

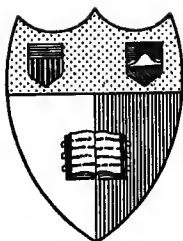
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THE KING'S CUP-BEARER

THE KING'S CUP-BEARER
A SERMON IN MEMORY OF THE
REV. E. WINCHESTER DONALD D.D.
PREACHED IN TRINITY CHURCH
ON THE SUNDAY NEXT BEFORE ADVENT
NOVEMBER 20, 1904
BY THE
REV. WILLIAM REED HUNTINGTON D.D.
RECTOR OF GRACE CHURCH
NEW YORK



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E. W. D.

THE KING'S CUP-BEARER

I was the king's cup-bearer. NEHEMIAH I : 11.

THE man who said this of himself had been, at an earlier stage of his life, in the service of the king of Persia. I justify my taking his words as a text for this morning's discourse by reminding you of what another King, one Jesus, said of this same function of cup-bearing: "Whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward."

The sign of the cup may be traced through both Testaments, and carries many significations. There is the cup of sorrow, with its plenteousness of tears; there is the cup of doom, freighted with death; and then again there is the cup of thanksgiving, the cup which brims with eucharist and overflows with joy; tears lose their saltness at its approach,

THE KING'S CUP-BEARER

and poison its skill to harm. This last is preëminently the King's cup; to be the bearer of it is a most honourable office; reverently to present it to the King is a lofty act of homage; acceptably to minister it to the King's guests is a blessed employ.

Dr. Donald your late rector, Winchester Donald your friend and my friend, was thus privileged. He was King's cup-bearer. It is in that character that I shall try to picture him; for service rendered under that head that I shall chiefly praise him. It is a great thing to be a preacher of righteousness. He was that. It is an even greater thing to be a son of consolation. He was that also. How often men mistake their own powers and misinterpret their own gifts! Had you asked your late minister to define himself, he most likely would have said, "I am a swordsman. I fight

THE KING'S CUP-BEARER

the King's battles." But no, his supreme gift was not militancy,—however it may have seemed to some, as well as to himself,—his supreme gift was not militancy, it was sympathy; he gave drink to the thirsty; he satisfied the longing soul; his true emblem was not the claymore, as he fancied, it was the chalice.

But let us busy ourselves with heredity for a few moments, for that battleword which I just now used carries us back to Scotland, the home of all the Donalds that ever were, and it would be vain to attempt an estimate either of the man or of the minister without having first taken a straight look at Donald the Scot. To a great, yes, to a most creditable extent, your rector had himself made himself what he was; but none the less the blood that had run in the veins of his forbears, from generation to generation, had helped to make him.

THE KING'S CUP-BEARER

The quality most central to Scottish character is intensity. The people of that stock know how to love, and they know how to hate,—for hatred, the obverse of love, is sometimes a virtue:—“Ye that love the Lord, see that ye hate the thing which is evil.” The Scotch can be good haters as well as ardent lovers. “Perfervid” was the epithet a controversial divine of the Seventeenth Century fastened upon the race, and it has stuck. When they care for anything or any person, they care a very great deal,—“*Praefervidum ingenium Scotorum.*”

Akin to this attractive trait, though in partial contrast with it as well, is what they call in Scotland dourness. The word is a hard one to define, but it carries with it a distinct suggestion of severity dashed with melancholy. The dour man is ever observant of the rugged

side of human life. He notes that all the sounds of inanimate Nature, the voices of the woods and of the streams, are in the minor key. The tragedy of the world afflicts him, and he is willing that others should call him austere rather than stand in his own eyes an optimist on false pretences. This is a dour world, he says, and I will be dour to match it. That was a shrewd critic of national character who divided the Scotch into two families, "the children of nature under Robert Burns, and the children of grace under John Knox;" but who shall count the number of the souls whom their very dourness drove into these opposite companionships, some that they might find an antidote for their melancholy in sensuous delights, and other some that they might find warrant for it in the eternal decrees of a predestinating God.

