THE GOSPEL IN PARIS:

SERMONS

BY THE

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OF L'ÉGLISE DE L'ÉTOILE, PARIS.

WITH PERSONAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

BY THE

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XII.

A COURT PREACHER.

"For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife; for John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her."—MATT. xiv. 3, 4.

AT the very threshold of the Gospel we meet the stern and grand figure of the forerunner of Jesus Christ. John the Baptist is the man of the desert. Until the day when he commences his mission, he has dwelt in solitude in the wilderness; far from the artificial society of men, far from the cold, empty, and formal religion which reigned in Jerusalem, he has developed himself; in the unbroken silence of the boundless waste, in the presence of Jehovah alone, his soul has grown strong. No wonder then that, when he appears, when his voice is heard for the first time, men recognise in him a being on whom the world has no power, and who can all the more efficiently act upon it that he is so thoroughly detached from it.

Do you see him, with his gaunt and emaciated frame, the result of frequent and protracted fasts, bronzed by the Eastern sun, and clothed like the poorest of the poor? Do you hear his burning, terrible, and implacable words falling like a sharp axe upon all the iniquities which come under his notice? Nothing stops him. He speaks the truth to all: to great and lowly, to rich and poor, to priests and publicans. At one blow he shivers all that is mere appearance, hypocrisy, or vain ostentation, and unveils the corruption that lies in the depth of the human heart. To all he proclaims the holy and terrible God, the Judge whom none can escape; he points to the horizon where the coming day of vengeance already dawns; he crushes the souls that resist, and promises pardon only to the sinner who, terror-stricken, humbly craves the baptism of repentance.

Truly that mission was grand and formidable. Think of all the hatred which was silently gathering against him. But here is a danger for the prophet which is far more real still—it is the peril of success. His instructions are listened to everywhere and seem to be gladly received; his name produces a magical sensation throughout the country. All are shaken by his voice; the desert is covered with long trains of pilgrims, who come from Galilee, from Judea, and especially from Jerusalem. The priests at first murmur and rage; the stronger minds, the Sadducees, simply sneer; but the movement increases and becomes irresistible. Priests and Sadducees must needs join in it and come to the Jordan in their turn. Herod himself is stirred; he, the accomplished sceptic and libertine, is astonished at the appearance of this strange preacher; he is anxious to hear him. He calls him, says the historian Josephus, to his palace of Machærus, and there he

surrounds him with marks of esteem and distinction.

Now, it is easy enough to attack the world so long as one is a complete stranger to it; it is easy to humble the great of the earth so long as one is wholly independent of them; it is easy to point out the miseries and vices of a class of individuals from whom one expects nothing. But inquire of history; in each of its pages it will tell you how fearful is the snare of success, of popularity, of public favour and flattery, and how many brave and noble souls have foundered upon this reef. What then are the future destinies of that prophet, who, at thirty years of age, has seen, in the space of a few weeks, a whole nation humble itself at his word, and a king himself load him with favours? That is the picture which I would place before your eyes today. I would show you in John the Baptist a court preacher such as the world had never seen before; with you I would learn from his example what it is to be a witness of the truth in the world.

In the court of Herod the prophet had witnessed the most shameful disorder. The king lived in open adultery with his brother's wife. This brother, named Philip, had formerly been disgraced and deprived of all command. Herodias, his wife, had been unwilling to share his degradation; as ambitious as she was depraved, she had deserted him to attach herself to Herod. She had soon been raised to the rank of queen, and now exhibited upon the throne all the scandal of her misconduct.

This Herod (surnamed Antipas) was not the monster of iniquity which popular imagination has made of him; he was a weak and sensual man, given up to his passions, but susceptible of nobler feelings. When he had taken an interest in John, he had not acted a part; the words of the prophet had stirred his soul. Mark tells us that they had troubled him.[1] "He heard him gladly," he adds, but without reforming his conduct. His conscience spoke, doubtless, reproaching him with his shameful life, and with the demoralising example he gave his people. But he reassured himself with the thought that he was protecting a man of God, a holy prophet, and that, at any hour, he could ask counsel of him.

