







The Knight of Purity Series. No. 1.

PERSONAL PURITY, HOME LIFE

AND

NATIONAL GREATNESS.



AN ADDRESS BY

THE BISHOP OF MELBOURNE.



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I have been credited by some with making a suggestion, founded on my own large observation of the physical characteristics of our Northern Territory, which may not be without its influence on our material prosperity. I will now make another, which goes, I believe, very much nearer to the secret of our national and individual well-being. It is that every true friend of Australia shall bend his utmost energies, in this formative period of our history, to the maintenance of social purity. The life of the nation depends on the life of the home, and that of the home depends on the purity of the individual. The world is full of signs that the struggle for purity is to be the great struggle of our age.

Have any of you been driven by the sense of duty to read one or more of the terribly realistic

sketches of the most famous of modern French-storytellers? If you have, perhaps you have thrown them down, after reading a dozen pages, in impatient disgust. I do not wonder if it were so. Sometimes, however, one is not permitted to yield to the first righteous instinct. And knowing, as I do, that one at least of those stories is the simple exhibition of facts in Parisian life, laboriously collected, and thoroughly reliable, I overcame my disgust, and read to the end. That book is the real record of French decadence. I do not wish to make too much of it. I know that there are pure populations in French villages, and I would fain hope that the future of a noble race is not to be determined by the life of its cities. But should that hope be vain, then I feel that I know the end of the French nation as certainly as if I had seen it arrive—in bloodshed, poverty, and shame.

It is not, however, in Paris alone that the fleshly school is lifting its brazen face, and inviting men in the outraged name of nature to devote all the energies of their spiritual being to the indulgence of animal passion and the glorification of carnal luxury. There is a fleshly school of poetry and art in

England; and many, alas! of the so-called leaders of society are making themselves (unwittingly it may be) the tools of an æstheticism which has for its heart the heart of a beast. (Hear, hear.) The apostles of that cult have visited our own land, and, taking advantage of the temptations of a life, free, bright, prosperous, and lived under an ardent sun, have sought to justify or excuse that amongst us which is our deepest shame. It is our bounden duty to look this evil straight in the face, to tear the mask off its painted features, and to overcome our shame in talking about that which is shameful, lest taking refuge in its foulness, this vile gospel of the flesh should burrow unseen in the hearts of our young people, and only then reveal itself when it is too powerful to be overcome. (Hear, hear).

Its common subterfuge is that it is calling men to be natural. Let us see, then, if that be so. Man has a body and bodily instincts like the lower animals. As we see in those animals, it is the purpose of the instinctive passions to secure the preservation and continuance of the species. In the lower animals those instincts operate beneficially, because they are followed in blind unconsciousness. They come into

active exercise only with the presence of their appointed stimulants. With us it is otherwise. Superimposed upon our animal nature is one of higher kind and finer quality—that conscious life of intellect, conscience, and will, which is the sole prerogative of man. Our higher faculties have their appointed objects—the wonders of God’s wisdom in nature, the complicated relations of man in society, the great august realities of the supersensible sphere of religion and worship, the history of the wonderful past, the pervision of the more wonderful future. When our higher faculties go forth to their proper objects, and find a worthy exercise in their predestined sphere, the instinctive passions are left untormented to perform their beneficent purpose in man as in the lower creatures. It is possible, however, in an unbelieving materialistic age, so to discredit some of the loftiest objects of human thought, and so to neglect others as to draw down all the glorious powers of our human nature into the low province of sense, and to bid them find their only exercise in connection with the pleasures and interests which meet them there. What then follows? That the whole force of man’s conscious life, of his

far-reaching intellect, of his potently creative imagination, of his masterful will, and of the culture which comes from memory and association, are exerted to enlarge, intensify, and diversify the pleasures which belong to his lower instincts. But these poor impulses were never designed to bear such a strain. They and their purposes are essentially simple. So pressed and strained beyond their capacity they are driven into irritation and monstrosity. They become the fruitful source of bodily disease, mental disquiet, and emotional torment. They drag down the loftiest faculties of the soul into the mire of their unnatural debasement. And at length by this horrible process man, made in the image of God, is reduced to the image of a beast possessed by the soul of a fiend, a creature without sense of duty, thought of God, power of self-control, or capacity for self-denial. (Applause.) Then the individual and national ruin is consummated. Then if a pestilence like the cholera makes its appearance, it finds a nation of cowards whose only thought is to escape the natural death, which is their uttermost idea of evil. Then the attack of a horde of savages, once no more to them than that

of so many wild beasts, becomes a terror and a danger. No man will suffer for his fellow; no man will run risks for his fellow. Society is ground down into a collection of selfish, non-cohering atoms, and, resolved thus into its elements, perishes.

