

TRUE LIBERTY

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True Liberty by Phillips Brooks

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PHILLIPS BROOKS

TRUE LIBERTY

True Liberty

By the Right Rev.
Phillips
Brooks,
D. D.

Philadelphia
Henry Altemus Company

1876

F. H.

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TRUE LIBERTY.*

AN earnest appeal to all that enter that Liberty. I will read to you a few words from the eighth chapter of St. John? "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Let us not think, my friends, that there is anything strange about the spectacle which we witness this morning. The only strange thing that there could be about it is that anybody should think that it is strange that men should turn aside for half an hour from their ordinary business pursuits, that they should come from the details of life to inquire in regard to the principles, the everlasting principles and purposes of life; that they should turn aside from those things which are occupying them from day to day and make one single hour in the week consecrated to the service of those great things

* A Monday address to Business Men.

which underlie all life—surely there is nothing very strange. There is nothing more absolutely natural. Every man does it in his own sort of way, in his own choice of time. We have chosen to do it together, on one day of the week during these few weeks which the Christian Church has so largely set apart for special thought and prayer and earnest attempt to approach the God to whom we belong. It is simply as if the stream turned back again to its fountain, that it might refresh itself and make itself strong for the great work that it had to do in watering the fields and turning the wheels of industry. It is simply as if men plodding along over the flat routine of their life chose once in a while to go up into the mountain top, whence they might once in a while look abroad over their life, and understand more fully the way in which they ought to work. These are the principles, these are the pictures which represent that which we have in mind as we come together for a little while each Monday in these few weeks, in order that we may think about things of God and try to realize the depth of our own human life. The first thing that we ought to understand about it is that when we turn aside from life it is only that we go deeper into life. This hour does not stand apart from the rest of the hours of the week, in that we are dealing with things in which the rest of the week



has no concern. He who understands life deeply and fully, understands life truly; he has forever renewed his life; and if there comes into our hearts, in the life which we are living, a perpetual sense that life needs renewal, a richening and refreshing, then it is in order that we may go down into the depths and see what lies at the root of things — things that we are perpetually doing and thinking. It is this that brought us together here: it is that we may open to ourselves some newer, higher life. It is that we may understand the life that we may live, along side of and as a richer development of that life which we are living from day to day, which we have been living during the years of our life. How that idea has haunted men in every period of their existence, how it is haunting you, that there is some higher life which it is possible to live! There has never been a religion that has not started there, lifted up its eyes and seen, afar off, what it was possible for man to do from day to day, in contrast with the things which men immediately and presently are. There is not any moment of the human soul which has not rested upon some great conception that man was a nobler being than he was ordinarily conceiving himself to be; that he was not destined to the things which were ordinarily occupying his life; that he might be living a greater and nobler life.

It is because the Christian Scriptures have laid most earnestly hold of this idea, it is because it was represented not simply in the words which Christ said, but in the very being which Christ was, that we go to them to get the inspiration and the indication, the revelation and the enlightenment which we need. I have read to you these few words in which Christ declares the whole subject, the whole character of which His life is and what His work is about to do, because it seems to me that they strike at once the key-note of that which we want to understand. They let us enter into the full conception of that which the new life which is offered to man really is. There are two conceptions which come to every man when he is entering upon a new life, changing his present life to something that is different from the present life, and being a different sort of creature and living in a different sort of a way. The first way in which it presents itself to him — almost always at the beginning of every religion, perhaps — is in the way of restraint and imprisonment. Man thinks of every change that is to come to him as in the nature of denial of something that he is at the present doing and being, as the laying hold upon himself of some sort of restraint, bringing to him something which says: "I must not do the thing which I am doing. I must lay upon myself restraints,

restrictions, commandments, and prohibitions. I must not let myself be the man that I am." You see how the Old Testament comes before the New Testament, the law ringing from the mountain top with the great denials, the great prohibitions, that come from the mouth of God. "Thou shalt not do this, that, or the other— Thou shalt not murder. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods." That is the first conception which comes to a man of the way in which he is to enter upon a new life, of the way in which the denial in his experience is to take effect. It is as if the hands were stretched out in order that fetters might be placed upon them. The man says, "Let some power come that is to hinder me from being this thing that I am." And the whole notion is the notion of imprisonment, restraint. So it is with all civilization. It is perfectly possible for us to represent civilization as compared with barbarism, as accepted by mankind, as a great mass of restrictions and prohibitions that have been laid upon human life, so that the freedom of life has been cast aside, and man has entered into restricted, restrained, and imprisoned condition. So it is with every fulfilment of life. It is possible for a man always to represent it to himself as if it were the restriction, restraint, and prohibition of