Men who are completely hardened are rare; the greater part, while enjoying the delights of sin, hope to give it up sooner or later. There are times when the shame of evil seizes them, when they are weary of their life, when they are supremely disgusted with themselves, when they are terrified, it may be. Nothing, then, reassures them more fully than the feeling that they have within their reach a means of salvation, a refuge. You do not know all that passes in the heart of man, all that lies concealed beneath the veil of frivolity, all that conscience speaks in the hours when

[1] See Mark vi. 20: "Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man, and a holy, and protected him; and when he heard him, *he was often troubled,* and heard him gladly." Here I have followed the text adopted by M. A. Rilliet (*ηπόρει*, instead of *εποίει.*).

dissipation is impossible. Herod, the debauchee, is glad to have John the Baptist near him. Ah! is he not aware that he is entering upon a perilous path? Does he not know that the warnings of God are not to be trifled with, and that if they touch not the heart they harden it? Does he not know that if the Divine light does not enlighten, it blinds; that we must either love it or hate it more and more, and that in this terrible game of chance we are risking our eternal future? In short, does he not see that, when he offers the prophet a refuge, it is a prison he is preparing for him, until, at last, he will give him an executioner?

What will John the Baptist do? What would he have done had he taken counsel only of human prudence? and we, what should we have done in his place? Only think; he is in favour with Herod. What greater mistake could he make than openly to oppose the monarch who protects him? It is best, many a wise counsellor would doubtless have said, it is best to use caution, and to take into consideration characters and circumstances. Recollect how Herod had been brought up, and what demoralising influences had surrounded him. Remember the pollution which his father's court had presented to his youth. Reflect upon the force of habit, upon the intoxication of royalty. Besides, a great result has already been obtained. Herod has given you his confidence. Should you not acknowledge the hand of God, Himself, in your sudden and unexpected exaltation? Does not God call you thereby to exercise the widest and best influence, to act the part of intercessor for your oppressed people, to render the yoke of the stranger more easy to bear? Ah! who can tell if He does not mean you to assure an efficient protection for His worship? Who can tell if you are not destined to be the instrument He will use to raise His altars, and prepare the approaching reign of the Messiah? In order to obtain such grand results, can you not put up with much? Will you, by a hasty or impatient word, overthrow the designs of God?

Yes, such has been the reasoning of court preachers at almost every epoch. Thus they spoke in the court of Constantine, and that was why they fell so low as to deify this murderer of his own son. Thus they spoke, alas! in the sixteenth century at the court of Henry VIII., whilst that monarch sullied the English Reformation with his infamies. Thus they spoke at the court of Philip of Hesse, and thus was Luther led, in an hour of weakness, to palliate, in a most cowardly manner, the vices of that prince. Thus they spoke in the court of Louis XIV., where Bossuet, who on this point had been so severe against Luther himself, found scarce a courageous word to utter in presence of scandals far more crying still. Thus Massillon quieted his conscience at the Regent's court. . . . Thus, on the free soil of America, in presence of negro slavery, and of all the infamy which accompanied it, thousands of ministers of the Gospel long remained silent or spoke only of

peace, endurance, moderation, until at length a fearful thunder-clap roused their sleeping consciences. . . . Oh! deplorable seduction of the world's favour! That is why dishonoured religion has had *Te Deums* in honour of all the happy strokes of skilful policy, absolutions for all manner of scandals; that is why it is still so miserably compromised in all the complications of human politics, when alone, and without any other support than its intrinsic truth, it would, perhaps, have won the world over to Jesus Christ.

