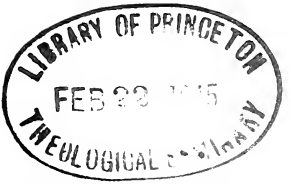

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THE IDLE WORD:

SHORT RELIGIOUS ESSAYS

UPON THE

GIFT OF SPEECH, AND ITS EMPLOYMENT IN CONVERSATION.

BY

EDWARD MEYRICK GOULBURN, D.D.

PREBENDARY OF ST. PAUL'S, CHAPLAIN TO THE BISHOP OF OXFORD, AND ONE OF HER MAJESTY'S CHAPLAINS IN ORDINARY.

"As alphabets in ivory employ,
Hour after hour, the yet unletter'd boy,
Sorting and puzzling with a deal of glee
Those seeds of science call'd his A B C;
So language in the mouth of the adult
(Witness its insignificant result)
Too often proves an implement of play,
A toy to sport with, and pass time away.
* * * *
Sacred interpreter of human thought,
How few respect or use thee as they ought!
But all shall give account of every wrong,
Who dare dishonour or defile the tongue."—COWPER.

"By thy words thou shalt be justified:
And by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

NEW YORK:
D. APPLETON AND COMPANY,
90, 92 & 94 GRAND STREET.
1870.

IN MEMORY

OF THE LATE

RIGHT HON. HENRY GOULBURN, M.P.,

WHO HAS PASSED TO HIS REST

SINCE THIS TREATISE

ON THE GOVERNMENT OF THE TONGUE,

A GRACE WHICH HE SINGULARLY

EXEMPLIFIED,

WAS FIRST INSCRIBED TO HIM.

PREFACE.

The reader of this little Book will soon discover from the style adopted in parts of it, that the substance of the several Chapters has been delivered in the form of Sermons. But the throwing of these Sermons into the form of short Religious Essays has given me the opportunity of introducing matter unsuited for the Pulpit, and of erasing much which had only a special reference to the circumstances and temptations of my own flock. At the same time, I have felt unwilling (in this, as in a former publication) to omit entirely all practical addresses and appeals of a devotional character, however out of place such passages may seem to be in an Essay. For indeed I feel that all exclusively speculative treatment of Religious Subjects (and specially of a

subject having so close a bearing upon practice, as that with which the following Pages deal) is to be avoided. We do not think on these subjects aright, unless our minds are led on from the theory of them to the influence which they ought to exercise upon our practice,—unless we allow them to stir within us the sentiments and aspirations of devotion. Nor, except we view them under this light, are we safe from erroneous conclusions respecting them. For right conclusions on Religious subjects cannot be formed by those who speculate upon them in a wrong, or in a defective, spirit.

To some, I fear, the Rules of Conversation here proposed may appear too strict, and even impossible to be carried out. May I request that such Readers will consider, before they reject the Rules, what is said in Chapter VII. on Words of Innocent Recreation?

I may have erred doubtless in some of my applications of it to practice,—but I cannot see my way to evade the general principle, that words, to redeem themselves from the charge of being idle, *must fulfil some one of the ends which words were designed to fulfil.* These ends are indicated at length in the body of the Work, and it only remains for me to say, that a wider scope should possibly be

given to the term, "innocent recreation," than it was consistent with the nature of a religious essay to set forth. A great many words which cannot be justly called witty, or humorous, yet tend to relieve the burdens of life, and to lighten the heart with a gleam of merriment; nor would it be possible to enter into any useful conversation without passing through the preliminary porch of lighter remarks, and repartees upon ordinary topics. If such things were precluded, conversation would lose its ease and gaiety, and with these its power of refreshing the mind. To preserve this power (which ought always to attach to it), while at the same time guarding against empty words, and the encroachment of a spirit of unwatchfulness, is doubtless an arduous task,—one of the most arduous perhaps which the Christian has to achieve; but it is our encouragement and consolation to know that our Merciful Lord never commands impossibilities, and offers us not only the guidance of general principles in His Word, but also Grace and Light to direct the individual conscience, in its attempts to apply those principles to the conduct of daily life.

E. M. G.

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CHAPTER I.

THE CONNEXION OF SPEECH WITH REASON.

"The time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land."—Song ii. 12.

The Divine Founder of our Religion warns us in the most solemn manner against the sin of empty and frivolous conversation. His words on this subject are such as to strike an awe into every conscience in the ear of which they are sounded. "I say unto you that every idle word which men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment."

Nor is the law behind the Gospel in its protest against this particular form of evil. We find such a protest inwoven into the most essential part of the Law—into that part which is universal in application and binding upon all alike—into the very tables of the Decalogue. "The Lord will not hold him guiltless," we there read, "who tak-

eth His Name in vain"—the implication here being that God (and His estimate must be righteous,—cannot be harsh) will regard sins of the tongue in a light totally different from that in which the world regards them. Let it be borne in mind that the Ten Commandments are the code of essential morality for all times, for every generation,—that there is nothing in them (considered as a rule of life) which has ever been abrogated, or is susceptible of abrogation,—that they are not a series of arbitrary rules made (as it were) by the discretion of the Almighty, but are based upon the eternal relations subsisting between God and man, between man and his brother; and it will then be seen that every precept which they inculcate (whether directly or by implication) must be part of the essence of true religion—must have a profound import, and one which we can only trifle with at the peril of our souls.

Now the grounds of this serious view of light talking require to be explained. Grounds of course there are—God's every word must be based upon counsel,—but they do not at once approve themselves to the mind. So entirely has the comparative indifference of words taken possession of the minds even of religious persons, that they find it difficult to fight against the unscriptural persuasion. Of what sin does even the well-

principled and well-conducted man think more lightly, than of a profane or hot expression, vented in a moment of excitement? And if he were assured, as he might be assured on the best of grounds, that such a sin has really a very serious aspect, probably his understanding would not at once acquiesce in such a verdict. He might suppress his understanding (as he ought to do) in deference to the testimony of God's Word, but it would require some consideration before he could bring round his mind to assent to the reasonableness of that testimony.

It is the author's purpose to throw together some thoughts in the following pages, bearing on the important subject of Conversation. He feels more and more that one of the greatest hindrances to personal piety—that which eats out the heart and soul of true religion—is an unrestrained and unchastened exercise of the tongue,—that if persons could but be persuaded to banish from their lips empty talk (talk relevant to nothing in particular, gossip about their neighbours' concerns and arrangements, little profanenesses of expression, and the like) and to leave only such speech as was instructive or amusing (for words of innocent humour and wit are surely not idle words)—a vast amount of moral and spiritual mischief would be swept away as so much rubbish out of the

world, and men would be introduced by the effort into the atmosphere of holiness, as finding themselves unable to effect such a clearance without constant mindfulness of the Presence of God. May God abundantly bless what shall be offered upon the subject, to our conviction of sin and conversion from it, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

I propose to begin at the very foundation of the subject. This method of proceeding (Bellum Trojanum ordiri ab ovo) may be unsuitable indeed for a poem, but it is essential to the clearness and stability of an argument on graver subjects. Thus our first topic will be—

The Connexion of Speech with Reason.

If this connexion can be thoroughly established, if it can be shown that Speech is the great organ of Reason,—the sign, proof, and evidence that a creature is rational—then the seriousness of Speech will at once become apparent. If it be impossible to make an ordinary remark, without calling into exercise that special gift which distinguishes man from the inferior animals, and allies him with God and holy angels, then there may be some real and deep-seated impropriety in making a trifling or light remark,—in doing so we may be playing with an instrument of mighty power, and degrading it to low and cheap uses.

Speech then, *as a fact*, is connected with Reason. Reasonable creatures are those who can speak,—and conversely those who can speak are reasonable.[1] With this fact alone we shall occupy ourselves in the present Chapter. *How* Speech and Reason are connected will be the subject of future consideration.

We are surrounded by, even as we are composed of, three elements—Body, Soul, and Spirit.

I. First, we cast our eyes abroad upon inanimate nature—upon the frame of the earth, the trees, the rocks, the water.

There is no Speech here,—no power of expressing either intelligence or feeling. For Speech is not merely the emitting of sounds. It is of course obvious that inanimate nature may emit sounds. The waves surge, the stream ripples, the avalanche crashes, the thunder mutters, the bare arms of the trees in winter sway and creak in the wind; but these sounds, however a lively fancy may picture in them the voice of nature addressing herself to a man, have evidently no affinity with speech.

Let a man go abroad amid the mountain fastnesses or in the fields, and pour forth his soul to nature. Let him previously be wrought up to the highest point of passion and interest—let him have burning thoughts within him, and long to

[1] See the Note at the end of the Chapter.

unbosom them. Let him be full of passionate grief or ardent enthusiasm, and let him be bent upon relief by venting these emotions. Let him address the great solitude, as if it had ears to hear him, and intelligence to respond. Let him weep, let him plead, let him expostulate, let him fling himself upon the bosom of the soil, let him call heaven and earth to witness, let him attest the mountains to his controversy and the strong foundations of the earth, let him seek to extort a hearing by every form of appeal which can awaken passion, and rouse dormant sympathy; well, what is the response? Nature, to those who seek her sympathy, is like Baal to his worshippers. "There is neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regardeth." The great mountains stand in grim silence around, unmoved spectators of his passion; or, if they give back sound, it is only "jocosa montis imago,"—his own words returned as if in mockery upon himself. The mimicry of his own pleading rings in his ear, and he turns away with a bitter sense of the barrenness of his efforts. Nature has no intelligence—she cannot counsel him with discourse. She has no soul —she cannot comfort him with sympathy.

Imagine now the case of a similar appeal made to an animate and rational being. Take as an example the tender and urgent expostulations

of God with His sinful creature man. God pours out His whole heart of love in pleading,—in yearning over His prodigal erring child. He draws His stirring appeals from every topic, which experience proves to carry weight with it. At one time He rolls over the sinner's head the thunders of retribution—He whispers into the ear of the conscience the nearness of death and judgment. At another, He arrays before him the blessings and comforts of a lot which has fallen in fair ground, and asks by an inward voice which will not be suppressed, whether these do not legitimately call for gratitude. At another, He pleads in yet more urgent strains the Sacrifice which He has provided to win back the allegiance of man,—the Sacrifice which testifies to a love stronger than death, which the many waters of human indifference cannot quench, neither can the floods of ingratitude drown it. The God-man by His Word, by His Ministers, by His Spirit, pleads the wounds which scarred His Sacred Body, and the pangs which rent His Holy Soul asunder, the strong crying which went up to God from the depths of His unfathomable anguish, and the bitter tears which, in the days of His flesh, the malice of foes and the faithlessness of friends alike conspired to draw from Him —well—and is there no response? God be

praised, these pleadings have not gone forth into the world of spirit—into the world of reason—without awakening a reply. The reply is Speech, articulate and intelligent. The reply is Prayer—no barren empty retort—but a taking of words on the part of many, and a turning to the Lord. When God's Voice issues His invitation of Grace to all the world, and says, Seek ye My face, an answer struggles up to Him from the depth of many a conscience, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek. Oh hide not Thou Thy face from me, nor cast Thy servant away in displeasure." He addressed the spirit, or reason, of man, and the spirit communes with Him by its organ of Speech.

II. But, in the second place, we are surrounded by animated nature—a stage in the creation infinitely higher than that which we have just considered.

But again there is no Speech here, albeit there is a dim dark semblance of Speech—something which struggles up towards being speech, and seems to make an impotent effort to express itself in articulate language. For Speech (properly so called) is not the expression of feeling, but the expression of intelligence or Reason. The brute creation, as possessing Soul or affection, is capable of expressing feeling. Animals will cry when frightened or struck; the dog has ever

been known to moan round the grave when bereaved of his master. But the most striking exemplification of the susceptibility of animals to feeling, and of their power of expressing it, is to be found in the notes of birds. "The fowls of the heaven," says the Psalmist, "sing among the branches." The same phenomenon is noticed in the passage which stands at the head of this chapter—"The time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land." The music which birds pour forth expresses joy, contentment, and satisfaction, feelings of which they are no doubt susceptible according to the limits of their nature, and the conditions which it imposes. Their music, like instrumental music, is the effusion and embodiment of sentiment. What are the harp and the organ, and those other mechanisms which trace up their origin to Jubal? What are they but instruments for expressing feeling, apart from intelligence? And their sounds, as being the offspring of affection, touch and move the springs of affection. There are, indeed, some persons, in whom this source of pleasing emotions seems to be sealed up. But others there are, in whom the soul predominates, and is the key-note to their nature,—who can be moved even to tears by strains of music, and whose soul, in a varied melody, now rising into

exultation, now sinking into plaintiveness, lies rocking upon the undulations of the music, as fishing-boats heave and fall with a swell in the bay. Now birds are Nature's musicians, and the song of birds is Nature's music. And thus, even among unreasoning creatures, there is an expression of sentiment or feeling by means of sound.

III. But how infinitely does this expression of feeling fall below Speech, which is the expression of intelligence. Only think what Speech is; how wonderful a gift for any creature to be endowed withal! That by a few articulate sounds, uttered almost with the rapidity of lightning, I should be able to summon up a whole train of ideas in the mind of another, and those, not rough-hewn ideas—not vague and undefined impressions—but notions nicely chiselled, exact, and precise (notions following in an orderly and consecutive arrangement one upon another)—so that, for example, a person whom I send to search for a thing in my chamber, comprehends by my uttering twenty words the precise spot in which he is to lay his hand upon it—why this, if we will but ponder it, is a miracle—not the less marvellous for being of daily occurrence. Compare with this the utmost verge to which any animal can go in the communication of ideas. Some of

the domestic animals can convey the feelings of gratitude and affection, gladness in recognizing their owners, fear of punishment and pain under the smart of it; but what are these mere impressions of the soul, even when conveyed by sound, compared to the Discourse of Reason, in one sentence of which ideas are ordered, marshalled, and communicated with a facility which is only equalled by their clearness. Between the sound expressive of feeling and the sound expressive of intelligence there is a great gulf fixed; far greater than that which separates man from man, the kindly but rough peasant from the acutest philosopher. For the peasant may be developed by mental training into the philosopher, but no training or discipline could develop mere feeling into reason.

We see, then, as a fact in the world around us, that Reason and Speech are associated together. Where Reason is not found, there Speech is not found, and where Reason is, there Speech is, as the organ or expression of Reason.

Two remarks of a practical nature arise from what has been said. In the course of our discussion we have incidentally mentioned the response which the human heart makes to God's invitations of Grace—Speech in the form of prayer and praise—the highest form this which Speech can

assume. How forcible is the argument against vain and light words, which this single thought supplies! The noblest exercise of Speech, its most exalted function, its great final cause, is that it should be poured forth before the Lord in confession, supplication, thanksgiving, and praise. Now, viewing the matter in this light, is not this of itself sufficient ground to make us think seriously of Speech? Does not the evil of an idle word become apparent, seeing that it is a degradation to low uses of a noble instrument? Is there not an obvious impropriety—an impropriety residing in the nature of things—in employing a gift, which is destined to such noble uses, for purposes of defamation, railing, profaneness, or with the mere frivolous object of whiling away time, apart from the motive of improvement? I may add, in the language of St. Paul, accommodated to my purpose: "Say I this thing of myself, or saith not the Scripture the same also?" For is it not written, "With the tongue bless we God, even the Father; and *therewith curse we men*, which are made after the similitude of God. *Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing?*" And then what does St. James add? "My brethren, *these things ought not so to be.*" There is a deep impropriety, a folly, and a vice, in these contradictory employ-

ments of one and the same organ. How! shall you come into the House of God, and there take up into your lips the inspired strains which flowed from the harp of David: or shall you go into your chamber, and recite before God the prayer which was taught you by the Infinite Wisdom; and then shall you go forth, and employ the same tongue in company, to point a profane joke, or to launch an unclean innuendo, or to rail against your brother on the moment that you are thwarted? Will you thus take an instrument of the temple service and degrade it to the mean end of gratifying temper, or lust, or the desire of saying something smart? Lord, deliver us from the guilt of such sin in time past, and from its power in time to come!

Finally:—One conclusion, to which the truths which we have developed conduct us, is the great dignity, glory, and beauty of human singing. We have seen that the song (as it is called) of the bird is expressive only of feeling. There is soul in it, but there is no reason. Even without reason, the outpouring of music, whether from the bird's throat or from the instrument, is very beautiful. But let reason be added to music Let the expression of feeling be added to the expression of intelligence, as is the case in human singing. Let the devout sympathies of the heart

be made to keep peace with articulate discourse respecting God's mercies (as it is written, "I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also"), and what is the result? The result is just this: the highest active engagement, in which man can by possibility be employed. Intelligence speaking the praises of God, while the heart echoes them, what a sublime exercise! How worthy of occupying the faculties of man throughout eternity! Therefore it is, that in every Scriptural representation of the state of glory, we find this hymning of the praises of God forming the great staple of the employment of the glorified. Are they spoken of as the four living creatures, or as the four-and-twenty elders? They are represented as falling down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and *singing a new song*, saying, "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." Are they the redeemed from among men, who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth? They are represented as "harpers harping with their harps, and *singing as it were a new song* before the throne, which no man could learn but" themselves. Are they those who have gotton the victory over the beast,

and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name? They are shown to us standing on the sea of glass, mingled with fire (that is, on the crystal firmament, in which the stars wander and the lightnings play) and *singing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb*, saying, "Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of Saints."

Lord, when we turn our minds to those glorified saints of Thine, we recognize deeply our unmeetness to join in that mighty chorus of Hallelujah. "Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts." Lord, touch and hallow our lips by the live coal from Thine altar, even by His atonement and mediation, Who was a coal of earthly nature, kindled with the fire of Divinity. Touch our hearts with love and zeal, and out of the abundance of the heart let our mouths speak Thy high praise. And by the Blood of the Lamb, and through the instrumentality of sanctified trouble, make us meet to join that heavenly chorus, who "rest not day and night, saying, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and

honour and power; for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created."

NOTE ON CHAPTER I., p. 21.

"*Reasonable creatures are those who can speak—and, conversely, those who can speak are reasonable.*"

In order to justify these two propositions, it is necessary to define Speech exactly.

Speech, then, is the conveyance of ideas from mind to mind in logical method.

By holding fast to this definition, we shall be enabled to see our way through cases, which might at first appear to constitute exceptions to the above positions. Thus it might be alleged against the first of them ("All reasonable creatures speak"), that the dumb are reasonable creatures. But the dumb have the faculty of speech, though some imperfection in their organs prevents their exercising it *vocally*. The essence of speech is not in the sound; otherwise a machine might be made to speak. The dumb can not only arrange his ideas in an orderly and methodical manner, can not only throw them mentally into consecutive words and propositions, but can convey them, so arranged, to another person, by talking on the fingers.

Against the second position ("All creatures who can speak are reasonable") it might be alleged that birds of the parrot tribe, though not endowed with Reason, can speak. But to this also it may be replied, that the mere making of articulate sounds, independently of the ideas annexed to them, is not Speech. It is not pretended that imitative birds can mentally frame a proposition; and the doing this is part of the essence of Speech.

But there are cases among the inferior animals which mount up much more nearly to the notion of speech, than that of the parrot. I extract one of these from Sir Benjamin Brodie's Psychological Inquiries (p. 192, Second Edition).

"The observations of M. Dujardin place it beyond a doubt that bees have some means of communicating with each other, answering the purpose of speech. When a saucer containing syrup was placed in a recess in a wall, and a bee conveyed to it on the end of a stick which had been smeared with syrup, he remained there for five or six minutes, and then flew back to his hive. In about a quarter of an hour, thirty other bees issued from the same hive, and came to regale themselves on the contents of the saucer. The bees from the same hive continued their visits as long as the sugar remained in the state of syrup, and fit for their purpose, but none came from another hive in the neighbourhood. When the sugar was dry, the saucer was deserted, except that every now and then a straggler came as if to inspect it, and if he found that by the addition of water it was again in a state of syrup, his visit was presently followed by that of numerous others."

On reading this trait of Natural History (and I believe many similar instances might be adduced), it might occur to one to ask: "Is not this Speech in all its essentials? The bee who first visited the saucer communicated to those in his own hive the intelligence that syrup was there—an intelligence of which the bees in the adjacent hives did not avail themselves, *because they had no informant.*" No doubt this appears to have been the case. But there is no evidence whatever that the intelligence was communicated *by a method of arrangement involving Subject, Predicate, and Copula*, or that bees could so communicate. And how many processes of Reason are involved in the logical method of communication, will be seen in the succeeding Chapter. It is not every communication of ideas from mind to mind, which is Speech, but *the communication of them in logical propositions*, which ordinary persons effect by the mouth, and the dumb by the hand. Exclamations or gestures might convey to me that a man was in pain, or

in ecstasy of delight, or that he wanted me to reach him something, but no one will dignify these methods of communication by the name of Speech.

With all submission of my judgment to the great scientific authority, whose work I have just quoted, and whose book is characterized not only by its patient investigation of facts, and refusal ever to outrun their verdict (the great scientific virtue), but also by what is far more precious—profound deference to Revealed Religion, I am unable to go along with all his conclusions, those especially which relate to the possession of the higher reasoning powers by animals. Thus, for example, he says, in the person of ERGATES—

"Setting aside the lowest form of animal life, I apprehend that no one who considers the subject can doubt that *the mental principle in animals is of the same essence as that of human beings; so that even in the humbler classes we may trace the rudiments of those faculties, to which in their state of more complete development we are indebted for the grandest results of human genius.* We cannot suppose the existence of mere sensation without supposing that there is something more. In the stupid carp which comes to a certain spot, at a certain hour, or on a certain signal, to be fed, we recognize at any rate the existence of memory and the association of ideas. But we recognize much more than this in the dog who assists the shepherd in collecting his sheep in the wilds of the Welsh mountains. Locke, and Dugald Stewart following him, do not allow that brute animals have the power of abstraction. Now, taking it for granted that abstraction can mean nothing more than the power of comparing our conceptions, with reference to certain points to the exclusion of others: as, for example, when we consider colour without reference to figure, or figure without reference to colour; then *I do not see how we can deny the existence of this faculty in other animals any more than in man himself.* In this sense of the word, abstraction is a necessary part of the process of reasoning, which Locke defines as being the perception of the agreement or disagreement of our ideas. But who can doubt

that a dog reasons, while he is looking for his master, whom he has lost; or (as in the instance of which we were speaking just now) when he is seeking his way home over an unknown country?"

CRITES.

"But if my recollection be accurate, Dugald Stewart does not mean to deny that brute animals are capable of the simpler forms of reasoning. He merely states that being unable to carry on processes of thought by the help of artificial signs (that is, of language), they have no power of arriving at general or scientific conclusions."

ERGATES.

"Without doubting for an instant the vast superiority of the human mind, still *it appears to me to be difficult to say how far the capacities of brute animals are limited in these respects.* It is not to be denied that the aid of language is necessary to the carrying on any long or complex process of reasoning. But we see, nevertheless, that those who are born deaf and dumb reason to a great extent; and, on the other hand, it may well be questioned whether some animals are so wholly unprovided with language as Dugald Stewart supposes."

