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"NOT SLOTHFUL IN BUSINESS: FERVENT IN SPIRIT."

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## Poetry.

### The Words of Jesus.

I HAVE heard a lute's soft music,  
And harp-notes in the air;  
I have heard a flute's rich echoes  
Singing and dying there:  
And the singing voice of birds,  
And the ring of a silver bell,  
And the passing winds of heaven  
As they rise, and sink, and swell.

But nature's many voices,  
Though sweet, and passing fair,  
With the blessed words of Jesus  
Could never yet compare.  
And even the glorious angels  
Harping before the throne,  
Such wondrous power and harmony  
In their songs could never own.

Yet they had something, too,  
Of the harp-note's melting tone,  
As they spoke to weary spirits  
Of rest in a better home:  
Were tender as the lute's,  
When He folded to His breast  
Fair babes, and little children,  
And hush'd them there to rest.

And richer than the echoing  
Of flute-notes on the air,  
Was the music of His teaching  
To those who gathered there;  
When in deep tones of pity  
He warned of death and sin,  
And to the shelter of His love,  
Would fain have brought them in.

And far more grand and glorious  
Than any sounds of earth,  
Were the words that roused the dead,  
And called the slumberers forth;  
Quelled by their mighty power  
The raging of the sea,  
And by their stern authority  
Made evil spirits flee.

Earth listened to His voice,  
And, it may be, from its tones,  
Learned the sweet melodies that float  
Round and about our homes;  
Else why should simple echoes  
With thrilling music breathe,  
And the roaring waves of ocean  
With such wild cadence heave?

His voice is here no more,  
But its echoes still remain;  
And often to the waiting heart  
They come and come again.  
Listen with mute attention  
For those whispers of His love,  
Till in its richest harmony  
Ye hear His voice above.

## Selections.

### The Mountain and the Closet.

A HOMILY.

BY HENRY WARD BEECHER.

"And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone." (Matt. xiv. 23.) He left the crowded shore, the thronged highway, and crossing the turf fields, came to the edges of the mountains. His pulse throbb'd and his breath quicken'd as he clomb, as ours does when we climb. The sparrow, not knowing its Creator and Protector, flew away from his coming. His form cast its shadow, as he passed, over bush, and flower, and grass, and they knew not that their Maker overshadowed them. Sounds grew fainter behind him. Those who had followed him, one by one, dropped off, and the first eye that looked after him had lost his form amid the wavering leaves, and was withdrawn. He was in the mountain, and alone. The day was passing. The last red light followed him, and stain'd the air of the forest with ruddy hues. At length the sun went down, and it was twilight in the mountains, though bright yet in the open field. But when it was twilight in the field, it was already dark in the mountain. The stars were coming forward and filling the heavens.

No longer drawn outward by the wants of the crowd, what were the thoughts of such a soul? And what were the prayers? Even if Christ were but a man, such an errand of such a man would be sublime. But how foolish are all words which would

approach the grandeur of Christ's solitude upon the mountain when we regard him as very God, though incarnated, communing with his co-equal Father!

What was the varied prayer? What tears were shed, what groans were breathed, what silent yearnings, what voiceless utterances of desire, no man may know. Walking to and fro, or sitting upon some fallen rock, or prostrate in overpowering emotion, the hours passed on until morning dawn'd. When he went down to his disciples, they neither inquired nor did he speak of his mountain watch.

If prayer be the communion of the soul with God, it is but a little part of it that can be uttered in words; and still less that will take form of words in the presence of others. Of outward wants, of outward things, of one's purely earthly estate, we can speak freely. But of the soul's inward life—of its struggles with itself—its hopes, yearnings, griefs, loves, joys—of its very personality—it is reserved to such a degree, that there can be no prayer expressive of the inward life, until we have entered into the closet and shut the door. Every Christian whose life has developed itself into great experience of secret prayer, knows that the hidden things of the closet transcend all uttered prayer as much in depth, richness, and power, as they do in volume and space.

Sometimes we mourn the loss of old books in ancient libraries; we marvel what more the world would have had if the Alexandrian library had not perished; we regret the decay of parchments, the rude waste of monks with their stupid palimpsests. We sorrow for the lost arts, and grieve that the fairest portions of Grecian art lie buried from research; that the Parthenon should come down within—two hundred years of our time, with its wealth of magnificence, a voice in stone from the old world to the new, and yet perish almost before our eyes!

