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In Memoriam.

A MEMORIAL DISCOURSE

IN HONOUR OF

JOHN STUART MILL,

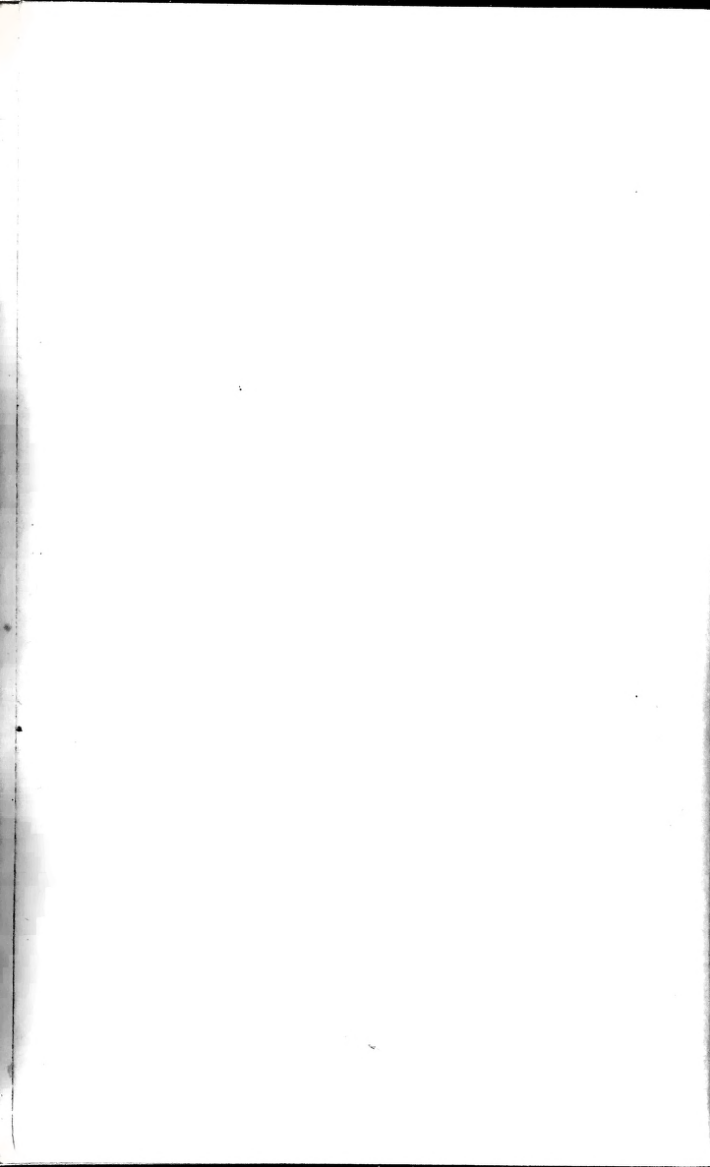
BY

MONCURE D. CONWAY.

WITH HYMNS AND READINGS.

SOUTH PLACE CHAPEL, FINSBURY,
SUNDAY, MAY 25TH, 1873.

PRICE SIXPENCE.



HYMN.

Britain's first poet,
Famous old Chaucer,
Swanlike, in dying
Sung his last song,
When at his heart-strings
Death's hand was strong.

“ From false crowds flying
Dwell with soothfastness ;
Prize more than treasure
Hearts true and brave ;
Truth to thine own heart
Thy soul shall save.

“ Trust not to fortune ;
Be not o'ermeddling ;
Thankful receive thou
Good which God gave ;
Truth to thine own heart
Thy soul shall save.

“ Earth is a desert,
Thou art a pilgrim :
Led by thy spirit,
Grace from God crave ;
Truth to thine own heart
Thy soul shall save.”

Dead through long ages
 Britain's first poet—
 Still the monition
 Sounds from his grave,
 "Truth to thine own heart
 Thy soul shall save."

Music by E. Taylor.

W. J. Fox.

READINGS.

How beautiful, upon the mountains,
 Are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings,
 That publisheth Peace !

Upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, have I set watchmen
 Who shall never hold their peace, day and night.

Go through, go through the gates ;

Prepare ye the way of the people !

Lift up a standard to the peoples !

Behold my servant whom I uphold,

My chosen one in whom my soul delighteth :

I have put my spirit upon him ;

He shall publish right among the nations.

A bruised reed shall he not break,

And the smoking flax shall he not quench.

He shall publish right in truth.

He shall not grow feeble nor be discouraged,

Till he have established right in the earth ;

And the isles shall wait for his law.

I have called thee for deliverance,

A light of the nations,

To open blind eyes,

To set at liberty those that are bound,

Even them that sit in the prison of Darkness.

ISAIAH.

I have heard these words—"Living in solitude to master their aims, practising rectitude in carrying out their principles"—but where have I seen such men?

To sit in silence and recall past ideas, to study and feel no anxiety, to instruct men without weariness; have I this ability in me?

The man of character does not go out of his place. He is modest in speech, but exceeds in action.

He will hold rectitude essential—bringing his work forth in humility, performing it with prudence, completing it with sincerity. What he seeks is in himself.

There is a divine nobility and a human nobility. To be a prince, a prime minister, or a great officer, constitute human nobility. Benevolence, justice, fidelity, and truth, and to delight in virtue without weariness, constitute divine nobility. The ancients adorned divine nobility, and human nobility followed it.

It has never been the case that he who was not sincere could influence others; nor that he who possessed genuine virtue could not influence others.

Whenever the superior man passes renovation takes place.

The principles of great men illuminate the universe. The principles they cherish begin with the common duties of men and women, but in their extent they light up the universe.

CONFUCIUS.

Buddha was residing at Jetavana. In the night a heavenly being, illuminating Jetavana with his radiance, approached him, saying—"Many gods and men desire to know the things that are excellent." Buddha said:—

“ To serve the wise and not the foolish, and to honour what is worthy of honour : these are excellencies.

“ To dwell in the neighbourhood of the good, to bear the remembrance of good deeds, and to have a soul filled with right desires : these are excellencies.

“ To have knowledge of truth, to be instructed in science, to have a disciplined mind, and pleasant speech : these are excellencies.

“ To honour father and mother, to provide for wife and child, and to follow a blameless vocation : these are excellencies.

“ To be charitable, act virtuously, be faithful to friends, and lead an innocent life : these are excellencies.

“ To be pure, temperate, and persevering on a right path : these are excellencies.

“ Humility, reverence, contentment, gratitude, attentiveness to wise instruction : these are excellencies.

“ To be gentle, to be patient, to converse with the religious : these are excellencies.

“ Self-restraint and Charity, the knowledge of the great principles, and the hope of the eternal repose : these are excellencies.

“ To have a mind unshaken by prosperity or adversity, inaccessible to sorrow, secure and tranquil : these are excellencies.

“ They that do these things are the invincible ; they attain the perfect good.”

BUDDHA.

Seeing the multitudes Jesus went up into a mountain ; and when he had sat down, his disciples came unto him. And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying :—

“ Blessed are the poor in spirit ; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are the lowly ; for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are they who mourn ; for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after justice ; for they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful ; for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart ; they shall see God.

Blessed are the peace-makers ; for they shall be called the children of God.

Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness sake ; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you, falselyfor so did they persecute the prophets that were before you.

Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but in a candlestick ; and it giveth light to all that are in the house. In like manner let your light shine before men, that others seeing your good works may judge of your Father in Heaven."

JESUS.

Calmly, calmly lay him down !

He hath fought the noble fight ;

He hath battled for the right ;

He hath won the unfading crown.

Memories, all too bright for tears,

Crowd around us from the past,

Faithful toiled he to the last,—

Faithful through unflagging years.

All that makes for human good,
 Freedom, righteousness, and truth,
 Objects of aspiring youth,
 Firm to age he still pursued.

Kind and gentle was his soul,
 But it glowed with glorious might ;
 Filling clouded minds with light,
 Making wounded spirits whole.