The incapability of animals to arrive at general or scientific conclusions, maintained by Dugald Stewart, and questioned in the above passage, seems to me to be perfectly tenable, notwithstanding the instances adduced against it. Let it be granted (since the result is the same) that a dog finds his master in the same way (so far as mental process is concerned) as a man or a boy would. He knows his master by sight. (A repeated exercise of the senses, united with memory, effects this.) He knows his habits. Having accompanied him in his walks, he is aware to what places he usually resorts at certain hours. He goes to the same places, or in the same direction. In doing this he has an additional assistance from the senses (which

the man does not enjoy), in the keenness of his scent. Probably this keenness of the scent furnishes a large amount of help in that much more wonderful phenomenon, adverted to in the beginning of the Conversation, and which I myself have known as taking place—a dog taken in a carriage and by a circuitous route, to a distant place, finding his way back to his former home across a tract of country with which he could have had no previous acquaintance.

Probably animals, *being much more occupied in the senses,—living in them much more than men do, are generally far more observant of sensible tokens.* A man's mind has a wider sphere through which to diffuse itself. As he walks or is carried through the streets, he muses on future contingencies, or on past incidents—his mind is not in the senses—*audit, non auscultat.* Hence in many exercises of the mind upon the notices of sense, we should expect to find him even inferior to the animals.

But in the instances referred to, I cannot see any evidence which shows more in the mind of the animal than memory, and close observation. Where is the abstraction? the generalization? the perception of law? any approach to the apprehension of a general and scientific truth? If we must represent by an equivalent proposition the idea in the animal's mind, will it ever mount above a particular proposition—"This is the man whom I saw, or this the road along which I travelled, the other day," &c., &c.? Though indeed to represent it by a proposition at all, gives probably an erroneous notion, as all propositions involve arrangement and classification of ideas. (See next Chapter.)

Does not the author somewhat ignore the old and most true distinction between the intellectual efforts (if we are to call them so) of animals, and those of men—a distinction which places between the two a great and apparently impassable gulf? *Man's state is susceptible of continual improvement, and his civilization of continual progress by fresh discoveries.* Reason

(as it is possessed by him) is susceptible of a development to which we can set no limits. Where is there any thing comparable to this, or at all generically the same, in the history of animals? It cannot, I suppose, be denied that animals, under the pressure of particular emergencies, occasionally devise a particular method of extricating themselves. They may discover a door of resource in a particular case. But can they lay down the platform of a general principle, or rear upon it step by step the superstructure of an ameliorated and higher condition of existence? Sir B. Brodie talks of "the republic of the rookery." Is that republic one whit better governed now than it was when rooks were first created? Has legislation advanced among them? He tells us (with great truth and force) that "insects are excellent weavers, house-builders, architects—that they make diving-bells, bore galleries, raise vaults, and construct bridges," &c. The various branches of skill and industry are no doubt innate in some of them, and correspond to their particular habits and modes of life. *But have insects ever opened up a new resource which they were not at first endowed with?* If not, why not? Is it only because they have not the mental stimulus necessary to rise above the occasion? because they are so constituted, as to acquiesce in a supply of the needs of their present state of existence? because when the immediate want is satisfied, there is no further restlessness in the mind—no curiosity? This may partly account for it, but we think also that there is much reason to suppose in them, with Dugald Stewart, an impossibility of "arriving at general or scientific conclusions."

I have not adverted in the text (lest I should too much trespass upon the religious and practical character of the work) to a topic, which yet may find place in a note, as going far to establish the very close connexion between Reason and Speech. It is a very old debate (into the rights of which it is foreign to our present purpose to enter) whether or not it is possible to reason mentally, without having the words in the mind, which

represent the subjects of our reasoning. Whatever be the truth on this moot point, *the fact of its being a moot point* is sufficient to establish generally a close connexion between Reason and Speech.

If a question were raised and discussed, whether or not it is possible, under present arrangements, to pay tithes in kind—whether or not they may be paid in any other form than that of money—this would be a sufficient evidence of a connexion between tithe and money, and that the latter is commonly the form in which the former appears.

CHAPTER II.

THE CONNEXION OF SPEECH WITH REASON.

"And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof."—GEN. ii. 19.

"He surnamed them Boanerges, which is, the sons of thunder."—MARK iii. 17.

IN the first Chapter we called attention to the *fact* that Speech and Reason are associated together.

In pursuing the topic further, we shall catch a glimpse of *the grounds and manner of that connexion*.

While speaking on subjects of rather an abstract and philosophical character, I desire, both for my readers and myself, that we should keep in mind that the end of our discussion is to edify—to point out how intrinsically serious and awful a gift the faculty of Speech is, and so to illustrate,

and show the grounds of, Our Lord's censure of idle words.

The naming by Adam of the beasts and fowls is the first exercise of human Speech upon record.

I say, it is the first *exercise* of human Speech. The faculty of Speech must have existed before. In the circumstance of his naming the several creatures, it is sufficiently implied that our first parent must have been previously endowed with the gift, which alone could have enabled him to name them. Not only must the bodily organs which are necessary to articulation—the tongue, the lips, the palate, the throat, the teeth,—have existed previously; but those processes of the mind, which are essential to the formation of language, must have been previously developed and (to a great extent) matured.

Now a question might be raised of this kind. Speech being so obvious a characteristic of man, why are we never *told* that man was endowed with Speech? Why is no notice given us, that God bestowed upon His noblest creature a gift so wonderful? Why is our attention never called to the time at which the grant was made? Why, in short, is the endowment assumed as a matter of course? The answer is obvious. *The gift of language is involved in the gift of a rational soul.*

And a rational soul is part of the constitution of Man; so that no creature is a man without it. It having been stated that Man was made in God's Image after God's Likeness, and that the breath of lives (not life, but lives, i. e. animal, intellectual, and spiritual life) was breathed into his nostrils, it would have been superfluous to add that he was endowed with Speech, for that is involved in this account of his constitution. The following illustration is offered. Suppose we were told that a man had manufactured a watch. We should not need to be subsequently informed that he had placed a mainspring in the heart of it. For a mainspring is essential to the constitution of a watch: a watch is not a watch (but only the semblance of a watch) without a mainspring, and therefore, when we are informed that he manufactured a watch, it is implied that he gave it a mainspring. Or suppose that those words of Inspiration, "God maketh the light," were read in your hearing. Would any man, possessed of a knowledge of the subject, think of asking, "Why is it never said that God made colours, that beautiful raiment of many hues which nature is dressed withal, the ruddy streaks of the evening sunset, the deep purple of the sea under some conditions of the atmosphere, the gorgeous plumage of birds in hot climates, and so forth?" The answer of

course is, that in making light, God made colour; all colour is in the light, as you will see by employing the prism. In the absence of light there is no colour, showing that colour resides not as a quality in objects themselves, but is an essential property of light. The difference of colour in objects is caused merely by some very subtle difference of superficies and texture, one superficies or texture absorbing the brighter rays, and rejecting (or reflecting) the more sombre; while others, of directly contrary affinity, absorb the sombre, and reflect the bright. Now just as colour inheres in light, and is developed out of it, so Speech inheres in Reason; and, therefore, when it is asserted or implied that a creature is rational, it were only superfluous to add that he has the faculty or endowment of Speech. His endowment with Reason implies as much.

But now let us look more minutely into the narrative of Adam's naming the creatures, and consider what other implications respecting the gift of Speech may be found in it.

It is against propriety to suppose the names to have been purely arbitrary and unmeaning, to have been simply articulate sounds attached without reason to the various animals. Such an hypothesis may be discarded, as not corresponding with the dignity of the subject. The consti-

tuted sovereign of the earth, under whose feet were solemnly placed "all sheep and oxen, yea and the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air, and the fishes of the sea, and whatsoever walketh through the paths of the seas,"—walks abroad upon the domain, which has been newly created and furnished for his special service. The various creatures are made to pass before him in long array,—each pauses for a moment to receive his searching glance of intuition,—and then the air reverberates in distinct accents its name. Shall we suppose that in such a name there was no suitability,—nothing implying discernment of the properties of the animal,—nothing that shed light upon its habits, manners, and characteristics? Such a notion seems to me untenable upon the surface; it goes to represent the whole transaction as a very futile and shallow one.

Rejecting it, therefore, and adopting the view of there being a propriety and significance in the names which Adam conferred, let us consider how much of previous mental process on his part is thus implied.

The names may have been significant either of the physical properties of the animals, or of their habits and character. (One instance of a name of the former class in the Latin language would be *corvus*, signifying the raven—a word which many etymo-

logists regard as identical with the adjective *curvus*, crooked, supposing the bird in question to have been thus denominated from the crookedness of its beak.) Let us suppose then that the beasts and fowl were all designated originally on a principle similar to this; that the fox drew his name from his cunning, the hare from its quick sense of hearing, the horse from its fleetness, the rhinoceros from its impenetrable flakes of natural armour, the eagle from the power of its eye. The process *must* have been something of this kind; and what does such a process imply? It implies first *general notions* of cunning, quick hearing, fleetness, impenetrability, power of eye. These notions, and the words expressing them, must have been formed previously in the mind of Adam. And this formation of abstract ideas was probably effected much as it is now, by observation and experience. The child becomes conversant by means of his senses with certain objects which agree in some one point, which have the same colour, or the same form, or which stand in similar relations to some other objects. Hence he gains what is called an abstract idea,—an idea independent of, and more perfect than, any object which he has ever seen. The sight of snow, and wax, and wool, and white paper, furnishes him with a general idea of the colour white. The arrowy rushing of a rapid

river, the rapid careering of some unyoked animal, the flight of an arrow—these and similar scenes open the eyes of his mind to the general notion of swiftness. His notions of moral qualities are formed in the same way. He has indeed an innate moral sense; but it is developed by witnessing particular instances of moral conduct. Instances in a parent or guardian of impartiality, or the reverse, give birth to his latent ideas of justice and injustice. So that, in short, before a child could name any object white, or any movement swift, or any action just, his mind must have been at work. 1st. Observing and noticing things around him. 2dly. Comparing them together. 3dly. Classifying them according to the results of the comparison. To denominate a horse white, he must first have noticed several white objects (this would demand merely an exercise of the senses). Secondly, he must have placed them side by side in his mind (this would demand an exercise of memory). Thirdly, he must, by seizing upon the point in which they agree, and dropping the points in which they differ, have reduced them under a general head or classified them (this would demand an exercise of the powers called abstraction and generalization).

This last power, which we may call the power of Classification, I take to be one of the distin-

guishing characteristics of the Reason. You may classify or generalize too hastily, and so erroneously (the uneducated do so); but this affords no sufficient grounds against regarding the power of Classification as one of the fundamental principles of the human Reason. What is the first thing which a superior mind does, when it grapples with any subject? It classifies; it throws immediate light upon the subject by a clear and good division of it under heads. Look at such a work as Lord Bacon's Advancement of Learning. He takes up each subject of human learning, and divides it into its branches with an admirable skill. The mere division, *independently of the comment upon it*, sheds a very considerable light upon the subject itself—its bearings flash upon you as you read the dry heads of the topic to be discussed. Again, in matters of practical management, how is a great mind discerned? When the affairs of a nation have got entangled and are in confusion, what is the first work of the intellect which professes to right them? Is it not organization? and what is organization but Classification,—the discerning a fitness between certain men and certain posts, and placing the men in those posts,—the methodical devolving of certain functions upon certain seasons and certain persons,—the full carrying out, in great matters, of the principle which holds in common

things, that there shall be a place for every thing, and that every thing shall be in its place?

Classification, then, is the great work of the Reason.[1] And it will be observed that Language expresses the classifications made by the Reason. Language does not give us a distinct word for every object in the world,—it does not assign to things as to men, *proper* names; but it gives us generic words, embracing whole classes, and so susceptible of numerous applications. Take any substantive, adjective, or verb, in any language,—and you will at once see that the substantive expresses not one object, but many,—the adjective, the quality not of one object, but of many,—and the verb not one action, but many. The substantive comprises numerous objects, and the verb numerous actions, under one head. This is the power of Classification in the human mind, putting itself forth in words. Hence the intimate connection of Speech with Reason.

Of course it is not intended to convey the impression, that every one employing Language has previously gone through the mental processes of observation, memory, and classification, which we have described. Certainly not. It is only asserted that *in the first formation of Language, as in the first adoption of it by each individual*, these pro

[1] See the Note at the end of the Chapter

cesses of mind must have been previously at work. Words are the great medium of commerce between mind and mind, as coins are the medium of literal commerce. And as coins, in passing through many hands, become quite worn and smooth, and lose all trace of their original minting, so it is with words: men fling them about in exchange to one another, as current for such or such a signification, without ever dreaming of the intellectual processes which gave them their origin. But Divine Truth, with its heavenly precepts against idle or light words, recalls our minds to this origin. It bids us see in words the exercise of the human Reason. It rubs off the crust and film of usage, which has grown over them, and obscured their origin, and made us think as lightly of them as of pebbles on the sea-shore, and discloses to us their lustre, worth, and weight, and above all the image and superscription of Reason which they bear —Reason, which was itself made in the image of God.

We turn, however, gladly from the more speculative part of the subject (which yet is necessary in order to the thorough sifting of it) to the second passage which stands at the head of the Chapter—that passage which brings before us, not the first man who introduced sin and death into the world, but the second Adam, through whom

alone flow pardon, peace, and blessing to the guilty. Adam is expressly stated by St. Paul to have been a "figure of Him that was to come." And, accordingly, as we find Adam manifesting his sovereignty over nature, by bestowing names on the inferior animals, so do we find the Lord Jesus Christ manifesting His sovereignty in His Spiritual Kingdom of Grace, by bestowing names upon His Disciples. He gives to Simon the name of Peter, to James and John the surname of Boanerges, or the sons of thunder.

What the precise signification of the latter name, as applied to St. James and St. John, may be, has been much disputed. The most probable account is, that it has reference to the impetuous spirit of the two Apostles,—the spirit which prompted the suggestion that fire from heaven should be called down upon inhospitable Samaritans. Against this it might be alleged, that St. John at least was eminently the apostle of Love, that gentleness and charity seem to have been his distinguishing graces—that the traditional representation of him by painters gives a cast of feminine rather than of masculine beauty to the countenance,—and that impetuosity therefore could not have been his leading characteristic. But may it not be questioned whether love, and ardent impetuosity in behalf of the person loved, are not two

sides of one and the same character? We speak proverbially of the love of women—the tenderness of women,—and are not women far more animated and energetic than men, when one upon whom they have fastened their entire affection is assaulted? Is not their pride in the person they love, and their jealousy on behalf of that person, far more keen and susceptible than the pride and jealousy which the harder sex feel for their friends? Which of the two, think you, would most vehemently resent an injury done to a son, or a slur cast upon him—the father or the mother? I think the mother. And I think that something of this feminine impetuosity of spirit is manifest in the writings of the Apostle of Love. It is hallowed, of course, and chastened by the Spirit of God, which rested upon him as he wrote, but still there is the trait of natural character which gave rise to the surname Boanerges. We hear the thunder, when he writes respecting "those who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh," such a censure as the maudlin liberality of the nineteenth century would pronounce uncharitable: "If any man come unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed." And if tradition may be trusted, he acted in the spirit of this precept, when, hearing that Cerinthus the heretic was in the bath-house,

he fled from the baths, lest the roof of the building should fall in upon the assailant of divine truth—thus carrying out the principle laid down in the matter of Korah—"Remove, I pray you, from these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in their sins." I cannot refrain from digressing a moment from our topic, to remark how strangely these words and these actions are at variance with the spirit of the generation on which we are fallen. To us such a mode of speaking and acting appears illiberal. And why? I believe the account of this alteration in the feeling of Christians towards those who deprave or deny God's Truth, to be simply this: Love is waxed cold, as the Lord Himself predicted it should. We of this century have no love of Christ, or but a faint and chilled love; and accordingly we have no jealousy for His honour, and no sensitiveness to any slight which the irreverent seekers of a carnal wisdom may put upon Him. And our utter indifference to Him we represent to ourselves and others under the extraordinary name of liberality! Oh! we could not say Anathema Maranatha to those who love Him not, we could not fling a sentence of excommunication at any soul of man, we could not refuse our hand, nor a place under our roof, even to the worst heretic that ever traversed God's Earth! If a man announces to all

the world that he considers Him, upon whom my hopes rest for time and for eternity, my Lord and my God, my guide through life, my support in death,—to be but a mythical character, the creation of man's brain, the fabulous impersonation of perfect virtue (or some such nonsense)—I can hear the announcement without wincing,—I am too liberal forsooth to evince any righteous indignation! But it is well for me to understand that this liberality of mine is so far from being love, that it is actually one feature of the want of love. *If I were a son of love, I should be in my measure a son of thunder also.* But having a cold heart —my regards for the Saviour being faint and feeble —I can bear to hear even His existence canvassed with true nineteenth century charity. But I have none of the charity of the first century,—none of the charity which called Elymas the sorcerer "a child of the devil, and an enemy of all righteousness,"—none of the charity, whose accents, as directed against error in principle, and vice in practice, were these: "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"

Such is the account which I should be disposed to give of the significance of the name Boanerges, as applied to St. James and St. John. But whether or no we can discern the significance of the name, most certain it is that it was emi-

nently significant, as being conferred by Him who knew what was in man, and has an insight into the secret character of all His creatures.

To name any thing truly according to its character, implies of course an insight into its character. For which reason it is specially mentioned as one of the attributes of God, that He names the stars. "He telleth the number of the stars, and *calleth them all by their names.*" No man can name the stars appropriately (he may give them names drawn from the resources of his fancy—from imaginary figures in which they are grouped); but no man can give them *names expressive of their character*, because in truth he knows not what they are. What is a planet? Is it a vast globe of superfluous fluid,—a repository of waters, dispensed with by the great Artificer in the formation of the earth, and now wheeling round on the skirts of the mundane system? or is it an abode of life and intelligence, possibly the home and haunt of angels? And what is a fixed star? Is it a sun of other systems? or is it a shred-coil of luminous star-dust, the fragment of a nebula? We may speculate on these things, and form or assail theories on the subject—but we are totally ignorant of the true character of a star, and so must remain, unless the range of our telescopes is enormously enlarged—an enlargement, the mechanical

difficulties of which would be probably insuperable. The nature of a star is a mystery—and, consequently, the naming of a star is an attainment beyond our reach.

We have spoken of Our Lord's intimate knowledge of the character of His disciples, a knowledge which He evinced in naming them. It is well to remind ourselves that He has a perfect knowledge of *our* characters—could at once pronounce the name which would most suitably express them. His eyes, which are as fire, penetrate through all disguises, and read the ruling passion, the besetting sin, under every mask of outward circumstance and position. He has read our secret history from childhood: not that history which has been patent to the world, but that which has been transacted in the inner man, in the depths of our consciousness. Does He see that we are His indeed? that amid all the backslidings of certain portions of our lives, amid all the intricacies of feeling and motive, amid all the alternating conflicts of passion and principle, there is in us a true and loyal heart? Let us but put this question to our consciences solemnly, and compel from them an honest and candid answer to it;—and we shall not have closed without benefit a Chapter, which to some may have appeared too abstruse and speculative for a religious

treatise, on a subject so eminently practical as that of the Idle Word.

NOTE ON CHAPTER II., p. 48.

Classification is the great work of the Reason.

In confirmation of this remark, it will be observed that the vices of the Reason resolve themselves into faulty classifications.

The first fault of the uneducated—the fruitful mother of all superstition—is over-hasty Classification. Two things associated accidentally (the wearing, for example, of a charm, and a recovery from illness) the uncultivated mind associates generally, and regards as essentially connected with one another. This is an instance of the vice of hasty Classification in its rudest form. Among the educated, the same vice shows itself in other forms. One notorious property of stupid people *is their incapability of apprehending a distinction.* They have laid down a rule, to which they doggedly adhere in cases which are obviously exceptional—or they entertain some cherished view, under which they reduce all cases which have some superficial affinity with it. Thus they reckon things homogeneous, and class them under one head, which really have profound discrepancies.

But there is an opposite defect of the Reason,—and it is one of refinement and over-cultivation. It is popularly termed *the making a distinction without a difference.* Legal acumen will often develope distinctions of this kind—distinctions of the subtlest character, and which in truth have no existence. If we would reason aright, we must neither classify too roughly nor distinguish too finely—we must steer a mean between the two excesses.

I shall illustrate further the two faulty processes, by pointing

out the way in which they manifest themselves in the exposition of Holy Scripture.

Several of Our Lord's Parables are, by a person who does not minutely study them, classed roughly together as conveying precisely the same lessons. Thus, the Parables of the Pounds and the Talents are supposed to have precisely the same scope. The Lost Sheep, the Lost Piece of Money, and the Prodigal Son, are all regarded as Parables on Repentance—and the distinguishing details dismissed or overlooked. In the hands of a great scholar and divine (like Archbishop Trench) each of these Parables has its peculiar lessons and delicate applications—and the similarity between them is no longer specific—only generic—they are seen to differ as much as various species of grain differ, while all are grain.

The opposite defect of over-refinement and multiplying distinctions, is seen in the proceedings of the Harmonists. Where two narratives of Scripture obviously refer to the same event, they are induced, by some trifling discrepancy of detail, to regard them as occurring on different occasions—a flagrant improbability on the score of common sense. Two witnesses giving truly their account of the same event, would never do so without superficial discrepancies—for no two minds refract the same event at precisely the same angle.

What is it that is faulty in the man who generalizes hastily, and the man who distinguishes too finely? It is the Reason, the mind, the judgment.

Therefore, Classification is an essential property of the Reason, and according as it is justly or viciously performed, the Reason, is in a sound or unhealthy state.

CHAPTER III.

THE HEAVENLY ANALOGY OF THE CONNEXION OF SPEECH WITH REASON.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."—JOHN i. 1.

THE doctrine of the Trinity in Unity is the great mystery of the Christian Religion. For surely of all mysteries that must be the deepest and most mysterious, whose subject is the Nature of the Invisible and Infinite God.

If then upon all lesser mysteries we can expect only partial light, while here below; much more is it reasonable to suppose that upon this "mystery of mysteries" a cloud will ever rest. Of Jehovah it is written that "clouds and darkness are round about Him." His nature and attributes must be ever (more or less) shrouded to the human intellect—at all events while "confined and pestered in this pinfold here,"—while cooped

within the trammels of an animal nature. The most which the wisest and holiest man in the world can hope to apprehend of such a mystery, is but little.

Still, as the doctrine of the Trinity is unquestionably the Truth of God, and the Truth cannot really be at variance with an enlightened Reason, —we may hope without presumption, under the guidance of Scripture and the illumination of the Holy Ghost, to gain partial glimpses into its significance—glimpses like those which, through the tumbling sea of mist beneath his feet, a wanderer in the mountains catches of a patch of verdure on the bosom of the hill, as a slant ray of sunshine shoots athwart his path—glimpses sufficient to make us easily believe that, if the full flood of Divine Light could but be poured upon the soul, as it will be in the day when "we shall know even as we are known," the whole doctrine would stand before us in all its proportions, as a fact absolutely necessary and essential, and harmonizing with all other facts in the whole compass of Truth.

The prosecution of the subject, of which these pages treat, leads us naturally to an illustration of this Cardinal Mystery.