But when one reflects upon the secret history which has transpired in men's thoughts, and that the noblest natures have been they whose richest experiences could never have been drawn forth through the pen, or recorded in books, but have found utterance through prayer and before the conscious glory of the Invisible Presence—I am persuaded that the silent literature of the closet is infinitely more wonderful in every attribute of excellence, than all that has been sung in song, or recorded in literature, or lost in all the confusions of time. If rarest classical fragments, the perished histories and poets of every people, could be revived, they would be as nothing in comparison with the effusions of the closet, could they be gathered and recorded.

The noblest natures it is that resort to this study. The rarest inspiration rests upon them. Flying between the heavens and the earth, with winged faith, they reach out into glories which do not descend to the lower spheres of thought.

How many souls, so large and noble, that they rose up in those days of persecution, and left home and love for the faith of Christ, and went to the wilderness and dwelt therein, gave forth in prayer their whole life! Doubtless their daily prayers were rich and deep in spiritual life. But there are peculiar days to all—days of vision—days when we see all human life as in a picture, and all future life as in a vision; and when the reason, the imagination, the affections, and the experiences of life, are so tempered together that we consciously live more in an hour than at other times in months. Every man has his mountains of transfiguration, and sees and talks with the revealed and radiant dead. In such experiences, what must have been the wonders of prayer, when the noblest natures—rich in all goodness, deeply cultured in knowledge, refined in all taste, and enriched in pure lives, but driven out among the wild shaking leaves of the wilderness for their father's sake—poured out their whole soul before God; their conscious weakness and sinfulness; their yearnings and trials; their hopes and strivings; their sense of this life, and their

view of the other; their longing for God's church on earth, and their prospect of the glorified church in heaven! What if some listener had made haste to put down the prayers of Luther, with all his strong crying and tears, if that could be possible! How many noble natures gave up to celibacy and virginity the wondrous treasures of multitudinous affections. And when at periods of heart-swellings, in hours when the secret tide set in upon men from the eternal ocean, and carried them upon mighty longings and yearnings toward God, before whom they poured forth in mingled sobs and words those affections which were meant to be cas'd in the relations of life, but which hindered and choked, found tumultuous vent in mighty prayer to God!

Consider what mothers' hearts have always been. How many thousand thousand of them have watched day and night over the cradle till the body failed, but the spirit waxed even keener; and, with what wondrous gushes of words, such as would disdain to be called eloquence, have they besought God, with every persuasion, for the life of the child! We judge these things by our own experience. All the words that were ever spoken, and all the thoughts that we have conceived, are unfit to bear up the skirt of those prayers, which burst, without words, right out of our hearts, for the life of dying children!

Consider what a heavenly wonder must be the Book of Prayer that lies before God? For groans are interpreted there. Mute joys gain tongue before God. Unutterable desires, that go silently up from the heart, burst forth into divine pleadings, when touched by the Spirit, their imprisoned nature comes forth; could thoughts or aspirations be made visible, could they assume a form that befitted their nature, what an endless procession would be seen going toward the throne of God, day and night! Consider the wrestlings of all the wretched, the cry of orphans, the ceaseless pleadings of the bereaved, and those fearing bereavement; the prayer of trust betrayed; of hope darkened; of home deserted; of joy quenched; the prayers of faithful men from dungeons and prison houses; the prayers of slaves, who found man, law and the church around and against them, and had no way left to look but upward toward God! The hearts of men by myriads have been pressed by the words, as grapes in a wine-press, and have given forth a heavenly wine. Beds of long sickness have learned such thoughts of resignation, and such patient trust and joy, that the heavenly book is bright with the foot-prints of their prayers! The very silence of sickness is often more full of richest thoughts than all the books of earth have ever been!