Ah! not thus did they act, those men of the ancient dispensation whom God called to be His witnesses. Not that royal favour was refused to them, for oft would a high price have willingly been paid by kings and princes to obtain their silence. . . . Moses was brought up in Pharaoh's court, but it was to say to that monarch, "Let the Lord's people go." Nathan carne to the court of David, but it was to denounce his adultery and his murder in these bold words: "Thou art the man." Elijah was introduced into the court of Ahab, but it was to say to him, "It is thou that troublest Israel." Micah was sent to the same prince, but it was to warn him of his approaching fall. Jehu came to the court of Jehoram, but it was with this question: "What peace is there with the wicked?" Daniel and Nehemiah lived at the court of the greatest of Eastern monarchs, but it was to be the witnesses of justice, and to mourn over the fate of the people of God.

Well, thou heir of all these prophets, O John the Baptist! what wilt thou say to that Herod who loads thee with his favours? Hear the narrative of Scripture. "John said to the king, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife." What simple yet firm words! There is no hesitancy, no ambiguity. The prophet might have alleged the honour of the prince, the scandal caused by his conduct, the interest of the throne, all those reasons of utility which, in many cases, prove so effective. But that is not what preoccupies him. "It is not lawful for thee." John looks directly to God; it is His glory which forces him to speak. He might have fulfilled his mission in another way, and have saved his life. He might have quitted the palace with display, denounced in presence of all the scandals of Herodias, and excited against her the anger of the multitude. Then a wonderful popularity would have been the reward of the brave denunciator. Thus doubtless would have acted many a tribune of the people, and this kind of courage is not rare. At all times the vices of the great have been the principal cause of the discontent of the masses; at all times those who have aimed at ingratiating themselves with the people have attained their end by simply touching that chord. But seek the true motive of this virtuous indignation, what will you often find it to be? The mere selfish desire of self-advancement. Such men are vigorous in their attacks, expecting thereby to prove their independence towards the great, but they more often prove their servility by the very

manner in which they make themselves the echoes of popular passion. But John the Baptist in presence of the people has been silent concerning the corruption which has distressed his heart. His attitude is unstudied, he is utterly unmindful of the effect he will produce; alone, before Herod, frankly and loyally he tells him, “It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother’s wife.”

Note one more feature in his fidelity: there are many harsh and pitiless characters who have no difficulty whatever in casting at their fellows the most bitter truths. Some would perhaps be inclined to place John the Baptist in this category. This were indeed a great mistake. Notwithstanding his authority, John possessed extreme delicacy of sentiment, and I know not if religious history contains any more touching words than those which he uttered when his disciples left him to follow Jesus Christ, “He that hath the bride is the bridegroom, but the friend of the bridegroom, who standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled; He must increase, but I must decrease.” Oh, when I think of that sublime humility, how deeply struck am I with these noble words, “It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother’s wife”! He knows that this speech will change the king’s favour into hate. It matters not. “It is not lawful.” He knows that henceforth his life is imperilled. He knows that Herodias thirsts for his blood. Again, it matters not. “It is not lawful.” You who have experienced how much of cowardly fear lurks in the human heart, tell us if you know of a nobler heroism than this, and learn of John the Baptist what it is to bear testimony to the truth.

That, brethren, is the lesson which this narrative is meant to teach us. The examples which the Scriptures set before us are not vain pictures, destined simply to stir our imagination; they are appeals and warnings addressed to all Christians. To all, I say, and I insist upon that word. When men are called to bear testimony to the truth, they are not slow in saying or thinking that this is the business of preachers. They most willingly lay this duty upon them. Alas! how few there are who discharge it faithfully, with a view, not to please, but to warn consciences; not to succeed, but to alarm souls unto salvation! And yet we must acknowledge that in our day this mission is not very perilous. All the world knows that he who ascends the pulpit must not do so simply to flatter and deceive souls. If he boldly denounces evil, everybody will readily admit that he has strictly performed his duty. People will forgive him; nay, more, they expect this of him. They willingly encourage him, and the most worldly-minded will listen with interest to words which no one would have the right to utter elsewhere; they will even find in them a keen delight, an actual interest, which will contrast with the ordinary and monotonous tone of the traditional sermon. Noble courage, forsooth, is that which consists in saying from the pulpit