Dying, he can never die !
 To the dust his dust we give ;
 In our hearts his heart shall live ;
 Moving, guiding, working aye.

Music from Beethoven.

Adapted from Gaskell.

MEDITATION.

Sweet day ! so cool, so calm, so bright,
 Bridal of earth and sky ;
 The dew shall weep thy fall to-night,
 For thou must die !

Sweet rose ! in air whose odours wave,
 And colour charms the eye ;
 Thy root is ever in its grave,
 And thou must die !

Sweet spring ! of days and roses made,
 Whose charms for beauty vie ;
 Thy days depart, thy roses fade,
 For thou must die !

Only a sweet and holy soul
 Hath tints that never fly ;
 While flowers decay, and seasons roll,
 It cannot die.

George Herbert.

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JOHN STUART MILL.

OF old it was said "The righteous dieth and no man layeth it to heart." That at least cannot be said of England standing beside the grave of her noblest son. Friend and foe have laid to heart the departure from the world of one who has left so deep an impress upon it. The Church journal which honestly exults in his death, saying it is glad he is gone and does not care how soon his friends follow him, has laid it to heart. Those who are busily circulating in private a printed catalogue of slanders against his fair fame, have laid it to heart.

Let them rave,
 He is quiet in his grave.

They cannot rave his truth out of existence. Their hatred only reveals how deep his arrow has gone into the heart of their wrong. Great men may be measured, like towers, by the shadows they cast. Their elevation is attested by the wrath of the base against them. But they alone know the height who have

climbed to it, and caught the grander view it commands. And whilst a few, with vulture instinct, are tearing the sod above the great heart, we may well turn with a sad satisfaction to the general and real grief of this people at the sorrowful tidings that the powerful brain so busy with schemes for human welfare is still, that the heart which beat only for man beats no more. The high-toned and impressive utterances of the press have done honour to the national feeling. Westminster Abbey has asked permission to enshrine his dust. Prime Minister* and Peer have joined with philosopher and poet to do homage to his worth. Whatever posterity may have to say of the shortcomings of this generation, so much we may be sure will be recorded in its honour. There is a dreary catalogue in the past of the great unrecognised, of mighty spirits sitting in the world at mighty tasks, and departing, to leave a consecration only to the vacant rooms where they have laboured, and bring men as pilgrims to pay to their dust the homage denied to their lives. That day is past. The people listened to this great man; bore him to their Parliament; shaped their law to his thought; and they now feel on them the shadow of the dark valley into which he has entered.

Certain eminent men, in giving their names to the Committee formed to express in some suitable form

* Since this was spoken, Mr. Gladstone has withdrawn from the Committee formed to prepare some fit memorial of Mr. Mill,

this national feeling, have taken care to say that it implies no unity of sentiment with Mr. Mill on great questions. However needless such a precaution may be, it is another tribute to his distinctive grandeur. It reminds us again that his fame was won without compliance. It was not by concession to the opinions of others ; it was not by bending before the position or principles of the powerful, or reflecting established prejudice, that he gained the reverence now accorded him. But it is despite a life-long opposition to such opinions and prejudices that his genius and character make themselves felt, and prevail like some law of nature. And, indeed, this man's strength lay in his near relationship to the laws of nature. We may say of him as Confucius said of his dead friend, "Heaven alone is great and he was like unto it." No artificial systems could allure him from his allegiance to the order of nature and the order of thought. He had raised his heart and brain into accord with the truth of things, to its vision he was ever obedient, and what he spoke to men was what he had learned while sitting as a devotee in his solitude, communing with eternal reason.

There is a date in my own memory, marked round with vermilion, when I had the high privilege of passing a day with him amid wood and field, and beneath the blue sky. And while he spoke, leaf and flower and sunbeam seemed to weave themselves around him as a frame. His words were their kindred, so real were they, so gentle and so true. To listen was to be

raised into a purer atmosphere. He spoke of a modern French philosopher, with whom he had been too much identified, who had treated certain sciences with a certain contempt as not being of utility to man. "As if," he said, "any one could tell what is of utility to mankind! How many a truth, seemingly insignificant, has turned out to be of momentous importance! How many inventions, after remaining a long time little more than toys, have become engines of civilisation! This little plant I have just plucked, and mean to examine, who can say it may not be just the one link needed in a great chain of knowledge? It is never safe to regard any fact as small. All that we esteem great truths have been built up by these apparently small bits of discovery, and to despise any truth because we cannot see its use would bring our advance to a full stop."

