

STOPFORD A. BROOKE



THE GOSPEL
OF JOY

The Gospel Of Joy

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THE ARMOR OF GOD I

Advent Sunday

Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness and let us
put on the armor of light,
Romans xiii. 12

THIS is the day when, in preparation for the festival of the coming of Jesus, in whose infant soul was hidden the spiritual kingdom of love, we are called upon, according to the old tradition, to purify our lives. The Epistle, which Roman and Protestant Churches have read from generation to generation, which is hallowed to our imagination when we think how many millions have listened to it and felt their heart beat faster, is embodied in the Collect which, of all these Scripture prayers, is perhaps the most noble in expression; so noble, that the words themselves, uplifted by their thought, sound like a great Archangel's trumpet on a festal day. And both Epistle and Collect call upon us, while we look to our Master in the past, to realize His presence with us in the present; to expect a yet greater deliverance of mankind; to make ourselves worthy of a new phase in God's progressive revelation; and to prepare for the many things Christ has then to say to us by cleansing our hearts and lives; by fighting for the good causes of love and justice, clothed in the armor of light.

It is a good and grave tradition. Its basis is historical. Before the new life came to man with Jesus, it had been preceded by the preaching of John the Baptist. Before men heard of Love — of God's love to them, of man's love to man, and of both as universal — from the lips of Christ,

they had heard of Law, the law of right doing and of repentance by right doing, from the lips of John. Moral purity was not the gospel, but it was the plain path which led to the gospel. To get clear of wrong opened the eyes to see the further truth of keeping clear of wrong through love of righteousness known in God the Father, and through love of man known in Jesus Christ. That historical basis has been again and again relaid. Whenever, in the spiritual development of mankind, a higher aspect of the truths of love which Jesus taught has been revealed to men, or a deeper insight given into the character of God — these revelations have been preceded by the call, made sometimes by one man, sometimes by a whole people, for the casting out of works of darkness, for greater purity in national life. And such a call is necessary not only as preparing the soul for the reception of new light, but also as guarding the soul against the degradation of this light.

In human affairs which belong to religion it often happens that a wider, freer doctrine leads men away into carelessness of moral conduct, or that the passionate excitement created by the new ideas changes into a lower excitement in which the passions may become sensual. To protect ourselves against this weakness, to guard Church or sect against it, the first, the imperative necessity, is an awful reverence for moral right, a downright determination to clear the soul and life of works of darkness, to walk in the light as children of the light.

It has been thus in history. It ought to be the same in the changes which are wrought in our little lives when fresh aspects of ancient truths break like the dawn upon us. Things have gone in such a way with us that we feel upon the verge of a new world of work and thought. Over a landscape within which has been troublous and dark the clouds begin to lift, and our soul prophesies the sunlight. Religious doctrines, which have locked up our soul in frost, loosen in the coming warmth of a higher view of God and

life. Our inner life at all these changes begins to thrill, to move like the heart of the folded flowers when first the west wind blows. It is a call for preparation. Within you, it is like Palestine before Jesus began to preach; dim excitement, passionate longing, or wild expectation. Let all the eagerness be not only the eagerness of hope! Let it also be the eagerness of action. Hear the voice of the Baptist: "Repent, since a kingdom of heaven is at hand for you. Prepare the way of the Lord in your soul. Make the inward paths straight. Get life clear of wrongdoing."

Else, if the new life come while the old life is still encumbered with unrepented joys of the world and the flesh, the higher thought, dragged down by the evil temper of the soul, may be unable to sustain itself, or the new passion in the heart become the minister to loose morality. Then, alas, the glory dies, the revelation turns to thick darkness, the experience of triumph and joy is the beginning of fresh failure and sorrow. "Cast away the works of darkness," that is the first Advent cry of preparation, the first demand of God, the first absolute necessity for being able to see and keep the light. The demand is not as yet a demand for holiness, not as yet to pursue after the ideal aim of Jesus, but it is to clean your soul, to make ready in the desert in which you are living a clear highway down which God may come to you in revelation.

