

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
ANNUAL CONGRESS
OF THE
NATIONAL PRISON ASSOCIATION
OF THE
UNITED STATES,
HELD AT
PITTSBURG, OCTOBER 10-14, 1891.

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SECOND DAY—SUNDAY.

THE Sunday morning session of the Prison Congress was held in the First Presbyterian Church. The annual sermon was preached by the Rev. George T. Purves, D. D., Pastor of the church.

The Sunday night session was held in the Duquesne Theatre on the invitation of Rev. Dr. Izer, pastor of Christ's Methodist Episcopal Church, who for the time being were using this theatre as their place of worship in consequence of the destruction of their church building by fire.

SERMON ; BY REV. GEORGE T. PURVES, D. D.

"Recompense to no man evil for evil." Rom. xii-17.

"If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing, thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head." Rom. xii-20.

"Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men." I Thes. v-14.

I have been asked to preach this morning before the National Prison Association, presumably on the ground that Christianity is the acknowledged motive power of such philanthropy as the association represents. It is undeniably the fact that the teaching and the spirit of Jesus Christ have been the source from which the idea of and consecration to such benevolent work have arisen. The influence has not always indeed been conveyed through church channels, but that it has emanated from the Founder of the church cannot be reasonably questioned. The practical love of man has often been forgotten by Christ's followers, but it undoubtedly burned in the mind of Christ himself, and by him has it been kindled in other breasts. Men may differ as to the immediate cause by which in particular cases modern philanthropies have been awakened. Individual philanthropists also may not always be consciously moved by Christian motives. But there can be little doubt of the source

from which as a whole such manifestations of noble, disinterested benevolence have sprung. We have only to contrast the present prevailing sentiments with those of the ancient classic world when the weak were regarded as burdens to be gotten rid of, and captives as good material out of which to make gladiators for the arena, and slaves as the absolute chattels of their masters and criminals as unworthy of the least consideration; we have only to contrast it likewise with the cruel and tyrannical and revengeful customs which still prevail where the better teaching of Christ's Gospel has not been felt; to see that the love of man and the sweeter, kinder, hopeful thoughts, which we all more or less feel even to the worst of men have been drawn from the effect upon us of Him who with infinitive love descended from the highest to the lowest place that, as the Son of Man, he might seek and save the lost. You may find examples indeed of philanthropy and self sacrifice before Christ lived and among those who knew him not. You may find examples, alas, of selfishness and hard indifference to others' need since Christ lived and among those who profess to know him. But none should fail to admit that to him supremely belongs the praise of having evoked by his own life, word, and spirit that philanthropic altruism which we have all come to regard as part of the duty of man.

Now the value of this particular form of philanthropy which asks our attention to-day arises on the one hand from the character of its objects. I would interest you in the claims upon us of those whom we usually consider utterly undeserving. The claims of the unfortunate need little arguing. Affliction moves to pity even a heart of stone and the duty of assistance is at once cordially admitted. It now needs no proof that we should provide for the helpless, that we should have hospitals for the sick, and homes for the friendless children. This much advance at least have we made upon the cruelty of barbarism. But that the criminal has any claims upon humanity is felt to need proof. He is not classed with the sick, nor ought he wholly to be. He is one that has struck at the foundations on which our peace and quiet rest. He is a menace to our property and lives. Knowing this, we are apt to think of all criminals as belonging

to one class, rebels against society and justly meriting its wrath and curse. On this principle of indiscriminate condemnation society has for centuries proceeded in its treatment of adjudged law breakers. As soon as a human being has once been sentenced, he is too often assigned in our thoughts to the class of the hopeless and the irredeemable. It is felt that he has passed beyond the reach of philanthropy and must be left to the unrelieved vengeance of the law. It is a bold step taken when men deny this and dare to assert that even here the domain of Christian philanthropy reaches; when they remind us that all law breakers are not equally sinners; that some may be saved from sinking further into the slough of crime; that often they have fallen through circumstances, the removal of which may prevent a repetition of the offence; that at least the young offenders may be saved and that even the hardened and vicious may be brought to their right minds; that at any rate no human soul is in this world so far sunk in sin as not to be worth saving, if possible, for the eternity to come. May we believe this? Dare we carry our hope so far? No one familiar with the facts, can doubt it; and yet the limitations which even good men commonly place upon their benevolence requires the cause of the prisoner to be pleaded with special courage and intelligence.

