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REVIEW SECTION.

I.—EUGÈNE BERSIER.

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IF a Greek critic of the Attic prime, supposed living again among us moderns, should, merely from the point of view of oratoric art, compare the achievements in pulpit eloquence of the various races of mankind, it would no doubt be to French preachers that he would award the palm of supremacy. Among those French preachers (of whatever time) such a critic, free from every prepossession, would, I feel sure, find no one superior to the subject of the present paper. Critics less severe and less severely Greek—Asiatic, let us say, rather than Attic—might pronounce a different judgment. A warping influence admitted from an admixture of romanticism in the literary taste might not unnaturally lead to a preference of something English or of something American over anything French. But to your pure Attic sense the French would infallibly seem finer. And of the French, as I said, nothing would seem more free from fault or defect than the eloquence of Eugène Bersier.

It is thus a very high, but it is also a somewhat peculiar praise that I bestow on this eminent French preacher. I prepare, as far as I may, my readers for considering the claims of a master in pulpit oratory contrasted, but rather in quality than in quantity of merit, with all of his peers in the list of illustrious names furnishing subjects for the present series of papers. It is Attic performance that is here to be judged; we must apply Attic canons of art and Attic standards of taste in judging it.

This means, of course, that nothing to strike by eccentricity, extravagance, excess, no indulgence of individual caprice, no lawlessness willing to be mistaken for independence, no sins against taste hoping to pass for audacities of genius, no violences of expression doing duty for originalities of thought—nothing whatever of this sort need be looked for in Bersier. All with him is measure, proportion, propriety, pure taste, sound judgment, undisturbed dominance of the rule of not too much, order, harmony,

with clearness what its form should be. It should come directly from the heart. There is a holy delight in pouring out freely before God the thoughts and feelings of a soul warmed by Divine love. Such were the prayers of the apostles and the primitive Church. The use of fixed forms of prayer was a device of a later age. It formed a part of the elaborate ceremonial which a spirit of formalism, in imitation of the Jewish Church, imposed upon Christianity. Yet fixed forms of prayer are not without some justification. Considered from an artistic standpoint, they secure greater perfection of form. They are apt to be more comprehensive in scope and more condensed and beautiful in expression. The congregation is better able to unite in the prayer. To some persons who are lacking in fluency and fervor, they supply a real want. But without condemning the use of fixed forms, we find that they are exceptional in character, springing not from the essential nature of prayer, but from the needs of particular persons or from a spirit of formalism. The world will never be converted by fixed forms of prayer nor by the men that habitually use them.

SERMONIC SECTION.

THE SURVIVAL OF THE WEAK.

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We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.—Rom. xv. 1.

A CURT statement of one of those far-reaching and revolutionary principles of daily conduct which lean back upon the example and teaching of Christ. Under the Christian system the strong are under obligation to help the weak. Instead of being indifferent to their infirmities or making spoil of their weaknesses it behooves them by the exercise of respect and by ministries of love to do them good and edify them.

No rule of living is more familiar than that we must be ready to deny ourselves in that which is less in order that we may gain some greater good. We abandon corroding habits, though they may be pleasing, that we may win some prize more worthy of being coveted than the one we forfeit. A rule of daily prudence becomes a religious practice when we mortify the flesh and

the lusts thereof in obedience to the command of God, losing our present life that we may gain the life eternal; crucifying the flesh that we may be clothed with the power of the Spirit.

The other rule of conduct involved in the apostolic words of the text, in many quarters came upon the world as an utter novelty, and has had more to battle against to find its place as an established rule of ethics than the former rule of self-abnegation for the good of self. In some languages the very word "unselfishness" is wanting, and philanthropy in its deeper channels is an unknown thing even among the most cultivated classes who know not Christ. Here we are taught to look also on the things of others, using our own strength and superiority in their behalf and unto their edification. After the first deed of blood God called out, "Where is Abel, thy brother?" It was a recognition of the claim of man upon man. The Gospel goes a step further when it says, "Love thy neighbor as thyself." The strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please themselves.

I. This is not law in the brute creation. Beneath man all life is engaged in a fierce struggle for existence. Pity is unknown or almost unknown. Each individual seeks his own. The strong devour the weak. Each is bent on his own profit and aggrandizement. No one lays up for the other. A violent, unceasing conflict is going on for self-maintenance and superiority. The strong look out for themselves. The weak go to the wall. If the fittest do not always survive, the most cunning and the strongest do. The infirm are preyed upon or left mercilessly to perish. They flee to the hills and cover away in inaccessible rocks and caves. They are endowed with acuteness of ear and liteness of limb, so that they may discern the approach and escape from the pitiless greed of the strong.

