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VICTORY

by

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“For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?”—1 JOHN v. 4, 5.

IT ought to be our practice, if we have any religion, to examine the state of our souls from time to time, and to find out whether we are “right in the sight of God” (Acts viii. 21).

Are we true Christians? Are we likely to go to heaven when we die? Are we born again,—born of the Spirit,—born of God? These are searching questions, which imperatively demand an answer; and the text which heads this paper will help us to give that answer. If we are born of God, we shall have one great mark of character,—we shall “overcome the world.”

In opening up this subject, there are three points to which I propose to invite attention in this paper.

I. In the first place, let us consider *the name by which St. John describes a true Christian*. He calls him six times over, in his First Epistle, a man “born of God,” and once, “begotten of God.”

II. In the second place, let us consider the *special mark which St. John supplies of a man born of God*. He says that he “overcomes the world.”

III. In the last place, let us consider *the secret of the true Christian's victory over the world*. He says, “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”

Let me clear the way by expressing an earnest hope that no reader will turn away from the subject before us, under the idea that it is a controversial one. I doubt whether any doctrine of the Bible has suffered so much from impatient dislike of controversy as that which is contained in the phrase, “Born of God.” Yet that phrase contains a great foundation verity of Christianity, which can never be neglected without damage. Deep down, below strifes and contentions about the effect of baptism, and the meaning of liturgical services, there lies in those three words one of the primary rocks of the everlasting gospel, even the inward work of the Holy Ghost on the soul of man. The atoning work of Christ FOR us, and the sanctifying work of the Holy Ghost WITHIN us, are the two corner-stones of saving religion. Surely a truth which the last writer of the New Testament brings forward no less than seven times in the five chapters of one Epistle, a truth which he binds up seven times with some of the distinguishing characteristics of the Christian man,—such a truth ought not to be disliked or timidly passed by. Surely it may be handled profitably without entering upon debatable ground. I shall attempt so to handle it in this paper.

I. First and foremost, I ask my readers to notice the *name by which St. John describes a true Christian*. Here, and in five other places, he speaks of him as one “born of God.”

Let us briefly analyze this rich and wonderful expression. The natural birth of any child of man, in the humblest rank of life, is an important event. It is the bringing into being of a creature who will outlive sun, moon, stars, and earth, and may one day develop a character which shall shake the world. How much more important must spiritual birth be! How much must lie beneath that figurative phrase, “Born of God!”

(a) To be “born of God” is to be the SUBJECT OF AN INWARD CHANGE of heart, so complete, that it is like passing into a new existence. It is the introduction into the human soul of a seed from heaven, a new principle, a Divine nature, a new will. Certainly it is no outward bodily alteration; but it is no less certain that it is an entire alteration of the inward man. It adds no new faculties to our minds; but it gives an entirely new bent and bias to our old ones. The tastes and opinions of one “born of God,” his views of sin, of the world, of the Bible, of God, and of Christ, are so thoroughly new, that he is to all intents and purposes what St. Paul calls “a new creature.” In fact, as the Church Catechism truly says, it is “a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness.”

(b) To be “born of God” is a change which is THE PECULIAR GIFT OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST to all His believing people. It is He who plants in their hearts the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba Father, and makes them members of His mystical body, and sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty (Rom. viii. 15). It is written: “He quickeneth whom He will.” “As the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself” (John v. 21, 26). In short, as the first chapter of St. John teaches, so it will be as long as the world stands: “To as many as received Him He gave power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name; which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God”(John i. 12, 13).

(c) To be “born of God” is a change which unquestionably is VERY MYSTERIOUS. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself tells us that in well-known words: “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit.” (John iii. 8). But we must all confess there are a thousand things in the natural world around us which we cannot explain, and yet believe. We cannot explain how our wills act daily on our members, and make them move, or rest, at our discretion; yet no one ever thinks of disputing the fact. The wisest philosopher cannot tell us the origin of physical life. What right, then, have we to complain because we cannot comprehend the beginning of spiritual life in him that is “born of God”?

(d) But to be “born of God” is a change which WILL ALWAYS BE SEEN AND FELT. I do not say that he who is the subject of it will invariably understand his own feelings. On the contrary, those feelings are often a cause of much anxiety, conflict, and inward strife. Nor do I say that a person “born of God” will always become at once an established Christian, a Christian in whose life and ways nothing weak and defective can be observed by others. But this I do say, the Holy Ghost never works in a person’s soul without pro-

ducing some perceptible results in character and conduct. The true grace of God is like light and fire: it cannot be hid; it is never idle; it never sleeps. I can find no such thing as “dormant” grace in Scripture. It is written, “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God” (1 John iii. 9).