And on the other hand the value of such philanthropy arises from the immense elevation of the type of Christian spirit which its pursuit requires. Some virtues are commonplace. They constitute the first lessons of christian life. Some fruits of the Spirit of Christ are necessary products, found in all in whom he at all resides. But others are finer productions indicative of deeper sympathy with the mind of Christ and of more careful cultivation of his world changing principles, and these are those which must needs come into exercise, if a man would engage in work for the confessedly undeserving. That work implies a breadth of view, a freedom from anything like resentment, a purity of motive, a patience in doing good which, quite apart from the results achieved, ought to commend it as one of the ripest and fairest fruits of the spirit of Christianity.

Hence I have selected, as my text, these passages from the writings of the Apostle, to which many others of similar tenor

might be added, which illustrate the Christian temper from which the highest philanthropy springs "Recompense to no man evil for evil." "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head." "Warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men." How evident the divine origin of a religion which even accidentally drop such gems of ethical instruction! Note the self-control, the absence of resentment, the pity, the self forgetting love which breathes in these exquisite commandments, culminating too in that wide, yet most personal, that delicate and most difficult command, so utterly opposed to natural impulse, so deep and broad in its implications, "be patient toward all men." These directions are to find embodiment in society as well as in individual believers, and in the former by first being embodied in the latter. They are meant to be gradually wrought into our legislation and into our civil economy and into our philanthropic work as the divine Spirit affects more and more completely the life of man, and they seem to me to express most happily the purpose and character of the particular work in the interest of which I speak.

Permit me briefly to indicate some of the thoughts bearing on that work which they suggest.

1. They suggest in the first place the spirit in which punishment should be inflicted by Christian society.

There can be no doubt of the right of society to inflict punishment upon offenders against its peace and law. This is not only a right but a duty. Some justify it simply on grounds of necessity, looking to no higher power than that which resides in the majority. We would go further and maintain that it is a Godgiven right which society may not without fault fail to wield. It is specifically granted in the Scripture, and the officer of law, in the discharge of his proper duties, is described by the apostle as a "Minister of God." But from almost every point from which we may view it, the right is easily defensible. It may be deduced from the right to self protection which is inalienable in both the individual and the state. It may be deduced from the duty of preventing crime which even the

least paternal theory of government must admit; while if it be part of our social duty to reform the vicious and educate the degraded, this can only be done when the right of punishment for wrong-doing is made a manifest reality in the eyes of the community. If finally the state be regarded as in any sense a divine institution, then its right to punish the law breaker is in the same sense and to the same degree part of the power which it has received from God. Whatever the ground on which the right is argued, the right itself is certain. Civil punishment is no act of tyranny. It is not the oppression of the weak by the strong. It is not based on any injustice. It is itself just. It is a right and duty which society may not fail to exercise, and the failure to exercise it brings on society in turn a penalty which of itself proves that in not punishing wrong, society has done wrong. It is, I judge, of the highest importance that we should realize this. The arm of the law has a right to be strong as iron. It ought to fall on the offender with the swiftness and certainty of fate. It must show no partiality. It must judge with blind eyes. It must be, so far as possible, resistless and inexorable. Whatever other sentiments of a kinder nature mingle with and guide the administration of justice, they must not subvert the law. However disposed society may be to forgive, it must not dispense forgiveness in such a way as to bring law into contempt. Such was the assumption which underlay the tender temper described in our text. "Warn the unruly." It is not rendering evil for evil to administer justice in the established and duly regulated way. For the foundation on which the whole salvation of man rests is that the moral law cannot be violated; that man cannot be rescued at its expense; that the sacrifice of righteousness would be a greater one than even the sacrifice of God's own Son has been, since the latter is a sacrifice which God has made to save men, but the former would be to sacrifice the universe itself and so make salvation impossible. In like manner, education in this world is only possible on the basis of law; reformation is only possible if the stern fact of retribution be insisted on; rescue of the criminal can only be accomplished, if it be kept clearly before his mind that its alternative is ruin. Philan-

thropy therefore, just as truly as self protection, ought to insist upon the indefeasible right and duty of society to punish its offenders.

