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Edward Hoare and Rev. W. May**

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**Memorials  
OF  
FRANCIS STORR.**

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*SERMONS*

BY

REV. CANON HOARE,

AND

REV. W. MAY,

*Preached in Brenchley Church, 26 February, 1888.*

ALSO

*NOTES OF THE LAST SERMON PREACHED BY*

REV. F. STORR,

*12 February, 1888.*

LONDON:

WILLIAM RICE, 86 FLEET STREET, E.C.

**In Memoriam.  
FRANCIS STORR.**

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*From the GUARDIAN, Feb. 29th, 1888.* <sup>[3]</sup>

On Saturday, February 25th, the mortal remains of the Rev. Francis Storr, for thirty-four years Vicar of the parish, were buried in the beautiful churchyard of Brenchley. The snow lay thick upon the ground, but the sun shone bright in heaven, and the outward scene symbolised and reflected the feelings of the mourners—the blank sorrow of a bereaved parish, and the rejoicing that the last prayer of their beloved pastor had been granted, and that he had been summoned home before increasing years had necessitated that resignation of his work and ministry which

would have been to him a living death.

His work was well described by Canon Hoare, who preached the funeral sermon:—"He was a true specimen of a devoted parish clergyman. He did not take much part in things outside his parish. Most thankful should we have often been if we had had more of his help and counsel in matters concerning the diocese and the Church. But the parish was his sphere, the parish was his home, and the parish was the one object for the benefit of which he spent his life." The Bishop of Dover writes,—“No one could possibly be half-an-hour in his company without seeing a transparently Christian character, the chief features of which were personal humility and genial sociability.” And the Archbishop of Canterbury writes,—“My last day in Brenchley, and my walk and talk with him were one of the never-to-be-forgotten days. The labour and the love which turned an affliction so great [his blindness] into a gain, were indeed in the very spirit of St. Paul and of his Master.”

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Born in 1808, and educated at Harrow and Queen’s College, Oxford, he entered the ministry in 1833 as curate of Up-Waltham, in Sussex, where he often exchanged pulpits with Archdeacon (now Cardinal) Manning. In 1837, he was appointed to the rectory of Otley in Suffolk, through the instrumentality of the present Bishop of Norwich, who, with a conscientiousness which was in those days rarer than now, refused himself to hold two livings. The parish had never before had a resident incumbent. A dilapidated and empty church was speedily restored and filled. The young preacher with his striking presence, clear voice, and impassioned delivery, attracted a congregation not only from his own parish, but from the neighbouring villages, where in those days such preaching was unknown, so that hearers from twenty-three different parishes have been counted at one Otley service.

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In 1846, he was presented by Lord Tollemache, who as a near neighbour had seen and appreciated his work at Otley, to the living of Acton, in Cheshire. Acton is a large and straggling agricultural parish, but with the help of curates and district visitors, he soon got to know each household almost as intimately as in the village of Otley, and any one in trouble, whether of mind or body, instinctively turned to the Vicarage. Acton was one of the first parishes, if not the first parish, to give up generally the practice of Sunday cheese-making. Till, at his instigation, the experiment was tried, it had been pronounced by farmers an impossibility. After eight years of incessant labour (he was hardly absent as many Sundays from his parish), the declining health of his wife compelled him to move southward, and he was appointed to the living of Brenchley, vacant by the death of the Rev. R. Davies, Secretary of the C.M.S., whose widow some years later became his second wife. The special work of his predecessor was carried on by him with ever-increasing zeal and success, and, whereas in 1848 Brenchley had scarcely heard of the C.M.S., in 1887 the contribution from the parish amounted to over £300. Part of this sum came from outside friends who knew that the most acceptable birthday present they could make to the Vicar was a subscription to his favourite Society, but the larger proportion was given in sixpences and coppers. It must not be supposed that this preference made him overlook other claims, or ignore other charitable societies. In particular, the London City Mission, the Flower Mission, and the Bible Society were very near his heart. As for the wants of his own parishioners, he not only gave profusely himself, but he was indefatigable in urging their claims on all who could or would give. He was, I believe, the first incumbent in Kent to remit, without solicitation, a percentage of the tithe. Latterly, in hop-gardens where no hops were picked, the tithe was wholly remitted, and no farmer who was in real straits was ever pressed for payment. For labourers out of work, work was somehow made or found. Thus, during the last winter, as many as thirty at a time were employed by him in road-making. Endless similar charities might be recorded, and still more were done in secret and unknown; but these would wholly fail to represent “that best portion of a good man’s life, his little nameless unremembered acts of kindness and of love.” His utter unselfishness and his quick power of sympathy endeared him to an ever-widening circle of friends. He never lost sight of any he had known, and all, whether rich or poor, knew that, if content with simple fare, they would be welcome visitors at the Vicarage.

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During the last ten years of his life, the greatest of earthly privations was sent him. There was a gradual failure of sight, ending in total blindness. None who knew him even slightly can have failed to admire the serenity and cheerfulness with which this loss was borne. Like Milton, he “bated not a jot of heart or hope, but still bore up and steered right onward . . . content, though blind.” He never would admit that it was to him a heavy trial, though to a man of his independent character and restless energy it must have been a daily thorn in the flesh. Thanks to the guidance of loving hands, he was able to continue to the last his pastoral visits, and would fearlessly mount the narrowest and steepest stairs of cottages, wherever the sick or dying needed his ministrations. His sermons and lectures seemed almost to gain in power by his concentration of thought and abstraction from objects of sense. He would not rarely take (I had almost written “read”) the whole of the Morning Service, including the Psalms and the Holy Communion. Even in his eightieth year his memory was hardly impaired, and he would give chapter and verse for text after text quoted in his sermons. His knowledge of the Bible was wonderful; it was as if he had it photographed on his heart. The last sermon, preached only nine days before his death, was clear, stirring, and energetic, and bore no trace of flagging powers.

