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**The Discipline of War Nine
Addresses on the Lessons of the
War in Connection with Lent**

John Hasloch Potter

Imprint

This book is part of TREDITION CLASSICS

Author: John Hasloch Potter

Cover design: Buchgut, Berlin - Germany

Publisher: tredition GmbH, Hamburg - Germany

ISBN: 978-3-8424-8297-5

www.tredition.com

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

The war has introduced into countless lives new conditions, and has strangely modified, or emphasised, those already existing. These Addresses, prepared under much stress of other work, are intended to supply, in very simple fashion, hints for conduct and points for thought along the lines of our fresh or deepened responsibilities. An Appendix gives a suggested subject and a passage of Scripture for each day during Lent. May God the Holy Ghost, without Whom man's best labours are in vain, bless this little book to its purpose. Please say a prayer for the writer, who, as much as any, needs grace that he may try to practise what he preaches.

J. HASLOCH POTTER.

Surbiton.

The Conversion of St. Paul. 1915.

FOREWORD

Kingston House,
Clapham Common.

January 19th, 1915.

My dear Canon, —

You have invited me to say a few words introductory to the little book you are putting forth, and of which you have sent me the advance proofs.

From the great excellence of that which I have read, I am convinced that your Lenten meditations on the Discipline of War, will be of pre-eminently spiritual value in a time when publications on the subject are multiplied. That the war is to leave us on a higher plane of self-discipline, and with higher ideals of citizen life and responsibility, every Christian must acknowledge. Your little Lenten scheme is just that which is needed to give reality and action to what might otherwise be left in the realm of theory. May the Holy Spirit make use of your work to the benefit of us all and for the Glory of God.

Your sincere friend,
CECIL HOOK,
Bishop.

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THE DISCIPLINE OF WAR

I

The Discipline of the Will ASH WEDNESDAY

Isaiah lviii. 6

"Is not this the fast that I have chosen?"

Discipline is the central idea of the observance of Lent. An opportunity, rich in its splendid possibilities, comes before us this year. Much of the discipline of this Lent is settled for us by those tragic circumstances in which we find ourselves placed.

God seems to be saying to us, in no uncertain tones, "Is not this the fast that I have chosen?"

Our amusements are already to a large extent curtailed, maybe by our own individual sorrows or anxieties; maybe by the feeling of the incongruity of enjoying ourselves while anguish and hardship reign supreme around us.

Our self-denials are already in operation, under the stress of straitened means, or the vital necessity of helping others less favoured than ourselves.

Our devotions have already been increased in frequency and in earnestness, for the call upon our prayers has come with an insistence and an imperiousness that brook no denial.

To this extent, and further in many directions, our Lent has been taken out of our own hands; ordered and pre-arranged by that inscrutable, yet loving, Providence which has permitted the War to come about.

Thus, at the very outset, we are brought into harmony with the central idea of discipline — not my will, but God's will.

Broadly, discipline is defined as "Mental and moral training, under one's own guidance or under that of another": the two necessarily overlap, and therefore we shall speak of God's discipline, acting

upon us from outside, and of our own co-operation with divine purposes, which is our discipline of self from within.

In the forefront of the subject, and including every aspect of it upon which we shall touch, stands that tremendous word—*will*.

Have you ever attempted to gauge the mystery, to sound the depth of meaning implied in the simple sentence "I will"?

First of all what is the significance of "I"? You are the only one who can say it of yourself. Any other must speak of you as "he" or "she"; but "I" is your own inalienable possession.

This is the mystery of personality. That accumulation of experience, that consciousness of identity which you possess as absolutely, uniquely your own; which none other can share with you in the remotest degree. "A thing we consider to be unconscious, an animal to be conscious, a person to be self-conscious."

This leads on to a further mystery, alike concerned with so apparently simple a matter that its real complexity escapes us.

"I *will*": I, the self-conscious person, have made up my mind what I am going to do, and, physical obstacles excepted, I will do it.

