

WATSON DAY AT YALE.

Verbatim Reports of Ian MacLaren's Sermon in Battell Chapel and Talk in Dwight Hall.

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Dr. John Watson (Ian MacLaren), of Liverpool, preached in Battell Chapel last Sunday, Feb. 20, at the regular morning service, and talked to the students in Dwight Hall in the evening. It was an unusual Sunday for the University and the interest of the student body showed a keen appreciation of the opportunity. The sermon was on the text of the eulogy of John the Baptist, by Jesus. It was in a simple form and rose to high dramatic force towards the close. Notice had to be given days in advance that it would be absolutely impossible to seat any but those directly connected with the University. As it was, the capacity of the building was overtaxed and very many were turned away from the doors.

President Dwight opened the service and Dr. Watson offered the prayer as follows:

Almighty God, most holy and most gracious, who doth not refuse the prayer of any true heart nor despise the sorrow of them that feel penitent, we beseech Thee to grant unto Thy servants, now and always, a contrite heart for all their sins, and a true desire for holy living, and by Thy great goodness and according unto Thy promises, declared unto us by Christ Jesus, that Thou wouldst lessen the intolerable burden of our sins through Christ's sacrifice. We beseech Thee to grant unto us peace of conscience and pure hearts, that we may serve Thee all the days of our life.

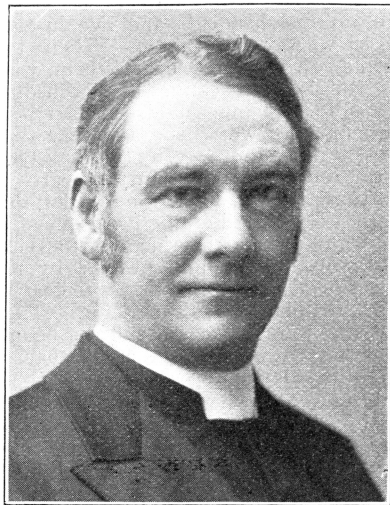
Oh God, who art the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, we render Thee thanks that Thou hast sent Thy beloved Son into this world and that he has overcome the power of sin and the power of the present world and the power of death. Unto Thee we render thanks that Thou raised him from the dead and set him at Thine own right hand in the heavenly places and that he has all power in Heaven and out, unto salvation. And we pray that our faith in the midst of this mortal conflict may be established in the risen and triumphant Christ, and that through Christ we may obtain the victory over all our temptations and over all our sins, and come at last, through him, into the holy and perfect life.

Oh God, who rulest in Heaven above and on the earth beneath, we beseech Thee to shed forth the spirit of Thy beloved Son into the heart of His church the world over. Protect by Thy providence all the missionaries of the Cross in distant places and their companies of lonely converts, wherever they carry the preaching of Christ in our own country or any other country of the world, and hasten the day when all Christ's disciples shall stand together, and so through Thy mercy hasten everywhere the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We beseech Thee to send Thy blessing upon this country, giving Thy servant, the ruler, heavenly wisdom, and all associated with him in government and every person in authority, and uniting all the Commonwealth together in brotherly love and the fear of God. And bless unto the advancement of Thy kingdom on earth, all recent events in the history of this country, that everywhere the kingdom of God may come and stand in peace and righteousness and order and good government.

Most pitiful Father, we entreat Thee

to have compassion on those who are in sorrow and in tears, for all who are in danger by land and sea, for every one who has lost the kindly light of reason or is in despair of faith; for all who have secret trials and for whom the help of man is vain; for all lonely, disappointed and burdened men, and for



REV. DR. JOHN WATSON.

anyone whose name may now be mentioned. We beseech Thee that all that serve the country, both soldiers and sailors, and everyone toiling for our comfort and watching our way, that Thou wilt give them aid and merciful deliverance. And also for all who have sinned and for such who are appointed unto death. We pray for all of those who are near and dear to us; the old folks at home; those of our families who are far away, and anyone dear to us whom case and circumstance are lying upon our hearts.

Almighty God, who art the only source of our righteousness and faith, we beseech Thee that Thy holy spirit, the spirit of knowledge and wisdom, may be sent forth upon the President and teachers of this ancient University, and upon all who learn within its folds; that here, light may ever grow brighter and stronger and that knowledge may never cease, until it rises to the knowledge of Him, whom to know is life everlasting.

Finally, we render Thee thanks for all ordinary mercies which we enjoy from day to day, and for the means of grace, by which, we pray, prepare our hearts to receive Thy word, and keep us this day and all the days of our life in the paths of peace and righteousness, and grant us at last to come into Thy heavenly kingdom and to serve Thee there in perfect knowledge for ever and ever. For all of these things we beseech Thee, through the merits and intercession of Jesus Christ, our Lord, to whom and to Thee, the Father, the Holy Ghost, be all glory, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Dr. Watson's sermon, which was without notes, was as follows:

The Sermon.

The subject of the sermon this morning is Jesus' eulogy of John the Baptist and the text is in the 11th chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel: "Among them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist."

Two men stand in the background of Jesus' life whose histories are woven like a net of golden threads through the story of the Gospel and whose characters touch the extremes of moral contrast. One was Jesus' forerunner, who only saw the Lord once, when he

acknowledged him as the Messiah, and the other was Jesus' king, who only saw his subject once, when he took the opportunity of insulting him.