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His life was one of the many golden threads that run through the variegated warp of England’s Church history, and show the continuity of her ministry. Though severed by five centuries, he is the direct lineal descendant of Chaucer’s “poure Persoun of a toun,” and there is scarce a word in that marvellous portraiture that might not have been written of Francis Storr, for

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“Christes lore, and his apostles twelve,

## **In Memoriam. FRANCIS STORR.**

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*From the RECORD, March 2nd, 1888.*

Among the deaths of last week our readers will have seen the name of the Rev. Francis Storr, Vicar of Brenchley, Kent. The news reached us only in time to record the bare fact, but we cannot pass over in silence a life, uneventful indeed, but none the less noteworthy. Mr. Storr was one of the oldest, if not the oldest, of a remarkable band of men, linked together by common views and doctrines, but still more closely united by the apostolic zeal and devotedness to Christ's service which animated one and all. He was the brother-in-law and intimate ally of Dean Champneys and Bishop Utterton, and the life-long friend of the Bishop of Norwich and the Bishop of Liverpool.

Born in 1808, he graduated at Oxford in 1833 (the year of the first appearance of *Tracts for the Times*), being awarded an honorary Fourth Class. With the Tractarian movement he felt no sympathy, and, though on terms of friendship with some of the leaders of that movement, from the very first he threw in his lot with the Evangelical party, never swerving in his allegiance to the end, though ripening years taught him more and more to see good in everything and to attach less importance to party distinctions. In the same year he was ordained by the Bishop of Chichester to the curacy of Up-Waltham, and two years after he took the curacy of Beckenham, Kent. Here he married his first wife, Caroline, daughter of Colonel Holland of Langley Farm, Beckenham, a true and constant helpmate during the twenty years that she was spared to share his labours. In 1837 he was presented to the living of Otley, in Suffolk, and in this small but neglected parish his energies found for a time full scope. When he came, there was no parsonage (no previous Rector had ever lived in the parish), the church was dilapidated, and the churchyard a neglected waste. A parsonage was built, the church restored, and the churchyard reclaimed. But the spiritual change wrought by his means in the parish was even more striking. The voice of one crying, not in a dissenting chapel, but from a Church of England pulpit, "Repent ye," and appealing with all the fervour and some of the eloquence of a Whitfield, to the individual conscience was a strange sound in that sleepy hollow. Those who had never before set foot in a church came, first from curiosity, then from genuine interest, and then carried the good news to their neighbours, so that the little church could sometimes not contain the hearers who came from twenty parishes round. His sermons were wholly extempore; he never took a note with him into the pulpit. In the most literal sense of the words, "he preached unto them the Scriptures," for having studied the text of the Bible as few clergymen are now wont in these days of multiplied expositions and commentaries, and being gifted with a strong memory, he would pour forth verse after verse in support of any point he was urging, giving in each case the exact reference. But it was even more by house-to-house visitation than in the pulpit that he made his influence felt. By his absolute unselfishness, his large-hearted sympathy, his deep personal humility, and his genial humour, he found his way sooner or later to every heart, and Dissenters who would denounce him in public as part and parcel of the hated and apostate Establishment, welcomed him in private as their truest counsellor and friend. Over children he exercised almost a fascination; they would follow him along the village street like the Pied Piper, and for each child he would have his sportive nickname or little private joke.

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Leaving Otley for Acton was one of the greatest trials to his singularly affectionate nature, and to the end of his life Otley and its people were very dear to his heart. But, much as he loved his first parish, he felt that he could not resist the call to a wider sphere of duty. Of his work at Acton, his successful crusade against Sunday cheese-making, and his unflagging work and labour, both spiritual and sanitary, in the fatal cholera year, we have left ourselves no space to speak. We must pass to the last and longest chapter of his life at Brenchley, of which for thirty-four years he was the Vicar. Succeeding the Rev. Richard Davies, the faithful and devoted Secretary of the C.M.S., he accepted as a sacred legacy the furtherance of the claims of that Society. How successfully he pleaded its cause is shown by the fact that in 1886 Brenchley, a rural parish with no resident squire, sent up a larger contribution than the whole of Scotland. The chief proportion of this came from the coppers of missionary boxes, and the proceeds of a missionary basket to which an old servant of the family was "told off." During his incumbency the growing district of Paddock Wood, and the off-lying hamlet of Matfield, were made into separate parishes. If all parishes had had an Incumbent like the Vicar of Brenchley, we may confidently say that the question of extraordinary tithe would never have arisen. Each defaulter was treated by him as a tenant in arrears with his rent would be treated by an indulgent landlord, and in bad years some remission of tithe was freely granted at a time when such indulgence was unknown, at least in Kent. Nor were the labourers less cared for than the farmers. No man or woman who could show a plausible case of distress was ever sent empty away from the Vicarage, and relief was always, if possible, given in kind or by providing employment. For the hop-pickers who swarmed each autumn from the slums of London one or more Scripture-readers from the London City Mission were always retained; field meetings, magic-lantern entertainments, &c., were got up; pressure was brought to bear on the farmers to supply more decent sleeping accommodation—in a word, they were treated for the time as members of the flock, and, as far as time and

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opportunity permitted, Christianised. Of his private life this is not the place to speak, but this much we may venture to state—no man since Dr. Primrose numbered so many poor relations, for the plea of poverty or distress was at once admitted by him as a claim of kinship. And he never lost sight of a friend. Curates who had worked with him forty years ago would still write to seek his counsel and help in any difficulty.