(e) To crown all, to be born of God is a thing which is of ABSOLUTE NECESSITY to our salvation. Without it we can neither know God rightly and serve Him acceptably in the life that now is, nor dwell with God comfortably in the life that is to come. There are two things which are indispensably needful before any child of Adam can be saved. One is the forgiveness of his sins through the blood of Christ: the other is the renewal of his heart by the Spirit of Christ. Without the forgiveness we have no title to heaven: without the renewed heart we could not enjoy heaven. These two things are never separate. Every forgiven man is also a renewed man, and every renewed man is also a forgiven man. There are two standing maxims of the gospel which should never be forgotten: one is, “He that believeth not the Son shall not see life;” the other is, “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His” (John iii. 36; Rom. viii. 9). Quaint, but most true, is the old saying: “Once born, die twice, and die for ever; twice born, never die, and live for ever.” Without a natural birth we should never have lived and moved on earth: without a spiritual birth we shall never live and dwell in heaven. It is written, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John iii. 3).

And now, before I pass away from the name which St. John gives in this text to the true Christian, let us not forget to ask ourselves what we know experimentally about being “born of God.” Let us search and try our hearts with honest self-examination, and seek to find out whether there is any real work of the Holy Ghost in our inward man. Far be it from me to encourage the slightest approach to hypocrisy, self-conceit, and fanaticism. Nor do I want any one to look for that angelic perfection in himself on earth, which will only be found in heaven. All I say is, let us never be content with the “outward and visible signs” of Christianity, unless we also know something of inward and spiritual grace.” All I ask, and I think I have a right to ask, is, that we should often take this First Epistle of St. John in our hands, and try to find out by its light whether we are “born of God.”

One more thing let me add, which I dare not leave unsaid. Let us never be ashamed, in a day of abounding heresy, to contend earnestly for the Godhead and personality of the Holy Ghost, and the reality of His work on souls. Just as we clasp to our hearts the doctrine of the Trinity, and the proper Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, as great foundation verities of the gospel, so let us grasp tightly the truth about God the Holy Ghost. Let us ever give Him in our religion the place and dignity which Scripture assigns to Him. Wherever in the providence of God we may be called to worship, let our first inquiry be, “Where is the Lamb?” and our second, “Where is the Holy Ghost?” We know there have been many martyrs for Jesus Christ and the true doctrine of justification. “A day may come,” said a remarkable saint, “when there will need to be martyrs for the Holy Ghost, and His work within the soul.” Happy is he who can say with heart, as well as lips, the familiar words of our venerable Church Catechism,—“I believe in God the Father, who hath made me and all the world: I believe in God the Son, who hath redeemed me and all mankind: I

believe in God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth me, and all the elect people of God.”

II. The second thing I will now ask my readers to notice in my text is, *the special mark which St. John supplies of the man who is a true Christian*. He says, “Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world.” In short, to use the words of that holy man Bishop Wilson, Bishop of Sodor and Man, the Apostle teaches that “the only certain proof of regeneration is victory.”

We are all apt to flatter ourselves, that if we are duly enrolled members of that great ecclesiastical corporation the Church of England, our souls cannot be in much danger. We secretly stifle the voice of conscience with the comfortable thought, “I am a Churchman; why should I be afraid?”

Yet common sense and a little reflection might remind us that there are no privileges without corresponding responsibilities. Before we repose in self-satisfied confidence on our Church membership, we shall do well to ask ourselves whether we bear in our characters the marks of living membership of Christ’s mystical body. Do we know anything of renouncing the devil and all his works, and crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts? And, to bring this matter to a point, as it is set before us in our text, do we know anything of “overcoming the world”?