There are those who know they are doing wrong, who will not let loose their sin, yet whose intellect, imagination and easy fervor run to meet a higher view of life and of religion. The downright truth about them is that unless they banish the dark thing, root it out and cast it from them, they may see the light but will not keep it; may touch it and yet turn it into corruption. We must give up what we know to be sin. Then, when the kingdom of God opens before us, we can not only enter into it, but abide in it.

When that is done, the next step is possible, the putting on of the armor of light. The inspiration has come to us;

new thought, and aims, and emotions; new views of God, new views of man, new motives in our soul. Good news they are; a gospel such as men felt when long oppressed with sin or with the ceremonial law they heard the voice of Jesus say: " Follow me in love; love God for He loves you; love man for man is the child of God." We hear, and our heart goes forth to fulfill in life what we have felt within.

Well, all seems easy then; we seem indeed to have already attained. Yet the warfare has but begun, and we find out that life is not peace with evil, though it be peace within. And the first thing to do when we have passed over the border of the kingdom is to put on our armor. There, by the wayside, just beyond the ridge, is, I picture, a great building blazing in the light, for its walls are of adamant; and in its porch stands Fortitude, leaning on her fourfold shield, and round her shoulders and drawn over her square brows, the lion's head and hide. That Virtue has won her fight, but her sword is still bare in her hand, and in her shield are the broken spears and fierce arrows of the enemies she has slain. She is the image of what we are to be, and of the life we are to lead. Above her head, over the portal of the door, in letters of shooting lightning, is written this verse: " Endure hardness like a good soldier of Jesus Christ." We pass the porch and enter the vast hall, and on every side, from end to end, stand the images of those who have fought most worthily the good fight of faith, who most nobly have wrought righteousness; clothed from head to foot in their panoply of light. This is the armory of the invincible knights of Jesus Christ. We look on them and take courage and pray that we may be made fit for their inheritance. And as we pray. One comes, bearing our armor — for all the armor of each of us is stored in the great side-chapels of the hall — and fits it on, and tells us of the work which we must do with it, defensive and offensive. As we listen to His soft, courageous voice, which while it thrills our heart, strengthens our will, we know that we are not

called to ease, but to hardness; not to slumber, but to waking through the night and day of life; not to a sentiment of Christ, but to follow in His steps, with the Cross on the shoulder and the sword drawn and the soul alert to carry on the battle that He fought with sin and death and hell; and His last words to us are these, clear in their statement of trial, undecieving in their severe truth, but ending with encouragement and certainty of victory: " In this world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer: I have overcome the world." Then we pass forth, and as we go down the steps. Fortitude smiles and bids us good speed; and out of a lowly cottage near the great steps, there runs a little child and takes our hand, and looking into our eyes, says softly: " Keep me with you all along the way, in every battle and in every peace. I am the lowly love, the grace of Jesus Christ."

So we begin the Christian life. The land over which we have to march and to contend lies before us in the morning light. It will be no easy task to win it through. We know, now that we are armed, that it will be one long battle-field, but that the foes and the fighting will lessen in proportion as the battles have been nobly and strictly fought, until at the end there will be nothing left to conquer. To be a good soldier, as Christ was, that is our business, our steady joy, our glorious calling; and well was St. Paul inspired, when, borne by his spiritual passion into noble imagery, he described in the Epistle to the Ephesians the panoply of the Christian warrior, piece after piece of the divinely tempered armor, from the helmet to the sandals, from the shield to the sword; defensive and offensive for the sake of the great causes dear to God and dear to man. " Having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace: above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation

— ' and for a helmet, the hope of salvation ' — and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God."