For the last ten years of his life it pleased God to afflict him with the hardest of human trials—the total loss of sight. Yet he found a way to turn his loss to gain, and his noble example of cheerful and almost joyous resignation to the will of his Father more than compensated for any diminution of his energy as a pastor. Not indeed that he relaxed or slackened his work to the very end. In his eightieth year it was his habit to take the Communion Service and Sermon in the Morning, and to read Prayers in the Afternoon; and, though he had necessarily to depend more on others for seeking information and carrying out his behests, no household in the parish was unknown or uncared for.

His last prayer, ἐν φάει καὶ ὄλεσσον, was granted him, and he died in harness, quietly, almost painlessly, and with consciousness to the last. One minute only before he was taken, he asked one of his sons on what text he had preached the previous Sunday, and on being told, “Our Father, which art in heaven,” he whispered, “Our Father—in those two words, rightly understood, lies the whole of the Gospel.”

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## I. SERMON

BY

REV. CANON HOARE, M.A.

*Sunday Morning, February 26th, 1888.*

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*Ezekiel xxxiii. 33: “And when this cometh to pass (lo, it will come), then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them.”*

You can see at a glance the application of these words to the solemn occasion that has brought us together this day. They were spoken to Ezekiel. He was a very popular and attractive preacher. The people sat before him, and his words were unto them “as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument.” But they produced no effect; for the people heard his words, but they did them not. These words were therefore spoken to warn them that when certain predicted troubles should arise, they would learn the truth of Ezekiel’s ministry. Those troubles are described in verses 27, 28; and these words were added to warn the people that when all this should come to pass—which it most surely would do—they would then learn the awful fact that there had been a terrible reality in the message of the prophet, and be taught by too late experience that, although they had regarded him not, they had had a prophet among them.

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Now, the word “prophet” is not applied only to those persons who were moved by the Spirit to predict the future, such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. It means one who speaks forth the Word of God, and proclaims the message of God in the Lord’s name. It is a term therefore that, in this its wider sense, may well be applied to your late beloved pastor, our dear and honoured brother now taken from us, of whom it may be said with the most perfect truth that for thirty-four years he went in and out a true prophet among you.

He was a prophet in the true meaning of the word, for he spent his life in publishing or speaking forth amongst you the hidden mysteries of the salvation of God. We quite acknowledge that he was not a prophet like Ezekiel, carried away in lofty flights of inspired ecstasy; nor like John the Baptist, feeding on locusts and wild honey; but he was one who was in his own quiet, devoted life a true prophet, and who for fifty-five years laboured for souls and faithfully preached Christ Jesus his Saviour.

I have no words to express my profound reverence for such a man. He was a true specimen of that most honourable class, the country clergymen of the Church of England. He did not take much part in things outside the parish. Most thankful should we often have been if we had had more of his valuable help and counsel in matters concerning the Diocese and the Church. But the parish was his sphere, the parish was his home, and the parish was the great object for which he spent his life.

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Remember him, then, in his Pastoral work. For thirty-four years (the best part of his ministry) you have enjoyed this privilege. I am speaking, I know, to a bereaved flock; and I want you to look back on your past privileges. He went in his pastoral work into the homes of his people. Think of him: how kind, how faithful, how full of sympathy, how diligent in visiting, even in his blindness. Was he not in very truth a true friend to you all? I am sure every heart must answer, “He was.”

Think of him among the Young. The majority of you must have grown up under his care, and you know what an interest he took in you; how he watched over you in the schools, cared for you in

your confirmation, and welcomed you when you became communicants at the Table of the Lord.

In my position at Tunbridge Wells, I see young people from all the surrounding villages, and by the candidates which I have for confirmation I can form some estimate of what is going on in the different parishes. Now I always have a good hope when I have to do with young people who have been brought up at Brenchley. I find them, as a general rule, well trained in the Gospel. I cannot say that they all love it, but they have been taught it, and all that the pastor can do has been done for them in their early training. How many are there in this church at this present time who can look back with profound thanksgiving to lessons taught them in early life by that venerable man!

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Think of him in his Missionary work. I do not mean in parochial missions, such as you have just been having—I mean in his warm love for that grand institution, the Church Missionary Society. Were there ever known such Bible and Missionary meetings as those in his schoolroom? What a holy enthusiasm did he kindle amongst us! What a glow there was all around him! The dullest hearts could not fail to catch his fire. How he knew the history of each box! He could not see the records because of his blindness, but he knew all about the boxes and their possessors; and it was impossible to be apathetic in his presence. And what was the secret of it all? How was it brought about? How was this fire kindled—this enthusiasm? Was it not that he was a man of prayer? I remember the last meeting I was at in Brenchley. Just before we left the Vicarage we knelt together in his study, and there he poured out his whole soul before God, and pleaded for that blessing which he found awaiting him when we reached the schoolroom. There was the secret of his power, and there it was that he learned that even in his loss of eyesight God's grace was sufficient for his need.

Then think of him in the Church. What a wonderful thing to have seen that man, totally blind, standing at the Communion Table only last Ash Wednesday, and going through the service with the Epistle and Gospel as well as those who have their full vision. It was a grand thing to see the blind man not reading the prayers but repeating them. He had loved those prayers throughout his ministry; he had prayed them all through the days of his eyesight, and they had become so completely a part of himself that, when his eyesight was gone, the prayers remained written both on his memory and soul; so that instead of sight he had memory, and instead of his prayer-book he made use of the fleshy tables of the heart. That is the way to pray.