Of the three great spiritual enemies of man, it is hard to say which does most harm to the soul. The last day alone will settle that point. But I venture boldly to say, that at no former period has “*the world*” been so dangerous, and so successful in injuring Christ’s Church, as it is just now. Every age is said to have its own peculiar epidemic disease. I suspect that “worldliness” is the peculiar plague of Christendom in our own era. That same love of the world’s good things and good opinion,—that same dread of the world’s opposition and blame,—which proved so fatal to Judas Iscariot, and Demas, and many more in the beginning of the gospel,—each is just as powerful in the nineteenth century as it was in the first, and a hundred times more. Even in days of persecution, under heathen emperors, these spiritual enemies slew their thousands, and in days of ease, and luxury and free thought, like our own, they slay their tens of thousands. The subtle influence of the world, nowadays, seems to infect the very air we breathe. It creeps into families like an angel of light, and leads myriads captive, who never know that they are slaves. The enormous increase of English wealth, and consequent power of self-indulgence, and the immense growth of a passionate taste for recreations and amusements of all kinds; the startling rise and progress of a so-called liberality of opinion, which refuses to say anybody is wrong, whatever he does, and loudly asserts that, as in the days of the Judges, every one should think and do what is right in his own eyes, and never be checked,—all these strange phenomena of our age give the world an amazing additional power, and make it doubly needful for Christ’s ministers to cry aloud, “Beware of the world!”

In the face of this aggravated danger, we must never forget that the word of the living God changes not. “Love not the world,”—“Be not conformed to this world,”—“The friendship of the world is enmity with God,” these mighty sayings of God’s statute-book remain still unrepealed (1 John ii. 15; Rom. xii. 2; Jas. iv. 4). The true Christian strives daily to obey them, and proves the vitality of his religion by his obedience. It is as true now as it was eighteen hundred years ago, that the man “born of God” will be a man who, more or less,

resists and overcomes the world. Such a man does not “overcome” by retiring into a corner, and becoming a monk or a hermit, but by boldly meeting his foes and conquering them. He does not refuse to fill his place in society, and do his duty in that position to which God has called him. But though “in” the world, he is not “of” the world. He uses it, but does not abuse it. He knows when to say No, when to refuse compliance, when to halt, when to say, “Hitherto have I gone, but I go no further.” He is not wholly absorbed either in the business or the pleasures of life, as if they were the sum total of existence. Even in innocent things he keeps the rein on his tastes and inclinations, and does not let them run away with him. He does not live as if life was made up of recreation, or money getting, or politics, or scientific pursuits, and as if there were no life to come. Everywhere, and in every condition, in public and in private, in business or in amusements, he carries himself like a “citizen of a better country,” and as one who is not *entirely* dependent on temporal things. Like the noble Roman ambassador before Pyrrhus, he is alike unmoved by the elephant or by the gold. You will neither bribe him, nor frighten him, nor allure him into neglecting his soul. This is one way in which the true Christian proves the reality of his Christianity. This is the way in which the man “born of God” overcomes the world.

I am fully aware that, at first sight, the things I have just said may appear “hard sayings.” The standard of true Christianity which I have just raised may seem extravagant, and extreme, and unattainable in this life. I grant most freely that to “overcome” in the fashion I have described needs a constant fight and struggle, and that all such fighting is naturally unpleasant to flesh and blood. It is disagreeable to find ourselves standing alone every now and then, and running counter to the opinions of all around us. We do not like to appear narrow-minded, and exclusive, and uncharitable, and ungenial, and ill-natured, and out of harmony with our fellows. We naturally love ease and popularity, and hate collisions in religion, and if we hear we cannot be true Christians without all this fighting and warring, we are tempted to say to ourselves, “I will give it up in despair.” I speak from bitter experience. I have known and felt all this myself.

To all who are tempted in this way,—and none, I believe, are so much tempted as the young,—to all who are disposed to shrink back from any effort to overcome the world, as a thing impossible,—to all such I offer a few words of friendly exhortation. Before you turn your back on the enemy, and openly confess that he is too strong for you,—before you bow down to the strong man, and let him place his foot on your neck, let me put you in remembrance of some things which, perhaps, you are forgetting.

Is not the world, then, one of the three great foes which you were solemnly bound at baptism to resist? Was it for nothing that these words were read, “We sign him with the sign of the cross, in token that hereafter he shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under His banner against sin, THE WORLD, and the devil, and to continue Christ’s soldier and servant unto his life’s end”? And is it really come to this, that you mean to renounce your obligations, and retire from your Master’s service, to desert your colours, to slink away to the rear, and refuse to fight?

Again, is it not true that myriads of men and women, no stronger than yourself, have fought this battle with the world, and won it? Think of the mighty hosts of Christian soldiers who have walked in the narrow way in the

last eighteen centuries, and proved more than conquerors. The same Divine Captain, the same armour, the same helps and aids by which they overcame, are ready for you. Surely if they got the victory, you may hope to do the same.

