

**The doctor : a lay sermon for working people / by the author of Rab and his friends.**

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if in every conversion of a sinner He beholds a reward of His agony, and sees in it of the travail of his soul and is satisfied,—if He rises from His throne to welcome every believer who has finished His course and kept the faith—what joy shall irradiate His blessed countenance, when all the children whom the Father has given unto Him, shall be with Him where He is, beholding His glory!

Creation too, in earnest expectation, is waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God. It groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now, for it was made subject to vanity. It is covered with dark night, marring its beauty and loveliness, defiled

with a curse, and the stain of sin. But the resurrection-morning draweth nigh. The regeneration of the world is at hand. The creature itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, unto the glorious liberty of the children of God; for the *Light of the world* hath overcome darkness, and behold now a *world of light*! Then shall we sing with a deeper and truer meaning, and with more joyous gratitude and praise than ever before:—

"O my Lord and God, thou art very great;  
Thou art clothed with honour and majesty,  
Who coverest Thyself with *Light* as with a garment."

ADOLPH SAPHIR.

## THE DOCTOR.

A LAY SERMON FOR WORKING PEOPLE,\* BY THE AUTHOR OF "RAB AND HIS FRIENDS."

EVERYBODY knows the Doctor; a very important person he is to us all. What could we do without him? He brings us into this world, and tries to keep us as long in it as he can, and as long as our bodies can hold together; and he is with us at that strange and last hour which will come to us all, when we must leave this world and go into the next. When we are well, we perhaps think little about the Doctor, or perhaps we have our joke at him and his drugs; but let anything go wrong with our body, that wonderful tabernacle in which our soul dwells, let any of its wheels go wrong, then off we fly to the doctor. If the mother thinks her husband or her child dying, how she runs to him, and urges him with her tears! how she watches his face, and follows his searching eye, as he examines the dear sufferer; how she wonders what he thinks—what she would give to know what he knows! how she wearies for his visit! how a cheerful word from him makes her heart leap with joy, and gives her spirit and strength to watch over the bed of distress! Her whole soul goes out to him in unspeakable gratitude when he brings back to her from the power of the grave her darling child or her husband. He knows many of our secrets, our sorrows, which no one else knows—some of our sins, perhaps, which the great God alone else knows; how many cares and secrets, how many lives, he carries in his heart and in his hands. So you see he is a very important person the Doctor, and we should do our best to make the most of him, and to do our duty to him and to ourselves. A thinking man feels often painfully what a serious thing it is to be a doctor, to have the charge of the lives of his fellow-mortals, to stand, as it were, between them and death, and eternity, and the judgment-seat, and to fight hand to hand with Death. One of the best men and greatest physicians that ever lived, Dr. Sydenham, says, in reference to this, and it would be well if all doctors, young and old, would consider his words:—

"It becomes every man who purposes to give himself to the care of others, seriously to consider the four following things:—*First*, That he must

one day give an account to the Supreme Judge of all the lives intrusted to his care. *Secondly*, That all his skill, and knowledge, and energy, as they have been given him by God, so they should be exercised for His glory and the good of mankind, and not for mere gain or ambition. *Thirdly*, and not more beautifully than truly, Let him reflect that he has undertaken the care of no mean creature, for, in order that we may estimate the value, the greatness of the human race, the only begotten Son of God became Himself a man, and thus ennobled it with His divine dignity, and, far more than this, died to redeem it; and, *fourthly*, That the Doctor, being himself a mortal man, should be diligent and tender in relieving his suffering patients, inasmuch as he himself must one day be a like sufferer."

