


St. Andrew's Society of Ottawa.



ANNIVERSARY SERMON

≡ 1889 ≡


— PREACHED BY —

Rev. W. G. Herridge, B. D.


— IN —

ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH,

SUNDAY EVENING, DEC. 1ST.



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ANNIVERSARY SERMON.

“And He said unto me : Son of Man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee.”---Ezekiel ii., i.

IT is one of the distinctive doctrines of Christianity that to the humble come the best revelations, and to the humble are open the gates of the Kingdom of Heaven. In many places throughout Scripture, the servants of God are represented as falling prostrate to the ground, and in that attitude of self-abasement waiting to hear what God would say. We do well to learn the truth which such pictures suggest to us, that only when a man is humble can he understand the significance of the words of God. But there is an opposite truth of which we receive less frequent reminder, and that is that false conceit is not more harmful than false humility. A proper appreciation of man's place in the universe obliges him to feel at least some measure of self-respect. We are not without some worth, or God would not have created us. We are not without some mission, or God would not have set before us moral principles of such transcendent beauty and power. If we are to enter into the inheritance which really belongs to creatures made in the image of God, we must understand its value, and summon all our nobler energies that we may go up and possess it. We must not depreciate our life, but awake to the consciousness of its

gracious privilege and its magnificent opportunity. We must listen to the voice which recalled the prophet of Israel from his posture of abasement: "Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee."

In addressing Scotchmen here to-night, I wish to emphasize the value of true self-respect, especially in its power of revealing the whole scope of life, and thus stirring us up to the consecration of our best energies in the service of our country and the service of God. As long as you reside within the bounds of this Dominion, it is only in a modified sense that you can be described as "Scots abroad." The same old flag as that which stirred the chivalry of boyhood still waves over you. The same dear hand still guides the ship of State, and the dividing ocean has not lessened the fervour of your prayer: "God Save the Queen." You form part of what has well been called "the greater Britain"—the colonies and dependencies with which the adventure or conquest of the motherland has circled the globe. Carrying with you all that is best in the memories of the past, you have excellent opportunity to display amid the freer movements of this continent the distinctive genius of your nation. You are delivered from that snare of insular prejudice which in some degree is likely to beset the man who stays at home. The force which you bring into our common affairs, while retaining its own characteristics, must needs be joined with other forces in forming the current of Canadian history. In the midst of the healthy friction which belongs to a mixed community, you may keep warm your love for the

purple heather and the granite hills, while at the same time your heart becomes large enough to make you not a citizen of one place only, but a citizen of the whole world.

Few nations can look back to a past more suggestive or inspiring than your own. There may be some doubt as to the legend which tells us that in the fourth century a pious Greek monk brought from Byzantium the bones of your patron saint and deposited them on the coast of Fife on the site of the celebrated seat of learning which now bears his name. But it is certain that Christianity early made its way into Scotland, and the venerated names of Ninian, Kentigern and Columba belong to its first period of authentic history. The oldest building in the land, if we except the scanty remains of the Celtic Church in the Western Highlands, is the chapel on the castle rock of Edinburgh, erected in memory of Margaret, wife of Malcolm Canmore, who, to the graces which adorned her domestic life, added such a strong religious enthusiasm and such a truly benevolent heart. It would be impossible now to trace at length the course of Scottish Church history, though some knowledge of it is essential to anyone who would rightly estimate the religious features of the country to-day. It will do us good at any time to recall the stern resistance which the people made long ago to every form of ecclesiastical tyranny, the zeal which marked their defence of what they conceived to be the faith once delivered to the saints, the undaunted courage with which not a few bore witness to their sincerity in the lonely dungeon or amid the fires of death. No dis-

passionate critic will deny that the dominant religious party, whichever it might chance to be, often indulged in needless injustice and cruelty. There was the intolerance of reform as well as the intolerance of ecclesiasticism. If Mary did not understand John Knox, it is equally clear that Knox did not quite understand Mary. Yet when we recall the burning enthusiasm of that man of God as he confronted the beautiful but misguided queen, we see in him another John the Baptist, stern, indeed, but true, sending forth his warning cry: "Repent! for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." And though he did not live to see the secure establishment of the principles of civil and religious freedom, yet his works followed him, and hastened the day of Scotland's emancipation. For a long time, it is true, the Presbyterian and the Episcopalian, the sister churches of reform in the two kingdoms, were involved in acrimonious strife. Suspicion and jealousy prevailed on both sides, and in some cases, no doubt, the spirit of religion was lost in wordy strife over the letter of it. Yet if we would not do injustice to the men of that time, we must remember how different were the circumstances of their age from that in which we live to-day. They were too near the smoke of battle to discern all the issues of the conflict clearly. Let it be granted that they sometimes stormed an outpost when they thought they had taken the enemy's citadel, and that they sometimes failed to perceive the best means of bringing about religious peace and unity. Yet while we need not repeat all their methods, we may well admire the purpose

which inspired them, we may well preserve some measure of their courage and fidelity, we may well seek, as they did, to hand down inviolate to our children the untold blessings of religious freedom, and the priceless treasure of the Word of God.