But now the question rises, in what spirit shall this be done. It never occurred to men for many ages that it made any difference in what spirit it was done, but we have come to see that this is of the highest moment. Just in this lies the room for progress from barbarism to Christian civilization. At first the right to punish was conceived in the spirit of personal revenge. It was little more than retaliation. In the lowest grade of all, the individual who has been injured makes himself his own defender, takes the law into his own hands and makes the offender pay back the injury in the same coin in which it has been taken. Where such an order of procedure is allowed, society does nothing but countenance the punishment and approve the reprisal. The whole procedure is nothing more than personal revenge. Then there came a better spirit in the administration of punishment. It was taken out of the hands of the individual. The element of personal revenge was seen to be itself wrong. Revenge is not justice. It does not calculate accurately. It is itself the commission of crime, not the punishment of it. It stains the soul of the executioner of law as much as the offence has already stained the soul of the offender. And so society must take the work of punishment upon itself. It must establish courts of justice and places of restraint, that the right of punishment may not be exercised in the spirit of revenge but with precise justice and in the holy name of the community. This is an immense advance. Submission to this method is one of the necessary conditions of peace and order. Nay more. This is the natural state of society, without which we have not society but barbarism; and it proceeds on the idea that revenge is wrong and that the right of punishment is to be exercised with absolute self-control, with a view to the largest interests of the commonwealth, with complete absence of personal favor or anger, with sole regard to the penalty which the state has the right to inflict. Now most men are satisfied to let the matter rest here, and if there were no consideration involved except natural justice, it might be allowed to rest here. But there are

other considerations and these are drawn from the still higher ideals of life which we have learned from God himself through Christianity. In this, among many, directions we are to labor for the practical application of the Sermon on the Mount. Certainly this is not to be done, as Tolstoi dreams, by the disorganization of society, by standing with tied hands while evil runs riot in the community. The Sermon on the Mount was not meant to be applied to social life except on the basis of administration of the law. But it was meant to give the right Spirit of that administration. It teaches us to love our enemies and to bless them that curse us. It annihilates revenge. As Paul said, "Recompense to no man evil for evil"; by which phrase he aims not at the execution by law but at personal anger in it. It is in this spirit that a Christian society is to exercise its right of punishment. That spirit is summarized in the desire to save men with imperious sovereignty. It must combine the mercy and pity of a Father. It must believe that even the enemy of society is to be loved and cared for and toiled for, not to give him license to renewed sin but to save him as a man that he may be led to sin no more. Administered in this spirit, punishment will seek to be as far as possible reformatory. There are limits I know even to the effort to reform men, and punishment must be sometimes inflicted simply as punishment. But the Christian spirit will brood over the fallen to bring if possible, order out of the moral chaos and awaken fresh life in the dying soul. It will say to the criminal, crime shall be punished but you need not, you ought not to be a criminal. It will say this by its actions, by its methods of procedure, by its treatment of the offender, and thank God that at last this Christian ideal has begun to take hold of the minds of Christian men and enabled them to believe that even the enemy of society must be loved and may be saved.

II. But now our text further suggests that we must expect to be compelled to put this spirit in operation only after toil and thought. I beg you to reflect on that phrase of the Apostle's, "Be patient toward all men." How great is the need of patience in all our efforts to practically apply in society the principles of the Gospel! It is easy to be fired with good as-

pirations; it is hard to climb slowly toward their realization. All Christian men admit that the kingdom of God is to come upon the earth but a good many are in despair of its ever coming by present agencies and, impatient with the slow movement of events, give up the struggle. Yet we are forced to be idealists, if Christians at all; and there has never been an age, I judge, when the minds of men were stirred with so many grand and noble aspirations as at the present time. It is a common remark that ours is a practical age. It is so, but it is also an age of daring and lofty ideas. Never before has it seemed to men so possible to change social regulations and modify forms of government and to transform humanity. In all this we must learn to have the "patience of the saints." Christ and his Apostles did not expect to win the world in a day, and in such a matter as the reform of the criminal there is, from the very nature of the case, particular necessity that society should strive to realize the Sermon on the Mount with the utmost courage, with the clearest perception of the difficulties which the problem involves, and with the most patient efforts to attain little by little the desired end.