The freedom of man's will has been the subject of endless dispute from every point of view, theistic, atheistic, Christian and non-Christian.

Merely as a philosophic controversy it has but little bearing upon daily life. The staunchest necessitarian, who argues *theoretically* that even when he says "I will" he is under the compulsion of external force, yet acts *practically* in exactly the same fashion as the rest of mankind.

When the freedom of the will is considered in relation to religion, then it bears a totally different aspect. If the will be not free, religion, as a personal matter, falls to the ground, for its very essence is man's voluntary choice of God.

Here too those who deny the freedom of man's will doctrinally yet accept it as a working fact. Calvin, whose theory of Predestination and Irresistible Grace seems to exclude man from any co-operation in his own salvation, yet preached a Gospel not to be distinguished from that of John Wesley!

For us Christians the freedom of the will is absolutely settled by Him Who says, "Whosoever will let him come."

If you are sometimes troubled by certain passages in Scripture which seem to imply that God's predestination overrides man's will, remember, that whenever we are considering any question which concerns both God's nature and man's nature, difficulty must arise, from the very fact that our finite mind can only comprehend, and that but imperfectly, man's side of the transaction. Things which now seem incompatible, such as prayer and law; miracle and, what we are pleased to call, nature; God's foreknowledge and man's free-will in the light of eternity will be seen as only complementary parts of one divine whole.

Remember too that you must take the general bearing of Scripture; not isolated passages in which, for the necessity of the argument, one side is strongly emphasised. The Apostle who, thinking of the boundless power of God's grace, says, "So then it is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy" (Rom. ix. 16) is the one who says "He willeth that all men should be saved" (1 Tim. ii. 4).

The love by which the Father gave up His Son; the life and death of that Son; the ministry of God the Holy Ghost; the whole dispensation of the Catholic Church, form one great tender appeal to the free-will of man. Your free-will, my free-will, before which is placed the tremendous responsibility of choosing or rejecting.

And now from the broad thought of will, at its highest point, occupied with eternal choices and spiritual decisions, we turn to will as the governing power in our lives.

It is, to a certain extent, self in action, for before even the slightest movement of any part of the body, there must have gone, automatically and unconsciously, an act of will.

Before every deliberate action there takes place a discussion, which ultimately decides the attitude of the will, that is your final purpose. Put quite simply, the *motives* determine the *will*, and are themselves decided by the *principles* at the back of them.

Let us make this plain by an illustration. It is pouring with rain, you are sitting cosily over the fire with an interesting book. The

thought comes into your mind, I ought to go and see my sick friend. Then follows the deliberation: the flesh says, "To-morrow will do just as well." The spirit says, "No, it won't; you may both be dead to-morrow." The flesh says, "Perhaps I shall catch a cold"; the spirit says, "That fear wouldn't keep you from going to a Picture Palace." The flesh says, "Perhaps he won't care to see me to-day"; the spirit replies, "It's a dull, wet afternoon, and he's very likely to be alone."

Now notice that at the back of each set of motives is a vital principle. In the one case the lower self, in the other the higher self, that is to say "I" and "God."

The purely natural, human side of even the greatest saint would prefer to sit over the fire; but then our nature is not left unassisted, and even in a simple thing like this God the Holy Ghost comes to our aid with His suggestions of the higher course, and illuminates the path of duty. That is one of the most blessed features of the ministry of the Spirit; He enlightens, He persuades, He never compels: if He did, your will would not be free.

This explains what the discipline of the will really means. It is just the laying of ourselves open to the voice of the living God, speaking within us.

As we do this, day by day, the will itself becomes braced and strengthened, so that the struggle against the lower nature grow less and less fierce, the power of choosing the higher course more and more easy.

Here is our first practical thought for this Lent.

Watch yourself and your life, especially in those particulars in which you know that you have been getting out of hand. The prayers omitted, curtailed, said carelessly, said or attempted in bed, instead of on your knees: what a grievous failure, isn't it?