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And then follow him to the Pulpit. How often has he stood in this pulpit to plead with you! He must have preached in this church between three and four thousand sermons! and who can measure the value of such a ministry? Here he stood as the ambassador for Christ, "warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom that he might present every man perfect in Christ Jesus," &c. Here he stood to warn the wicked, to awaken the careless, to carry hope to the convicted, to proclaim pardon to the repentant, help to the weak, comfort to the afflicted, and to give food to those hungering and thirsting after righteousness. To sum up, he preached the Gospel of God through the power of the Holy Ghost. And how earnestly did he do it, and how prayerfully! how faithfully and yet how tenderly! How did his heart yearn for souls! How did he first plead with God for sinners in his own home, and then come here to plead with sinners for God! It is to such preaching as this that for the last thirty-four years you have listened habitually, and who shall venture to say that there has not been a prophet among you?

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Once more, look at him on his Death-bed. For a long time it had been his constant prayer that it would please God to take him home before he had to give up his work, and so when the answer came all was ready. There was no alarm, no hurry, no confusion. He could still think of his beloved people whom he was about to leave, mentioning by name some of the sick and aged whom he was habitually visiting. He could say, as Mr. Standfast in "Pilgrim's Progress" did, "I see myself now at the end of my journey; my toilsome days are ended. I have formerly lived by faith, but now I go where I shall live by sight, and shall be with Him in whose company I delight myself."

And so in the peaceful calm of an assured faith, with his blessed Saviour full in view, and his beloved people, like the names on Aaron's breastplate, borne still on his heart, he could step across the border-line to receive from his Lord, whom he had so faithfully served and so truly loved, the blessed welcome, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

And now, what was the secret of the whole character and the whole work? What was it that made him what he was in the home, in the parish, amongst the young, in the mission work, in the church, and on his death-bed? What was it that was the very essence of his life?

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There was one thing, and one only. And what was that? I appeal to all who knew him. Am I not right in saying that it was nothing else than the glorious old Gospel of the Grace of God in Christ Jesus, his blessed Saviour? On that he lived, on that he laboured, on that he died; and that was the one secret of his peace and power. He was not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; he knew it as the power of God unto salvation in his own soul, and he did not want to attempt to improve it by any new-fangled notions of the nineteenth century. He believed in what have been called the three R's—Ruin, Redemption, and Regeneration. He was one of what people call the old-fashioned Evangelical school—and a very good fashion too, for what foundation so good as one that has been tried? He believed in the utter ruin of human nature; in the satisfaction of the Law through the propitiatory sacrifice of the Son of God; in the free pardon through the Blood of the Lamb, and justification through faith alone; in the perfection of imputed righteousness; in the new birth by the Holy Ghost; in His sanctifying power in the souls of believers. He believed that

the Lord Jesus Christ would come again, and would keep His people safe to the end; and with a happy, peaceful, bright expectation, he could live "looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of our Great God and Saviour Jesus Christ." These were the great principles of his life; and by them was his whole character governed. These were the truths on which he lived himself, and which he taught in his ministry; and these were the principles which I trust he has left indelibly written on the hearts and understandings of all of you, who for these many years have enjoyed the privilege of being members of his flock.

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We are all agreed, then, that there has been a true prophet among you; and now the question is, What has been the result of his prophecy? His labour is over, he is gone to his rest, and we may apply to him the words, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth; Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them" (Rev. xiv. 13). And now we have to consider what works there are to follow him. In the case of Ezekiel there was great disappointment. He was an inspired man, and a most attractive preacher. He was one that was heard with admiration; but there was no result, for the people did not act on his words.

Now I fear we must believe that it has been the same with some at Brenchley, for we have no reason to expect that the results of our ministry will be different to that of the ministry of St. Paul, of which it is said, "Some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not" (Acts xxviii. 24). In all probability, therefore, there are in this parish some who have been familiar with the venerable man labouring amongst them, and who have often heard his earnest words, but have never yet been touched in heart by the grace of God. The hard heart has never yet been broken, the self-will has never yet submitted, and they are still as far from God as if there had never been a prophet among them. Now, if there be such here, remember. You will never hear that voice again; you will no more listen to his earnest pleadings with you for your souls. But those appeals may still tell on you. It is said of Abel, "He, being dead, yet speaketh."

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Now you know his character, you know how true and consistent he was; you have heard how peacefully he could depart to be with Christ; and may not his death reach your heart even if his life has failed to do so? What do you think he would say to you now if he could speak from heaven? He might speak possibly with more persuasive earnestness, but I do not believe there would be the slightest change in his message. I firmly believe that it would be nothing but the same old, old story—Christ Jesus for the sinner, and the sinner for Christ Jesus. Think, then, of all you can remember of his ministry. You will never hear it again, so gather up the fragments that remain that nothing be lost. In some cases there may be but very little, for Satan carried most of it away before you left the church; but let that little tell. If you remember nothing more, remember, at all events, his earnestness for your souls' salvation; remember how he watched for your souls as one that must give account; and if you pained and grieved him by your carelessness when here, remember that you may possibly be able to gladden him even now, for are we not told that "there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth," &c.? So let his heart be gladdened even in heaven; let the angels carry up the blessed tidings that the lost sheep is found, and do you listen to those words of St. Peter, which I am sure would be the words of the saint before the throne: "Repent and be converted every one of you, that your sins may be blotted out."

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But it is not to all that I would repeat those words, for I cannot doubt for one moment that the ministry of my dear friend was not in vain in the Lord. There cannot be the slightest doubt that God has richly blessed that ministry to the salvation of very many souls. Who can doubt that there are at this present moment very many with himself before the Throne of God, who owe their place there to God's blessing on his work in this parish? What a loving welcome must they have given him last Wednesday! And how many are there amongst the living; how many in this church this morning; how many of you who are now before me, have reason to bless God for all eternity for that knowledge of Christ Jesus your Saviour which you learned through the instrumentality of him who will now speak to you no more? May it not be said of this church, "This and that man was born here"? Has not God the Holy Ghost brought life to your souls in Christ Jesus, that life which is in the knowledge of Him? and have you not reason most profoundly to thank God for him whom He sent to be to you the messenger of mercy?