An exception to this prevailing rule is found in the generous instinct of motherhood, which pervades the grades of animal being below man. But for this maternal pity, the most of these animal races would quickly become extinct. The tigress, even, will fight for her cubs, risking and losing her life on their behalf. The mother bird pines and laments when the little ones of her nest have been disturbed.

Another exception is afforded by the domestic animals. Appointed unto man to be his companions and defenders, they have given proof of willing and affectionate self renunciation for his good. The dog pines when the master is absent who has dealt kindly with him. He will risk his own life in his service, share with him in dumb but strong friendship his want and solitude, and has been believed to die of a broken heart when he is dead. But once left to roam, these animals also seem to abandon themselves to the brute principle of utter selfishness. Strength, muscular strength, and sagacity determine the length of life and well-being among the brutes. Might is right. Force is law. The strong intimidate the weak. The mighty crush the feeble.

II. The law of the brute creation predominates largely among men where the power of the Gospel is not felt. Strength is a law unto itself. The able-bodied and the mighty seek their own self-indulgence. Without regard to the feelings of the weak and without concern for their rights they please themselves, gratifying their own lusts and heaping up to themselves riches, estates, and dignities.

Human life is also a struggle for existence. Man, too, like the brute, is forced to be continually at work to keep off hunger and beggary, disease and death. He is engaged in a never-ending conflict, and the fittest do not always survive. The bravest swimmers are often wrenched down beneath the crest of the wave by unseen whirlpools. The most clear-sighted climbers lose their footing and dash into the precipice beneath. The good and the pure are often crushed to the earth, while the depraved and the unclean thrive and are exalted.

Self-assertion is the first principle of life, and it must be pressed in order to have survival and to the attainment of the prizes of the world. A man must magnify himself and push himself onward to keep alive and to reach the high places among his fellows. The strong must insist upon their strength. Self-assertion is essential to self-preservation. True as this is, nevertheless self-preservation must not be made the excuse for preying upon the infirmities of the weak or rising upon the ruins of others. In the rush for fame, success, wealth, dignities, ease, and all else that delights or is to be coveted, the strong are apt to trample upon the feelings of the weak, and increase their own strength by preying upon their infirmities. Out of this root of self-assertion have come all despotisms, servitudes, rapacities toward the widow, debasements of womanhood, inhumanities to children, oppressions of the enslaved, tortures of the captive, and cruelties to the beast. It is the human way to enforce the *brutal* principle of surviving by the sufferings and humiliations of

the weak. The strong please themselves, and the more close man is to the barbarian and the brute, the more fully does he act out the rule of securing, if need be, his own advantage, comfort, and enrichment by the heartless spoil of the helplessness of the weak, a rule which the apostle riddles and scatters to the winds by his injunction that the "strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak."

Wars, from the earliest predatory feuds to those which resulted in the partition of Poland and the campaigns of Napoleon, have for the most part grown out of the determination to exalt one's self by the losses of another. If a nation was weak, a stronger one would pounce down upon it and do in about the same way what the fierce king of the forest does with the passing gazelle. The keeper of one baronial hall detected the weakness of the walls which encompassed another, and coveting booty, sallied forth and spoiled or crushed his neighbor. Towns and cities of the Middle Ages were surrounded with thick walls, and the inferior in strength was in constant dread of the loss of property, virtue, and even existence from the rapacity of a stronger neighbor.

All slavery, involuntary and hereditary, was for the most part in the first instance the outcome of the principle which this text tears to shreds. The Arab slaver to-day, by the sheer strength and superiority which come from the possession of weapons and the excelling skill in their use, depopulates mercilessly whole areas and involves whole tribes in most pitiless sufferings, even unto their almost utter extermination, in order that he may gratify his own lust, gain, and aggrandizement. For centuries untold the taskmaster has exacted labor, blood, and life from the bondman, with no sense of pity for the oppressed's misery, with eye only to his own ease, enrichment, and indulgence. And the taskmaster idea survives long after slavery is abolished.

