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Forth from the casemate, on the plain
Where honour has the world to gain,
Pour forth, and bravely do your part,
Oh knights of the unshielded heart!
Forth and for ever forward!—out
From prudent turret and redoubt
And in the mellay charge amain,
To fall but yet to rise again!

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CHALLENGE AND CHEER

I

Sovereign Power

(1) SELF-REVERENCE

"When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; what is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him? For Thou hast made him but little lower than God, and crownest him with glory and honour."—*Ps.* viii. 3–5.

THESE are not only among the most familiar but among the profoundest words in the whole range of the Bible. They state and solve, with incomparable dignity, a problem which the modern man, with his modern conceit, imagines to belong purely to his own age, but which has agitated the human mind almost since the dawn of intelligence—the problem of man's seeming insignificance and real significance in the scheme of things; I repeat, man's seeming insignificance and real significance. It is quite true that modern astronomy has enhanced that problem by giving us an immensely vaster Universe than that inhabited by our forefathers, by telling us that even our solar system is merely one among millions of such, that Sirius is 125 times, and Alcyone a thousand times, larger than our sun—and what then, it seems to ask, are we, specks of

dust on an inconsiderable minor planet? But long before the astronomer began to reckon in millions of miles—always, in fact—man has felt a very small and frail and negligible quantity in this great world; always has he been awed by the contemplation of the illimitable heavens, and asked himself, What, compared with these starry splendours, is he, the puny creature of a day, and of what account can he be in the sight of the mighty Framer of the Universe who has fashioned such marvels? A question beginning on a note of diffidence, and ending too often on one of fatal discouragement. And discouragement must be the result, until we arrive at the Psalmist's inspired solution: man, in spite of all his apparent frailty and littleness, is as a matter of fact more than suns and stars, than oceans and mountains, more than "height or depth or any other creature," because of something within him which lifts him above these, and upon quite a different level. He perceives and can reason about the world, but the world cannot reason about nor even perceive him; God has created nature and man, but only man can think God's thoughts again after Him; by his mind, his soul, his sense of right, his sense of beauty, he is directly related to God Himself, who has made man alone of all creatures a partaker of His own Divine nature, and crowned him with glory and honour. Thus reassured, man takes heart of grace again; he is greater than he had judged; his insignificance is only apparent, his significance is real.

My subject to-day is the first of Three Secrets of Sovereign Power; and that there may be, so to speak, no secrecy about these secrets, let me name them with the least delay. You will remember Tennyson's poem *Œnone*, in which he tells over again, in verse of exquisite

sweetness and haunting cadence, the old-world story of the choice of Paris; how that youth was called upon to award the prize to one among three goddesses, Hera, the Queen of Heaven, Athene, the Queen of Wisdom, and Aphrodite, the Queen of Love. And Hera offered him, should the prize be hers, regal power and lordship over many lands, allegiance and alliance, secure and ever-widening sway; and the prospect pleased him well and flattered his ambition, insomuch that already he was prepared to yield her the coveted award. But Athene, the wise and austere virgin goddess now spoke, and held a higher, finer ideal before him:

> Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,
> These three alone lead life to sovereign power.
> Yet not for power (power of herself
> Would come uncalled-for) but to live by law,
> Acting the law we live by without fear;
> And because right is right, to follow right
> Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence.

But that was too exalted a view of life to appeal to Paris, the pleasure-loving and shallow, and when Aphrodite, the light-o'-love, approached, and offered him what she had to offer, reflection was drowned fathoms-deep in desire, and to her went the prize; and so began the long-drawn tragedy which led to Paris' own undoing, and the deaths of many brave men, and the sack of Troy.

Now the lines in Tennyson's poem with which we are directly concerned, and which reveal our three secrets, are these, which I have already quoted:

> Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,
> These three alone lead on to sovereign power.

And perhaps we cannot do better than ask ourselves

in the first place what we mean by power, what is the power we wish, and may legitimately wish, to attain. I should define it as the full development of what is best and noblest within us, of the faculties by which life takes on its highest meaning, is turned into a grand and worthy enterprise, a drama of activities in which we feel it good to take part. We do not mean mere dominion of a material kind, or over material resources, but the power of self-realization, of striving after and attaining what in our moments of aspiration and insight we have visioned and longed to be. This is a power which raises us above petty fears and desires, which bestows inner balance and peace, which means strength and courage and serenity such as the world can neither give nor take away ; in the degree that we have it—and who would not have it ?—its possession really confers sovereignty, the temper which cares neither for the world's bribes nor for its threats.

Now the first secret of such power is self-reverence ; and by this time you see quite clearly why we began on the note we did, viz., the real significance of man in this huge and overpowering scheme of things, which by its vastness dwarfs and is so apt to discourage him, to make him feel the merest mote, an animated nothingness—until he gets hold of the right scale of values, and sees things in their true proportion. And I say without hesitation that the only way in which he can escape the sense of his nonentity, and obtain what I called the right scale of values, is by means of religion.

Take the materialistic view, which makes us mere accidental products of a blind mechanical process—a process that has somehow resulted in you and me, without purpose, without object—and I really do not see where self-reverence is to come from ; we are animals, with a

chance development of mentality, but for the rest born as the brutes, and destined to perish as they. Chance or Destiny, call it what you will—

> The Eternal Pourer from his Bowl has poured
> Millions of Bubbles like us, and will pour.

The materialist, if he is consistent, cannot reverence himself, cannot but take a low view of himself, for what has he to live for save material satisfactions? What nonsense to cherish high aspirations if we are only cunning casts in clay, or what better thing is there than to eat and drink and be merry if to-morrow we die, and return, dust unto dust? And mark you, wherever you find a man living in this fashion—as, alas, you may find thousands doing in our midst—there you will find, at the bottom, a total lack of even self-respect: a man who so uses himself, for all his swagger and bluster does not really think much of himself, and never suspecting his capabilities does not develop them; and in the end his epitaph is, "Here lies one whose name was writ in water."

So I recommend the other, the religious view to you, because it is the only one which makes for self-reverence, which tells you that you are a child of God, and therefore meant at any rate for better things than the indulgence of those lower desires which form part of our sub-human inheritance; that there is in you an element which links you to the Eternal Himself, a wonder and a mystery which impels you upwards, and to which it is your high calling and privilege to be true. And the religion which deepens this reverence for yourself and its possibilities most of all, is the religion of the Gospel, which proclaims the infinite value of the human soul, and assures us of God's direct care for and interest in

each individual, so that by our obedience we can actually help, by our disobedience we can thwart, His Will, and hurt His Love. A being so dowered, so circumstanced, aware of such potentialities within himself, cannot but feel that he owes himself respect, and will conduct himself accordingly ; and when we remember the meaning of the Cross, that the Divine Love suffered and agonized there for our sakes, in order to win us unto itself, we know that we, with all our imperfection, must somehow be *worth* this immense effort, this immense sacrifice, or God would not have made it.

I would therefore, in the first place, with all loving seriousness, my brethren, warn you against whatever may be calculated to lower your views of human nature, to make you think contemptuously of it, to expect little from mankind—a frame of mind which is often unconsciously adopted by those who are in search of an excuse for demanding but little from themselves. Cynicism is a very cheap and easy attainment, a pose of apparent smartness which it costs very little exertion to acquire, but which costs an immense deal of your inner resources —a casting overboard of what is best in you—to keep up. You must reverence humanity if you are to reverence yourself ; all the great work of the world has been achieved by those who held a lofty view of their race and its destiny ; cynicism, the scoffer's art, with its grin and smirk, these are verily of the Devil. There has recently been published the biography of a man—a very interesting man—who, during a long lifetime, in spite of eminent abilities, never rose into the first flight of statesmanship, and has left no lasting achievement to his credit ; and the authoritative record of his career but confirms what everybody had known to be the explanation of his failure—for it was a failure—viz., his funda-

mental lack of seriousness, of reverence, the confirmed habit of mockery which turned everything into jest. And of an English prelate, dead not many years ago, we read that he made this dreadful, self-revealing statement: "I can never ask myself first, 'What mighty ideas swelled in the hearts of men?' But, 'What made men see a chance of saving sixpence, of gaining sixpence, or escaping from being robbed of sixpence?'" Is it a wonder that, with such a conception of human nature—surely based unconsciously upon a reading of himself—he achieved only a brilliant sterility, even though, in Archbishop Temple's judgment, for sheer cleverness he beat any man he knew?

If our lives are to be saved from barrenness, if they are to be worth anything, and to result in power as we have defined that word, we must shun a low estimate of our fellows. As Mr. Watson has truly sung—

> O prophets, martyrs, saviours, *ye* were great,
> All life being great to you: ye deemed Man more
> Than a dull jest, God's *ennui* to amuse!

There is a whole type of contemporary journalism which persistently exhibits humanity under its least worthy aspects, under the sway of the least elevated motives and passions, to an unceasing accompaniment of winks and leers, of giggles and grimaces; and unfortunately there is no mistaking the popularity of this kind of fare. Now I will undertake to say that you cannot, week-in and week-out, feed your mind on this class of production without losing tone, without suffering a debasement of your whole outlook on the world of men and women; as Nietzsche has truly said, "If you look long enough into the abyss, the abyss will begin to look into you;" and in the end the springs of your own conduct will be

subtly and perniciously affected, since in a world of fauns and satyrs what were the sense of trying to be a saint, or even to lead a godly, righteous and sober life? Avoid the kind of reading, avoid the type of entertainment, which, for all its seductive brightness and laughter, lowers your ideals, lowers your self-reverence, and so strips you of the power to be your best and do your best. To have and develop that power you must rather seek to share the standpoint from which the mighty genius of Shakespeare exclaimed: "What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in action, how like an angel! in apprehension, how like a god!" You are of a race that has produced heroes and thinkers and martyrs, seers and doers and sufferers for right's sake, yes, and innumerable men and women who, without making much show, or calling out for pedestals from which to exhibit themselves and solicit admiration, made simple duty their watchword, shunned low delights, and lived "as ever in their great Taskmaster's eye." That is good to remember, such lives are good to study and take inspiration from, and not the piteous chronicles of diseased frivolity and tainted appetite.

And in the same way I would warn you, with all the solicitude of a brother, whose sole aim in preaching is to safeguard your welfare, against whatever mode of thought is calculated to lessen your sense of personal freedom, personal initiative, personal responsibility. The root objection to every form of Determinism is not that it is intellectually erroneous, but that it is practically pernicious. You will infallibly reverence yourselves less the less you think you are able to direct your own lives, to fight your own battles, to resist your own temptations, the more you regard yourselves as the

sport of circumstance; and if power is your object, as it should be, let me tell you that the only power you can exercise is the power you believe yourselves to have. I want to lay great stress, if you will allow me, on this intimate connection between self-respect and a healthy sense of responsibility. The man who feels that he is responsible for the proper carrying-out of a job, that this delicate or difficult piece of work has been entrusted to him, is the man who respects himself, and rightly so; and on the other hand, what a crushing feeling, to know that we are only cogs in the machinery, most easily replaced, of no individual importance whatsoever, really only permitted to be where we are on sufferance! But how much worse, how much more degrading is the feeling that we have no self-direction, no choice, but are the mere playthings of blind caprice! Believe me, you would rather be reproached by your superior with sharpest rebuke for having acquitted yourself badly than to have the matter passed over with shrug of shoulders and raised eyebrows, and a cold: "Well, of course, what else was there to be expected? What a fool I was to let you touch the thing!" In the same way, there is more hope in self-blame than in self-pity; for self-blame means that we could and ought to have done better, while self-pity is infinitely the most insidious of all forms of self-indulgence, because it is fundamentally akin to self-contempt.

Now I am struck by a tendency in modern literature, both the literature of the novel and of the drama, a tendency to emphasize this note of compassion with human frailty and human fate in a manner which is full of dangers—dangers to self-reliance and self-esteem. That is the dominant note in the writings of that fine and distinguished mind, Mr. John Galsworthy, who is

exercising a deep and probably widening influence upon the reading and play-going public. He has been called by a discriminating critic "the very genius of pity," and for pity there is assuredly room amid the harshnesses and cruelties of life; but when it threatens to becloud all moral standards, it is time we pulled ourselves together. Now Mr. Galsworthy is a great and conscientious artist; he does not depict humanity in its strayings and falterings with a grin, to be sure, but rather with a wistful smile and a sigh, as who should say, "Poor men God made, and all for that!"—poor hearts that are called upon to bleed from such atrocious wounds, without choice or say in the matter! His whole point of view seems summed up in the words he places on the lips of one of his characters, who says: "Who am I to tell you what's wicked and what isn't? . . . There's suffering enough without adding to it with our trumpery judgments!" Well, friends, that is a very plausible way of putting it, but an altogether misleading one; as your pity increases, it necessarily engulfs your esteem for the person so pitied, whether that person is yourself or anybody else, because you don't treat him or her as a free agent; and self-pity, to say it again, will act as the most fatal solvent upon self-reverence. You see, that is the radical difference between Buddhism and Christianity; Buddhism is concerned with, and seeks a remedy for, human suffering, and finds that remedy in self-extinction: whereas Christianity is concerned with, and seeks a remedy for, human sin, and finds that remedy in self-realization, the realization of our best self. And the verdict of Buddhism is to be read in the light of history—it has meant stagnation, loss of initiative, loss of power; while Christianity, with its insistence on

the sinfulness of sin, and its clear call, "Go, and sin no more," has been the power of God unto salvation. If you want to reverence yourself, my brother or sister, you must shoulder the burden of responsibility, refuse the opiate of self-compassion, assert your liberty; for 'tis better to have tried and failed than never to have tried at all. There is a type of illusion, quite well-known to medical men, in which a patient gets it into his head that he cannot set his foot on the ground because he is soft or brittle—and so long as he holds to that notion, he really *cannot* stand or walk; it is the same with this moral illusion that we cannot help being what we are: we can only disprove it practically by rousing ourselves, assuming responsibility, and so earn our own self-respect, the dynamic of further power.

And this self-reverence, which will be strongest in him who knows himself a child of God, once we have it, will govern our aims and ambitions, will create an atmosphere in which some thoughts will naturally flourish, and in which others will be simply unable to live. It is this temper which expresses itself in Tennyson's call—

> Arise and fly
> The reeling faun, the sensual feast;
> Strive upwards, working out the beast.
> And let the ape and tiger die.

In choosing your associations—and what is even more important, your associates—you will ask yourselves, "Is this worthy of me?" You will ask that question, understand me, without all priggishness, or Pharisaism, or hateful assumption of superiority; for the self which you reverence, and desire to protect against what is evil and lowering, is not so much your actual as your potential self, that which you know that under God's

good Providence you are capable of growing and intended to grow. Here is, maybe, a feeble shoot in your garden, and with what care you water it, and mulch it, and keep slugs and snails away from it, and during the frosty nights cover it up—and some one says, "What an absurd fuss to make over *that* thing!" But what you are protecting and doing your best for, is not the tiny growth that now appears, but the lovely rose tree you see in your mind's eye, and which that mere shoot has the power to become —and you are wise in reverencing the potential in the actual, and your critic shows only his shortsightedness.

And the same thought, the thought of God's high calling, of the capacities He has infolded in you, that they may be unfolded by you, will help you to make a right use of all your faculties, will enable you to find answers to the question, What are the right things for me to cherish, to seek out, to set before myself? Remembering what you are and what you may be, you will be preserved from choosing the unworthy, from stooping to the base, from following after mean and perishable satisfactions, and bartering your soul's treasure for dead-sea fruit; instinctively you will know and say when this lure and that bribe is dangled before your eyes, "This is not good enough for me—for me, who am a word of God made flesh."

And if self-reverence will help and guide you and supply you with power in doing, so will it minister power to you in suffering, in enduring hardness without flinching, in seeing this star and that star in your firmament go out without feeling that you are left in darkness, because your inner vision will be fixed upon an unextinguishable radiance, the light which never shone on sea or land, but shines upon the soul. You can bear

this grievous thing, you can hold your head high, though blows rain upon you, because of what you are, because of that better part of your own self which, if you have laid hold on it, no one shall take away from you. Do you know what the Psalmist means when he says, "Thou preparest a table for me in the midst of mine enemies"? Not food and drink, of course, but just what Jesus, in the midst of persecution and harassment, means by the words, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." So if you have learnt and practised the lesson of self-reverence, if you can "face yourself," are at unity with yourself, you will know peace in very troubled seas, and an inner content when there is much without to vex and sadden, and amid the tumult of the hostile elements Hope will be playing for you on the one string—you remember the picture—which all the world's ill-usage cannot break; for strength is born of stress, and from endurance springs the power to endure. When I was a very little chap, that transparently good man, my father, used to quote—perhaps to comfort me in some childish woe—a line from Homer, which has ever since been with me, bringing the same suggestion of comfort: "Suffer this too, my heart, for worse than this thou hast suffered." I can hear that very gentle voice, a voice that has been still these thirty years and more, repeating those Greek words, with their roll and rhythm, and somehow it is more real to me than many louder and more insistent cries of the hour.

Does this reverence for self bring power? Well, think of some of the men who have attained and exercised such power, and you will find that here lay their secret. Here is that poor miner's son, brought up in poverty and privation, owing his education to charity, entering the cloister as a youth, yet destined to emerge

from that cloister and to initiate the emancipation of whole peoples from the yoke of Rome—Martin Luther : not without a tremendous sense of the use God had for him—may we not say, of the need God had of him—could he have entered upon that combat, obscure, unknown, unarmed, with the forces of Church and State arrayed against him. Here is Spinoza, the Jewish philosopher, elaborating his great system while earning a pittance as a grinder of lenses ; the offer is made to him of a lucrative post as professor at Heidelberg University —on the one condition, that he should teach nothing contrary to the established orthodoxy ; but Spinoza reverenced himself too much to consider such an offer, and preferred his garret, together with liberty to speak the truth as he saw it. Here is Booker Washington, born in slavery, sharing the disabilities and degradation of the negro race : but there is that within him which does not suffer him to remain on that degraded level, and after winning the boon of education for himself, he proceeds to establish schools and colleges for his fellow-negroes, to train them for the duties and responsibilities of citizenship, and so to outgrow the stigma which attaches to their colour. In each of these instances—and how one might multiply them !—does not the effect proclaim the cause beyond a peradventure ?

One last word, brethren : as self-reverence is the offspring of faith, so in turn it will lead to larger faith. For whence, in the final analysis, comes the belief in immortality but from the feeling that man is *worth* surviving, that the grave is not good enough as a goal for him ? I do not wonder that those who live to the lower side of their natures, for what is perishable and corruptible—I do not wonder that for such as these immortality should be an almost incredible thought ; and just as

natural is it that those who have lived for exalted and unselfish aims should be so sure that this span is not all, that death is a new beginning rather than the end, that there await them in God's Beyond the wages of going on. Let us be reverently true to the best within us, valuing ourselves as sons and daughters of God, and walking accordingly, and we shall have solved the first secret of sovereign power, for we shall lay hold, by faith, even upon "the power of an endless life."

II

Sovereign Power

(2) SELF-KNOWLEDGE

" Who among men knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of the man, which is in him ? "—1 *Cor.* ii. 11.

WHEN we read this text superficially, we are apt to think it the Biblical form of a query, such as we have heard put, or have put ourselves, many a time in everyday affairs and everyday arguments: " Can't you allow me to know best about what concerns myself ? " Or, " Don't you think a man is the safest judge of his own affairs ? " Or, " Who is likely to know what happened on any given occasion if not the man to whom it happened ? " We have all, I say, argued, or heard others argue, like that ; but I venture to think that whenever we hear that plea used by some one else—not, perhaps, when it is we who use it—we are conscious of a doubt as to its soundness. Is a man always of necessity the best judge of his own affairs ? Then we must all be allowed the final voice in whatever affects our own selves, our own advantage and so on—a course which would have only one trifling drawback, viz., the effect of all those voices would be irreconcilable, screaming discord, with every man a law unto himself !

And is it a fact that the man to whom a thing happened is invariably best qualified to give an accurate account of what did happen, even granting that he wishes to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth? Must not, wherever our own interests are involved, a certain amount of bias be allowed for, must not the personal factor be recognized as a disturbing element, which it is best to correct by calling in an outside judgment? Just to illustrate this principle—there is an interest, sometimes a charm, often a piquancy about autobiography which give to it a value of its own; but for a final estimate of the personality we meet in such personal memoirs we generally go to the more objective pages of some other writer, with a clearer perspective. A Napoleon dictates his recollections during that last phase on St. Helena: surely, he ought to have known what did take place—but the result is a subtle compound of truth and falsehood, and it would be impossible to say just where self-deception ended, and the deception of others began in this case. A Goethe pens the reminiscences of his youth, but is so conscious of his incapacity of setting things down just as they occurred that he labels the volume, by way of warning, "Poetry and Truth." An eminently cool and matter-of-fact intellect like Herbert Spencer writes his autobiography in two ponderous volumes; but he leaves directions for the writing of an official Life by another hand. The fact is, we all idealize ourselves; we all occupy the centre in the stage of which we have the setting, turning on the limelight with a liberal hand; we all start with a considerable amount of prejudice in our own favour, and are not even disinterested witnesses, let alone infallible judges, in our own case.