It is useless to deny that this young society of ours is threatened with such disaster, for the elements of danger lie all around us, and on the very surface of our life. Immigrants bring them from Europe, criminals bring them from New Caledonia, literature brings them sometimes openly displayed, sometimes subtly hidden in stories, reviews, and even philosophies. And these fruitful germs of evil fall on no uncongenial soil. They find in a city like Melbourne a rampant larrikinism, impudent, irreligious, idle, self-indulgent, capable of forms of brutal vice and crime which make the blood run cold; they find a system of prostitution so hideous that its facts have to be hidden away from decent eyes in Parliamentary bluebooks; they find, too, I fear, in some quarters, practices of immorality which, if less infamous, are scarcely less pernicious than these, the existence of which no one affects to doubt but those whose interest it is to conceal them.

What, then, are we to do in this strait ! I answer at once—

ORGANIZE RESISTANCE TO THE EVIL.

It is not enough that we individually hate and avoid it. If we are to resist it effectually, to drive it back, and to deliver our children and the future race of this great and glorious country from ruin, we must create a public opinion which will not tolerate it, which will smite with the whip of public shame and reprobation any man, no matter how rich or great, who lends to it his countenance or the support of his example. (Cheers.) Law can do something for us by prohibiting and punishing the vilest forms of the evil. But law can never grapple effectually with a spiritual influence. Thoughts are things of too subtle a mould to be grasped by the hand of a policeman. Impurity is a thing too secret and intangible to be set at the bar of a court. You may have a city as gay, as brilliant, as orderly as Paris, and have at the same time (as Père Hyacinthe says is the case now) 150,000 harlots in its houses. A spiritual force like this must be met and encountered by a spiritual antagonist—one which knows and seeks its enemy, which meets him at every point of

social life, and will tolerate his presence nowhere.

It is this conviction which has led to the formation of a White Cross Union in our Church. We have a definite object—to resist the growth of impurity—and we adopt a definite means of resisting it, the power of the Cross of Christ. These things we have indicated in our white cross, and beyond that in the way of symbolism we do not intend to go. The Society hopes to gain its members among our young men. While, therefore, urging the clergy to push it forward in their parishes, let me give to young men a few reasons for enrolling themselves in its ranks. The best—it should be the all-sufficient—reason, is furnished by the natural relation which God has established between the man and the woman. Man is the stronger creature—stronger in his physical development, stronger in his intellectual grasp, and stronger, far stronger, in his force of will. Now, why has God made this inequality of the sexes a natural ordinance? We know that in many species of the lower creatures the female is the stronger and more formidable animal. Why, then, was it not so ordered in the human species? It is rash to attempt to specify final causes, but we cannot go wrong, in

looking for an answer to such a question, in the direction of the faculties which are peculiar to the human race. Man alone among earthly creatures has a moral consciousness, and it is upon obedience to the imperative dictates of this consciousness that his worth and happiness mainly depend. What, then, is the

SECRET OF MORAL HEALTH AND GREATNESS?

It is the subordination of the selfish to the altruistic impulses. Let a human being forget self in devoted service to what is weaker than self, and he is already on the high road to moral nobility. For woman the natural stimulus to such self-forgetfulness is furnished by the relation of the mother to the child; for man, by the natural weakness and clinging dependence of the woman. Why is the weaker appointed to bear the pain and helplessness of maternity? Why is she, for so large a part of her life, especially in civilised communities, absolutely dependent on man for subsistence and protection? Why is her nature set to the law of these natural conditions, so that without effort or sense of dishonesty she can accept a position of dependence and trustful love, feeling it her greatest joy to give herself

to her beloved? That she may be to the man what her child is to her, and that then our whole wondrous life may become one great school of virtue.

The equality of mere atomism is simply a school of selfishness, a provocation of strife, an organisation of egotism and discord. Harmony, love, moral development, implies distinction and gradations of functions and powers. And therefore is such distinction and gradation made a part of our very nature. We look for a time when sickness, poverty, and misery shall be indefinitely diminished. If, therefore, the altruistic and sympathetic instincts depended on the mere service and relief of suffering, it would seem as if men must become less moral as the race grew happier. But this is as far as possible from being the case. If sickness, destitution, and sorrow were banished from the world to-morrow, the helplessness of the child would still call for the impulse which is furnished by the pure relation of self-devotion of the mother, the weakness of the woman for the chivalrous and knightly devotion of the man.

Still, and for ever, the Christian law of unselfish

service is the law of the noble life; still, and for ever, the cross of self-sacrifice is the symbol of a great and gentle nature. Can we not say, then, on the warrant of nature, not less than on that of Scripture, that the man is the head of the woman? Then it follows that the man is bound to serve the woman, and to use his utmost strength to guard her from scath and wrong. (Applause).

