

"Am I my Brother's Keeper?"

A sermon delivered in the Christian church, Portland, Or., by Bruce Wolverton, on the evening of the 25th of September, 1881.

It shall be my purpose, this evening, to consider in the light of truth, the question of our responsibility to earthly government. "Am I my brother's keeper?" This was asked by a murderer. We are compelled to stand face to face with a murderer to-night, as, with devilish indignity, and an inhuman desire to insult humanity, he says, "I calculated the loss of a life of small moment. I dare to shed the blood of my fellow man." While we behold, with horror, the assassin, and contemplate with amazement the satanic spirit which would dictate the words of my text we are asked calmly and reverently to consider the great underlying question of civic responsibility. A man is shot down. He is a noble specimen of the godlike in humanity. He cherishes no malice toward anyone. He has never been convicted of a single crime. The vengeance of God pursues him not. He is regarded, even by his enemies, as one of nature's noblemen. Many years of public service has rendered him an object of admiration by his constituents. The government of this great nation is indebted to him for his wise counsels in assisting his peers in the enactment of many wholesome laws. His name is inscribed among the statesmen of the country. As a patriot, a scholar, a wise counselor, as now the chief executive, the nation not only owns to him its protection and support, but also, while in the discharge of these arduous duties, it looks to him for that display of his best powers in the high position to which he is called. He is a representative man. He represents the patriotism of America, the constitutional prerogative of a free people. He represents the law of the land. In him is reposed by 50,000,000 of people a sacred trust, that of chief executor, to see that law is enforced in all this vast realm. Quietly and peaceably he took upon him this responsibility, and from the lips of all this people came the common consent, signifying that for the space of four years he shall be our ruler. Thus he becomes in a peculiar sense a representative before the whole world to bear this government with its free institutions before the nations of the globe. We begin to comprehend the magnitude of that crime which overrides all nations of common justice, disregards the sacred duties incumbent upon every citizen toward the chief ruler, and dares to cast an infamous reproach upon a nation and degrade it before the nations of the world. We begin to see the dark and bloody deed in its true light. An assassin! What has he done? He has presumed to act as a framer of this nation's destinies. He has dared insult every soul in this nation; nay, more, he has aimed at the life of every man, woman, and child, invaded every family circle, set at naught every officer who holds his commission at the consent of the governed, and done violence to every principle upon which this nation is founded. More than this, in his foul attempt on the life of a representative man and upon the prerogatives of the governed, he challenges the authority of Almighty God. Herein is involved civil, social, moral, and human responsibility. If we can conceive of a more heinous crime and more foul sin it can only be in the crucifixion of our Savior, a representative of the highest government—the eternal one.

The wretch Guiteau is a representative. In him, as in all others of his class, and there are many, we tremble to believe, is found the negative side of all law of all accountability, of all ideas of a God and lawgiver, of all that is not directly and most wickedly, too, connected with that being—self. In his class is found a

perfect derangement of the universe, where God and law and order are made, if possible, subservient to self and sin and destruction.

"Am I my brother's keeper?" The murderer says, No! But he who strives to observe the Golden Rule says, Yes. I am so related to my brother, and he to me, as we are both to God, that I am, to the extent of my ability, in the fear of God, accountable for his protection. It depends upon the principle that I am a part of his great system of God's government; that, I cannot separate myself from humanity on any side or from God in any part, and dare to say I live. See it illustrated, even in that villain, as he fears the law will not be strictly enforced, awaiting till death by inches takes away his victim, claiming with cringing cowardice a compliance with the "letter of the law." This whole system of God's universe is so related that a sparrow does not fall to the ground without his notice. A disregard of this foundation principle brings evil incalculable upon the world. This is our great national sin to-day. We ignore this responsibility. We may not, it is true, deny in so positive a manner this obligation to our fellow citizens, but we treat lightly the great questions which are at the foundation of all true self-government. I tell you before God to-night this sin lies deep; this plant of iniquity has been a long time developing. The seed was planted under the corner stone of the temple of freedom. It shot up its tender branches while the battles were being fought in the first struggles for liberty. It cast its first leaves ere the constitution of the United States was ratified by the thirteen colonies. It grew and strengthened in the very presence of the Goddess of Liberty. Are you curious to know just what this was? I answer it was the misinterpretation of the word "liberty." O, how sad to think that this, in which we are expected to take so much pride, improperly understood, and so continually misapplied, brings slavery and death. Yet, such is the power of Satan who can himself appear as an angel of light, that he can call wrong, right, and evil, good. By the enticing influences of his flattering tongue, he was able to deceive the first parents and cause their sin and death. Thus does he now make the law which is ordained for life death to him who is deceived and thereby slain. So, when the corner stone of the temple of freedom was laid infidelity, with Tom Paine as their lexicographer, defined liberty to mean libertinism; and that patriotism was a deification of man and martyrdom for the sake of country. Anyone who will carefully study the beginning, great with promise, of this country and its government, will find too truly that this noxious plant has been thriving to an alarming extent in the last quarter of a century. The storms that shake the column of State are not wholly without our government. Causes exist within which must crowd or later overturn our own free institutions, unless we, on such an occasion as this, while we are upon our knees, bowed in the very dust of humility, are willing to study well the solemn lesson and heed its awful warnings. Yes, my brethren, when a people misinterpret the watchword of their own sacred institutions, when they seek to subvert the law of God for a so-called freedom, then it is they approach the extremes of liberty which some one aptly calls the veriest slavery. Many a man has been led to eternal destruction by the satanic fallacy that submission to no law of God or man was freedom. Freedom to do as one pleases they call liberty. Ignoring the claims of their Creator upon them, or their responsibility, they champion the reckless aphorism of the Epicurean, "Let us eat and drink and be

