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*THE IRONY OF ST. PAUL.*

WHEN Carlyle put into the mouth of Teufelsdröckh,—“Sarcasm I now see to be, in general, the language of the devil; for which reason I have long since as good as renounced it,”—the intimation as to himself his familiar friends could afford to pass by with an easy smile: his strange unconsciousness of the past was a substantial security for the future; a renunciation which had been hitherto, in the main, subjective, was not likely thereafter seriously to interfere objectively with the force and fire of his prophetic style. But, in the theory therein expressed, he apparently surrendered to the frailty of fallen nature, or in his own language, to the devil, a faculty which should be “brought into captivity” to the redeemed nature and to Christ. To judge from the context, however, all that Carlyle for the moment saw before him was that pitfall of sarcasm, the personal bitterness and contempt accompanying self-gratification, and entailing indifference to the welfare of the satirized, and even of those in whose interest the satire is employed. “Often was I blamed” says Teufelsdröckh in a previous sentence, “and by half-strangers hated, for my so-called Hardness, my Indifferentism towards men; and the seemingly ironic tone I had adopted, as my favourite dialect in conversation. Alas, the panoply of Sarcasm was but as a buckram case, wherein I had striven to envelope myself; that so my own poor Person might live safe there, and in all friendliness, being no longer exasperated by wounds.” In thus disowning the simulated sarcasm, he discloses to us the point of view from which in this place he regards the reality.

Sarcasm, no doubt, has its dangers, but it has its duties too. Even the early transitional sense which Galen gives us, “tearing the flesh or biting the lips with rage,” might well have symbolized a pure and righteous indignation;

and the "irony with a certain biting mockery" by which sarcasm is defined in Stobæus, is not more incompatible with the "spirit of Christ," than the "superlative irony" whereby Bishop Horne prefers to describe this later expansion of the meaning. This "superlative irony," this "deep and cutting irony," to use the phrase of St. Jerome, is what Pascal is defending when he deals with the charge that he has not spoken with "due seriousness" of the maxims of the Jesuits. "As Christian truths (says he) are deserving of love and respect, so the errors which contradict them are deserving of contempt and hatred; because there are two things in the truths of our religion: a divine beauty which makes them lovely, and a holy majesty which makes them venerable; and there are also two things in error: impiety, which makes it disgusting, and impertinence, which makes it ridiculous." And Mr. Ruskin speaks in the same strain when he is justifying the representation of the vices in mediæval art under the most ridiculous forms: "Folly and sin are to a certain extent synonymous; and it would be well for mankind in general if all could be made to feel that wickedness is as contemptible as it is hateful." Well indeed is it when with the gentler irony "things which deserve to be mocked and jeered at, since we give them weight by combating them seriously," are made to appear as such even to the subjects of the irony themselves, so that they learn to laugh at their own errors and to shun them. But it is not always practicable to draw distinctions between the leaders of the blind and their blindness; at times it seems unavoidable, for the sake of the deceived, to make both deception and deceiver alike hateful and contemptible, in order that the personal hold of the deceiver may be loosened, and the deceived may be weaned from their perilous allegiance. Such superlative irony may be the last resource of the prophet, ancient and modern; yet, be it so or not, it was a weapon wielded against Scribes and

Pharisees by the hand of Christ, and against false apostles by the hand of Paul. It is with the irony of Paul that I propose to deal.

Sarcasm may be called the tropics of irony; but irony has zones upon which the fierce light and heat, the consuming fire of sarcasm does not beat. Few of these provinces are visited by Paul. Just as his nature and his life were too highly strung for quaint humour, for playful incongruity of thought and expression, so irony in its sportiveness or jocularly is strange to him, at any rate in his writings and his reported speeches. These are no field for the sham fighting, the conflict between word and feeling, the light artillery which pours forth its sallies in the atmosphere and even in the service of perfect harmony and goodwill, and which has its legitimate sphere in adding sprightliness and vitality to the communion of friendship and affection. Without controversy, Paul's love for his friends was strong enough to suppress its natural tone, safe and firm enough, and sure enough of reciprocation, to vent itself in contradictions, disdaining to run in the commonplace channels of affectionate expression. But this lighter irony—

“Irony and feigned abuse  
Such as perplexed lovers use,  
At a need, when in despair  
To paint forth their fairest fair,  
\* \* \* \* \*  
A contentment to express,  
Borders so upon excess,  
That they do not rightly wot  
Whether it be pain or not,”—<sup>1</sup>

this lighter irony, if his highly strung nature and laborious life left room for it, has not come down to us, nor could it have been looked for in the serious fragments that remain. So far as Paul's irony touches the domain of friendship, it