I shall never forget a proof I myself got twenty years ago, how serious a thing it is to be a doctor, and how terribly in earnest people are when they want him. It was when cholera first came here in 1832. I was in England at Chatham, which you all know is a great place for ships and sailors. This fell disease comes on generally in the night; as the Bible says, "it walks in darkness," and many a morning was I roused at two o'clock to go and see its sudden victims. One morning a sailor came to say I must go three miles down the river to a village where it had broken out with great fury. Off I set. We rowed in silence down the dark river, passing the big hulks, and hearing the restless convicts turning in their beds in their chains. The men rowed with all their might; they had too many dying or dead at home to have the heart to speak to me. We got near the place; it was very dark, but I saw a crowd of men and women on the shore at the landing-place. They were all shouting for the Doctor; the shrill cries of the women, and the deep voices of the men coming across the water to me. We were near the shore, when I saw a huge old man, his hat off, his hair grey, his head bald; he said nothing, but turning them all off with his arm, he plunged into the sea, and before I knew where I was, he had me grimly in his arms. I was helpless as an infant. He waded out with me, carrying me high up in his left arm, and with his right levelling every man or woman who stood in his way. It was Big Joe carrying

\* Delivered many years ago at the Broughton Place Mission Schoolhouse in the Old High School Close, Canongate, Edinburgh.



No Evangelist has described the contrast between darkness and light, and the hatred of the darkness against the light so emphatically and awfully as the beloved disciple, who is indeed the apostle of love, but not in the sense in which a God-estranged generation has imagined it. In his Gospel we read how Christ told the Jews that they hated Him, not although, but because He told them the truth; that they understood Him not, because the love of God was not in them, and they were of the devil, the liar and murderer from the beginning. Sin never looked so dark; man's sin never appeared so fearfully connected with a kingdom of evil, a prince of darkness, as now, when Jesus Christ, the Light, reveals to us the mystery. Of eternal death, and of an uttermost darkness, whither no ray of light, life, and love penetrate, the true and faithful witness often spoke. For the Light maketh all things manifest; and that, out of love. Sin, death, hell, mystery of darkness,—I stand in awe, and tremble—yet I fear not, for Jesus, who reveals to me the darkness, is the Light of the world; He has atoned for sin, and renews the heart; He has conquered the grave and hell; the prince of the world is judged; the Lord, He is God, the God of our salvation.

The Light is self-communicative; it cannot be hid; they, who come to Him, believe in Him, follow Him, rise from the dead, and Christ gives them light. They become light in the Lord; it is in and through them that Christ is the Light of the world. Looking upward, they see a reconciled God; looking around them, they see brethren to love, fellow-men to attract and benefit; looking before them, they see Jesus their Guide. Jesus, being no longer a stumbling-block and rock of offence, He is the way, a path of light and peace.

And thou, who art not rejoicing in the Light, hear the testimony of the sun concerning Christ:—

Light is free; no gold or silver can purchase it, no skill can frame it, no toil or labour earn it. It comes unbought, and to its glory and strength no human being can contribute; such is Christ.

Light is seen by itself. No artificial substitutes can equal it. They are willingly left when it appears. When Christ reveals Himself, the knowledge of mere memory and intellect, the light of nature, education, and outward religion vanish.

Light is calm, yet strong! "It sparkles on morn's million gems of dew, it flings itself into the shower of noon, it weaves its gold into the cloud of sunset, yet not a sound is heard!" Thus it is, that far from all ostentation and outward pomp, "not with observation," Jesus Christ sends light into the troubled heart, increasing in brightness and glory till midday splendour. And as light is calm, dispersing the darkness gently and without violence, thus was Christ meek and lowly; "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street." The heathen rage, the enemies mock, revile, and persecute—He only shines, with steady brightness, serene and glorious. But He leadeth judgment to victory. Paul

by the Spirit, the greatest and the best are beheld as imperfect and sinful when compared with Him. He is above all, because He is from heaven; who chargeth even His angels with folly, how much more them that dwell in houses of clay?

is bound; but the Word is not bound, the Light is beyond the reach of man's cruelty, malice, cunning, and power,—it is free. Invincible is his might, irresistible His influence, and His strength is infinitely tender and compassionate. He adapts himself with unspeakable considerateness to the weakness and frailty of the broken-hearted and poor in spirit. He has many things to say; but remembering that His disciples cannot bear them yet, He modifies the intensity of the Light so as to suit their capacity. As the morning-star He appears to the anxious and troubled soul; He is like sunlight, strong, bright, rousing, fructifying, joy-giving; He is like moonlight, gentle, soothing, inviting to repose and calmness. The infinite and perfect light is ordained by God, a sun to shine by day, moon and stars to shine by night.