We saw, in our first Chapter, that Speech or Language is, as a fact connected with Reason,

Reasonable beings are those who can speak—and conversely, all who can speak are reasonable beings. The apparent exceptions to this rule have been already[1] considered. On the one hand, it might be alleged that the dumb are reasonable beings,—yet the dumb cannot speak. Reason, therefore, it might be argued, may exist without Speech. To this it may be answered that actual sound is not essential to the faculty of Speech. Speech is the faculty of conveying to other persons (not mere feelings and emotions, but) the processes of the understanding. The dumb can do this (and with marvellous intelligence) upon their fingers—showing hereby that they possess the essentials of Speech.

Again it might be alleged, though perhaps more wantonly than in earnest, that the whole tribe of imitative birds speak, and employ certain words;—yet these birds are not rational. It is not therefore true that all creatures which can speak are reasonable creatures. But here again it may be answered that sound—even articulate sound—is not the great essential of Speech. Speech is the power of conveying to persons in logical method the processes of one's own understanding. Birds, which imitate the human voice, ARE imitators and nothing more: the words which they

[1] See Note to Chapter I.

speak they never originate, but catch them up from men,—nor is there the remotest proof that, when they utter them, they connect with them any intelligent meaning.

And let me, by the way, call attention to the circumstance, that an Echo stands in the same relation to Inanimate Nature in which an imitative Bird stands to Animated Nature. An Echo is the mimicry of Speech *by matter*. The language of an imitative Bird is the mimicry of Speech *by Animated Nature*. Neither Matter nor animated Nature can really speak—neither of them can communicate to others (in method of discourse) ideas originated by themselves. But they can *imitate* Speech—or rather they can imitate its outward form,—of the intelligence, which constitutes its essence and spirit, they are not partakers.

We must be prepared then to admit that Reason and Speech are essentially connected together, intertwined one with another. The Homeric epithets *μέροψ* and *αἰδήεις* (articulate speaking) characterize the rational creature *Man*. The power of Speech inheres in the faculty of Reason. Reason is revealed by Speech. Speech is the unfolding, the manifestation, the development, the communication, the message, the utterance, the outcoming, the revelation of Reason.

Yet, though essentially interwined,—though

Reason implies the power of Speech, and the power of Speech implies Reason,—Reason and Speech are clearly different faculties. Do you wish to see them apart, in order to ascertain their distinctness? We can show them to you in severance one from another, or rather, we can show them to you, one latent, and the other active. Take the case of a man completely absorbed in his own reflections,—Sir Isaac Newton, for example, engaged, after seeing the apple fall to the ground, in thinking out the law of gravitation. Wrapped in deepest calculation and self-communing, he sits with eyes cast down, and arms folded, and utters not a word. Speak to him—call him by name—he does not answer, he is dumb—his mind is abstracted from the outer world. Lay your hand on the shoulder of such an one,—he looks up with an exclamation of surprise, and you say to him—"So you have found your tongue, have you?" Perhaps it is to be reckoned among the accuracies of language, that we do not say, "You have found your *Speech*," but "You have found your *tongue*,"—hereby implying that the faculty of Speech was latent in him all the while, but that its instrument, the tongue, had been without exercise. Yes,—he had not spoken,—he had not exercised the faculty of communicating his ideas to others,—but he had been reasoning

all the time, and if Sir Isaac Newton be the case imagined, reasoning to some purpose. There is an instance of Reason, independent of Speech.

However, it might suffice to say, by way of proving their distinctness, that the words Reason and Speech on the surface convey distinct ideas to every mind.

And yet, distinct as these things are, Speech is wrapped up in Reason;—so that wherever the faculty of Reason is, there the faculty of Speech must be. This was proved in the last Chapter, where we showed that Human Language supplies us with a classification of objects, by assigning generic words to embrace a great number of individuals. To classify, however, is, as we then pointed out, the work of the mind. It is the mind which, contemplating objects, arranges them under different heads. Wherever the mind or Reason exists, it must have this power, latent in it, of contemplation and arrangement, and accordingly, wherever the mind is, there must be in embryo the faculty of Speech. So that if we were asked which of the two is the earlier—the Reason or the Speech—our answer must be, that they are so inextricably intertwined together, that neither the one nor the other is the earlier. They are coeval. They are twin faculties, the moment of their birth the same. May we not say that in a

child, as a general rule, the development of Speech keeps pace exactly with the development of the understanding?

So it is with Light and Colour, which I have already employed as an illustration. Colour and Light are distinct things. We have distinct notions, when we pronounce the words Colour and Light. But, as Colour inheres in the Light,—is a natural property of the Light,—it is impossible to say with Truth either that Colour existed before Light, or that Light existed before Colour. They, too, are twin births. At the same point of time, when the Most High issued His first creative fiat, Light sprang into existence and Colour with it.

Now we are told in the first Chapter of Genesis, that Man was made "in the Image of God." We cannot understand this assertion of the Body of Man. For God is incorporeal—"He is a Spirit," saith the Scripture;—as the first of our Articles assures us, "He hath neither Body, Parts, nor Passions." We are driven then to the conclusion that the resemblance between God and Man—the "Image," which was originally stamped upon our Nature in the minting of it,—*stands in the Mind or Intelligence*,—in that part which discriminates us from the brute creation. *I say in that part which discriminates us from the brute creation;*—for that it does *not* stand in the soul

or animal nature, may be inferred from the circumstance that brutes have this animal nature, and yet the Image of God is never said to have been impressed upon *them*. The Spirit or Mind of Man, then, presents us with an Image of God; and in examining the Spirit or Mind of Man, we may expect—we are warranted by Holy Scripture in expecting—to find some adumbration, some dim shadowy outline, of the Nature of the Most High.

If, however, we had only *this* notice of Holy Scripture, it would behove us to be very cautious indeed in drawing inferences from it. The subject is one upon which Angels may well fear to tread,—into which only a fool would rush with presumptuous curiosity. At the same time, while it is a point of reverence and right feeling not to seek to be wise *beyond* what is written, it is also a point of holy ambition, to seek to be wise *up to* that which is written. And there is another passage (or rather there are many other passages of Holy Scripture) which throw a singular light upon the subject before us. They are those in which the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity is called "*the Word*." "In the beginning" (thus opens St. John's Gospel;—how like an oracular voice, dropping from heaven, it sounds,—how full of mystery and sublimity!) "was the Word, and

the Word was with God, and the Word was God." This term, "the Word," was not original with St. John. It was a term much employed by the Gnostic Heretics, to denote an emanation from the Deity. St. John takes it up, and adopts it, and applies it to Our Blessed Lord as the *true* Emanation from God. But it matters not at all whether he invented the term, or adopted it. As he *has* adopted it, it has now the seal of Inspiration,—and we must believe that in the term, as applied to Our Lord, there is a deep significance, which perhaps a prayerful consideration, and comparison of other inspired notices, may reveal to us.

Man's Reason was framed in the Image of God,—and Our Lord is called the Word; those are the two Scriptural intimations, which guide us by the hand into part of the truth respecting the Divine Nature.

We have seen that Reason involves a thing distinct from itself, namely, Speech, or the power of communicating the processes of the Reason—so that whosoever has the faculty of Reason, has, in the faculty of Reason, the faculty of Speech or of the Word.

We have seen that though Reason wraps up Speech in itself, yet we can conceive of Reason as

energizing latently, and of the faculty of Speech as having no exercise.

And we have seen that neither Reason nor Speech can make any claim to priority of existence—that they are twin faculties, born at the same instant.

Now listen to what the Holy Catholic Church has gathered from the Scripture respecting the Nature of God.

First, she says, that there is a TRINITY IN UNITY, that is, more than one Person in the Divine Nature. Man's spirit, the Bible says, was made in the Image of that Nature. And in Man's spirit there are at all events two faculties, Reason and Speech. The Son, or Second Person in the divine Nature, goes by the name of "the Word of the Father," that is, He stands to the Father in the same relation as that in which the Word, or Utterance, or Speech, stands to the Reason or Understanding.

Secondly: St John intimates that there *was* a period when, although both Blessed Persons existed, yet the Son was wrapped in the bosom of the Father,—when, though the Word was, yet the Word came not forth. "The only begotten Son, *which is in the bosom of the Father*, He hath declared Him." That is like Reason, with the faculty of Speech latent in it,—not put forth.

Thirdly: the Church holds and proclaims that

the Majesty of these Persons is "*Co-eternal;* that "the Father is eternal, and the Son eternal also" —that therefore to attribute priority of existence to the Father, would be to fall into the very heresy of Arius, condemned by upwards of three hundred Bishops assembled in Council at Nicæa. The adumbration of this in the human spirit is that twin birth of Reason and Speech, to which we have already called attention. They are both (as we have seen) coeval.

"But," an opponent might reply, "the Catholic Doctrine is, that in God there are not only two distinct faculties (which I could understand, and to some extent realize)—but two distinct Persons." No doubt it is so. And perhaps it can be shown by means of another intimation of Scripture, that at all events there must be *more than one* Person in the Godhead. For it is written that "God is love"—*that love is the essential nature of God.* Love *was* His nature, long ages before the World began, before there were any human beings to love, before those morning stars of creation dawned upon the brow of time,—before the angels had sprung into existence. God *was* Love from all eternity. But what does Love imply? Does it not imply a Person, or Persons, to be loved? If there was only one Person in the Universe, a gigantic solitude reigning all around

him, could He be Love? would it not be subverting the definition of Love, to say that He was so? The fact is, that what St. Paul says of a Mediator, is true of Love—"a Mediator is not a Mediator of ONE;"—there must be two parties to make him a Mediator. Similarly we may say, "Love is not of one." It, too, implies more than one party.

We may learn from what has been said that there is no doctrine of the Scriptures and the Church, however mysterious on the surface, which will not by and by reveal to us something of its propriety and harmony, if we diligently read the Word of God with thought and prayer, and patiently ponder and compare its statements. The first point which it becomes us to ascertain, is, that the Holy Scriptures are from God. There are many books of evidence (which it is now the fashion to depreciate) which have quite set this question at rest for every impartial and candid inquirer. When it is set at rest in your mind, then the remainder of your path is clear. You must accept every thing which God says in the Scripture, however many difficulties it may present to your Reason. But your difficulties shall diminish daily, if you will patiently read on, fastening your belief on the sure testimony, and praying earnestly for the Light of the Spirit. Beautiful dis-

coveries shall burst upon you, as you pursue this course,—discoveries which shall have in them an element both of intellectual and spiritual enjoyment, until at length, disenthralled from the body, "we shall know even as also we are known." So have I seen a traveller catching at first through tangled boughs disjointed glimpses of some great City, to which he is journeying, but by and by he emerges from the woodland, and a sudden turn brings him to the open brow of a hill, and there, beneath his feet, lies the City, in the clear outline of its fair proportions, its pinnacles smitten by the sun, and the silver river intersecting its thronged maze of streets.

We have seen, Reader, that Speech in the nature of man, represents CHRIST in the Nature of God. This, independently of the Connexion of Speech with Reason, impresses a value and a dignity upon the faculty of Speech. When you reason, and communicate to others the results of your reasoning, you are adumbrating in the limits of a finite nature the Nature of the Infinite One. Would you take any thing which represents Christ, and was intended to remind us of Christ, and make it the instrument and minister of sin? Would you, for example, take the consecrated elements of the Eucharist, representing (as they do) His Body and Blood, and devote them to the

purposes of intemperance and excess? and shall any child of man take this faculty of speech, and degrade it in vain, or profane, or unclean communications, making it the instrument of morally corrupting others, and of being morally corrupted himself?

Son of God, Only Begotten of the Father, who hast sanctified the utterance of the human lips, by taking unto Thyself the title of the Word, touch their hearts with penitence, who have so offended, and, as we would all flee from the contagion of a pestilence which can terminate only in death, so make us to flee from the moral pestilence of filthy talking and idle words, and set Thy watch and seal upon the door of our lips!

CHAPTER IV.

AN IDLE WORD DEFINED FROM THE DECALOGUE.

'Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people."—LEVITICUS xix. 16.

SOLOMON echoes this precept of the Law in his Proverbs:—"A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter." And again, chap. xx. 19: "He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips." And in echoing the precept, the wise king illustrates it. For the law contains a simple prohibition, without a reason assigned. But Solomon gives a reason. One chief mischief of talebearing is that the talebearer is apt to repeat things which have been told him in confidence; or, at all events, which had much better be considered as confidences, even if they were not communicated on that express understanding.

It is a startling fact that so large a proportion of the preceptive part of the Bible should deal with sins of the tongue, and deal with them so severely. I cannot help thinking that this feature of the Scriptural code is an incidental evidence of its having come from a supernatural Source, or, in other words, being inspired. For probably no human treatise of moral philosophy ever gave to words such an importance as the Holy Scriptures assign to them. Certainly Aristotle's great treatise on human duty ignores words altogether. And one can see that in any estimate of moral subjects made by mere Reason, the words of men (as being after all a passing breath) would be taken little account of, and the attention fastened simply on their actions and sentiments. But not such is the estimate of Him, whose "thoughts are not as our thoughts." Throw all the precepts of the Old and New Testament into one code; and how very large a proportion of them will be found to turn upon words! What a serious, austere view the Sacred Writers take of what man would call slips of the tongue! None more serious and austere than Our Blessed Lord Himself, who yet was by no means an austere man, who came eating and drinking, and went into all societies, shunned no company, and whose Sacred Heart was a fountain of most pure and beautiful com

passion, in which was mirrored the Love of the Eternal Father, and the sympathy of God with all His creatures. The Pharisees, convinced of the Divine Mission of Christ, had been belying their convictions by attributing His works to Beelzebub, and inwardly flattering themselves doubtless with the thought that their disbelief lay in words only, not in the sentiments of the heart. Our Blessed Lord solemnly warns them that this discrepancy between words and sentiments was in fact the unpardonable sin; the sin against the Holy Ghost; and then, as His manner was, coming down from the extremest form of the sin He was condemning to its milder and more excusable shapes, He said, "But I say unto you, That every *idle* word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of Judgment."

And where Our Lord sets the keynote, all the writers of Holy Scripture chime in unison. Extract all the verses of the Book of Proverbs, which have reference to foolish talk, bad talk, or too much talk; and you will have a very large number of verses. Add to these the precepts of St. Paul forbidding corrupt communication, and prescribing speech with grace seasoned with salt. Close the list with that paragraph of St. James's Epistle, which forms the body of the third chapter, and which speaks in such awful terms of the wide-

spread mischief done by sins of the tongue, and with that later passage of the same Epistle, in which the Apostle reiterates with emphasis the caution against swearing contained in the Sermon on the Mount, "But above all things, my brethren, swear not;" and you have not only a portion of space devoted to this subject which seems to mere Reason disproportionate to its merits; but also, which is more remarkable, the warnings against this class of sin are more deeply serious in tone than those against almost any other.

Now whatever we may imagine in the vanity of our minds, we may be quite sure that the Word of God has Reason on its side. And we may be quite sure also that we shall have a glimpse of that Reason, if we will but look for it carefully and devoutly. Physicians, it has been well said, make an immediate and accurate judgment of health by the state of the tongue. And there is the same connexion between a healthy tongue and a healthy condition of body as between a sound heart and sound wholesome words. The tongue is symptomatic in both cases. Our Lord says so. "A good man, out of the good treasure of the heart, bringeth forth good things: and an evil man, out of the evil treasure, bringeth forth evil things;" "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."

But there is another analogy between mental and bodily health, which is still more to the point. Serious derangement in the natural constitution of all bodies is often produced by the most trifling causes. The blight which destroys some article of sustenance, the pestilence which lays low its thousands and tens of thousands, is perhaps traceable to the presence in the air, or in food, of certain very minute animalcules, which are taken into the plant through its leaves, or into the human system through the lungs. These animalcules are possibly so small, that it requires a powerful microscope to discover them. And in the body itself the ultimate molecules, whose arrangement constitutes health or disease, are so very insignificant that in many cases the disorder could never be ascertained by the eye. An almost infinitesimal quantity of poison, insinuated into the living body through a puncture or a scratch, will spread like wildfire through the system, and either communicate mortal disease, or cause mortification in a vital part. These are all instances in Nature, in which agents, trifling in bulk and to the eye, have yet a most potent effect on the entire frame, both of vegetables and animals. Why should there be no such agents—agents of similar apparent insignificance, agents of similar deadly force—in the moral world? We believe that there are such. We be-

lieve that words are such an agent. Things in themselves light and insignificant, blown up like so many bubbles from the surface of the character, to burst as soon as they are formed. Things said in a moment of excitement, and forgotten as soon as the excitement which gave birth to them is over. Things as transient as the morning cloud and the early dew. But it does not follow that they are unaccompanied by serious effects. The moral frame of each one of us is, like the animal frame, continually taking in influences, and assimilating nourishment from all sorts of sources. The words of other men, the casual expressions of their sentiments, have a strong influence upon our characters. Our own words have a reflex influence upon ourselves; not only coming from the heart, but reacting upon the heart which sent them forth.

Thus far, we have offered some observations which may justify our regarding the Idle Word as a matter of sufficient importance to form the subject of a separate treatise. In this and the following chapter we propose to define "an Idle Word" from the Decalogue, before considering the significance of Our Lord's language in so denominating it. The whole of human duty really founds in the Decalogue. There is no precept of the Gospel which is not to be found in germ and principle in

the Ten Commandments given to Israel on Mount Sinai. And the more we study those ten commandments, the more shall we be impressed with the great perfection of the outline of Human Duty, which is here traced by the finger of God Himself.

The Decalogue falls, as we all know, into two tables, one of which guides man in his relations to God, the other in his relations to his fellow-men. Now it is surely observable that in each Table there should be a precept respecting words; in the first, "Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain;" in the second, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour." According to the ordinary (though by no means universally accepted) division of the tables, the first contains four commandments, the latter six. Thus, if this code of moral precepts be as we believe, a perfect and exact one, one-fourth part of our duty to God, and one-sixth part of our duty to man, have to do with the words which we speak of them respectively.

In the present chapter we shall deal exclusively with the Ninth Commandment, reserving the Third for subsequent consideration.

The extreme case to which the Ninth Commandment applies is that of bearing false testimony to the detriment of another in a court of

justice, a sin so universally abhorred that it is superfluous to point out or dwell upon the heinousness of it. But let us attempt to extract the principle of this Commandment; for the court of judicature, and the solemn oath, and the other formalities of the law, are only the husk in which the principle is wrapped up. The principle, then, is this: *that we shall in no respect injure our neighbour's reputation.* It will not be denied that reputation is a very precious treasure. Life would not be worth having, if a man had no sort of credit from the society in which he moved, if he stood low in the esteem of every soul which formed his little circle. To be respected by others who know us, to have some influence with them, to carry some weight, this is in itself a form of life. Says St. Francis of Sales, "We live three lives, a corporal life which stands in the union of soul and body; a spiritual life which stands in the grace of God; and a civil life which stands in our reputation. The corporal life is stifled by murder; the spiritual life is stifled by sin; and the civil life is stifled by slander, which is a species of murder, inasmuch as it destroys a species of life." It is most true. A blow aimed at a man's reputation injures him quite as effectually, though in another form, as a blow aimed at his body; and most men are far more sensitive to the first of these injuries than to the second; they

dread the tongue of the calumniator much more than the weapon of the highwayman. The name of "accuser of the brethren" is given in Scripture to the author of evil; and the title is illustrated in the holy volume by the narrative of his attempt to ruin the fair reputation which Job enjoyed in the Court of Heaven. The slanderer then acts in imitation of the devil; and, as children act in imitation of their parents, he may be truly called the devil's child.

But the ninth precept of the law reaches to sins which fall far short of slander. Slander is a *false* assertion to the detriment of our neighbour's character. But in fact *any* assertion to the detriment of his character is forbidden, whether it be true or false. Some one perhaps will say: "I do not see this in the Commandment: it is *false* witness against our neighbour, not any witness against him which is forbidden." But consider what a hazard even a substantially true assertion runs of being false in the general impression created by it. The bare fact alleged may be true enough, but if none of the evidence in favour of the accused, and none of the extenuating circumstances be alleged side by side with the fact, we violate truth in the general effect of our words upon the hearer, though the particular details of them may be correct. If we exhibit a man's vices only, and con-

ceal the proportion which those vices bear to his virtues, we calumniate him quite as effectually, as if we ascribe to him a vice which he does not possess. A man may have a defective feature or features, and yet the general proportion of his person may be so good, and the general cast of his countenance so pleasing, that the ill effect of the features which are awry is either modified, or entirely carried off. It is an untrue representation of that man to say merely that he has too prominent an eye, or too thick and coarse a lip; that may be the case, but it is not a fair, because it is not a complete, description of his personal appearance. And, similarly, if my neighbour has been overtaken (perhaps by surprise) in a grievous fault, and if I, for want of better matter to entertain my company withal, blaze abroad this fault of his, but am wholly silent as to his good character up to that time, and as to the prayers and struggles against that particular sin which he may have made, my witness against him becomes as certainly false in the general impression created by it, and therefore as mischievously injurious, as if I stated of him what was not matter of fact. In a word, if a *fair* account of a man's faults and sins is to be given in conversation, the common rule of justice must be attended to, that evidence shall be heard for the defendant; which if it were done, a true verdict

might be arrived at by the company. But such evidence never is alleged, nor does any party appear in the interests of the defendant, so that the verdict never can escape being false, and the evidence by which it is arrived at is to all intents and purposes *false* witness.

This consideration evidently makes it exceedingly difficult for us, and practically all but impossible to say any thing to our neighbour's disadvantage in common conversation, which shall not be more or less false in its general effect on the minds of the hearers. If they gathered no other conclusion from our words, than that the allegation were true as an isolated fact, it might be all well and good. But this we know from our own experience they never do. With the speed of lightning we all of us proceed from adverse facts to a general unfavourable judgment on a man's character, and the devil being in the ear of the company as well as in the tongue of the accuser, the thought rises up instantaneously in their minds, "Has such a man indeed done this or that? Then what a villain he must be? how must all confidence in him be at an end!"

One element of mischief in the habits of the talebearer has been thus exhibited. The talebearer can hardly escape the charge of being a detractor. But even without positive detraction

he may do great mischief by disclosing private confidences, or things which had better be considered as such. The confidences which are so disclosed are generally of a petty and insignificant kind; idle gossip is usually the sphere in which such communications live and move and have their being, according to that word of the Apostle, which attributes this particular form of sin to women without families, who have nothing to do: "Withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house" (how clear an echo have we here of the Mosaic precept, "Thou shalt not *go up and down* as a talebearer among thy people"); and not only "idle, but tattlers also, and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not." And because of the usually contemptible character of such gossip, it is not sufficiently considered how real an enemy to society the man or woman who indulges in it is. One great difference between God's estimate of sin and ours is, that God considers a sin in its tendency and natural operation, apart from all the checks and hindrances which impede its full development. Man, on the other hand, judges of it, not by the mischief which it has a tendency to do, but by that which it actually does. To see the full evil of revealing confidences, we must consider what the result to Society would be, if every one revealed them. Sup-

pose that the sins of the early life of every man, known at present only to his family and friends, were blazed abroad when he has attained to eminence and is in a position of usefulness; suppose that every minister of Religion thought himself at liberty to divulge the secrets entrusted to him by burdened consciences in confession; suppose that the secret history of many a family which stands well before the world and possibly is at the head of affairs, were divulged by one of its members; unquestionably many facts would thus be brought to light which are now little dreamt of; but what would become of that confidence between man and man, on which the whole social fabric is built? Trust in our fellow-men, which is the foundation of all social virtues, and which is so essential to the love of them, would be at an end for ever. And I believe it would not be long before trust in God, which is the foundation of all religious virtues, would take its flight also.