<sup>1</sup> Charles Lamb, quoted by Dr. Cox in his *Commentary on Job*.

takes its start from wounded love, and "like all irony which is not jocular, is not only serious but earnest."<sup>1</sup> Ironical commendation of self, or ironical depreciation of others, would here be quite out of place: such irony can only exist where mutual affection is secure. But we find what under such circumstances may readily be expected—ironical, even sarcastic, commendation of opponents or unfaithful friends, and ironical depreciation of himself; in one word, ironical acceptance of the view of those who are wounding him. In this mood he deigns not to "commend himself" to those whose loyalty ought to have been fast bound by his devotion. Stubborn facts enable him to despise commendation either to or from the deserters: he sarcastically leaves such commendation to those false apostles who are without the facts and therefore need it. "Are we beginning again to commend ourselves (to use the taunt of my calumniators)? Or need we, as do some, epistles of commendation to you or from you? Ye are our epistles, written in our hearts, known and read of all men."<sup>2</sup> Or again:<sup>3</sup> "For we are not bold to number or compare ourselves with certain of them that commend themselves: but they, measuring themselves among themselves and comparing themselves with themselves, do not understand." He has been charged with courage on paper, but cowardice when face to face. One sort of courage he ironically confesses that he lacks: he has not the self-reliance (*αὐτοί*, ver. 12) to be his own model of excellence, or to belong to a mutual admiration and self-admiration society. In another mood, overborne with anxiety to leave no stone unturned to save his converts from ruin, he descends even to self-commendation; but it is not ironical. That element is too alien for him to sport in: the irony, when it comes, is not in the commendation, but in the reproachful acceptance,

<sup>1</sup> Compare Bishop Thirlwall on *The Irony of Sophocles*.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. iii. 1, 2.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. x. 12.

here and there, of an undeserved position. "Would that you could bear with me in a little foolishness."<sup>1</sup> Observe the mingled satire and sadness which says, as it were, "You bear with my adversaries in much foolishness, as they commend themselves: can you not bear with me in a little?" Then, with mingled irony and affection, he suddenly assumes that they will: "Nay, ye do bear with me": ye bear with me (he seems to say) as an erring son bears with a father who claims a hearing while he numbers up the proofs of his love. They were doing "finely"<sup>2</sup> in bearing with the adventitious deceiver, "the comer" (ὁ ἐρχόμενος, verse 4), for whom St. Paul himself had been the humble forerunner; the "supereminent apostle" and his kith and kin, who had preached "another" Jesus, imparted "another" spirit, proclaimed "another" gospel. Had Paul "abased" himself by foregoing his righteous claim on his converts for support, "pillaging" the poor churches of Macedonia to do the rich Corinthians service; and had his "children" permitted this reflection upon the pseudo-apostolic self-exalting lovers of lucre, to be turned against him as a sign that he distrusted his right to the apostleship? These "supereminent apostles," these "ultra apostles," these "very much too much apostles," in "fashioning themselves into the apostles of Christ," had a worthy precedent and model in him who "fashioneth himself into an angel of light:" "no great thing," then, was it that they should be found "ministers of righteousness." Boasting was folly; but he would follow the accepted fashion; he would indulge the self-complacent satisfaction his wise readers felt in tolerating fools (vv. 18, 19). Grand indeed was their forbearance (ver. 20): Christ's freemen enslaved, their substance devoured, they themselves

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. xi. 1.

<sup>2</sup> καλῶς. Compare the use of the same word in our Lord's ironical address to the Pharisees, Mark vii. 9; "Finely do ye reject the commandment of God."

caught in snares, the self-exaltation of their captors acquiesced in and their harsh handling endured. For himself he could never claim toleration like this: he was speaking only as one without position, rights or authority (*κατὰ ἀτιμίαν*), "on the ground, you know, that we have proved weak (and contemptible)." Yet his pretensions were after all as good as those of these spiritual tyrants,—though it was folly to advance them, and they were worthless when advanced. "Ministers of Christ are they? I will take them at their word: yes (in 'madness' be it spoken) I will take them with all the superabundance of their labours, (have they not rather entered into mine?) the number of their stripes, the chronicle of their imprisonments, their experiences of the article of death!—I am become a fool in my glorying; but it was ye that compelled me; ye should have made my boasting needless; for, when I was with you, what marks of an apostle were lacking for your glory and blessing—except that I was not burdensome to you? Forgive me this one wrong." But with this cutting satire he cries "Hold, enough!" and the wounded affection, which is affection still, finds consolation in protestations of love. For "all things, beloved, are for your edifying,"—even when he seeks to scorn them into shame.