Consider for a moment the difficulties with which prison reform inevitably meets. There is in that which rises from popular indifference first of all and this in turn springs largely from popular ignorance of the needs and possibilities of the work. Then there are the difficulties which arise in the way of securing such official action, on the part of state authorities, as will render possible the prosecution of those methods which experience proves to be the wisest. Further still are the difficulties arising from the variety of the work. We lump the criminals into one class in our ordinary thought, but the confusion is unpardonable. All experts tell us, what we ought to know ourselves, that they are of many grades, from the first offender who has been led astray down to the hardened, professional law-breaker. It is of the utmost importance that these should be kept separate in fact and in thought. Different methods of treatment must be used, if there is to be any hope of success in the task of reformation. Different institutions are needed and different systems in each. All this means

study and observation, long thought, mature experience, wide comparison of facts." A good deal more is needed than enthusiasm and the love of men. We need science and organization and expert service. And through it all we need exhaustless patience. The active worker in this cause needs it and we need it who would fain assist by our sympathy and influence. For Christian philanthropy must be put on a thoroughly scientific basis. Because a work is scientific is no reason why it should not be religious and because a work is religious to no reason why it should not be scientific. The highest success is won by the combination of the two. To arouse public sentiment, to remedy established wrongs while at the same time preserving established rights, to deal as kindly as possible with children who have been taught by others the alphabet of crime, to deal as wisely as possible with the boys and girls who have committed their first offence and save them from a deeper fall, to deal as firmly and yet as wisely and kindly as possible even with the old offender that even he may be made to see that he yet may become a self respecting man—it needs for me but to name the elements of this wide, deep problem to make it plain that in order that our Christian society may administer its criminal law in a Christian spirit, we must feel the work to be worthy of long, careful, courageous, patient thought and toil. Hence the value of the National Prison Association. Hence the value of their Congress. Unless the work which they represent be done wisely, it were better not done at all. But if it be done wisely, then there is no branch of philanthropy which seems to me to express more thoroughly the spirit of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Of course to the members of the Prison Association, who are already experts and enthusiasts in the cause, I have nothing to say except to bid them Godspeed in their work and to welcome them in the name of the Christian public as they have been welcomed by the civil authorities of our twin cities.

But to that Christian public itself I have a word to say. This is a branch of philanthropy in which few of us can take a personal part. Direct personal service is not wanted of us. But nevertheless on our interest and sympathy with it, its success

will in the end depend and, through our representatives in church and state, we may help to make even the administration of punishment a Christian thing. I need not particularize; but you know the power of public opinion and on us and others like us does the character of it depend. Over a hundred years have passed since JOHN HOWARD wakened the conscience of England and then of Europe to the barbarities then practiced in the name of law, and the changes wrought in consequence have been his imperishable monument. But these gentlemen can tell you how much is yet to be done; how far off the ideal yet is. Let JOHN HOWARD ever remind us of what one man can do who has the will to do it and let us believe that they are indeed few and far between whom it is not our Christian duty to try to save. Did not our Master say "I came to seek and to save the lost"? and we who by divine grace have been enabled to live virtuous lives must never forget the claim upon us of the degraded and the fallen. A Christian state should administer punishment not with the cruelty or indifference of a tyrant, but with the united authority and tenderness of a Father, ever remembering the patience of our God with this rebel world, and ever desiring to hear the Judge of all say unto us, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these ye have done it unto me."

The Sunday night session was held in the Duquesne Theatre.

The address was given by REV. T. K. BEECHER, D. D., of Elmira. At the request of DR. BEECHER only the following abstract of this address is given.

ABSTRACT OF SERMON BY REV. THOS. K. BEECHER, D. D.

Behold the goodness and the severity of God. Toward them that fell, severity, but toward thee goodness *if thou continue in his goodness*. Rom. II: 22.

Behold! in the history of elect Israel the goodness and the severity of God. Surely no other people can show such a record of discipline. Although "elect" of God, they have not been and are not his petted and spoiled favorites. God has been to them a loving Father; but his "love" leads never to fond and foolish feebleness. Behold the goodness and severity of God.