Again, is it not true that this fight with the world is a thing of absolute necessity? Does not our Master say, "Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple"? (Luke xiv. 27). "I came not to send peace on earth, but a sword" (Matt. x. 34). Here, at any rate, we cannot remain neutral, and sit still. Such a line of conduct may be possible in the strife of nations, but it is utterly impossible in that conflict which concerns the soul. The boasted policy of non-interference, the "masterly inactivity" which pleases so many statesmen, the plan of keeping quiet and letting things alone,—all this will never do in the Christian warfare. To be at peace with the world, the flesh, and the devil, is to be at enmity with God, and in the broad way that leadeth to destruction. We have no choice or option. The promises to the Seven Churches in Revelation are only "to him that overcometh." We must fight or be lost. We must conquer or die eternally. We must put on the whole armour of God. "He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one" (Eph. vi. 11; Luke xxii. 36).

Surely, in the face of such considerations as these, I may well charge and entreat all who are inclined to make peace with the world, and not resist it, to awake to a sense of their danger. Awake and cast aside the chains which indolence or love of popularity are gradually weaving round you. Awake before it is too late,—before repeated worldly acts have formed habits, and habits have crystallized into character, and you have become a helpless slave. When men on every side are volunteering for war, and ready to go forth to battle for a corruptible crown, stand up and resolve to do it for one that is incorruptible. The world is not so strong an enemy as you think, if you will only meet it boldly, and use the right weapons. The fancied difficulties will vanish, or melt away like snow, as you approach them. The lions you now dread will prove chained. Hundreds could tell you that they served the world for years, and found at last that its rewards were hollow and unreal, and its so-called good things could neither satisfy nor save. Cardinal Wolsey's dying words are only the language of ten thousand hearts at this minute,—

"Vain pomp and glory of this world, I hate ye:
I feel my heart is opened.
Had I but serv'd my God with half the zeal
I serv'd my king, He would not, in mine age,
Have left me naked to mine enemies."

But who, on the other hand, ever fought God's battle manfully against the world and failed to find a rich reward? No doubt the experience of Christian pilgrims is very various. Not all have "an abundant entrance" into the kingdom, and some are "saved so as by fire" (2 Pet. i. 11; 1 Cor. iii. 15). But none, I am persuaded, have such joy and peace in believing, and travel to the celestial city with such light hearts, as those who come out boldly, and overcome the love and fear of the world. Such men the King of kings delights to honour while they live; and when they die, their testimony is that of old Bunyan's hero, Valiant, "I am going to my Father's house; and though with great difficulty I have got hither, yet now I do not repent me of all the troubles I have been at to arrive where I am."

III. The third and last thing which I shall ask you to notice in this text is, *the secret of the true Christian's victory over the world*. St. John reveals that secret to us twice over, as if he would emphasize his meaning, and make it unmistakable: "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our FAITH. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that BELIEVETH that Jesus is the Son of God?"

Simplicity is a distinguishing characteristic of many of God's handiworks. "How beautifully simple!" has often been the philosopher's cry, on finding out some great secret of nature. Simplicity is the striking feature of the principle by which the man "born of God" overcomes the world. Perhaps he hardly understands it himself. But he is what he is, and does what he does, acts as he acts, behaves as he behaves, for one simple reason,—he BELIEVES. He realizes the existence of unseen objects, compared to which the frowns or smiles, the favour or blame of the world, are trifles light as air. God, and heaven, and judgment, and eternity, are not "words and names" with him, but vast and substantial realities; and the faith of them makes everything else look shadowy and unreal. But, towering far above all other objects, he sees by faith an unseen Saviour, who loved him, gave Himself for him, paid his debt to God with His own precious blood, went to the grave for him, rose again, and appears in heaven for him as his Advocate with the Father. SEEING HIM, he feels constrained to love Him first and foremost, to set his chief affection on things above, not on things on the earth, and to live not for himself, but for Him who died for him. SEEING HIM, he fears not to face the world's displeasure, and fights on with a firm confidence that he will be "more than conqueror." In short, it is the expulsive power of a new principle, a living faith in an unseen God and an unseen Jesus, that minimizes the difficulties of a true Christian, drives away the fear of man, and overcomes the world.

