

SCALE HOW "MEDITATIONS."

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THE CALL OF THE FIRST DISCIPLES.

*(S. John, chapter i., verses 35–43. [sic])*

(v. 35.) Once more we have the testimony of the Baptist, but his is no longer the figure of central interest. He was standing at that baptistry of his, that pool of Jordan, at Bethany or Bethabara; and with him stood two of his disciples after a manner no longer understood in the western world. A man's disciples to-day read his books or attend his lectures, but in the East and in the academic groves of Athens disciples followed their master up and down to gather stray words of wisdom from his lips.

(v. 36.) "And he looked upon Jesus as He walked." We have all experienced at some time and in a measure the feeling implied in this phrase. When Nansen stood, small to behold among his thousands of auditors, and told how he had faced unaided and alone the great forces of nature, one looked at him with amazement that so much vitality, energy and resource could be contained within the small compass of a single man. Those who looked upon Florence Nightingale, Tennyson, Browning, Darwin, must have been overtaken now and then by similar amazement. The Baptist looked at the (apparently retreating) figure of the Son of Man, overwhelmed by the sense of all which that single human form represented; out of the fulness of his heart an utterance came; he has said the same words before, and we may believe that he repeats them because to him they express the most of that which Christ is—"Behold the Lamb of God." They enunciate a new principle of life, dimly hinted at indeed by prophets, practised, more or less, by many a loving soul, but never before brought out in relief as the truth by which men live. The principle of sacrifice was old and was common to all the world. The principle of voluntary self-sacrifice for the behoof of others was new; and, just as we say a man is generous, or witty, or patriotic, putting our finger upon his characteristic, the master-thought of all his thinking, so the Baptist pointed to Christ as the Lamb of God,—always in the act of outpouring His life for the sustenance of His people. "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me," says our Lord in perhaps the most pregnant of His sayings, that one which more than any other teaches us the meaning of Calvary. Possibly the thought of Christian people has been a good deal obscured as to the meaning of the Atonement which our Lord made. He died for us. Yes: but we are apt in the face of this mystery to lose sight of the constraining force of His life, reaching down and forth towards our lives, and drawing them upward to the place where He is; the place where no man thinks first of himself, but values his life only that he also may lay it down and spend it to the uttermost for his brethren. This is, perhaps, some of the force which the Baptist perceived in "that continual dying which constrains us"—the Lamb of God.

(v. 37) The two disciples—one of them, we may suppose, the Evangelist himself, the

other Andrew, that gentle saint who was among the inner group of the Twelve chosen to be with our Lord on some special occasions, because, we may believe, they loved much—the two, mazed, like men in a dream, apparently bewildered by the great conceptions brought before them, turned without any words of farewell and left the Baptist and followed Christ.

(v. 38.) We are all aware of it when we are being followed, and it appears to be with that natural human consciousness that our Lord turns and addresses the two. According to His wont, He addressed to them the searching question of a great teacher, which is, at the same time, the ordinary phrase which any man would use—“What seek ye?” We would do well to meditate on these words, because they are possibly the direct question that Christ addresses to many of us. He brings us to pause in the midst of a giddy or restless career with some such query—“What are you aiming at? What will be the result of all these efforts? What do you propose to yourself in the end? You cannot believe that a little success, or a little pleasure, or a little wealth, or a little of the friendship and favour of men will satisfy you! What seek ye?”

(v. 39.) The two make answer awkwardly enough in their shame-facedness—“Master, where dwellest Thou?” or, as we should say—“Where do you live?” Probably before the words were well spoken they chided themselves for their rude clumsiness; and yet they gave the very answer which it behoves us to give when Christ meets us, soul to soul, and demands—“What seekest thou?” We, too, would do well to answer, question for question—“Master, where dwellest Thou?” “We seek the place where Thou art, for there would we also be, for in truth Thou art the end of all the searchings of heart which perplex us.”

Observe the fulness of grace and the sweetness of courtesy with which our Lord replies to what the two doubtless felt to be their rude demand. “Come and ye shall see,” He says, and they went with Him, and saw where He abode. We wonder where it was. We know of no hospitable roof which covered Him in those early days in Judea. We know that “the foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head;” but He appears to have had an abode for the time, and the two went with Him, and it was the tenth hour (four o’clock in the afternoon), and “they abode with Him that day.” The day ended at six o’clock, so they had two hours’ talk with our Master and theirs. The discovery of the six possible Logia of Christ at Oxyrhynchus has greatly moved the Christian world, but what would it be to us if these two had made notes, not on their hearts only but on some old papyri, of that two hours’ discourse in which our Lord gave Himself unsparingly, not only in teaching, but in that virtue of His life which is self-sacrifice for service’ sake? But we know nothing. As the sun set they came out from Him, too full we may believe for speech, having drunk of that new wine of life which should henceforth make every petty detail of everyday living worth while to them.

(v. 40.) “One of the two was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother.”

(v. 41.) “And he findeth first his own brother Simon,” Simon the hasty and impetuous, Simon the unstable and the firm, the meek and the proud, the most loveably human perhaps of all the Twelve. It was possibly not quite easy for Andrew to give his great news to Simon; we all know that it is not easy to impart confidences to the hasty in speech, rapid in judgment, who will not let us say our say before they come down upon us with objections. But Andrew went to work the shortest and the surest way. He told his tale without preamble. In much and in little it was this—“We have found the Messiah.” A statement so startling from the brother whose greater composure of mind and steadfastness of character had possibly great weight with Simon succeeded anyway in bringing him up suddenly. Had Andrew set out with elaborate

attempts to prove that this new teacher was the Messiah, his brother would doubtless have found argument for argument and would not in the end have been convinced. But nothing is so catching as conviction.

(v. 42.) Andrew was sure and made no attempt to show why; and Simon was arrested and ready for the next step, which was, that “he brought him unto Jesus.”

Here follows an example of the intimate personal communication which our Lord holds with every person that comes to Him. We see in this story the limit of what we can do for one another. We can arrest the attention of another; and that, only by the intensity and absoluteness of our own conviction. Perhaps, too, we should do well to imitate Andrew and express our conviction in few, strong, plain words. The less religiosity in our language, the more we are able to speak simply and plainly as we do about other things and other people, the more chance there is that we shall be attended to. Then, too, our own character tells. If we are persons whose observations are worth heeding, we may be able to arrest the attention of another, and fix it upon that life which whoso contemplates sincerely must needs adore. But this is all we can do. Just as we may introduce a friend to a friend and the introduction may end there or may be followed up into great intimacy and mutual comprehension, so it is with Christ; there can be no intermediary dealings with Him, but close *rappart*, person with person. We should understand all this better if we could leave off thinking that our personality is the visible body which our friends look upon with their eyes. When we realise that we deal with each other, spirit with spirit, person with person, the outer form of us being a mere by-issue, interesting but not vital, then we shall understand that in just the same real, personal, way we must needs come face to face with Christ.

(v. 43.) “Jesu looked upon him,” a look of discernment, of complete recognition, a look that appreciates all the influences of His education and environment—“Thou art Simon the son of John”—a look which recognises in the turbulent, restless nature the latent possibility of perfect repose and strength:—Christ gave him a new name—“Thou shalt be called Cephas, Peter, a rock.”