what all the world expects of us! This costs but little effort, brethren; but may not that be the very reason why our words produce so little effect? We mourn over the apparent inutility of preaching. When we reflect that, Sabbath after Sabbath, in hundreds of churches, the Holy Word is heard, we are confounded at the inanity of the results obtained by so great a display of efforts and energy. What may be the cause of this sorrowful fact, but that preaching being for most men a mere matter of habit and conventionalism, it astonishes and alarms no one? It is understood that one day in the week a man is empowered for the space of one hour to attack the morals of his time, and to tell his hearers that they are bringing upon themselves the wrath of God. This language is considered as most natural in his mouth. Should anybody else venture to use it, men would take offence, but it is universally admitted that all license is granted to the pulpit. This is a state of things which we cannot accept. We want something more than mere preaching. We want, apart from the pulpit, firm, frank, courageous men, who will not be afraid openly to speak the truth. Is it in a discourse, and by means of vague and general figures, that John the Baptist pictures the scandals of Herod's court? Had it been so, he might perhaps have been forgiven. The courtiers would have said, "He has spoken as a prophet should; he has done his duty;" and, doubtless, they would have thought no more of it. But that which troubles and disquiets and irritates, that which is unpardonable, is that an intruder should directly, face to face, without the slightest oratorical preparation, say to Herod, as of old Nathan said to David, "Thou art the man." That, brethren, is what I call being a witness of the truth. Well, it is your business as well as mine to bear that testimony. Whoever believes in the truth receives from it a Divine investiture, a true consecration; he immediately becomes its witness in the sphere where God has placed him—in public life if God calls him there, in his profession, in the circle of society to which he belongs, or at least in his family. In presence of evil, silence is forbidden him. Men must know what is his idea of it; and if his age, his character, or his position enjoin reserve on his part, even then everything in him should proclaim the truth so forcibly that all who are brought into contact with him will be compelled to hear it.

That is the preaching which our age requires, which all classes of society have need of; and I add at once, because my text leads me to it, that is the preaching which the higher classes of society must hear. We have seen by what temptations Herod was surrounded, and how well-nigh impossible it was for a word of warning and salvation to reach his ear. Let us not be mistaken. That is the danger of all elevated positions, of all superiorities of rank, fortune, or intellect. . . . Men speak much today of raising the masses, of evangelising the masses, of moralising the masses. . . . Ah! let them beware lest they lose themselves while pretending to save others!

You are all unanimous in condemning sin when it manifests itself under a gross and cynical form; but there is in the higher spheres of the world I know not what almost unconscious art of veiling evil under graceful appearances and of divesting it of its repulsive character. The very language spoken there helps to render this disguise perfect; the expressions are so delicately moulded that they can insinuate everything without ever becoming offensive, and sportingly, as it were, pour poison into the troubled heart. In these circles men breathe a voluptuous atmosphere of flattery and seduction which dulls and deceives conscience; the firmest, the purest, cannot avoid it. Vainly do they hope to escape its demoralising influence; vainly do they pretend to remain firm, to judge of things with impartiality, to discover what those praises, those smiles, that conventional language, what all this art of putting a gloss upon reality is worth. However skilful and clear-sighted they may believe themselves, they are caught in the snare, sooner or later. Religion itself, which should enlighten conscience, is perverted and disfigured by the worldly spirit; in its turn it becomes a matter of fashion and infatuation. Those who are its official representatives and who have charge of souls are often particularly anxious to avoid pointing out the danger. They are happy when they see persons who occupy a high position in society come to them, accept their authority, and bend beneath the yoke of the Church, and they fear to repel them by too much severity. Consequently, provided they obtain from them certain acts of outward submission, provided that, at certain epochs, they perform what the world is pleased to call religious duties, provided that, at such times, their fervour manifests itself by liberal alms, these leaders of souls willingly declare themselves satisfied, and gladly preach an easy devotion which adapts itself marvellously well to the most decided worldliness. . . . How can conscience escape becoming corrupted under such fatal influences? Is it a matter for wonder that the upper classes often place before us the spectacle of the greatest moral depravity joined to the deepest religious fervour, to the enthusiastic effusions of the most superstitious zeal? . . . The masses, guided by their vulgar common-sense, see in this mere hypocrisy; and yet it is but seldom that these outward manifestations are the result of premeditated deception. . . . Alas! the evil lies in the fact that men believe they are sincere; they are carried away by their very emotions; they pray, they weep, they repent on certain days; they take as a return to God the sensual excitement produced by some special sermon, by some imposing ceremony, by some heart-stirring strains of church music, and thus, deluding themselves, they become more and more incapable of conversion, repentance, and holiness. . . . If you think I exaggerate, allow me to refer you to your own personal experience, and let your conscience itself answer.

