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*From The Wives*

BIRTH COMMEMORATION.

# A Sermon

PREACHED IN UPPINGHAM SCHOOL CHAPEL,

On Whit-Monday, May 29, 1882,

BY

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(14)



# Sermon.



“FOR there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, Saying, Fear not Paul; thou must be brought before Cæsar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.”—*Acts* xxvii., 23, 24.



THESE words tell us of a great calamity, and of a great cause being saved in the person of St. Paul, with all, whether good or evil, who came within that circle. This has always struck me as one of those bits of living sculpture by which the Holy Spirit of God makes a great truth live visibly before men's eyes for ever; live, as it were, in the breathing stone of a noble memorial, carved out, and clear cut, to last throughout all generations, like a statue by a master hand. The shipwreck is a striking figure of ruin—helpless ruin—coming on; and St. Paul stands out for all to see, as representing a good cause, and being saved, to be a witness to Cæsar and the world of the truth. I am bold to think that this school represents a good cause; and, that like St. Paul, it had a message of life to deliver, which God willed should not perish in the shipwreck. The being saved from an overwhelming calamity is in itself a witness to work that ought to be done, and a mission that ought to be fulfilled. Worthless things, dead things, are not saved. They are let go. When God appeals, time after time, to having brought His people through the Red sea; and when the angel of

God comes to St. Paul, with the assurance that he will be saved, because he must be brought before Cæsar, we have very strongly put before us what a great deliverance means. Nations, and men, aye, and schools, are delivered because they embody a cause, and have a message to hand on. Once more, I say, the being saved is in itself a strong assurance to the thoughtful mind, quite apart from the innumerable traces of God's hand, which those who are saved can often see, though they cannot shew them to others. Few of you now remain who were at Borth with us in that great day ; and you may wonder, therefore, at the solemn way in which I speak of it. You would not wonder if you had felt it with me.

People understand battle and bloodshed. No one needs to be instructed what it means when the fierce ranks of war close up, or the soldier rides back into the rushing river under a heavy fire to save his dying comrade. But the bright everyday sun, and the quiet spring days, what have they to do with death? So thought the fated two in Phœnix Park the other day ; but the death came, quick and sharp, at the pleasant evening hour, and because it was violent, and bloody, the whole world is horrorstruck. But the bright everyday sun, and the quiet peaceful hours, from time to time, shine on wounds as deep though unseen ; which do not come quick and suddenly, or end in blood, but are first perceived far off, and then draw nearer and nearer, in a calm, pitiless way, a ghostly plague that no hand can touch. There is nothing—look to the right and to the left—there is nothing. The houses stand as they stood before ; the sun shines ; the fields are not changed ; but a doom, that mocks the familiar home-scenes, is in the air, dimly at first, but full of fear ; and it comes nearer, and it comes nearer, like the slow creeping of the tide to the martyr, bound hand and foot on the sunny sands, the

children's playground. And it becomes certain, as the silent hours crawl on, that the life which a quarter of a century has built up, the cause which weary head, and weary hand, and aching heart, had grown weary over so many years, and which so many hopes, and so many joys, have clustered round, cannot be saved ; and the last week comes, and is known to be the last, and nevermore are our feet to tread the accustomed floor—for it is of ourselves I am speaking—unless some great deliverance comes ; and it came, and we were saved, and are here to-day to celebrate it. Now, what was saved ? Do not let us mistake. Had this school, I mean the living material that is the school, come to an end that hour, and died to this place, what would have perished, and what would have remained ? I, and some of those whose hearts were with me, would nevermore have set foot within these walls, but have gone elsewhere at once, with every hope of a prosperity, after our trial, as great, or greater than we could have here. We, then, should not have been the worse in the end, or perished. These great buildings would have remained, and, without doubt, some years later, would have become the home of another school, as great in numbers and fame, or greater, than before. The school, in that sense, would not have perished ; but it would have been *another* school. All the discipline, the life-power, the traditions, the experience, the rewards, the punishments, the triumphs, the defeats, in a word, the life of this school would have been snapped short off, and it would have died. The cause of honour, and self-government, and truth, built up so patiently through so many years, would have died, as soon as all the living members were scattered elsewhere. This, then, was what was saved by our year at Borth ! We came back the same school that we had been before ; instead of another school having been set on foot by others, and filled by others.



We are the same, and not another. And if any think that we are not marked out by any special appearance, that we should take to ourselves the upholding of a cause, I would remark, that St. Paul looked like other men, and to the soldiers, who were ready to kill him, was of very little account indeed, a common prisoner. Whether we uphold a cause, or not, does not depend on how we look, but on what we are. And a school, which claims to do its best for each boy, in which each boy has proper teaching in school, and proper interests out of school; a school which stands in the front rank of the first nation of the world, and stands there because of this thoroughness, and because, in some degree you are examples of this, does represent a cause; and, when you play false, you little know how much you betray. Once more, the exodus to Borth saved this cause, this life, which is being built up here. The rest might very well have gone on elsewhere. And those, who have been saved by a great deliverance, have been saved for a great purpose; to give witness before Cæsar, to stand out boldly, and fearlessly in the world, and maintain truth, and purity, and obedience, self-government, and honour, in the face of the prevailing powers of the day, if need be, and fashionable idolatries. The being saved means this. I am sure, if you will quietly think over the fact, that for one whole year this school was in exile, and at any moment might have come to an end in that grim struggle for life, when more than once all seemed lost to those who really knew what was going on, a strong feeling will take possession of you, that a great debt is owed by the school to God, Who opened the way, when there seemed no way, and saved it through all. The school has a work to do in the world, or it would not have been saved; a work it *ought* to do; for well I know that in this world God's work is too often betrayed. Yet when God gives the work, though many



betray it, nevertheless the work is handed on to worthier hands by the faithful few. Yet I pray that the many may be faithful, and that this bit of history for hundreds of years may be an inheritance in these walls, a fire of living light burning in this place, a spirit in your hearts, a glory on your heads, and that you may outdo it by faithful deeds yourselves. We owe, too, a debt to Borth. It is our honour to pay it; a debt to the people whose goodness made safety possible, whose kindness made it pleasant; it is our honour to be remembered in Wales for good, as we are, and year by year to keep that memory fresh. How gracious is an heirloom in an old family, an ancient honour in a school. Make this an ancient honour, by caring that it never dies out. Remember St. Paul and the shipwreck. Remember the words, "Thou must be brought before Cæsar." The great deliverance meant also a great, an honourable, a dangerous duty. Is this modern world a place to play the fool in, and the coward? Nay, be men, be found in God's name in the front rank, where work, and honour, and danger call for volunteers.