Why am I saying all this? Because that common and

most obvious interpretation of our text, which makes it to mean that a man knows best about what concerns himself, is really based upon a misunderstanding; it leaves out the most important word and idea in the text—the *spirit* of the man, which is in him, this it is which knoweth and understandeth the things of a man, and this spirit is just that part of him which stands over and against the material, the passionate, the sensual, the earthy, which also enter into his composition. It is, at the lowest, the clear intelligence, free from the urgencies of bodily appetite, unswayed by irrational impulse, "no slave of a four-footed will;" it is, at the highest, that part of man which links him directly to God, his spiritual nature, the inner light caught from the Divine radiance, that which the old writer means when he says that the spirit of man is the candle of the Lord. In that light, provided it burns with a steady flame, we can know ourselves, we can judge ourselves aright, and in no other.

Our subject now is the second of the Three Secrets of Sovereign Power, in the order in which they are enumerated by Tennyson:

> Self-reverence, *self-knowledge*, self-control,
> These three alone lead on to sovereign power.

With self-reverence we have dealt already; now we come to self-knowledge, that further indispensable condition of power in the best sense, and as we have defined it—viz., the power to strive after what is worthy and enduring, to lift ourselves above the tyranny of the things of sense and time, and so to rise to a level of inner poise and serenity beyond the world's power to disturb. That may sound, I know, rather too elevated and rarefied for attainment by our ordinary human nature; neverthe-

less, I believe that it is an ideal in large measure attainable by all who set out upon the quest resolutely, but certainly it requires a right knowledge of ourselves, far more thorough than most people even attempt to gain.

You are all familiar with the description given of the oracle of Apollo at Delphi—how through long centuries pilgrimages wended their way thither, young and old, high and low, private citizens and embassies from great princes, laden with costly offerings—one and all intent upon the self-same business, to inquire of the god concerning their future, and how to turn their circumstances to best account; and ofttimes, no doubt, the answers of the priestess were pretty correct guesses, based upon a shrewd knowledge of human character, and at others they were designedly left vague and ambiguous, so as to fit any happening, and with it all there was mixed much priestly magic and make-believe; but there was one piece of advice given gratis to all, unmixed with fraud, and that was the sculptured inscription over the portico of the sanctuary, *Gnothi Seauton*, Know thyself. Truly, had the seekers at the Delphic shrine but possessed the real self-discernment which was within their reach, had each one sought instruction concerning the things of the man from the spirit of the man within him, they might have spared themselves weary journeys and the spending of their substance. And when we pass from Greek paganism to the Christianity of a St. Augustine, we find him summing up all prayer in the aspiration—"*Noverim Te, Domine, noverim me*," "May I know Thee, Lord, may I know myself." Yes, for we might, without irreverence, slightly alter the great Apostle's saying, and leave it no less true—listen: "If I know all mysteries, and all knowledge, but have not" know-

ledge of myself, "I am nothing, and it profiteth me nothing." And this emphasis upon the importance of self-knowledge does not in the least arise from self-conceit, as though you or I were the most interesting and fascinating personage to know: nothing of the sort—only our self is the medium through which we inevitably envisage and form our ideas of all the rest, and if our knowledge of ourselves is amiss or seriously defective, we shall be viewing the whole world through a distorting medium, and all our sight will be vitiated. If we are wrong in that point, we shall necessarily be wrong in all. And I am quite convinced that that is one of the most fruitful causes of unhappiness and suffering: men and women see the whole of life with a squint, they misread its plainest meanings, because their ideas of themselves are wrongly focussed. It is a case of "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is the darkness!" If we misunderstand even ourselves, how can we hope to understand others, or the great world!

Now I trust I shall not be thought unduly discouraging if I say straight out that one of the most necessary and salutary forms of self-knowledge is a knowledge of our *limitations*. A certain self-confidence, a rather jolly over-estimation of our capacities and talents and of what the rest of creation owes us, is perhaps inseparable from youth, and in the providence of God serves a useful purpose; I would much sooner have to deal with a young fellow who gave me to understand that he was aiming for the top of the tree, and meant to get there—who in other words had a pretty good conceit of his brains and his will power—than with some "humble" Uriah Heep, or some spiritless cypher, who was quite content to be a cypher all his days. Life

will presently take the former of the two in hand, and show him there are plenty as good as he, and not a few better, and that if he wants to "make good," as the Americans say, it will have to be done by sheer indomitable effort. Everybody has felt rather sorry for the only boy, petted and taught to regard himself as the centre of creation by fond and adoring parents; he has heard his praises sung, his cleverness extolled, until he has come quite naturally to accept all these eulogies as his due; there have been no other wills to curb his own, no brothers or sisters to supply him with an outside view of himself, and the result is that when first he makes his appearance in the rough-and-tumble of life, he is voted a general nuisance, and presently he comes in for some very hard experiences. Well for him if he does so, for now he learns the lesson that this world was not specially made for him, that he must adapt himself to his environment if he is to find things at all tolerable. And if there is good stuff in him, he drops his superiority, discovers that he really is not the abnormally gifted person he had imagined himself to be, that he has not only his equals but his superiors in whatever he takes up, and that he had better take off his coat to his job than wait for others to take off their hats to him.

Let me say that one has known unhappy instances where men right into middle age have never shaken off the delusion of possessing exceptional merits, which warranted them, as they thought, in taking exceptional liberties—in other words, they did not gather the indispensable self-knowledge, the knowledge of their limitations. The local politician, a great man in his small circle, finds his way to Westminster, and to his amazement discovers that he is just one of nearly seven

hundred gentlemen, only a very few of whom count for anything except as units in a division—and he not among those few. If he is wise, he may either resign himself to that fate, or cultivate those gifts which make for advancement, assuming that he has them; if he is not, I am afraid he will after a few years tire of Parliament, which has never appreciated him at his own valuation, and return to his local circle once more for those doses of incense which the leaders of his party were really too busy to administer to him with proper frequency.

But, such instances as these apart, we almost all, at the opening of our careers, absurdly overrate our talents, and feel entitled to a far more ornamental place in the scheme of things than our merits can reasonably lay claim to. We complain of our narrow spheres and opportunities, when the plain truth is that if we had the abilities we think ourselves possessed of, the spheres would widen almost automatically, yielding to the pressure we were exerting, Let me say this—All real mastery, all real power, springs from a pretty accurate knowledge of our limitations ; we have to find out what we can't do before we discover what we can do, and develop along those lines, leaving many other things severely alone. This and that and the other desirable accomplishment is out of our reach ; when we realize that, we can turn cheerfully to the one or two things which, with fidelity and concentration, we may by and by do well at. To condense this into one short sentence, into tabloid form, *it is only a proper sense of our limitations which gives us a proper sense of our true capacities.* On the other hand, one of the most tragically futile persons is the one who has never outgrown the youthful illusion that he was meant, say, to be a poet or a philo-

sopher, and so goes on producing rubbishy rhymes and fearsome theories of the Universe instead of serviceable boots or accurate balance sheets.

But there is one limitation which life brings home to nearly all of us, and for which we thank God: it is borne in upon us that we are not meant to be sufficient unto ourselves, that we are really very helpless without the sympathy and goodwill of our fellows—that, as the Latin saying has it, one man is no man at all. Just as the idea of being self-made is the illusion of a vulgarian, so self-sufficiency is the illusion of a prig, and one which does not even make its victim happy. By the merciful ordinance of God we are purposely endowed with such limitations as make us mutually necessary to each other, supplementing what is lacking in one another, even as two eyes, looking at the same object from slightly different angles, correct and supplement each other's vision, making the object plainer because they are two, not one. Blessed be God, I say, for the wisdom and mercy which impose upon us what seems a disability, but is a condition of fulness of power.

And another condition of power is a knowledge of our *weaknesses*; just as the secret of many a fall is our obstinate disinclination to own those weaknesses even to ourselves, the efforts we make to ignore them, to hide them from our own consciousness, the elaborate self-deceptions we practise. If there is one prayer our hearts decline to frame, it is the Psalmist's, "Lord, let me know how frail I am;" but the Psalmist, in uttering this particular petition, as in many other things, was wiser than we. Will you let me say that while we may succeed in deceiving ourselves about our weaknesses, we seldom succeed in deceiving others, we never deceive or outwit the nature of things, we never deceive God;

far better be frank with ourselves, acknowledge where our defences need strengthening, and act accordingly. I put it to you that when we drop pretence and cease fencing with reality, we know well enough, every man and woman amongst us, what are the dangers we need to guard specially against, what are the temptations to which we are constitutionally liable to succumb; and once we look those facts in the face, we can frame a course for our self-protection—but not unless. I am reminded of that very old story of the various applicants for the post of coachman, each of whom was asked how near he could drive to the edge of a steep quarry, and how they outbade each other in boasts of their skill and venturesomeness, till one of them said quite simply, "Well, for my part, sir, I'd keep as far away from the edge as I could"—and that was the man who got the post. We need not try how near we can drive to the edge; we have too precious a cargo to take unnecessary risks—an immortal soul, committed to us by God—and our one business is to deliver it safe into the Owner's hands at the end of the journey.

Really and truly, my brothers and sisters, we have had intimations more than a few to tell us the kind of things of which we had better beware, the hurtful passions or maybe indulgences to which we are prone; but we usually think it would not be good form to pay any heed to these warnings. If we had a weak heart, we should avoid undue strain; if we were liable to bronchitis, we should think it downright folly to be out in the fog; if we had a tendency to rheumatism, we should not court exposure to damp—we have commonsense enough for that; but when we are dealing with vulnerable spots in our dispositions and characters, the first thing we think proper to do is to cover them up,

to deny their existence, to act as if they weren't there —and the next thing is that we come in for the consequences, which are as natural as the bronchial trouble following carelessness in foggy weather!

Friends, where we are vulnerable—and there is none without some weak spot—there let us use a double measure of precaution and protection; to acknowledge what are our besetting temptations is the first and indispensable safeguard against them; that is the means whereby men and women, seeking God's help to overcome their frailties, are out of weakness made strong—that is the sense of that astounding paradox of the Apostle's, "For when I am weak," when I know how frail I am, "then am I strong," *i.e.*, then am I in a position to ward off the blows which, had I not guarded against them, would have come upon me unawares, and felled me to the ground.

I do not wish to labour this point more than necessary; but I do want to drive it home, to show how much is gained when we once have grace enough to see plainly what we ought specially to shun, what is dangerous to *us*. It must be strange if in our complex inheritance there are not some traits which need careful watching, checking, weeding-out; and you know that you have got to diagnose before you can prescribe, to make sure of what you ail before you can even attempt to cure. And then we come back to the old truth that, whether one member suffereth, all the members suffer with it; I mean, the whole character tends to grow unsound, the whole moral constitution and disposition are affected and undermined, when one particular weakness remains unchecked—the evil spreads, for our characters are not built up in separate air- and water-tight compartments; man is an organism, and what brings

injury to one part brings injury ultimately to all the rest. You have said many a time, in tracing some one's deterioration and downfall, "And, you know, it all began in"—so-and-so, some trifling habit of self-indulgence or carelessness about the truth—and bit by bit all the tissues were corroded, and the man went to pieces. For centuries there towers over the Square of St. Mark's in Venice the great Campanile, a structure designed to defy a score more centuries; there are tiny fissures in one of the walls, near the base, but what of that in so huge a building? Then, one morning, Venice is wakened by a rumble as of thunder and a roar as of cannon, and the great Campanile lies in ruin—just because a few tiny cracks had not been deemed worth attending to. Lord, make us to know how frail we are, that we may triumph over our frailties, that the spirit may assert its sway over our lower inheritance, that the soul may hold its sceptre, and rule its province of the brute.

And next in order of ascent, as we try to understand what is involved in self-knowledge, I would count a knowledge of our *wants* as a condition of power—of our *real* wants, needless to say, our needs, not of the hundred-and-one things that take our passing fancy. One and all of us, we want whatever aid we can get to character-building—whatever will contribute to that great end. We are set here by God with so much raw material from which to select, and out of which to shape a moral habitation for the soul, a character; and God has a greater esteem for you and me, friends, than to make our task a light and easy one. In order to discharge it successfully, we must make up our minds to meet, not shirk, our difficulties; to put forth loyal and sustained effort, to expect

and accept life's discipline without murmuring or whining. Discipline—yes, the training of our faculties for service, and keeping under of unruly cravings and selfwill; all this means the storing-up of power to effect what will be worth doing, and without such discipline the power we might have wielded will be dissipated and spend itself in space. With sharp, gleaming chisel and mallet the sculptor chips and carves his block of marble, ere out of the shapeless mass there emerges some figure of heroic proportions or divine beauty; so life the sculptor, with many a steely instrument and many a ringing blow, has to shape and fashion and discipline us before there can emerge the noble shape of a fine character. And towering above all the rest stands One of Godlike mien and perfection; and as we bend our gaze upon Him, the Author of our salvation, we see the mark of the nails, and remember that even He was made "perfect through suffering."

Then, among the wants of which we need to grow more conscious, is the want of what will aid and stimulate the life of the mind. In a community such as ours, with its rush of commercialism and its rather metallic standards, this is an admonition which a preacher must not tire of giving out. Hand in hand with a rather ruthless pursuit of business aims—*i.e.*, in the last resort, of money—there always goes a tendency to seek relaxation in the more frivolous and brainless sort of pastimes, in mere indulgence of one kind and another, and between these two pursuits intellectual interests suffer neglect, and the mind has a poor time of it. If you wish to have an accurate index or symptom of a general phenomenon, think of the kind of plays that are presented in most of our theatres week-in and week-out. Silly and ever sillier musical comedies; suggestive and ever more

suggestive farces; crude and ever cruder melodramas —these form the staple fare, and the supply testifies to the demand, it represents what the public evidently wants. Let us resolve to satisfy our higher wants, to find a little more time for the furnishing and improvement of the mind, for gathering some of the true and unfading riches. Let us realize, with a full consciousness of what is involved, that this is one of our true and pressing needs; knowledge *is* power, and in proportion as we *know* more of the world and its store of wonders, we can *be* more, and be *worth more* to society, to ourselves, and to God.

And yet again, moving in ascending order, I would say that the self-knowledge which is to lead us on to sovereign power will certainly include a far better knowledge of our *possibilities*. Our selves are largely unexplored estates which it is our business to develop and raise a harvest from. This estate of self is worth exploring, surely; and since it is all we can count our own, what a pity to go through life in partial ignorance of what is ours, of what we might be if we deemed it worth while to find out! There is a scrap of dialogue in a modern play which will show my meaning: "You don't know what's in you, I'm sure!" "I do, though!" "Do you? Then why don't you let it out?" Don't you see? Only it is not always just a case of letting it out but of bringing it out, of making a voyage of discovery into our unknown interior. Now doesn't that sound adventurous? And it is; the most exciting adventures are in store for us when we go exploring our own souls. There are finer possibilities of self-devotion, heroism, tenderness, courage, magnanimity in you than you ever imagined; but your best is not necessarily on the surface, nor most obvious—

only, it is there! Now it is no use leaving it latent, leaving your good points so deep down that nobody really suspects them, that nobody is the better for them, neither you nor anybody else; your gold cannot be minted while it is down in the mine, you have got to dig for it and get it to the surface, so that it may shine and be brought into circulation. God gives us these possibilities in order that we may turn them into actualities; the gold in our natures is to be made into currency, and so to prove serviceable—that is our duty to God who endowed us with it, not to keep it covered up, an unrealized possession, of use to none. Of all kinds of waste there is none so pitiful nor yet so common as the waste of selfhood, the potential good that slumbers in men and women, waiting only to be awakened. How much finer an affair we might make of life by systematically seeking what good we could do, even in the humblest of everyday concerns! We are told by modern science that there is power enough in the tides, if we knew how to harness it, to perform all the world's manual work and drudgery; and I tell you that there is hidden power, sovereign power enough in human hearts, did we but know it, did we but tap it, to turn this world from a field of weeds and brambles into a plantation of delight, into a garden of the Lord.

And this brings me to the last and highest form of self-knowledge, to which one ought to devote an entire sermon, and to which I can only just allude in closing—the knowledge of ourselves as *children of God*. In this consciousness and in this alone there is security and peace, and quenchless hope; for having this we can link our very feebleness to His almighty power when our own fails, and so be enabled to prevail. We can then say, "I can do all things, through Him that

strengtheneth me." A few years ago an ancient manuscript of alleged sayings of Jesus was discovered in Upper Egypt, one of which ran :—" Know yourselves, and ye shall be aware that ye are sons of the Father." It may or may not be an authentic utterance of our Lord's, but it is true. Not until we realize our relation to God as His children, do we know ourselves, and this knowledge is ministered to us by the Son of God in whose face we have read the secret of the Divine Fatherhood. Here all our limitations, all our weaknesses, all our wants, all our possibilities are made clear to us, here all our needs are answered. May we have that knowledge above every other, and we shall find in it the very fulness of power.

III

Sovereign Power

(3) SELF-CONTROL

"Better is he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city."—*Prov.* xvi. 32.

NOT long ago I was told a remarkable story about a remarkable man. All the world knows, and the older people still vividly remember, that when Henry Ward Beecher was in the height of his fame, he was made the subject of foul and wicked allegations which threw a dark shadow over years of his life, and of which he was triumphantly acquitted in the end, but only after unspeakable sufferings. But few people know, and I only learned it a few days since, that during all that terrible period Mr. Beecher had the complete proof of the source of those slanders, in a packet of letters written in disordered passion by one dear to him; that he could at any moment have cleared himself by producing those documents; but that, sooner than hurt the writer by exposure, he consigned them to an envelope marked "Not to be opened till after my death"—set his teeth, and held his peace. All that time this great man stood up in his pulpit week-in and week-out, fully cognisant of what the evil-minded and

scandal-loving were saying about him; and all that time the wretched writer of the letters did not so much as know that they were in the victim's possession. Take it for all in all, this is the greatest act of self-control of which I have ever heard; a self-conquest mightier than the conquest of many a foe, a ruling by a man of his own spirit more notable and more difficult than the taking of a city.

Self-control—that is the third and last of the secrets of sovereign power recited by Tennyson; and the fact that we all admire any one who exhibits that faculty in marked degree is the best answer to those shallow minds which would have us believe that our having it or not is just constitutional—that we are born with this particular gift or without it, and there an end; that we are such as we are, and cannot make ourselves any different, "choose how," as we say in Yorkshire. Of course it is quite true that we are not born alike, with the same endowments, mental or moral; of course a good stock counts for a great deal, or why should we talk about the well-bred? Of course, men's temperaments vary so vastly that one person may have more passion or irritability or fear to control in a day than another in a year, so much so that in most cases, when judging others, it will be our wisdom to recall the poet's line, "We know not what's resisted." But for all that, it is fundamentally false to imagine that we can be no other than we are, that our end is pre-ordained from our beginning, and that we cannot *make* ourselves different. As in the parable, we are sent out with diversities of gifts; but nothing save our indolence hinders us from trading with such gifts as we have, from cultivating and increasing our native powers, and so repaying with interest Him who

has bestowed them upon us. The first condition, the first necessity, with regard to self-control is that we should believe in our own ability to exercise and develop it; here as elsewhere applies that dynamic phrase of Emerson's, which I wish men and women would constantly bear in mind: "They can conquer who think they can." We all know that for want of self-mastery lives innumerable run to waste and drift to wreckage, disappointing—I say it reverently—the hopes of God; we all repeat the familiar lines:

> O well for him whose will is strong!
> He suffers, but he will not suffer long;
> He suffers, but he cannot suffer wrong:
> For him nor moves the loud world's random mock,
> Nor all Calamity's hugest waves confound,
> Who seems a promontory of rock,
> That, compassed round with turbulent sound,
> In middle ocean meets the surging shock,
> Tempest-buffeted, citadel-crowned.

Well for him? Yes; but how is this power of self-control, the secret of further power, to be gained, to be strengthened and extended? This is the practical question to which we must try to find an answer.