We cannot strictly say that we find in St. Paul any specimen of that *judicial* irony, which with dissembling and respectful attention listens to or discusses both sides of a case as though both were equally right or neither altogether wrong. In his particular sphere he is too much of a partisan. He laid no claim to that spirit of aloofness which qualifies the dispassionate critic to winnow Christianity in the fans of comparative religion, and add the sifted grain to a compound heap, acceptable to gods and men. The religion of Christ was to him the absolute religion; there was no other Name given under heaven, and Christ's apostle was intolerant of partnership or substitution in the renova-

tion of the world. Judicial irony was here impossible for the man of extremes. Perhaps the nearest approach to it may be found in his mode of dealing with the Corinthian appeal to him on the eating of meats offered to idols.<sup>1</sup> In the court of his mind he seems to lend a respectful hearing to both parties; his sympathy is at one moment with the "strong," at another with the "weak"; it is easy to see how he maintains the attitude of one who discerns that the right or the wrong lies with neither absolutely. His theoretical approval of the intellectual position of the "strong" is almost nullified by his sarcastic rebuke of their loveless knowledge: "*We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but love edifieth.*" On the other hand, his tender leaning towards the "weak" borrows a certain hardness from his perception of their domineering and enslaving ignorance: "Why is my liberty judged by another conscience?"<sup>2</sup> But Paul was no Gallio; he had interests far surpassing the complacent cynical study of the faults of both sides; and the judicial irony fails to keep cool before the burning desire that "no man should seek his own, but each his neighbour's good."<sup>3</sup>

What we have already said will help us to understand how it is that Paul does not naturally employ *dialectic* irony,—that continuous and even current of satire which, running through a whole discussion, half reveals and half conceals the sunken rocks on which an opinion or practice, however apparently safe under the pilotage of the writer, is steered slowly and surely to shipwreck. Such cool calm reserve, such sustained self-restraint in handling hidden weapons, may suit a Plato, a Pascal, an Erasmus, a Matthew Arnold, but would not have suited a Paul. His impetuous spirit could not have brooked the protracted repression. His steel is now in and now out of its transparent sheath, and now the sheath is flung away alto-

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. viii. and x.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. x. 29.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. x. 24.



gether: from gentle banter he rushes into grave rebuke or indignant reprobation; from biting sarcasm into earnest exhortation or appealing tenderness. He continues not "long in one stay,"—except that he is always seeking to persuade men, and therefore even in sarcasm never fails to be truly human.

This changefulness of mood, between scorching lightning and melting sunshine, and what is at times as it were a pathetic blending of both in a union whereby both are modified, is perhaps the most signal characteristic of the irony of St. Paul: this, and its humanity. Even in a passage already noticed (2 Cor. xi.), where the irony is more continuously sustained than in any other, there are breaks of serious tenderness and of an indignation that is close upon the borders of affectionate upbraiding. "Would that ye could bear with me in a little foolishness; nay, ye do bear with me." Here we have, as was observed above, a mingling of satire and sadness; but suddenly there breaks out a tender, almost playful, solicitude: "For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy; for I have espoused you to one husband." Then an accession of earnestness,—“For I fear lest by any means . . . your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.” Then trenchant sarcasm lashes "him that cometh," and the "toleration" of the Corinthian church. In the same way the biting irony of "Forgive me this wrong," turns aside through the avenue of gentle reproachfulness in the next verse ("I will not be a burden to you, for I seek not yours but you; for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children"), and finds its way at last to vows of service and cravings for love in return: "I will most gladly spend and be spent to the uttermost for your souls, though for loving you the more abundantly, I am the less beloved." Instances of this characteristic might be multiplied; let one or two more suffice. The amusing assumption of the