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And now he is gone, and what are you to do? The prophet is gone, and what remains? That is a good verse for such an occasion in Phil. ii. 12, for it is the voice of the absent pastor, and it teaches that the flock when bereaved must be thrown on their own personal union with God himself—"Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own Salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." So now remember that the Lord Jesus Christ is not taken from you. Though your beloved Vicar is gone, your Saviour remains. You may draw as near to Him this day as you did when that beloved voice led you in prayer. So keep fast to Him, and in Him to each other. Whenever there is a change in the ministry there is a tendency to unsettlement, but let there be no unsettlement here. Do not begin to wander because he is gone; but walk in the steps in which he sought to lead you, as consistent Churchmen abiding in the old paths, and as humble believers so keeping close to the Lord Jesus Christ that, through the power of the Holy Ghost given in Him, you may be enabled through His great grace to glorify His name.

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## II. SERMON

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BY  
**REV. W. May, M.A.**  
***Sunday Afternoon, February 26th, 1888.***

2 Kings ii. 5: "*Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head to-day? and he answered, Yea, I know it, hold ye your peace.*"

WOULD not an empty pulpit to-day have been the most effective sermon? The voice which for thirty-four years has spoken to you from this place, so faithfully, so fervently, so wisely, and with the eloquence always of love—that voice is silent. There was once "silence in heaven about the space of half-an-hour;" and a still silence might be a speaking testimony here, to him who on Wednesday week was ministering in this church, and the Wednesday after was called home—a testimony to the life which he led, to the truths which he taught, and the precious fragrance of loving words and deeds which he has left behind. It seems as if God Himself were dealing with us, too closely almost for human intervention; dealing with our consciences, our memories, our hearts. The Lord has taken away our master from our head to-day. Should we not hold our peace? Ought we not to be dumb and open not our mouth, because He is acting? Should we not in thought and imagination go in and stand before our Master, judging ourselves that we be not judged of the Lord, accounting to Him for the way we have dealt with His servant, and then, convicted every one of us—as well we may be, the preacher first—by our own conscience, go out one by one, saying, "How dreadful is this place: this is none other but the House of God, and this is the gate of heaven." For a gate of heaven truly it is. It has been the gate of heaven for twenty-five years to the speaker, and but for words spoken at this gate, God only knows whether he would be able to-day to subscribe with his hand unto the Lord and say, "I am His." Sermons reckoned by the thousand, full of sacred truth, full of sanctified common sense, full of marked originality, full of "power and love and of a sound mind"—these have to be accounted for.

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And his prayers, public and private—prayers put up for us on every possible occasion—effectual fervent prayers of a righteous man standing ever in thought and feeling in the presence of God, and in the sweet, bracing, healthful atmosphere of unfeigned love to man, these are responsibilities which none can evade.

What a true pastor he was! what a faithful friend! what a saintly servant! what a large-hearted man! Which of us but has had proof, nay, countless proofs of his loving-kindness? Which of us could ever have succeeded, even if we had wished, in making that man our enemy? Oh! brethren, tears may well be in our hearts to-day—well may we weep for ourselves and for our children, weep because he is gone, weep because not one of us appreciated him enough, prayed for him enough, loved him enough, while he was still here. Oh! but he was a pastor who pressed his dear people to his heart, and then bore them up on that large heart of his before his divine Master,—every one of us, and our needs were continually in his mind. And now the Master has need of *him*, and has come and called him away; and, after a short and comparatively easy passage, he has forded the river, and gone up the shining path, and we stand alone and cry, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof," and we see him no more.

p. 29

And yet he would not have us silent to-day. He would bid us encourage ourselves, encourage one another in the Lord. He would exhort us to preach the Word. He would remind us that the time is short, and beseech us to buy up the opportunity. Let us do it, checking our tears. Did not we hear only yesterday that word of Christ, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die"? Is there then loss to-day of any man's *life* amongst us, or only of the ship? "Not lost, but gone before," is that life, if the word of Christ be true. Our pastor "is not dead, but sleepeth." The ship is broken by the violence of the waves, but all the *life* is "safe to land." The casket is shattered, but the precious jewel is in the hand, nay, in the very bosom of the Saviour. "He is not dead, but sleepeth." *Dead* four days? Nay, but *alive*, with a life far brighter and keener and more joyous than he ever had on earth! He sleeps well, and presently the Lord of life will say, "I go that I may awake him out of sleep." And how near that day-dawn, that awaking time may be, the morning of the resurrection, when the dead in Christ shall rise first. Meanwhile, the voice that speaks to us from that farther shore, aye, and will speak "till thought and memory flee"—that voice saith in death, when it cannot be silent, what it would have hesitated in its humility to say in life: "Be ye followers of me, even as I am of Christ." And so we call upon the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of the Living God and of Jesus, and offer this prayer—

p. 30

"Refining fire, go through my heart,  
Illuminate my soul;  
Scatter Thy life through every part,  
And sanctify the whole.

"My steadfast soul from falling free,  
Shall then no longer move,  
And Christ be all in all to me,  
And all my heart be love."

Turn we now from our dear master who has been taken away to that Master, still more dear, that perfect Master, "chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely," who remains. *They* fail,

p. 31

but *Thou* remainest. Human friends, comforters, pastors forsake us, but Thou, O Christ, art with us all the days even unto the end. Even an Elijah, that chief of the prophets, had to go up and stand before his Master. But we, beloved, have a kingdom which cannot be moved, and a kingly Master who cannot die. He, “the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever, is able to keep us from falling. He shall preserve us blameless, and present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.”