At another time, and when listening to his conversation on a totally different subject, I had reason to observe how each conviction he held ran through and through him. He was this time speaking of the downfall of slavery in America, and the principle he had maintained of reverently treasuring every truth, however small or seemingly useless, re-appeared in his faith that right ideas should be pursued, however hopeless or visionary they might appear. From an intimate acquaintance with the chief anti-slavery men of America, I had said that they had not at all hoped to see the success of their labours. They had grown up from nothing; they had been derided as a handful of

visionaries; they had agreed that they were visionaries, and the most sanguine among them had never dreamed of that near consummation of their hope which they have lived to witness. "It was that very fact," said Mr. Mill, "that made their power so great, and their victory so complete. Not seeing a near success, not hoping to reap what they were sowing, they gave themselves all the more absolutely to the principle. They were not tempted to compromise it by any prospect of securing success by doing so. It is no true Utilitarian principle for men to maintain only that whose practical outcome and effect they can see and measure; but it is to trust that the truth is and must be useful, if not to us, to those who come after us. To serve the truth thus unreservedly is itself, too, success, even though it may appear unsuccessful. The anti-slavery men of America refused to sanction a great wrong by participating in the politics of the country: they would not even vote; but each man who abstained from voting thereby really voted very heavily; and the abolition of slavery which has followed is the sublimest manifestation of purely moral power which our time has witnessed. It is a lesson of the might that may lie in the most seemingly ineffective and unpractical principle that we hold."

This, you will observe, is a restatement in application to morals and politics, of that principle he had maintained with reference to Nature, that the smallest and most useless fact was to be studied and rever-

enced as much as the greatest, and that it was constantly turning out that the least was the greatest.

It is hard to preserve patience with those who have attributed to Mr. Mill the belief in that kind of Utilitarianism which is coarsely conceived by themselves as a mere consecration of that which is convenient or immediately serviceable. The whole life of this man was devoted to ideals. Above the heads of time-servers and self-seekers, he passed on with his eye fixed on the star-like truth from which he never swerved. I will not dwell on that which his personal friends know: that he might have been a man of large wealth had he not held his income more for solitary students, and poor scholars, and public purposes than for himself; but I may ask with what Idealist can you associate more ideals than with him? The right of the labourer in the land, the secular education of the people, the emancipation of mankind from superstition, the enfranchisement of women—all visions! As visions he espoused them; as fair ideals he lived for them; as dreams unrealised he has gone down amid them to his long sleep. Yet these were the bright hopes of a Utilitarian philosopher, of one whose Utilitarianism consisted in his perfect faith that whatever was true was also useful, and who had proved to us in the world that though we do not avail ourselves of that truth, its utility is already manifested in its power to build up a noble life and adorn it with spiritual beauty.

It is one of the saddest signs of the degree to which

the most civilised countries are as yet sunk in superstition that the majority among us, perhaps, can only think of such a man as a Sceptic, or an unbeliever in religion. There was infinitely more religion in his unbelief than can be found in all the Churches of England. In an epigram of Schiller's it is said : " To what religion dost thou belong ? " " To none you could name. " " And wherefore to none ? " " For the sake of religion. " (*Aus Religion.*) In an age which bows down to graven images—none the less graven images because set on inward altars—here was one who would not bow down to such nor serve them, and straightway the cry is heard " Infidel, " " Atheist ! " It really makes religion a mockery. If Infidelity means such lives, Heaven send us more Infidels ! The truth was that he could belong to none of the religions around him simply because he was too religious. There is a certain characteristic which is inherent in all fine natures, that what they think they also feel. It was the character of Mr. Mill, beyond all the men I have ever known, that his feelings went along with his thoughts. It was not enough for him to know virtue, he must possess it ; and it was not enough for him to possess it, but he must love it. Truth was his Lord, and his delight was in the law of that Lord ; and on that law did he meditate day and night. Consequently it was impossible for him to follow the common plan of saying one thing while he felt another ; to repeat creeds not in his heart ; or to enter temples where he must leave truth at the threshold.