" Stand therefore," he cries, for if half our life be marching on when the battle is over, half our life is also standing and withstanding in battle; stand therefore, having girt your loins with Truth. There, in the midst of the body, is the strength of a man, woven in and out in knitted muscle and sinew; strength to withstand in wrestling, strength to hold to the ground, strength to heave and overthrow, strength to pursue and overtake — and well does the image represent the power of rigid resistance with which the life of the soul is to wrestle against the principalities of evil, against the world-rulers of this darkness — the devilish conceptions which tyrannize mankind.

It is on the knowledge and conviction of truth that this strength abides and endures. "I know the truth of that for which I fight and stand." It is a mighty knowledge and it makes might. Truth round the loins of the spirit, and the certainty of its certainty, are the lasting power in the battle for God and man. Failure, to be beaten down in the fight, ridicule, the scorn and defeat of the world, are, if we are convinced of truth, only a passing trouble. "O mine enemy," we cry, "though I fall I shall arise. What do I care for the world's cry; what is it to me if I die in the battle? I live again, for the truth lives." This is the carelessness of the Christian warrior. " My life is nothing, my cause is all. Great truths are my strength. It is true God is my Father; it is true my sins are forgiven; it is true I shall be at one with God forever." He who has girt his loins with these is already conqueror of death and hell, and his march is over vanquished lies.

Then round his breast where his heart lies, the source of imagination and of feeling, he binds the corselet of Righteousness. Yes, the issues of life, the treasures of pure passion, the loves and sorrows of life, its lighter affections,

its fancies and dreams, its ideals and their poetry — these, above all, need guarding by righteousness. They are so beautiful that our greatest danger lies in their false allurements. The light that leads astray seems light from heaven. There is but one protection against the attack of evil on them. It is strict righteousness, clasped close and mightily riveted around the heart.

And for the head, where thought abides and weaves its web; where plans of battle, means of conquest, theories of action, forms of work, are made; where Will commands, organizes and directs all powers to an end; where conscience analyzes and compares — what helmet suits it best? The helmet of the Hope of salvation! Plans fail; measures are foiled; theories are dispersed by experience; forms of work are impermanent; the organized force of will breaks down; the analysis of conscience does not meet, as we hoped, the difficulties of right and wrong; and then, after these failures, comes the attack of the deadly phantom, despair— of the forerunner of despair, despondence. The defense against these evil ones is the helmet, the hope of salvation. It is hope which does not make ashamed; that is, it does not fail to realize itself. In spite of failures, the life of love and righteousness is saved by this hope. The plans of life, the ideas we loved, the organized work of our will, may be defeated, but the things behind them, those glorious objects for which we made them — these are saved, they are incapable of destruction. And out of this conviction so mighty a hope is redoubled, that we pass with unbroken spirit out of every failure, and reorganize life with even greater freshness than before. We are saved by hope.

One more defense is ours, one more defensive piece of armor. It is the shield of Faith. For, as we move through life, we move through an arrow storm of doubts of God. From the evil we see in nature and in man, from our own deep fears, from the cares and sorrows of our life, from the

temptations which beset us, from the woeful thoughts of other men, from the misery of the whole world—the fiery darts of mockery of God, of doubts of His being, of suspicion of His love, of anger with the course of things, are shot against our heart and head.

The guard of life against these is trust in God, the shield of faith. "Whatever happens," we say, "He must be just and right. I will believe in Him against all proof to the contrary. I will hold to Him, though He seem to slay me with pain. I will trust His love and righteousness against all the misery of mankind. He is our Father; He will, He must redeem His children."

This is the true defense of life. On that shield the suspicions of God which burn into us from without, and which by their torment would render active goodness in daily work impossible, are extinguished. From its noble round fall harmless to the earth the worst of the adders of war, the inward doubts which make us idle and nerveless in our fighting. They stab at us, crying, "You will never attain to God; you will never know the love of Christ; you will never conquer that sin, never reach your aim, never pass through this trial. God has forsaken you. Give up the strife." "I will not give up," we answer; "I believe in God. If I say to this mountain of woe or sin — Be thou removed and cast into the sea, it will obey me."