"And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and the four-and-twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of the saints." And the other magnificence of the scene one may read in the fifth chapter of that gorgeous Book of Divine Pictures, the Revelation! How remarkable would it seem, if it were revealed to us that there dwelt in the air a race of fine and fairy spirits, whose work it was to watch all flowers of the earth, and catch their perfumed breath and preserve it in golden vials for heavenly use! But how much more grand is the thought, that all over the earth, God's angels have caught the heart's breath, its prayers and love, and that in heaven they are before God like precious odours poured from golden vases by saintly hands! Again the Divine Head is anointed with precious ointment, not now from the broken alabaster, a woman's gift, but by heavenly hands poured sweeter still from broken hearts on earth. The influences which brood upon the soul in such a covert as the closet, are not like the coarse stimulants of earthly thought. It is no fierce rivalry—no conflict for victory—no hope of praise or hunger of fame, that throw lurid light upon the mind. The soul rises to its highest nature, and meets the influence that rest upon it from above. What is the depth of calmness—what is the vision of faith—what is the rapture—

the ecstasy of love, the closet knows more grandly than any other place of human experience!

### The Sinner's Trial.

A DIALOGUE BETWEEN MERCY, LAW, JESUS AND THE SINNER.

By the Rev. C. H. SPURGEON.

An extract from a sermon entitled "Why are men saved?"—(founded on Psalm cvl. 8: "Nevertheless he saved them for his name's sake,") preached in the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

"Let me close by noticing obstacles removed, in the word 'nevertheless.' I shall do that by way of parable. Once on a time, Mercy sat upon her snow-white throne, surrounded by the troops of love. A sinner was brought before her, whom Mercy designed to save. The herald blew the trumpet, and after three blasts thereof, with a loud voice, he said, 'O heaven, and earth, and hell, I summon you this day to come before the throne of Mercy, to tell why this sinner should be saved.' There stood the sinner, trembling with fear; he knew that there were multitudes of opponents who would press into the hall of Mercy, and with eyes full of wrath, would say, 'He must not, and he shall not escape; he must be lost!' The trumpet was blown, and Mercy sat placidly on her throne, until there stepped in one with a fiery countenance; his head was covered with light; he spoke with a voice like thunder, and out of his eyes flashed lightning! 'Who art thou?' said Mercy. He replied, 'I am Law; the law of God.' 'And what hast thou to say?' 'I have this to say, and he lifted up a stony tablet, written on both sides; 'these ten commands this wretch has broken. My demand is blood; for it is written, 'the soul that sinneth it shall die.' Die he, or justice, must.' The wretch trembles, his knees knock together, the marrow of his bones melts within him, as if they were ice dissolved by fire, and he shakes with very fright. Already he thought he saw the thunderbolt launched at him, he saw the lightning penetrate into his soul, hell yawned before him in imagination, and he thought himself cast away for ever. But Mercy smiled, and said, 'Law, I will answer thee. This wretch deserves to die; justice demands that he should perish—I award thee thy claim.' And oh! how the sinner trembles. 'But there is one yonder who has come with me to-day, my king, my Lord; his name is Jesus; he will tell you how the debt can be paid, and the sinner can go free.' Then Jesus spake, and said, 'O Mercy, I will do thy bidding. Take me Law; put me in a garden; make me sweat drops of blood; then nail me to a tree; scourge my back before you put me to death; hang me on the cross; let blood run from my hands and feet; let me descend into the grave; let me pay all the sinner oweth; I will die in his stead.' And the Law went out and scourged the Saviour, nailed him to the cross, and coming back with his face all bright with satisfaction, stood again at the throne of Mercy, and Mercy said, 'Law, what hast thou now to say?' 'Nothing,' said he, 'fair angel, nothing.' 'What! not one of these commands against him?' 'No, not one. Jesus, his substitute, has kept them all—has paid the penalty for his disobedience; and now, instead of his condemnation, I demand, as a debt of justice, that he be acquitted.' 'Stand thou here,' said Mercy, 'sit on my throne; I and thou together will now send forth another summons.' The trumpet rang again. 'Come hither all ye who have aught to say against this sinner, why he should not be acquitted;' and up comes another—one who often troubled the sinner—one who had a voice not so loud as that of the Law, but still piercing and thrilling—a voice whose whispers were like the cuttings of a dagger. 'Who art thou?' said Mercy. 'I am Conscience; this sinner must be punished; he has done so much against the law of God that he must be punished; I demand it; and I will give him no rest till he is punished, nor even then, for I will follow him even to the grave, and persecute him after death with pangs unutterable.' 'Nay,