This is the principle that made the Apostles what they were after the day of Pentecost. When Peter and John stood before the Council, and spoke in such fashion that all men marvelled at their boldness, their vivid faith saw One higher than Annas and Caiaphas and their companions, who would never forsake them. When Saul, converted and renewed, gave up all his brilliant prospects among his own nation, to become a preacher of the gospel he had once despised, he saw far away, by faith, One that was invisible, who could give him a hundredfold more in this present life, and in the world to come life everlasting. These all overcame by FAITH.

This is the principle which made the primitive Christians hold fast their religion even to death, unshaken by the fiercest persecution of heathen emperors. They were often unlearned and ignorant men, and saw many things through a glass darkly. But their so-called "obstinacy" astonished even philosophers like Pliny. For centuries there were never wanting men like Polycarp and Ignatius, who were ready to die rather than to deny Christ. Fines, and prisons, and torture, and fire, and sword failed to crush the spirit of the noble army of martyrs. The whole power of imperial Rome, with her legions, proved unable to stamp out the religion which began with a few fishermen and publicans in Palestine. They overcame by FAITH.

This is the principle that made our own Reformers in the sixteenth century endure hardships even unto death, rather than withdraw their protest against the Church of Rome. Many of them, no doubt, like Rogers, and Philpot, and

Bradford, might have enjoyed rich preferments and died quietly in their beds, if they would only have recanted. But they chose rather to suffer affliction, and strong in faith, died at the stake. This was the principle that made the rank and file of our English martyrs in the same age—labourers, artisans, and apprentices—yield their bodies to be burned. Poor and uneducated as they were, they were rich in faith; and if they could not speak for Christ, they could die for Him. These all overcame by BELIEVING.

But time would fail me if I brought forward all the evidence that might be adduced on this subject. Let us look at our own age. Let us consider the men who have made the greatest mark on the world for Christ's cause in the last hundred years. Let us remember how clergymen like Whitefield, and Wesley, and Romaine, and Venn stood alone in their day and generation, and revived English religion, in the face of opposition, slander, ridicule, and real persecution from nine-tenths of the professing Christians in our land. Let us remember how men like William Wilberforce, and Havelock, and Henry Lawrence, and Hedley Vicars, and George Moore, the Christian merchant, have witnessed for Christ in the most difficult positions, and displayed Christ's banner even in the House of Commons, in the camp, at the regimental mess table, or in the counting-house in the city. Let us remember how these noble servants of God were neither frightened nor laughed out of their religion, and won the respect even of their adversaries. These all had one principle. "Give me," said that strange dictator who rode rough-shod over England's Church and Crown in the seventeenth century, "Give me men that have a principle." These Christian soldiers of our own day had a principle, and that ruling principle was faith in an unseen God and Saviour. By this faith they lived, and walked, and fought the good fight, and overcame.

Does any one who reads this paper desire to live the life of a true Christian, and overcome the world? Let him begin by seeking to have the principle of victory within. Without this, all outward show of spirituality is utterly worthless. There is many a worldly heart under a monk's cowl. Faith, inward faith, is the one thing needful. Let him begin by praying for FAITH. It is the gift of God, and a gift which those who ask shall never ask in vain. The fountain of faith is not yet dry. The mine is not exhausted. He who is called the "Author of faith" "is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; and waits to be entreated (Heb. xii. 2). Without faith you will never war a good warfare, never set down your foot firmly, never make progress on the ice of this slippery world. You must *believe* if you would *do*. If men do nothing in religion, and sit still like uninterested spectators of a show, it is simply because they do not believe. Faith is the first step towards heaven.

Would any one who reads this paper fight the Christian battle with constantly increasing success and prosperity? Then let him pray daily for a continual growth of faith. Let him abide in Christ, get closer to Christ, tighten his hold on Christ every day that he lives. Let him never forget the prayer of the disciples, "Lord, increase our faith." Let him watch jealously over his faith, and never let its fire burn low. According to the degree of his faith will be the measure of his peace, his strength, and his victory over the world.

(a) And now let us leave the whole subject with the solemn self-inquiry, "What do we know of that great test of religion which this text supplies? What do we know of *overcoming the world*? Where are we? What are we doing? Whose are we, and whom do we serve? Are we overcoming or being over-

come?” Alas, it is a sorrowful fact, that many know not whether they are Christ’s freemen or the world’s slaves! The fetters of the world are often invisible. We are dragged downward insensibly, and are like one who sleeps in a boat, and knows not that he is drifting, gently drifting, towards the falls. There is no slavery so bad as that which is unfelt. There are no chains so really heavy as those which are unseen. Wise is that petition in our matchless Litany: “From all the *deceits* of the world, good Lord, deliver us.”