It is written of Jesus, at the grave of

Lazarus, not only that he wept, but that he "groaned in the spirit." Tears are often a coveted relief; groans tell of a deep-down sorrowfulness that finds no outlet. Jesus groaned in the spirit because there was present to his consciousness at that moment, not the solitary case of Lazarus only, but the sombre picture of a whole world travailing together in pain. Doubtless his outward features betrayed the inward grief. In all likelihood the charge they brought against him, "He hath a devil, and is mad," was prompted by a look in his face like that which frightened Dante's Florentines. They would not tolerate the melancholy mood. It put their surface light-heartedness to rebuke; it spoiled their feast. They desiderated a cheery Christ.

Still another Scottish trait is keenness of discernment in the region of things

THE KING'S CUP-BEARER

immaterial and unseen. This shows itself in various ways. The Scotch, for instance, have always taken kindly to the more abstract, as contrasted with the more concrete, among the sciences,—natural-born metaphysicians almost to a man. They are, moreover, both divines and diviners, divines in virtue of their fondness for theological problems and their skill in wrestling with them; diviners in that their folk-lore deals so largely with the marvels of second sight. Spiritually minded they are, if religious; philosophically minded, whether religious or not; and mystically minded, even to the verge of superstition, whenever the deep race-instinct wakes in them.

I find in Winchester Donald a blend of all three of these characteristics. He was intense in his affections; he was dour in his temperament; he was born

THE KING'S CUP-BEARER

of the Spirit. Faithful in love ; deeply serious in purpose ; ever intimate with the invisible ; he showed the best of Scotland in his handsome face. By the accident of birth, Donald was a New Englander, and to the day of his death a loyal one ; but by all that differences one sort of countryman from another sort of countryman, he must be rated a North Briton, kinsman to the Napiers and Buchanans, the Douglasses and Alexanders, the Scotts and Campbells and Carlyles,—men whose genius has compelled a land of which the emblem is a thistle to blossom as the English rose.

Elijah Winchester Donald (and I have sometimes been sorry that he suppressed the former of his two baptismal names, there was so much of the Elijah in him) was born at Andover, in that year of revolutions, eighteen hundred and forty-eight. The atmosphere of the

THE KING'S CUP-BEARER

historic little town was vibrant, at that time, with the breath of scholarship, if also made strident now and then by the rougher winds of controversy. The son of a manufacturer, he was helped to offset these influences by a wholesome contact with the world of practical affairs. It is impossible to overestimate the influence which the surroundings of childhood exert upon the child through the sympathies and the imagination. I was myself brought up in a "mill town," and I would not for the world see blotted the pictures which water-wheels and power-looms, canals and sluice-ways, great bales of cotton and great bales of wool, printed in vivid colors on my memory. It is good for the idealism which is in a child to feel the counter-check of reality, to be forced, at times, out of the world of dreams into the world of things. The young Donald felt both influences,

THE KING'S CUP-BEARER

that which streamed from the seminary and reached him filtered through the ministrations of the meeting-house; and also that which issued, strong and healthy, from the mill. He grew up the sturdier man for having known both contacts.

In 1869 Donald was graduated from Amherst College, of which seat of learning he afterwards became a trustee. In later life he was proud, and not without reason, of the fact that he was the first Episcopal clergyman to receive from Amherst the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity. For the College, he ever cherished a warm affection, and by its officers and graduates was loved and deeply trusted in return.

He began his post-graduate life uncommitted to any particular calling or profession, a teacher for a time, and also, for a little while, a dabbler in journalism.

THE KING'S CUP-BEARER

All of these experiences helped to make him ready for the real work of his life, which began when, after due preparation at the Divinity School of our own Church in Philadelphia and the Union Theological Seminary of New York, he was made deacon in 1874.