merry, for to-morrow we die." Those misguided and mistreated subjects of transatlantic kings who came to the wilds of America with the vain hope of liberty, dreaming that if they were once free from tyrants they would never again submit to any authority, were the pioneers of anarchy and the forerunners of American misrule. Because they were ruled so tyrannically in the old world they had misjudged that governors and governments were wrong, that the law and not the lawless was accountable for all the evil in nations. Being blindly desirous of their own good and acknowledging no God or lawgiver, the great arbiters of nations, they each and everyone magnified self as the item of great interest to the nation. So there was begun a system of legislation which looked only to the benefit of that one individual in the nation to the neglect of all others. Freedom in its loosest sense was inculcated. So this noxious plant spread its branches over the temple of freedom. It even grew into a mighty tree till it overshadowed the halls of Congress and sent out its poisonous odors into all the departments of the government. Under this liberty to do as one pleases, ignoring their allegiance to the law of truth, they interpreted right to be whatever would advance their own interests. I tell you, we may talk about the disgrace we invited when the first shipload of slaves was landed on American shores, but he who carried over the nation that liberty is free from all authority brought a greater reproach to our own boasted free institutions. One curse has been removed, though it took thousands of noble lives, and if this disgrace is ever removed it will take a more heroic struggle. It will be too, not so much a trial of physical strength as a struggle in the spiritual sphere and a settling in the public mind the conviction that we owe a duty to our God, a duty to our fellow man, a duty to ourselves, and all in accord with the eternal truth.

See the corruption that is in this government. Why? Legislation is a subject more of commerce than of honor. Private interests are discussed more than the public good. Legislation in behalf of corporations and of individuals enlists the attention more of the voter and the legislator than that which will affect the public weal. Whatever will carry a point and lodge more power in a man or corporation is believed to be more necessary. We behold this in many places to-day. Look at the cause of the struggle in the present short and illustrious but sad administration. Why the almost herculean task, necessary to affect the desired end? Because a number of men were unwilling to sacrifice what they called their interests to the public good. Why the direct exasperation of the assassin? Because what he called his interests were not advanced to the disgrace of the nation and the administration. Why all this greed for office? Because some one has a vote and influence, and forgetting his obligation to act conscientiously in the discharge of that obligation he is ready to use his prerogatives for the furtherance of his private interests. So this evil is permeating all the armies of trade, all the departments of social, and we might almost say, of religious life. Men are bartering away immortal souls for station, power, and gold; and the remote cause is in a misinterpretation of the term "liberty." The first symptom of the dread evil is known in "Free thought." This signifies a tearing loose from the sacred truths of the Bible. It permits man to disregard all true revelation concerning himself; and, a whatever his weak mental powers suggest to him as were in accordance with his desires he canonizes, and in it glories. It makes no difference whether we find it deified in the Goddess of

Reason of Fraud or dignified by the high sounding title of Rationalism, as in England it is all the same. Men should not be permitted to think as their own unguided intellects may please. Men should think the truth as they are commanded to speak the truth.

Behold what devastating influences this moral heresy is having in the world. It encourages literalism in all its horrible forms. It points to regard himself as developed from the dirt. It throws upon him the unsatisfied and unsanctifying thought that there is no common source of being and there is no creator to whom we are all responsible. It shuts out from him the glory of eternity, and persuades him that for all these deeds done in the body, he shall never render an account. It shuts out from his vision every ray of hope which might give him patience to bear some of the ills to which mortal flesh is heir. It breaks down all standards of right, all criterions for judgment, and casts the world adrift upon uncertain seas to be engulfed sooner or later, in the whirlpools of anarchy and despotism.

What fearful fruit is ripening beyond the Atlantic because the liberal the free (?) thinker says, I can do as I please, since I have thought as I pleased. Some know, too well, the upas-trees of Liberalism, Commonism and Nihilism are spreading their branches above true liberty and self-government, and must sooner or later poison to death and destroy all the sacred bonds of society, all the hallowed institutions of religion, all the time-honored customs of civil and international life, unless their growth is cut short by the entire uprooting of such evils.

