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# A Life given for Ireland

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## A S E R M O N

PREACHED AT THE

DEDICATION OF A MEMORIAL WINDOW

ERECTED BY MEN EMPLOYED IN THE IRON AND STEEL WORKS

TO THE LATE

LORD FREDERICK CAVENDISH

*IN ST. JAMES'S CHURCH, BARROW-IN-FURNESS*

ON ST. ANDREW'S DAY, 1882

BY THE REV.

STEPHEN E. GLADSTONE, M.A.

RECTOR OF HAWARDEN

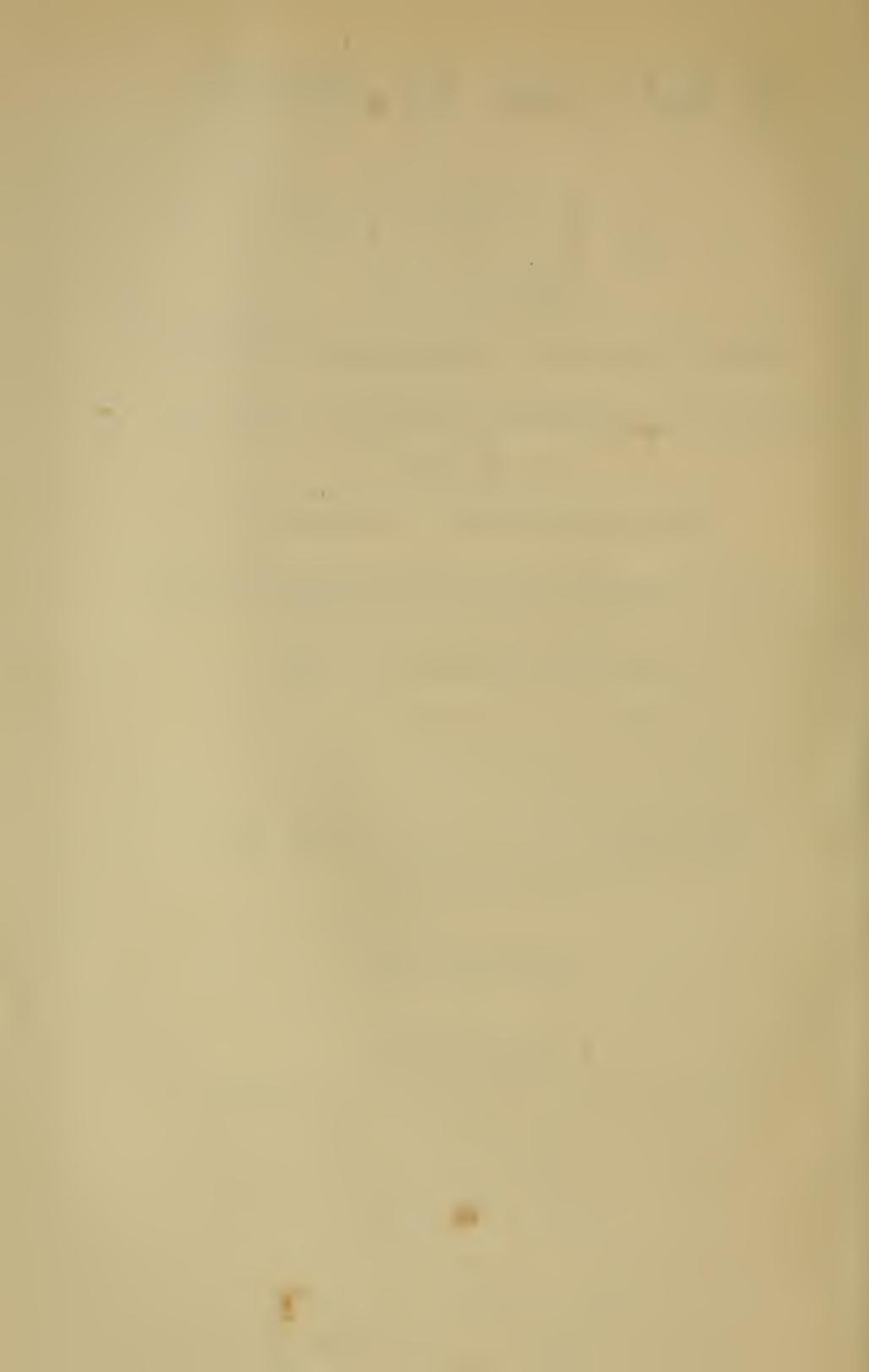
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## *A LIFE GIVEN FOR IRELAND.*

“ Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.”—  
ST. LUKE x. 37.