In this more humane age we often

stand aghast at the methods by which the weak in other ages were taken advantage of by the strong, and their infirmities made the occasion of pleasure and amusement to the strong. The nations of culture in antiquity rudely practised the principle that the weak and unfortunate have no rights the strong are bound to respect. The Spartans placed the deformed and the cripple out on Mount Taygetus to die. The Romans acknowledged the propriety of the same practice. On an enormous scale they sometimes carried it out in the butcheries of conquered peoples for the sake of self-glorification and in the disgrace of noble foes, tied to chariot wheels and dragged along in gay triumphal processions to give the populace delight, as well as in those sanguine combats where human combatants, trained for that special purpose, reddened the arena with their life blood to afford amusement to the spectators. It is not so long ago that tortures and torments were applied to the weak on rack and in cell, which could yield no profit except to the morbid appetite of the strong. The gargoyles on Spanish spires are often Moors, whose features are distorted in agony and distress. The ages gone by seem to have taken delight in the agonizing spectacle of human pain, and to have aggravated it as the Indian did the torture of his victim at the stake. And this in periods of Church domination! For if Tamerlane marked his victorious progress by pyramids of skulls, Coligny's head was sent embalmed as a present to Gregory XIII.

The spirit is not extinct. To conduct and propensities still we apply the term *brutal*, which wrench wealth, superiority, amusement from the sufferings and debasement of the weak. The refinement of the methods by which strength makes merchandise of the weaknesses of the infirm may cover up the brutality of the instinct, but does not change it. Whether it be the cruel treatment of the brute on street or track, in truck or landau, by galling bit or fretting har-

ness, simply to gratify pride or a fashion; or whether it be the heartless treatment of children, or exactions from the dependent classes, or abuse of the person of man or woman by taking advantage of their infirmities or necessities—all is opposed to this Gospel, and is of the flesh, fleshly, and of the earth, earthy.

The Gospel has announced another law of life for man and enforced it by a conspicuous example.

Here love and not force is supreme. The good of others is co-ordinated with our own good. Here the strong do not live for their own aggrandizement alone. No man liveth unto himself. We defame ourselves by making prey of the infirmities of the weak. We dishonor Christ whom we follow. We ought not to please ourselves by making traffic of others necessities. By the Gospel the strong bear the infirmities of the weak.

The struggle for self-existence goes on. The effort to survive is pressed. "Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure," says the apostle. Again, "Work out your own salvation." And still again, "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." The obligation to help ourselves loses none of its emphasis. Every man must bear his own burden, work out his own destiny, and achieve his own crown.

We live also for others. We recognize the rights of the weak. We pity their infirmities. At the side of self-assertion is placed self-renunciation. With self-care is coupled concern for others, and these two draw the chariot of a regenerated life to the highest attainment and to the approval of God. The Christian law summons each to afford to others the utmost opportunity for the development of their faculties, to recover them that are out of the way, to call to the marriage feast of good things them that are in the highways and hedges. Self assertion is only one half the function of life. He who practises it even unto all purity of

thought and cleanness of deportment attains but unto the vestibule of the Christian sanctuary of a life well pleasing to God. One half of the function of life is to care for ourselves, force ourselves upward, bear our own burden. But only one half. One half of the function of life is the care of others, the help of the weak, the bearing of one another's burdens.

The world utters often a motto which is good as far as it goes. It is a great advance upon bruteness—"Live and let live." So it runs, but behind this half-truth selfishness and greed may hide themselves and grow. "Live and help others to live" is the motto of the Gospel. "Look out for Number One" is a favorite maxim of the street, which pushed alone is the brutal principle in full sway. "Do good unto all men" is a maxim coming from a different atmosphere, and while not unfriendly to ambition and all high achievement, is hostile to all methods which compass the gain for self by preying upon the infirmities of others.

The struggle for life now becomes a struggle for eternal life. The well-being of the body is matched by the well-being of the soul. The pleasures and places of the world are exceeded in excellency and permanency by the approval and crown of God. Man lives not by bread alone. He lives by the commendation of God. He survives not by the debasement and loss of others. He survives in their advancement, and rejoices when they can partake of his joy. He will bear the infirmities of the weak, seeking by every means their good unto edification. He will avoid all pretension in looks or haughtiness of manner. He will suppress all ridicule and satire of the deformities and weaknesses of others as outside the dignity of a Christian. Whatever in speech or demeanor may be an occasion of offence to his brother he will avoid. He will have no guile in his heart toward men. "Love thinketh no evil." Stooping down, if necessary, love bears all infirmities and

covers a multitude of sins. "Be not high-minded, but condescend to men of low estate." Unnecessary offence even to a dog will be avoided, or, if committed, will be repented of. When the disciples were met and the Master had bent low to wash their feet, He said unto them, "I have given you an example, that ye do as I have done unto you."