The carelessness about preparation before and thanksgiving after Communion, the irregularity of your attendances; the habit of Self-Examination, or of Confession, dropped — why? The Bible neglected.

Then the self-indulgences in the matter of sleep, food, drink, and purely wasted hours.

All these things are sapping the manhood and dignity of the will. Sometimes even more dangerously and insidiously than open sins, because with regard to these conscience does speak; but when we are merely drifting down the stream of time, the pleasant lapping of the ripples on the side of the bark lulls conscience into fatal sleep.

Look at your life, ask yourself the question, boldly and honestly, what is the principle upon which it is being lived, God or self? When the answer comes you will see clearly the first steps to take in the disciplining of the will.

Glorious examples of what can be done abound around you. Think you there has been no struggle on the part of those tens of thousands who have given up comforts, home, prospects, harmless pleasures, in exchange for the ghastly miseries of the trenches, the appalling risks by land, on or beneath the sea, in the air, all at the call of a stern, compelling duty, which told them that the life really worth living was the one spent, laid down if need be, for King and country?

Think too of the heroism of the wives, the mothers, the sweet-hearts, on whose lips there must have trembled over and again, "I will not, I cannot let you go." Yet the will was disciplined, the words remained unspoken, the tears were shed in secret, and these brave hearts, even in breaking, shall find their reward.

It was at Waterloo one afternoon, a young officer was being seen off for the front by father, brother, and *fiancée*. The two former bravely and cheerily said their good-bye, and withdrew a little to leave the young couple for their farewell; a kiss, a close embrace, outward smiles, but tears very near the eyes; and then as the officer got into the carriage just this one remark: "It's precious hard upon the women." What a world of meaning there was in that.

Above all, as your pattern and your power, look to Him Who said, "I came down from Heaven not to do mine own will but the will of Him that sent Me."

For suggested meditations during the week, see Appendix.

II

The Discipline of the Body FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

1 Cor. ix. 27

"I buffet my body, and bring it into bondage."

On Ash Wednesday we were considering some purely subjective realities, such as principles, motives, will – things we could not see. To-day we think about a very objective substance, ever present to our senses – our body. A man may deny point blank the existence of his soul – using the word in its ordinary acceptation – he cannot say, "I have not got a body." Even if he should conceive of that body as a mere bundle of ideas, an accumulation of sensations, yet there it is, making itself felt in countless ways.

So intimately bound up is it with every part of our life, apparently so infinitely the most real part of us, that we often think of it as being our true self. Yet every cell and fibre of it changes in the course of seven years. Therefore in itself it cannot maintain our identity. Have you ever pinched your nail, right down at its base, and watched the dark mass of congealed blood making its way to the tip of the finger, and then dispersing? This gives you some idea of the pace at which the body is being burned up and renewed.

All the while the personal "I" remains, deep-seated in the self-conscious intellect, memory, will.

Of course the body plays an immensely important part in the complex story of our existence. It is the machine by which the personal self acts, speaks, loves, hates, chooses, refuses; therefore we can neither ignore it nor despise it.

The popular notion concerning religion is that it is meant only for the salvation of the soul. If this were so, then the coming of the Holy Ghost would have sufficed for all needs.

One manifest purpose of the Incarnation was to give to the body the possibility of holiness here, resurrection hereafter.

Very marvellous is the dignity conferred upon the body by the fact the "Word was made flesh." From that flows forth the high position of the Christian, whose body is a "temple of the Holy Ghost."

It is through the body that we receive the Sacraments, which are means of grace to the soul.

Did time permit, it would be deeply interesting to trace out the use of the word body in this connection—the natural body of our Lord, His spiritual body after the Resurrection, His mystical body, the Church, in which sense He Himself is called "the Saviour of the body" (Eph. v. 23), His Sacramental Body, of which He says, "This is my body."