Curate for a year to the Rev. Dr. John Cotton Smith, Rector of the Church of the Ascension in New York,—a divine well remembered by the older generation of Trinity Church worshippers,—he presently became himself a rector, having been called to the charge of the parish of The Intercession, Washington Heights. Here he tarried for seven busy years, learning more of joy than he had known before, and more of sorrow. At the expiration of this preparatory ministry, he was recalled to the Church of the Ascension, Dr. Cotton Smith, his old chief, having died. At the Ascension,

THE KING'S CUP-BEARER

Donald remained ten years, fulfilling a ministry memorable in more ways than one. During those ten years I was his near neighbour, and since it was impossible to be his near neighbour without becoming acquainted with his sterling worth, a friendship sprang up between us to the known strength of which I am indebted for the high honour of having been appointed his eulogist. I had known him before our coming into neighbourhood, but had not known him well. How vividly I remember the very first time I set eyes on him. It was at a meeting of a little group of clergymen interested in the upbuilding of the Church Congress. They were most of them elderly men, and he a youth "ruddy and of a fair countenance." Something was said to which he could not assent, when suddenly there came into his eyes a look like that which flashes from

THE KING'S CUP-BEARER

under the brow of Doré's neophyte in the picture of the monks in choir. He struck his stick against the floor and spoke his mind. Who is this young man, I asked, who ventures thus frankly to dissent from the majority, and they his elders? It was not long before I came to know who and of what make he was.

One of the most interesting features of Dr. Donald's New York ministry was what we may call its outreaching character. He succeeded in establishing close relations with people of a class which the average minister seldom so much as touches. This was the more remarkable because the Ascension was not at that time what it has since become, a church with free and open sittings. What his methods may have been I do not know; but this I do know, that somehow there was gathered, round about the compact body of his parish-

THE KING'S CUP-BEARER

ioners proper, a wide fringe of detached or semi-detached adherents, who loved him dearly and would have followed him anywhither. He was a sort of Apostle to the Latin Quarter. Young men of business, strangers in the great city, struggling artists, budding journalists, — I venture to say that the young rector of the Ascension had more of these, and of the like of these, under his wing than any other pastor, certainly any other pastor of our communion, in New York.

It was not so much his oratory, his eloquence, that attracted them, though that was a powerful magnet: it was his virility, his downright sincerity, his insight into their needs. Here is a man, they said, who will tell us what he really thinks about these questions that are vexing our souls, one who can understand us, who will not be hard upon our infirmities, or chastise with scor-

THE KING'S CUP-BEARER

pions our shortcomings. And so it was that the young rector came to have an exceedingly good report of them that were without. Bohemia heard him gladly. Let it not be supposed for a moment that this popularity with the people whom most ministers of religion fail to reach was won by any lowering of standards. Far from it. His preaching and his teaching were ethical, unmistakably ethical, to the core. His counsels were ever the counsels of perfection. But to help men ethically, we must know men personally; if we would mend them, we must meet them. This is what he sought to do, and did. He "found" men, in the sense in which Jesus found Andrew and Philip and Nathaniel. Listen to two witnesses whose agreement is the more remarkable because neither one of them knew that the other was to be put upon the

THE KING'S CUP-BEARER

stand. This is what a former assistant writes,—and remember that a rector is not always a hero to his curates:—“He had a genius for getting *en rapport* with the unsettled and the discouraged, and for steadying dizzy eyes. This power of his used to impress me greatly when I was with him at the Ascension. My door looked down a long hall, and people going to his office had to pass it to get to him. Again and again would I see some one come along the hall, a very picture of gloom, go in for an interview with him, and in half an hour reappear, the shadows all gone, and hope and a new will put in their place.”

And this is what another, now a university professor of philosophy,² has to say: “His very great love for young men, his sympathetic appreciation of

¹*The Reverend Milo H. Gates.*

²*Professor Woodbridge, Columbia University.*

THE KING'S CUP-BEARER

their difficulties, untouched by any taint of sentimentality, and his untiring and unselfish devotion to their interests, when once they had gained his confidence, always impressed me, linked as this was with a winning severity such as I have known in no other person. . . . He seemed to give himself not only spiritually, but also physically to those whom he comforted. It often seemed to me that he actually changed places with them. I have seen stricken people leave him not only comforted, but with a certain bodily elation, and have found him prostrated in his study."

This testimony of two men is true, and very wonderful testimony it is. The cure of souls does not often take so much out of a man as it exacted of this keenly sensitive, though seemingly defiant, nature. He did not, like the false prophets of old, "wear a rough garment

to deceive," though he did sometimes wear a rough garment that deceived.