WHAT a record of joys and sorrows is the history of human life on earth ! As night follows day, as sunshine breaks forth to dispel the clouds, so is the heart of man wont to feel the successive changes of the happiness and the anxieties of life. Nay, even the very heart which has been made bright with joys knows at the selfsame moment “its own bitterness.” And how much deeper and more piercing are the great sorrows of life than its great joys. While one is rejoicing, another is weeping. This very day we are met together to try and glorify God for events wholly differing in their character. The three windows, unveiled this morning,

commemorate events, some of which were the occasion of deep joy and thankfulness, and others of the most heartrending grief. How different the occasions ! a life spared, and a life taken ; one life taken when not far off the term of three-score years and ten ; another life suddenly cut down by cruel hands in the full vigour of manhood. So different, and yet it is so happy a blending : for whether our lot is one of joy or sorrow, we are to take that joy or sorrow as equally coming from the love of God. It is for His glory and our good. He alone can bless it. Apart from Him our truest earthly joy must fade and die ; with Him to bless us, our keenest sorrows, borne as best we can in trust and patience, will but prepare us for the perfect life. Such souls as these which “sow in tears will reap in joy.” May God bless those hearts who have been moved to mark their faith and love by the putting up of these memorial windows. To His eternal glory be they dedicated ; and for ourselves

let us not forget the events, the lives and deaths which they commemorate.

Too often do we take God's great gifts, and forget to thank Him : we turn to Him perhaps in trouble, but we forget Him in prosperity. Too often do we fail to profit by the lessons of a noble life, spent for God and for the souls God loves. Such heroes are living amongst us if only we have eyes to see and hearts to take notice ; living miracles, set before us even in this day, and in this country, in every rank and occupation, from the highest to the lowest—to teach us that the grace of God is still with His people, powerful to raise the natural man into the spiritual man, to hallow and train to their full growth and glory those powers and instincts which sin had corrupted, and which the world, the flesh, and the devil are ever striving to degrade and to destroy.

I see a correspondence between the lesson of this Festival of St. Andrew and the parable of the Good Samaritan, and the life of which

that window is commemorative. There is the glorious life of self-sacrifice, of working for the good of others, of doing one's duty to one's neighbour however hard it may be :—this lesson is contained in all three—can I do better than ask you to consider it to-night? St. Andrew was the disciple who was always bringing others to our Lord. Oh, how blessed a mark of a true, brave heart, strong itself in faith and love, and longing to draw others to know of the same pardon and peace. Oh, brave manly hearts who have met here to-night, strive hard to know Jesus better yourselves, that you may do something to comfort and raise the multitude of immortal souls that are around you. One thing only is wanting, and that is a heart that has by true prayer and penitence found Him itself. A Christian worthy of the name must be one like St. Andrew, who brings others to Christ, and by quiet perseverance and brave example shows other men the Lord and Saviour they have found.

And then, as for the Good Samaritan, who is He? Jesus Himself, the one perfect life; God, made Man for our sakes; He who was born for us, lived for us, suffered for us, died for us, rose from the dead for us, ascended for us, and even now is our High Priest within the veil, praying for us, and ever offering before the Father the oblation of Himself as the ground and strength of all the Church's prayers and blessings. Think of that devoted life. We know it so well, we hear it so often. Alas! it touches us so little. Its infinite pathos find our hearts so shallow and cold. Could we suddenly realize what it all was, could it rise up before our mind's eye as a statue long gazed on coming suddenly into life, oh, how it would thrill us through and through, and send us back to our daily lives with changed hearts, new determinations to fight against sin, and that strong love for Him which would enable us, in our poor degree, to "Go and do likewise." The sight of a picture of the crucifixion, or of

the Head of Jesus crowned with thorns, has sometimes gone like a sword through some heart careless and untouched till then. Alas, how little the utter self-sacrifice of Jesus really touches our hearts and inspires our lives; and yet no life is noble, no act is noble that is not inspired by self-sacrifice. Nothing on earth can move us much to what is good and pure unless first we have been moved by the undying love of our Saviour. Truly He did love His enemies, even to the very end. He did bless them that persecuted Him. He spent His whole life for His faithless creatures. He died for those who despised, rejected, cruelly tormented, and shamefully slew Him. There is the sacrifice for our sins; thence we may have pardon and renewing grace. There is also the great Pattern for us to go and imitate. We must not only look at Christ crucified to be healed, but to get strength to live unselfishly, to live for others rather than ourselves, to make sacrifices of our own comfort, convenience; we must have our

hearts warmed there with something of that enthusiastic love for man. And when any one is taken from our midst whose life has been a humble following of the One Perfect Life ; when after death we become, often for the first time, aware of how noble, how pure, how unselfish a life has been—then we shall do well, as on the present occasion, to study that life, to emulate its virtues, and to give glory to God for its faithfulness.