Well, I answer before all else that the pathway to this third secret lies precisely through the other two with which we have dealt on previous occasions, viz., through self-reverence and self-knowledge. Do not for one moment suppose that when the poet placed self-control after the other two he was indifferent as to the order in which he named these attributes, or anxious only to produce a line that scanned well. Tennyson was thinker as well as craftsman, and when he put self-control last, he had a sound and well-considered reason for doing so. His meaning comes out with

flashing clearness in the words he addressed to his sovereign—

"O loyal to the royal in thyself;"

he saw her capable of enduring because of her strong sense of her own worth, possessed of a nobleness of character greater than that of earthly rank. Self-mastery, in other words, will be wielded by those who respect themselves; they will be loyal to the royal in themselves, because they will have in the first instance realized that there *is* a royal in them, an element of Divine origin and sanctity with which they dare not tamper or take liberties. The debasing self-indulgence which we see practised by so many, the bondage to the senses in which myriads mis-spend their lives, would be positively impossible for men and women who understood that they are the temples of the living God; men do not dare to desecrate the dwelling of an earthly monarch which they are privileged to visit—they talk in hushed voices as they are admitted to the State apartments, because they are conscious of an unseen majesty; how much less would they dare to behave unseemly in the very sanctuary of God, if only they believed that they themselves are that sanctuary! That is why the truest and surest foundation of self-control will be the religious foundation, man's intimate awareness of himself—almost awe of himself—as the child of God, whose respect for his birth compels him to refrain from this, to observe another, kind of conduct. Self-control will assuredly result from the instinctive recollection of who and what we are—created in the Divine image, partakers of the Divine substance, redeemed by the Divine self-offering.

Even on a less exalted level one has experienced the

feeling of wholesome restraint which is due to the sense that we owed something to our forerunners, that a certain course which we felt strongly inclined to adopt was after all not worthy of the sons of our parents—the feeling summed up in the saying *Noblesse oblige*. Without being un-democratic, one may own that there is a peculiar satisfaction in looking back upon a long line of honourable ancestry; but the satisfaction, so far from making us self-complacent, lays upon us an unescapable obligation. Because we honour ourselves as the descendants of these, we may not tarnish the 'scutcheon which they kept bright; because we are not our own, but belong to them, we must try to battle against failings, to subdue impulses, which, given rein to, would prove us unworthy of our sires; everybody knows that motive, and it bears out my contention that self-reverence is one of the main roots of self-mastery.

And here we come upon the explanation of the peculiar dignity which we have all found to characterize people of by no means exalted worldly station who had a strong sense of God and their own relationship to God; who could hold their passions in check by the thought that they were joint-heirs with Christ; who were hallowed in their own sight, set above low delights, by the thought that Christ had died for them. Men and women who are convinced that their citizenship is in heaven will not allow the royal voice within them to be silent, or to be drowned by the yelpings of the brute, but proclaim and exercise their sovereign rights of control over the sub-human inheritance which still "walks" in us, and needs to be laid.

Self-control by self-reverence, that was our first point; self-control by self-knowledge, that is the

second. And by self-knowledge I would in this connection principally indicate and plead for that sincerity with ourselves which renders us aware of our failings, and puts us on our guard against them. We do not need to practise any morbid introspection to know quite well which are our weak spots, at what points we are threatened by danger, where our defences need strengthening if they are to prove efficient in case of a sudden attack. A knowledge of our *best* possibilities is hidden from many of us, because, as I have pointed out before, we lack the adventurous spirit which would explore the unknown interior of our own souls—in many instances we never suspect our soul-treasures, and *therefore* do not bring them to light. But if we are ignorant of our best, we can hardly plead a like ignorance of, shall I say, our own seamy side, of those portions of our characters which are sadly frayed and soiled and out of repair; if we do plead any such ignorance, we are really paying a notable tribute to our powers of self-delusion—what I have heard called our capacity for misleading ourselves. Really and truly, if we will each of us practise candour with himself or herself, it needs no supernaturally-gifted messenger to come and tell us "Thou ailest here and here." When Christ told the woman at the well of Sychar all about the disorders of her private life, she said, "Sir, I perceive that Thou art a prophet." *But the woman knew of her own self all the time.* And we, too, know, "our conscience bearing witness, and our thoughts one with another accusing or else excusing us;" we know from what directions peril threatens us, to what kinds of harmful stimulus we are unduly susceptible, where, in fact, we need to control ourselves more effectively.

Now to this query "Where?" there are of course many

answers, and yet, strange as it may sound, ultimately the answer is always one and the same answer—viz., *in the mind*, there and nowhere else; all action begins in thought, all action is preceded by volition, and it is our thoughts and wills which need to be disciplined and educated if they are not to play the traitor against us. Self-control is just a matter of ruling our spirit. Now it is one of our common mistakes to undervalue the importance of thought; there is no more frequent or more futile excuse than "I only thought" so and so, as if thinking did not matter much, or entailed no responsibility. But thought matters enormously, and if we do not control our mental apparatus, if we let that go anyhow, we shall certainly never control anything else. I really want to lay the utmost stress upon this. It is far too readily assumed that whatever else we can help, we cannot help our thoughts. We can, and must. You remember Luther's saying, "You can't prevent a bird from lighting on your head, but you can prevent it from building a nest there." Transfer the simile from the outside to the inside of the head. Ungoverned and unchecked, our thoughts may only too easily run in the direction of self-indulgence, or of envy, or of greed, or of evil desire. Now my point is that we are not passive river-beds through which our ideas course at their will, but that we can stem their current if we choose, and deliberately replace the undesirable thoughts by others of a different calibre altogether. That, indeed, is the one fundamental method of all self-control—a continuous process of selection and rejection—the conscious rejection of one idea or group of ideas in favour of another; if you do not make your start *there*, you will only be dealing with surface symptoms all the time, and not with root causes. You know very

well that it was by letting the mind travel again and again along certain seductive but pernicious routes that you have weakened your power of self-mastery; well, you must take warning from experience, and consciously, at the first sign of danger, call up other ideas to refuse admittance to visitors who, if tolerated, will do mischief, and prove more and more difficult to dislodge. Remember that saying of Professor William James's: "What holds attention, determines action." To have worthy, uplifting, inspiring thoughts in readiness for active service at a moment's notice, is a great thing; and it is a faculty which we can and should systematically cultivate, till the thing is accomplished without effort, at will. Let me give you a rather lengthy quotation from Mr. Arnold Bennett:

"I can say to myself when I arise in the morning; 'I am master of my brain. No one can get in there and rage about like a bull in a china shop . . . I have power to maintain my own calm, and I will. No earthly being can force me to be false to my principles, or to be blind to the beauty of the universe, or to be gloomy, or to be irritable, or to complain against my lot. For these things depend on the brain; cheerfulness, kindliness and honest thinking are all within the department of the brain. The disciplined brain can accomplish them. And my brain is disciplined, and I will discipline it more and more as the days pass. I am therefore independent of hazard, and I will back myself to conduct all intercourse as becomes a rational creature."

Substitute "mind" for the too materialistic "brain," and I think you have the exact truth. Of course we may decline the task of ruling our own minds, and many do decline it because of the effort it involves, but our shrinking from an enterprise does not prove it to be impossible, it only proves us to be slothful; and on the other hand, let me remind you of what you know to be true, viz., that every effort grows less with each

repetition. You need not give way, you need not be at the mercy of your passing thoughts; you can keep at bay, and finally put to rout, the hurtful suggestion, the brooding over injuries, the idea which, if unresisted, will heat your blood to fever temperature; all our feelings begin in mental images—exactly like the pictures thrown upon the screen by a magic lantern—but *you are the lanternist,* and if you will you can withdraw any slide and substitute another for it. What holds attention, determines action. There never was better advice given than the Apostle's "Think on these things"—things true, and honourable, and just, and pure, and lovely, and of good report. May I venture on another illustration? The mind is exactly like a great city, with its intricate network of streets. In every such city there are low quarters, squalid, narrow lanes, sinister courts, forbidding alleys, where you run the risk of being waylaid, drugged and robbed by the prowling denizens; then why turn down those crooked and ill-lit side-streets, and not rather keep to the broad and airy main avenues, where you may walk with comfort and safety? We have only to control our mental movements, to avoid the wrong turnings, in order to preserve our birthright as children of the light and of the day.

Well now, having laid down the main principles and methods for solving our third secret, we may briefly turn to some particular applications. What are the circumstances under which self-control is specially needed? Almost every one's first impulse will be to reply at once, "Under provocation." It is very difficult to preserve calm when exposed to intentional insult, to the imputation of vile actions or vile motives, to the slings and arrows of unscrupulous malice; rather is the

natural impulse of the natural man to retaliate there and then, to counter blow with heavier blow, ay, and even the ugly word with an uglier. Now I am the last person to advocate a spiritless submission to the machinations of evildoers; but I do say that our chances of quenching all the fiery darts of wickedness are in direct ratio to our ability to hold mere blind anger in check, to keep our balance. "Truth is stronger than intrigue," as Mrs. Joseph Parker once said to her distinguished husband; and to be slow to wrath is to see clearer and move swifter to victory. On the other hand, we know that the maximum of heat may go together with a minimum of light; we remember Shakespeare's particularly uncomplimentary reference to those who "unpack their hearts with words;" and we conclude that strong language may be left to the champions of weak causes. In most of the ordinary disputes which inflame men and so frequently embitter their mutual relations, it were well to remember that nine times out of ten the point at issue is not worth the expenditure of temper, and that too often we fight for our opinions because they are ours rather than because they matter—and behold, how much wood is kindled by how small a fire! This we do know, that in controversy, if anywhere, self-control spells power; that of two disputants the cooler and more self-possessed has the obvious advantage; that unbridled vehemence invariably fails of its object.

I have never witnessed a finer exhibition of self-command, and that in a very unexpected quarter, than at a public meeting in Croydon, when Mr. Victor Grayson was the speaker. All the evening through I had noticed an evil-looking individual with a perpetual sneer on his face; as the speech was drawing to its

close, this person slowly moved to the door, took aim at Mr. Grayson, hit him full in the face with an egg, and bolted—was pursued and captured. The excitement was indescribable; I can see one man rise in his seat, his face distorted, livid with rage, yelling out, as did others—"Hand him to the police!" "Certainly not," said Mr. Grayson, wiping his face, "let him go"—and let go he was. The effect was instantaneous; the meeting returned to sobriety, enhanced by a new respect for the man who had not let his temper run away with him; and I will undertake to say that that moment's self-mastery was worth more to the speaker's cause than many hours' oratory. In ruling his spirit he really did take a city—or at any rate a big meeting—by storm.

But in circumstances of far lesser stress, in the everyday of life, self-control is just as great a necessity. Who has not had to battle against the tendency of his attention to wander, to be dissipated and lost, when the subject to be attended to was difficult, or the duty to be done irksome? I will undertake to say that a great deal of the world's work is so indifferently done, not because those who do it are normally incapable of performing it well, but because they give only half their minds, and the less effective half, to it. Now you cannot fill up Bills of Lading or count up columns of figures properly if you are thinking of the exploits or the prospects of some particular football team all the while. You won't make a very great success of your household tasks if you cannot command your imagination to withdraw itself resolutely from that thrilling serial story: just leave it alone—it will all come right in the end. There is no good work turned out in shops where the one subject of conversation is the odds. Here is a confession on the subject of mind-wandering from a standard text-book of psychology:

"One snatches at any and every passing pretext, no matter how trivial or external, to escape from the odiousness of the matter in hand. I know a person, for example, who will poke the fire, set chairs straight, pick dust-specks from the floor, arrange his table, snatch up the newspaper, take down any book which catches his eye, waste the morning *anyhow*, in short—simply because the only thing he *ought* to attend to is the preparation of a noonday lesson which he detests. Anything but *that!*"

Well, friends, here is loss and leakage of power, as unmistakable as it is deplorable; inefficiency, unsuccess, and after that futile regrets, for "The mill will never grind with the water that is past." But it need not be so; we can resist the seductions of this and that distracting, luring, beckoning thought; we can say, "This one thing I do," by calling up, and again recalling, the idea of the task which has the first claim upon our energy and attention. As the writer whom I have just quoted puts it: "Consent to the idea's undivided presence; this is effort's sole achievement." Neither you nor I always feel in the mood for responding to the demands of duty; but our business is to master our moods, to collect our minds and energies, to concentrate, and so by asserting power to acquire it more abundantly.

And is not in every kind of temptation our success or failure ultimately just a matter of self-control, and this again a matter of mind-control—keeping one idea steadily, and maybe with an effort, in the centre of the field of mental vision, or else letting it be displaced, edged out, blurred and overlaid by other ideas, other and more fascinating mind-pictures? Here is a man in whose mind two ideas struggle for predominance—outward success or inward peace; a mean triumph or continued self-respect; thirty pieces of silver or loyalty to Christ; the gratification of

desire or an unstained conscience; and the point to emphasize again and again is that we can attend to the one or to the other of these ideas, and throw our whole selves into the scale. We can also, and this is worth reiterating, form the habit of refusing to think about certain subjects at all, of not entertaining certain notions; such a habit will make it easier for the soul, at the decisive moment, when its fate trembles in the balance, to utter its solemn and mystic word, "I will." We shall not pass through life untempted, and there is no glory in escaping all trial and times of testing; on the other hand, we are none of us so strong that we can afford gratuitously to enter into temptation, and the wisdom of the ancient writer is not at fault which warns us that he who loveth danger shall perish therein. "The huge world that girdles us about puts all sorts of questions to us, and tests us in all sorts of ways. Some of the tests we meet by actions that are easy, and some of the questions we answer in articulately formulated words. But the deepest question that is ever asked admits of no reply but the dumb turning of the will and tightening of our heart-strings as we say, '*Yes, I will even have it so!*'" (James.)

Lastly, friends, this faculty of self-control is most needed, and the power it confers is most evident and most blessed, when we are face to face with affliction, when some dark fate threatens to engulf and overwhelm us. It is then that we shall be helped and heartened by that self-reverence which in the last analysis rests on an unshakable basis of faith in God and His governance. That is the spirit of the Psalmist who says "In God have I put my trust. I will not be afraid; what can men do unto me?" That is the temper which enables us to repeat the lines:

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.

You know Stevenson's motto—or if you don't know it, you will thank me for passing it on to you: "*Never to set up to be soft, only to be square and hearty, and a man all round.*" Listen to him, as near the end he makes this confession: "For fourteen years," he writes to George Meredith, "I have not had a day's real health . . . I have written in bed and written out of it, written in hemorrhages, written in sickness, written torn by coughing, written when my head swam for weakness; and for so long, it seems to me, I have won my wager and recovered my glove. . . . The battle goes on—ill or well is a trifle; so as it goes. I was made for a contest, and the Powers have so willed that my battlefield should be the dingy, inglorious one of the bed and the physic bottle." Ah, gallant heart! Don't the words send a thrill of passionate admiration through you? Well may Dr. Kelman say of him: "As blow after blow descends, we watch anxiously, expecting to see him succumb and cease to strive. But after each he rises, fighting against still more impossible odds, with undiminished valour, and with ever finer skill."

Yes, he was made for a contest—and so, by the grace of God, are you and I; and what matters is not the nature of our battlefield, but the manner in which we bear ourselves upon it, and how we use the weapons of our warfare.

And all this depends on self-control; a stark refusal to feel sorry for ourselves; a refusal to "collapse into a yielding mass of plaintiveness and fear." Quit you like men; be strong. Endure hardness as good soldiers of Christ. In the day of crisis feel with pride that *more* now depends on you, and is committed to you, and convert your trial into an opportunity of showing what you are worth. Like the spices of the East, the heart needs sometimes to be bruised ere it can give forth its full fragrance:

> O loyal to the royal in thyself—
> Break not, for thou art royal, but endure!

"The world," it has been said, "finds in the heroic man its worthy match and mate; and the effort which he is able to put forth to hold himself erect and keep his heart unshaken is the direct measure of his worth and function in the game of human life. He can *stand* this Universe." Stand it—yes; because he *under*stands it, knows it to be under the mighty and prevailing rule of the Most High God. That is why he can control alike his passions and his fears; neither will he be afraid of evil tidings, for his times are in God's hands. Once more, then:

> Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,
> These three alone lead on to sovereign power.

Power over the lower self; power over the things of sense and time; power to fight the good fight and strike doughty blows if God permits; power to hold still, if that be His command, and await His further orders without faltering; power and victory over sin and death. "To which end let us pray always, that our God may count us worthy of our calling, and fulfil every desire of goodness and every work of faith, with power."

IV

The Waggon and the Star

"Set your mind on the things that are above."—*Col.* iii. 2.

IN these words we have the nearest Biblical equivalent to the motto which furnishes us with our subject—a saying which we owe to one of the most original and stimulating thinkers of the past century, as well as one of the rarest and most gracious human characters, Ralph Waldo Emerson. Let it be conceded that here is an instance in which those who make much of a man's heredity have a fair case. In Emerson's veins there ran the best and purest New England blood; behind him stood generation upon generation of ministers of the old Independent stamp, with their lofty morality, their strenuous courage, their abiding sense of spiritual realities and values—as magnificent an ancestry as any man could wish for. Still, if it is true that we each have to build our lives with materials we did not choose, it is equally true and more important to bear in mind that what we *make* of our materials, what kind of lives we shape and mould from them, is left to us. It would be foolish to deny that Emerson started with splendid possibilities; but it would be even more foolish to forget that

it was he who turned them into splendid actualities, devoting his genius to the finest ends. He had received much from the past, but he administered his inheritance right nobly; as he himself said, "It is the one base thing to receive and not to give."

If we ask for the keynote of Emerson's thought, almost any one will point by way of answer to the title of one of his best-known essays—*Self-reliance*. A score of memorable sayings of his flash through the mind, bearing out that contention. Think of familiar aphorisms like these: "They can conquer who think they can;" "Self-trust is the first secret of success;" "Shallow men believe in luck;" "Whoso would be a man must be a Nonconformist;" "Nothing can bring you peace but yourself;" "I must be true to myself of to-day, even if I contradict myself of yesterday;" "Insist on yourself, and the great world will swing round to you"—these are all variations on one fundamental theme, and they bear witness to a fundamental disposition and outlook. I like them all; my heart thrills to every one of these sayings, and every one of them might serve as a motto or text to preach from. But there is another side to Emerson's thought and teaching after all; his strong self-reliance is balanced and kept sane by an equally strong God-reliance, a keen sense of the dependence of the soul upon what he called the Over-soul. He insisted indeed that there was a Divine within us capable of vibrating in response to the Divine above us and without; but he knew also that the very fact that we long for communion with God proves that communion to be as yet unachieved. He knew that there is in us no grander faculty than that of aspiration; but aspiration is not the same as fulfilment.

If it is to be in any measure fulfilled, we must cultivate the sense of the ideal; we must, in his striking phrase, "hitch our waggon to a star."

Let me say one word by way of brief explanation. In order that we may understand the full import of this saying, we have to revise our idea of what is meant by waggon; we really have to translate it out of American into English. Emerson does not refer to a heavy, lumbering conveyance such as the term suggests to us, but to the light vehicle in constant use in the America of his day for every kind of private business or errand. He writes of a society where people do not walk—they ride or drive; to hitch up the waggon is the preliminary to the briefest expedition; and since all life is an expedition, a business on which we all have to set out, his advice to us is to hitch our waggon *to a star*—some motive-power that will carry us upward—in other words to follow after ideals, to set our minds on the things that are above. We are to link on our own capacity, our slender resources, to some greater power, some finer impulse, something that transcends self, though our inmost self can respond to it. He addresses himself to the idealistic faculty, to the aspiring part in man, and endeavours to rouse it into activity. Above the huckstering voice of self-interest and the siren voice of self-indulgence he utters the clarion note of the onward and upward call, and tells us that we are made to pursue greater ends than either profit or pleasure.

Now it seems to me that that is essentially a message for an age such as ours, for our busy days and commercial surroundings and metallic standards; in such an environment as ours that idealistic faculty of which I spoke is always in danger of being deadened, or ignored, or ridiculed out of existence; almost without

knowing it we become devotees of the leaden gospel of getting on, and repeat its musty shibboleths as the last words of wisdom. It is so easy to resign oneself to the grind of routine, to give up to mammonism and materialism our immortal part, to lose our taste for high and noble things in the scramble for a little more of the world's prizes ; it is so true of myriads of modern people what the poet expressed in those familiar lines—

> The world is too much with us ; late and soon,
> Getting and spending we lay waste our powers ;
> Little we see in nature that is ours—
> We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon,
> For this, for everything, we are out of tune,
> It moves us not. . . .

It is well to be recalled from such a mood of ignoble surrender and content with things as they are to the quest for ideals. This is our greatest endowment—the sense that what is, is not good enough, the instinct which leads us always to dream of something better than the world has yet beheld, and not to rest until the dream has become reality, and the vision concrete—no, nor even then ! That is the true spirit in which a French writer exclaims, "There is something in me that has never yet been satisfied." When we feel like that, and act like that, we are claiming our human birthright ; the fact is, we have no business to be satisfied with the world or with ourselves. However good the thing accomplished, it is only a step towards something better ; however glad we may feel that we have reached such and such a level above the valley, still peak towers above peak, and the summit is beyond our vision. It is only this sense of the unachieved, yet possible, that gives zest and worth to life : no existence which is lit by that inner fire can be dull or mean ; and on

the other hand, the moment we cease to aspire, we cease to live, we only vegetate on and stagnate.