This, then, is the defensive armor with which we set out to follow the fighting of Jesus over the world. We have cast away the works of darkness; we have entered the kingdom; we are armed; and now lying before us is the world of men, and beyond, the heavenly city of the soul. But before we reach its shining walls there is many a weary tramp for us through deserts of trouble and pain. Many are the long nights we must outwatch against the surprises of sin; many the sudden combats we shall have to wage with the forces of the world that lurk in thievish ways. And, at times, in a solemn crisis of life, we must fight a pitched battle,

continued for days, against the enemies of God and man. Sometimes we conquer, sometimes we meet a sore defeat, often we are left wounded nigh to death upon the field. After conquest or defeat, we rest; sleeping in the hollow of our shield of faith, and our sword, that has life in itself, whirling and flashing round our slumber as its guard. But always it is war — war with wrong, war with falsehood, war with injustice, war with luxury, war with scorn, war with every force which divides instead of uniting man. And in ourselves, war with unrighteous thought and with feeble passions.

This is the life to which we are called to-day. Therefore, let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.

THE ARMOR OF GOD II

And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, . . .

And take the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God.

Ephesians vi. 15, 17

WHEN in the "Faerie Queene," Prince Arthur, who is the image of the Magnificence, that is, of the Great-Doing of the Christian warrior, rides forth on adventure, that which Spenser dwells on most is the dazzling brilliancy of his armor. The earth, as he passes, is illuminated with the show of it. But the symbol which St. Paul uses here, of the "armor of light," is concentrated by Spenser in the shield of the Prince. It is hewn out of solid diamond, and is so bright that it is covered up, lest it should flash into blindness all mortal eyes. Only rarely, and when the fight with the monsters of evil is greatest, is the covering let slip, and then it dazes the courage, confounds the mind, and blinds the eyes of the wicked ones, so that they fall an easy prey to Arthur's puissant sword. It was thus in the terrible battle he waged with the two most powerful sources of wrong and ruin, with giant Pride, and the Falsehood that wears the mask of Truth — with Orgoglio and Duessa.

The manifestation of light is then enough to overcome and destroy darkness. This is the full result and use of the Christian armor; this makes the duty of its wearer to carry it into darkness. There are portions of it which are only defensive, the helmet, the shield, the breastplate, the girdle of the loins — hope, faith, righteousness, and truth; but

these are offensive also; they pour forth light upon the darkness. Therefore the finest weapon of offence against evil is the whole of the armor, the light which shines from it — the manifestation in life of righteousness, faith, hope, truth, glad tidings of peace, the flashing in all that we say and shape of the Word, of the truth of God, of the sword of the spirit. These are spiritual arms; the true battle then is never waged with the weapons of the world.

Our habit, only too often, is to attack moral and intellectual evil with evil means, with violent words, with bitter denunciation, even with the material sword; with imprisonments and laws created for the occasion, or with their equivalents of persecution in domestic or social life.

This is to use evil to overcome evil, and the result is the increasing of evil. We shall never set up the kingdom of God with the means of the devil, and yet it is what the whole of the Christian world is incessantly and blindly trying to do. When we denounce evil with violent words, the root of our violence is some evil thing in ourselves. Below our desire to overthrow evil lies pride in our fine denunciation of it. Sometimes it is envy of the success of evil, and of the pleasure that it gives to the senses of others, which sharpens our tongue. Sometimes jealousy is at the root of our wrath with our neighbor's wrong-doing; jealousy which makes us believe that we are just when we are only mean; jealousy which, once admitted to our company, tears every piece of our Christian armor off, and having made us naked, sits on our breast and gnaws our heart with teeth of fire. These are personal ways of doing the wrong of meeting evil with evil; but the wrong is worse in its results when it is done by communities; by a Church, by religious assemblies, by a whole profession, by the Press, by Governments, by kings and priests combined to persecute. If the thing they persecute be good, they ruin their own souls; if it be evil, they increase its evil. At every point,

thinking to establish the kingdom of God, they develop the kingdom of the devil.