Corinthians, in their letter of inquiry, provokes him at the outset to a bantering acquiescence: "We know that we all have knowledge."<sup>1</sup> But his next words are stern and incisive, the startling abruptness of the transition dispensing with connecting particles: "Knowledge puffeth up, but love buildeth up." Scorn of intellectual pride stirs him to compare the "knowing" to a blown out bubble; and the undercurrent of irony continues to flow in the following verse, wherein he assures the "know-somethings" that they are "know-nothings," because of the vanity which prompted their pursuit of knowledge and their complacency in the possession of it. In verse 3 the style changes to a solemn apophthegm on the basis of real knowledge: "But if any man love God, God is known of him." The irony of easy acquiescence crops up again, here and there, in the same Chapter whenever he touches upon the vaunted "knowledge" or "liberty;" and it is beneath the surface when he describes the emboldening of the conscience of the weak as "edification": "Will not his conscience, if he is weak, be *built up* (as no doubt you would phrase it) to eat things sacrificed to idols"; but in each case the irony is afterwards forsaken, and is finally altogether abandoned. St. Paul pursues a similar varied course when he is hunting down the sectarian pride of the same Church, each section in its own selected and glorified teacher, and also in itself for the wisdom and discrimination of its choice. The flashes of sarcasm appear and reappear.<sup>2</sup> "For which of us teachers is it that distinguisheth thee, making thee to stand out from others, as without our aid knowing what thou knowest and having what thou hast?"<sup>3</sup> To whom dost thou owe *thy* distinction from other brethren that

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. viii. 1.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. iv. 7 ff.

<sup>3</sup> The delicate insight and happy turnings of Canon Evans and Mr. Waite have been of great service in unfolding the irony contained in the two Epistles to the Corinthians.

thou shouldst draw distinctions between *us*? Thy distinction is not owing to Paul or Apollos. And (after all) if thou *didst* receive (as thou didst), why boastest thou as though thou didst not receive?" The hidden irony of this introduction then casts aside all disguise; it becomes sharp sarcastic invective. "Already are ye filled (with the blessings of the kingdom), already are ye become rich: ye have got to be kings apart from us. Yea, I would ye had got to be kings, that we might be kings too. For indeed we apostles seem to be in sorry case." And at once the sarcasm gives way before a mournful gravity, as Paul draws a graphic picture of the sufferings, privations, and perils of the apostolic fighters with wild beasts. All in the midst of this the irony breaks out again: "We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ: we are weak, but ye are strong: ye have kingly glory, but we have dishonour." Yet only for a moment; for immediately the "dishonour" takes him back to the story of painfulness whereby he would draw them; and this diverts him from castigation to fatherly counsel: "I write not these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children."

Or take the Apostle's scornful message to the Corinthians about going to law before the "wrong-doers": it teems with irony.<sup>1</sup> "Deigneth any of *you*, having a matter against his neighbour, to seek for judgment before the wrong-doers, and not before the saints? (Are ye so ignorant with all your boasted 'knowledge') or do ye not 'know'<sup>2</sup> that the saints shall judge the world? And if in your court the world is judged, are ye unfit to hold courts of the lowest sort? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? Talk not of secular things! Nay, rather, if secular courts

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. vi. 1 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Observe how "*know ye not*" rings through this appeal to the "wise": compare vv. 2, 3, 9, 15, 16, 19.

ye should haply hold, why take men that are utter nobodies in the Church and set them on the judgment seat!" Then a solemn interlude: "To move you to shame I speak it"; and then a return to the satire: "So! is there not (among all ye wise men) even one wise man fit to decide between one brother and another?" From this he drifts on to expostulation: "Why do ye not rather take wrong?" thence to tender reproach: "Nay, ye *do* wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren." And after irony once more,—“Do ye not know (ye wise men) that wrongdoers shall not inherit the kingdom of God?”—and a word of affectionate warning, “Be not deceived,”—his last note is one of persuasive thankfulness: “Such were some of you; but ye were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified.”

These are cases where, as we have said, the irony is more than usually sustained. Scattered sparks drop here and there in other passages of his letters and in his reported preaching. Sometimes the irony is light and gentle: “We that are *strong* ought to bear the infirmities of the *weak*”;<sup>1</sup> “I am debtor . . . both to the *wise* and to the *unwise*”;<sup>2</sup> “Let us therefore, as many as be *perfect*, be thus minded”;<sup>3</sup> “Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye which are *spiritual*, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness”;<sup>4</sup> “Let each man prove his own work, and then shall he have his *glorying in regard of himself alone, and not of his neighbour*”;<sup>5</sup> “We being Jews by nature and not *sinner*s of the Gentiles”;<sup>6</sup> “Whether we are *beside ourselves*, it is unto God; or whether we are of *sober mind* it is unto you.”<sup>7</sup> Sometimes the strain of sternness is more marked. In the parting address to the Jews of Pisidian Antioch, when the two missionaries leave them to their self-chosen fate, it is

