

Purgeon on American Slavery and the Lancashire distress.

In the course of a sermon delivered in the Metropolitan Tabernacle, on Sunday, 9th November, Mr. Spurgeon, in regard to the suffering operatives, said, "Remember that their poverty is no fault of their own. They are not brought to it by excess of meats or drinks. They are not reduced to it by riot or disorder. It is not illness; it is not a wilful strike against the masters. It is utterly unavoidable; and here, therefore, it is the right place for benevolence to display itself. The Egyptian hierarchy for charity is very suggestive. It is a naked child giving honey to a bee which has lost its wings. Notice, it is a child—we should give in meekness, and not for show. It is a child feeding a bee; not a drone, but one that will work; a bee that has lost its wings; one therefore, who has lost its power to supply itself; a picture before you of those martyrs and confessors of industry whose cause I plead to-day. A bee that has lost its wings, makes its appeal for a little honey to every childlike heart here to-day, and they who are true to God will not refuse it their aid. Remember, too, that the cause of this suffering is a national sin—sin of slavery. We have not yet passed the third generation, and upon a nation God visits sin to the third and fourth generation. We have rid ourselves, at last, of this accursed stain, so far as our Government is concerned; yet we are, therefore, delivered from any fear in future on that ground; but still, if slavery be now in America, we must remember that it would not have been there if it had not been carried there, and we are partners in guilt. More-over there has been too much winking at slavery amongst the merchants of Manchester and Liverpool. There has not been that abhorrence of the evil which should have been, and therefore it is just in the providence of God that when Americans cut with the sword we should be made to smart with the rod. If the Lord is pleased to smite our nation in one particular place, yet we must remember that it is meant for us all. Let us all bear the infliction as our tribulation, and let us cheerfully take up the burden, for it is but a little one compared with what our sins might have brought upon us. Better, far, for us to have famine, than war. From all civil war, and all the desperate wickedness which it involves, good Lord, deliver us; and if thou smitest us as thou hast done, it is better to fall into the hand of God than into the hand of man. I must also refresh your memories with the fact of the patient endurance of those who have been called to suffer. There was never upon earth a nobler spectacle than that of these men suffering so graciously with their wives and children, and yet enduring it so patiently. If ever there was a case in which human ears must be opened to hear the cry of woe, this is it. If you and I had our wives and children starving, and had nothing but the charity of the parish, and the little relief of the committee, making only some one-and-fourpence or one-and-sixpence a head to live upon for a week, I am afraid we should begin to think that we could re-adjust the machinery of Government; or it might happen, that, if we saw bread, and could not get it, we might break in the window, or do some unrighteous act to take away another man's property. They suffer well, brethren; and we do not well unless we help them. Moreover, remember how widely spread is this distress. I know too many of my dear hearers are often brought to as great poverty as the operatives in Lancashire; but, then, you have some little help; sometimes the church can give it; at other times some friend, not quite so badly off as you are, will help you. But there, if a poor man wants a loaf, he can not get of the tradesman even on credit, for the tradesman has no power to give him credit. Nor can these people borrow of their neighbors, for where all are equally destitute, one can not help another. Even the churches fail to do what they would wish to do. In the case of one dear brother, late a student in our college, to whom we constantly send supplies week by week, and who maintains a class of some forty young women, and in answer to the cry of faith has found all the means, I hope to aid him by this collection of to-day. The distress is not only with the poor, now, but with those a little above them, and God only knoweth to what extent it must go unless in His gracious providence He by some means or other bringeth a supply of cotton, that they may once again be at work. Wherefore need I urge you, my hearers? I feel that you are ready, now, to assist these suffering ones. Let your own gratitude to God move you. Blessed be God that you have not this famine and straits of bread. We have not to know every habitation is a Boehm, because the strong man boweth down for lack of bread, and the faces of the children are wan, and the mothers weep, and even the breasts refuse the infant child nourishment. Give us God has prospered you. He that giveth to the poor, lendeth to the Lord, and the Lord shall remember him in the time of trouble. He that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ, hath everlasting life freely given to him; let him, therefore, freely give, even as he has freely received.

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