A chief test of Christian civilization is the consideration with which the strong regard the infirmities of the weak. The homes for those who are suffering from the infirmities of age, the hospital for those who are suffering from wounds and disease, the refuge for those who are suffering for moral faults or from mental aberration, the midnight missions, the dispensaries, the industrial school, the free reading-rooms, the societies for the prevention of cruelty to man and beast—these are the glory of our civilization, as the brothels, making prey upon the shame of woman, the gambling dens, the saloons, making spoil of the health and honor of man, are its disgrace, but not its despair; for so long as the cross lifts high its spectacle of mercy, the principle that the "strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak" will go among men, like a stream of waters, pure as crystal.

Our literature bears witness to the infusion of this humane principle. The "Song of the Shirt" has a large circle of sympathetic readers. The poet who speaks so tenderly of the "wee, sleekit, cowerin', tim'rous beastie," whose fragile house in the fields has been overturned by the plough, moves readers to whom the great epics of arms and the fall and recovery of man are only names. Lowell's "Sir Launfal" and a thousand other poems have their interest from the Christly spirit of regard for the weaknesses of others which they magnify. We turn aside and read as indicative of a great heart the simple incident of Luther, who, instead of joining in the chase, caught the hunted hare and hid it under his cloak, because the

chase reminded him of the way in which Satan hunts for souls. And we step aside from his widely known deeds to the incident in Mr. Lincoln's life when, on his way with other lawyers to the court, he stopped to replace two young birds who had been blown out of their nest, saying, "I could not have slept if I had not restored those little birds to their mother."

A prince of the blood who finds pleasure in the indulgences of the flesh, while he sets a bad example to his people, only shows again how close a man may be to the summit of all earthly dignities and glories, and yet how far he may be from the life of Christ. Where there is condition to improve, misery to mitigate, misfortune to be retrieved, manners to be reformed, what a broad field under the exhortation of the text is opened up to them that are strong and powerful by reason of intellect, wealth, social position, and birth! It was a most noble thing, when Naples was suffering from the ravages of the cholera a few years ago, for King Humbert to turn aside from the races, where he had made appointment to be, and to hasten to the relief of his people. "*A Pordenone si fa festa. A Napoli si muore. Vado a Napoli. Umberto.*" ("At Pordenone they are having sport. At Naples they are dying. I will go to Naples.") Such was the telegram he sent, and hail to any prince who acts in this spirit! He will live in the hearts as in the prosperity of his people.

It is this law of the Gospel which has led men into all self-abasements and all heroisms of self-renunciation, and abashes all corporations and individuals who, in order to please themselves, amuse themselves, enrich themselves, exalt themselves, rob the poor, oppress the weak, or lock up their own treasures of strength, influence, or wealth, and withhold from bearing the infirmities of the weak and helping them on to all well-being.

For the motto, "The fittest survive," the Gospel substitutes the watchword,

"*The unfit must survive*," "the lost must be saved," "the sinning be reclaimed," yea, "the dead be made alive again." If thine enemy hunger, feed him. In cell, in sick-chamber, in abode of wretchedness, on the dark mountains, the strong espies the infirmities of the weak and goes to their rescue. Self must stoop low to break the fetters of others. Pride must empty itself to carry a cup of cold water to a thirsty soul and to wash a bleeding foot. And if meat make my brother to offend or drink, I will neither eat meat nor drink wine, for I am here by all means to save some. "Though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. To the weak, because I was weak, that I might save the weak. I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some."

The principle of the apostle and the opposing principle may be contrasted. The indifference of the strong, in quest of self-gain and amusement, to the infirmities of the weak, was embodied on an imposing scale in that amphitheatre at Rome where great remains justify the appellation "colossal." Built by the Emperor Titus in the shape of an ellipse, six hundred feet by five hundred feet, its outer walls rising one hundred and forty feet, and coated with marble, it was within fitted with sixty or eighty rows of benches rising one above the other. Eighty thousand spectators looked down from these seats upon the spectacles taking place on the arena beneath. There wild beasts, maddened by previous starvation, were let loose to delight the audiences, and gladiators contended in mortal combat to afford them a holiday. Trajan, at his accession, exposed ten thousand unhappy captives to death by each other's hands, and the bloody sport prolonged itself one hundred and twenty-three days. To-day the tourist walks through the deserted spaces, looks with wonder upon the foundations of the benches and at the gaping dens beneath where the wild beasts were caged, and at the

avenues through which they were let forth into the arena.