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xv. 1.<sup>2</sup> Rom. i. 14.<sup>3</sup> Phil. iii. 15.<sup>4</sup> Gal. vi. 1.<sup>5</sup> Gal. vi. 4.<sup>6</sup> Gal. ii. 15.<sup>7</sup> 2 Cor. v. 13.

recorded that "Paul and Barnabas" said (but the words must surely have been Paul's): "It was necessary that the word of God should first be spoken to you. Seeing ye thrust it from you and *judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life*, lo, we turn to the Gentiles."<sup>1</sup> Side by side with this instance we may set the subtle irony with which, under cover of a single word (*ἔδοκίμασαν*), he exhibits the deliberate wilfulness at the foundation of Gentile idolatry.<sup>2</sup> The play on *ἔδοκίμασαν* can scarcely be reproduced in English, but the force of the thought is only recognized when that play is revealed. "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools (ver. 22). . . . And even as (ver. 28), after *testing God, they, with judicial wisdom, approved not to retain him in their knowledge*, God gave them up to a mind tested and not approved." In so many words, they, with "fantastic tricks before high heaven," set themselves up as a judicial authority to try God, and found Him wanting; and God in return gave them up to a mind which He had tried and found wanting. The irony is equally stern in his rebuke of the inconsistent Jew: "If thou bearest the name of a Jew, and retest upon the law, and gloriest in God, and knowest his will, . . . and art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them that are in darkness, a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of babes, . . . thou therefore that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?"<sup>3</sup> In a similar tone he warns the Corinthians against the impiety and the danger of idol-feasts: "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? *You don't say that we are stronger than he?*"<sup>4</sup> and censures the levelling women in the same church:<sup>5</sup> "Every woman that prayeth aloud or discourseth with head unveiled puts to shame the head over her, for she is one and the same with (*not a whit better than*) a

<sup>1</sup> Acts xiii. 46.<sup>2</sup> Rom. i. 28.<sup>3</sup> Rom. ii. 17-21.<sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. x. 22.<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. xi. 5, 6.

*woman shaven* (shaven for shamelessness).” And then, barbing the shaft, he continues: “For if a woman do not veil, *let her also clip*,”—she may as well take the next step and be logical. In the same Chapter, in the midst of his reprobation of the abuses at the Lord’s Supper, his telling picture, “one is hungry and another is drunken,” suddenly prompts him to the satirical question, “What, really, have ye not houses for eating and drinking (where ye can feast singularly and alone, while the poor brethren outside are starving), or despise ye the church of God (by bringing fasting and feasting face to face, in a celebration of opposition and not of unity), thus shamefully humbling those who have nought?”<sup>1</sup> And when the Apostle approaches the end of his severe strictures upon the innovations in this ill-disciplined Church, he sums up with a touch of sarcasm: “What? from *you* did the word of God start, or unto you alone did it reach? (Is *your* church the first and last station on the line of the Gospel, the Alpha and Omega of Christendom? Truly, much right have ye to set yourselves as the model and exemplar of all the churches).” Then, after a serious assertion of Apostolic authority, comes another flash of scorn. “If any man is ignorant (that what I command is the commandment of the Lord) let him be ignorant”; but, finally, a touch of tenderness: “Wherefore, *brethren*, let all things be done decently and in order.”<sup>2</sup>

St. Paul was not a historian, or a maker of parables or dramas, and therefore there is no sphere in his writings for the exhibition of that irony which may be called *dramatic*, the subtle mode of presenting the truth that “things are not what they seem.” Yet he is quite conscious of this *irony of action*. He draws no *Œdipus* for us, blind to realities so long as he had sight, and gaining true sight only through blindness; confident in his own shrewdness

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xi. 22.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xiv. 36-40.