\* \* \* \* \*

Earth and heaven are not very far apart. When we stand at the foot of the ladder with the ascending and descending angels, when we sit at the feet of Jesus, some down here, some up there, but *all*, all for ever at His feet, and all, all for ever in His hand, and every one of us receiving of His words—when this is so, beloved, heaven draws very near to earth, and earth to heaven; and when the gate opens to receive some loved one in, we can almost hear the music and the singing. There is just this difference and distinction: here on earth we are labouring to enter into rest; there they are resting in the midst of joyful labour, being so close to their King. *We* might be closer than we are, and thus have more “days of heaven upon earth.”

\* \* \* \* \*

And now, feeling sure on this occasion of your forbearance and sympathy, I add a few things which may interest you concerning our earthly master, father, teacher, friend, taken from our head to-day by the Lord.

p. 32

His knowledge of Scripture was wonderful, was it not? and his memory for quotation—not the words only, but chapter and verse—up to the very last, after ten years of total blindness.

His knowledge too of that piece of intricate and, alas! disordered mechanism, the human heart, was remarkable. How his sermons turned us inside out, so to speak, but all loving, wise, and persuasive, leading us to Christ and to comfort.

The wondrous mixture in his disposition and character of thorough humanity and great spirituality—of manliness, vigour and cheerfulness, with a very tender, sympathising heart! How he could turn at once, and without causing any jar to our feelings, or any sense of discrepancy in his action, from the brightest play of mirth and humour to fervent, pleading prayer. How *real* and transparent he was, both as a man and a Christian!

There is another thing I desire to mention. “When the messengers of John were departed, Jesus began to speak unto the people concerning John: What went ye out into the wilderness to see, a reed shaken with the wind? . . . a man clothed in soft raiment? . . . a prophet?” You remember that *that*, on Sunday week, was the text your dear pastor last preached from; and what reply can we give to that question as regards himself? Was he a fickle, changeable man, “a reed shaken with the wind”? Was he a man living delicately, surrounding himself with luxury, and not rather a man given to self-denial, rising very early in the morning, winter and summer, and depriving himself of comforts, almost of necessities, for the sake of his beloved poor?

p. 33

“But what went ye out for to see, a prophet?” Yea, and a true prophet concerning the things of God. If you know not now, the day is coming when “ye *shall* know that there has been a prophet among you.” For myself, I desire this once publicly to testify that I have never heard a sermon from his lips (and I have heard many) or spent half-an-hour in his company (and I have spent many), without gaining conscious benefit to my soul.

Can any of you who heard it, forget that last sermon of his on Sunday week? Did you mark the look of holy joy in his dear face, as he portrayed the eager readiness of the Baptist for martyrdom, a martyrdom which would solve his last doubt, deliver him from his last sin, free him from his last infirmity, and place before his opened eyes the face of the King? Yes, on Wednesday morning *his* eyes looked upon Jesus, who for long years *had* looked on no man. “He has received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.”

But are you aware that he had proposed to return to the subject of John the Baptist? that very shortly before his translation (for it was translation rather than death), that verse was constantly in his thoughts: “John did no miracle, but all things that John spake of this man were true” (John x. 41). Well, all I can say is of our beloved friend and pastor, if *he* did no miracle, *God* did many miracles by him. Who shall reckon up the number of precious souls saved, cheered, taught, strengthened, made meet for the Master’s use by means of him who now rests from his labours, but whose works *do*, yea, and *shall* follow him. One thing, I believe, eternity will show—not that your minister was a perfect minister or a perfect man; he had his faults, his mistakes, his sins—but this is what eternity will show, and oh! the weight of responsibility it lays on *all* of us: “*The things which Francis Storr spake of Jesus Christ were true.*”

p. 34

Yet once more. With special prayer and consideration, he drew up for this winter a Course of Wednesday Evening Lectures. Two only, out of the twelve, were delivered. The subject of the third was announced, as usual, in church for the following Wednesday, but the address was not given. And what *was* the subject? “By it, he being dead, yet speaketh;” “and when he had said this, he fell asleep.” What does that word *it* refer to—“by it, he being dead, yet speaketh”? Abel’s sacrifice, type of Christ’s, which Abel looked at and God accepted. To the worth of that atoning sacrifice Abel testified, your pastor testified, in life, unto death, and for ever. The lecture was not delivered. His death, not his living voice, was to declare it, for we had the text, and the text only, “and when he had said this, he fell asleep.”

p. 35



Do you remember, brethren, the last time we all met—he, and you, and I, for prayer and praise and conference at the opening of the year, in that well-loved school-room—do you remember that the speaker was led to quote these lines?—

“The great and terrible wilderness of famine and of drought  
Lies in the shadow behind me, for the Lord hath brought me out;  
The great and terrible river, though shrouded still from view,  
Lies in the shadow before me, but the Lord will bring me through.”

Now he has reached that river, and crossed it, Christ and he—the Master and his beloved disciple. “They two went on;” “they two went over.”

“So they passed over quickly towards the goal,  
But the wistful, loving gaze of the parting soul  
Grew only more rapt and joyful as he held his Master’s hand;  
Methinks or ever he was aware, they were come to the Holy Land.”

And so his favourite oft-repeated text, “Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Ammi-nadib” (Song Sol. vi. 12), was fulfilled. Literally, the words are, “Or ever I was aware, my soul set me on the chariots of my willing people.” Ah! these were “the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof,” which raised his spirits and lifted him heavenward, while he was still down here, *his people “made willing in the day of God’s power.”* Beloved, we may raise him higher yet! we may gladden his heart still! we may cause his reward to grow exceedingly, we may yet give him souls for his hire, seals to his ministry! Shall we not hear him to-day, dead yet speaking, beseeching us on this his first Sabbath in heaven, to carry on and carry out the work God permitted him to do among us? “If there is therefore any comfort in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any tender mercies and compassions, *fulfil ye my joy!*” (Phil. ii. 1, R. V.).