The discipline of the body.

The thought is prominently before us at the present moment, and first let us look at it from its purely material side. Thousands of youths who a few months ago were slouching, narrow-chested, feeble specimens of underbred humanity, have now-expanded into well set up, hardened men. The body has been disciplined by drill, exercises, route-marching, and the like. Those who return from the war uninjured will, we may hope, be in such improved condition as may somewhat compensate for the terrible loss of vigorous life which is taking place.

Had there been universal military training of the youth of our land for the past few generations, either the present war would never have taken place; or the results of the first three weeks of it would have been vastly different from what they were.

Now take another significant fact: letter after letter from the front says, "We are all very fit." The average "fitness" in the trenches is, broadly speaking, higher than that of training camps at home, especially of those where little or no supervision is exercised as to strong drink. How plainly this shows that hardness, even of an extreme character, braces up the body; softness and self-indulgence enfeeble it.

S. Paul affords a wonderful illustration of this; obviously a man of very delicate health, frequently ill (probably this was the thorn in the flesh), yet accomplishing vast labours, and, in addition, buffetting his own flesh lest it should get the upper hand.

Here, then, we reach the first great principle in the discipline of the body. It must not have its own way, or it will infallibly assert its way over the man's real self.

That is what happens in the case of the habitual drunkard or the slave of lust. That which at first is a temptation, perfectly capable of being resisted, becomes at last what the doctors call a "physical" craving that, humanly speaking, cannot be overcome. By constant yielding the will has been weakened to such an extent that the personal "I" no longer reigns; the usurping body has taken its place and rules supreme.

Let us take the main thought of self-control, which is the true rendering of the word temperance, the state in which, as S. James says, the man is "able to bridle the whole body" (S. James iii. 2), and test ourselves by it this Lent. Am I retaining my dominion over my body, or is it gradually pushing itself into my place?

Self-examination, honestly performed, will reveal this at once, for conscience, unless blunted by neglect, will speak infallibly.

For instance, when you find some indulgence of the flesh concerning which you say "I can't help it," there your body has vanquished you. It is absorbing your personality, robbing you of your divine birthright, in which you say, "I will," "I will not."

And now to go a step further—the disciplining of the body, care in regard to eating, drinking, amusements, and the like; strictness as to luxuries and things which, though lawful, may not be expedient, not only tend to bodily strength and mere physical well-being, but brace up the will power, because they entail the constant exercise of it.

Here is where the practical wisdom of the Church comes in as regards fasting. One day in every week is set apart, beside other days and seasons, as a reminder of the fact that fasting is a duty of the Christian life, just as much as almsgiving and prayer—a duty sanctified by the example enjoined by the precept of our Lord Himself.

True, no hard and fast rules are laid down, but a little sanctified common sense will dictate to us how to make fast-days a reality, by some simple acts of self-denial.

Our last thought is one of intense practical importance—our attitude at the present moment towards strong drink.

Lord Kitchener and the Archbishop of Canterbury have both on several occasions called the attention of the nation to the terrible evils arising from the unhappy custom of treating soldiers to strong drink.

Punch, always on the side of morality and rightness, has dealt with it in the following trenchant fashion:—

TO A FALSE PATRIOT

He came obedient to the Call;
He might have shirked, like half his mates
Who, while their comrades fight and fall,
Still go to swell the football gates.
And you, a patriot in your prime,
You waved a flag above his head,
And hoped he'd have a high old time,
And slapped him on the back, and said:
"You'll show 'em what we British are!
Give us your hand, old pal, to shake";
And took him round from bar to bar
And made him drunk—for England's sake.
That's how you helped him. Yesterday
Clear-eyed and earnest, keen and hard,
He held himself the soldier's way—
And now they've got him under guard.
That doesn't hurt you; you're all right;
Your easy conscience takes no blame;
But he, poor boy, with morning's light,
He eats his heart out, sick with shame.