You will expect me to speak to you more particularly about this, looking to the occasion and the place. You knew something of his real worth—his simple goodness, his unaffected, manly, dutiful spirit, and his religious earnestness, none the less deep and real because it was so quiet and without show. Many of you were familiar with his frank and open face, his kind and courteous bearing. As Secretary to the Treasury his fair and impartial mind was found to be invaluable where all sorts of knotty points have to be referred and dealt with. All

this, with entire devotion to his work and his great success in his official capacity, endeared him with a brother's love to his colleagues, and not less was he loved and respected by the permanent officials. It was devotion to his duty, it was an ardent love to do all he could for poor Ireland, that when suddenly called to a post of singular difficulty and real danger, made him ready to sacrifice himself, his own wishes, tastes, and comfort, wherever it was thought by those whom he trusted that he could do good. To be successful as Irish Secretary at that time was indeed a very unlikely thing for any one. But not even his self-mistrust, any more than his natural shrinking from such a duty, made him hesitate. A spirit, nobly proud, dreads failure more than death. He knew he might fail: some said he would. The papers, on the day he left his home for Ireland, were full of all sorts of criticisms, many of them idle. How little did those writers know the way that was

before him. He was destined in less than one day's time to become, by the sacrifice of his life-blood, one of the chief causes of the gradual restoration of peace and order, at a moment of great danger. To go there was an act of real self-denial to him. At one moment, when it was thought he would not be required to go, he expressed his great sense of relief. I believe he was quite aware of the personal danger he incurred, though he would not make anything of it for the sake of those he loved and trusted. Straight forward he went, when called to go; and what encouraged him amongst other things was his real ambition to help the Irish people, and his ready sympathy with many of their aspirations. He had not lost confidence in them; he believed the heart of Ireland was sound, though terrible symptoms of disease had appeared.

You know he left London on Friday night, May 5th; and on Saturday, the very day he landed, with his heart full of doing

good, anxious not to lose a single moment even then, he set himself down to work, at Dublin Castle, on some most important points. It was this very eagerness to do his duty that led to his desire for extending his walk in the evening of that day which proved his last. Ten or twelve hours after landing, with only one desire in his heart, to help a deeply suffering country, you know how, unarmed, unprotected, he fell beneath the murderous attack of a number of armed men, together with his companion, another noble heart, also honoured and beloved by all who knew him. Alas! how often men know not their best friends. Cowardly and atrocious as was that attack beyond all words, can we suppose it would have been made if those men, bad and brutal as they were, had known what was really in those true hearts? You may know that *his* life, in all probability, according to evidence obtained, was not aimed at; though this hardly mitigates the ferocity of that crime which

rang throughout the civilized world ; and, alas ! it has to be added that in the worst quarters of the city there was, at least at the first, considerable rejoicing at his death. And yet, could we look through the veil which for a while separates us from eternity, who can doubt that the same love of the people, the same trust in their real soundness at heart, which beat in his heart, when alive, still is filling his soul after death ? Great indeed was the outburst of deep indignation throughout the country, and of course not least in England—happily an indignation, a horror held in check as usual by the English self-restraint. And, thank God ! equally great was the burning sense of shame and horror in Irish hearts when they awoke to what had been done. Many were the signs of this widespread and deep grief. You may remember, for example, the account of the priest in County Galway, reading that most touching letter of Lady Frederick Cavendish to a weeping congregation.

Though these two murders were not, indeed, worse than others, yet the surrounding circumstances made them more terribly sad, and they are said by those who best know to have been the turning-point in the last terrible history of crime and outrage. It was, in fact, these deaths which woke up the people from their apathy about crime. Since that dreadful 6th of May it is a fact that crimes of all sorts have steadily declined, both in the number and in the quality of the acts. And though every now and then we are still startled by a new act of horror (as, alas! has been the case this very week), it is reassuring to know that the country is returning to a state of peace, and of greatly increased prosperity. The return of agrarian outrages was 531 for March last. For June the number was reduced to 283, and in September to 131 (half of which were threatening letters). Looking at the matter from another point of view, we find that last September there were 59 actual offences

against persons, property, and the public peace, as against 225 twelve months before. Further notice that in March last 587 men were in prison merely on suspicion, whereas now there are none. We were further told the other day by the present Irish Secretary that from the reports of those in authority in the disturbed districts, it was certain that the state of feeling from which crime sprang is materially improving. These men, who know the country well, all say that the relations between landlord and tenant are improved, that rents are being fairly paid, and that intimidation is decreasing. Mr. Davitt himself regretfully indicates by his speeches that agitation is dying out because the people of Ireland imagine they have got justice by the Land and Arrears Acts.