Nor are other memories of his native land without their inspiration to the Scotchman of to-day. The physical features of your country have played their part in building up the stamina of its people. Of what use would he be amid the wild mountains or the barren moors who feared the storm-cloud or the driving mist of rain? The rugged grandeur of the Highlands has stamped its mark upon the men who loved them well, and sent them forth everywhere full of dauntless adventure and unconquerable love of liberty. When the commerce of England was paralyzed by war, the ships of the continent were bringing their freight to your shores. For centuries before the union of the two kingdoms was effected with results which proved in the end so fortunate to both, Scotland had maintained an almost unbroken friendship with France, and while not inclining to imitate her either in religion or politics, had brought its character to bear upon the great southern nation, and enriched her chivalry on many a well-fought field. The wars of Scottish independence read like a tale of romance. Wallace and Bruce are still magic names in the national history. They inspired a nobler patriotism and gave birth to a distinctive literature which, beginning in the stirring ballads of military daring, found its later themes among the

glens and lakes and mountains, and in the cottage homes of its people. Burns stands without a rival as the sympathetic poet of humble life, and Sir Walter Scott has bequeathed to us a series of vivid pictures which take us back to the days of chivalry. Scottish character has always manifested an intellectual bias, and the love of learning is one of the strongest passions among all classes of the community. With a type of speech and mind closely resembling the kindred German, Scotland has given to the world some of its best historians and philosophers. It is the land of Hume and Robertson, of Adam Smith and Thomas Reid, of Dugald Stewart and Sir William Hamilton. In its literary ranks are numbered such men as Thomson, Montgomery, Campbell, Lord Jeffrey, "Christopher North," and Thomas Carlyle. Among travellers it can boast a Livingstone, among scientists a Hugh Miller, among pulpit orators a brilliant galaxy which includes Wardlaw, Guthrie, Macleod, Irving and Chalmers. Its victories of peace have been not less renowned than those of war, and every Scotchman has reason to look back with pride to the rich mental and spiritual inheritance which is bequeathed to him, and to show its inspiration as he goes about to fulfil his part in achieving the fortunes of his adopted country.

For none of the best qualities of the Scotch character will be without their distinct value in Canada to-day. They are old-world in their origin, and that itself is something. Though upon the other side of the Atlantic, we feel that the roots of our civilization are buried in the soil of the past.

“ Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay,’ and it is ours, if we are wise, to reap the harvests of European centuries. The Providence of God has given us half of this continent that we might be unimpeded in our united efforts to build up a prosperous and happy people who, while they had a past to guide them, should have besides a future bright with golden possibilities. In this inspiring enterprise the sons of Scotland have a work to do. They must temper our rash enthusiasm with their graver prudence, not allowing that virtue to degenerate into mere selfishness, nor exercising it so timidly as to do nothing at all. Their prudence must be seen in checking unwise commercial or political ventures, in waking us from idle Utopian dreams, in not permitting our religion to be blown about by every wind of doctrine. For prudence, in its place, is exceedingly valuable in moulding the life of a new country. Our watch-word, I know, is “ progress,” but there is such a thing as mistaking its meaning, or trying to progress too fast. We are impatient of delays ; but all true growth must needs be a thing of time, and it is by the tempering of zeal with discretion that we shall best be able to work out the harmonious development of our beloved Dominion.

And with Scotch prudence we need also Scotch industry in our land. What is too often the merely theoretical creed of the perseverance of the saints is mocked by the practical creed of the perseverance of the sinners. When a Scotchman chooses, few can exceed him in obeying the command: “ Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.”

The love of hard work has been forming for centuries in conflict with inclement nature, and amid the changing fortunes of war, and I am persuaded that it has not yet left you. Now we need in Canada this power of steady application to one thing in the midst of the many things which claim our attention. We have natural advantages unsurpassed by any country. But we must not rely solely on these. It is our business to use them diligently and well. Sloth has killed more than one nation, and we cannot prosper unless we retain that industrious and persevering spirit which has before now exalted many an obscure and humble toiler to a place of distinction among the heroes of the race.