May I suggest to you what always seems to me rather a helpful application of that thought? The grim old Calvinism, popularized in many a hymn, points to your sense of sin, and says, Have you not there, in your own heart, the sure witness of your ruin, of your deadness in guilt? I answer, No; for dead things do not feel. If we *feel* that all is not well with us, if we are discontented with ourselves, it is because our spiritual nature is struggling into life and consciousness; it is the moral ideal, however dimly descried, that is asserting itself and refusing to be silenced. The sense of sin which haunts us is itself the promise of better things—it is our first response to a Divine challenge. If we are good enough to feel unhappy because we have done wrong, then so far from all being lost, all may yet be won. The only conscience to be dreaded is a conscience that is drugged, and has ceased to act.

And that is merely to say what I so want you to believe—that contentment is the soul's great enemy. I am amazed and saddened when I see people—young people, too—who seem to go through life without this urge and impulse to grow a finer self, without purpose or earnestness, without desire to be better citizens of a better world. Everywhere there is to be seen a mass of preventable ills, there are social problems that cry aloud for solution; but a vast proportion of men and women seem neither to see nor to hear, they busy themselves instead with a hundred and one trivialities of fashion, games, amusement, petty personal rivalries, and the rest. Nobody gives me such a feeling of hopelessness as the pleasant-spoken, amiable young fellow who quite candidly avows that serious interests of whatever kind

are outside his range. Ask him about the exploits of such and such a football team, or the merits of a particular kind of golf-ball, and he will give you copious information; ask him about the merits of a great measure of far-reaching import before the country—try to find out what he thinks about questions of labour, wealth, poverty, education, religion—and he is dumb, vacantly surprised that you should expect him to bother about such matters. These are the people, and their number is legion, whose waggon is hitched to no star; their one desire is to satisfy a few elementary wants with a minimum exertion of body and mind, and as their desire, such is their attainment!

We want to keep alive within ourselves the aspiring faculty; and next to this we want to make quite sure that that faculty is guided aright, that our life's vehicle, with all its precious freight, is really hitched to a star, and not to some will-o'-the-wisp that will land us in a bog. If there is a greater tragedy than the life without ideals, it is the life spent in the pursuit of false ideals, dead-sea fruit which turns to ashes in the mouth. Be quite sure that no material things can still the soul's hunger; be sure that money will not purchase the happiness of which we are in quest; be sure that luxury, popularity, the gratification of every taste or desire, still leaves an unfilled void. Here is an authentic testimony or confession which gives one furiously to think: "In the course of three weeks," writes Greville in his *Memoirs*, "I have attained the three things which I have most desired in the world for years past, and upon the whole I do not feel that my happiness is at all increased." He does not specify what those three things were; but since he was first and last a courtier, we may form a guess at the ambitions he had cherished so long, and

whose fulfilment added so little to his happiness. May I insist in particular upon this—Make sure that what you take for a star, and pursue so eagerly, is not merely the glitter of a gold coin. I wish you could all read that thoughtful and most fascinating novel, *Dominy's Dollars*, which traces the progress of a penniless street urchin to the eminence of multi-millionairedom: the concentration of purpose, the almost superhuman energy, endurance, brain and nerve power that go to the building-up of Dominy's gigantic fortune—and how the best things of life, those which cannot be minted into money, or purchased across a counter, slip through the all-grasping fingers of the great financier; how the only thing this timber king's millions can purchase for him at last is the powerful opiate that lulls him into the final sleep as his weary body floats out with the tide from Guernsey beach. Quite as a lad, he had chosen, and chosen amiss; he had devoted an amazing capacity to one end—and when that end was compassed, he found it vanity and vexation of spirit.

Well now, will you let me make some positive suggestions as to those stars in the firmament to which we may wisely and profitably hitch our waggon? I make no apology at all for naming first and foremost the star of Work, because somehow it does not seem to shine brightly enough to attract the natural man. The one statement in the Bible we are inclined to accept on faith is that work was decreed as a curse, and yet that statement is quite patently and flagrantly false. "The sum of wisdom," as Emerson has it, "is that the time is never lost that is devoted to work;" I would add that there can be no fineness in a life which does not produce something of value, something for use. We are

all consumers of the world's stores, and surely we must strive to put something back in the place of what we take. People are apt to sneer a little at the phrase "the dignity of labour;" well, that dignity consists quite simply in paying decently for our keep—at any rate there is not much dignity about evading such payment. And every kind of work may be further dignified by being well performed. As the old mystic Tauler puts it, "One man can spin, another can make shoes; all these are gifts of the Holy Spirit. I tell you if I were not a priest I should esteem it a great gift that I was able to make shoes, and I would try to make them so well as to be a pattern to all." One would not mind seeing a little more of Tauler's spirit in evidence; but as a matter of fact—well, do you want me to complete the sentence? The fact is, too many of us want ease without having earned it; we are eager to knock off, reluctant to buckle to; we see on how little we can keep ourselves going; and we wonder that the result is mediocre. A friend of mine, in one of the great Government Departments, said to me the other day, "The rank and file are obsessed with the one idea of limiting their hours of labour; that's why they remain rank and file. The chiefs in our Office do a day's work after the subordinates have gone home to their suburban villas—they don't spare themselves; that's why they're chiefs. They have no 'hours'—they have only work, and an unlimited readiness for it." If I may express my own conviction about our great modern middle class, it is that we do not take work seriously enough; we play too much; our ambition is too apt to take the form of long week-ends; and you may be certain that the mastery belongs to those who, in my friend's words, have no "hours," but only work, and an unlimited readiness

for it. I came upon a phrase in Mr. H. G. Wells' novel, *Tono-Bungay*, which somehow stuck and embedded itself in my memory : " I now know," says one of his personages, " that during all these years I never used myself to the edge of my capacity." Now that is what I mean ; we are here to use ourselves to the edge of our capacity. Let me put it to you in confidence—You, my brother, and I, are not so highly gifted that we can afford to do less than our best. If there are any people whose second-best might be good enough, they are generally the people who would scorn to do anything short of their *very* best ; and we, I repeat, can afford to do no less. Look at the ornamental, favoured classes, the people who do not need to work ; see how these upper unemployed degenerate into the worst type of unemployables—and be thankful that you are more happily circumstanced in having to put forth effort and exertion.

And next to the star of work let us hitch our wagon to the pole-star of Duty. As Robert Louis Stevenson, with his essential sanity and manliness, once put it, " The world must return some day to the word duty, and be done with the word reward. There are no rewards and plenty duties. And the sooner a man sees that and acts upon it like a gentleman . . . the better for himself." Here is the great antidote to self-indulgence and self-pity with all their enervating effects. To recognize that the principles of right are fixed ; that we are to do the right, not because it is pleasant or advantageous, but just because we *ought* to behave in this manner and not in any other—that is what puts iron into the blood, and self-respect into our constitution, and trains us to be good soldiers of Christ.

And do not let us misunderstand Stevenson when he says that " there are no rewards ; " he wishes to dis-

courage the mean calculating temper which wants to be bribed into behaving decently, and counts upon outward prizes and tangible returns for right-doing; but I need not tell you that there is an inner happiness waiting on those who are faithful to principle, such as the weakling, the egoist, the compromiser knows nothing of. There is an uplift of the soul, a very legitimate pride, in being able to say to oneself, "By the grace of God I will do this hard thing, I will forego this unfair advantage, I will repel this smiling temptation, though it cost me a great effort: I will because I ought; and I can, because I will." As has been aptly said, life has to strike us hard in order to strike sparks out of us; but when the sparks are struck from a human soul by a living sense of duty, they kindle a more than earthly glow and radiance. This is the act in which self-reliance and God-reliance blend, the Divine within us answering to the Divine without; by our own will we link ourselves on to God, and a new power floods our being and reinforces our own strength. It is an oft-told tale, and you know it, how Lockhart's attention as a young man was drawn to the spectacle of a hand which he could see from his window, a hand that was toiling day after day, wielding a pen from morn to eve, with an unfailing, untiring industry; the hand was that of Sir Walter Scott, firmly intent upon his own task, that of repaying his creditors every penny lost in the crash of an ill-starred publishing enterprise. He did not give his readers inferior value in those books which poured forth from his teeming brain during that period of heroic labour; literature has not been the loser because the stimulus which spurred Scott on to continual production was the spur of duty. Indeed, I can only say once more that when we so surrender ourselves to the highest motive, we are

rewarded by a strength over and above our own: the star we have hitched our waggon to does not merely gleam—it bears us along.

Work—Duty—let me suggest another star, that of Knowledge and High Thinking. There never was an age when there was so little excuse for ignorance, when the treasures of the world's thought were to be had practically for the asking—when we could have the best of good company for our very own, all at a mere nominal expenditure of money. On this subject I will let some one else speak for me—a young Irish navvy, a boy scarcely twenty years of age, who sent me a little book of verses lately. They are very remarkable verses to have been written by a manual labourer, but there are a few lines I want specially to quote to you, not because of their literary merit, but because they bear upon our subject. They are taken from a piece called *My Bookshelf*. "For me," writes this lad—

> For me has Homer sung of wars,
> Æschylus wrote, and Plato thought,
> And Dante loved, and Darwin wrought,
> And Galileo watched the stars.
>
> My bookcase holds them one and all,
> The mighty minds of long ago,
> Socrates, Shakespeare, Mirabeau,
> Josephus, Bacon, Juvenal—

and so through a list of more than a score of other writers and thinkers of the front rank. Isn't it very marvellous? I don't suppose anybody could have a much poorer chance of mental culture and self-improvement than this young railway surfaceman; but think of the world he inhabits, a world of fact and fancy, a world aglow with great thoughts and deeds, which he has opened for himself at the price of a few pence at a

time, pence which he might have taken to the public-house! Don't you think he has chosen the good part which shall in no wise be taken away from him, gathering joy and help and manifold delight from communion with the elect minds of many ages—and how few of us have turned our opportunities to anything like as good account as P. MacGill, navvy and lover of literature?

But I must hasten on, in order to name yet another of these celestial lights that should guide our course—I mean the star of Truth. We want to see truth reigning in religion, in business, in politics, in every department and relationship of daily life; and we each can do something to hasten that blessed consummation by our personal example, as well as by showing a fit abhorrence for every form of untruthfulness, which is a poisoning of the very wells of life. Insist upon the truth in matters of belief, and refuse compromises and concealments. No pages in the history of the Church are darker than those which tell of the campaigns of persecution, the attempts to stifle truth in the interest of dogma; and believe me, these tactics did not come to an end with the dark ages. The same spirit of bigotry is still occasionally at work, using subtler, craftier methods than of old, but with ends essentially unchanged, viz., the suppression, the excommunication of the heretic. Well, it is a stupid policy, as well as a cowardly one; truth is mightier than the bigots who imagine that it can be hushed up. They imprison and maltreat a Galileo, but they could not stop the earth from moving; they dismiss a Biblical critic like Robertson Smith, in 1878, from the Free Church College in Aberdeen—but to-day there is no professor or student at that College who does not freely hold the views that were stigmatized as heretical a generation ago. They can have

the poor triumph of hurting the individual truth-seeker, but the truth itself they can no more prevent from conquering than they can prevent the sun from rising !

Work and Duty, Knowledge aud Truth—I add in conclusion a fifth star, Trust. When every other light has gone out in the heavens, let this one still shine upon us. When we sit contemplating our failures and disappointments, when our best endeavours have miscarried, and our bravest enterprise ended in defeat, let us still keep despair at bay and reflect that all is not lost. The endeavour itself was always worth while ; its effect upon ourselves, our own character, is so much gain, the aspiration itself has lifted us on to a higher level. If it is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all, it is certainly better to have tried and failed than never to have tried at all ; for though we may have lost the immediate object of our quest, we have found ourselves, realized ourselves. Yes, and our temporary failure may be part of God's eternal success. Here is a young man who, after much misgiving, is persuaded to relinquish a career in the army for the Church. Morbidly sensitive, he felt all through his life that probably he had made a mistake in his choice of the preacher's vocation, never ceasing to regret that he had not become a cavalry officer ; but God, who had overruled his wishes, smiled at His child's want of wisdom, for this preacher was none other than Robertson of Brighton, whose sermons are part of the world's devotional treasury. And when we speak of apparent failure, can we forget the Cross ? Could any enterprise have ended in more utter disaster ? Only it did not end—Calvary was the birthplace of the greatest upward movement that has ever blessed the world. With that example

before us, we can hush our fears and quiet our impatience. Let us work on, hope on, hope ever; let us believe the truth that

> He most lives,
> Who thinks most, feels the noblest, acts the best;

let us guide our lives by pure and strenuous ideals—by

> Thoughts sublime that pierce the night like stars.
> And with their mild persistence urge man's search
> To vaster issues.

V

Wanted—Volunteers !

" And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us ? Then I said, Here am I ; send me."—*Isa.* vi. 8.

LET us journey forth in imagination from these wind-vexed Northern shores with their fog and drizzle to a gentler climate, to an isle in the far South, thousands of miles away. There, we are told, " the morning is such a morning as we have never seen ; heaven upon earth for sweetness, freshness, depth upon depth of unimaginable colour, and a huge silence broken only by the far-away murmur of the Pacific." There lived, for the last and happiest years of his life, and there, too, lies buried, one of the bravest spirits who was also one of the most beloved writers in our language, Robert Louis Stevenson, who furnishes us with the subject and the title of this sermon in eight famous lines—lines containing his whole working creed :

Wanted Volunteers
To do their best for two score years !
A ready soldier, here I stand,
Primed for Thy command
With burnished sword,
If this be faith, O Lord,
Help Thou mine unbelief,
And be my battle brief.

The man's whole nature utters itself in these ringing words; and since a motto always comes home to us with greater force when it is illustrated in the life and character of the one who coined it, I will, with your permission, say just a little first of all concerning Stevenson himself, as perhaps the most eloquent comment upon this watchword of his. To begin with, this great writer, who crowded into a lifetime of only fourty-four years such an immense deal of work, and left such a vast mass of literary output to the world, was himself one of those who become what they become not so much by fortunate chance—at any rate not *simply* by genius, but by sheer, untiring industry, dogged perseverance, resolute fighting against tremendous odds—in his case chronic ill-health. "I imagine," he wrote, "nobody had ever such pains to learn a trade as I had; but I slogged at it day in and day out; and I frankly believe (thanks to my dire industry) I have done more with smaller gifts than almost any man of letters in the world." He never gave in; he never retired from the battle; he was a volunteer, ready and eager, to the end. As he himself says—and more astonishing words never came from a frail invalid and sufferer—"Vital, that's what I am, first; wholly vital, with a buoyancy of life."

And the same spirit animated his whole outlook and practice. He seemed for ever on the look-out for opportunities of helpfulness, of serviceableness, not despising the lowliest offices. He was what so few people are—generous of himself, always drawn to the weak and needy, whether it was taking charge of a child in an emigrant train to let its mother have sleep, or whether he flung himself with ardour into the cause of the Samoan natives against European misgovernment—

a struggle in itself distasteful to him, and interrupting his literary work, on which he depended for his livelihood. "For a man of his temperament and in his health to do so much from pure love of helpless and half-savage fellow-men," says Dr. Kelman, "is, surely a very honourable record on the roll of heroic self-sacrifice and service." It was the same in small things as in great: he could not see a dog ill-treated but he interposed, and when the owner resented his interference and told him so, "It's not your dog," he cried out, "It's God's dog, and I am here to protect it." The test question for a life, as he once expressed it, is, "What difference has it made to the world and our country and our family and our friends that we have lived? The man," he adds, "who has only been pious and not useful will stand with a long face on that great day when Christ puts to him His questions." He never asked whether an injustice hurt *him* personally before he took up arms against it; when some misguided bigots slandered the memory of Father Damien, the leper saint, Stevenson flamed forth in a refutation of the slander, which has been called the most terrific diatribe since Christ's impeachment of the scribes and Pharisees. And being such a one, he no more knew pessimism or despair, even in the darkest hour, than Robert Browning himself. In the midst of the Samoan crisis he writes: "The inherent tragedy of things works itself out from white to black and blacker; and the poor things of a day look ruefully on. Does it shake my cast-iron faith? I cannot say that it does. *I believe in an ultimate decency of things*; ay, and if I awoke in hell, should still believe it." Because his was the invincible spirit of the volunteer for righteousness, he could possess his soul in the faith which is able—

To feel in the ink of the slough
And the sink of the mire,
Veins of glory and fire
Run through and transpierce and transpire,
And a secret purpose of glory in every part,
And the answering glory of battle fill his heart.

Well, now, from Stevenson the man, let us turn a little more inquiringly to his motto, and let us ask first of all, Why this cry, this urgency for volunteers to do the business of life, and to help on the world? Can't all that is wanted be done just in an ordinary business-like way? But I think the moment we ask ourselves such a question, we receive and perceive the answer to it: it is because the best work can only be done for its own sake, can only be done, as we very rightly say, for love. The motive, as Christ insisted again and again, makes all the difference, and nothing but the right motive can give us the right results. It is the common fallacy that you have only to set before men sufficiently high material or semi-material rewards, in the shape of money prizes, so-called "honours," popular applause and the like, to get the best out of them; and it is amazing that such a stupid fallacy should survive when it is so obviously and continually refuted by facts. For money, for popularity, for all or any of these remunerations, men may do and have done their worst, many a time—but their best, never. At the bid and the beckon of wealth you may get men to disobey the dictates of honour and of humanity, to let loose the horrors of war upon a peaceful country, to degrade their abilities, to sell their souls; but you can never stimulate a man by the prospect of a big income to become a patriot, or a poet, or a lover of his kind—if he is accessible to such motives, that in itself proves him to be none of these things. Money has never yet manned a life-boat, I was told

the other day that the advertisement manager of one of the huge London stores receives a salary of £5,000; no doubt the company knows his value to them, and they are best qualified to assess that value in terms of cash; but after all, you don't imagine anyone becoming an advertisement manager for the love of the thing, nor could you think of a great prophet arising in response to an offer of £1,000, and a still greater one on the offer being doubled. And it may strike even the worldliest among us, on reflection, that the prophet, whose message no millionaire could command—nor silence—might after all be a phenomenon of greater importance to humanity than the most brilliant specialist in advertising! The latter, however able, is a hired man; the former is a volunteer, acknowledging God's call, and no other. Highly respectable work is done for wages, and wages will always be able to purchase it; but the moment we come to the upper reaches of man's faculties, the purchasing power, the hiring capacity, of money vanishes, and that the more completely, the higher the department. They offer Spinoza a pension if he would dedicate his next work to Louis XIV; but this poor maker of lenses, disdaining to show respect where he felt none, refuses, saying he had no intention of dedicating anything to that monarch. And what sum, do you think, would have bought a Luther or a John Knox? How many of the world's leading master-minds or master-workers have residences in Park Lane? Or if you tell me that great musicians, for instance, earn fabulous sums, I reply that they are not great musicians because of what they earn, but the other way round. Schubert sold his songs for tenpence a-piece: he composed them for love!

This is what I want to get right home, if I can: that not a single really great thing has ever been achieved

in response to material incentives; the great achievements of humanity have always been spontaneous, the expression of men's innermost natures, in a word, the work of volunteers. Take the first illustration to hand —the tremendous force led by the Persian kings to overrun Greece, a mighty host which took three days to march past the sovereign rejoicing in the prospect of certain victory, though it could only be the victory of brute force, crushing an insignificant foe: why was not that prospect realized? Why were the Persian myriads defeated, beaten back, driven into the sea? What is the explanation of Marathon, Salamis, Thermopylæ, and the final disarray of the invaders? Just this, that the Eastern hordes were made up of pressed men, serfs who had to be urged with whips to advance upon the enemy, while the defenders were free men, patriots, volunteers—and it was their scanty numbers whose heroism turned the scale, turned, indeed, the whole current of European civilization as we know it to-day.

It was the same with the men who opposed slavery in the last century, and brought about its abolition. We read that the night when Wilberforce first denounced West Indian slavery in Parliament, he left the House of Commons an outcast and a pariah, with all the great country houses closed against him. We know that when Henry Ward Beecher identified himself with the same cause of negro emancipation, he became one of the best-hated men in the country, risking violence and worse. Men cannot be coerced into such action, nor encouraged to make such stands, by offers of gold or promotion; they come forward voluntarily or not at all, in free obedience to an inner, higher law. It was the same with the men, so diversely gifted, Mazzini and Garibaldi, who made a free and United Italy possible.