You have just met with evil under its grossest and most repulsive form; before you has passed one of those beings whom intemperance has branded with shame; your eyes have rested upon that countenance on which vice has imprinted its degrading seal; you have shuddered at this sight; your heart has been divided between disgust and pity, and your thoughts have wandered sorrowfully to those low grounds of society upon which no ray of pure light ever shines.

But on the eve of the same day you have joined in a brilliant worldly entertainment. Here all is light, smiles, and beauty. Eyes grow bright; conversation flows, merry and sparkling. . . . But do you not very soon become conscious of being carried away by a strange excitement? What speaks the voice of conscience amid this bewitching society, where whatever is calculated to stir up the passions of eye and heart, to charm and excite the senses, is gathered together? Again, what does that voice speak when at the theatre you hear the thunder of applause which hails one of those plays in which guilty passion is portrayed with all its attractions, in which it expresses itself with so much spirit, emotion, and delicacy that it succeeds in captivating every heart? . . . Christian soul! what now hast thou become? Ah! in that heavy and unwholesome atmosphere thou hast faltered. Moral intoxication has seized thee. . . Now, in the sight of God, tell me which is the most guilty, that wretch upon whom thou hast cast a look of disgust, and who, it may be, has never received either light, or instruction, or vivifying inspiration, or thou who hast been warned in so many ways, thou who hast been enlightened by the Gospel, thou on whom the Lord seems to have lavished all His mercies?

Another example: Here is an unfortunate man who is being led into prison. . . . The crowd looks on. It is a thief! Honest folk are anxious to see the expression of a thief. . . . A most curious sight for them is that of one of the representatives of those lost classes with whom all social relations will henceforth be impossible. . . . See the surprise, the contempt, the anger depicted on so many countenances! Among them all how few there are that express the slightest pity!

But here, at the other extremity of the social scale, is an immense fortune springing up as by enchantment. True, strange rumours are afloat concerning its origin. True, in its production means have been employed which every honest conscience condemns. Much skill and clear-sightedness alone have kept those proceedings from falling under the stroke of the law, but bad faith and deceit have been manifest. . . . Yet what will people say? Will any one venture to protest energetically against such an iniquity? No, and that is what alarms me most. People will speak much, for a time they will cry out loudly against the scandal, then all will be hushed as by magic, and you will see the crowds bowing before fortune and hastening to share

in its sumptuous entertainments. . . . . And if from those richly loaded tables a few crumbs should fall for works of piety, you will see religious men keep silence and counsel you to do the same! But tell me, before God, which has been the most guilty,—the unhappy man to whom everything, light, instruction, moral and religious influence have been denied, and who, urged by misery, has, in an evil hour, yielded to temptation, . . . or the man who had been given everything, good examples, education, comfortable circumstances, abundance even, and who escapes public dishonour only by dint of dexterity?

Am I wrong, therefore, when I affirm that there are positions which stun and intoxicate and in which men become inaccessible to the truth? . . . The world cries out loudly against the pharisaism of believers, but what can be more pharisaical than its judgments? . . . It crushes vice when it presents itself under its coarse and vulgar aspects. . . . It forgives everything to the skill which knows how to save appearances... . It kneels to success and popularity!