And then we need here that reverence which has always been an element of Scottish character. It is a quality more easily cultivated in civilizations older than our own. The long past affords objects of veneration, and the mind is not shut up to contact with contemporaries. The saints and heroes were no doubt men of like passions with ourselves, but their figures loom up in shadowy outline upon the horizon of historical vision, and seem to grow rather than diminish as they recede farther from our view. In southern Europe reverence takes more particularly the æsthetic, and across the channel the religious turn, though both phases are present in each case, and both are needed with us to-day. A ruin in the old world becomes a theme of song and a shrine of devotion. In the new world, on the contrary, we are apt to be impatient of vestiges, and may even assist nature's work of demolition in order to make room for 'modern' improve-

ments. But all the time, I think, we are learning to cherish more carefully the links which bind us to the past. As yet they are few in number and by no means remote in their suggestions. But the day may come when our descendants will be able to learn history as they walk our streets or visit some memorial of our age of chivalry.

It is not, however, in matters of taste but in matters of religion that we need most this old-world reverence. There are types of religious life among us in which, I fear that reverence, the foundation principle of religion, is wanting altogether. We have acquired an almost fatal fluency in discussing the problems of the soul. We need the grace of silence as well as the grace of speech in our religious work. We need to remember how Christ taught that it is not the performance in public but the prayer in secret which moulds the character and warms the heart. Our Christianity must manifest itself, or it is no Christianity at all, but it must run less to outward appearance, and be more concerned with doing justly and loving mercy, and walking humbly with our God.

Now as Scotchmen you must be true to your best religious associations if you would help to turn into the right channel the young life of this Dominion. You must preserve the love of home and keep that sacred word from ever meaning less than it used to do in the humble dwellings of your forefathers. You must still be priest of the family, and gather your children around you to study the good old book which has so largely influenced your national

character. Read again "The Cottar's Saturday Night," and then breathe a fervent prayer that Canadian poets may never want material for a kindred theme. For

"From scenes like these, old Scotia's grandeur springs,
That makes her loved at home, rever'd abroad ;
Princes and Lords are but the breath of Kings,
' An honest man's the noblest work of God.'"

As I wish to speak the truth to you, I do not say that you have nothing to unlearn in your past history. The divorce of religion from morality, so frequent, alas ! everywhere, has sometimes been witnessed in Scottish character. There are few men who would desire, even if they were able, to follow a Saturday night's debauch by a devout attendance at the kirk on Sunday. Yet Scotchmen have done this, and it is to my mind a difficult problem of psychology how they could apparently enter into both proceedings with equal relish and fervour. Certainly it is a tribute to the strength of the religious instinct that not even Bacchus has been able to put it wholly to flight. But this perplexing inconsistency, as any one knows who has watched Scottish life during the last half century, is growing much less frequent, and when it occurs is meeting with severer censure. The time has passed for the acceptance of vinous inspiration either in the pulpit or the pew. Now in this new world, while you may think you keep your Saturdays better than some of your forefathers, see that you do not keep your Sundays worse. See that you do not lose their devout love of worship or their extraordinary capacity for religious in-

struction. Let the Church be still your rallying-point, and become to you none other than the house of God and the gate of heaven.

So, too, you must try to reunite, what has sometimes been separated in your past history, the love of religion and the love of your fellow-men. The stormy manner in which your ancestors were obliged to assert their religious convictions, if they would live at all, was not favorable to the growth of charity. They were menaced on all sides by relentless foes and the gentler elements of character seemed to find little opportunity for display. But living as you do in a far different age, you cannot shelter yourself even behind their great names if you do not add to your faith and hope that love which is the queen of all the graces. It has been sometimes asserted that your great poet, Burns, is given to satirizing religion. But this is a serious mistake. Whatever were the faults of his brilliant and perilous career, he is never wanting in admiration of the true spirit of worship. But he does scathe with well deserved sarcasm the man who says: "I love God, but I hate my fellows," he cannot endure the "unco' guid" who, while perfectly satisfied with their prospects for the future, have little hope of their erring brothers, and still less desire to lift them from their degradation into the liberty of the sons of God. We ought rather to mourn than smile at the fidelity of the picture in "Holy Willie's Prayer":—