Feel tenderly to every woman—the humblest and plainest; feel that it is unworthy of your manhood to abuse her divinely implanted trust in you, and readiness to sacrifice herself for you; feel that it as much the action of a cur and a blackguard to wrong a woman as it would be to oppress a child, and then your manhood will grow, your courage, your self-control, your chivalrous gentleness, and it will be with more right than the proud Douglasses of old that you will write upon your shield “tender and true.” (Applause). Who are the strong men, the bold men, the men of such high knightly character that all look to them for leading, and lean on them in danger? They are the pure-hearted men, the men who look on women as sacred beings, made sacred by their weakness and trustfulness, and, above all, by their holy func-

tions as priestesses of the home. If man be the head of woman, woman is the heart of man, the natural fount of those holier and tenderer feelings which are too often dulled and dried up in the hard conflicts and selfish interests of his life. That is why it is a liberal education to live with a pure, high-minded woman. She elevates a man's motives, stimulates his imagination, purifies his feelings, and adds tenfold to his moral force and influence, whether in the Church or the State. (Applause).

Woe to him, then, if in his passionate selfishness he corrupts his heart, and abuses a weakness which was associated with his life to call out its noblest and most chivalrous impulses. Careful observers of human life have often been surprised at the subtle, wide-reaching degeneration of character which attends sins of impurity. Their influence seems to reach to the distant recesses of the spirit, and to have a power of breaking down and deteriorating every moral impulse, which is like nothing so much as that which is exerted by certain subtle poisons upon the bodily tissues. Whence, then, it has been asked, does this sin derive its tremendously noxious and far-reaching power? I think I have already

answered that question. From its intrinsic baseness; from the continually hardening force of selfishness which is required to shut the ears to that voice of woman's suffering, which, as the sin develops its consequences, pleads so mightily to man's natural pity; above all, from the extinction of that divinely appointed stimulus of man's sympathetic impulses, which is furnished by the pure relation of husband and wife, of youth and betrothed maiden. Trample on woman, and you trample on your own moral nature. Respect woman, care for her, work for her, give her knightly shelter and protection from the human beasts who would wring a moment's pleasure from her ruin, and with continually accelerating force, in secret unconscious ways, of which we can give no account, you shall find the loftier emotions gaining sway in your heart, and touching your life to finer issues.

Believe me, the maintenance of purity in the relations of the sexes is vital to national greatness and prosperity. (Applause). For in the relations of husband to wife, parent to child, through long gradations of mutual tenderness and support, each is bound to each, and all "with golden chains about

the feet of God." Break once these golden links of loving help and service, and all the strong bonds of civilised society will be weakened and loosed ; men will be driven asunder into selfish atomism, and the whole firm structure of the commonwealth fall into ruin. (Applause). Resolve then, that whatever be the temptations which assail you, you will resist them in the might of Christ ; that never by any act or word of yours will you become guilty of the murder of a woman's body and soul ; that if you see some conscienceless wretch stealthily weaving the web of seduction round a helpless maiden's feet you will with all your strength rend it in pieces and take the consequences. (Applause). Fight down the ape within you. Trust in the might of Him who is greater than the world. Be vigilant—be confident.

So nigh to glory is our dust,
 So nigh to God is man,
 When duty whispers low "Thou must,"
 The soul replies "I can."

By way of strengthening the resistance of your individual will, take measures to create a public opinion which shall be a terror to every evil-doer. Law, as I have said, can do but little, but public

opinion can overawe and bridle the mightiest transgressors in the world. Organise yourselves, therefore, into a vast White Cross Union, the members of which shall be pledged to stand together, and to strike with all their collective force against the dark fiend of social corruption. You not only double your strength, but increase it a myriad-fold by association. You gain thus the force of sympathy, the consciousness that a thousand minds are perfecting your plans; a thousand hands are sustaining your work; a thousand voices are swelling your prayers. You will thus create a literature, a propaganda of purity; above all, a banded might of righteous opinion, before which the boldest libertine will shrink and falter. (Continued applause). Oh! whether you be young or old, think, I pray you, of the holy names of sister, wife, and mother; think of all the holy influences which stream forth upon an evil world from the relations which those sacred names represent, and resolve, one and all, that under no sky from which the sun shines down shall those names have a holier, tenderer meaning than in this fair land of our birth or adoption. Do much and dare much in this blessed cause,

resolving that if you cannot conquer at once, at least you will do what in you lies to prepare the victory for a coming generation. Remember what the poet has said about that glorious defeat which is the pledge and condition of ultimate victory—

They out-talked thee, hissed thee, tore thee—
Better men fared thus before thee ;
Fired their ringing shot and passed,
Hotly charged and sank at last.

Charge once more then, and be dumb !
Let the victors, when they come,
When the forts of folly fall,
Find thy body by the wall !