Why should I recall these things? For the melancholy pleasure of pointing out evil and provoking scandal? God forbid! Moreover, this were unnecessary. All I have said has been spoken before, and far more boldly, by the world itself. Think you that the worldly do not judge one another? Think you that they are not skilled in rending in secret that which they flatter in public? Think you that they ignore all that lies concealed beneath these apparent virtues? Think you that calumny spares anything, and that it will not invent evil rather than remain inactive? Evil! Ah! the world will proclaim it loudly with joy and delight. . . . But what you will never hear in the world is that firm, faithful, and courageous voice which goes straight to the sinner, like John the Baptist to Herod, and tells him plainly, “It is not lawful for thee to do that.”

Now that is precisely what God requires of us. Not loud indignation, not terrific denunciations, but that humble and firm testimony. . . . That is what God requires of you in the sphere in which He has placed you, each time that you are brought into contact with evil, each time that your conscience warns you, each time that your silence would be a cowardly shrinking from duty.

Look around you. . . . Here, among those who are dear to you, is a soul walking lightly and unconcernedly in the way of temptation; it seems to sport with danger. What does it need? A serious word. And who can speak that word with more effect than you who see its peril clearly, you whose voice would surely be heard? Here is a brother, a friend, whose troubled conscience wavers and is on the point of yielding. That man knows your character. If you do not speak, he will allege your silence in justification of his fall. Fathers and mothers who hear me, those I speak of are perhaps

your children. Those souls which are rushing onward to perdition will be required of you. What answer will you then give to the Supreme Judge?

But we shall suffer for our frankness, you will doubtless object. I know it well; but who has discovered the secret of loving truly without suffering? Love, such as it is understood in the present day, is in many cases nothing more than a soft tenderness. Ah! come and learn of John the Baptist how you are to love. Learn of him that you must be willing to forget yourselves, to speak that which is displeasing, that which wounds, that which irritates, but also that which saves. By this is true love to be recognised. False love ever seeks its own satisfaction; it will never consent to alienate a heart in order to save it. True love, which seeks the happiness of others and not its own interest, is willing to be misunderstood, slighted, forgotten. Teach us then, O ye Christian mothers, all the suffering you must have undergone ere you have brought into true life those whom God had given you. . . . Tell us all that your unwavering fidelity has cost you in the day when it has seemed to estrange from you those hearts whose affection had been your only reward and your only joy. Tell us, O Monica, all the submission and patience, all the secret prayers and hidden tears, which have given to the Church its St. Augustine. Teach us, O St. Paul, what it is to love without seeking one's interest, thou who hast written these beautiful. words: "Though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved," and who wert willing to be accursed provided Israel were saved. Or rather, tell it us, Thou who wert charity incarnate, Thou who camest upon earth to give peace, liberty, happiness, and salvation to men, and who didst obtain as Thy sole reward the most monstrous ingratitude. Ah! Thou knewest what it is to love when with slow steps Thou didst advance on the sorrowful path at the end of which the cross awaited Thee. Thou knewest it in the day when Thou didst utter these sublime words: "O Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, and ye would not! "Thou knewest it when, in the gloomy night of Thy agony, those whom Thou didst love the best were unable to watch one hour with Thee. Thou knewest it when from Thy cross, where love had nailed Thee, Thou didst meet nought but angry looks, Thou didst hear nought but words of blasphemy and malediction. Alas! it is by the intensity of the hatred which the world bore Thee that Thy love must be measured.

We have seen the fidelity of the Forerunner. Let us now consider his reward.

I will not attempt to portray the closing scene of his life. Everything in it bears the stamp of horror. That iniquitous revel, that impure woman presiding at the banquet, that graceful dance and the applause of the guests, then suddenly that reeking head brought upon a charger and delivered by an executioner into the hands of a maiden who gives it to her mother. That

hellish blending of hate and joy, of dance and murder, of blood and voluptuousness, all this brings a shudder to the soul and fills it with terror.