and heeding not the wisdom of the warning god; calling for our sympathy in seemingly undeserved misfortune, yet not so altogether free from blame for rashness and impetuosity as to appear the "victim of a cruel and malignant power." Yet Paul recognizes the solemn irony of his own situation. "I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth."<sup>1</sup> Not till he was blinded with the glory before Damascus did he see that he had in reality been the chief of sinners, because he had "persecuted the church of God and wasted it,"<sup>2</sup> and because he had followed his own wilful judgment, without heeding the "goad of Jesus"; and that, though he might seem entitled to "receive mercy" because he had done it "ignorantly," yet beneath the surface of things lay the incriminating fact that he had done it "in unbelief."<sup>3</sup> Again, though Paul puts on the stage no Ajax to teach that all mere mortal strength is weakness, all mere worldly prosperity and human glory a passing illusion, while only through a sight of one's own madness can come self-knowledge and self-control; yet with the irony of earnest paradox he can say,—“We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God, and not from ourselves”;<sup>4</sup> “When I am weak, then am I strong”;<sup>5</sup> “Let no man glory in men”;<sup>6</sup> “Let him become a fool that he may be wise”;<sup>7</sup> “God chose the weak things of the world, that he might put to shame the things that are strong”;<sup>8</sup> “Not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called.”<sup>9</sup> He discerns the low estate of the boasting and privileged Jew, and the high degree of the outcast and despised Gentile; and he sees in the apparent rejection of Israel the irony of God, who is wounding that He may heal.

<sup>1</sup> Acts xxvi. 9.<sup>4</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 7.<sup>7</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 18.<sup>2</sup> Gal. i. 13.<sup>5</sup> 2 Cor. xii. 10.<sup>8</sup> 1 Cor. i. 27.<sup>3</sup> 1 Tim. i. 13.<sup>6</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 21.<sup>9</sup> Ver. 26.

The picture of *practical* irony which is seen in the parable of the Prodigal, when the father humours the whim of his wild son because trouble and sorrow alone will teach him wisdom, is not a picture to be found in St. Paul's writings or in his missionary history. Doubtless there were occasions when with far-seeing Christian policy he had to leave bigotry, exclusiveness, and un-Christlike tempers and habits to be burnt out by the fire of experience; but such occasions are not definitely described, and the practical irony of humouring even for a time what he saw clearly to be mischievous, was hardly to be expected from one whose human foresight would not justify him in giving the rein to certain evil in order to reach a problematical good. But, without going as far as this, he, like all wise leaders and reformers, used accommodation in things indifferent to himself, though not indifferent to those with whom he had to do. To the Jews he became as a Jew; to those not under the law he became as one not under the law; to the weak he became as weak.<sup>1</sup> But in every case his judgment had to decide whether by such practical irony he would shew a proper and beneficent conciliation, or a culpable and mischievous weakness. The man who spontaneously circumcised Timothy, the half-Jew, lest the Jews of Lystra and Iconium should be needlessly shocked and thereby alienated,<sup>2</sup> would not yield even "for an hour" to those who would have forced the circumcision of Titus, the Gentile, in order to assert the permanent necessity of the Jewish law.<sup>3</sup>

We have strayed beyond the strict confines of mere sarcastic irony from a desire to cover wider ground. But sarcasm is, after all, irony in its most distinctive form, and we return to it before we close. Who, then, can study sarcasm in the hands of Paul and "see it to be, in general, the language of the devil"? With him it is a weapon of the Christian armour, it is no fiery dart of the evil one.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. ix. 19-22.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xvi. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Gal. ii. 3, as I understand it.



And the reason has been already hinted at. Even in sarcasm, we have said, he never fails to be truly human: he could be sarcastic and not cynical; for his is not the bitter jesting of the oppressed heart, pouring out its misery in misanthropic scorn. Heavy, indeed, was the burden he often had to bear, put forth as he was—perhaps more conspicuously than all his fellow-labourers, “stamped with the signature of death”<sup>1</sup>—as a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men. But his heaviness bred no distrust, no despair, no disdain: no distrust of the Divine working, no despair of the world’s future, no disdain of the deceiver or the deceived. Rather did faith, hope, charity, these three, save his soul from ever knowing alone its own bitterness, and drive back any Satanic stranger visitant from intermeddling with its joy.

JOHN MASSIE.

### A DAY IN PILATE'S LIFE.

*“Suffered under Pontius Pilate.”*

THAT critical occasions come to all men, moments of crowded opportunity, on their use of which the complexion of their whole after-life depends, is a mere truism. Shakespeare’s expression of it,

There is a tide in the affairs of men  
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;  
Omitted, all the voyage of their life  
Is bound in shallows and in miseries,

has been so hackneyed that one is almost ashamed to quote it. But to few men can there have come a day so loaded with tragic opportunities, pregnant with a crisis so manifold and complex, as the supreme day in Pilate’s

<sup>1</sup> ἐπιθανάτους. 1 Cor. iv. 9.