The next step is "Free Speech." I know many so-called patriots have made much capital out of this, to them, safe-guard of American liberty. But as we look at the abuse of what was designed to be a bulwark of constitutional government, we may justly tremble at the magnitude of this evil.

I tremble to-night at the thought of these questions.

Free Speech! The Press has almost unbounded rights. It seems that the publishing of nothing short of downright treason is prohibited the standard here, as elsewhere is "Will it subserve a personal interest." Novels of all kinds, trashy literature of every description fill our libraries and homes. Men are free to write anything about anything and anybody. The dailies teem with accounts of robberies, suicides, murders and more horrible crimes. The police news is more often telegraphed across the continent and ocean than those events in history which make for peace and honor and immortal renown. We make our evening and morning meal on such shocking events in daily life, that there is no wonder the youth of the land grow up trained to deeds of blood. All the court proceedings must be lugged from the bar of justice out into the highways as if the executives would rid themselves of the foul stench. Thus, our moral atmosphere is tainted. We are permitted to blacken the character of men and instruct the rising generation to lightly regard the sacred rights of persons. Most especially is this the case with persons in high estate, with officers of the law. I do not plead that any man be protected in his crimes, but I do protest against public criminations and recriminations to the disgrace of our fellowmen and the abandonment of all law and order. Free speech in the present abuse is a free farce, a reproach to American independence. God have mercy upon that people whose tongues, as an unruly evil full of deadly poison, setting on fire the course of nature, themselves set on fire of hell, are permitted, by gossip, blackmailing, and abominable recklessness, to blacken characters, entering their sacred precincts, and to mar the peace of

families. Set neighbors at awe against one another, and, crushing the fortunes of men, to overthrow our social, political, and religious institutions.

Following close upon this I find we are trained by the free (?) ballot to a habit of barter, buying, and selling, exchanging sacred and God-given rights for disgrace. Men are free to engage in enterprises which rack our social fabric, to sell that which takes away wealth and manhood, to carry on a business which taxes honesty and industry to the utmost to keep men from breaking into and through all that recognizes God and truth. And when we disclaim against these things we are naively told that this is a free country, that the law protects them in this traffic. They buy these rights (?) and they are free! I beseech you, brethren, in the name of all that is pure and good, of all that is holy and true, consider these things, I cry to these oncoming hosts of sin with Satan in the van, "Halt, right about, disperse ye plotters of man's destruction, the mark of Cain is upon you all." Guiteau is a type of our worst element in the world. It is that which claims a division, "Eat, drink, and be merry." And while he alone is directly responsible for his own sin, yet this is a development of the criminal education in the land. This is a festering sore on our body politic and indicates the near presence of other festering sores which may at any time break forth.

What shall we do?

Let us take the example of Achan, who made Israel to sin, and put away this evil from among us. Then as Ezra commanded, when he read the law, let us find who among ourselves are in the wrong. Confess our faults to Almighty God, make restitution, reconsider our present position, resolve that we shall from now, henceforth and forever, submit in all things to the Great Ruler, declare eternal warfare against all social evils, political corruption, commercial dishonesty, and spiritual iniquity.

Eugenie's Hand in Two Wars.

That the Empress Eugenie was largely responsible for the decision taken by her husband when, in 1870, he ordered that march to Berlin which terminated at Sedan, is one of the undisputed facts of recent history. It is however, much less generally known that this unhappy woman had also no small share in the declaration of another war. According to Count Kisselef, who acted as Russian Ambassador at Paris after the Crimean War, it was the Empress who decided the irreligious Napoleon to make war against Russia. The story, as told by Count Kisselef, is given on the authority of the Empress herself, who told him, on the 12th or 13th of May, 1857, that it was she who was responsible for the declaration of war. When the Czar's letter arrived, the courtiers of which notoriously embittered Napoleon, the latter handed it to his wife with the remark that it was cold. "No," said she, after reading it, "it is more than cold, 'elle est grossiere'." The Emperor read the letter again, and said, "C'est vrai, je m'en occuperai." From that moment, said the Empress, war was decided on. Count Kisselef replied, "Then it is your Majesty who has been the cause of the death of 200,000 men, and of the loss of seven or eight millions of France?" "Yes," she answered, "Indirectly, and I do not repent of it. Such perturbations are sometimes necessary for France to take her rightful place in Europe. She has done this by means of the alliance with England, and by that alliance she will maintain her influence at home and abroad."—*Pull Mall Gazette*.

—Although he did not like being told he was no gentleman, George IV. had once, at least, while regent, forgotten he was one. That was when he flung a glass of wine in Col. Hamlyn's face, with: "Hamlyn, you are a blackguard!" The insulted officer could not return the compliment without committing something like treason; it was out of the question to challenge the prince, while to let the insult pass unnoticed was equally impossible. The colonel filled his glass and threw the contents in the face of his neighbor, saying: "His royal highness' toast; pass it on!" "Hamlyn," cried the regent, "you're a capital fellow! Here's your health!" And they were fast friends from that evening.