There was not a trace of self-seeking in their activities, they did not weigh their sufferings against the possibilities of personal advancement—you can't create liberators and heroes by an appeal to their egoism; they would have died a hundred times over to realize their dream of their nation's unity and independence.

And time would fail us were we to go over the roll of martyrs and reformers, discoverers and explorers, poets and artists and thinkers, all who had the highest interests of mankind at heart, and did and risked and suffered everything—neglect, hardship, poverty, scorn, the loss of all the world holds dear—allured by no bribes, "true to a vision, steadfast to a dream," urged on by the invisible dynamic of the soul's "I will." Think of the romance of missions—Morrison undertaking single-handed to carry the Gospel into China, Judson preaching the Cross in Burmah, William Carey setting out upon the conquest of India, Livingstone devoting his life to the Dark Continent, and so on to this day: you may not accept the creeds these men held, but you recognize the spirit in which they one and all went forth—the same spirit that filled Paul with fiery and unresting energy, that seized hold of those great Irish missionaries in the sixth and seventh century, and impelled them to evangelize the wild regions of Central Europe: you can't get this work—you can't get any of the best work—done for pay; the cry is, "Wanted, Volunteers!"

But now you say, "Yes, but all this does not apply to us, however true it may be in itself, and in relation to special and exceptional types of people; we are neither missionaries nor reformers nor prophets, but ordinary folk—employés or employers, cogs in the great industrial machinery, wage-earners in shop or

office or warehouse or school, or engaged in the humdrum routine of domestic duties which claim us every morning that dawns; there is no room in our lives—in the lives of the great majority, that is—for this volunteering element of which you speak; enough for us to so discharge our tasks as to earn our salaries or our keep!"

Well, there, my brother or sister, I think you are wrong; I think you are under-estimating your scope, and what is far more important, you are under-estimating, belittling yourself. It is quite true, of course, that you perform your daily duties as a means of earning a livelihood; but it is not true, I hope, of any of us that if we were once relieved of this necessity of providing for our wants, we should straightway and for ever join the ranks of the idlers and the parasites—our self-respect would not let us. Deep down in our souls there is an intimate conviction that there is something honourable in making our trifling contribution to the immense amount of work that *has* to be done if the world is to be kept going for only twenty-four hours. We may talk as we like about the monotony of the daily round, the dulness of our occupations, yet at heart we despise the shirker, and render our quota of toil not simply with an eye to the cashier's desk at the end of the week.

It is sad, indeed, where it is otherwise; the man or woman who works *merely* for wages makes an exceedingly poor type of employé, at best a machine that can be replaced with the greatest ease, more frequently one who aims simply at getting undetected and unrebuked through an irreducible minimum of exertion—enough to keep his or her post—a miserable ambition. Nobody who feels like that, who has no interest in his work beyond its money return, is likely to do his best, because

he does not *give* his best, and does not *put* his best into it. You must have some incentive beyond that to bring out your possibilities; you must have a zest that will stimulate you to leave that minimum of effort far behind, take some sort of pride in performing your job, not merely passably, but creditably—you know, the impulse that makes you give the extra rub which will produce the extra shine, if I may use such a very homely simile. Here's this sculptor, and he carves with scrupulous care every detail of a figure which will stand so high above the passing crowd, on the roof of the cathedral, that no one will be able with naked eye to appreciate his delicate craftsmanship—what does he give himself all this trouble for? And here's this clerk, and he takes a special pleasure in keeping his books with preternatural neatness, the rows of figures standing like well-drilled squads of soldiers on parade; and here's this housekeeper, and she has brought tidiness and cleanliness and the combination of efficiency with economy to the level of a fine art which she devotes herself to still perfecting—and don't you see that in every case it is the volunteer's spirit, the delight in excellence for its own sake, which produces excellence, and leads the worker "from good to better, daily self-surpassed"? Yes, and it will do more than that—it will make the tedious work worth doing, and the unromantic life worth while. No wonder we think our days dull, and that our tasks pall upon us, if they are just forced labour; we must to some extent feel that we are voluntary co-workers with God before we can thrown ourselves into our duties, and be glad because they are opportunities.

And, moreover, it is solely to the volunteer that improvements and progress are due; the man who is only part of a mechanism working from compulsion, without

thought, will never improve the mechanism. It is the other type of worker who cherishes the ambition to perfect the instrument he wields, to win richer results from the field he cultivates, to leave things on the whole better, if ever so little better, than he found them. Here, to give you an actual instance, is a subordinate Government official, with a certain amount of latitude as to how he will fill up a certain amount of time in the office—he may fill it up, as a matter of fact, with exceedingly little; but he has noticed on several occasions the confusion and waste of time when some particular fact or reference has to be suddenly elicited—and he sets himself to elaborate a system of indexing so minute and complete that now any boy who has been in the department for a fortnight can supply a Cabinet minister with any detail or set of particulars at a moment's notice. Here is an inspector of mines: if he is only a hired man, he can get through his duties perfunctorily enough, but if he is a volunteer, he keeps his eye on the death-rate among miners, and his life's ambition is to send that rate down, to prevent some of the ghastly disasters that are due, sometimes to carelessness, sometimes to the greed which disregards dangerous conditions, and grudges expenditure for the protection of life and limb. And so it is in every field of human activity: mere tools are plentiful, superabundant, easily replaced—but make yourself a volunteer, and you are indispensable.

And now, to turn to another aspect of our subject, don't you see how the same principle applies in the domain of conduct? To put it quite broadly, sin is always a confession of servitude, goodness is always a vindication of liberty. And is it not a fact that here, too, in morals, mediocre motives will produce only mediocre results? Where there is nothing but a forced

obedience to outward compulsion, the moral level will inevitably be low; you may get an iron discipline in that way, but the moment the external restraint is removed—beware of the reaction of licence that is likely to set in! There is a famous charity, an orphanage, where the children's every action is controlled by unyielding rules and regulations; and it is the common belief among employers that once these young people issue from the bondage that has cramped them, they are uncommonly likely to have their fling and throw restraint to the winds.

No, it is only in freedom that character can be trained; it is only when we believe in goodness, in truth, in uprightness for their own sakes—when we believe that because right is right, to follow right were wisdom in the scorn of consequence—that our action and the set of our characters becomes moral in any true sense. Between the man who will abstain from wrong for fear of punishment, and the man who will do the right with the certainty of loss and suffering before his eyes—what a difference! You may keep back certain of the grosser manifestations of evil by force; but goodness that is contagious and conquering must be spontaneous. And again, it is only a portion of human conduct that can be regulated by "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not;" but all the finer graces of character—kindliness, considerateness, chivalry towards the weak, forbearance, graciousness, compassion, forgiveness—these cannot be enacted by statute or enforced by authority; they are voluntarily cultivated, voluntarily practised. There is no life, friends, which does not present scope for all of these—which does not call, in other words, for the volunteer in us—and there is no life which, lacking these elements, is not a poor and barren affair.

And here is another fact. I alluded to the resistance offered, the victories fought, by the Greek freemen over the Persian hosts: friends, it is the same on the battle-fields of the soul—only by leading all our resources of inner liberty into the contest can we hope to beat back and drive out the barbaric hordes of our untamed desires, our disorderly appetites, which would invade our sanctuaries and set up their idols in our holy places. And we all have that campaign to wage, we are all called upon to refuse our ear to siren voices, to wrestle and strive for self-mastery, to rise, if necessary, on stepping-stones of our dead selves to higher things—and that is volunteer's work, every bit of it. But for that spirit, but for the iron in the blood, but for that which made Christ set His face stedfastly to go to Jerusalem when all considerations of self-regard pointed the other way, I tell you the battle is lost before the trumpet has sounded the attack.

I come to the highest manifestation of this temper, the highest response to this call which is meant for every one of us—I mean the giving of self for others. In love we see, and instinctively adore, the supreme exercise of what I have called the volunteering spirit; this we know, beyond all argument, to be the greatest thing in the world. To this you, too, are called, in your own sphere; by this you are to rise from your disappointed hopes and defeated purposes into the consciousness of your kinship with God. By this you are to realize with astonishment your own unsuspected worth, the treasures that lie within yourself, waiting only to be brought to light. The other day there died at Darjeeling, in India, one who was known and loved by thousands of Hindus as Sister Nivedita, which means the Consecrated. She was an Irishwoman by birth, and

sixteen years ago heard the call which led her to give herself to the education of the poorest Hindu girls, for whom she established a school at Calcutta, while she was also indefatigable in every effort that tended to the uplifting and regeneration of the natives of India. No matter what the religious creed in which she expressed her beliefs—it was love which prompted her, and who will doubt that she found an exceeding great satisfaction in her devoted labours? You and I are not called to such great tasks—true; but we are wilfully blind if we say that we are denied scope and opportunities for practising the same disposition, and earning the blessing that waits on him who has given so much as a cup of cold water to the least and lowliest, who has shown sympathy to the troubled, extended a helping hand to one who had stumbled by the wayside, lit the lamp of Divine comfort in some great darkness that enveloped another soul. How much of such work there is waiting to be done, calling, how urgently, how pleadingly, for the brave-souled, for the kindly-affectioned, for the volunteer! And wherever such a one tries, with fingers however unpractised, to bind up a wound, or with speech, however unskilled, to bring consolation to a sufferer—wherever one soul would willingly give up and endure that another might be spared a pang or a stain—there, I say, "see the Christ stand," Christ, the Great Volunteer, who loved us and gave Himself for us.

Such love is no mere sentimental softness—it has rather a steely quality of strength, it is an instrument forged and tempered in many fires, and its edge will not be turned or dulled with use. Those who wield it, wield the mightiest of weapons; they gather freely and uncoerced around their great Captain, the volunteers He wants to serve under the banner that bears for its

insignia a Cross. And so, in the words of the poet who gave us our motto—

> Forth from the casemate, on the plain
> Where honour has the world to gain,
> Pour forth, and bravely do your part,
> Oh knights of the unshielded heart.
> Forth and for ever forward !—out
> From prudent turret and redoubt,
> And in the mellay charge amain,
> To fall but yet to rise again !

That is the life worth while, the life well lost—the life for ever gained.

VI

The Value of Effort

BROWNING'S "GRAMMARIAN"

"This one thing I do."—*Phil.* iii. 13.

EVERYONE is familiar with the heroic figure who, in spite of failures and rebuffs innumerable, persevered in his dream of sailing West and ever West, and so in the end discovered the New World, and initiated a new era. That is a story known to all; but I wonder what is the proportion of those who realize that about the same time there was going on a process no less remarkable and fraught with far-reaching consequences —the re-discovery of the Old World. For centuries the learning, the literature, the very language of Greece had been forgotten in the West, its memory allowed to die out, while a thick pall of ignorance rested on Roman Christendom; the glorious achievements of Athens might never have been, its poets never have sung, its sages never have taught, so far as the Western world was concerned. The priests had seen to that. Then, in the fifteenth century, came a sudden change—the Turkish capture of Constantinople, and the flight to the shores of Italy of the scholars who had kept the lamp of Greek culture alight. It may sound an exaggeration, but the grating of the keels of those Grecian galleys on Italian sand was the signal that proclaimed the end

of the Middle Ages, the times of darkness; for those galleys were laden with manuscripts from the East "as the most precious portion of their freight," and with the manuscripts came those who could interpret them. The result was an intellectual upheaval and an intellectual revival without parallel, and destined to exercise an enormous effect upon Western civilization. The world was ready for such a renewal, tired of the barrenness of the Roman system; with something like ecstasy all the best minds threw themselves upon the study of that marvellous literature, and as John Richard Green says, "the poetry of Homer, the drama of Sophocles, the philosophy of Aristotle and Plato woke again to life" in Florence and elsewhere. Men's minds were seething, thrown into a turmoil of rapture, with the wonder, the beauty and nobility of this literature; a new intellectual leaven was at work, and with the revival of learning a fresh period definitely began in European history.

But while Italy especially gave itself over wholeheartedly to an artistic and literary appreciation of these treasures newly brought to light again, in the more northerly nations there were men who hailed the re-discovery of the ancient Greek language for quite other reasons—or rather, for the one reason that now at length they would be able to study the New Testament in the original tongue instead of being dependent upon the Latin translation sanctioned by the Church of Rome. They had little feeling for the æsthetic charm of the classical authors, or even for the thought of a Plato, the eloquence of a Demosthenes; their interest was exclusively spiritual, their aim to get at the sacred original text of the Gospels and Epistles, and extract the meaning from them. It is very characteristic that while in

Florence—as we may read in the leaden pages of George Eliot's *Romola*—everybody studied the writers of pagan antiquity with the utmost zeal, in England the immediate outcome of the recovery of Greek was Tyndale's, and in Germany, Luther's, translation of the New Testament.

But the language had to be recovered, its rules and idioms laboriously re-established in the first place, and that took much toil of an incredibly minute and searching character. The ancient manuscripts, too, were often in a very corrupt and defective state, and to restore the text to anything like purity was a task which called for, and often baffled, the profoundest and subtlest learning. Behind the translation of our Bible, which we buy for a few pence—behind such a marvellous production as the *Œdipus* of Sophocles, which some of us have had the privilege of witnessing of late—there lie the almost incredible exertions of the textual critic, the grammarian, the laborious classical scholar. These men, little known outside the circumscribed world of learning, would spend years of research in settling some seemingly trifling philological point, on which yet a great deal depended in deciding the meaning of an author ; they would toil away at these dry-as-dust problems which the man in the street did not so much as dream the existence of, and of whose importance you certainly could not persuade the average money-making or moneyed citizen. In their devotion to pure scholarship—nay, in their devotion to truth—the grammarian, the critic, the philologist would toil on, content to be unknown and scantily rewarded, content if by their utmost efforts they had made some small contribution to the sum of knowledge. The world, if it ever hears of such people, shrugs its shoulders in pity-

ing disdain, and calls them queer, unpractical mortals, given up to objects that have no practical use, when they might have made money, enjoyed the good things of life, tasted pleasure, fame, popularity, instead of grinding away at their dusty pursuits; it took the great mind and soul of Browning to choose one of these devotees of learning as one of his types of the heroic life, the life worth while, to bring out all the grandeur of his character, as he has done in the poem we are now to study, *A Grammarian's Funeral.*

Mr. Stopford Brooke has had the happy idea to suggest that the scene of this Renaissance poem, left unstated by Browning, must be Germany rather than Italy. "There is," he says, "a clean, pure morning light playing through the verse, a fresh, health-breathing northern air, which does not fit in with Italy; a joyous, buoyant youthfulness . . . which has no relation whatever to the temper of Florentine or Roman life during the age of the Medici. The bold brightness, moral earnestness, pursuit of the ideal, spiritual intensity, reverence for good work and the man who did it, which breathe in the poem, differ by a whole world from the atmosphere of life in 'Andrea del Sarto.'" It may well be as Mr. Stopford Brooke surmises; at any rate, I know that Browning's portraiture fits the painstaking, thorough German scholar, solely intent upon adding his brick to the great temple of knowledge, content with earning a very frugal livelihood, all his life and powers dedicated to his line of research, toiling to the very last; I know, because, you see, I grew up in such an atmosphere of plain living and high thinking, of classical scholarship and philology—though its austerity was warmed and softened by deep human affections—and in Browning's sixteenth-century Grammarian I

recognize not a few of the lineaments of the man whose name I bear. A reverence for learning instilled into the child almost as soon as he could walk; Latin grammar taught him, not as a task, but as a pleasure, on walks at the age of six or seven; books for playthings and almost for playmates—well, you understand that with such antecedents I do not approach this poem in quite an impartial frame of mind. . . .

This is the picture the poet unrolls for us: in the little town where he had spent his years, scarcely known except to a few, some laborious, indefatigable scholar has died, and ere daybreak his devoted students carry their master's body up the steep mountain side to give him the only burial that is fit for the tabernacle which held that ardent, soaring spirit, on the very summit of the hill. As they bear their burden, they discuss with affectionate enthusiasm the qualities of the man, his outlook upon life, his utter and unswerving devotion to an ideal that brought him neither riches nor wide recognition nor pleasures as the world counts them. How could he, who during his lifetime dwelt so far above the multitude, the grovelling crowd which is solely concerned with material ends and satisfactions, be buried in the valley—where but nearest the sky, they say, is the fitting resting-place for him?

> Thither our path lies; wind we up the heights:
> Wait ye the warning?
> Our low life was the level's and the night's,
> He's for the morning.
> Step to a tune, square chests, erect each head,
> 'Ware the beholders!
> This is our master, famous calm and dead,
> Borne on our shoulders.

One might say that to have kindled such a flame of affectionate veneration in the breast of youth, to have

inspired in others such an appreciation of high ideals, was perhaps a greater thing than to fix the right interpretation of some Greek idiom—at any rate, it showed that there was greatness in the man who did it. It is a real privilege to live close to a worker who will take infinite pains, shun no effort, leave no point unconsidered—no matter what is the particular result he is aiming at—in order to get that result just right; to lay such a foundation as others may build on with entire confidence in its soundness, not needing to fear that the whole structure will one fine day come down about their heads.

And now, as the bearers climb steeply up-hill, they recall the qualities and characteristics of their dead master; and note that Browning is by no means blind to the limitations of his Grammarian—he is too human not to feel what was lacking in this hero of his. Well, we are to imagine him as one who drew his first breath in that marvellous age—that re-birth of the human spirit—of which I have already spoken, when every day fresh revelations of the genius of Greece dawned on the Western world and took it captive. A fair, well-favoured youth, bright and goodly to look upon, he might have had his fill of that vivid, multicoloured life of the Renaissance which meets us in many of Shakespeare's plays; but from the first he had the scholar's instinct, and "decided not to Live but Know." He spurned the life and the delights of sense, attracted by a sterner and more elusive ideal—the quest of Knowledge, the pursuit of Truth, and recked not a whit of his worldly chances; with a concentrated ardour he studied this ancient literature, deciphered crabbed manuscripts, weighed and sifted evidence as to which of a number of conflicting readings of some passage might

be the true one, inquired into the exact shade of meaning conveyed by those minute Greek particles that are the despair of the translator—and lo, ere he knew it, youth had fled, and he did not so much as care. He did not care that he had to pay the penalty for this scholarly absorption in premature old age, in dimmed eyesight, in loss of bodily vigour; another man would have taken warning, felt it was time to relax effort and enjoy life a little—you remember Omar Khayyám's invitation:

> Ah, make the most of what we still may spend
> Before we too into the dust descend. . .
> Come, fill the cup, and in the fire of spring
> Your winter garment of repentance fling:
> The bird of time has but a little way
> To flutter, and the bird is on the wing.

Not so the Grammarian, who saw in the approach of age and loss of faculty only an incentive to redoubled exertion: if the end was near, that was all the more reason why he should fill up the short remaining balance of days with the maximum of work, following up the clues which might escape another, leaving his task, if necessarily unfinished, yet as little incomplete as possible. During the closing years of his life he was little more than a physical wreck—but a wreck how heroic, disdaining ease, still holding each day as a stewardship from God, still learning and teaching, forging ahead, making paths along which other scholars should travel with greater ease in days yet unborn; and if they never knew of him—still, what matter! he would have done his uttermost, put out his one talent, and laid down the interest on the altar of truth. His students tell the story of his last days with awed admiration—how still "with the throttling hands of death at strife, ground he at grammar;" how he settled one knotty philological

point when he was already "dead from the waist down." Friends, I have actually seen that done; seen a man on his death-bed, and knowing that his life was ebbing fast, complete the particular piece of scholarly work on which he was engaged, and yielding only when the last batch of printer's proofs had gone. This work was to be done; my father did it, and then resigned himself to rest.

So the Grammarian had lived and died, and the world, looking on and not comprehending, might ask, "Was it not futile?" But Browning, through the lips of the dead man's disciples, asks, "Was it not great?" I want, if I can, to bring out, to make you see, the greatness of this character, and to show what is its distinctive "lesson in living." And, before going further, and that there may be no misunderstanding, let me once more insist that the poet by no means ignores the defects in this man's make-up; it is one of the most natural touches that his admiring students should glorify those defects and declare them to be virtues—that is the way of hero-worship, especially youthful hero-worship, which is always rather undiscriminating, and defends its hero through thick and thin, imitating his gestures, tricks of speech, peculiarities of dress—but Browning's mature mind judges differently. These students might exalt their master's entire seclusion from the world and its interests, but such self-isolation warps the mind, shuts it up in an unnaturally small circle; they might think it a splendid trait in his character—a peculiar grace, they call it—"that before living he'd learn how to live"—but that is an impossible resolve: you might as well say that you would not go into the water till you knew how to swim! They might be tremendously impressed with the way in which

he made Knowledge the highest, and, indeed, the sole object of life—but we have learnt that love is greater than learning, that "whether there be tongues, they shall cease, whether there be knowledge it shall be done away," but "love never faileth." In his idolatry of knowledge, the Grammarian had starved his body, his sense of beauty, his affections, and so had become something less than human; the very fervour of his one-sided devotion had dried him up, desiccated him, left him loveless. All this Browning, with his abundant humanity, sees clearly enough; the creator of Pippa, of Rabbi Ben Ezra, and many another noble and beautiful character, has a wider outlook than Greek particles and dusty manuscripts; why, then, does he call this scholar great, and holds him up to admiration?