The safe rule to be deduced from the foregoing observations as to the government of the tongue in Society, is to stand at a very respectful distance from all such topics as our neighbour's conduct and character. We shall escape all risk of doing him injury, if we never repeat any thing we may have heard to his disadvantage; and if to this we add the practice of stating simply (and without

exaggeration) what we know in his favour, when we hear him attacked, we shall not only be free from the charge of wronging, but also do something to right him in the estimate of others.

Of course this rule, like all other rules, must be understood with those qualifications which common sense, other precepts of Scripture, and the very principle of the rule itself imply. Circumstances may and do arise, in which it is right and necessary to take away a man's natural life. Not that even in this case our duty to our neighbour is for an instant suspended; but our duty to a single neighbour is overruled by our duty to Society. The murderer is rightly executed, the care which the Law has for the lives of innocent subjects overruling the care which it has for the life of a single guilty one. And, similarly, circumstances may arise (and do arise) in which it is not necessary only, but right, to say things adverse to our neighbour's fair fame, and thus to take away his civil life. It is a positive charity to expose impostors who deceive mankind; of a wolf in sheep's clothing we shall do well to point out the claws, and to show the inconsistency of his life with his professions, lest he should devour other sheep; and this holds good, whether the person against whom Society is to be put on its guard be vicious in practice or erroneous in principle. Er-

ror in fundamental points of Religion is exceedingly perilous to young and simple souls; and it is a maudlin, spurious charity, too popular at the present day,—nay, if we are in a position to teach and influence others, it may be the ruin of some tender soul,—to salve over such errors with unctuous flattery of the life of their professors. Not so did the Apostle, who is the great example of the grace of Love in a sinful man. St. John did not think that pretty philosophical sentiments and a blameless life were to compound for vital error in doctrine. "Whosoever transgresseth," cried he, "and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed."

But these and similar qualifications having been made, it remains for us seriously to put it to our own consciences,—"How often, when I have spread abroad something to another's disadvantage, or even attacked another's character, have I been justified in so doing by considerations of the interests of Society, or the interests of truth?" And remember, in self-examination on this point, that our unfavourable testimony may have really more or less answered one of these ends, and yet

may not have been intended by ourselves to do so. There may possibly have been good grounds for bearing witness against our neighbour; but we did not proceed to it upon these grounds, but merely from want of something better to say, mixed up perhaps with a grain or two of personal dislike.

I must just glance, before concluding, at the word "false," in the Ninth Commandment, and give it a prominence which it has not received hitherto. Insincerity is falsehood; and all insincere apologies for our neighbour, or commendations of him (an extreme into which some well meaning persons are apt to run from a dread of calumny), are to be avoided. Though we should endeavour, if possible, to defend him when attacked, it must always be by honest arguments, such as we ourselves think to be valid evidence in his favour. Above all, we must beware of salving over a personal aversion by hollow and false compliments, a hateful hypocrisy which transpires very quickly, and which never fails to inspire the listener with a just disgust. Let us remember that "he that hideth hatred with lying lips (as well as he that uttereth a slander), is a fool." Let us take heed of coming under that animadversion of the wise man: "He that hateth dissembleth with his lips" (maketh his voice gracious),

"and layeth up deceit within him. When he speaketh fair, believe him not: for there are seven abominations in his heart." "Whose hatred is covered by deceit, his wickedness shall be showed before the whole congregation."

The subject of this Chapter has been a moral duty, which, insignificant as it seems at first, we have shown to have an important bearing on the welfare of Society. Let none imagine that such a topic is unspiritual or unevangelical. We have, it is true, nothing to preach but the unsearchable riches of Christ; but then there are unsearchable riches in His Example as well as in His Atonement, in His precepts as well as in His promises, which equally require to be unfolded in the view of His Church. And in order to connect with His pure and spotless life the precept which we have been attempting to illustrate, we need only adduce the words of Psalm xv., which is a description, by anticipation, of that perfectly righteous Man, whom God would accept in virtue of His own meritorious obedience, who should abide for ever in the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man; who should rest for ever upon that heavenly Hill, whereof Mount Zion was but a type:—"Lord, who shall abide in Thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in Thy holy hill?

. . . He that *backbiteth not with his tongue*, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor *taketh up a reproach against his neighbour*. . . . . He that doeth these things shall never be moved."

CHAPTER V.

AN IDLE WORD DEFINED FROM THE DECALOGUE.

"Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His Name in vain."—EXODUS XX. 7.

THIS precept, like the rest of God's commandments, is exceedingly broad. For by "the Name of God" is not to be understood merely the designation *in speech* of the Divine Being. Names in old times being significant of the characteristics of the persons bearing them, the Name of God in Holy Scripture is often put for the character and attributes of the Divine Being; the most remarkable example of which mode of speaking is to be found in the proclamation of God's Name to Moses, that proclamation being nothing else than an enumeration of God's attributes in Moses' hearing: "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, for-

giving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." If in the Third Commandment the Name of God be understood in this broad sense, every sort of profaneness, all desecration of things connected with God will be forbidden by it. It is, however, our present purpose to deal with it only so far as it forbids wrong words, against which in the first instance it is directed.

There is a great resemblance between the Decalogue and the Lord's Prayer, indicating to a thoughtful mind that both proceeded from one and the same Author. The Decalogue falls into two tables, the Lord's Prayer no less obviously into two distinct classes of petitions. The first table of the Decalogue prescribes our duty to God; the second our duty to our fellow-men. And similarly the first section of the Lord's Prayer contains petitions for God's honour, kingdom, and service; the second section petitions for the supply of man's wants.

We are apt to think our whole duty discharged, if we have been blameless in our conduct towards our fellow-men. But the Law of God corrects that error with a high hand, teaching us that the most fundamental duty of man, that which has the earliest claim upon him, is "to love the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all his mind,

and with all his soul, and with all his strength." And, similarly, we are apt to think that in prayer we need sue for nothing more than the supply of our own needs, bread, mercy, grace, and so forth. But the Lord's Prayer corrects this error with a high hand, teaching us that God's honour, His cause and service, lies nearer to the heart of a true disciple than even his own needs.

And to come to particulars, there is no one who does not see the marked resemblance between the Third Commandment ("Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain") and the first petition of the Lord's Prayer ("Hallowed be Thy Name"). The Commandment prohibits that, the opposite of which the Prayer solicits. We are forbidden *not* to desecrate God's Name; and we pray that we may consecrate or hallow it. When we sincerely, in a spirit of love and reverence, call God "our Father," we fulfil the First Commandment, professing Him to be our God, and repudiating all other. When we say, with the spirit and with the understanding also, "which art in Heaven," we fulfil the second Commandment; for hereby we indicate that the God we worship is in Heaven, beyond the barriers of gross matter, and that therefore we must not harbour any sensuous conception of Him, or make any material representation. Thus the invocation

of the Lord's Prayer embodies the two first Commandments. And the first petition which follows the invocation is an echo of the third.

The extreme form of sin forbidden by this Commandment is perjury; a solemn calling upon God to attest that which we well know to be false. But the spirit and principle of the precept forbids also all profaneness of expression; and I cannot help pointing to the ground assigned for the prohibition, as remarkably illustrating the fact adverted to in our last Chapter, namely, the serious estimate of words which Almighty God, and those who are the exponents of His mind and will, seem to form. "For the *Lord* will not hold him *guiltless* that taketh His Name in vain." The Lawgiver seems to glance at a different estimate of this subject, popular and current among those on whom the restriction is laid. It is as if He had said, "Man may hold words in no account—may deem them a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again. What can be the harm, he may ask, of a word spoken against conviction, and with a mental reservation, if the sentiments of the heart be right? We cannot suppose that for so slight a thing as a word God will judge us, though we could easily conceive that He might do so for neglect of His Worship, or any practical disrespect shown to His Ordinances." In answer to these

reasonings of the natural heart, God assures us that He will by no means hold him guiltless that taketh His Name in vain. He will by no means do so, however man might act; and He will not count the profane word *guiltless*, that is, He will account profaneness of language to be a serious offence.

The current profanenesses of expression, into which Christians, good and serious in the main, might be entrapped from want of reflection, or in a moment of excitement, are as follows:

1. All asseverations which take the form of an oath, whether the name of the true God be introduced in them or not; all ejaculations in surprise or excitement, which imply an invocation of God. The original design of the Commandment was probably to draw a broad line of demarcation between the peculiar people of God, and those contiguous heathen nations (the Egyptians specially) who freely interlarded their discourse with the names of their deities, Isis, Apis, Jupiter, Hercules, and the rest. To a certain extent the precept took effect; for the Jews never allowed the name Jehovah (meaning the Self-existent One, or He that was, and that is, and that is to come) to pass their lips. When they came across it in the Old Testament, as they did in every page, they substituted another word of lower import, not *ex-*

clusively appropriated to God; nor was it ever lawful to pronounce this sacred Name except for the High Priest once a year on the great day of Atonement, when he announced forgiveness to the people in the name of *Jehovah*. But while in this formal superstitious manner they observed the letter of the Commandment, they—at least in the later period of their history—evaded its spirit, and when God Incarnate came among them, He found them using all manner of conversational oaths, swearing by heaven, by the earth, by the Temple, by Jerusalem, and so forth, in all which forms of speech they recognized no guilt. It is against this practice that our Lord directs His precept in the Sermon on the Mount: "But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: nor by the earth; for it is His footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black;" a precept which is echoed, almost in the terms in which it was issued, by the Apostle James: "But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath; but let your yea be yea, and your nay nay, lest ye fall into condemnation."

It is singular what a hold conversational oaths

have taken of the minds of men in all ages and countries alike; what a discontent has always been shown with the simple affirmation and denial, as not sufficiently emphatic; and how, when (under the influence of Christian civilization) a direct appeal to the true God has been entirely banished from good society, foolish and frivolous exclamations, in which the name is disguised, or exchanged for that of some heathen Deity, have taken its place. The account of this is, that the mind is ruffled by some momentary excitement, whether of anger or surprise; that all emotions naturally seek a vent; and that a momentary relief is found in expressions of this kind. The practice, like most other practices, with great facility grows into a trick; and then is indulged in as a mere flourish, even when the mind is perfectly calm. It may be thought, perhaps, that it is not easy to see the guilt of such a habit; and that when once formed, it is so instinctive as to become involuntary. But let it be considered that in the presence of an earthly sovereign such expressions would be accounted most indecorous, and universally refrained from without an effort; —the history of which propriety of demeanour would be, that men naturally lay a restraint upon themselves, when they are under the eye of one whom they venerate, and instinctively take care

that nothing shall escape them, which can be construed into disrespect of a great presence. This remark opens a glimpse into the true spiritual significance of the precept before us; for a consciousness of God's Presence steadily maintained would impose a similar restraint, as we shall have occasion presently to notice more at large.

2. I pass from the unduly emphasized asseveration or denial to other profanenesses of expression, into which Christians might be liable to fall.

It is a bad habit, and one which we should seek as much as possible to banish from our discourse, to quote texts of the Holy Scriptures by way of pointing a jest. The effect of this practice is, that when we next come across the text in Private Devotion, or it may be in the Public Service of the Church, the ludicrous association clings to it: we seek to brush it off, as a person walking through a corn-field seeks to brush off a burr which clings to his dress, but we fail; and find it perhaps impossible to re-invest that passage with the sanctity which once it had for us. In the Psalms we find it written, "Thou hast magnfied *Thy Word* above all Thy Name;" as if out of the whole circle of His attributes and properties there was none which God so especially delights to honour as His Word. And certainly, if there be any truth in the repre-

sentation of Our Lord's life as given by His biographers the Evangelists, there is no one thing which He so continually honoured in His practice as the Scriptures of the Old Testament. The prophetical outline which those Scriptures had traced out for Him as Messiah seems to have been one of the uppermost thoughts in His mind; and as He was fulfilling His great destiny, He was continually reverting to this outline with such expressions as, "The Scriptures must be fulfilled." Now if God holds His Word in such especial honour, and if the Incarnate Son, the Image in human flesh of the Invisible God, and our perfect Example, shows such a deference to Scripture's slightest intimations, it surely cannot be in conformity with the mind of God and Christ that we should desecrate what is especially venerable by light and jocular applications of it. And possibly this practice of quoting Scripture in a connexion which desecrates it may have gradually wrought more evil upon our own minds than we are fully aware. One patent error of the day is a light esteem of Holy Scripture; a contemptuous repudiation of certain parts of it, as altogether unworthy of credit from their *appearing* to conflict with scientific discoveries and the moral sense of man; and generally a bringing down of the Sacred Books to the level of common writings, upon which Criticism is to sit in judg-

ment, eliminating whatever does not satisfy her, and reconstructing the lively Oracle in a manner suitable to the progress and enlightenment of the age! How much of this awful presumption, which is now making such encroachments upon Sacred Literature, may be due to small habits of irreverence, gaining ground stealthily and insidiously on the mind, it is impossible to say. But this we may confidently assert, that for all light esteem of Holy Scripture, as of every thing else connected with the Name of God, a judgment will in due time overtake us; and therefore we cannot be too cautious or scrupulous as to our own practice in this particular. No doubt the gaiety and mirthfulness of discourse is in itself a good thing, because in this way it is that Conversation is made to fulfil one of its ends, which is the relief of the mind under the many burdens of life; but too dear a price is paid for this gaiety, if it is produced by any saying, however sparkling, which compromises or lowers our reverence for God's Word. To refrain from such a saying will no doubt often be a trial to those in whose characters there is a humorous and imaginative element; but let them say, after honestly trying it, whether such self-restraint, out of reverence to the Awful Name of God, does not bring with it its own reward,—whether it is not at all events compensated by the great facility and readiness

with which the mind is brought into a devotional frame, and fenced from distractions in prayer.

3. But perhaps there are profanenesses of expression current among us, when and where such things are least looked for,—when and where in a rapid survey they would be overlooked. Our times are controversial times, when a great public interest is felt in subjects of religion. We do not believe that the depth of this interest is at all proportionate to its universality. What men have much on their tongues has seldom a very firm root in their minds:—and it is just this combination of fluency of talk with shallowness of feeling (so characteristic of our day) which constitutes our danger. Theological discussions are so common now-a-days, that the words which denote the highest verities of Religion have become mere counters, passed about from hand to hand with a fatal facility. As coins which are in continual currency lose the Sovereign's image originally impressed upon them, so that we can no longer tell to what reign they belong; so these religious words, being bandied about continually, lose all the freshness of their original signification, and convey hardly more of idea to the minds of the persons using them than an algebraical formula. Men will talk about the Inspiration of Scripture, Baptismal Regeneration, the Sacrament of the Altar, the Powers of the Chris-

tian Ministry, the Miracles of Our Lord, His Divine Sonship, the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity, without ever pausing for a moment to consider the deep reality of the things on which their conversation is turning,—without the thought crossing them that their tongue is making its sallies in the region of the supernatural. Who ever came away from an ordinary controversial discussion, feeling that he was the better for it, or with an impression of the solemnity of Divine things abiding on his spirit? Who ever came away without feeling that the dignity of the subject had been somewhat impaired by the rude friction against his neighbour's views which his own views had sustained? And what is the reason of this result? The reason is that, in the warmth of the discussion, both parties have forgotten the reality of the things which were upon their lips; both have in a measure (though quite unconsciously, and probably with no worse motive than that of mutual improvement) "taken the Name of the Lord their God in vain." To talk suitably and profitably about Divine things is no such easy matter as might be supposed. It demands a certain state of heart which is not by ordinary Christians realized, except in happy moments. It demands recognition of God's Presence, of the mysteriousness of His Nature, and of all truths concerning Him, and of the limitations

imposed upon the human understanding. The mind must be in a worshipping rather than a speculative frame. For Divine Truth is most certainly received, not with the understanding, but with the heart; and therefore he who allows himself to make an intellectual game of the pursuit of it, as if it could be won by mere dialectical fencing, approaches it at the wrong end, and misses altogether of its moral effect.

It is recorded of Sir Isaac Newton, and a similar anecdote is told of Boyle, that he never named God in conversation without a visible pause or stop, and that, if he were covered at the time, he commonly also raised his hat from his head. Oh! how much it is to be desired in these days of Religious Conferences and Church Congresses, when fluent mention of God and Divine things in certain circles is so much in vogue, that men would cultivate the same spirit which expressed itself by these outward visible signs? How much it is to be desired, even if the only point to be secured were the edification of man! For a controversial discussion, conducted with a seriousness suitable to the subjects on which it turns, could not be an acrimonious discussion. A heart solemnized by the thought of God's Presence is in a calm state,—is in communion with the Fountain of Truth and Love, and cannot easily fulminate an anathema, or even

provoke a difference of opinion. But how much more desirable does such a state of mind appear, when we remember that not only the danger of dissension with man has to be guarded against, but that also of offence to the Majesty of Heaven! Sins against Society are light as compared with those against God, and are to a certain extent remediable by Society itself, according to that profound word of the old priest: "If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him?"

4. We have spoken of Reverence in handling Divine Truth; but there is another sentiment, distinct from, and yet intimately blended with Reverence, with which it should be handled,—I mean that sentiment of fervour, of love, and delight, to which the name of unction is usually given. Surely it is doing a great wrong to the greatest of all themes, if we speak of God in a dry, cold, hard manner, without any feeling of the surpassing beauty, amiability, and attractiveness of His Character. A Being whose heart is a Fountain of pity and of sympathy with His meanest creatures, and whose tenderness for His rational creatures is so unspeakably great, that, sooner than they should perish, He consented to the Sacrifice of His Son; a Being who, in His inexhaustible bounty, yearns and longs to communi-

cate His favours far and wide,—who so yearns after union, with man in particular, that to effect this union, He sent His Son to take our Nature upon Him, and His Spirit to make us partakers of His Divine Nature,—a Father of lights, from whom proceeds every scintillation of wisdom and truth which has ever been struck out, and a God of Love in whom every pure and benevolent affection centres,—such a One should not be named except in a loving and fervent spirit, with the feeling that, if we had the tongues of angels to exalt Him with, we could never adequately tell forth His praise. Such an infinitely good, wise, and tender Father one would wish never to think of without a drawing of the heart towards Him, and therefore never to speak of except in terms which might commend Him to the listeners. It is a high attainment to speak of God thus in familiar discourse, but not beyond the reach of any man who will set about it in the right way. It is not to be done by unnatural straining after a pious sentiment, and injecting it into the ear of a casual listener. The speech which ministers grace to the hearers is never forced, but flows naturally from the exuberance of a heart full charged with its subject; it is water from a fountain, not water forced up by machinery. Hold much and fervent communion with God;

and let this communion consist not so much in direct prayer, as in meditation on His glorious and lovely attributes, as they are fully revealed to us in the Gospel. This meditation, if persisted in, will gradually beget what I shall call a gravitation of the mind towards God, a thrill of joy when any new wonder in His works or His Word is revealed to us, and of delight when He is honoured and glorified. And this state of mind will transpire occasionally—with some oftener, with others more rarely, according to the greater or less unreserve of the character,—in simple but fervent words spoken to those around us, which, coming from the heart of the speaker, and having a savour of heavenly affections, which commends them, are very likely to go to the heart of the listener. Thus shall we not only refrain from taking the Name of the Lord our God in vain, but shall do something towards the fulfilment of the precept on its positive side, by "hallowing the Name" of our Father which is in Heaven.

5. And now, in conclusion, we must exhibit this positive side of the precept a little more fully. In order to which it will be necessary to observe the connexion which subsists between the com mandments of the first Table. We know that they are all summed up in the one precept of "loving the Lord our God with all our heart, and

with all our soul, and with all our mind, and with all our strength." Now this devoted love of God must necessarily involve the following obligations:—

Firstly. An obligation to worship Him only, to the exclusion of pleasure, money, distinction, or any other object to which men give their hearts. This is the obligation prescribed by the First Commandment.

Secondly. An obligation to worship Him in spirit and in truth, not leaning upon material representations, or impressions derived from the senses. This is the obligation prescribed by the Second Commandment.

Thirdly. An obligation to worship Him, in a certain sense, unceasingly, by continually realizing His Presence, and gravitating towards Him in our inmost souls. This is the obligation prescribed by the Third Commandment.

And fourthly. An obligation to devote a certain portion of our time to direct acts of worship. This last precept is the antidote and corrective of an error, which possibly might be insinuated by the Third. For it might be asked: "If the mind is never allowed to lose the consciousness of God's Presence, is not this sufficient homage, without any distinct *acts* of worship?" The Fourth Commandment answers this question in

the negative, affirming the principle that God has a claim upon our time, and that this claim must be acknowledged by surrendering a certain portion of it to Worship, Public and Private.—But to return to the Third Commandment.

I am not denying that forcible restraints upon the tongue are good, or that they are necessary as steps by which we may mount up to the spiritual fulfilment of this precept. But I do say that the precept, understood in its length and breadth, involves something far beyond these restraints. It cannot be thoroughly fulfilled without an habitual consciousness of God's Presence, and intimate nearness to each one of us. "Thy Name also is so nigh." "I am always by Thee." Let this consciousness preside in the soul; and an irreverent word becomes at once an impossibility. We have already seen that it is only when a man is off his guard, and does not care for his company, that such words escape him. If he were in a royal presence, nay, even if he were in the presence of a child or a woman, or, in short, of any one to whom respect is felt to be due, he would, almost without an effort, refrain from profane language. Then if he can bring himself to the remembrance that God's Eye is always upon him, that this Supreme Object of reverence and love hears every word he says, and registers every idle word, this

thought will operate as no mere rule could do, to secure the fulfilment of the precept. Seek, then, this consciousness of God's Presence. Say often in thine heart, "Thou God seest me;" "Have I also here looked after Him that seeth me?" The practice of pausing momentarily in business or recreation, to realize God's Presence, is one of the rudimentary lessons in the Primer of Religion, which teaches us to walk by faith and not by sight. Be thoroughly rooted and grounded in this lesson. Make it the maxim of your spiritual life. And you shall soon learn to live more nearly as you pray, when you pray, as you do daily, that the "Name of our Father who is in Heaven may be hallowed."

CHAPTER VI.

WHAT IS AN IDLE WORD?

"Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment."—MATT. xii. 36.

THE sin of idle words is censured by Our Lord in the most awful terms. It behoves us, therefore, to ascertain exactly what is meant by idle words,—lest we should add any thing to, or diminish any thing from, His holy commandment.

Nor let any one imagine that such minute investigations of the language of Holy Scripture as we now propose, are wanting in interest. Holy Scripture is the expression of the mind of the Spirit. He, therefore, who sifts a Greek or Hebrew phrase occurring in the Old or New Testament, with the view of ascertaining its fine shades of significance, is investigating the sublimest of all subjects—he is exploring, as far as man may explore, the thoughts of Almighty God.

"Every idle word."

Our first rule, in seeking to understand a passage of Scripture, must always be to review it in connexion with its context. What then is the context of these words of our Lord?