Shall I say it, brethren? Oft when I have read the Scriptures, and especially the lives of those who were the noblest witnesses of God upon earth, I have been tempted to accuse God of an inexplicable severity. What! for us so easy and comfortable an existence, so many blessings, consolations, alleviations to our sorrows, and for them who were so resolute, so faithful, a life so terrible, and often, yes, often a death so fearful! See how they die: Isaiah sawed by Manasseh, Zachariah slaughtered beside the altar, Stephen stoned, James beheaded, Peter crucified, Paul reduced to exclaim, "All have forsaken me." These are a few of them. Count all the others, if you can, in that innumerable army of martyrs. What then are Thy ways, great God, that Thou shouldest have reserved such a reward for them? And yet, of all these deaths, the most awful in my eyes is that of the Baptist. . . . Picture to yourselves that man in his dungeon, beneath a palace where all is light and merriment. Hark! In the stillness of night the heavy tread of a brutal soldier is heard descending. The door swings on its hinges. There is the dull sound of a falling sword, and all is over. Was he surprised in his sleep? Was he engaged in prayer? Was he permitted to utter a parting word? We cannot tell. A dead silence and nothing more. Thus perished he whom Jesus called the greatest of the prophets.

Ah! in presence of a death like this, if we had no hope save in this visible world, we might well exclaim, "Vanity! vanity! that is what this obscure death, this life-course ended at thirty years of age, this useless sacrifice, this fruitless fidelity tell of. A stroke of the sword has finished all. Herod triumphs and the prophet is dead."

Dead! Are you quite sure of this? Ask the authors of this crime. If John the Baptist imprisoned troubled their impure festival with his invisible presence; if from the depths of his dungeon his voice sounded in their ears as a perpetual reproof, John the Baptist, once dead, will appear to them more formidable still. Hear what Herod says! In vain has he seen him beheaded. A few months have passed away, a new prophet appears. "It is Elijah!" say some. "It is Jesus of Nazareth!" say others. "No," replies Herod; "it is John!" He sees him again standing before him, and haunting him everywhere with his avenging presence. . . . He sees his eyes following him. He hears his voice saying, "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife." Though dead, John speaks to his guilty conscience still, and that terrible voice no Herodias can silence now.

Dead! Men do not die when they have served God. Today John speaks to us still; today his example has stirred our hearts; today one of us, perhaps, having beheld his martyrdom anew, will save some perishing soul, and,

despising the seductions of the world, will become the unfaltering witness of truth.

Dead! No, in the cause which he has served nothing is useless, and if the most obscure sacrifice loses not its reward, what then will be the recompense of a martyrdom such as his? If the Church has lived and grown, it has been owing to such sacrifices as these. When, glittering in the sunlight, we see the tall spire of some gigantic cathedral which remains standing as the silent witness of the faith of past generations, do we think of the enormous blocks buried within its depths? No mortal eye sees them, but without those hidden foundations the edifice would crumble at the first blast of the storm. . . . Well, if today there is in the world a Christian Church, if there is a refuge accessible to all the sorrows of earth, an asylum in which the soul can for ever escape the oppressions of earth, a spiritual home where faith, hope, and love for ever abide. If we ourselves have found a place there, it is because at its foundation there are acts of devotion without number, obscure deaths, unknown sufferings, silent sacrifices which none can ever count.

Yes, it is by deaths like those that the reign of truth advances, and in the battle which we are waging with error and sin, they are of more importance than thousands of frivolous, vain, and fruitless lives. . . . When an army marches on to the attack of a fortress, the soldiers in the foremost ranks, alas! must fall by hundreds in the ditches that surround it; . . . but over those heaps of slain the rest will pass on to victory. Brethren, if today faith in the future, in the triumph of truth, is possible to us, it is because those heroes of olden times, those noble martyrs of the Divine cause, have suffered and died.

Dead! . . . But is it death to rejoin all those who were the witnesses of God upon earth? Is it death to enter eternal glory, and to unite with the company of the purest, noblest, .and holiest souls that have lived here below? Is it death to meet one’s God, and to exchange the sufferings of the present time for the ineffable glory of the world to come? Is it death to feel that we are the objects of a boundless love, and to live the true life for all eternity? . . Ah! if that be death, then shall we say with Scripture, “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his! “