Of Dr. Donald's ministry in Boston, why should I, who knew it only by report, seek to inform you who for more than ten years were in daily contact with it, who personally observed its methods and personally felt its power? The motive which prompted him to accept the invitation to become your leader was a chivalrous one, if ever motive merited that adjective. "Some one," he said to himself, "must leap into the gulf; if the lot falls on me, why not I?"

In the spirit of willing sacrifice he came; in the spirit of willing sacrifice he toiled; in the spirit of willing sacrifice he died. How many there were who appreciated it all, the great throng which gathered under this roof at his burial gave proof. Death brings its own Epiphany. He stood revealed.

THE KING'S CUP-BEARER

It was in the early morning of Transfiguration Day that Donald took his leave of earth, a fair and happy day to die; nor can we for a moment doubt that, in the language of the prayer proper to that feast, he, "being delivered from the disquietude of this world," was and is "permitted to behold the King in his beauty." You remember how Donald loved beauty.

I should like to say a few words before leaving the pulpit as to your late rector's religious opinions and ecclesiastical affiliations. No estimate of the man would be complete that left these particulars untouched. Dr. Donald's point of view both with respect to theology and "churchmanship," so-called, was a somewhat unusual one. He held convictions that are not often found living amicably together in one and the same mind. His attitude towards Chris-

THE KING'S CUP-BEARER

tianity in the large may best be understood through a study of his Lowell Lectures on *The Expansion of Religion*, published in 1896. His main contention in these discourses would seem to be that the more the power of the Church, as a visible and distinct organization, equipped and officered, appears to wane, the more have we reason to comfort ourselves with the reflection that the type of character which the Church was designed to create is being generally approved and accepted. As in the old Arabian tale, the casket is broken, but out of it has emerged a cloud-giant whose figure towers to heaven.

This view, pessimistic as respects the Church, but optimistic as respects that for which the Church stands in the region of conscience and conduct, is familiar enough; but what is less familiar is the concrete instance of a man's hold-

THE KING'S CUP-BEARER

ing, along with so unecclesiastical a philosophy of religion, a deep devotion to the sacramental side of Christianity. The Holy Communion was to your late rector's heart singularly attractive. He cherished the idea of it, he loved the ritual of it. At the centre of all his devotional life, there stood an altar. Both at the Church of the Ascension and here in Trinity Church, he laboured to enhance the dignity and the beauty of that portion of God's house which is especially associated with the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ. This cannot have been because of his holding the notions of sacerdotal authority commonly associated with the Anglo-Catholic movement of the last half-century, for, as a matter of fact, he did not hold them. His sympathies went out to the Cambridge rather than to the Oxford School. He symbolized with the Thirlwalls, the

THE KING'S CUP-BEARER

Lightfoots and the Westcotts, not with the Puseys, the Kebles and the Liddons. How then are we to account for his sacramental leaning, apparently so much out of harmony with all the rest of his convictions and preferences? Simply in this way, I incline to think : in the midst of shaken walls and crumbling columns, "a dust of systems and of creeds," the eye of his soul discerned the majestic figure of the Son of Man, the unconquerable Christ. Whatever else fails me, so his meditations ran, He at least will not. To Him I have pledged loyalty. To Him I have given allegiance. He is my Sovereign. Sacramentally, therefore, seek I to realize what spiritually I am ; with joy to my King's banqueting-house I go ; his banner over me is love, and his cup-bearer I will be. It was not that he had it at heart to see one special form of eucharistic doctrine prevail over

THE KING'S CUP-BEARER

another. Though full of zeal, he was no zealot. What drove him to the altar-steps and kept him there, was simply a strong desire to meet his Lord.

Just one year ago to-day, counting by Sundays, on the morning, that is to say, of the third Sunday in November, 1903, your alms were asked, as in a few moments they will again be asked, in aid of the Episcopal City Mission. Donald was here—for the last time he was here; he spoke—for the last time he spoke. He pleaded tenderly for Christ's poor and sick and lost. Suffer him, dear friends, through my lips, after all these months of pain and silence, once more to plead. It is the ancient plea, the old, old plea, "I am hungered, give me meat. I am thirsty, give me drink." No, after all it is not I; it is not Donald; it is the Christ. Hear ye Him.