Regions which the sun rarely cheers are barren wastes. But Christ, the Sun of righteousness, converts deserts into vineyards, gardens, and fields, clothed with fragrant and beautiful abundance. The desert rejoices and blossoms as the rose; "instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle-tree."

Light brings courage. The Lord is my Light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? God is a sun, and thereby also a shield. In the midst of snares and complicated networks of temptation, we have a sure light guiding and directing us; and in the very valley of the shadow of death it is not utter darkness, the Light still shineth.

Light is joy. When God turned away impending destruction from his people, we are told "the Jews had light and gladness, and joy and honour" (Esther viii. 16); and in like manner we read, "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." (Ps. xcvi. 11.) When God sends His light and truth, they lead us and bring us to the altar of God, our exceeding joy! Once we were in darkness, tempestuous was the voyage; for many days neither sun nor stars appeared; we were in fear and terror, in loneliness and sorrow, in the bondage of sin and death; but now we see God face to face, and our life is preserved; on Christ's cross we behold the declaration, "The Father himself loveth you," and in the Resurrection of our Saviour is a sunrise, which commences an everlasting day.

But what shall it be when the word is fulfilled?—"The sun shall be no more thy light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee; but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory." When Christ shall appear, then shall His people, the children of light, shine forth as the sun. On earth their light was often obscured by their own unfaithfulness, weakness, besetting sin, the temptations of Satan and the world; but now delivered for ever from sin and frailty, from fear and sorrow, from evil within and evil around them, and beholding Christ as He is, they will shine forth strong, bright light! What shall it be, when the myriads of His disciples, conformed unto His image by the Spirit, shall emit the myriad-coloured reflections of that fulness of love and purity which dwelleth in Him? And if Jesus rejoiced in spirit when on earth He thanked the Father for revealing the mysteries of His kingdom to the poor and lowly,—



me to see his grandson, little Joe; and he bore me off to the poor convulsed boy, and dared me to leave him till he was better. He did get better, but Big Joe was dead that night. He had the disease on him when he carried me away from the boat, but his heart was set upon his boy. I never can forget that night, and how important a thing it was to be able to relieve suffering, and how much Old Joe was in earnest about having the Doctor.

Now, I want you to consider how important the Doctor is to you. Nobody needs him so much as the poor man. He is often ill. He is exposed to hunger and wet and cold, and to fever, and all the diseases of hard labour and poverty. His work is heavy, and his heart is often heavy too with misery of all kinds—his back weary with its burden—his hands and limbs often meeting with accidents,—and you know if the poor man, if one of you falls ill and takes fever, or breaks his leg, it is a far more serious thing than with a richer man. Your health and strength are all you have to depend on; they are your stock-in-trade, your capital. Therefore I shall ask you to remember *four things* about your duty to your Doctor, so as to get the most good out of him, and do the most good to him too.

1st, It is your duty to trust your Doctor.

2dly, It is your duty to obey your Doctor.

3dly, It is your duty to speak the truth to your Doctor, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth; and

4thly, It is your duty to reward your Doctor.

And so now for the *first*. It is our duty to trust our Doctor, that is, to believe in him. If you were in a ship, in a wild storm, and among dangerous rocks, and if you took a pilot on board, who knew all the coast and all the breakers, and had a clear eye, a firm heart, and a practised hand, would you not let him have his own way? would you think of giving him your poor advice, or keep his hand from its work at the helm? You would not be such a fool, or so uncivil, or so mad. And yet many people do this very same sort of thing, just because they don't really trust their Doctor; and a Doctor is a pilot for your bodies, when they are in a storm and in distress. He takes the helm, and does his best to guide you through a fever; but he must have fair play; he must be trusted even in the dark. It is wonderful what cures the very sight of a Doctor will work, if the patient believes in him; it is half the battle. His very face is as good as a medicine, and sometimes better,—and much pleasanter too. One day a labouring man came to me with indigestion. He had a sour stomach, and heartburn, and the water-brash, and wind, and colic, and wonderful misery of body and mind. I found he was eating bad food, and too much of it; and then, when its digestion gave him pain, he took a glass of raw whisky. I made him promise to give up his bad food and his worse whisky, and live on pease-brose and sweet milk, and I wrote him a prescription, as we call it, for some medicine, and said, "Take *that*, and come back in a fortnight, and you will be well." He did come back, hearty and hale;—no colic, no sinking at the heart, a clean tongue, and a cool hand, and a firm step, and a clear eye, and a happy face. I was very proud of the wonders my