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That we may do it, let us give earnest heed to the prayer of our master’s Christ, for the answer is not doubtful: “While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Thy name. . . . and now come I to Thee, and these things I speak. . . . *that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves,*” (John xvii. 12, 13).

### III.

## NOTES OF THE LAST SERMON

PREACHED BY  
**REV. F. STORR, M.A.,**  
***February 12, 1888.***

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Matthew xi. 9, 10: “*But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.*”

I PROPOSE to you for your own reading and meditation and self-examination during the season of Lent the life and history of John the Baptist. Seek out all the special passages which allude to him, and pass them not lightly over, and see and mark the great reformer, still more the great forerunner. That which may be done at any time is too often not done at all; thus our Church has wisely set before us certain seasons for meditation on certain subjects.

\* \* \* \* \*

Some do not approve of services in unconsecrated buildings. I confess it seems to me that such are not very assiduous in their attendance in consecrated buildings! No, we want a heart for these services; we want the Holy Spirit to make us know that we are dying creatures—that we must all stand before the Judgment-seat of Christ. “It is high time to awake out of sleep” (Rom. xiii. 11).

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Glance at the leading features of John’s life:—

1. Self-discipline.
2. The Witness.
3. The closing scene of his life.

1. If you notice particularly Matt. iii., Luke i., John iii. (towards the end of the chapter), Luke iii., Mark vi., you will have before you the comprehensive features of John the Baptist’s life. Let me direct you to his credentials. This is the man who was prophesied of seven centuries before the coming of the Lord, not in Isaiah xl. only, but in Malachi iv. 5. He went into the wilderness, the less inhabited country. He probably had tried Jerusalem; it is not unlikely that he had consorted with the learned Jews. He found little encouragement, it may be. Then he cast himself on the Lord—HE never disappoints. We shall ever and anon (God grant always) cast ourselves on Him—

there is no disappointment there. The world disappoints, friends disappoint, there is very much disappointment in our own hearts. God never disappoints.

Men would consider it a great waste of time, those three years in the desert—so much for him to do, so much misery and wickedness and sin. There he was in the desert, assuredly not doing nothing for men, but in the wilderness, holding little intercourse with men. Rely upon it, the greatest things done for God are done in secret. Religion does not come forth full-blown. God sows the seed; the roots strike downward, unseen. Self-examination, self-discipline, communion with God,—these fit men for great enterprises, for conflict in daily life, and for the trustful and rejoicing walk with God. Self-examination—very mild and charitable towards others, very strict and exacting towards ourselves. Converse with God: there is no one you can tell everything to, but God. Away with the idea of confession to our fellow-man—casting our burden upon the priest, as though he could take it to God for us. That is not the way of the saints of God. No, we want much converse with God, much searching of His Word, and what that Word saith to us individually, whenever we hear His voice speaking to us, do it. George Müller, at the age of twenty, made this Book “the man of his counsels.” Müller’s life is one of the most wonderful miracles of Providence that ever was performed; that man, without ever asking for one farthing from anyone, committed his way to the Lord, walked with God, and in fifty years a million of money has passed through his hands; I forget how many orphans he has clothed and fed. It is just as much a miracle as when the ravens fed Elijah, brought him bread and flesh every morning and evening.

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Now, the season of Lent reminds us of self-examination, of self-judgment; and surely if self-judgment, it will be self-condemnation. It bids us take everything to God: thus shall we be blessed in the Lord, and in the power of the Holy Ghost we shall have His peace pervading our hearts. Now let us proceed to—

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## 2. The Witness.

It was in “the fulness of time” that our Lord came. They had often been asking, Where are the signs of His coming? It is of no use for man’s clock to strike before God’s. If I may say so with reverence, God’s clock struck, and then John the Baptist came—six months before the Lord. Long predicted and anticipated, at length he came. He was of good parentage. There is a great deal in being of good parentage. “The seed of the blessed of the Lord” (Isa. lxx. 23). The real thing—that is what we want; not gilding or veneer, but the good heart of oak. “They were both righteous before God,” etc. (Luke i. 6). That is the good parentage. Children are apt to follow parents really walking “in the ways of the Lord.”

His witness was uncompromising. It was no time for mincing words. “The axe is laid unto the root of the tree,” etc. (Matt. iii. 10). He went straight to the mark.

His witness was general. Observe this, when you hear men say, “The Gospel is not to be preached to all; it is only for the elect.” God has His elect; God forbid that we should deny it. But how shall we know them?

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It was a good answer of John Newton’s (too familiar it may have been) when one was finding fault with him for preaching the Gospel to all men, he said, “You chalk the elect, and then I will preach to them apart.” Though the words are too familiar, they strike the right note. John preached the Gospel to all, “Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Mark you, the same word his blessed Master preached (Matt. iv. 17). “Repent ye,”—change your mind; go straight to Christ, to God. Cease to do evil by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Though the Gospel has been preached from this place forty to fifty years, there are those who sit there, year after year, just as they were. How will they be found in the Day of the Lord?

As his witness was wholly uncompromising and general, so was it *practical*. He went direct to the mark. The soldiers, the publicans, the people, all came to him; even the Pharisees stripped off, or rather covered over, their phylacteries. The Spirit of the Living God to convince of sin and quicken the conscience of each sinner—that is what we want. Unless we speak in the Holy Ghost and in power, we might as well, and far better, never speak at all.