I press this inquiry in all affection on my younger readers. You are just at that generous and unsuspecting age when the world seems least dangerous and most inviting, and it stands to reason you are most likely to be ensnared and overcome. Experience alone can make you see the enemy in his true colours. When you have as many grey hairs on your heads as I have, you will place a very different estimate on the good things, or the praise or the hatred of this world. But, even now, remember my caution: “If you love your souls, hold the world at arm’s length. Beware of the world.”

(b) Reader, you and I meet over this paper for once in our lives, and are parting in all probability to meet no more. You are perhaps launching forth on the waves of this troublesome world. My heart’s desire and prayer to God is, that you may have a prosperous voyage, and be found at length in the safe haven of eternal life. But, oh, take heed that you are well equipped for the stormy waters you have to cross, and see that you have a compass to steer by, that you can depend on, and a pilot who will not fail! Beware of making shipwreck by conformity to the world. Alas, how many put to sea in gallant trim, with colours flying, and brilliant prospects, and are lost at last with all on board! They seem at first to begin with Moses, and Daniel, and the saints in Nero’s household; but they end at last with Balaam, and Demas, and Lot’s wife! Oh, remember the pilot and the compass! No compass like the Bible! No pilot like Christ!

Take the advice I give you, as a friend, this day. Ask the Lord Jesus Christ to come and dwell in your heart by faith, and to “deliver you from this present evil world” (Gal. i. 4). Ask Him to pour out His promised Spirit on you, and to make you willing to bear His easy yoke without further delay, and to resist the world. Strive, in the strength of Christ, to get the victory over the world, whatever it may cost you. Be ashamed of being a slave, however gilded the chains may be. Be ashamed of the mark of the collar. Resolve to play the man and be free. Liberty is the greatest of blessings, and deserves the greatest struggles. Well said the Jewish rabbis in ancient days, “If the sea were ink, and the earth parchment, it would never serve to describe the praises of liberty.” For freedom’s sake, Greeks, and Romans, and Germans, and Poles, and Swiss, and Scotchmen, and Englishmen, have often cheerfully fought to the bitter end, and laid down their lives. Surely, if men have made such sacrifices for the freedom of their bodies, it is a disgrace to professing Christians if they will not fight for the liberty of their souls. This day, I repeat, resolve in the strength of Christ, that you will fight the good fight against the world; and not only fight, but overcome. “If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed” (John viii. 36).

(c) Finally, let us all remember that the Christian soldier’s best time is yet to come. Here, in this world, we are often “sore let and hindered” in our warfare. There are many hard things to be done and borne. There are wounds and bruises; there are watchings and fatigues; there are reverses and disappoint-

ments. But the end of all things is at hand. For those who “overcome” there will be a conqueror’s crown.

In the warfare of this world, the muster on the morning after a victory is often a sorrowful sight. I pity the man who could look at Miss Thompson’s famous picture of *The Roll-call* without deep emotion. Even when peace is proclaimed, the return of victorious regiments is an occasion of very mingled feelings. That man must have had a cold heart who could see the Guards march back into London after the Crimean war without a sigh or a tear.

Thanks be to God, the review day of Christ’s victorious army will be a very different thing. There will be none missing in that day. It will be a meeting without regret. It will be “a morning without clouds” and tears. It will make rich amends for all we have suffered in resisting and overcoming the world.

He who saw our gracious Queen distributing the Victoria Cross at the Horse Guards during the Russian war might well be stirred and moved at the sight. But he who saw her come down from her seat to meet a wounded officer, who could not walk, and, with her own royal hands, pin his decoration on his breast, will probably remember it as long as he lives.

But, after all, it was nothing compared to the transactions of that great day, when the Captain of our salvation and His victorious soldiers shall at length meet face to face. What tongue can tell the happiness of that time when we shall lay aside our armour, and “say to the sword, Rest, and be still!” What mind can conceive the blessedness of that hour when we shall see the King in His beauty, and hear these words, “Well done, good and faithful servant and soldier, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord”? For that glorious day let us wait patiently, for it cannot be far off. In the hope of it let us work, and watch, and pray, and fight on, and resist the world. And let us never forget our Captain’s words “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John xvi. 33).