Well, in the first place Browning, himself so strong and independent, so intent on doing his own work and uttering his own message, irrespective of plaudits and popularity, finds in the Grammarian a man after his own heart. He himself was content to write for a small circle of people who made the effort to understand him, while the great public delighted in cheap sentiment and all sorts of prettinesses which by this time have long since faded and are forgotten, while Browning endures. To have your own aim; to work for the inner satisfaction of doing your best; not to sell your soul for the tawdry rewards of the market-place; to hold honourable obscurity better worth having than certain kinds of fame—that appealed to him enormously, and he wants it to appeal to us. Ah, yes, Browning wants to teach you, to make you better men and women, all the time; he says, This is fine, this is worth imitating, this will make life better worth your living. You cannot imagine anyone going to this scholar and saying,

"Now, look here, a man with your ability ought to be doing a lot better for himself—let me put you on to some other work, much easier and bringing in three or four times what you're earning now, wearing yourself out;" at least you can imagine the answer the Grammarian would return. We know the answer Socrates at his trial did return to the implied suggestion that he might purchase life at the price of silence about the things which mattered to him most: he unhesitatingly repelled the offer as unworthy of himself. Now at some time and in some shape some such temptation comes to nearly all—to barter away truth or freedom for ease, popularity, money or money's-worth; it is then that we shall find the example of such as the Grammarian invigorating and helpful.

But further, and in the second place, Browning, like all virile personalities, had an intense belief in, and appreciation of, the value of concentrated effort. You say, the Grammarian's was a narrow ideal, grubbing away among the prepositions and adverbs and what not of a dead language; well, my brother, I tell you without hesitation that a narrow ideal is a great deal better than no ideal at all, and it is the latter disease that we are chiefly suffering from. You are a wonderfully clever person if you can do more than one thing supremely well, and most of us don't do so over-well in our chosen and particular line; no, but we might do a good deal better, without touching perfection, by greater concentration. Give me the man who says, "This one thing I do," every time, in preference to that other one who says, "These half-dozen things I fiddle at." It takes a strong man—ay, and it makes a strong man—to bring all his will, all his faculties, to bear on the one piece of work he has in hand; and it is strong

people the world wants—amiable, well-intentioned, dilettante kind of persons are cheap, and in the hour of crisis and of testing they go cheap. Stevenson's verdict sounds harsh, but it is fairly true: "The weak brother is the worst of mankind."

Browning had a passionate belief in the saving efficiency of resolute endeavour, even if it was directed upon an aim unimportant or mistaken in itself. "*Whatsoever* thou doest, do it with thy might." Feeble goodness is an irritating and unedifying spectacle. "It is," says one discriminating writer, "as if the poet considered that the qualities of strength, decision and resoluteness would, in the long run, work out a man's salvation, even though for the time they were misdirected, and that little or nothing was to be got out of a man naturally feeble and fickle and irresolute. Better have a character which compels you to go straight even for wrong than a character which allows you to drift in a half-hearted fashion. A man's deepest and most real self is his will; and the measure of its energy, power, and self-determining character is the measure of the worth of a man. . . . The Grammarian burnt his way with fierce energy straight toward the end he had set before himself. This constitutes his greatness—not his knowledge of history, or his proficiency in Greek grammar. He fought a good fight, not perhaps in the noblest of causes. His manner of fighting showed the man." He embodied that stark principle which Browning expressed elsewhere in the lines:

> Let a man contend to the uttermost
> For his life's set prize, be it what it will.

Set your hearts on something—have an aim; you need not let that aim narrow you, but a fixity of purpose there must be in every life that is to yield its best to the

world, and receive the best in return. All your other interests will gain in richness if there is some one governing interest, some ruling idea, some fixed principle round which the rest group themselves harmoniously. And no existence, not the humblest, fails of nobility, whose current sways to one purpose, deliberately chosen and followed.

But the crowning greatness of the Grammarian's life, with all its lack of breadth and sympathy, is that it was a life of faith—faith in something greater than self, and miserable aims that end in self—faith in the purposes and the sufficiency of God. Of course, from the worldly point of view, this man merely wasted his chances; but he was concerned with something of greater import than his personal fortunes, or the balance he might leave at the bank—and the pursuit of knowledge, if not the highest, is yet higher than the mere pursuit of money and material satisfactions. When we believe in the value of the unseen as against the seen —when we are prepared to make sacrifices for the True, the Right, the Good, as of supreme worth—we are on the side of religion, knowingly or unknowingly. When self is discarded, God is gained. To be a servant of Truth, in whatever field, counting such service privilege and reward enough, is to be a servant of God.

And then our Grammarian believed that good work was worth doing and would endure, though his eyes should never see it; and that, too, is a great act of faith. That he might not see the end, that he would never reap the harvest which he sowed, had no power to shake his resolution:

> Others mistrust and say, "But time escapes;
> Live now or never!"
> He said, "What's time? Leave Now for dogs and apes,
> *Man has for ever.*"

That is a great declaration of faith ; that is the conviction which enables us to work, not for selfish and immediate ends, but for results which God will in His own good time appraise, " while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen, are temporal; but the things which are not seen, are eternal." And so we get these warning lines, into which so much wisdom is condensed :

> Oh, if we draw a circle premature,
> Heedless of far gain,
> Greedy for quick returns of profits, sure
> Bad is our bargain !

We come back to the lesson the poet teaches in *Andrea del Sarto* : " A man's reach should exceed his grasp"—we ought to work for something, to aim at something, beyond ourselves, that calls out our utmost efforts, not the thing that we can do easily, and that leaves us as we were, but link ourselves on to some ideal enterprise which most likely we shall never finish, but which others will carry on towards completion in that future which is in God's hand. Such the Grammarian's task, and hence the exclamation of his disciples :

> Was it not great ? did not he throw on God—
> (He loves the burthen)—
> God's task to make the heavenly period
> Perfect the earthen ?

Friends, you and I, like this laborious scholar, can with utmost endeavour do but a very little, and sometimes it comes home to us with a sense of discouragement *how* little ; progress seems so slow, reforms are baulked or come into operation in a truncated fashion that seems to deprive them of most of their value, and we wonder whether the fight for the causes we believe in

is worth while—there is so little headway made; in such moods of despondency Browning bids us throw on God *His* task—"to make the heavenly period perfect the earthen"—to let Him use our effort and bring it to fruition according to His wisdom. He is the Architect, we are His journeymen; ours to labour faithfully, His to carry out the grand design. In this spirit of faith we can bear even failure. Oh, and let me insist yet again, and ask you to believe, that it is better to fail nobly than to succeed ignobly, to triumph meanly. You remember Rabbi Ben Ezra's:

> What I aspired to be,
> And was not, comforts me.
>
> All I could never be,
> All, men ignored in me,
> *This*, I was worth to God.

So here we have those golden stanzas which we ought to teach our children to know by heart:

> That low man sees a little thing to do,
> Sees it and does it;
> This high man, with a great thing to pursue,
> Dies ere he knows it.
>
> That low man goes on adding one to one,
> His hundred's soon hit;
> This high man, aiming at a million,
> Misses a unit.
>
> That, has the world here—should he need the next,
> Let the world mind him!
> This, throws himself on God, and unperplexed,
> Seeking, shall find Him.

In all unselfish effort, in all pursuit of ideal ends, there is the sense that we are in tune with the Soul of things, that we have taken God for partner, and that though our individual effort may count for little, or even fail, the cause, God's cause, cannot fail, and He judges us

by our endeavours, not by our attainments. As another poet, far less robust of faith than Browning, wrote :

> It fortifies my soul to know
> That, though I perish, Truth is so !
> That, howsoe'er I stray and range,
> Whate'er I do, Thou dost not change ;
> I steadier step when I recall
> That, if I slip, Thou dost not fall.

That is the feeling of the climber accompanied by his trusty Guide ; and we have our Guide with us always—if we will follow Him.

And now the band of disciples have reached the brow of the hill, with but the last pious duty to perform ; and they will perform it joyously, rendering thanks to the Giver for the life of labour, of patience, of faith, that has closed here to recommence elsewhere :

> Here's the top-peak ; the multitude below
> Live, for they can, there :
> This man decided not to Live but Know—
> Bury this man there ?
>
> Here—here's his place, where meteors shoot, clouds form,
> Lightnings are loosened,
> Stars come and go ! Let joy break with the storm,
> Peace let the dew send !
>
> Lofty designs must close in like effects ;
> Loftily lying
> Leave him, still loftier than the world suspects,
> Living and dying.

That is a grandiose epitaph ; and because " Man has for Ever," and

> Our days are in His hand
> Who saith, " A whole I planned,"

we may complete it by the grander prophecy that as death shall be swallowed up in victory, and faith give place to sight, so at last shall the Grammarian's love of knowledge be transmuted into the knowledge of love, in that realm where God is all in all.

VII

Man in Search of his Soul

IBSEN'S "PEER GYNT"

"What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"—*Mark* viii. 36, 37.

THESE two questions, from the day when they were asked by Jesus Christ, have echoed all through the centuries; they are questions which compel answers, and have in effect revolutionized our thinking. What Jesus did in asking them was to strike one of the key-notes of the Christian Gospel, to assert and emphasize the worth of the human soul as it had never been asserted before; so great was that worth according to Him, that compared with it the whole world appeared not only worth less, but worthless—its prizes mere baubles, its glitter and glamour transient and evanescent. The soul, the man's innermost self, He declared to be infinitely valuable, whether regarded as a jewel that might be lost, or one that might be gained; and that not the rare, exceptional soul of saint or hero, but yours, mine, everybody's; no matter what you barter it away for, He says, your bargain is a deplorably bad one. So priceless is man's soul,

Christianity contends, that the Son of God died to save quite ordinary men and women, commonplace sinners; it would have been impossible to state the case with more tremendous force or clearness.

Christ's questions, I said, have re-echoed all along the corridors of the centuries, and their effect has been to modify profoundly man's thought about himself, to give him quite another and more exalted idea of his place in the scheme of things, to fill him with a new sense of his own dignity. What a king stoops to pick up from the mire, cannot be a brass farthing, but must be a pearl of great price; now in Christ we see the King of kings stooping to raise us up and to make us His own for ever—is not the inference obvious? You can trace the influence of Christ's estimate of man, and the worth of the individual soul, in all manner of ways; I am certain that you can trace it in that social unrest which is so characteristic of our age, and which is ultimately due to man's feeling that he is too good to live in narrow, stunting, degrading conditions, conditions which give him no opportunity to be himself, *i.e.*, to realize his possible self, which is more valuable than all the world of visible, palpable things.

And it is very remarkable that when a great poet like Ibsen, who would not have called himself a Christian, ponders over the ultimate meaning of human life, it is the Christian view he sets forth, both as to the all-importance of selfhood, self-realization—what the Gospel calls "gaining one's soul"—and the true way to attain that end. In both his two supreme poetic dramas, this is the subject with which we find him occupied. In *Brand* we hear him exclaiming, in the person of his hero, with a note of vehemence and defiance, "But we were called ourselves to be"—ourselves—each

an original word of God—not feeble imitations of alien models; in *Peer Gynt*, which was written a year later than *Brand*, we find him pushing the inquiry further and asking, "*What is it to be oneself?*" We saw Brand perishing in the awful isolation of ice and snow, buried under the avalanche, cut off from his fellows, because his scheme of life, for all its grandeur, was inhuman, and deliberately denied the kingship of love; we shall see in the very different career of Peer Gynt the same problem treated, the same truth envisaged from a different angle, and driven home with all the unexcelled force of Ibsen's poetic genius.

One or two words of unavoidable preliminary. Ibsen took the character and some of the features of Peer Gynt from the folk-tales of his country, and utilized them in his great poem, just as Goethe took and used the popular story of Faust, and as a much older Hebrew author took and used the popular saga of Job as the basis of the magnificent speculative poem we read in the Old Testament. Now in the Norwegian folk-tale of Peer Gynt, as Ibsen found it to his hand, the natural and the supernatural mingle fantastically, and the mixture suited both the mood and the purpose of the poet; while his human characters are for the most part Norse peasant-folk, he takes up the goblins and sprites with whom their imagination peopled the mountains and glens, and shapes them into symbols, each of them designed to illustrate in fanciful guise the lesson he has set out to teach. We have to get used to this bold mixture of realism and fairy-tale, to discover the meaning of the symbolic personages to whom the poet introduces us, and that makes our task a little more difficult at the outset; also, it has to be said in passing, that so far there exists no English translation which

gives us the full flavour of the original, and that is a serious drawback so far as the literary, æsthetic enjoyment of the work is concerned. In none of his works has Ibsen given such free rein to his imagination, hurrying the reader along from scene to scene with a rush that is almost breathless. At a first perusal the story, simply as a story of adventure, will carry you on by its sheer swing and verve, puzzling you here and there, no doubt, but interesting even while it puzzles you; then, at a second reading, with the main outline of the tale already in your mind, the inner meaning will begin to trace itself out in more and more luminous letters—and that meaning is simply Ibsen's answer to the question, What is it to be oneself, and how shall a man attain to self-realization?—or, more simply still, What must we do to be saved? Let me attempt, in however stumbling and sketchy a fashion, to set forth both story and interpretation—the story of man in search of himself, in search of his soul, an allegory fit to stand side by side with Bunyan's immortal *Pilgrim's Progress*.

When we first meet Peer Gynt, he comes before us as a young scapegrace of twenty or thereabouts, the son of a farmer whose extravagance has left his widow in poor circumstances, with the marks of impoverishment everywhere plain to view. As Peer's mother puts it:

> See the farmhouse! Every second
> Window-pane is stopped with clouts.
> Hedges, fences, all are down,
> Beasts exposed to wind and weather,
> Fields and meadows lying fallow,
> Every month a new distraint. . .

And the worst of it is that the lad, though sturdy and well-set-up, won't "frame," as we say in Yorkshire, nor do a hand's-turn about field or homestead, barn or byre,

leaving the drudgery to his mother, who can only vainly scold and complain. He is an idler and waster, just such another as Saul Kane, the hero of *The Everlasting Mercy*; never a village brawl but he is mixed up in it, never a wild escapade, but he is its disreputable centre and mainspring. For weeks at a time he will disappear, and be off on lonely hunting expeditions which suit a certain romantic vein in this young scamp, suit him better, anyhow, than hard work. He is a dreamer and romancer, almost unable to keep to fact, to see or state things as they are, deceiving himself even more than others by braggart tales of adventures he has never had except in imagination, and everlastingly boasting of the fine things he is going to achieve—by far more delightful means, be it understood, than exertion and the sweat of his brow. He has never yet faced a difficulty; he has never yet conquered an obstacle; he has never yet thought of anyone, or lived for anything, but self and its gratifications. And with it all Peer Gynt has the indefinable quality which we call charm, for want of a better word—that dangerous quality which is so often the endowment of the utterly and shamelessly selfish. Peer can get over people, even those who know his worthlessness best, and to their cost, even over his mother: the type of the shiftless, captivating rogue with whom it is hard to be angry for long, and who so often has a far better time of it than plodding, unromantic merit.

Once, just once, is this ne'er-do-weel moved to something finer, once is a nobler longing than that of mere appetite awakened in him, by a chance meeting with a young girl, Solveig, a mere bud of gracious, tender womanhood—all purity, gentleness, selfless devotion, a northern sister to Browning's Pippa, as we

first see her— but it is for a moment only; straight from his vision of Solveig, and of the true happiness life might hold for him, he plunges into so outrageous an adventure at a country wedding that henceforth his life in the village is impossible—he has to take flight and live as an outlaw in the forest. For a fleeting instant the possibilities of good have been evoked in his soul: after the brief aspiration there comes for Peer a long descent into the mire.

Up to this point everything has been swiftly-moving, easily-followed action on the plane of ordinary rustic life; but now we are in for a succession of scenes of symbolism, which require a word of interpretation. Selfishness—this Ibsen is at pains to drive into us—is fundamentally anti-social, estranging the egoist from his kind. Peer Gynt has made himself an outcast, and now his pursuit of gratification at all costs lures him from the human to the sub-human level, the realm of malevolent goblins or trolls. Let him make himself at home with them, dwell in their squalor, nourish himself on their nauseous fare, and he shall wed the troll-king's daughter, the very symbol of earthly and unpurified desire which has taken Peer captive—yes, he himself shall become ruler over the trolls' inferno. All he has to do is to renounce and lay aside his manhood, to become a troll himself, adorned with a tail, the outward "mark of the beast." And now notice the troll-king's explanation to Peer of the grand distinctive characteristic of trolldom:

> Out yonder, under the shining vault,
> Among men it's the motto: "*Man, be thyself!*"
> At home here, with us, and the tribe of the trolls,
> The motto is: "Troll, to thyself be—enough!"

You see the meaning. "Man, be thyself," be obedient

to the heavenly vision, "follow the gleam"—that is the counsel of wisdom and goodness. "To thyself be —enough," live only for your own appetites and desires, consider no one else—that is the very essence of animalism. The one motto points to the sky, the other to the sty; the one says, "Be true to the best," the other, "Be true to the beast," in you.

Now the prospect of living up to the troll motto of self-sufficiency and self-centredness strongly appeals to Peer; but there is that in man, even the average sensual man, which won't allow him quite to acquiesce in being an animal—Peer is ill at ease with his tail, he cannot see things from the purely selfish point of view, and when the troll-king offers to correct his vision by removing his right eye and putting a squint in his left, Peer revolts and seeks to escape from the dominion of demons into which he had ventured so recklessly. But it is one thing to descend to the depths, it is another to raise oneself from them. The imps, at the command of their ruler, hurl themselves upon him, and torture him—as do our evil desires when we try to escape from their tyranny; and when the sound of Church bells has unexpectedly routed them, Peer has yet another and more terrible battle to wage. In pitch darkness, trying to make his way out, he runs, wherever he may turn, against a cold, soft, slippery monster, a shapeless mass, the creature known in Northern folklore as the Boyg. "Who are you?" Peer calls out in despair of this invisible, unescapable adversary, and "Self" is the answer. To right and left he tries and fails to find a way, exclaiming:

> Forward or back, and it's just as far,
> Out or in, and it's just as strait!

"Go roundabout, Peer!" is the Boyg's mocking advice,

but the more roundabout he goes, the more surely does he find himself caged, while if he only attempted to cleave his path *right through*, he would be successful. And he is just about to give in for good, when in the distance Solveig's motif, bells and hymn-singing, is heard once more, and at the sound the Boyg shrinks up to nothing, and Peer is free, delivered instantly, though only at the very last moment.

I think the allegory fairly explains itself. The Boyg, we are plainly told, stands for self, *i.e.*, in the lower sense, selfishness; from this cold, slippery monster man finds it next to impossible to escape, and its counsel is always to go roundabout instead of straight ahead—to evade our difficulties and responsibilities instead of facing them and hewing our way through them. It is this which makes Peer, as it makes all of us, prisoners of self, subdued to what is timid and unworthy in us, thralls of our lower nature—the spirit of compromise. And that which finally gives Peer the victory over the Boyg is the recollection of the one pure, unselfish emotion he has ever known; it is the thought of Solveig—identified by Ibsen with the power and appeal of religion—which gives him the mastery over self in his very extremity, causes the monster to shrivel up into nothing, and sets him free. It would be difficult to devise a more telling or touching allegory of the redemptive power of a gracious thought, a beautiful memory, an all-but-forgotten aspiration after better things.

Peer, then, is delivered, and we next see him in the forest, still an outlaw, but in his solitude working out his own salvation by honest toil, building—not, indeed, a palace, as with a touch of the old boastfulness he for a moment describes it, but a workaday dwelling, a human home. And as he so labours, lo, his reward approaches;

it is none other than Solveig, who is coming to him over the snow, Solveig who has always, being pure in heart, seen God, even the hidden God in Peer's breast; who has loved him—not the wild roysterer the world saw, but the real Peer Gynt, as God meant him—and who has now sought him out, to unite her life with his. But this lovely idyll is quickly to be disturbed: you can get away from the past—every second carries you further from it—but you cannot annihilate what has been. In the very anticipation of happiness Peer is haunted by the vision of the troll-king's daughter, symbolizing his former ignoble surrenders to appetite; that degrading recollection—personified, of course, as an actual character in the poem—threatens always to come between him and Solveig, and in a paroxysm of shame and unavailing repentance Peer takes flight from her whom he dare not face, whose purity would too utterly condemn him. Was he wise? I think we can recognize that his motive was not altogether ignoble, for his flight sprang from a sense of sin and unworthiness; but in essence he was simply once more following the Boyg's fatal advice, "Go roundabout, Peer," evading difficulty instead of facing it. If he had but trusted to Solveig—to Love—Love would have pardoned and redeemed him; but that was a lesson yet beyond his grasp—so he fled, and his cowardice avenged itself; while Solveig waited in the home Peer had built, understanding all, forgiving all, assured of love's victory and Peer's return.