The discourse, of which the words in question form a part, had its rise in the circumstance of the Pharisees attributing Our Lord's miracles (even those of them whose character presented most difficulty to such an explanation) to Satanic agency. He had cast out of a man a blind and dumb devil, so that the blind and dumb both spake and saw. The people were struck with amazement and conviction. They said, "Is not this the son of David?"

But the Pharisees resisted this natural and obvious conclusion, by suggesting another account of the phenomenon. *They* said, "This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils."

Thereupon follows the discourse, which makes mention of a certain unpardonable sin, called blasphemy against the Holy Ghost (*ἡ τοῦ Πνεύματος βλασφημία*), and embraces also the warning against idle words that is contained in our text.

Now *at first sight*, it is natural to suppose that by idle words are meant such as the Pharisees

had just vented—words of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. And it is not difficult to perceive what kind of words *those* were. The Pharisees, like the multitude, were internally convinced of the Messiahship of Jesus by the miracle which they had witnessed. But it would have been inconvenient to them to have acknowledged His claims. By doing so, they would have to retract their whole previous career—to place themselves (after the fashion of Mary) at His feet, as His disciples. This would have humbled the pride of those ecclesiastical rulers, and such an humiliation they could not brook. So, without honestly believing their own explanation, they attributed the cure of the blind and dumb man to the agency of Satan. It was a *supernatural* cure—that they admitted—but there are, said they, supernatural *evil* agencies as well as supernatural good ones,—and this particular miracle is due to the first of these causes. It might have occurred to them (probably it did occur to them in the deep of their hearts), that this was a flimsy and transparently false explanation—that, on no recognized principle of craft or policy, could the Devil cast out his own agents.

Yes, such an account would not serve the turn; —it was a dishonest shuffle, and they knew it to be so, to avoid making a confession which was irre-

sistibly forced upon their minds, but which would have involved them in consequences from which their pride and jealousy shrunk.

And then came in the corrupt special pleading, so natural to the human mind under such circumstances,—Ἡ γλῶσσ' ὀμώμοχ', ἡ δὲ φρὴν ἀνώμοτος. "After, all, though I am giving an explanation which I do not believe—with which I am not satisfied myself—which finds no response whatever in my convictions,—yet these are but words, the breath of the lips, lightly uttered and soon forgotten—my mind recognizes the truth, though I cannot bring my tongue to confess it."

The eye of Him, who knew what was in man, detected this reasoning at the bottom of their hearts: and down came the lighting of His censure to brush and blast a fallacy so dangerous. "Whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man" (without violating internal convictions,—like Paul before his conversion, who spake many things against the Son of Man, but spake them ignorantly in unbelief), "it shall be forgiven him—but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost" (violates those internal convictions of Truth, which are wrought in the mind by the Holy Spirit), "it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come." As if the Lord had said: "Your Language is not, as you vainly im-

agine, a separate and separable thing from your Reason: it has a deep and living connexion with your state of mind. Language and Reason have their fibres twined up together,—so that a corrupt Language argues a corrupt Reason."

And then follows our passage, introduced by the formula BUT I SAY UNTO YOU:—"Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment."

Now is the idle word to be explained simply and solely by the *blasphemy* preceding? If so, the warning,—though still an awful one,—will scarcely possess a general applicability; for the number of those is few, whose circumstances resemble the circumstances of the Pharisees. The nearest approach to the same sin now-a-days, would be the case of an Indian Brahmin, mentally convinced of the truth of Christianity, but inventing arguments to explain it away from the fear of losing caste. Similar cases would rarely occur in countries professing Christianity,—though even here men might sin, after a measure, on much the same principle.

But we think there are reasons for giving to these solemn words a far more extended applicability.

First, they are introduced by a formula, which will be found, I think, to indicate a transition

from a more limited to a more extended application, the word translated "but" having the force of *moreover,—furthermore.* Thus in the Sermon on the Mount many times:

"Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths. BUT I SAY UNTO YOU (ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν), Swear not AT ALL." In other words, I make the precept of the Law more extensively applicable.

Again: "Ye have heard that it has been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: BUT I SAY UNTO YOU" (ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν)—the Law truly interpreted imposes a far wider restraint than this,—"Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."

Again; in commendation of the centurion of Capernaum, it is said: "Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel: AND I SAY UNTO YOU (Δέγω δὲ ὑμῖν), that many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven." Observe, *many* shall come—I limit not my speech to this centurion—I assert it as an universally applicable truth, that many, whom ye look down upon as dogs and sinners of the Gentiles, shall be admitted to a

glorious and intimate communion with the first founders of your race.

And again: "Have ye not read in the Law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the Temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless?" (their profanation of the Sabbath is excused by the fact that it is committed in the course of their attendance on the Temple. My disciples, therefore, supposing they were attending on the Temple, might be excused for some profanations of the Sabbath.) "BUT I SAY UNTO YOU" (λέγω δὲ ὑμῖν), "that in this place is One greater than the Temple." (My disciples are plucking the ears of corn, in course of their attendance upon ME: how much more does *that* excuse the act.)

Thus we perceive that the phrase in question introduces a transition to a stronger, more emphatic, or more general assertion.

But the same conclusion will follow from examining the word rendered "idle" (ἀργός).

According to its derivation, this word means *not working*—(ἀ-ἔργον).

If we refer to other places in which it occurs, we shall find that it is used of the labourers, whom the lord of the vineyard saw standing *idle* (ἀργοὶ) in the market-place. Here it must mean simply *unoccupied, disengaged*. Again, St. Paul employs it to denote that hanging about upon

life, which is so opposed to Christian earnestness in work, and which goes together with gossip and curiosity about other people's affairs. Advocating the second marriage of widows he says that if unmarried, "they learn to be IDLE" (*ἀργαὶ*), "wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not." (I quote contexts, because I wish to arrive at a well-defined, nicely-chiselled apprehension of the Scriptural meaning of the word.) Then again a verse from Epimenides is quoted in the Epistle to Titus, in which the Cretans are said to be "slow bellies" (*γαστέρες ἀργαί*). The substantive would probably indicate their gluttony; the adjective their want of exertion, that is, their indolence. Finally, St. Peter, in his second Epistle, couples the word with *ἄκαρπος*, unfruitful. Christians, who exhibit Christian graces in abundance, are said to be, *οὐκ ἀργοὶ οὐδὲ ἄκαρποι*, "neither barren nor unfruitful." Ἀργὸς then is a term which might be applied to unproductive ground—to that soil which, though drinking "in the rain that cometh oft upon it, bringeth NOT forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed." Hence, of the barren fig-tree it is said —*ἱνατί καὶ τὴν γῆν καταργεῖ*; "Why *also* cumbereth it the ground?" Why, besides being unfruitful itself, doth it drain away the fatness of the soil,

which might go to feed a fruit-bearing tree, and so render the ground inoperative, unproductive, unfruitful?

Now, the words of the Pharisees were not simply useless, unfruitful, unprofitable words;—but far worse. They were false words—they counteracted conviction—their fault was not that of omission—they were positively bad, mischievous, and wicked words. They were a lie in the teeth of conviction, and they were calculated to do harm, to mislead the ignorant people who looked up to their authority. Hence we infer that when Our Lord condemns *idle* words, He is going a step beyond that sin of blasphemy upon which His censure had at the outset of the discourse so heavily fallen—and that our text, rendered so as to exhibit the emphatic transition, would run thus—"Nay, I *even* say unto you, that every *idle* word" (not merely every *false* and *blasphemous*, but "every *idle* word) that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment."

Nor is there any thing which need surprise us, in this strictness of the Christian Law on the subject of words. It is strictly in accordance with the general tenour of Evangelical Precept. We are often instructed that that precept cannot be satisfied by innocuousness—that we are required

not merely to abstain from harm, but to do positive good. Thus it is in the Parables of the Talents and the Pounds. The servant who hid his talent in a napkin, who did not give it to the exchangers—who did not put it out to interest—is called a *wicked* servant. But his wickedness was no wickedness after the world's estimate. It consisted simply in slothfulness:—had harmlessness been the criterion of worth, the servant being perfectly harmless, would have passed without censure. But God gives us talents *for an end.* The abilities, resources, influence, opportunities of improvement, which He bestows, are designed *to further an object.* And if they do not further that object, if they are idle, fruitless, unprofitable, —if they fulfil not their function, and bring no revenue to the good of man, and the glory of God,—condemnation ensues as surely and as sternly as if they had been misemployed. Indeed, *not* to employ a talent which was designed for employment—this is to misemploy it.

May God eradicate out of the hearts of all of us that worldly, false, and mischievous notion,—that we may neglect the opportunities afforded us, waste our time, and leave our talents uncultivated, and yet be accounted in the sight of God to have lived upon the whole a pure life. This would be very well, if we were to be judged at the Last

Day by the World,—by the society in which we have moved. The world *does* account harmlessness for goodness. If a man has done no harm, the world is content with him, the requirements of society are satisfied. But we are to be judged by One, who has not the smallest regard to the verdict of society, or the estimate of man. We are to stand before the tribunal of the Lord Jesus Christ,—and there to render to Him an account how we have observed His Law. The Word that He hath spoken, the same shall judge us in the last day. We have that Word in our hands—it is sounded in our ears continually. Does He in that Word ever lead us to expect—does He ever give us the slightest intimation—that *He* will be satisfied with an amiable harmlessness? Verily, I trow not. Every thing which He says on the subject is in the teeth of this notion. He proclaims the principle of His dealing with us to be this—That wherever He has bestowed a talent, He expects a revenue from it—He expects that we shall put it out to interest, and bring this interest into His treasury.

Apply now this principle to words. Is not the gift of words a talent? Is there any talent so wonderful as words,—which are the living produce of the Reason? And are not words a talent adapted to secure the highest of all ends? May

we not bless God therewith? May we not preach the Gospel, and communicate wholesome instruction therewith? May we not edify human souls therewith? May we not carry on discourse of wisdom therewith? May we not therewith refresh and relax the mind by discourse of wit, which is nearly allied to wisdom? May we not lighten another man's burden therewith, and lift up the head that droops therewith, and present to the mind pictures of truth and beauty therewith, and drop suggestions therewith, which shall be the seed of great thoughts and of lofty impulses? And if the talent of words may be made thus largely prolific, it was no doubt *designed* to minister to these ends. The blessing of God, the edification and rational amusement of man, are its final causes, the objects which it was designed to subserve.

Shall I be surprised, then, if, when I stand before the Judgment Seat, an account is required of me how I have used this talent—if I am asked whether I *have* blessed God, *have* instructed or entertained man, *have* spoken a word in due season to the weary, *have* thrown out good suggestions, *have* advocated holy objects therewith—and if upon every word which has not conduced to any of these purposes (then brought to my memory with an instantaneousness more than electric)

should be pronounced by the Son of Man the censure IDLE? In short, is there any thing more than the intimation, that we are expected diligently to improve all our talents, in the solemn words of our passage: "Nay, I even say unto you that every IDLE word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment"?

In the next Chapters we will consider more in detail the final causes of the talent of words: for unless those final causes are well defined in our minds, we shall not be able to apprehend the subject in detail, however much possessed of a clear general notion of its meaning.

But, before closing our present Chapter, let us reflect that we have ascertained this clear general notion. It is a solemn thing—this ascertaining of Our Lord's meaning in a matter bearing so immediately upon our daily practice. So long as the meaning is a little cloudy, and wrapped up in doubt and difficulty, we might think perhaps that if we do not fully carry out the precept, it is because we do not entirely understand it. But I am afraid that the meaning is too clear in this instance, for the precept to be thus evaded.

What the passage condemns is *useless* words, words conducive neither to instruction nor to innocent entertainment—words having no salt of wit

or wisdom in them—flat, stale, dull, and unprofitable—thrown out to while away the time, to fill up a spare five minutes,—words that are not consecrated by any seriousness of purpose whatever.

Now that we understand clearly what is forbidden, we must gird ourselves earnestly to the observance of the restriction. Remember upon Whose authority the restriction rests. Remember it is the Lord Jesus who speaks. This leaves no room for evasion. The command may be hard, may be difficult of execution; but impossible it is not, or He would not have commanded it—and difficult though it be, He gives grace if we seek it, more than commensurate to the difficulty.

Well, then, I see plainly that a new duty has been brought home to my conscience, and that I must begin to-morrow clearing away out of my talk every weed and useless growth—every thing vapid, useless, aimless, idle.

Said I every weed and *useless* growth? And are there not in the mouths of some (despite all the refinement of modern society) words positively evil and noxious? Do not many use the tongue in swearing, which should be employed in blessing God? Do not many employ that faculty which was given for the purpose of edification, in corrupting others by means of words, and in spreading round them a moral pestilence? the sentence against

IDLE words is awful enough. But for him, who taints the soul of another by communicating to him the venom of a foul imagination, for him, and such as him, there remains a censure, which seems to exhaust the righteous indignation of Him Who is Love:—"Woe unto that man by whom the offence cometh: IT WERE BETTER FOR HIM THAT A MILLSTONE WERE HANGED ABOUT HIS NECK, AND HE CAST INTO THE SEA, THAN THAT HE SHOULD OFFEND ONE OF THESE LITTLE ONES."

CHAPTER VII.

WORDS OF BUSINESS AND INNOCENT RECREATION NOT IDLE.

"Every idle word."—MATT. xii. 36.

WE are at present engaged in the minute examination of the solemn censure, passed by Our Lord upon idle words.

I suppose my readers to be deeply impressed with the necessity of following out the Lord's will, when it is ascertained. I suppose them willing and desirous to observe such restraints as He lays upon them. I suppose the tone of their mind in regard to His precepts to be justly expressed by the words of the Blessed Virgin to the servants at the marriage festival,—"Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it." Our question on the present occasion is, what He *does* say?

In prosecuting this inquiry, we have already seen that the word rendered "idle" is very appro-

priately so rendered—that it is susceptible of application to any person or thing which does not perform its proper business, and so fulfil the proper end of its existence.

Words then are idle, which do not fulfil the proper end of the existence of words.

We may remark, in general, that what constitutes the excellence or virtue of any thing is, that it should fulfil its proper end. A few simple instances will suffice to make this clear. The end of an orchard—the business which we expect it to fulfil—is to bring forth fruit. The end of a flower-garden is to gratify the senses of sight and smell. The end of a watch is to keep the time truly. The end of memory is to present us with a faithful picture of the past. The end of an electric telegraph is to convey news with rapidity. If the orchard brings forth a meagre crop,—if the garden presents a poor and ill-arranged assortment of colours,—if the watch is ever losing or gaining,—if the memory is ever letting points of importance drop,—if the telegraph is so ill-worked, or so fractured, that the instantaneous conveyance of intelligence is impeded,—we call it, as the case may be, a bad orchard, or a bad garden, or a bad watch, or a bad memory, or a bad telegraph,—implying thereby that we regard that thing as good, which fulfils its proper business or function.

What then is the proper function of words,—the end for which they were given,—by fulfilling which they become good, and escape the censure of being idle words?

The first and perhaps (by comparison) the lowest end of words, is *to carry on the business of life.* A moment's thought will show us, that the most ordinary and most essential transactions cannot be carried on without words. Life would be at a standstill without them. Think how impossible it would be to carry out any common project or enterprise, if those who took it in hand were suddenly struck dumb. Remember how impossible it proved to continue the building of the Tower of Babel, when by the confusion of tongues the builders were precluded from the use of a common language. And without some amount of combination, mutual assistance, and co-operation, scarcely any thing could be effected. Men are so completely one body, that they have need of one another's services many times in each day. The service of course often consists of some common piece of information, which one man is master of, and another not. Still it is a service; it involves the principle of mutual assistance, and in the absence of words it could not be rendered. You walk through the fields, and a peasant, who has no clock but that of the heavens to govern his

arrangements by, asks you the time. You walk through the city, and an officer of justice, in pursuit of a criminal, asks you whether you have seen a person of such a description as you came along on such a road. You want a book of reference for immediate use; long before you can procure it from a bookseller, the occasion for it will have passed away: but you may have it by speaking a few words; for your neighbour possesses it, and will lend it to you, if you ask him. Now conceive in all these cases what a serious impediment to the business of life it would be, if the person in want of assistance, or the person questioned for information, were deprived of the use of Language, or were sullenly to refuse to speak. Carry out this hypothesis to its ultimate results, and you would deal a death-blow at mutual supply and demand, at commerce and exchange, at all the arts of civilized life,—nay, you would destroy the whole system of the republic (by which word I now mean, not any particular form of government, but the system of society and of life in common), and would reduce man to the level of a solitary creature,—to the condition of the hermit, who plucks berries for his food, dips his potsherd in the stream, wattles his own hut, and patches up a garment of leaves, like our first parents after their fall.

The sum and substance of what has been said is this: Men are, by Divine appointment, a community—"one body." The mutual dependence of the members of a community upon one another, involves some rapid means of communication between them. The means of communication ordained by God for this purpose is Language. Language, therefore, may be not only innocently, but commendably, used in carrying on the business of life. Assuredly it is no idle word, if, when I want information to guide my arrangements, I ask for it, or if, when I am solicited for such information, I give it. If such words are to the point,—I mean, if they are not made the excuse for indulging in gossip, and throwing away precious moments—I need not fear *their* confronting me at the Day of Judgment. Probably, reader, you think that this is a very needless admonition. Nay, but I am anxious to ascertain very definitely, by way of guiding our consciences, what words are permitted to us and what are forbidden. How are we to examine ourselves on the idle words we have used, so long as we have but a vague notion of what is meant by an idle word?

The second end which words should fulfil, and for which they were no doubt designed, is *to refresh and entertain the mind.*

It is a trite saying, but no less true than it is

trite, that the mind requires refreshment. One strain of serious occupation or of earnest thought, cannot be maintained for any length of time, and an attempt made to maintain it, in despite of the constitution of our nature, would probably, if persisted in, issue in the wreck of our mental powers. The mind, like the body, cannot endure a long-continued pressure; and man, therefore, being in need of recreation (and that, in virtue of his original constitution, without reference to the sin he has superinduced upon it), we should expect to find him furnished with some resource,—a resource, mark you, in himself, and not in external circumstances, for mental refreshment. Most wisely, therefore, and most beneficently has it been ordained that he shall carry about with him such a resource in the tongue,—the instrument of recreation as well as of business, of refreshment as well as of instruction.

Similarly, in his bodily constitution there is a provision for the recreation of his *physical* frame. The power of moving the limbs,—of taking exercise of any description,—no doubt conduces to the more serious ends of carrying on mutual communication, and so of forwarding the business of life. But this same exercise, taken in the open air, under fresh breezes and gleams of sunshine, and among the ever-shifting sceneries of nature, is also a physical

recreation. Think of the operative, whose nimble fingers are plying all day amidst the whirr of machinery, and giving abundant testimony to the wonderful skilfulness with which the human hand has been constructed for the purpose of the useful arts: set these same limbs at work on a fine summer's evening amid the genial sights and sounds of nature,—let him pluck daisies to weave a fantastic garland, or toss himself among the sweet hay, or simply walk through the fields of clover, and watch the sun descend in a blaze of gold,—this is the very refreshment which his frame, jaded by the protracted labours of the day, demands, and which we of the upper classes, whose luxuries are purchased by his toils, are bound to see that he has at least the opportunity of enjoying.

Now analogous to exercise for recreation's sake in the physical frame of man, is the use of the tongue for the entertainment of the mind. The method of mental entertainment readiest to hand,—that which nature herself furnishes independently of all extrinsic resources,—is by the tongue. "Iron sharpeneth iron: so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend,"—a very expressive text, and one which speaks for itself. When the countenance is dulled and blunted by the hard and dry business of life, what is it which communicates to it the spark of animation, which makes it dawn

once again with intelligence, which brings out that characteristic gleam, which probably lies hidden in every countenance, which it is the artist's skill to catch and to perpetuate upon canvas, but which no solar picture (taken as such likenesses are by machinery, and without an operation of the artificer's mind) ever did or ever will catch? "A man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." The simple collision of mind with mind, not on arduous subjects, or serious business, but upon ordinary and lighter topics,—the simple interchange of thoughts without reserve, and the freedom and gaiety of common intercourse,—acts as the greatest relief, to one whose attention and thoughts have been kept on the stretch by study or business. The excellence of such conversation—that which renders it good of its kind, and suitable to the fulfilment of its end—is Wit. Do not be surprised at hearing such a thing advocated (and I am prepared deliberately to advocate it), in an essay, whose purport is religious. If there were more of the salt of wit in our ordinary conversation, its general vapid nature would be corrected,—it would turn less upon the character, conduct, plans, and arrangements of our neighbours,—topics upon which perhaps it can never turn with any profit, and upon which it rarely turns without trenching hard upon sin. It is to be deplored that there is so

little wit in the world, not that there is so much; for in default of wit it is that men seek diversion of the mind, some by empty gossip, and some by foul and obscene conversation, which feeds in them the deadly gangrene of impure lust. It has been often said that Wit and Wisdom are twin sisters. And it is true. They are so nearly allied, that one might almost say they are the same faculty, operating at its different poles. "Wit," says Aristotle, "is the conception of incongruities." And is not wisdom the perception of harmonies? What is the perception of analogies running through all the various departments of nature,—the domain of sight, the domain of sound, the domain of touch,[1]—but wisdom or philosophy? What is a parable, but the exhibition of a harmony subsisting between God's works of Grace on the one hand, and His works of Nature or Providence on the other? Is there any wise work in any department of literature, art, or science, which is not ultimately founded on the apprehension of harmonies,—the discrimination of true and real harmonies from those which are false and shallow and superficial? Now would not he who discerns harmonies most readily, have also the readiest discernment of incongruities? He who has the liveliest faculty of comparison, must he

[1] See the Note at the end of the Chapter.

not also have the liveliest faculty of contrast? He who is keenly alive to congruities, must he not be alive also to incongruities? Or, in other words, must not he who has in him wisdom, possess wrapped up in that very gift the kindred faculty of wit?

And it is pleasing to see in experience, that oftentimes the men of most depth and seriousness of character—the men who in their closets have taken the most earnest view of life and have cultivated heavenly Wisdom most largely, have also been men of lively fancy, sprightly and agreeable repartee—seem to have had within them a spring of joy and merriment bubbling up, when the obstruction of serious affairs was removed, and covering with fertility even the leisure hours of their lives. The world's wisest men have mingled mirth with earnestness,—they have not gone about with starched visage, prim manner, or puritanical grimace. If they have been deeply enwrapped (as the holiest and best men always are enwrapped) in the shadows and clouds of life,—they have ever and anon walked in its lights,—have not despised those gleams of merriment which shoot athwart our path, as a relief from the pressure and burden of our work and responsibilities.

Which of us, man or boy, has half the playfulness of the poet Cowper? Which of us can write

a letter like him,—a letter sparkling with sallies that never wound, sallies not elaborated, nor framed of set purpose, but thrown off in the natural buoyancy of high spirits, thrown off simply, freshly, and gracefully? And which of us, man or boy, can even approach him in the earnestness of his religious feeling,—which of us views sin in colours half so dark as it wore to his eyes, or is equally prepared in mind to apprehend that Love of God in Christ, which stands out against the black mass of human guilt as a rainbow against the thunder-cloud?