prescription had done; and having forgotten what it was, I said, "Let me see what I gave you." "Oh," says he, "I took it." "Yes," said I, "but the prescription." "I took it, as you bade me. I swallowed it." He had actually eaten the bit of paper, and been all that the better of it; but it would have done him little, at least less good, had he not trusted me when I said he would be better.

So, take my word for it, and trust your Doctor; it is his due, and it is for your own advantage. Now, our *next duty* is to *obey the Doctor*. This you will think is simple enough. What use is there in calling him in, if we don't do what he bids us? and yet nothing is more common, partly from laziness and sheer stupidity, partly from conceit and suspiciousness, and partly, in the case of children, from false kindness and indulgence, than to disobey the Doctor's orders. Many a child have I seen die from nothing but the mother's not liking to make her swallow a powder, or put on a blister.

*Thirdly, You should tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, to your Doctor.* He may be never so clever, and never so anxious, but he can no more know how to treat a case of illness without knowing all about it, than a miller can make meal without corn; and many a life have I seen lost from the patient or his friends concealing something that was true, or telling something that was false. The silliness of this is only equal to its sinfulness and its peril.

I remember, in connexion with that place where Big Joe lived and died, a singular proof of the perversity of people in not telling the Doctor the truth—as you know, people are apt to send for the Doctor for cholera when it is too late, when it is a death rather than a disease. But there is an early stage, called premonitory—or warning—when medicines can avail. I summoned all the people of that fishing village who were well, and told them this, and asked them if they had any of the symptoms. They all denied having any (this is a peculiar feature in that terrible disease, they are afraid to *let on* to themselves, or even the Doctor, that they are "in for it"), though from their looks and from their going away while I was speaking, I knew they were not telling the truth. Well, I said, "You must, at any rate, every one of you, take some of this," producing a bottle of medicine. I will not tell you what it was, as you should never take drugs at your own hands, but it is simple and cheap. I made every one take it; only one woman going away without taking any; she was the only one of all those *who died*.

*Lastly, It is your duty to reward your Doctor.* There are four ways of rewarding your Doctor. The first is by giving him your money; the second is by giving him your gratitude; the third is by your doing his bidding; and the fourth is by speaking well of him, giving him a good name, recommending him to others. Now, I know few, if any of you, can pay your Doctor, and it is a great public blessing that in this country you will always get a good doctor willing to attend you for nothing, and this is a great blessing; but let me tell you,—I don't think I need tell you,—try and pay your Doctor, be it ever so little. It does you good as well as him; it keeps up your



self-respect; it raises you in your own eye, in your neighbour's, and, what is best, in your God's eye, because it is doing what is right. The "man of independent mind," be he never so poor, is "king of men for a' that;" ay, and "for twice and mair for a' that;" and to pay his way is one of the proudest things a poor man can say, and he can say it oftener than he thinks he can; and then let me tell you, as a bit of cool, worldly wisdom, that your Doctor will do you all the more good, and make a better job of your cure, if he gets something, some money for his pains; it is human nature and common sense, this. It is wonderful how much real kindness and watching and attendance and cleanliness you may get for *ten shillings a week*. Nursing is a much better article at that,—much, than at *nothing* a week. But I pass on to the other ways of paying or rewarding your Doctor, and, above all, to *gratitude*.