But the habitual reverence of his mind, his essential religiousness, made him in every moment a worshipper, and every spot whereon he stood a temple.

In matters of transcendent import with which small theologians have complete though suspicious familiarity, he was reticent. On one occasion within my knowledge he spoke in conversation concerning the great subjects of human belief and hope—spiritual existence and immortality. “On these things,” he said, “there is no positive evidence at all. It is true that in experience we know of mind only in connection with physical organisation; but this is no evidence that it may not exist otherwise. There is really no evidence bearing on the subject one way or the other. All that can be said is, that the common aspiration of mankind furnishes a presumption in favour of the reality of that towards which it aspires; but the actual proof or confirmation of that presumption must wait for the further increase of human knowledge. Nothing is proved—all is possibility.”

This may seem a very slight faith beside the intimate knowledge copiously poured forth from every little chapel pulpit, where everything is known about Heaven and Hell and God, even to the number of his family; but I believe that Humility will rather go and sit beside the thinker in his ignorance, and acknowledge its inability to comprehend the incomprehensible or utter the unutterable. Socrates once received a prize in Athens for possessing greater

knowledge than any other; and that knowledge in which he excelled was knowledge of his own ignorance.

It may be noted of Mr. Mill that he is one of the very few great authors who have never uttered or written one word of discouragement. As a political economist he was the first to encourage the labourer to believe that his lot might and would be improved; as a social reformer he was the first to encourage woman to have faith in her larger destiny; and now here in the region of religious inquiry, in the moment when he was warning a friend of the lack of real knowledge of those high matters, he ended with the cheering words, "All is possibility!" He knew full well how many planets had rolled on overhead, undiscovered through long ages, to be revealed at length to watchers by night when the instruments for seeing them had been perfected, to say to us, Because you know nothing now you will never know anything. Rather amid the darkness he has sounded the watchword clear and strong—"All is possibility." For this really is the tenor of all he has written. And we may say that his whole philosophic work was an endeavour to perfect the lenses and the telescopes of the mind, to teach men how to use the instruments of thought, through which that highest knowledge is to be reached, if it is ever to be reached. And so great was his service in teaching men what knowledge is and what it is not, in teaching them the meaning of words and the values of their ideas, that I doubt not when all the

fictions and superstitions have cleared away, if then any insight into supersensual mysteries is attained, the age attaining it will canonise as a saint this man who taught men how to look and whither to look. The ancient world—to use an illustration suggested by himself—did not much regard the mathematicians of Alexandria, who passed what seemed idle days and nights investigating the properties of the ellipse, but two thousand years after their speculations explained the solar system, and through their labours ships now circumnavigate the globe.

There is a passage which Mr. Mill once wrote about Plato in which, as I think, he unconsciously described the task of his own life. He says:—"The enemy against which Plato really fought was Commonplace. It was the acceptance of traditional opinions and current sentiments as an ultimate fact; and bandying of the abstract terms which express approbation and disapprobation, desire and aversion, admiration and disgust, as if they had a meaning thoroughly understood and universally assented to. The men of his day (like those of ours) thought that they knew what good and evil, just and unjust, honourable and shameful, were, because they could use the words glibly, and affirm them of this and of that, in agreement with existing custom. But what the property was, which these several instances possessed in common, justifying the application of the term, nobody had considered; neither the sophists, nor the rhetoricians, nor the statesmen, nor any of those who set themselves

up or were set up by others as wise. Yet, whoever could not answer this question was wandering in darkness; had no standard by which his judgments were regulated, and which kept them consistent with one another; no rule which he knew, and could stand by, for the guidance of his life. Not knowing what justice and virtue are, it was impossible to be just and virtuous; not knowing what good is, we not only fail to reach it, but are certain to embrace evil instead. Such a condition, to any one capable of thought, made life not worth having. The grand business of human intellect ought to consist in subjecting these general terms to the most rigorous scrutiny, and bringing to light the ideas that lie at the bottom of them. Even if this cannot be done, and real knowledge be attained, it is already no small benefit to expel the false opinion of knowledge; to make men conscious of their ignorance of the things most needful to be known, fill them with shame and uneasiness at their own state, and rouse a pungent internal stimulus, summoning up all their mental energies to attack these greatest of all problems, and never rest until, as far as possible, the true solutions are reached."