There is, however, one passage of Scripture, which, on first sight, seems adverse to what I have said, and which requires explanation, before I quit this branch of the subject. In the Epistle to the Ephesians, St. Paul appears to forbid, under the comprehensive term "jesting," every species of pleasantry. His words (and that portion of them about which no question can arise ought to be very awful words to many) are these:—"But fornication, and all uncleanness and covetousness, let it not be once named among you as becometh saints" (not to *practice* such things does not meet the strictness of God's requirements—*we are not even to mention them*), "neither filthiness nor foolish talking,"—so far all is clear. That such species of conversation should be forbidden, is in ac-

cordance with all that we should expect from the purity of Christian precept. But the Apostle adds, "nor jesting, which are not convenient; but rather giving of thanks." Now let me again remind my readers that whatever precept the Scripture gives, not only *may* be carried out by prayer and exertion, but *must* be carried out at all hazards, and that to the letter. God, when He has laid down a Law, will not indulge us in the smallest deviation from it. If in this or any other passage He forbids pleasantry, then pleasantry is a sin—a sin which like any other sin, grievous or slight, requires all the efficacy of Christ's Blood to atone for it, and all the Grace of His Spirit to correct and eradicate it from our hearts. It is a false and wholly unscriptural view, that God lays down unduly strict rules by way of securing as large an amount of obedience as can be extracted from us, and that the smaller and more harmless infringements of those rules will be by Him overlooked. No infringement of a divine rule is harmless—*every such infringement is full charged with guilt and misery and eternal ruin.* Step out of the paling of the Divine Law at one point, and you place yourself out of the shelter of the whole Law: you are then beyond the reach of mercy, except through a Mediator. "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of

all." Let us ascertain then, clearly, whether God *does* forbid pleasantry; for, in that case, no laugh of ours must ever ring again, no humorous word ever proceed from our lips, no smile ever sit upon our countenance. The word translated jesting is *εὐτραπελία*. According to its derivation, it properly means "versatility"—aptness in turning to another topic, or another resource, when one topic or resource is wellnigh exhausted. You see that if we regard the word according to its origin and etymology, no notion of pleasantry whatever attaches to it. Such a notion, however, may subsequently have gathered round the world, for all that, —and I believe that it did. I have not time to go through the proof of my position. But I apprehend that in the former words, "filthiness and foolish talking," the Apostle is forbidding all coarse and empty conversation,—that it then strikes him that something more beyond these has to be forbidden —that there is a kind of conversation very rife among men of the world, and very common in what is termed the most fashionable society, which is not outwardly coarse and obscene (and so not "filthiness"), nor yet foolish in the usual sense of folly, being mixed with quick inuendoes and smart repartees (and so not exactly "foolish talking"), but in which improprieties are implied though not expressed, and in which the natural liveliness of

parts of one who knows that Society will not tolerate any thing very gross, vents itself in an insinuation, either full of moral mischief, or armed with a sting.

"Let there be no coarseness, nor vapid and gossiping conversation,—no, nor even the refined, but sinful raillery of the man of fashion." Such is, I believe, a fair paraphrase of the passage.[1]

The word, if this be its meaning, gives us the salutary warning, that albeit pleasantry itself be no sin, it is under certain circumstances very closely allied with sin.

By way of preserving pure this offspring of the heart's merriment, three cautions should be rigidly observed:

First; from all our pleasantry must be banished any, even the remotest, allusion to impurity —which forms the staple of much of this world's wit. Pleasantry should be the fruit of a childlike playfulness, and of a heart buoyant, because it has not the consciousness of guile. If you once make it the vehicle of uncleanness, you foul it at the spring.

[1] On turning to Archbishop Trench's Synonyms of the New Testament, I see that he takes this view of the meaning of the word in question. To his excellent work I refer the reader who wishes to follow up the subject.

Secondly; all such sarcasms as hurt another person, wound his feelings, and give him unnecessary pain, are absolutely forbidden by the law of Christian Love. The flashes of wit should be like those of the summer lightning, lambent and innocuous.

Thirdly; all such pleasantries as bring any thing sacred into ridicule—or, without bringing it actually into ridicule, connect with it, in the minds of others, ludicrous associations, so that they can never see the object, or hear the words, without the ludicrous observation being presented to them,—are carefully to be eschewed. At all times our primary duty,—that which is inalienably binding upon us, and from which no plea of entertainment can excuse us,—is to hallow God's Name.

Let us close our present remarks, by the prayer that God would restore to us that purity of heart, which forms the groundwork of a sound and Christian mirthfulness,—that He would enable us so to believe in the efficacy of His Son's Blood, as to have our conscience sprinkled from all guilt thereby,—that by the operation of Grace He would make us in intention stand aloof from all evil,—so that the burden of unforgiven and cherished sin may no longer make our hearts to stoop; but that joyfulness may enter there to be a per-

petual guest, and that, whatever we put our hand unto, we may rejoice.

NOTE ON CHAPTER VII., p. 131.

"*What is the perception of analogies running through all the various departments of nature,—the domain of sight, the domain of sound, the domain of touch,—but Wisdom or Philosophy?*"

As an example of this perception of analogies, I extract the following passage from the "Advancement of Learning." The Author is speaking of those elementary philosophical axioms, which he calls "Philosophia Prima:"—

"Is not the ground, which Machiavel wisely and largely discourseth concerning governments, that the way to establish and preserve them, is to reduce them *ad principia*, a rule in religion and nature, as well as in civil administration? Was not the Persian magic a reduction or correspondence of the principles and architectures of nature to the rules and policy of governments? Is not the precept of a musician, to fall from a discord or harsh accord upon a concord or sweet accord, alike true in affection? is not the trope of music, to avoid or slide from the close or cadence, common with the trope of rhetoric of deceiving expectation? Is not the delight of the quavering upon a stop in music the same with the playing of light upon the water? Are not the organs of the senses of one kind with the organs of reflection, the eye with a glass, the ear with a cave or strait determined and bounded? *Neither are these only similitudes, as men of narrow observation may conceive them to be, but the same footsteps of nature, treading or printing upon several subjects or matters.*"

CHAPTER VIII.

SPEECH THE INSTRUMENT OF PROPHECY AND SACRIFICE.

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom: teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."—Col. iii. 16.

"He hath made us priests."—Rev. i. 6.

In our last Chapter, we were engaged in inquiring what sort of words Our Lord censures, and warns us against, under the term "idle."

We defined idle words to be such as do not fulfil the object or objects, for which the faculty of Language is given.

This definition threw us back upon the inquiry: "What *are* the objects or final causes of Language?"

And the two objects, to the consideration of which our last Chapter was devoted, were—the carrying on the necessary business of life, and the entertainment of the mind.

These are two of the ends, which the gift of Speech was designed to promote, and such words as really promote either of these ends cannot be stigmatized as idle words.

But words have higher ends than these; and what those higher ends may be, we now proceed to consider.

St. Paul exhibits these higher ends in the first passage which stands at the head of this Chapter. I believe that in our version it is erroneously punctuated, and that it should run thus: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly"—[a general exhortation, and one having respect to their state of mind;—the Word of Christ was to be stored up in their hearts, as water in the treasury of the great deep, and to flow forth from their mouths in a twofold current,—first, a current towards man, irrigating the moral world with fertility,—secondly, a current of thanksgiving and praise, which should pour itself into the Bosom of God]—"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly;—in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another"—(this is the highest use of Speech, as it looks towards man)—"in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing thankfully" (ἐν χάριτι sometimes has this meaning) "in your hearts to the Lord"—(this is the highest use of Speech, as it looks towards God). These two ends, then,

may be shortly stated as being I. Edification, and II. Praise.[1] Let us say a word of each of them.

I. *Edification.* This word need not be confined exclusively to Moral or Spiritual Edification. It may be made to embrace every communication of knowledge from man to man.

He who by words throws knowledge into the mind of another, which did not exist there previously, or developes in that mind some idea which was latent in it, but not yet brought to the birth, certainly edifies by means of Speech. There are other kinds of truth besides Scriptural truth, (why should we fear to admit it?) and he who communicates to another any kind of truth (worthy of the name) is employed in the work of Edification. In a certain important sense, too, all truth is God's message and God's revelation, though not in the same sense in which the Holy Scriptures are. God is said to be the Father of *lights*—observe, not of one light, but of all lights. Wherever there is light, it is a ray emanating from God. The Scriptures are the organ by which God reveals—not all truth, but—all spiritual truth,—all such truth as pertains to Salvation. There are many kinds of truth, not at all bearing upon the question of Eternal Salvation. And these

[1] See the Note at the end of the Chapter.

truths, not affecting our eternal interests, God communicates through other instruments, which we need not scruple to call organs of revelation, if only we understand clearly in what lower sense those words are applied. The truths of Natural Philosophy are revealed to us by the human Reason, operating upon the Phenomena of Nature. The law of gravitation is one of these truths; it was a great light, when first it dawned upon the mind of Newton, and from that mind was diffused abroad. And it was a light which, like all other lights, came from the Father of lights. It was God who gave Newton his reason, and designed him (fore-ordained him, if you will) to discover by it such laws and principles of Nature, heretofore unknown, as Reason is competent to discover.

Again, the truths which we learn from experience are lights. God sends the experience, and designs us to learn by it, and gives us Reason, to operate upon the experience, in order that we may learn. If we desire to know a truth of experience, for the guidance of our individual lives, we must set our minds and memories to work upon what has befallen us, and gain the truth by this process. If we desire to know a truth of experience, for the guidance of societies, we must read History, which is the record of the expe-

rience of communities, and there find what causes have operated to produce the prosperity and decay of states. These truths, when we have gained them, are a light; but they are given through the organ of experience, or of Reason operating upon experience, not through that of Holy Scripture.

In vain will you inquire of Holy Scripture, what is the best form of civil government, or what is the cause which retains the Earth within its annual orbit;—the Scripture is not the organ, through which God designs to reveal these truths to you.

Again, Instinct is a light,—a scintillation which the Father of lights has disparted among the inferior creatures. Acting upon it, their lives are preserved, and their interests secured. It may be but a glimmering, but still it reveals to them all that it was designed to reveal.

There are, then, many forms of truth, according to the different processes by which God communicates it,—and he who conveys truth to an other, so long as it be of an innocent, and not of a corrupting, character,—he who diffuses a scrap of useful knowledge, or divulges a piece of curious information,—is contributing to the great end of Edification, and so furthering one of the objects for which Language was given.

But, of course, the highest and most blessed form of Edification is that by which we communicate to one another Religious or Scriptural Truth—by which we impart that wisdom, which is man's peculiar province (for we are told that "the fear of the Lord, *that* is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding"), and without which the most abundant resources of genius and learning are but gilded dross and a splendid folly.

Now the climax of this form of Edification is called a Sermon,—a sermon being a solemn address, made by one man to others, on subjects of the highest import, such as affect their eternal welfare. It is not indeed every man's province or business to preach a sermon. But it is every man's province to speak unto edification, and that not simply to the enlightenment of the mind, but also to the improvement of the heart. Only the man set apart for that function preaches formally and in the pulpit, but the man not set apart must equally teach and admonish his neighbour "in all wisdom." "Ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be comforted," says the Apostle. This precept has its primary reference no doubt to the miraculous gift of Prophecy: still its spirit and principle, like that of every other Scriptural precept, is to be carried

out now-a-days, and how it can be carried out I see not, so long as the Christian laity hold themselves exempted from moral and spiritual admonition, and resent such admonition, when it proceeds from any one but a clergyman. It is every man's duty, as it ought to be esteemed every man's privilege, to say a word for God in society, wherever such a word may be discreetly and properly introduced—to be faithful with his more intimate friends, in representing their defects of character and conduct—to be thankful himself for receiving such representations—and ever to be on the watch, to arrest an opportunity of profitable conversation.

II. We now come to the highest of all the ends for which the faculty of Speech was given—the Praise of God. "In psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing thankfully in your hearts to the Lord." "Therewith," says St. James of the tongue, "therewith bless we God, even the Father." "By Him," says the Apostle to the Hebrews, "let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His Name."

We have seen in the course of these pages that man is provided, by his natural constitution, with resources in himself for the maintenance of his bodily and mental health, and for carrying on the

business of life. The power of motion in his limbs enables him to take exercise—and perhaps the form of exercise which is taken by the simple movement of the limbs, without any extrinsic adventitious aid, is of all forms the most conducive to health. For the recreation of the mind he has a resource in the faculty of Speech. And the same faculty enables him to carry on the business of life, with a speed and facility which no contrivance of art can rival. What a clumsy and tardy method of communication is that by paper and ink, as compared with the speaking face to face! Nay, even the electric telegraph itself, the most marvellous invention of modern times, is slow in its conveyance of ideas in comparison of the human mouth. So that for the business and enjoyment of this life, man is amply furnished in himself with all resources—he need not travel out of his own nature—he has his instruments ready at hand.

But man is made for transactions of a higher description than any which relate to this earth; he has communications to hold with Heaven, and intercourse to carry on with God: he is a "Janus bifrons,"—with one face he looks towards earth, with another he confronts unseen things, and regards the invisible God. We should expect then to find him furnished with resources for heavenly, as well as for earthly, intercourse. And such is

indeed the case. "With the tongue bless we God." Every one has the instrument of a spiritual sacrifice within him. The spiritual sacrifice is that of Psalms and Hymns, and the instrument wherewith it is offered is the tongue of man.

What a noble sacrifice! With what ease, facility, and grace, may the instrument fulfil its end! In a song there is, as I have observed before, an element of intelligence and an element of feeling. Not so in a piece of instrumental music, or in what is erroneously called the song of birds. Those inarticulate sounds,—beautifully touching, exquisitely pathetic, as some of them are,—express only feeling without intelligence,—they are the voice of the soul and not of the spirit. On the other hand, a speech or address has only a single element. It is the voice of the Reason: I deny not that it may move the feelings, and often aims at doing so; but the body—the substantial part—of a speech must always be its argument (the appeals to the affections, which a speaker makes, being only subsidiary to his argument), an argument is the province of the spirit, not of the soul of man.

A song combines both—the articulations of Reason and the gushing forth of feeling,—and therefore a spiritual song,—a song addressed to God,—embraces the highest exercise of the highest human powers.

And let me add, lest I should seem to exclude from this grand service of Praise all those whom defect of ear or voice precludes from literal singing—that a Poem is a Song, and that, therefore, a Psalm or Hymn, even though not sung, but simply recited, is a spiritual song. The Ancients were aware of this; and accordingly with them the poet was identified with the minstrel, and the same word "carmen" is employed in Latin to denote the effusions of both. For indeed either the rhyme and metre of Poetry, or its more essential attributes of figure, image, and lofty diction, may be justly regarded as the outcoming of feeling, and as a substitute for the musical tones of the voice.

Contemplate Redeemed Man, then,—contemplate yourself,—as having been constituted the High Priest of God. It is of necessity that you should have something to offer. And the tongue supplies you with a resource for sacrifice. God provides you not with a lamb, but with a song, for a burnt-offering. With Angels and Archangels, and all the Company of Heaven, you are required to pour forth your soul in strains of thanksgiving and praise to the Most High.

This is a sacrifice, from the offering of which no one is exempt. It is the sacrifice appointed for Redeemed Man in his priestly character. For let it ever be borne in mind that *all* Christians—

all the redeemed of God—are, in a certain most important sense, priests, and that upon all of them, as such, devolve priestly functions. "He hath made us priests." Nor does this doctrine, rightly apprehended, interfere, in the smallest degree, with that of a constituted Ministry set apart for the fulfilment of certain functions, which none may, without awful presumption, invade. Why should the two doctrines be more inconsistent under the New Covenant than they were under the Old? It is said of the whole Israelitish people, in the most distinct and emphatic terms: "Ye shall be unto me a Kingdom of Priests, and an holy nation." *All* were priests; and as a priest, each male was to present himself before God, with an offering, at the three great Festivals. Yet when Korah, Dathan, and Abiram presumed upon this sanctity of the entire congregation to arrogate to themselves the office of burning incense, the Divine displeasure was manifested in a form so peculiar, that it has no exact parallel throughout the whole compass of Scripture.

The solution of the apparent inconsistency between the priestly functions of the whole congregation, and those of the Ministry, I take to be this: The line of Aaron under the Old Covenant, and Bishops, Priests, and Deacons under the New, are Representatives before God of the entire Peo-

ple. Representatives,—that is the idea. Now it does not follow that whatever the representative is authorized to do, that the party represented may do. All Englishmen, who have a certain stake in the country, may vote at an election of a member for the Lower House, and then they are in their place, and act constitutionally; but most assuredly they would put themselves out of their place, if they were to force a passage into the House of Commons, and on the ground of their having a voice in the Government, attempt to make a speech there. That is simply arrogating a function which is none of theirs.

This is a homely image; but it may help to impress the truth upon the reader's mind. We, the Ministry, are the Representatives before God of you—who are yourselves his Royal Priesthood. You may,—nay, you must daily—seek to edify others with your lips as the passing occasions of life give you opportunity of doing so. You may, —nay, you must daily—present the Spiritual Sacrifice of Praise (not only praying to God for what you need, but glorifying Him in Psalms and Hymns for all you receive, and specially for Christ, the Unspeakable Gift). But as it did not follow that an Israelite, because he was a member of the Kingdom of Priests, might therefore slay a victim at the Tabernacle door, or burn incense before

Jehovah, so it does not follow that a Christian not ordained, may address his fellow-Christians in the Congregation, or offer up prayers in their name, or bless them in the Great Name of the Triune God; much less that he may break and bless those Elements of Bread and Wine, which under the Law correspond to the Sacrifices under the Gospel.

It is well for us, however, to bear in mind, that, while the Ministry of the Minister will pass away, that of the Christian will endure for ever. As the bloody sacrifices, which were the shadows of a coming Christ, projected beforehand upon the Church of God, have fled away, so also shall the Supper of the LORD, which is the commemoration of Christ already come, pass away when He returns. The great Ordinance of the Gospel has a term fixed for it. We are directed to show forth the LORD'S death by the elements of Bread and Wine till,—and only till,—He come. But even then, although the Ministry of the Minister will be at an end, the ministry of Psalms and Hymns will continue, and protract itself throughout Eternity. The great and enduring nobility of Praise is this,—that it shall abide for ever, that it is the ordinance of the Church of God, which has the stamp of perpetuity upon it. When there is no void in the heart, no want to be supplied, Prayer

shall expire. When every soul, save the irremediably lost, has been both brought to Christ, Preaching shall have no further use. When Christ is manifested face to face, we shall no longer need to regard Him through the dark mirror of Sacraments. Praise and Thanksgiving alone shall have a duration equal with the Love of God and the glory of Christ—they shall roll the tale of that Love, and the declaration of that Glory, along the ages of an Eternal Future.

NOTE ON CHAPTER VI., p. 141

"*These two ends, then, may be shortly stated as being I. Edification, and II. Praise.*"

In other words, it is by Speech that man is a Prophet (or Preacher) to his brethren, and a Priest (for the offering of spiritual sacrifice) to God.

It is very interesting to connect this idea with that set forth in a previous Chapter, where we pointed out the heavenly analogy of the connexion between Speech and Reason. We saw in that Chapter, that Speech in the Nature of man, is the representation of Christ in the Nature of God, our Lord being called The Word. Now we know that Christ is both Prophet, Priest, and King. As a Prophet, He was sent by the Father, to instruct us in the Law of Liberty. As a Priest, He negotiates our acceptance on the ground of His Sacrifice, and intercedes for us in the Heavenly Temple. As a King, He rules us by His Providence, His Word, and His Spirit.

Similarly, Speech may be viewed in a threefold aspect. One

end of it is the Edification of Man. Another is the spiritual Sacrifice of Psalms and Hymns, which Speech enables us to offer to God. And as discriminating man from the inferior creation, Speech may justly be said to be the Royal Faculty. It was in the exercise of his sovereignty over the beasts of the field, that Adam gave them names.

CHAPTER IX.

HINTS FOR THE GUIDANCE OF CONVERSATION.

"Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak."—JAMES i. 19.

WE have now completed our consideration of idle words.

We have arrived at the definition of an idle word, by ascertaining what words are *not* idle. And the definition is this: "All such words are idle, as contribute nothing either to the carrying on of the necessary business of life, or to innocent amusement, or to the lower or higher forms of instruction, or to the glory of Almighty God."

It remains that I should furnish some practical hints for agreeable and useful conversation. And of useful conversation there are two kinds, corresponding to the two forms of instruction—a lower and a higher. We may converse on earthly subjects of interest, or on divine and spiritual topics. Religious conversation shall occupy our next

Chapter. We will now confine ourselves to conversation on subjects (profitable and interesting indeed, but) not religious.

Let us consider, first, what principles Holy Scripture lays down for our guidance in this matter.

The passage which stands at the head of this Chapter, is the chief New Testament passage which affirms the principle on which Conversation is to be regulated. "Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak." Self-restraint in talking, and readiness to receive information, is to be the regulating principle. The spirit of the Old Testament precept on this subject, is the same with that of the New: its letter is even more solemn. It runs thus: "In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin; but he that refraineth his lips is wise."

It is true that, in the first of these passages, the primary reference is in all probability to those words by which *religious* instruction is to be conveyed. For, in the immediately preceding context, St. James has been speaking of God's having begotten us by the word of truth,—that is, by the word of the Gospel,—and he then prosecutes the idea, by inculcating restraint in speaking or preaching the Gospel. "Wherefore, my beloved brethren" (observe the significance of the "where-

fore;" it shows that the precept, which it introduces, is the legitimate conclusion from a doctrine previously affirmed), "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear [this word of truth], and slow to speak it,"—exactly harmonizing with the advice given further on in the Epistle (chap. iii. 1), "My brethren, be not many masters" (*μὴ πολλοὶ διδάσκαλοι γίνεσθε*,—literally, "Be not many of you *teachers*")—do not lightly covet the position of an instructor in Divine Truth; for thereby your responsibilities will be increased, and your shortcoming aggravated—"knowing that *we*" (the ministers of God's Word, the Apostle among the number) "shall receive" (if unfaithful to our trust) "the greater damnation." No doubt, with the more educated Jewish converts, specially those who had imbibed Pharisaical principles, the arrogating to themselves the position of teachers would be a very popular form of sin. No doubt there were many among them who trusted, as St. Paul intimates, that "they themselves were guides of the blind, lights of them which were in darkness, instructors of the ignorant, and teachers of babes." A similar spirit of presumption and censoriousness is condemned by Our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount, where He recommends His hearers to cast out first the beam out of their own eye, be-

fore they animadvert on the mote which is in their brother's eye.

It seems probable, therefore, that the words of St. James refer, in the first instance, to words of religious instruction or admonition.

But only in the first instance. We must not exclude a subordinate, but very important reference, to the whole range of Conversation. Though we should always, in the first instance, endeavour to discover the contextual connexion of the words of Holy Scripture, no passage is to be so pinned down to one narrow department of meaning, as that it shall not be allowed to soar above its context. A large and comprehensive view must be taken of Scriptural precepts, and of this among the rest. One great use of words is, that we may edify others thereby. This may be done while instructing them on ordinary subjects, as well as in a higher form, by direct religious teaching. Moreover, all words—and not only those spoken in a religious assembly—are uttered *before God.* He hears them all, and notes their character. "Lo, there is not a word in my tongue, but Thou, O Lord, knowest it altogether." So that involved in such prohibitions as—"When ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do,"—and again, "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God, for

God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore, let thy words be few,"—is a general precept of self-restraint in the use of words. And, accordingly, such a precept, as we have seen, occurs in the Inspired Volume without any special reference to words of religious instruction. "In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin." And again, "He that hath knowledge spareth his words: and a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit." "Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding."