The true way to meet any evil is to manifest the opposite of it in your life, to shine upon it with the light of righteousness and love. If you wish to weaken and overthrow pride in men or in your friends, be yourself clothed with humility. If you would destroy a lie, make clear in your whole character the truth which contradicts it. If you wish to do away with injuriousness, let forgiveness glow within you. If you wish to conquer despair in your friend, let incessant hope brighten in your eyes and be eloquent upon your tongue. Do not denounce, shine forth. March forward, all illumination, being and doing the things of faith and righteousness, hope and joy, of peace and truth.

When we can thus shine, the caverns of darkness are filled with light. Then the creatures who live in them are revealed as they are, shapes of infamy and loathing. The world sees them clearly and is horrified. They blink upon the light, dragged out of their holes and corners by it, and fall blind and die. The caverns themselves are rent asunder. The light of our armor shatters their roof; it has seemed to be rock, it is nothing but foul cloud and thickened gloom. God's glory in us pours into the hollow dark, and in days to come the place of monsters is changed into a valley of sweet waters. There the flowers of love and goodness grow, and men and women walk in peace and joy. This is, then, part of the Christian war. Ye are of the light, walk as children of the light.

Two other parts of the armor yet remain; the sandals and the sword. The first of these is the readiness to bring the glad tidings of peace; the flying sandals symbolize the swift and ardent joy with which the warrior of Christ proclaims the Gospel of the Peace-maker. No slothful person is he, no crawler on the way, but one who has shoes of readiness, winged on his message like Perseus, swift to work; ardent with joy, for without ardor no great labor is accomplished,

no battle fought out to the close. Nor is the ardor that somber ardor which burns like dark fire in those who fight with life in hopeless unbelief of the triumph of the good for which they contend — the unhappy yet noble lot of many in these days — but the enchanted fervor which is born of carrying glad tidings, and which fills the bringer of them with gladness.

In a world which, when it is in earnest has the custom of mournfulness, and when it is joyous has the custom of frivolity, it is the gracious duty of the Christian man to be serious without dark sorrow, to be joyous without losing earnestness. The groaning prophet, the grim-visaged puritan, the creatures who think that repentance means the torture of remorse, and who menace those they preach to with eternal woe, as if that were glad tidings of peace — are not wearing the sandals St. Paul puts upon the feet of the Christian warrior, for these are winged with glad tidings, and the joy of faith and love smiles upon the face of their wearer. And, in truth, the message of God's love and man's redemption, of conquest of life and of immortal life, is so glorious that he who believes it cannot but think of the message more than of himself. And to lose himself is joy. In the pleasure of what he tells his own pain is forgotten; and far beyond the trouble of men he sees the eternal rapture they shall have in likeness to God. Rejoicing himself, he makes others rejoice. Ardent himself, he brings ardor to a languid world. It is part of his battle with evil. Of all the weapons we wield against wrong there is none more effective than pure and burning joy.

And we are glad because the glad tidings are of peace. It is the one thing we want in a world which is diseased with restlessness and variance. Only too well we know what it is to be at anarchy within — desires of good contending with desires of evil; the will dragged hither and thither by battling motives; the spirit fighting with the flesh, now overcoming, now being overcome; good exaggerated into

wrong, or weakness hurried into it; the heart made into the battle-field of love against the false forms of love — that which we would, we do not, and that which we would not, that we do. Earthly wars make a great noise, but if we could unveil the battle in the souls of men, and hear the inconceivable sound of it, the very music of the spheres would be hushed in the roaring of the contest.