Such was the aim of Plato who lived in an age of transition, inquiry, doubt, like our own; and such was the aim of Mill. Where he saw the houses built on sand swept away, there at least he would dig deep and lay foundations which could never be shaken, based on the truth of things, the eternal rock. We may build on it in darkness, but there will come those who

shall build on it in light. However much we may misunderstand those sent to guide and raise us, we may be sure posterity will make no mistakes. When they cast their eyes back they will surely detect those who amid groaning humanity sought only their own good,—cringed to the strong,—repeated the servile creed,—their double tongue uttering all that is sordid and base. And they will pick out those who came to the rescue of humanity in its time of trial, who stood for justice and simple truth, faithful unto death.* They will say that in the grave of John Stuart Mill closed one of the few sacred lives of history.

There was blended with his intellectual work other that required a yet higher nature, work that needed preponderating moral sensibilities, a deep human sympathy, a rich emotional nature. I have said that Mr. Mill always felt what he thought,—and whenever he spoke the blood in his cheek spoke too. But there were two themes only upon which I have known his habitual calmness give way to agitation,—two only where, as he spoke, his mind caught flame and rose into passionate emotion. One of these was when before emancipation had taken place in America he saw humanity enslaved, and a Republic fettered by the same chain it had bound around the negro. The other was when he saw women struggling to break the galling political and social chains inherited from ancient, from a barbaric past. Into their cause he

* I have remembered here words spoken by Emerson on the death of Theodore Parker.

entered with an enthusiasm which brought again the age of chivalry, and the brave efforts he made to secure woman from hereditary wrong made him to our prosaic time the figure of St. George rescuing the maiden from a dragon. The world has felt a silent sympathy as in the French town he sat, studied, wrote, at a window overlooking the grave that held that treasure of his soul beside whom he now reposes ; but it has admired as it saw this personal devotion to one noble woman consecrating him to the cause of all her sisters. Ah, ye women, who amid many buffets and sneers are striving to attain a truer position and larger life, to help man to raise the suffering world to a higher plane,—ye women, what a friend have you lost ! Daughters of England ! weep not for him, but weep for yourselves and for your children !

The Hindoo standing beside his dead is accustomed to render him back solemnly to the elements. "O Earth," he cries, "of thee he was formed, to thee we commend our brother. Thou Fire, emblem of purity, didst quicken him, to thee we return him. Air that gave him breath, to thee we yield him. Water that sustained, receive thy share of him who has taken an everlasting flight !" Even so must we consign to Nature which gave him to us the man for whom we mourn. Great-hearted brother of all the sons and daughters of men, brave warrior of truth, you have fallen at your task suddenly, when your hope and ours were highest for your future work ; but we consign you to the elements that worked in and through you,

not without consolation ; for we know that the principles you maintained are deep in the heart of that nature to which you return. The flowers blooming over your grave shall write them in the dust, and the rustling leaves repeat them ; the sighing winds will whisper, the storm will publish them ; they shall move with the stars in their courses.

Part in peace ! Is day before us ?
 Praise His name for life and light ;
 Are the shadows lengthening o'er us ?
 Bless His care who guards the night.

Part in peace ! with deep thanksgiving
 Rendering, as we homeward tread,
 Gracious service to the living,
 Tranquil memory to the dead.

Part in peace ! such are the praises,
 God our Father loveth best ;
 Such the worship that upraises
 Human hearts to heavenly rest.

Music by Miss Flower.

Sarah F. Adams.