Having thus seen what principle Holy Scripture lays down for the guidance of Conversation, let us proceed to give some hints for the application of the principle to practice.

I. "Let every man be swift to hear."

A desire of gaining instruction is one of the first dispositions with which we must engage in Conversation, if we desire to make it profitable,—nay, even entertaining,—to both parties.

Let it be considered a fixed and ascertained truth, that your neighbour, however he may be inferior to you in some points of station and attainment, is able to impart to you some information which you do not possess. This is not a fancy, it is a real truth. We are told that as to spiritual endowments mankind are all one Body,—

that the Lord has not lodged the fulness of His gifts in any one person, save the God-man,—that the wisdom, knowledge, ability of all mere men are but fragmentary,—that one has the qualification which his neighbour lacks, and lacks the qualification which his neighbour has. And we are informed further of the significance and design of this arrangement—it is pointed out to us how this diversity of gifts in each individual contributes not only to the dependence of all upon One Great Head, but to mutual interdependence. The design is, that there should be an imperative demand among men for the services of one another —that the need of one man may be supplied out of the abundance of another, and that the person so assisted should reciprocate, by giving of what he possesses. And what is said of spiritual endowments, and of this world's wealth, applies with equal truth to the great stock of general knowledge disparted among mankind. It too is unequally distributed—one man has the ten talents, and another five, and a third but one;—yet the most cursory experience of life, the daily work by which the livelihood is earned, gives some portion of it to all. A mechanic knows how to perform the manual processes of his trade—a philosopher, though deeply versed in the principles upon which the art is founded, would probably handle the

tools in such a manner as to produce a certain failure. The knowledge of books, and an extensive acquaintance with literature, may easily consist with a profound ignorance of common things, external nature, or the current intelligence of the day. Let it be remembered that this current intelligence, if it concern worthy subjects, and not the frivolous movements of modern society,—if it turn upon political measures, or the events passing on the theatre of the world,—is a legitimate part of the great fund of knowledge, and that a man who has mastered it is so far forth a better informed man than he who has not. The events of the day—those, I mean, which affect our country and the world at large—are the elements of Modern History.

Let it be assumed, then, that every man has some piece of knowledge to impart to us, which we ourselves do not possess.

And, this being the case, let us, when either casually or by design we enter into company, set ourselves to the finding out what that something is. Possibly it is nothing in our own line—nothing that is to be found in books—nothing connected with any ambitious department of knowledge. And, therefore, you think it is not worth your listening to—much less, your casting about how you may extract it. Oh the narrowness of

the human mind, and the contemptible vanity of the human heart! "Because it does not lie in my department, — because the subject, though really a subject of human knowledge, is not sufficiently dignified for my consideration,—because my mind happens to be a perfect blank upon such topics,—therefore I need not care to know aught about it." Alas! my brother, such knowledge, though it moves in an humble sphere, may deal with subjects which affect the well-being of the human race more intimately than any sublimer study. The sublime processes of nature are not the most essential processes. It is not the flash of the lightning, nor the distant muttering of the thunder, nor the tumbling of the avalanche reverberated by a thousand hills,—it is not these which are the most potent agencies of Nature for good, but rather the distillation of the little dewdrop on the blade of grass, and the noiseless stealing down of the early and the latter rain. And the sublime processes of Art are not the most essential processes. It may be much questioned, whether the manufacture of a balloon is half as serviceable to mankind as the manufacture of a drain. And, similarly, thy brother's humbler knowledge may pertain to matters much more essential than thy more aspiring flight of wisdom.

Our practical suggestion is, then, that an effort

should be made to extract from those, with whom the occasions of life bring us into contact, that portion of useful knowledge, which out of the common stock they have appropriated to themselves. "Let every man be swift to hear."

What are the subjects in which, by his circumstances and position, he is likely to be interested? How can I draw him on to speak of them? If these questions were uppermost in the mind, and if conversation were pursued in the spirit of them, it would not be so barren a thing as it often is. The sense of unprofitableness which so often oppresses us after an hour spent in company, would be effectually dissipated. And more than this—such a plan would relieve conversation of the dulness which so often attaches to it. How often do we long to escape from the necessity of talking, which courtesy imposes, as from a bitter thralldom! How often does the exertion become intolerably irksome, because it really consists in fetching up from the mine of the Memory small buckets full of commonplace and formal remarks, in which neither party feels the smallest interest, and which are only bandied to and fro from a false feeling that to drop them altogether would not be well-bred, and that somebody must say something. Intolerable drudgery, indeed. Now let us make the experiment, whether the motto, "Swift to hear,"

may not furnish a remedy. Discarding every notion of self-conceit, let us regard ourselves in conversation as learners, in quest of something which will furnish us better for the various occasions of life. We shall succeed, no doubt, clumsily at first—better by a little practice—by God's Grace, well in time. But be our success what it may, we must, as Christians, absolutely renounce all vapid words, which have in them no salt of wit or wisdom. We are not at liberty—plainly not—to talk for talking's sake—to say something at all hazards—to throw out words, without the desire either to amuse or instruct. The warning against idle words must be heeded, at whatever expense of freedom in conversation. For He uttered the warning, whose lips are full of Grace, and at our peril may we slight even the least of His Commandments.

II. We now turn to the second part of the Scriptural Precept—"Let every man be slow to speak." This is involved in, and would naturally follow from, what went before. For if a man be simply desirous to receive instruction, he will not be over ready, although he will not be backward, to communicate it. The precept, however, is of such importance, that it cannot be left to inference. We need not to arrive at it in the way of deduction: it is given us directly and explicitly,

in a form which cannot be evaded: "Let every man be slow to speak." Now, as one design of the former precept was to communicate an interest to conversation, by setting each party upon an inquiry, as to what knowledge his neighbour might be possessed of, so the main scope of this is to prevent one party from selfishly engrossing *all* the interest of it.

Is it not remarkable how minute and detailed the Word of God is in its censure of evil, and how profound, in its analysis and exposure of the motives from which evil springs? Though, in compliance with its own principles, its words are few, yet how exploring are they—how do they detect the hidden flaw in our social intercourse, and point to its origin!

The way of society—the principles upon which the intercourse of the world is regulated—is this: It is assumed as an axiom, that the greater part of mankind have nothing to contribute to the common stock of knowledge, but that some favoured individuals have a gift of entertaining others by their Conversation, however little they may instruct them. The individuals thus favoured soon feel, and begin to exercise, their own powers. The admiration, even of a small circle, flatters their vanity, and they bid high for it, by making every effort, when in company, to be thought

agreeable. Nor is this effort, apart from the motive which originates it, any thing but commendable. It is every man's duty to seek to entertain and instruct the society in which he moves. But, then, there is in the effort of the worldling the poison root of selfishness, which vitiates it at the core. He cares not for pleasing others, except so far as they yield him the homage of admiration. His versatility, and his volubility, his anecdotes, and his bon-mots, are, from beginning to end, a process of self-glorification. And so long as he encounters no obstacle in the pursuit of his objects, his humour is complaisant, and his demeanour affable. But let another person, equally gifted, enter the same sphere, and, with no less pretensions to a hearing, claim to be heard. This will often develope, to the view of all, the selfishness which before was latent. Discontented and mortified by having found a rival in the power of entertaining, the man retires into himself. If he cannot be the first object of attraction, he does not care to entertain at all.

But, Reader, the way of society is not God's way, nor are the principles upon which worldly intercourse is regulated, Scriptural principles. God teaches that no man may put himself in a false position, by arrogating to himself the exclusive power of entertaining and instructing the

society in which he moves,—that, as no man is really endued with all knowledge in every department, so it is hypocrisy and a lie for any man to pretend that he is, and to monopolize conversation, as if he were :—"Let every man be slow to speak." Scripture prescribes the disposition with which a man should enter upon conversation, as one of candour in confessing ignorance, and of readiness to receive instruction :—"Let every man be swift to hear."

Now, if these principles were uniformly carried out, how different a scene would society present from that which we so often witness. The secret heart-burnings and jealousies, which are sometimes fomented by an evening in company, would cease, and Conversation, instead of lapsing into the vanity of an empty display, whose hollowness is apparent afterwards, would become a source of mutual profit and satisfaction to all concerned in it.

"But may I not be brilliant in conversation,—may I not shine in that, which I know to be my own department?" says some one, who feels that he is gifted that way. You may, nay, you must, exercise every gift that God has given you, but no gift may you exercise, if you are a liegeman of the Cross, and a follower of the Nazarene, *with the design of attracting admiration.* Words

were given for the ends of entertainment and instruction—they were given for the glorification of God, but I nowhere read that they were given for the glorification of self. In order to see more clearly how serious the fault is, which we are censuring, observe that the operation of the same principle which leads a man to engross conversation, by way of glorifying himself, turns him into an Heresiarch in the higher sphere of religious teaching. For what is an Heresiarch? An Heresiarch is one who, in virtue of his own peculiar constitution of mind, seizes upon some one point in the ample compass of Divine Truth. In the narrowness of his mind, he conceives all truth to be wrapped up in this one doctrine,—he looks down upon those counterbalancing doctrines, which are equally based upon the authority of Holy Scripture, and which present themselves more forcibly to minds of another cast. He does not apprehend the catholicity of God's Truth, or the fact that all men's minds are but partial receptacles of it—that one mind is more vividly impressed by one portion of it, another by another. Accordingly, if endowed with the gift of Speech, he seeks to gain attention for his one aspect of Truth, and to make all others do homage to it. He succeeds: and (for it is pleasant to be listened to) success gratifies his vanity. He forms an entire

theory upon his one doctrine, magnifying it in very undue proportions,—and attracts notice, and wins followers. Perhaps Schism (that is, separation from the Church) follows. The Church holds all truth, and he holds a part. The Church flatters no man's vanity, and he has a vast stock of vanity, which requires to be flattered. He can speak, and, therefore, to speak he will be forward —if not in the Church, at least in the Meeting House. It is the same vanity, and the same forgetfulness that every one holds a portion of truth, which, in a sphere *not* religious, leads a man to that monopoly of conversation, which the Scripture censures.

Finally, a valuable rule for the Guidance of our Conversation is to be obtained from a passage to which I have as yet made no reference. We know the manner in which Holy Scripture speaks —we know how brief and chastised are its delineations, and yet how significant—we know, when it paints character, how few and simple are the touches of the pencil, and yet how graphic and expressive—how, through the whole Volume (composed by divers human authors, and at periods of time separated by long intervals), runs the characteristic of few words, and deep wisdom—little rhetoric, and much point. Well, let us make it a model for the style of our Conversation. We are

bidden so to do. Let us be chastised in our talk. Let us strive that, as far as may be, each word we drop may have some point in it—some worth and weight, and solidity. In other, and better language,—"IF ANY MAN SPEAK, LET HIM SPEAK AS THE ORACLES OF GOD."

CHAPTER X.

ON RELIGIOUS CONVERSATION.

"And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near and went with them."—LUKE xxiv. 14, 15.

OUR subject in these pages has been Speech—in its origin—in its responsibility—and in its application to the Worship of God, and to the entertainment and edification of the mind. We endeavoured, in our last Chapter, to give some practical suggestions for conversation on topics merely useful and interesting, without being directly religious; in this final essay of the series, we shall endeavour to give some hints on the grave and important topic of Spiritual Conversation.

I. Now it is evident, at the outset, that of religious conversation there may be two kinds. Such conversation may turn upon that which passes within. We may reveal to our friends our religious

experience (meaning by religious experience, the fluctuating conditions of our spiritual life, the religious impressions made by various means upon our souls, the sentiments and reflections to which circumstances give rise within us, the personal dealings which we conceive Almighty God to have had with us in Providence or in Grace, and so forth)—or we may discuss religious truth which is external to our own minds, and of which a vast field lies open to us, inviting that investigation which is sometimes best carried on by the contact of mind with mind.

Thus, assuming, for the sake of an illustration, that St. Peter was one of the disciples, who, on the day of the Resurrection, walked to Emmaus (as we know he was not)—he might have discussed with his companion the shame and remorse which ever since his fall had hung like a dark cloud over his mind, and his earnest wish to make amends to his Master, now that it seemed as if amends could no longer be made; or the conversation of the two comrades might have turned, as it actually did turn, upon Christ,—they might have talked together of the things which had happened, taking a summary retrospect of that wonderful career, now that it had closed upon them (as they thought) for ever, and refreshing one another's memory on its various incidents—the miracles by which its prog-

ress had been marked, and the words of Grace, which, on various occasions, had fallen from the lips of Him who spake as never man spake.

Let us take each of these kinds of religious conversation in order, and consider how far each of them is intrinsically proper and edifying.

Speech (and therefore conversation, which is a form of speech) is the index or expression of the thoughts of man. Language is the outcoming of the human mind.

Now there is an analogy between the mind of man, in its operation upon ideas, and the senses of man, in their operation upon matter.

The senses—sight, hearing, touch and the rest, —are so constructed as to throw us into the outer world. The senses are perfect, only when we forget that we have them, and throw ourselves, by the exercise of them, into the various objects which are presented to us.

When, for example, we gaze upon a fair landscape from some eminence, and are wholly absorbed in the beauty of the plain outstretched beneath our feet, dotted here and there with cattle, and intersected with silver streams—upon the outline, undulating or jagged, of the purple hills in the distance—and upon the sheets of water which lie embosomed in the woods, the sense of sight has fulfilled its object in the just and legiti-

mate way, it has operated naturally, as it ought to operate. We have not seen the eye; for no sense operates upon itself. What we have seen is the object. Of the eye we have lost all thought. We have not been conscious even of possessing an eye. We have been engaged with the landscape.

It is the same with the other senses. They all throw themselves, by their natural constitution, outward. None of them have any reflex action upon themselves. And they are in a sound state, only when we forget that we possess them. A strain of music enchains the ear; it wakens up a train of associations in the mind, which carry the listener far away from the circumstances which at present surround him,—but he is quite unconscious of the inlet by which those associations entered,—he thinks not of the ear. A sweet breath of hay or seaweed bears him back again to the time of his youth, when he played in the hayfield or upon the beach,—he lives again for a time amid the scenes of his childhood,—but he thinks not of the organ by which the impression is received.

I say, he thinks not of it. There is no *reflection of the mind* upon the operation of the senses. And, of course, there is no reflex action of the senses upon themselves. The eye is not so con-

stituted that it can see itself, nor the ear that it can hear itself: their construction points to something in the outward world—a scene, or a sound, which they are to apprehend.

Now you are to observe, that, if there were any such reflex action, either of the mind upon the operations of sense, or of the senses upon themselves, this would indicate disease in the organs of sense. If a man's attention, or consciousness, is divided between the landscape and his eye, it is because the eye is not single, there is some flaw in it. If, while listening to a strain of music, he imagines that he hears it in a singular or unwonted manner,—that he hears the notes doubled, for example, or unduly prolonged,—this is because the sense of hearing is out of order. In any healthy exercise of the organ, he would not be sensible of its presence: when he is so sensible, that indicates something amiss.

Now, there is a resemblance between man's mind and his senses, as generally there is a correspondence between the outward and the inward frame. The senses are adapted by their construction to the matter which is outside of, and independent of, themselves. The mind is adapted by its constitution to the apprehension and contemplation of objects, which are quite independent of, and outside of, its internal mechanism. Thus,

for example, the affections of fear, hope, compassion, and love, have reference to certain objects upon which they are designed to fasten. Fear does not fear itself, nor compassion compassionate itself, nor love love itself, but fear apprehends danger, and makes us fly; compassion fastens upon distress, and disposes us to relieve it; love upon some object of natural affection, and disposes us to benefit that object.

And, in the purely intellectual faculties, the same feature is observable. Our minds are adapted to the investigation and contemplation of truths, which are independent of them, and outside them. They may investigate the laws which govern the universe, from the phenomena which the universe presents. They may throw themselves, through the medium of history, into scenes which have been enacted in bygone ages. Finally, they may contemplate the Spiritual Truths propounded in the Bible, and derive upon themselves, from that contemplation, a happy and an holy influence.

But supposing that, instead of operating thus, the feelings, affections, and thoughts, should fall back upon themselves, and contemplate their own operations. Supposing that in an hour of imminent peril—when on the verge of a shipwreck—the mind were to run, not upon the danger, but upon the affection of fear—that, instead of taking

all due precautions, we were engaged in a speculation upon the origin and precise amount of the alarm experienced on the present occasion. Or, supposing that, when our path was crossed by an object of distress, we paused, to analyze the feeling of compassion, as to how far it might be genuine on the present occasion, or how far other motives might dispose us to relieve this case. Or, supposing that we always had in our minds the affection felt by us for some member of our family, and, as having it much upon our minds, were constantly to be bringing it forward in conversation, and exposing it to others. Or, supposing, finally, that in a piece of historical research, a man were to please himself, not with a picture of ancient manners, elicited by a careful study of ancient monuments, and the patching together of notices, found in sundry dry old chronicles, but with the thought of his own acumen in shedding this light upon an obscure period,—what should we infer from all this, as to the soundness or unsoundness of the mental and moral powers? We should say at once that they were morbid, and their action unhealthy. As the eye is conscious of the landscape, not of its own visual power, the ear conscious of the music, not of its own structure,—so the mind ought to be conscious only of the external objects upon which it fastens, and when it turns back

again upon itself, this is a proof of some disease inherent in it.

Now, possibly, if the reader has followed me thus far, his mind will jump prematurely to one conclusion, which seems to present an objection to what has been said.

You will naturally ask,—is, then, all reflection of the mind upon its own processes, to be discouraged? Is not self-examination a duty prescribed in Holy Scripture? And what is self-examination, but a reflection of the mind upon its own processes? Is it intended to suggest that we should not constantly be looking into our own hearts and characters, and endeavouring to act upon the maxim, said of old to have come down from heaven, *γνῶθι σεαυτόν*?

Self-Examination, in the present circumstances of our nature, is, no doubt, a most important and arduous duty. But it is no less true, that Self-Examination has reference to a flaw in our nature, and in a perfect condition of the mental and moral powers would not exist. The object of Self-Examination is to ascertain how far our hearts are right with God. But supposing (which, since the Fall is a purely imaginary case) that our hearts were never wrong with God—that the magnetic needle of the Will always turned steadily, and without oscillation, in the direction of God—could

there be then any place for Self-Examination? Surely none. Self-Examination was unknown in Paradise. Our first parents, before the Fall, were innocents in the strictest sense of that term, throwing themselves, with keenest enjoyment, into all the objects of delight which surrounded them in the pure and happy garden; but never analyzing their own sensations, or reflecting upon the instrumentality by which they were produced. We may conceive them to have been essentially unreflecting (in the limited sense of the word reflection)—absorbed, indeed, in the contemplation of the Divine Goodness, and in the appreciation of those blessings with which He had crowned their cup,—but self in no shape entering into their thoughts. But, by the Fall, a great flaw entered both into the physical and moral nature of man. Thenceforth it became necessary for the physician to examine the structure of the organs of sense, and to acquaint himself, as far as possible, with the theory of sensation, in order that he might minister to the relief of the organs of sense, when deranged. And, thenceforth, it became necessary to exercise Self-Examination,—that man should analyze his own motives, should investigate his own feelings, and try by the revealed rule of right, his conduct and his character. All this was made necessary by superinduced evil—it was not necessary originally.

And now we have sufficiently examined the roots of the subject, to see our way to an answer to the question raised at the outset of the Chapter. And the answer I give is this,—The revelation of our own inward experience to other men—the talking of our own frames and feelings, or of the personal dealings which God may have had with us—is only desirable, so far forth as it contributes to the great end of Self-Examination. If it tends to give us self-knowledge—to develope more fully in our consciousness our own unworthiness and God's great Love—then doubtless it is desirable.

By the help of this principle, we must make out when conversation of this kind would be an advantage, and when it would not. The object of Self-Examination is the gaining a deeper sense of our own sinfulness. And the object of gaining this deeper sense is that we may recur with a stronger faith and more entire simplicity to Christ. If then this deeper sense of sinfulness can be forwarded or fostered by the disclosure either to an intimate friend, or to a clergyman (yes, to a clergyman,—we are not afraid of truth, because the Roman Church abuses and caricatures it) of our own inward religious life, we shall do well and wisely to make that disclosure, and to solicit the prayers for us of the person to whom it is made. The doing so would only be acting in accordance

with the inspired principle—"Confess your sins one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." I feel, however, that it behoves us at all times to be jealously watchful over our own minds, while making such communications. We may suffer real spiritual mischief by a too free or too general disclosure of feelings, which, as turning upon our own personal relation to God, are invested with a peculiar sacredness. It will be well for me briefly to point out how this mischief may arise.

Who, that knows himself, knows not the subtlety of pride? Who knows not that pride takes its occasion from our religious actions, from our religious feelings, and is the cankerworm at the root of them, that blights and makes them rotten? We cannot express ourselves humbly, we cannot confess our sins heartily, but pride, like a malignant fluid, secreted from the heart, poisons our humility and our confession. Now it is evident that pride may feel a great deal of complacency, when we speak out to another the most secret and sacred feelings of our own breast. The reflection will perforce suggest itself, do what we may to keep it down,—"Is not this act of self-abasement a proof of my real goodness? Could a man have the feelings which I disclose, and which by the

disclosure I unfold in my own consciousness, without having really some measure of saintliness? Will not the person to whom I disclose them think better of me, instead of worse, for the disclosure?"

I by no means say that the occasion which the talking of Religious Experience gives to feelings of this character ought to be a bar to it altogether. There is no religious exercise in the world, from which pride may not and does not take its occasion. If it is rather more apt to do so from this kind of conversation than from any other duty, it is because it is the most personal of all duties, the most bound up and identified with self. This consideration should make us, not backward in disclosing our feelings when the doing so may be attended with advantage,—but only guarded and watchful over our own minds, while making the disclosure.

Guardedness in exposing our feelings should arise from the consideration, that by thus diffusing them we evaporate their strength. This is a law of the constitution of our nature, the operation of which is inevitable. The sentiments of the heart, especially those of the most personal and sacred character, resemble fragrant odours. If you break the box of ointment, the fragrance must be more or less dissipated in the air. The concentration

of a religious feeling in the deep cell of the heart is its strength—its diffusion sometimes proves its weakness. There is one direction, however, and one only, in which it may be diffused without perilling its strength. The exposure of the heart's sentiments to CHRIST in confession of guilt, and acknowledgment of His mercies—in application for His sympathy and aid—this, as bringing us into contact with the One Source of light and strength, cannot but confirm and intensify them. From Him we can conceal nothing; and it is our highest wisdom and privilege to pour out the heart before Him. Mary broke her alabaster box of ointment upon His feet, and that offering He endued by His Word with an undying fragrance. "Verily, I say unto you, that wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her."

Let the odour of our affections go forth towards Christ; and they shall preserve their fragrance fresh and enduring.