Years slip by, and the Peer Gynt we meet is outwardly greatly changed, prosperous, middle-aged, a commercial magnate. He had emigrated to America, and there, like many another, made his fortune. An idler, as we know, he was no longer when he left his native land, but

selfishness was still unconquered in him, and supplied the incentive of all his enterprise. The further away from Solveig, the more cynical has his egoism become ; he has amassed a fortune by trading in slaves and idols, a course he defends with all the glibness of sophistry, and his millions have inspired him with megalomania—he really cherishes the quite insane plan of becoming Emperor of the World. It *is* sheer insanity, and Ibsen means it to strike us as such : let selfishness develop far enough without let or hindrance in a man, he says in effect, and it will drive its victim mad. Such exactly is Peer Gynt's fate ; he had tried all along to " be himself " in the wrong way, to seek self-realization by the path of ruthless egoism, and the result is that in due course this egomaniac is shut up in a madhouse in Cairo, where, he is told with grave irony, all the people are really themselves, live only for themselves, each hermetically closed in the world of his own fancies, totally disregardful each of the rest. As the Director informs the new arrival, of whose self-obsession he is aware :

> Here a man is himself, and can utterly sever
> Everything else from himself for ever.
> No one has tears for another's disasters,
> What the other's ideas are nobody masters ;
> And so, if an Emperor's to mount the throne,
> You are the man, and you alone !

The throne of a madhouse—yes ! For in a mad world Peer, the complete egoist, is the maddest.

Overwrought, dizzy, unable to escape from the keepers, Peer sinks down in a swoon, and amid mocking cheers is crowned with a wreath of straw as Selfhood's Emperor, having reached the topmost pinnacle of egoism.

How or when he was ultimately released from the asylum, the poet does not tell us ; after a long interval we see him again, now an old man, on board a steamer, returning to Norway after many years and vicissitudes —still hard-fisted, still set on self, and with a new note of embitterment ; obviously, his life-long quest has not been much of a success, and the sense of his failure rankles within him. Nor has he reached the term of his misfortunes, for the vessel that bears him founders, and though he escapes with his life, it is only just his bare life, and he lands a beggar and homeless. What has his existence been, what have his three-score years and ten brought him? He compares the various phases he has passed through, the many things he has been, to the layers upon layers of an onion—there are only layers, disclosing no heart, no centre, no reality, all selfishnesses and no self. And then he meets an enigmatical figure, who introduces himself as a button moulder, and tells Peer that he has been specially sent for him, because Peer must go into the casting-ladle, to be melted up. The mysterious messenger is none other than Death. That there may be no doubt as to his meaning, the Button Moulder makes it still plainer :

> Orders I have without delay
> From my Master, to fetch your soul away.

But Peer is terrified at the prospect—he does not want to be melted up, and asks what is the purpose of such a process. "To prevent the loss of good material," is the Button Moulder's reply—good stuff spoilt in the shaping :

> My Master, you see, is exceedingly thrifty,
> Flings nothing away as entirely worthless
> That can be made use of as raw material.
> Now you were designed as a shining button
> On the coat of the world ; but your loop gave way,

> So into the waste-box you needs must go
> And then, as the phrase is, be merged in the mass.

Such a proposal, however, is highly distasteful to Peer Gynt; that he should cease to be, that his identity, that precious Self for which he has lived, should be lost, is an intolerable thought to him. Hell, or at any rate purgatory, would be preferable to annihilation—a suffering self better than no self at all. And then his grim antagonist makes this astounding pronouncement: even Peer's sins have been on too mean a scale to deserve permanence—he is not qualified even for hell, only just fit to close a disappointing record by being broken up like other spoilt goods, just worth his weight as so much metal. Again Peer protests:

> I am easy contented, I don't aim high,
> But I won't lose myself, not a jot of what's I.
> This ladle-business, this "To be no more,"
> This from my innermost soul I abhor.

To this outburst the Button Moulder makes a reply which fills Peer with absolute amazement:

> But surely, you need not, my excellent Peer,
> Get so very warm over so small an affair?
> *Yourself you have never been, never; so why*
> *Does it matter at all if completely you die?*

Never been himself? Why, he has never been, or aimed at being, anything else!

> Could you see where my innermost being grows,
> You would find only Peer, yes, nothing but Peer,
> Nothing else at all, and nothing more's there.

But the Button Moulder is inexorable; his orders are definite, and at most he can grant a short respite, till they two shall meet at the next cross-roads. When they do so, Peer is sufficiently sobered to ask the Button Moulder what he has never asked before:

> What is it, at bottom, this "being oneself"?

And the answer he receives contains the poet's whole contention :

> To be oneself is to slay oneself.
> But on you that answer is doubtless lost,
> And so we'll say that it is to display
> The Master's intention as plain as a sign.

Don't you see ? Self-realization is not to be attained by greedy self-seeking, but by self-dedication to the best and highest that we know ; it is the very opposite of selfishness, which must be slain in order that the ideal self may live. Or, in the words of that luminous interpreter, Mr. Wicksteed : " What is it to be onself ? God *meant something* when He made each one of us. For a man to embody that meaning of God in his words and deeds, and so to become in his degree a ' word of God made flesh,' is to be himself. But thus to be himself, he must slay the craving to make himself the centre round which others revolve, and must strive to find his true orbit, and swing, self-poised, round the great central light."

Once more Peer is left alone by the Button Moulder, and now at length it dawns on him with an infinite regret that his egoism has laid his true life waste, and made it a thing of nought. Even the translation gives us the pathos of his reflections :

> So unspeakably poor, then, a soul can go
> Back to nothingness, into the grey of the mist !
> Thou beautiful earth, be not angry with me
> That I trampled thy grasses to no avail.
> Thou beautiful sun, thou hast squandered away
> Thy glory of light on an empty hut . . .
> I will clamber up high, to the dizziest peak ;
> I will look once more on the rising sun,
> Gaze till I'm tired o'er the promised land,
> Then let the snow drift silently o'er me . . .
> They can write above : Here NO ONE lies buried ;
> And afterwards, then—let things go as they may.

But repentance opens his eyes and ears; he sees a light from a hut, hears a woman's singing, and just as the Button Moulder would finally seize him, knows that it is Solveig's cottage, Solveig's voice. Dare he enter?

> Forward and back, and it's just as far;
> Out and in, and it's just as strait . . .
> No!—like a wild and endless yearning
> Is the thought: to come back; to go in; to go home.
> "Round about," said the Boyg. Ah, no; this time at least
> Right through, though the path be never so strait.

And there stands Solveig, mild, beneficent, beautiful in age as in girlhood, her dream fulfilled, and while Peer exclaims, "Hast thou doom for a sinner, then speak it forth," she can only cry, "He is here! he is here! Oh, to God be the praise!" But he has a question, a riddle to which he must have the answer—Where has Peer Gynt been all these years, Peer himself, as God meant him, the whole man, the true man? "Oh, that riddle is easy," says Solveig; "you yourself, the real Peer, have been here all the time—in my faith, in my hope, and in my love." And while Peer falls happily asleep, on his knees before Solveig, his head in her lap, she croons a slumber-song over him who is God's gift to her, both lover and child. All is not over; there is a last cross-road where Peer and the Button Moulder will meet, but there is hope now for some happier consummation than the all-obliterating casting-ladle. Late in his life's evening, Peer Gynt has begun to find his self, his soul, in the serene radiance of love; and over the refrain of Solveig's slumber-song, the drama of redemption closes.

There is the allegory the genius of Ibsen designed on a spacious canvas nearly half a century ago, and to the outline as I have given it, I feel that I need add very

little by way of comment. Let me only make one point clear, lest we should misconstrue the poet's essential message. Ibsen does not mean that Peer is redeemed from his evil past by Solveig's love for him, but that the real Peer is he who expressed himself in his love for Solveig, the symbol of purity and grace—all else he has been have only been phases, layers, garments, phantasms; but this soul's passion is the soul's reality, and as Emerson has it—

> What is excellent,
> As God lives, is permanent.

In his love, Peer was himself, and that self is deathless, can never be melted up and merged in the mass, still less flung as rubbish to the void. Selfishness is the antithesis, the annihilation of selfhood; the only self we gain is the self we give; and the only motive for self-giving is love. They who seek their life shall lose, they who are willing to lose their life shall gain it. That is the great, the ultimate "lesson in living" we have to learn, which, once learnt by heart, will give to life its proper value and meaning. It is only in relation with our fellows that we can find and fulfil ourselves; and for Ibsen, as has been well said, this relation was heightened and hallowed into the one supreme relation of Love. That is the essential teaching of this sublime allegory, an emphatic affirmation and confirmation of the central truth of the Gospel—the vanity of self-seeking, the redemptive power of self-giving—poignantly set forth by a great poet who stood outside the Christian Church. Is it too much to believe that he who insisted with such strength and tenderness upon Love as the Redeemer, was "not far from the Kingdom"?

VIII

Make your own World

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth."—*Rev.* xxi. 1.

LET me begin by saying that I am quite aware that the title of this sermon—"Make your own World!"—sounds a note of challenge. The challenge is quite deliberate, and I address it to the many people who are under the influence of a certain popular and harmful modern superstition. Believe me, what we call the Dark Ages had no monopoly of superstitions; our own enlightened era has produced its own, which are every whit as baseless and injurious as the older ones. And now we are going to look together once more at that very fantastic but very widespread notion that men and women are born into a set of circumstances, launched into a world, which they have to take as they find it—a world which shapes them, and makes them, and maybe dooms them, without their being able to affect the result by their Yea or Nay. The world so vast and powerful—the individual so weak and insignificant: how can he influence it, or guide his own course, by his utmost exertions? Might you not almost as soon expect a dancing gnat that had strayed into the engine room of a Dreadnought to influence the course and speed of the huge vessel? Is not our only wisdom to realize our impotence, and acquiesce as cheerfully, or at least as resignedly, as we may in what we can in no wise alter or take responsibility for?

We are all perfectly familiar with this line of reasoning, and nothing sounds more plausible on a first hearing. It seems sheer ludicrous presumption for a man to measure his powers against the sum of things in which he is a most negligible item ; he is enmeshed in a web which he did not spin and has not strength to break through ; he is the product of forces that have moulded him for generations before he saw the light. Give it ten consecutive minutes' thought, and you will be overwhelmed as you realize the enormous number of things that are determined *for* you, and things, too, of primary importance : you never chose your race or parentage, with all its inheritance, nor your abilities or disabilities, nor your country or schooling, or the religious influences under which you grew up ; a good many of your opinions on all sorts of subjects are, when you come to analyse them, merely the opinions held by your class or set, and not at all original with you—yet these opinions govern nine-tenths of your life and actions. No, no, the great world is what it is, and does as it likes with you, without asking your leave ; the big machine has got hold of you, and will not consult your preferences as to what you would like to have been or done with your life. You remember the story of the lady who said with a sigh, "I accept the Universe," and Carlyle's grim comment, "'Gad, she'd better!"

Yes, we have heard it all before ; and whether we regard this doctrine as comforting or as profoundly depressing, it sounds at any rate quite reasonable and self-evidently true—until we stop generalizing and come to test it, until we inquire how our theory fits the facts. And then we remember the son of a wretchedly poor miner, one of a large family of chil-

dren, who became an obscure monk, and seemed destined to pass his life obscurely and uneventfully, moulded by his heredity and environment, but who as a matter of fact made his own world with a vengeance, and incidentally re-made Germany and sent his influence far and wide beyond his own country and age—Luther, the Reformer. We remember a plain Huntingdonshire squire, whom no one would have thought marked out for greater things than farming his moderate estate, and perhaps taking his share in the deliberations of Parliament, but who put an end to the Stuart tyranny, and gave a new direction and impetus to the development of England. Our recollection tells us of a boy who was sent to work in a candle factory at the age of ten, afterwards becoming a page, and finally passing into an engineering shop; whose subsequent experiences included the treadmill, and who to-day is a Cabinet Minister—Mr. John Burns. We have read the autobiography of a woman who started life with the terrible threefold handicap of being blind, deaf and dumb, yet who to-day writes with charm, culture and delight in living, her mind stored with the world's best and choicest thought—Helen Keller ; she entitles one of her books, *The World I live in*, and a happy world it is, but hasn't she *made* it ? Listen. On a recent holiday in Switzerland I stood in the monastic library of St. Gall in Switzerland, and was shown its most priceless treasure—the little word-book made by St. Gallus, the monastery's founder, for his own use—Irish in one column, Alemannic in the other—thirteen hundred years ago, when he was evangelizing that wild district as it then was ; and I could not help thinking how easily Gallus might have stayed in his own village in the Green Island,

spent his life in farming or fishing, and lived and died unknown, but how, instead, he went across the sea, a bold adventurer, to carry the Gospel into unknown regions, and became the starting-point of a whole civilization. Was not this wandering son of Erin a world-maker—and did he not begin by making his own world ?

We come to this : the world as we find it is powerful, but it depends upon ourselves how we are going to react under its multitudinous stimuli ; influences of every description and variety are playing upon us from all quarters, but it lies with us how we care to respond, and to *which* of them we will respond. Just as man cannot change the laws of nature, but can discover their action and make the elements his servants, ministering to his needs with promptest obedience, so you may say that the sum of circumstances is always given, but it always rests with you to decide what to do with them. And just as fortune favours the bold, so success waits upon the persevering and alert, and opportunity comes unbidden to the aid of those who look for her and seize her resolutely, while the timid and hesitating stretch out their unready hands after her fluttering garments just when she is out of reach. The truth is, that to man alone of all living beings has God communicated something of His own nature, making him not only a creature but a creator as well, with powers over the shaping of his destiny, and the world's : He created man in His own image, in His own image created He him.

Now will you allow me, before carrying this further, to pass on a hint by reminding you of a fact of which we are all aware when it is pointed out to us, but which we habitually overlook. It is simply this, that we all inhabit different worlds ; that no two

of us see the same facts with the same eyes; that it is our own contribution to the facts which interprets them and gives them their value and meaning for us. That, by the way, is one of the chief reasons why people misunderstand each other—they speak different languages, they move in different universes. From the infinite mass of things we each select those—a mere fraction—which make up our world, we respond only to a number of stimuli, the rest glance off us, and so far as we are concerned they do not exist. Take a farmer, a painter, a geologist, a manufacturer, and a land speculator to see the same landscape, and they see not one, but five different scenes, their minds dwell upon different qualities, different possibilities—utilitarian, scientific, artistic, as the case may be. The feeling for nature, the delight in the grandeur of sea and mountain, which is so typical of our age, is quite a modern development—the ancients did not have it, we might say that down to the end of the eighteenth century it was largely non-existent: we see the Alps. we see the lakes at the feet of the mountain giants, with different eyes from our forefathers, and they really mean different things to us.

Again, we go to an Ayrshire village and enter a certain cottage there, and it is more than a mere clay biggin to us, for our mind is full of a score of snatches of verse, gay and sad, as we remember that it was there that Robert Burns drew his first breath. You go to Venice or Verona, and these cities mean something to you they would not mean but for Shylock and Othello, for Romeo and Juliet: the genius of a poet has literally *made* those places what they are to us, *i.e.*, if we are familiar with his characters. I well remember many years ago visiting the English Lakes,

moving among scenes full of associations present to every lover of Wordsworth; but I had read very little of Wordsworth at the time, and so of course I did not see or feel one half what was patent to better-instructed people. Your stolid common-sense person may say with great finality, "A thing is what it is"; but the truth rests with Shakespeare when he tells us that "thinking makes it so."

And now, don't you see what bearing all this has upon our subject? It means that, knowingly or unknowingly, we each of us construct our own world; it means that this process of world-making, from being largely unconscious, can and should be carried on consciously and purposively, for we can choose within very wide limits what sort of world to inhabit. But of course you can't use your powers unless and until you believe in them, just as you can't draw upon a bank balance of whose existence you are unaware; that is why I am for ever trying to inculcate belief in your own powers as a prime necessity.

And in the first place I would say, with an assurance deepened by observation, that many of us could, while we are young, select and so make our world by exercising far greater choice than most of us do in the matter of our careers and occupations. As it is, we are far too ready to adopt a passive rather than an active attitude, to cultivate acquiescence rather than initiative. Some one has said that mankind may be divided into lifters and leaners; I think it is just as accurate to divide people into drifters and drivers—and I know to which class I would rather belong. So many people drift into occupations they afterwards discover to be uncongenial, through not thinking seriously enough about the matter while the choice rests with them;

the trouble, indeed, lies very largely with people's lack of seriousness, their want of concentrated and sanctified purpose. There is some one thing you can do better than any other, and that one thing you ought to be doing, because the world has a right to your best, not your second-best. Of course, if a young man's mind is simply set on "enjoying the good things that now are," if his life's task is only an incidental, bothersome consideration, he will not trouble to qualify himself for anything in particular—for that means self-denial and self-discipline—but take whatever job will not make too big a demand on his time and energy, and provide him with the means to satisfy his tastes in clothes, drinks, music halls, and the rest. Then, in a few years' time, when he ought to be getting on, he discovers that he is in a blind-alley, where there is no progress, and bitterly blames circumstances. He should blame his lack of seriousness, his entering upon life without an object in life, which now dooms him to a narrow, monotonous routine devoid of prospect and incentive. Ay, and even more fate-fraught and irrevocable decisions are made every day by young people—men and women—in sheer lightness of mind: *this* is taken because *this* has happened to come along, and too late the knowledge dawns on them that a wrong world has been chosen, where their best has no scope—and "might have been" sums up a melancholy tale.

We are permitted to make our own worlds, but we must do so with our eyes open, knowing that *some* choices go by for ever. I know a man—I have known him quite a time—who from very early boyhood never had any doubt that he would be a writer—a writer of books. There were circumstances in his life which

seemed to make the realization of that purpose altogether impossible, but as Helen Keller says—and she ought to know, if anyone—our worst foes are not hostile circumstances but wavering spirits. If, in this particular case, the impossibilities ceased to be impossible, it was because there was a fixed determination to do a certain thing. I am not saying that that was the ideally best thing this man could have done with his life—that is not the point—but that he deliberately made his own world, and declined, when it came to it, to be permanently pushed into any other.

That is the first secret or key-word of world-making —Concentration of purpose—and the second is distinctly like unto it, viz., Application. To listen to the people who bid us remember the bigness of the world and the smallness of the individual, one would fancy that our exertions can make no difference, that "the struggle nought availeth," "and as things have been, they remain" irrevocably. Now hearken, instead, to the words of Professor William James, perhaps the most famous psychologist of our age, and note carefully what he has to say on this subject: "As a rule, men habitually use only a small part of the powers they actually possess, and which they might use under appropriate conditions. It is evident that our organism has stored up reserves of energy that are ordinarily not called upon, but that may be called upon." Well, too many of us will do anything rather than call upon these reserve powers—in fact, we would rather not be told that we possess them. And most of us, even when we call ourselves hard-worked, could do a deal more than we do, and find out that we can when we have to. Well, I suggest that the man who wants to make for himself a world worth living in,

will call up some of his reserves of energy ; he won't be contented with performing the indispensable minimum —he will fit himself for something better, using his God-given faculties, not merely because he knows that the cry is always for fitness and efficiency, but because he feels under a religious obligation to administer to the best advantage what God has put in his charge. I could tell the story of a friend of mine who, not content with his routine duties as a subordinate Government official, mastered all the intricacies of international law ; how at a very critical moment his trained judgment and sound information were of the utmost service to the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary ; and how this incident led, in due time, to an almost unheard-of promotion into the First Division. Now I will give you his own words on what this result has meant to him : " I am living in a different world ; " yes, but again I ask, hadn't he made it ? The same thing happens in this office and that factory every day —but it only happens to those who have qualified themselves for it by application and devotion to their task. Let me in this connection quote some essentially wise words of Sir W. Robertson Nicoll's : " I saw the other day," he says, " a statement innocently made that in Canada people who will work hard, and who do not insist too narrowly on hours of employment, are exceedingly valued. No doubt. They are valued everywhere. It is just that extra that makes all the difference, that power to labour and to think, that zeal and goodwill in co-operation, that every one is seeking for, and which no one willingly parts with when he finds it. I could tell how in my profession such men are desired. I could tell, also, how rare they seem to be." And then he adds this

sane comment: "It is mere cant to say that success does not make for happiness. . . . Other things being equal, the man who succeeds in any profession is likely to be much more happy than the man who fails. Failure is a hard, bitter business, and it casts a shadow over the homes and lives of others. Success, even of a small kind, if it is steady, is a sunshiny thing, and the sunshine spreads."