When Jesus was at work in Galilee, Herod and John the Baptist were in Herod's castle. One of them was in the banquet hall in luxury and wantonness, and the other was in his dungeon below, in affliction and in irons. Both of these men bethought themselves of Christ, one of them shortly before, when he sent the message to Jesus and asked if he was the Messiah, and the other shortly after, when Herod was afraid that Jesus was John arisen from the dead. To each man Jesus sent word. To John he sent: "Blessed is he who-soever shall not be offended in me," and to Herod he sent: "Woe unto Thee."

For John's mission, very peculiar qualities were required; not because the mission was dangerous (though it was), but because it was so humble. In the way John fulfills his remarkable mission, one catches sight of an almost unique, if not an entirely unique nobility of character. It is easy enough, as you know, to obtain men of animal courage, who will take great risks and rejoice to be in the forefront of the battle; who will not be afraid to lay down their lives, and who will have a man's joy in danger—aggressive, masterful, determined, full-blooded men! They can be found any day upon the street, and they can be found in any place by hundreds, in any society which is not absolutely decadent and rotten. It is far more difficult to get men who are willing to forget themselves, and to do obscure work; to be the pioneers of great causes, and to sink themselves, their lives and their reputations in their cause.

WHAT JOHN'S CHARACTER MEANS.

Such a character means utter self-regardlessness and a mind cleansed from vain ambitions; an elevation above this present world and a pure vision of noble ideals. Such was the character of John. And they are the men that are a rebuke to you and me, and a stimulant.

Between John and the apostles of Jesus there was an enormous difference. The apostles went everywhere with the message of a triumphant cause, of a Christ, who had died and risen again; and wherever they went throughout the cities of the Roman empire, signs and wonders followed them. Of course, they had to suffer; but then no man cares anything about suffering, pure suffering. It is the lot of the soldier, and if an apostle had to die, why, he died, with the sound of victory in his ears, and the last thing he saw was the Cross, for which he had fallen, moving triumphantly forward, as he died. John had to preach of a Christ no person had seen; of a kingdom of God that had not yet come. He had to do his work in the desert, in the company of the wild beasts, with no visible results. No Christ, mark you! No Christ kept vigil with him. John's humiliations had not the partnership of Christ. John was alone; and even when John died, he died just in the grey dawn, and died never having had a hand in the battle that was to be. That was the hardship of John's condition.

KEEPING RIGIDLY HIS COMMISSION.

John kept himself very rigidly within his commission, and never once allowed himself to be intoxicated by popular applause, which is the danger of all professional men and of all artists—the danger of every man who figures in the eyes of the public. Is there any object

under Heaven so sad as the decadence of a prophet—when a man who has a mission to perform, becomes intoxicated with his own message. When a man who has to prepare a way to the kingdom of God, comes at last to think himself greater than the kingdom, when the bearer of a great and immortal truth thinks himself greater than the truth he bears? The corruption of the best is the worst, and when a prophet goes astray it is the greatest catastrophe in ethics and in religion.

John maintained an even mind. When asked who he was, he did not require to say that he was the Messiah. There are a hundred ways in which a man may politely turn aside a compliment but accept it all the same. He might have allowed them to think, though he disclaimed it, that after all he was the Messiah. But what did he say to those who asked him that question? I, the Messiah! Never! Foolish to suppose that I am the Messiah. Elias? No, not Elias! (He was!) A prophet! Not a prophet, not a prophet at all! He did not have to say that he was a prophet. By and by men would see whether he was a prophet or not. What are you, then, what are you? I will tell you. This is what I want to be, a voice that sounds across the desert air and behind that, a man unknown. A name to be disregarded, to be forgotten. That is John.

When Jesus came it was a moment of great joy to John. It was also a moment of great sorrow, for the coming of Jesus meant the close of John's work. He could still approach the Messiah, and he could send disciples to the Messiah. But his disciples belonged to the Messiah now, and his message was completed. The very earnestness of his life had made him unfit to be one of Jesus' apostles. For Jesus could not take an ascetic from the desert, who had separated himself from men, and make him the apostle of this new gospel of the Cross. When Jesus came, John's work was done, and this was a tremendous trial to the man.

THE HARDEST TIME.

You are young now, and I pray you may have a great work to do in the learned professions, and in all the other spheres of enterprise in your country. But the day will come when you grow old, and the younger man has to do the work, and then will come the trial. For a man to be able and to have an opportunity to do the work is happiness. But O, to lay it aside and to give it to another man. We may be thankful if that time does not last long. John would not have wished to have lived, after his work was done and his message had been delivered. A man with no message, nothing left him, and no share in the big work. His work was done. And when a man's work is done, let him die. The man (John) would have chosen death. His death crowned and completed and entirely satisfied and glorified his life.

I have not exhausted the nobility of John for I have not exhausted his temptations. Isn't it a desperate thing when you and I are fighting a spiritual battle and have enough to do with the enemies in our own soul; that people will rush in from the outside, not to help the better self in a man, but to help the worst self. People looked on and saw Jesus and John. They saw Jesus succeeding and saw John silent. Now came the chance for the Pharisees. They hated John because John had told the truth. They suspected Jesus because Jesus had not yet lent himself to the traditions of the period. Now was the opportunity. Is there anything more agreeable to a certain kind of