The soldiers were coming into very great power at that time; he told them, “Do no violence,” etc., “and be content with your wages.” Then the tax-gatherers (who were utterly different from ours) had great opportunities of over-reaching; and some did not fail to take advantage of the power. Sad advantage for them. He told them, “Exact no more than that which is appointed you.” “He that hath two garments, let him impart to him that hath none.” If you can do good to any one, do it; if you have small means, use them; if you have great, use them. John used very plain language, “O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” Yes, beloved, John could hardly have moved in polite society, for he ventured to speak of hell, of “the unquenchable fire,” of “the wrath to come.” He told them to *flee*, not to creep, not to walk, “from the wrath to come.” He urged—his Master rather urged—“Repent ye,” etc. He spoke to the conscience. Oh, that the Lord in my few remaining days, if any more days are given me, oh, that He would make my words more plain. I have striven to be plain, brethren.

p. 42

John was the uncompromising, the faithful, the affectionate witness. We want a practical religion. If not practical, we had better throw it behind our backs; it will not profit us in the last day. What is the use of our religion if it is not to influence our life, if it is not to make you, dear children, better children, more obedient children, keeping your tongues from evil words, making you kind and gentle, your father’s joy and your mother’s darling, because they can trust you? As

a dear little grandchild of mine said, "I don't know what papa would do without me; I'm his right hand, he says," and she added, "Oh, I don't know what I should do without him!" Yes, we want practical religion. If we are not honest-hearted, faithful to our trust, if we do not to others as we would they should do to us, when we get to the gate of heaven and begin *then* to look for our religion, to hunt for our certificate, it will not be found. The man without the wedding garment was speechless.

p. 43

I remember an account of a ship that struck on rocks; they rose sheer and precipitous—not a chance of escape. All at once a ladder was let down from the top of the rock, and the poor sailors, who had given up hope, escaped all safe to land.

You are on the edge of the sea of eternity. The tide is coming in, the waves rolling up one after another; but there is a Rock. You must reach it, you must cling to it. How are you going to do it? You are not flies, children, that you can walk up a perpendicular wall. We have got something far more difficult to do—to live to God, to glorify God in our daily walk and conversation. In other words, you want "a ladder set up" (Gen. xxviii. 12).

What is that Ladder? John the Baptist preached holiness, practice. He was a practical man, because he did not teach men to make bricks without straw—he pointed them to Christ. Standing by the river Jordan, and seeing Jesus coming, he directed all the people to Him with the words, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." That was his ladder. There is no godliness without Christ: "Without Me ye can do nothing." The man who seeks safety on any other raft—lifeboat he may call it—is venturing on the ocean of Eternity in an unseaworthy craft. We must rest simply and wholly on Him, the Lamb of God, the Alpha and Omega—trust and know and love, as well as serve, the Lord Jesus. Now, time fails me, brethren, and I want very much to speak to you about the closing scene. I must do so as briefly as I can.

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### 3. The closing scene of his life.

A great deal is made of the closing scene of a man's life. Take, for instance, one who has lived to himself all through life; he is on his death-bed, we strain our ears to hear if we can, any word to give a glimmer of hope. He may have lived as he listed, and then at the close of life, when he is at the last gasp, and Death has him in his grip, friends lean over the pillow and question, "Are you trusting in Christ?" and if the whispered answer should be "Yes," they are satisfied! Poor dying man! what else is left for him to do? Is such an act, at such a moment, real faith? If a house is on fire, and a man leaps from the second storey window, you do not say he is a good leaper. What else could he do? I do not mean to say that there may not be such a thing as a death-bed repentance, but a death-bed repentance can scarcely be called satisfactory. Tell me what a man's *life* has been—has it been spent in Christ's service and to the glory of God?—and I care not *that* whether he has any last words on his death-bed or not.

p. 45

Look at John the Baptist's end. You do not find the account of many deathbeds in Scripture—the fact is, the great thing is how a man lives. Is Christ his life? Is holiness the result? Then will he lift up his head in joy whether in life or death.

Look at that last scene in the life of John the Baptist. He had had a great and strong struggle. Read his life, my children. You like story-books; you will find this Book far more entertaining than you think for, as, for example, the story of the three children in the fire, Daniel in the lion's den, and the story of the earthquake and shipwreck as told in the life of St. Paul. John was in prison, imprisoned by the king—(I pass over his uncompromising witness against sin). It is difficult to speak before the great; it is comparatively an easy thing for me to stand up here and say, My fellow sinner, thou art going to hell! "Come with us and we will do thee good."

\* \* \* \* \*

A cloud had come over John the Baptist's mind; the faith which had hitherto borne him up, is now sharply exercised. He sent his disciples to Jesus. I do not think that he had the disciples' good *only* in view. Our blessed Lord "in that same hour cured many," etc. (Luke vii. 21, 22), and answered them, "Go your way," etc. (ver. 22); and He added this (Oh, I thank God for that addition), "And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me." Have you ever had prayers so answered—I hope you have had many—that you almost, as they say, leapt out of your skin, you have been so astounded? You will have many more if you "come boldly to the Throne of Grace." I believe then, when the Lord sent this message to His faithful servant, He answered the very want and questioning of his heart, and that word satisfied the yearning of his heart. John the Baptist must have said, "Why, He knows my very thoughts, my very doubts, my failings, my fears!" May I not thus interpret? I do not add to the Word of God.

p. 46

All clouds disappeared; the Sun of Righteousness shines out with healing in His wings. By-and-by there is the glimmer of a light, the sound of the key in the lock. "Ah! my lord" (so the jailor would probably have called the prophet), "I bring you heavy tidings—the king has sent his executioner." "Heavy tidings? Nay, joyous tidings! blessed tidings! glorious tidings! Lord Jesus, I thank Thee! Where is he? Do not keep me one moment from heaven and glory!" Down he laid his head on the block joyfully, and another saint was in glory! Oh, my brethren, think what that will be—"For ever with the Lord!"

# FOOTNOTES.

[3] Some printers' errors have been corrected, and a few sentences omitted by the Editor re-inserted.

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