It was to help Ireland that he went; and now can we doubt for a moment that, in a manner little expected, he has helped Ireland in the most signal way? His life has been

sacrificed to the fierce hatreds which have been the awful result of centuries of the horribly wicked misrule of England. But Irish hearts now know what he was; and the memory of that terrible deed must still live to do something towards softening the hardest hearts. The desolation of a happy home, the awful blank left by his death, the piteous character of all the circumstances, all go to show how great a sacrifice it has been. You know how all his unselfish devotion to duty, all the risks which he so cheerfully undertook, when asked to go, were shared by his wife. His death has darkened a bright life indeed, but you know she has given him up freely to God in the comfort alone of the thought that his death was for the good of the country he wished to serve. Oh, do not let us cease to pray for her in her great sorrow, which in some ways must become greater still by the lapse of time.

Wonderful are the ways of God; we know

not His mind. That death has deprived the Queen and country of a faithful servant indeed. It has removed from public life a pure soul, single-hearted, and full of gentleness, yet of inflexible principle, and full of future promise. You may know, but I of course know far better, what a terrible, an irreparable, loss it has been to the chief adviser of the Crown, on whose head there has devolved such an enormous weight of responsibility. The Prime Minister's appreciation of him as a man, as a Christian, and of his work, was always intense. To see him was always a very real refreshment to his mind. None could have been a truer friend and wiser counsellor, though so much younger in years. And you need not to be told that, where a man has to bear such a great burden on his shoulders, as the Prime Minister has, a true-hearted, generous, wise sympathy, such as he had invariably found in his younger colleague, is a source of comfort and joy beyond what words can tell. It was a very

real grief to him when he felt it his duty for the public good to ask Lord Frederick Cavendish to go to Ireland ; for it was like losing a right hand.

But great as is his personal loss, the public loss is far greater. The State can ill spare such men—men who put principle first, interest afterwards ; who are known to be inflexibly just ; who will neither give nor take flattery ; men who by their thorough-going honesty raise political questions out of the low atmosphere into which they are too often dragged into higher, purer air ; men who take pains in forming their opinions and have the courage to stand by them, however unpopular they may at times chance to be ; men with moral backbone, as well as good intellect—such men in public life amongst the rising generation can ill be spared, and such a one was he. All this was felt, and the feeling was made evident not only at the striking scene of the solemn Christian funeral, but in the House of Commons—the House

crowded, pale, silent, but most really and deeply agitated, especially the Irish leader and the Irish members.

How powerfully on such occasions is the noble saying felt to be deeply true, "He being dead, yet speaketh." That life, that unselfish labour for others, that death, speaks, and will speak to us and to all true patriotic hearts. It speaks of that same love of others which the beautiful window tells of in the figure of the Good Samaritan; the same noble love which is greater than all other love, which, when called on to go, goes into difficulty and danger, with the one ambition of doing good—yes, that love which makes a true man ready to lay down his own life for his friends. Oh, Irish hearts, he died for you, as well as by the hands of cruel men amongst you. Oh, English hearts, he died for the wicked tyranny, the awful selfishness, the bloody cruelty of many of your forefathers. Let both countries be conscience-stricken with a common shame and sorrow ;

and may God grant that so stricken, they may be drawn nearer together, with mutual forbearance, and patient considerateness : and then that death will indeed not have been in vain.

And for ourselves, let that life and death do its work within us. These events are allowed to happen to arouse us from our sloth and sins, and to inspire us with high thoughts of serving our God and our country. "Go, and do thou likewise," is what this life and death says to us. That window speaks the same words. And we can, each of us, in our way, make a true answer to this appeal. There is not one of us who might not be able to do, even where we are, great things for our God and our country. Manfully to do our work—whatever that work may be—bravely to witness for Christ against every form of vice—particularly to try and do little deeds of kindness, of Christian neighbourliness, to others—and to go on day after day setting an example to those around

us, in the thought of the great reward in store for him who has lived unselfishly and helped his brethren—all this is as much open to the poor labourer as to the nobleman; yes, to the little child even, to the sick and infirm, to the sad and suffering. For we are not our own: ourselves redeemed by the blood of God in the flesh, we owe it to Him to love and labour for those He died to save. To live merely for our own enjoyment, however free even of open sin we may be, is an ignoble, a despicable life; whereas to minister to others' needs, to comfort the sufferers, to help the falling and fallen, to protect with true British chivalry the weaker ones, to spend and be spent for these high purposes, is the way to raise human nature to those glorious heights of true and eternal nobleness which, through Jesus Christ our Saviour, now properly belong to it. Such lessons of noble devotion let us try and learn, every one of us. Others have learnt them; let us do the same.

