEUCH”

Text.—Zechariah ix. 9; Isaiah xlii. 1; Daniel vii. 13; Isaiah xl. 9; Psalm cx. 1.

No. 12.—“GROWING TIRED OF CHRIST.”

Text.—“But now our soul is dried away; there is nothing at all, besides this manna before our eyes” (Numbers xi. 6).

No. 13.—“THIS I HAD.”

Text.—“This I had, because I kept Thy precepts” (Psa. cxix. 56).

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