

The Faithfulness of the Common Man

~Other Speakers A-F: Phillips Brooks:

"And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth..."

(Matt. 25:25).

It seems very certain that the world is to grow better and richer in the future, however it has been in the past, not by the magnificent achievements of the highly-gifted few, but by the patient faithfulness of the one-talented many. If we could draw back the curtains of the millennium and look in, we should see not a Hercules here and there standing on the world-wasting monsters he had killed, but a world full of men, each with an arm of moderate muscle, but each triumphant over his own little piece of the obstinacy of earth or the ferocity of the brutes. It seems as if the heroes had done almost all for the world that they can do, and not much more can come till common men awake and take their common tasks.

I do believe the common man's task is the hardest. The hero has the hero's aspiration that lifts him to his labour. All great duties are easier than the little ones, though they cost far more blood and agony. That is a truth we all find out. And this is part of the reason why we make allowance for our poor friend in the parable. But if we look at it in a higher way, surely we may come to feel that the very certainty that the world must be saved by the faithfulness of commonplace people is what is needed to rescue such people from commonplaceness in their own eyes, and clothe their lives with the dignity which they seem so woefully to lack, and which, if any man does not see somewhere shining through the rusty texture of his life, he cannot live it well.