Honey is not sweeter in your mouths, and light is not more pleasant to your eyes, and music to your ears, and a warm, cosy bed is not more welcome to your wearied legs and head, than is the honest deep gratitude of the poor to the young Doctor. It is his glory, his reward; he fills himself with it, and wraps himself all round with it as with a cloak, and goes on in his work, happy and hearty; and the gratitude of the poor is worth the having, and worth the keeping, and worth the remembering. Twenty years ago I attended old Sandie Campbell's wife in a fever, in Big Hamilton's Close, in the Grassmarket—two worthy, kindly souls they were and are. By God's blessing, the means I used saved "oor Kirsty's" life, and I made friends of these two for ever; Sandie would have fought for me if need be, and Kirsty would do as good. I can count on them as my friends, and when I pass the close-mouth in the West Port, where they now live, and are thriving, keeping their pigs, and their hoary old cuddie and cart, I get a curtsy from Kirsty, and see her look after me and turn to the women beside her, and I know exactly what she is saying to them about "Dr. Broon." And when I meet old Sandie, with his ancient and long-lugged friend, driving the draff from the distillery for his swine, I see his grey eye brighten and glisten, and he looks up and gives his manly and cordial nod, and goes on his way, and I know that he is saying to himself, "God bless him! he saved my Kirsty's life," and he runs back in his mind all those twenty past years, and lays out his heart on all he remembers, and that does him good and me too, and nobody any ill. Therefore, give your gratitude to your Doctor, and remember him like honest Sandie; it will not lose its reward and it costs you nothing; it is one of those things you can give and never be a bit the poorer, but rather the richer.

One person I would earnestly warn you against, and that is the *Quack Doctor*. If the real Doctor is a sort of God of healing, or rather our God's cobbler for the body, the Quack is the devil for the body, or rather the devil's servant against the body. And like his father he is a great liar and cheat. He offers you what he cannot give. Whenever you see a medicine that cures everything, be sure it cures nothing; and remember, it may kill. The devil promised our Saviour all the kingdoms of the world if he would fall down and worship

him; now this was a lie, he could not give him any such thing. Neither can the Quack give you his kingdoms of health, even though you worship him as he best likes, by paying him for his trash; he is dangerous and dear, and often deadly,—have no dealings with him.

We have our duties to one another, yours to me, and mine to you; but we have all our duty to one else—to Almighty God, who is beside us at this very moment—who followed us all this day, and knew all we did and didn't do; what we thought and didn't think—who will watch over us all this night—who is continually doing us good—who is waiting to be gracious to us—who is the great Physician, whose saving health will heal all our diseases, and redeem our life from destruction, and crown us with loving-kindness and tender mercies,—who can make death the opening into a better life, the very gate of heaven; that same death which is to all of us the most awful and most certain of all things, and at whose door sits its dreadful king, with that javelin, that sting of his, which is sin, our own sin. Death would be nothing without sin, no more than falling asleep in the dark to awake to the happy light of the morning. Now, I would have you think of your duty to this great God, our Father in Heaven; and I would have you to remember that it is your duty to trust *Him*, to believe in *Him*. If you do not, your soul will be shipwrecked, you will go down in terror and darkness to perdition.

It is your duty to *obey Him*. Whom else in all this world should you obey, if not Him? and who else so easily pleased, if we only do obey? It is your duty to speak the truth to Him, not that He needs any man to tell Him anything. He knows everything about everybody; nobody can keep a secret from Him. But He hates lies; He abhors a falsehood. He is the God of truth, and must be dealt honestly with, in sincerity and godly fear; and, lastly, you must in a certain sense *reward Him*. You cannot give Him money, for the silver and gold, the cattle upon a thousand hills, are all His already, but you can give Him your grateful lives; you can give Him your hearts; and, as old Mr. Henry says, "thanksgiving is good, but thanks living is better."

One word more; you should call your Doctor early. It saves time; it saves suffering; it saves trouble; it saves life. If you saw a fire beginning in your house, you would put it out as fast as you could. You might perhaps be able to blow out with your breath what in an hour the fire-engine could make nothing of. So is it with disease and the Doctor. A disease in the morning when beginning, is like the fire beginning; a dose of medicine, some simple thing, may put it out, when if left alone, by night, it may be raging hopelessly, like the fire, if left alone, and leaving your body dead and in ruins in a few hours. So, call in the Doctor soon; it saves him much trouble, and may save you your life.

And let me end by asking you to call in the Great Physician soon; to call Him instantly, to call Him in time; there is not a moment to lose. He is waiting to be called; He is standing at the door; He will make no delay. But He must be called—He may be called too late.