The third and last consideration, which I shall adduce against an undue divulging of our religious feelings to others is, that this practice, however sometimes necessary and desirable, cannot but counteract a secret, true, and natural instinct within us. There is a remarkable analogy be-

tween the way in which we regard our physical frame, and that in which we regard our moral frame. Ever since the Fall, which brought in a consciousness of imperfetion, man has shrunk from scrutiny—nakedness has been accompanied with shame. The first effect of man's sin was to make him hide himself among the trees of the garden, and deprecate exposure,—and the Lord condescended to this instinct, and recognized its naturalness under the circumstances, when "for Adam and his wife He made garments of skin and clothed them." And thus it is with our moral framework, too. We feel an instinctive reluctance to expose it, to lay bare the privacy of our heart's recesses before another. The heart, it is said, and there are periods when all, however surrounded with intimate and kind friends, must realize it—"the heart knoweth his own bitterness, and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy." Joseph screens the intensity of his affections from human eye,—not merely because the public indulgence of them might have led to premature discovery, but from deeper reasons—reasons connected with the constitution of his nature. "His bowels," it is said, "did yearn upon his brother: and he sought where to weep; and he entered into his chamber, and wept there."

> "He could not trust his melting soul,
> But in his Maker's sight;
> Then why should gentle hearts and true,
> Bare to the rude world's withering view,
> Their treasure of delight?"

If, then, the instinct of reserve be a true and natural one, we should not violate it without just reasons moving us thereunto, and due limitations. Nature itself would teach us to select the confidant from the number of the most intimate, or of those who have most conciliated, and have the justest claims upon, our esteem.

But are there no religious topics, save those which are of a personal character, and which turn upon our own inner and spiritual life? Surely, as the whole realm of Nature lies open before the eye of the body, wherein the Philosopher may explore minutely, and discover by such investigation ever fresh wonders—wherein the simple lover of nature may find ever some new feature of beauty to dwell upon, with awe and rapture,—so there is, without the human mind, a spiritual world, which will appear, upon research, inexhaustible, will open up fresh wonders at every turn, and present fresh features of moral grace and wisdom, as the believer contemplates it with more of simplicity and devotion. The Word of God, the Truths of God—elementary or advanced—this is the sublime realm

which the human mind is permitted and invited to explore, and which as those are aware who have made trial of it, will amply repay investigation. And conversation, the contact of mind with mind, has a tendency to shed peculiar light upon this investigation.

We seldom discuss a difficulty, without at least opening a way towards the solution of it. All minds run in a track of their own, and sometimes, if we pursue our own speculations too far, independently of the views taken by others, the track becomes a rut, and thought is beset by an entanglement and perplexity. The mode of obviating this mischief is by the interchange of friendly conversation on the thoughts arising out of God's Truth. If such conversation be conducted in a right spirit, it will be surely blessed by God, to greater clearness on our part. The two disciples had not long communed together, and reasoned upon their common perplexities, before light sprung up to them, and the Expositor was at hand. "Jesus Himself drew near, and went with them; and beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." Yes, mark the words—"the things concerning Himself." What other testimony had Moses and the Prophets to bear, but such as had reference, either directly or indi-

rectly, to the Lord Jesus—to His Advents, His Divine Person, His Humanity, His offices of Grace, His work of Love and Pity? With what other testimony is the whole of Scripture charged, but that of Christ, Christ, Christ? Christ, in the typical Histories of the Old Testament. Christ, in the typical Ceremonies of the Mosaic Law. Christ, in the Psalms, as the source of the Christian's consolation, and the key to unlock all the affections of his heart. Christ, in the Prophecies, as Captain of the great triumph over evil—predicted with greater clearness as time wears on. Christ, in the Gospels, as the Healer and Benefactor of the race. Christ, in the Epistles, as the Wisdom of God. Christ, in the Revelation, as the Coming One, whose Advent is ever imminent, the pole-star of Hope, upon which the Christian's eye is ever fixed. Reader, the Scriptures are, indeed, full of Christ, and we have His own testimony that we shall read them amiss, and discuss them amiss, unless our study and our discussion lead us to find Him in them. To commune of the Scriptures, if we commune aright, will be to commune of the Lord. As in the realm of nature, one form —that of the tree, with its branching arms—continually presents itself to the eye—so, in Scripture, the Cross of Christ ever presents itself to the mind. Let us expect, and seek, and pray to discern it

there. Let the mind operate by conversation, as well as by reading and meditation, on the Word of God, until this image of the Cross stands out on every page. With how large a blessing may such conversation reasonably look to be fraught! It may begin in perplexity, it shall end in clearness. It may begin with the presence of two or three—it shall end with the spiritual presence of a Fourth, "whose form is like that of the Son of God." He shall join us as we commune together and reason, and dissipate the cloud from our minds, and finally open our eyes, that we should know Him.

We have now brought the subject, which has occupied our attention through these pages, to a close. As regards that part of it which has been treated in this Chapter, it is rather the necessity of completing our topic, which has led to the discussion of it, than the feeling that the evil specially censured in it is popular or prevalent. The last fault to which the many are likely to be tempted, is that of laying bare too freely to the eye of their friends the recesses of their own inner life. Rather surely the ordinary temptation is the far more dangerous one—to discard from conversation all religious topics as being grave and serious, and an undue check upon merriment—and "to speak often one to another" not on spiritual concerns,

but upon topics unedifying, frivolous at best, and possibly sinful or profane.

I trust that in the preceding pages the sin of Idle Words has been faithfully represented in its true colours; and that some reader of this little Book may have received a warning against continuance in that sin, which may resound in his conscience for some little time.

It is a great thing (nay, it is the first step towards right conduct) to be impressed with the responsibility, which the faculty of Speech entails upon us. Jesus, when He restored that faculty to a dumb man, sighed, and said "Ephphatha." Why did he sigh? Was that sigh an indication that the Lord was about to confer an awful power, a power which might be awfully abused, as it might also be made the medium of infinite good? Was it equivalent to saying, "Son of man, hitherto shut out from the power of sinning with the lips, upon the brink of what an awful responsibility art thou standing! This giving thee an articulate tongue, to use or abuse, is almost like endowing thee with a soul, which, while it has a capacity of heavenly bliss, is also susceptible of being degraded to the lowest hell."

Was this the Saviour's mind when He sighed? It may be so; for indeed the tongue, being the faculty by which Reason is exercised, is so closely

allied with the Reason, that to give articulate speech is akin to endowing with Reason.

And so, in view of this intimate association, it is written—

"Death and life" (spiritual death and life) "are in the power of the tongue." Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue, keepeth his soul from troubles."

And by a greater than Solomon it was said—

"BY THY WORDS THOU SHALT BE JUSTIFIED: AND BY THY WORDS THOU SHALT BE CONDEMNED."

I cannot close this Chapter without bringing to the reader's memory a well-known-passage of Cowper,—one of the beauties of English literature,—which sums up the argument of the preceding Chapter:—

"It happened on a solemn eventide,
Soon after He that was our Surety died,
Two bosom friends, each pensively inclined,
The scene of all those sorrows left behind,
Sought their own village, busied as they went,
In musings worthy of the great event:
They spake of Him they loved, of Him whose life,
Though blameless, had incurr'd perpetual strife,
Whose deeds had left, in spite of hostile arts,
A deep memorial graven on their hearts.
The recollection, like a vein of ore,
The farther traced, enrich'd them still the more:
They thought Him, and they justly thought Him, One,
Sent to do more then He appear'd to have done;

To exalt a people, and to place them high
Above all else, and wonder'd He should die.
Ere yet they brought their journey to an end,
A stranger join'd them courteous as a friend,
And ask'd them, with a kind engaging air,
What their affliction was, and begg'd a share.
Inform'd, He gather'd up the broken thread,
And, truth and wisdom gracing all He said,
Explain'd, illustrated, and search'd so well
The tender theme on which they chose to dwell,
That, reaching home, 'The night,' they said, 'is near.
'We must not now be parted, sojourn here.'—
The new Acquaintance soon became a guest,
And made so welcome at their simple feast,
He bless'd the bread, but vanish'd at the word,
And left them both exclaiming, 'Twas the Lord!
'Did not our hearts feel all He deign'd to say?
'Did they not burn within us by the way?'
Now theirs was converse, such as it behoves
Man to maintain, and such as God approves:
Their views indeed were indistinct and dim,
But yet successful, being aim'd at Him;
CHRIST AND HIS CHARACTER THEIR ONLY SCOPE,
THEIR OBJECT, AND THEIR SUBJECT, AND THEIR HOPE."

APPENDIX.

I subjoin, as an Appendix, a Sermon, which embraces two points respecting the Government of the Tongue omitted in the Essays. The Reader will pardon the re-appearance, in a homely dress, of two or three ideas, which have been already introduced into the body of the Work.

APPENDIX.

A SERMON ON THE GOVERNMENT OF THE TONGUE.

PREACHED IN RUGBY SCHOOL CHAPEL.

JAMES ii. 2—4.

"*For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body. Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth.*"

THE Apostle is speaking, in these verses, of the Government of the Tongue.

And he says of the Government of the Tongue two distinct things, which are not to be confounded together,—both strong things to say, but the latter stronger than the former.

First, he says that the degree in which a man governs his tongue is an index of his whole moral

state. An index. The hands of a watch, or the projection on a sundial, are an index, by which you may ascertain the progress of Time, or in other words, how much of his course in the heavens the Sun has accomplished. The Sun (or rather the Earth in its diurnal revolution) travels silently and without noise. In order to be advertised at any moment of the Sun's exact stage of progress, we create an artificial index—the watch, or the dial, —which reports that progress with accuracy. Similarly, our moral life, though always moving either forward or backward (for, my brethren, it is a solemn truth that there is no standing still in moral life), yet moves slowly and imperceptibly; as we cannot *see* the Sun moving (although after it has moved, we note that it is in a different quarter of the heavens), so we cannot see ourselves growing better or worse (although, after a lapse of time, we may take notice that we are more or less good than we were a year or six months ago). It is desirable, therefore, to have an exact index, by recurring to which, we may ascertain our moral progress. And this index, the Apostle says, is the Tongue. That is the thought of verse 2. Keep it distinct in your minds.

But something more than this,—a further, and stronger statement,—is yet behind.

The Government or non-government of the

Tongue is not only an index. It is also a determining instrument. It is spoken of under the images of a bit and a rudder. Now what is a bit?—an instrument which determines the course of a horse, which makes him turn to the right or to the left, which, if loose in his mouth, leaves him to a free and speedy action, and, if drawn tight, arrests his progress. Just so a rudder with a ship;—it is the guiding instrument of the vessel's course. With the rudder you may turn the ship at a moment's notice as you please, but the guidance of a vessel which has lost her rudder, by the sails, is at all times a very difficult and dangerous matter,—not likely to prosper in any but the most expert hands.

Now this image, you observe, is an advance upon the index. The hands of the watch, and the index of the dial, do not *determine* the Sun's course, nor have they the slightest influence upon it. They *mark* and *announce* its progress; but they in no way bias its course, as the helm biases the course of the ship, and the bit biases the course of the horse.

Now, then, I will say a word on these two great topics—the Tongue as the index of our moral career, and the Tongue as the governing instrument of our moral career.

To those of you who are striving to be holy, and to imitate the example of Our Saviour, do I

now address myself. And I pray that what I say may be made, by God, the means of helping you in that pursuit.

First, the Tongue as an index. "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body." Only one perfect Man ever existed; and of Him—in perfect accordance with the principle here laid down by the Apostle—it is written, not only that He *did* no sin, but also that "no guile was found in His mouth," that "when He was reviled, He reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not,"—and, in another place, that "full of grace were His lips." The words of the text are not to be taken as implying that any man (except Him) is, in the judgment of God, perfect, but simply as asserting that the more closely any one approximates to perfection, the more vigilantly will he be found to govern his tongue, so that his performance of this duty supplies an accurate touchstone of his advance in holiness.

And this will become quite obvious if we reflect, first, that to govern the tongue is a task so difficult, that he who has grace to accomplish *it*, has grace to accomplish any thing. The exceeding great difficulty of governing the tongue consists principally in the great scope there is for going wrong. Other temptations only have scope

for their enticements occasionally. When a man is in health and spirits, friends all around him, and affluence and prosperity his portion, he has no temptation to murmur. When he is poor, and obliged to toil hard for a day's livelihood, there is no great scope for self-indulgence. If he lives a very retired life, and comes into little or no collision with society, of course his temper and courtesy are not tried. If he is obliged to be busy about a work which demands close attention of the mind, there is no avenue by which an unclean thought can insinuate itself. But *because the business of life cannot be carried on without speaking*, there is always ample verge and scope enough for offences of the tongue. In our least talkative day, the words which we speak from morning to night, if written down, would almost fill a volume. Speech is continually passing from us by a thousand avenues of occasion,—we want something, or desire information, or have some intelligence to communicate, or wish to please, or must do something to while away time, or to vent our feelings of irritation and peevishness. Even the reasonable and necessary occasions of speech—the occasions, on which without speech the business of society could not be carried on, are very, very numerous.

So that the reason why the Government of the

Tongue is more arduous than any other duty, is the reason why it is more difficult for a military commander to maintain a town which has a thousand outlets, than one which is only accessible at two or three points. In the latter case the garrison may be concentrated at the two or three vulnerable points. In the former, they must be dispersed in weak handfuls at the various outlets. Of course we gather with certainty that, if the force suffices to maintain the city with many approaches, it will suffice to maintain the city with few. And the Word of God (all whose reasonings are, if I may say so, the reasonings of Inspired Common Sense) infers upon the same principle that he who can stand against sin successfully, where the avenues of temptation are numerous, can stand also where they are few. "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body."

But now for a second reason why the tongue should be an accurate index of the moral state. Offences of the tongue are thought so little of by mankind in general, that he who is strict with himself here will be strict with himself, we may be sure, in all departments of duty. If he thinks gravely of wrong words, he cannot think lightly of wrong actions. You know how very little importance men generally attach to sins of the tongue—how strange-

ly their judgment on this point is contrasted with that of Him Who said,—"Every idle word which men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." Is not the tendency of our minds to reason thus—"A hasty word, vented in a moment of excitement—a slight misrepresentation, a profane joke, an impure inuendo,—why it is all empty breath,—nothing serious is intended by it, and a man may be a very good man, who indulges in such words occasionally?" Such is the prevalent notion. It is radically erroneous. It is wholly contrary to God's Word. It is probably glanced at in the third Commandment, where, after forbidding the taking His Name in vain, a sin which could not find place except in the exercise of the tongue, the Divine Legislator solemnly adds —"*The Lord* will not hold him guiltless" (oh, verdict of the world, how wilt thou shrivel up into insignificance when God reveals His Judgment at the last day!)—"The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His Name in vain." But however such is the sad fact, that men do take a very light view of sins of the tongue, very much lighter than they do of other violations of duty. Now, if a man should be found, who, in his own case, takes a very grave view of this subject, watches and weighs his words strictly, and rejects scrupulously all that it comes into his mind to say, which would

not tend either to some good end or to *innocent* amusement,—it is impossible, is it not, that that man should be a careless liver? The care of his words is the index of a general care over what men reckon more important than words,—actions, and feelings.

Then the point seems to be proved by reason, as well as asserted in Scripture, that an accurate index of a man's entire moral condition is supplied by the Government of his Tongue. Weigh it well. Just as you resort to the sundial or the watch for the reckoning of time, so in your spiritual reckoning, in your acts of Self-Examination, you may consult the index of the tongue, with the assurance that it will give no untrue verdict. To persons disposed to engage seriously in that arduous work, and yet beset (as we all are here) with manifold business,—this thought may really be a material assistance. You wish to examine your whole moral character and life? Examine the words of the past day,—they may be a sufficient criterion. Have you been watchful over them, or have you let them slip, without reflection, from your mouth? Have you governed them—that is, inspected them before utterance, rejected one, approved another, chastised a third, and so on? or, have you thrown the reins of self-discipline down, and let them take their course?

I am sure, from Reason and the Word of God, that this will be a true index; that it will never give an inaccurate verdict. But oh! is not this an alarming thought to many of you? Ought it not at once to awaken you to the truth of your state, as with trumpet call? For there are very many of you who, so long as you do not go wrong in your lives, give yourselves no concern at all about your words. They may be good this hour, and bad the next, so far as your superintendence is concerned,—for you never think of controlling them. And if vigilance over the words be, as God asserts it to be, the criterion of vigilance over the life—what is the conclusion? What, but that you are taking no heed to administer your general conduct after the precepts of God, and give, therefore, the surest proof that, whatever outward privileges may attach to your lot, you have no spiritual life dwelling in you?

But now to turn to the other image. The tongue is not only the index, but the determining instrument also of our moral state. It not only points out, but regulates,—as the bit regulates the horse, and the helm the ship. This position is equally apparent, when we come to examine it, with the former.

Take, as an example, the case of temper. A man has a strong temper, exceedingly irritable,

and hard to overcome. If he is a man with no self-discipline, this temper bursts forth continually, and renders himself, and all around him, miserable. He is sensible of its mastery, and, in his cool moments, deplores it. Well, there is one obvious rule of wisdom which, if he clings to it steadfastly, will, by God's Grace, enable him to curb the unruly passion. He complains that he cannot control his feelings,—they are like a fretful steed, too much for his rider, and they bear him away whither they list. Granted (for argument's sake) that he cannot control his feelings;—can he not control his words? Can he not, if he pleases, refrain from speaking? or if he pleases, utter a conciliatory expression? Let him go into society, after prayer for the aid of God's Spirit, with a steadfast resolution, that come what may—slight, or ridicule, or insult—and feel what he may,—he, at all events, will not *say* a single irritating or irritable word. I will suppose him, by God's Grace, to keep his resolution. What is the result? The result is, that the trial, if it comes at all, does not last very long. If the other party is not really bent on provocation, the whole feeling passes off, —perhaps veers right round in another direction —as this want of intention becomes apparent. And if he is bent on provocation, he soon wearies of it when he is met by soft words that turn away

wrath,—he begins to respect the principle which he instinctively feels to be at the root of this moderation,—perhaps he ends by acknowledging the fault, and expressing regret,—an issue which ensures an entire conversion of feeling towards him in the mind of the other. Whereas what would an angry retort have done? It would simply have ministered fuel for irritation to both minds.

Again, as regards secret pride. Pride is a swelling haughty steed, who will bear away triumphant all who minister occasion to it. And occasion will be ministered to it by words—by talking too much about self—whether in the way of self-gratulation, or in the way of self-depreciation. I am sure that language of the latter description really feeds and nourishes secret pride, and if much indulged in, will probably render it ungovernable. Avoid, by all means, speaking humbly of yourself to any one except to Him who seeth in secret. The reason is this,—pride is so inwoven into the very texture of our nature, that *our feelings* are very rarely indeed humble. Now, *if there be humility of expression, where there is no humility of feeling, that is the worst species of hypocrisy.* But humble words are not only evil in themselves,—they excite evil. We derive a kind of satisfaction, when using them, from the reflection that we are humble,—we be-

come inwardly proud of our humility. The safest rule (and that which is most consistent with courtesy and good breeding) will be to obtrude self as little as possible on the company—to speak as little as possible about self, in order that (oh, hard attainment!) we may think as little as possible about self. All words of self-praise, all words of self-depreciation, forbidden—if this rule be minded, it will prove the restraining of many a spark, which else might fall upon and kindle the explosive material of pride.

Again: as to that desire, natural to every man, of making himself entertaining and agreeable in the society in which he moves.

This desire, if not restrained, often leads us to say things which were better unsaid,—to give point to some of our conversation by a jest which is questionable, or to be bitterly sarcastic, or, at least, to exaggerate and misrepresent the truth. One objectionable remark, especially if successful in exciting wonder or amusement, is enough to ensnare us. The strong desire then becomes, like the horse whose rein is slackened, uncontrollable. We must then perforce go on in the career on which we have entered, and trick out our story with embellishments, without regard to the feelings of our neighbour, the interests of truth, or the Majesty of God's Presence. Therefore that

original error,—that first remark, which made the tongue too hot to hold,—had better have been restrained. And to restrain such remarks is utterly impossible without bitting the horse, without exercising a continual restraint upon that little member, which boasteth great things.

I need not dwell, because that is so evident, upon the awful ascendancy which unclean desire gains over a man who allows himself to use impure language. Such a person is indeed, by the practice of telling forth the abominations which exist in his heart, feeding and pampering a viper, the poison of whose fangs will speedily spread itself, to his eternal ruin, through his whole soul. This is a subject to be meditated upon in secret, rather than to be spoken of in public. Suffice it that I have called your attention in that direction, and warned those who are willing to give heed.

It will have occurred, perhaps, to some of you, that in inculcating so strict a government of the tongue—(and by consequence so continual a watchfulness over it)—we have been investing Religion with a garb of gloom and austerity, and robbing it of all mirth and lightness of heart. I must speak, of course, without fear of consequences, what the Lord puts into my mouth; but God forbid that I should represent Religion to you as at all alien to pure enjoyment or inno-

cent mirth. Wisdom's ways are pleasantness and peace. And let me say distinctly, that I am not forbidding any words but such as God's Law pronounces to be evil. Innocent mirth and gaiety, laughter at that which cannot wound another person, and is not wrong, and is not profane—so far from being an evil, is in a social (nay, in a religious) point of view a decided good. And a dull or moping spirit wilfully cherished, would be as contrary to the spirit of the Gospel as it is to our natural inclinations. Christ has done all for us, if we be His true followers,—has relieved us of the load of guilt, of corrupt inclinations, of carking care. If the great Burden-bearer bore those burdens for us, why are we to bear them ourselves? Why, if I can only realize these great things,—why should not a well of joy and thankfulness spring up within me, which shall make the heart ever merry and the countenance ever shining, and the mind accessible to all possible enjoyments which are pure?

Besides, one of the objects for which the tongue was given, is recreation; and this object would be frustrated, and life would not be relieved of its manifold little burdens, if conversation were not occasionally brightened with merriment. We HAVE BEEN ADVOCATING CONTINUAL WATCHFULNESS, NOT CONTINUAL SERIOUSNESS, OF WORDS.

Finally: some will think that I have been dealing after all with petty duties, and that your time might have been occupied better with matters of more moment. In that case I must go back to my authorities:—"If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain." I have not said any thing more serious about words than St. James and Our Blessed Lord say. Besides, the notion of not dealing with small duties is philosophically unsound. Life is made up of small things, small duties, small sins, small temptations, small troubles, small fragments of happiness. It has been much upon my mind lately, that to neglect these same small things is the height of folly,—that it is only through acquitting ourselves well on small occasions, that we can make a sure progress in holiness, and discipline ourselves for grappling with poverty, bereavement, calls of Providence, arduous posts of responsibility, and all the great occasions of life. The man who waits for a great emergency, or a fine opportunity, to show and approve his religion, is in a fair way, I think, never to have any religion at all. And, therefore, it was that last Sunday I warned you to give heed to the good conduct of each day, as it presents itself,—assured that from the good conduct of days, the good conduct of years would follow.

And, therefore it is, that I now warn you to give heed to your words. I tell you, on God's Authority, that care over the words is the very secret and key of care over the life. Here I recommend you to bestow a great deal of study and attention,—with the assurance that it will not be thrown away. And, above all, I recommend you to pray, that God would so fill your soul at every moment with the thought of the Majesty of His Presence, as to make the restraint of wrong words an easy task to you—aye, and to convert that restraint into an act of continual Worship.

THE END.

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