" Lord, in Thy day of vengeance try him,
Lord, visit them wha did employ him,

read aright the signs of the times, the two great historic churches of reform, the Presbyterian and the Episcopalian, are drawing nearer to one another, and sanguine minds are already predicting their more visible unity in the future. But what is even more suggestive than these ecclesiastical movements, is the growing spirit of religious tolerance everywhere. For as there may be union without love so there may be love without formal union. Scotland can never lose its passion for orthodoxy, but it has ceased to measure men solely by the Westminster Confession, and has come to see that a polemical treatise of the seventeenth century, however excellent as far as it goes, cannot adequately express the religious thought of the age in which we live. Those who do not understand Calvinism have accused it of harshness, and we need not deny that it has been sometimes expounded in forms repugnant to the reason and conscience of mankind. But it is a system which even in its most rigid aspects has developed a degree of moral stalwartness which we look for elsewhere in vain. If it does not care much for vapid religious sentimentalism, nor revival Hallelujahs, its pupils have a good reputation in the market-place, and can usually be trusted to discharge with intelligence and fairness the ordinary duties of life. It is no bad sign, however, that the better understanding of the Divine Fatherhood which marks the theology of our age has led thoughtful minds to a measure of discontent with the historical creed of Presbyterianism, and has caused them to desire a fuller statement of the infinite love of God

and the infinite desire of God that all men should come to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus.

Now, there is ample room for you to exercise in Canada that broader religious tolerance, which is happily growing in the motherland. This is the last place in the world for mere "clannishness" either in the Church or in society. We are a mixed people, and we must try to interpret the various elements which enter into the composition of the community. Having out-grown, I hope, the age of missile-throwing into the camp of our more immediate friends, let us proceed still further, and try to reach the standard of the heathen poet when he said; "I am a man, and nothing that pertains to man do I think foreign to me." It should be easy to develop a cosmopolitan sentiment among us, for under the term "Canadians" are included types of nearly all the best civilizations of the world. The Englishman is here with his tenacity of purpose and his ardent love of home. The Irishman is here with his impulsive generosity and his eloquent tongue. The American is here with his business enterprise, and his contagious sociability. The Frenchman is here with his native courtliness and his heroic past. The German, the Dane, the Swede are here, keeping their love of Fatherland, yet ready to share the fortunes of their adopted country. We have all the chief elements of European life in this Dominion, and enough of the Mongolian to teach us our duty to him. It ought to be easy, I say, to break down any mere local prejudices and to unite a fervent love of your own land with a sympathetic apprecia-

tion of the memories of others. For whatever be the home of our forefathers, we are now Canadians first of all, justly proud of our country, and determined to consecrate our best energies in developing its material resources, in enlarging its realm of thought, in laying, deep and strong, the foundations of its moral character.

As Scotchmen, you have already done much in all these directions, and I am persuaded that you will do still more. The courage of your patron saint in spreading the Gospel in heathen lands is said to have brought him to cruel martyrdom. You need not fear his fate, but you may well catch his missionary enthusiasm. This is how the scriptures introduce him to us: "One of the two who heard John speak and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, we have found the Messias. And he brought him to Jesus." It is a suggestive picture—Andrew bringing Peter into the presence of the Christ. Centuries of Church history have created what may seem to some an impassable breach between these two saints who once were brothers. But is it too much to hope that this simple New Testament picture anticipates the more glorious Reformation of the future, when Andrew shall again recognize Peter, and removing the obstacles which impede his progress, come with him again to worship the Lamb of God? He who relegates any part of the community to hopeless evil, by that very argument condemns himself. Our Christianity must be as broad as life, or it is no Christianity at all. We are all

children of the same family, and whatever the difficulties which lie in the way of reconciliation, it is not too much to believe that love will yet overcome them.

“ For a’ that an’ a’ that,
 It’s coming yet for a’ that,
 The man to man, the world o’er,
 Shall brothers be for a’ that. ”

Scotchmen, I congratulate you that you live in a land so rich in opportunity for the display of the best elements of your national character. “Stand upon your feet” in the conscious dignity of manhood, and hear what God the Lord will say. Recall the stirring events of your past history. Renew a “Solemn League and Covenant” of fealty to the religious instincts which are implanted in your soul. Keep pace with that growing charity which is the most hopeful mark of modern Christendom. Be true to yourselves, true to your country, true to your God. Fulfil the part which is assigned you in moulding the future destinies of this Dominion, and you will exalt it to be the brightest gem that sparkles in the coronet of the Queen, and having served your generation by the will of God, will stand in your lot at the end of the days.

St. Andrew's Society

Ottawa, Jan. 20th, 1896.

Dear Sir,

I am requested by the Arranging Committee of the St. Andrew's Society to remind you that you are in arrears for dues up to Nov. 30th, 1889, amounting to \$ 3 00

As the claims upon the Society's charitable fund are considerable at this season of the year, would you kindly remit the same to the undersigned, and oblige

JAS. PETERKIN,

Recording Secretary,

306 Concession Street.