To that, if we do our duty rightly, we are bound to bring the glad tidings of peace, and there is but one root of peace. It is to have the will of God as the master of our will; to have one desire alone, to do His will; one aim only, to live in obedience to God's righteousness. For then, under one ruler, all our powers, subordinated each to his own place and work, go forward like a disciplined army to one conquest. This is peace, the peace of harmony; and, when we are at last tired of being torn to pieces within by incessant revolutions, there is no tidings in the world so glad as this which we hear from Christ: "Come unto me, all ye who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

But that is but a part of the peace we have to proclaim with readiness. We have to tell the tale of God no longer represented as the enemy but as the lover of man; and by that tale of love to reconcile man to God. We have to lead men, understanding that God is Love, to turn to Him with longing; for who can be at enmity with one whom he believes to love him? We war against God because we think He is unjust and cruel to us, angry with the children He ought to love. But when we know that He loves us even when we are sinners, that He will never leave us till we are at one with His goodness, our war with Him is closed. Peace falls like dew upon the spirit.

We have to bring this tidings of love to nations hating one another: to classes at war with one another, to friends that have been sundered, to the injurer and the injured. "Surrender your dull scorn," we cry, "of one another; cease

to revenge yourselves; be pitiful, be courteous; consider your enemy's feeling more than your own; do him good when most he does you evil; yield the points to him which do not involve duty to righteousness; cast your pride into the deepest abyss; forget now the wrong that you have suffered; seek out the good in your foes, bring it into light and proclaim it to the world; abandon your own justification and the retorting accusations on which you found it. Thus, bringing into all the wars of earth loving-kindness, belief in good and endurance of wrong in that belief, your whole life will be the active proclamation of the gospel of peace. There is nothing which will lead you into closer fellowship to the Captain of your warfare, Jesus Christ. There is no deadlier weapon than this publishing of peace in the hands of a Christian warrior. Evil falls before it more hopelessly than even before the sword of the spirit. Take up this part of your great warfare. " How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth glad tidings, that publisheth peace."

At last, we meet with the actual weapon of the armor — the sword of the spirit which is the Word of God; and the Word of God means the whole Thought of God; all the divine ideas expressed in speech or writing by men. It is all the true, just, loving, wise and beautiful truths, which, derived from God, have been seized by men since the beginning of the world; the primary truths which have been arrived at in science, in art, in law, in morals and in religion. These are the Word of God among men. And whenever it goes forth, wherever it is proclaimed, it acts like a sword and leads the war. Every mighty truth rouses the falsehood which it contradicts against it; and war is declared in the realm to which the truth belongs — in the realms of science, art or religion. Day by day it defends its position against these falsehoods; day by day it slays the host of them, nor is it ever sheathed until they are all destroyed. This is its spiritual, immaterial war. It is the

sword of God's thought, of His truth, His beauty, of His righteousness, and of His love.

" It is quick and powerful," says the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Truth is alive, and cannot lose its vital power. Where it lives, there is energy. Life, as power, spreads from it. Take, for example, this one saying of Jesus Christ, embodying the truth that rules the whole spiritual world. " Whosoever shall lose his life, the same shall find it"! Think of the incessant changing life, in a million varied souls, of this Word of God; think of its kindling power, its persistent energy in the life of the whole world. Thought fails and imagination drops her wing before they can realize the thousandth part of the work done by such a sword of the spirit. And this, which is true of a spiritual truth, is equally true of a scientific, of a moral, of an artistic truth. These Words of God are sources of life, energies which must act, swords which hew down the falsehoods that oppose them. The sword St. Paul spoke of was a sword of the spirit, but there are swords of the intellect, swords of the conscience, swords of the imagination, and they too are the Word of God.