The other scene is recent. I am standing in front of a village school. The shadows of the Lebanon rest upon the valley. In a humble room a group of children are gathered and sitting on the mud floor, with tin slates and primers in their hands. On a plain table lies a large volume, the Arabic Bible. A native school-teacher, who has received his training in Beirut, conducts the school, as one after the other the classes show their slates, repeat Psalms and other exercises, and sing songs. Here is the mission of Christianity, and as I turn away with my missionary friend, I say, Here is the Gospel, with its ministry. In the one case we have on a huge scale an embodiment of the selfish and brutal principle by which the strong prey upon the infirmities of the weak. In the other we have the realization of the apostolic injunction, whereby "the strong bear the infirmities of the weak."

III. But is it possible to realize in this selfish and passionate world a principle so beautiful in theory? Is this not all a dream of the enthusiast? Yes, it is possible to realize it. In Christ we have the full embodiment of the lofty rule that the "strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please themselves." Who had better right to please himself than He, the Son of God, by self-indulgence and exactions from the weak? But of Him it is said, "Even Christ pleased not Himself." He made Himself of no reputation. He became poor that others might be made rich. He humbled Himself unto death, even the death of the cross, that He might bear our griefs and carry our sorrows. To the woman who had been bent with her afflictions eighteen years He said, "O woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmities." He condescended to men of low estate. Instead of seeking to exalt Himself by pretentious looks and haughty manners, He made Himself lowly. "The reproaches of men fell upon Me." His

generation would have had Him make vain show of His power and glory from pinnacle of the temple and on the cross. He knew better. He saw further. The ages to come had lessons to learn from Him of self-renunciation and abasement for the good of others. "I lay down My life for the world." The Good Samaritan of the parable teaches what Christ was, and what we ought to be.

By doing good Christ has taught us to do good unto all men. In expecting mercy He has taught us to show mercy. I do not pretend to say in what way corporations must act to observe this principle. That must be left to the conscience of each individual. But here is the principle. In going too far in extorting pleasure and profit from blind Samson we perish with him in his fall. The high do God's will, who keep themselves pure and are tender toward the infirmities of others, seek to edify them, to do them good, by fair treatment, by sharing their abundance, by visiting the sick, by weeping with them that weep, by handing a cup of the cool water of eternal life and hope. Not by selfish self-indulgence, not by hoarding our strength and riches, but by doing good to men, caring for those in distress, encouraging the fallen and comforting the broken-hearted, do the strong survive in this kingdom of God and win in this race for eternal life. For even Christ pleased not Himself. "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves."

THE FOLLIES OF THE WISE.

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The children of this world are, in their generation, wiser than the children of light.—Luke xvi. 8.

THE parable of which these words are the close is remarkable in that it proposes a piece of deliberate roguery

as, in some sort, a pattern for Christian people. The steward's conduct was neither more nor less than rascality. And yet, says Christ, "Do like that!"

The explanation is to be found mainly in the consideration that what was faithless sacrifice of his master's interests, on the part of the steward, is, in regard to the Christian man's use of earthly gifts, the right employment of the possessions which have been entrusted to him. But there is another vindication of the singular selection of such conduct as an example, in the consideration that what is praised is not the dishonesty, but the foresight, realization of the facts of the case, promptitude, wisdom of various kinds exhibited by the steward. And so says our Lord—shutting out the consideration of ends, and looking only for a moment at means—the world can teach the Church a great many lessons; and it would be well for the Church if its members lived in the fashion in which the men of the world do. There is eulogium here, a recognition of splendid qualities, prostituted to low purposes; a recognition of wisdom in the adaptation of means to an end; and a limitation of the recognition because it is only "*in their generation*" that "*the children of this world are wiser than the children of light.*"

I. So we may look, first, at these two classes, which our Lord opposes here to one another.

"The children of the world" would have, for their natural antithesis, the children of another world. The "children of light" would have, for their natural antithesis, "the children of darkness." But our Lord so orders His words as to suggest a double antithesis, one member of which has to be supplied in each case. And He would teach us that whoever the children of this world may be, they are "children of darkness;" and that the "children of light" are so, just because they are the children of another world than this. Thus He limits His praise, because it is the sons of *darkness* that, in