Sharp, piercing, and dividing also is the sword of any truth. It goes home to the roots of things, cleaving its way straight through all deceit to the actual realities of life; piercing through the very joints and marrow of lies; till men know, in its keen and sudden stroke, the vanity and vileness in which they have been living; and the trickeries of casuistry and sophistry are separated from the lie and leave it naked and forlorn. It discerns and divides the thoughts of the heart of man — separates motive from motive, feeling from feeling, argument from argument; forces each to stand aside, reveals each exactly for what it is. Then we see clear at last. All the mingling of good and evil, of true and false, of ugliness and beauty — in which the clear lines of right and wrong, of loving and unloving, of fair and foul, are involved and blurred; a mixture and

confusion which is the very condition of wrong doing and wrong thinking and wrong feeling — is utterly put an end to. We know things as they are, and we can choose our way clearly. This is the dividing of the sword, of any Word of God; and there is nothing which is of greater use in the war with evil.

Therefore get your swords; find truths — in science, art, politics and religion. Find the Words of God. And when you have got them, gird them on, draw them in the battle God has ordained, wield them for the sake of the progress and salvation of mankind. Be master of their management. Slay with them the falsehoods of the world; defend with them those whom the falsehoods oppress; pierce with them the hearts of men, dividing the evil from the good, separate with them the false from the true, that men may be able to see and choose the right. Let them flash in the forefront of the fight. Let them above all flash and pierce, slay and sift in your own heart, till in its cities and its country nothing lives which is not true and pure, beautiful and just, clear in thought, and loving in feeling! For you are not worthy to wield the sword of the spirit in the outward world, unless you are wielding it day by day against the spiritual enemies of your own soul.

Then, we are fit to use our sword of God's spiritual Truth to slay the evil and defend the good. The blade of that sword is welded of many truths, the spiritual Word of God of many words of God; and these are some of them — God is one, and God is love. Every soul is His child and destined to glorify Him forever. Sin is forgiven. New life is opened to repentance. The lost are always sought by the great Shepherd till He find them. Holiness is to be won and must be won. Love is to be the master of all action. Men are brothers of one another in their universal childhood to the Father. Jesus, because He loved the most, is the leader of our life and warfare. He is with us to the end of the world and we shall live with His Father forever Immortality with

God is the certainty of certainties, and we ought to live in it now. There is no real death in the world. The race of man is destined to everlasting joy in everlasting love. These are the bars of spiritual steel which forged together make the sword of the teacher of the Gospel, of the lover of Jesus Christ.

So then the Christian warrior is fully equipped with his armor. Helmet, breastplate, girdling coat of mail, shield, sandals and sword clothe him now. Let him go forth to do his duty. But why speak so impersonally? It is ourselves who are to cast off the works of darkness, ourselves who are to be armed for God and man. The battle is set in array before us now; now the onset sounds, now we see the host of darkness. Draw the sword of the spirit, lift the shield of faith, be swift and ardent of foot, bear breastplate and helm into the thick of the battle. Fight manfully under the banner of Christ against sin, the world, and the flesh; continue His faithful soldier and servant unto your life's end.

THE ARMOR OF GOD III

Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance, Ephesians vi. 18

THE noble passage, noble in the judgment of literature as well as of religion, in which St. Paul calls on the Christian warrior to stand against the evil, to endue the full armor of God, and to follow Jesus Christ to battle, is a splendid cry to arms. We seem to hear in its high trumpet-note the clear echo of even a greater cry — "Behold, the Bridegroom Cometh, go ye forth to meet him; " and the martial and exultant music ought, at this Advent time, to send us forth, with solemn joy, armed with the whole armor of God, to fight the good fight of faith.

But these hours of high resolve are succeeded by hours of sadness, even of defeat; and the Bridegroom delays his coming. Well did St. Paul know these hours of depression. Well did he know how long, how desperate sometimes was the fight. And the knowledge made him add my text to his description of the Christian armor. To meet this weariness, sorrow, or despair, he added three more things, expressed in his peculiar interweaving fashion, to the equipment of the soldier of Christ — Patience, Prayer, and Watchfulness, and these describe the temper of the soldier's mind within his armor.

1. Patience is the perseverance of the warriors of God; the steady holding on to the march and the battle; faithfulness to the cause of Christ through life to death; steadfastness in withstanding evil in one's-self, and in the