Very well, then: Concentration; Application; I come to my third point, and for the sake of keeping the lilt of the thing going, we will call it Exploration. What do I mean by that? I mean that just as most of us don't do as much as we might, so also most of us don't know nearly as much as we ought. But to be dull and ignorant is to live in a very dull world. To be empty-minded is to live in a horribly empty world. It is also to show ourselves very ungrateful to God, who has crammed His spheres full of objects of interest and fascination for our enjoyment and instruction. We sing a hymn about

> That universe, how much unknown!
> That ocean unexplored!

—and it is strictly true. We can really create our world by exploring it, by broadening our range of interests, by familiarizing ourselves with such and such a branch of science, acquainting ourselves with history or biography, with music or literature, with painting or architecture, with the constitution of our country or the religions of mankind. These are all perfectly possible things for us to engage in during our hours of leisure—but I grant you that nothing so much tests our quality as our use of the time we have, as we say, "to ourselves"! But does it not strike you, really, that I am using no exaggerated language

when I say that a young man or woman who has made a study of some great author, or who has entered into some understanding of the ways and wonders of nature, or who has learned another language, or become proficient in any one accomplishment—that every one who has done any of these things, has been making a new and fairer world for himself, a habitation more worthy of an immortal spirit? And the process is inexhaustible; that is the delight of it. You can freshen all your life, envisage new horizons, by coming into contact with the finest things in literature. You can people your world with the brave, the true, the gentle, the servants of mankind. You can let the great souls of the race speak to you, and feel as on some mountain peak where the air is like wine, and you behold illimitable vistas stretching out. You can on a single holiday, physically as well as mentally, enlarge your boundaries, and gather impressions that will permanently leave their transforming mark on the world you live in. I confess that I grieve when I think of the unused opportunities of life, of the quite needlessly dull and barren existences people lead, when interests are positively clamouring around them trying to rouse them from apathy and boredom. I want to say bluntly—pardon me if I say it too bluntly—that if you live in a dull world it is your own fault; if you have to fly to unhealthy excitements to banish dulness, you have not looked in the right direction—and the right direction is in every point of the compass: God has provided enough romance to quicken the pulses of the most sluggish, enough stimulus to prevent our eyes from closing except with excess of vision, enough beauty to ravish our very souls. You remember Stevenson, in his *Child's Garden of Verses*, writing in sheer exuberant joyousness:—

> The world is so full of a number of things,
> I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings.

That is a child's way of putting it; but the child may teach and rebuke many a dismal, languid man or woman—dismal and languid because they have never looked beyond small personal interests: no wonder they are tired—who wouldn't be?

But I come to yet another of my key-words, and this I will call Regulation. Let me again explain. The differences in the worlds we inhabit we have already seen to be due to the different impressions to which we respond, to the way in which we react or are affected by our environments. Circumstances matter, of course; but our attitude to circumstances matters supremely—it is that which gives the casting vote. Now I say we can deliberately cultivate a healthy attitude towards events, or allow ourselves to slide into an unhealthy one. *It is what events find in us that determines their effect upon us.* I believe it is true, even in regard to physical well-being, that the habit of dwelling on the happier circumstances of our life repels disease, while the opposite habit predisposes to it. We can regulate our own dispositions very considerably the moment we think we can. We can say that we won't let such and such a disappointment bow us down utterly—and that determination counts. We can tell ourselves that life has not become devoid of interests and duties even when some great happiness proves to be for good and all out of our reach. We can remind ourselves in the great crises of life that for God's child the way out is the way through—that weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. Of course, it is easier to do the other thing, to give way and go down and luxuriate in grief

and self-pity ; but I submit to you that that does not make things better, nor is it the way to heal our hurts. I think of you younger people, if you will allow me to say so, as an elder brother, knowing something of the pains and heart-aches from which even a normal life is not exempt, and I say, Regulate—regulate, exercise self-rule, strive for self-mastery, and you will be able to conquer much unprofitable grief, to turn trial into triumph, to rise above the sorrow life has in store for you, not because you do not feel it, but because there is that in you which sorrow cannot lay prostrate. Refuse to build your world out of your sombre experiences, your moods of perplexity and distress ; you want a wholesome world to dwell in—construct it out of all the sunny moments you have known, out of all the happy yesterdays that have blessed you, out of all the gracious memories you can rally and assemble together, and exclude so far as possible what can serve no purpose but to reopen wounds, and to bring chill and gloom into the atmosphere of a summer day. Pessimism, I heard an eloquent medical man say the other day, is a contagious disease, and the man who goes about spreading it is a criminal. Happy are you if you have that faith which sees Goodness enthroned at the centre of things, and beholds in the Cross the supreme guarantee that

> Life is ever lord of death,
> And Love can never lose its own !

We have been moving along an ascending line, and now we reach the culminating point : if we would make our own world, and build it aright, it must be by means of Dedication. No self-centred life holds out any prospect save of defeated purpose and utter weariness. We must seek and seize opportunities of

service and helpfulness, if we are to realize the true value and the true blessedness of life. It is a great thing to accustom ourselves early to look beyond our little ego, its needs and satisfactions, to seek for opportunities—they will come to us if we look for them—of practising the gracious art of self-giving, to sacrifice something in order that another's want may be supplied. It is the simple truth that every great and whole-hearted devotion transforms the world for us, reveals new beauty in it, reveals to us—and this is almost stranger—new treasures in ourselves. Believe me, it comes to this—you must be good to some one before you can be good for something. Every reader of that charming book, *The Lady of the Decoration*, will remember the saying, " The most miserable, pitiful, smashed-up life could blossom again if it would only blossom for others ; " and I believe that to be the exact truth. If you can once say in quiet sincerity, without pose, that you would purchase another's happiness at the cost of your own, you have not only risen in the scale of being, but you have almost discovered the secret of happiness yourself, and your joy no one taketh away from you—every mother knows that. Concentration, application, and all the rest, these are good and necessary, but without dedication, *i.e.*, if we have not love, our world is dead and void, and is become a habitation of unhappy spirits and mocking dreams and withered possibilities. Let us pray, therefore, for the self-giving spirit which was once incarnated in Christ Jesus, and has ever blessed the world ; and may *our* world be blessed and fragrant with

> That best part of a good man's life,
> The little, nameless, unremembered deeds
> Of kindness and of love.

IX

Luck ? or Pluck ?

"If thou wilt, thou canst . . . And he saith, I will."—*Mark* i. 40, 41.

PERHAPS I cannot begin better than by telling you a reminiscence of mine dating somewhere about a dozen years back. It was at a public dinner, and I found my neighbour a man I had just slightly known in Oxford in my student days. He told me he was a barrister, and in the course of conversation I made some remark about the element of chance in his profession, which brought some men into prominence and left others briefless and unknown. To my astonishment, he straightened himself up and said with intense conviction, "Don't you believe it. Everybody gets his chance at the Bar; some fellows take theirs, others don't. I, for instance, drink rather more than is good for me, so what can you expect ?" Certainly he proceeded to prove the truth of his confession during the remainder of the dinner; certainly also, while to-day everybody is familiar with the names of at least three of his contemporaries—men who started at the Bar at the same time—Sir John Simon, Mr. F. E. Smith, and Mr. E. G. Hemmerde, his name remains obscure. I never met him again; but he had taught me a valuable lesson—a lesson on the subject of luck.

Is it luck or pluck that is the determining factor in a man's life? I want you to consider that question, because a very great deal depends upon the answer we give to it, the attitude we take up towards this subject. Our actions are governed by our convictions; and how we think on this topic matters enormously. Now few things are more striking, to my mind, or more significant, than the frequency with which one comes upon this belief—quite seriously held—that after all, success and failure, whether a man shall acquit himself well or ill in the business of life, is a matter of luck; that you are born so-and-so, and can't be different; that your circumstances are such-and-such, and not under your control. I don't mind telling you that I look upon the spread of this view with the greatest concern and uneasiness; I regard it as untrue in itself, and infinitely pernicious in effect; and if I can only show you that it is false to fact, and point you to another road, I shall feel that I have done something that was worth while.

Now the origin, and especially the popularity, of this particular superstition, are by no means hard to trace. I read somewhere in my New Testament that "they all with one consent began to make excuses;" which shows how wonderfully alike human nature is all through the ages. Making excuses is, I was going to say, the oldest of industries; and certainly, if some people expended as much industry over doing the right thing as they spend over discovering reasons for not doing it, they would be doing well for themselves and for everybody else. The belief in luck—other people's good luck, and his own bad luck—is the most obvious excuse with which a feckless sort of man tries to cover up his failures; it is the one weapon the hand of every weakling instinctively

stretches out after—and a very suicidal weapon, for believe me, the man or woman who is really good at making excuses will never be really good at making anything else. One of the most hopeless persons to deal with is the one who always has a convincing explanation of why he did not get his task done, how it was that he came late, why his particular enterprise went all wrong.

Now, in this bad business of making excuses you may roughly distinguish two stages. In his elementary stage a man will put the blame for his misadventures on some other individual's shoulders—"The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she tempted me, and I did eat"—there you have the classical example, the immortal prototype. But that expedient is not always successful, for the other individual may resent the imputation, and repel it with some heat—it is not recorded what Eve said on the occasion in question; so in his more advanced stage, and warned by experience, the man does not blame any one person so much as an impersonal, intangible force which cannot answer back—a great advantage, this!—and that force he calls Luck. He talks of it more in sorrow than in anger, with an air of gentle resignation, as of something it is no good fighting against; and as each foolish plan miscarries, as each false step lands him deeper in the morass, as each flabby and spiritless effort fails to win the prize, he quotes something about the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, and sums up the ever-recurring situation in the pathetic phrase, "Just my luck." The one thing he does not believe in is the one truth that would save him—"If thou wilt, thou canst;" the one word he can't bring himself to say through his clenched teeth is the word, "I will."

Now it is an unfortunate thing that this type of person should have found a measure of apparent support in certain developments of modern thought, or at least in certain catchwords which sound quite modern and scientific. Plain people are apt to get tired of the man who keeps putting down all his failures to bad luck; but when he is able to express the same idea, to offer the same plea, in two words of four syllables each —Heredity and Environment—instead of one monosyllable, many folks are impressed, and feel there must be something in it. The man who won't brace himself up for the battle, preferring ease and self-indulgence, nowadays explains that he is the product of an unfortunate heredity—perhaps he may suggest that he has the artistic temperament, which cannot brook restraint and discipline and regular hours; and the man who tells you that his environment was, and is, unfavourable to the development of his faculties, feels that he has most successfully rolled the burden of responsibility off his own slack shoulders on to the Unknown, that he has set up a plea which cannot be rebutted. And the argument, in its essence, and in spite of its modern and pseudo-scientific disguise, is just the argument from luck.

Let me say one thing quite plainly: to enter upon the conflict in that spirit is to accept defeat beforehand. You will never achieve what you don't believe you can achieve. You will never conquer obstacles which you have made up your mind to regard as insurmountable. If you really think of yourself as a helpless at whirled about by forces against which you cannot contend, then whirled about you will be—only it won't be in an upward, but in a downward, direction. If you think of yourself as a creature of circumstances, the sport

of fate, will-less and powerless, that is precisely what you will be. Unquestionably that is the easy way—but it is the way to the bottom. You need not exert yourself particularly to fall ; but you must not be surprised if you don't exactly soar by that method. And do not, I beg of you, ever imagine that this resigned attitude has the sanction of Christianity. Christianity is not a passive but an intensely active religion, with "This DO" for its motto. Jesus crowded more world-shaping action into the bare twelvemonth of His public ministry than anyone else has ever put into a lifetime. He said, "Blessed are the meek," but He never said, "Blessed are the slack"—the despondent, the apathetic, the backboneless people who believe the doctrine that they are just what their environment makes them : which is, as I said, simply the old belief in luck in a modern and more fashionable guise.

What about that doctrine ? Does not environment count, then ? Does it make no difference where and how a child is brought up, what influences go to shape and colour his outlook ? Why, all our education, all our schemes of social reform, go on the assumption that these factors do count—and that assumption is obviously correct. But do not let this idea of environment run away with you—do not over-emphasize a truth until it gets out of focus and becomes an untruth. Physical and other conditions, schooling, friends, sphere of labour, all these things matter ; they are the material for the building of life and character—but you are the builder, don't forget that. You are the builder, and I may as well say at once that no profusion of marble, cedar wood, costly metal and all the rest of it will enable a careless and lazy architect to raise a fine edifice : the noblest cathedral, like the simplest dwell-

ing, must carry out a design—it is not the result of any happy accident. And the material which one man may despise another may use to most surprising effect. The achievement of ten men's lives will differ according to their environments; but in no single case need that achievement be mean, worthless, a thing that had better not have been.

This is the primary truth to lay hold of—that environment, external conditions, furnish us only with the raw possibilities of a life; to these *we* must in turn contribute plan and application, to shape and utilize them thus or thus. We have no business to let things happen; our business is to make them happen—not to drift, but to drive. "Circumstances?" said the great Napoleon; "I make circumstances"—and I think we all know just what he meant by that seeming paradox: he took the mass of circumstances, and welded them together with masterful hands into an instrument for the carrying out of his imperious will. It is only definite aims which produce definite results; and how are you to aim definitely at anything while you are under the domination of this superstitious belief that you are the mere toy of a destiny that is made for you, not by you? Ah, but—

> The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,
> But in ourselves!

All history and biography give the lie to the lazy doctrine that men turn out precisely according to the conditions which surround them—that the issue is determined by mere fortunate or unfortunate accident in the matter of birth and early influences. Mr. Chesterton has pointed out most sanely and most vigorously that "if we come to talk of a dangerous

environment, the most dangerous environment of all is the commodious environment." It is not true that the child whose path has been most elaborately smoothed—all obstacles removed, no difficulty left to conquer—will turn out the best kind of man or woman. It is not true that those who have the easiest access to the avenues of learning will be most eager to enter therein—that eagerness is generally left to the poor student who has had to make a desperate fight for it, bearing privations and hardships, in order to get anywhere near a College or University. It is not true that a big income or inherited riches are a guarantee of honesty—as let the stained memory of Bacon and Marlborough and many another rich pilferer attest. It is not true that character grows finest where nature is most opulent, denying her children nothing—where, in other words, environment is all that men desire. Ah, believe me, the only opportunities, the only chances that count, are those which we *turn* to account, seizing them and moulding them with determined hands and wills.

Luck or pluck? Ask the men who have accomplished anything in life, and hear what they have got to say on the subject. I do not mean people of the very unpleasant variety that used to be described as "self-made"—I do not mean loud-mouthed, metal-souled braggarts with a naïve egoism that makes them believe they have reached the summit unaided, when as often as not they were chiefly gifted with a convenient lack of scruple, which enabled them ruthlessly to crush out competitors. But ask a man like Alexander Irvine, who started as a bare-legged newspaper boy in the North of Ireland, and who to-day, after a career which reads like a romance, wields a vast and elevating

influence over many hundreds of lives. He will tell you, as a deeply religious man must, that God has been very good to him in sending him opportunities of self-culture and self-improvement; but he will also tell you in all modesty that he was on the look-out for those opportunities, that he battled for them, that he let no chance of accumulating knowledge go by, that he consciously and deliberately raised himself inch by inch—that he laboriously gathered and built up his material. He never learnt to read till he was high up in his teens; yet when he was a youthful private in the Marines on the flagship in the Mediterranean Squadron, and his ship visited Greek waters, his knowledge of ancient Greek history was such as to amaze a gentleman who got into conversation with him—a gentleman who afterwards turned out to be the King of Greece. Where had this lad with the thick Irish accent got his wealth of information from? It had not come to him by intuition or revelation! He wanted to make the most of his sojourn among these famous scenes, and he had studied hard in order that he might see them with intelligent interest. Was he lucky in visiting those parts, so rich in historical associations, at all? Truly: but he was only one of a thousand men on that ship; and he was the only one among those thousand who got the most out of his opportunity. When he first began to read at all, he tells us, he was greatly impressed with a passage in *John Halifax*:

"What would you do, John, if you were shut up here, and had to get over the yew hedge? You couldn't climb it."

"I know that, and therefore I should not waste time in trying."

"Would you give up, then?"

He smiled. There was no "giving up" in that smile of his. "I'll tell you what I'd do: I'd begin and break it, twig by

twig, till I'd forced my way through, and got out safe at the other side."

And I say to you, Smile at your difficulties, but let it be a smile with no "giving up" in it, and break them, twig by twig!

And here I would like to guard myself against being misunderstood. By pluck I do not mean a quality which will benefit its owner only on condition that he is an exceptional individual who has something that his competitors have not, and so climbs to eminence over their prostrate and defeated bodies. I believe that if all men had this resolution to strive for the best knowledge, the best culture, the best character they could attain, they would one and all be the better for it. Thank God, it is not always a case of one man's gain being attainable only at the cost of another man's loss. Of the best things in life there is plenty for all. Let me illustrate. You may every one here resolve that in twelve months' time from now your minds shall be so much more richly stored than they are to-day, by reading some of the world's best thought: no one will hinder you, your acquisition of those treasures will interfere with no one else's, will impoverish no one —and it is not a question of luck at all!

But let me give you another instance of what I am trying to bring home to you. Did you read the words Admiral Peary addressed to an assemblage in London shortly after his return from his famous expedition? They bear with singular directness upon our subject. "For twenty-four years," he said, "sleeping or awake, to place the Stars and Stripes on the Pole had been my dream; and now, awake or asleep, alone or in a crowd, I can face myself and say, 'I have made good.' Has it come by luck? If you will pardon the egoism, I will

say, No. I made my opportunity, fighting it inch by inch and yard by yard, out of that hell of cold and darkness in the North, and I have made good." Proud words, to be sure, but never did man speak with more just occasion for pride; it was a triumph of sheer indomitable courage, perseverance, grit, over the most appalling difficulties. How small and puling and contemptible by the side of such an utterance sound all the apologetic references one hears to "environment" and its insurmountable obstacles, its irresistible temptations, and all the rest. Here was a man who set out on a hard and baffling quest, with a goal so definite as to become almost an obsession, vowing to reach it, undeterred by delay and apparent failure; and that goal he reached, that vow he made good. To quote Mr. Chesterton again: "The moment we have a fixed heart, we have a free hand."

That is what is wanted—the temper that won't admit defeat, that won't pay homage to the great god Circumstance; that is the lesson I want young folks especially to learn, and not to believe in the dominance of luck. Just as surely as you cannot worship God and Mammon, you cannot worship Pluck and Luck; it must be one or the other—at most it is true that luck follows and rewards pluck. Listen. A few years ago a marvellous piece of statuary by an English artist, after creating a stir at the Paris Salon, was shipped back to England, and accidentally smashed to unrecognizable fragments, The mass of débris was taken to a London firm, who pronounced the case hopeless, and that seemed to be the end of the matter—a great work of art irreparably lost. Now for the sequel. The statue was so broken up that the firm refused to touch it, and it lay in their workroom unheeded for months. Then one night the

two partners, father and son, looked over it, and found some portions which they thought they could piece together. They tried first with these, just as an experiment, and the thing seemed to promise well. At odd intervals during the next twelve months they turned their attention to it, but it was like putting together a most intricate puzzle. The fascination of the restoration grew as they advanced with it, and slowly the scheme of reconstruction began to take shape. All the time the artist was allowed to believe that her work was destroyed beyond recovery. Judge of her feelings when, after two years, she was shown her statue so perfectly restored that no outward traces of damage were to be seen. Luck or pluck? Frankly, now, what do you say? And is not there in that story from real life a very obvious parable for us? Maybe there is some reader who thinks that his life as he had planned it has got smashed up to fragments: spoiled and done for, that is your own verdict, and, possibly enough, the world's. Well, but don't give up so entirely; see if there are not some fragments among the mass that will piece together again—just as an experiment—and perhaps the fascination of restoration will grow upon you too, until some day you may find that the impossible has come to pass, and chaos been replaced by order, and the broken and disfigured made whole again. Don't you think it is worth the trying?

I come back to this always: Here is circumstance, in stature a giant, in appearance strong and mighty—and there is man, in stature a pygmy, in reality stronger and mightier, if he chooses to assert and exert his power. And I repeat that it is not the smiles but the frowns of fortune that bring out what is worthiest in character, as it is the night that brings out the stars. The best

chance that can come to any of us is the fighting chance. There are reserves of power, possibilities of courage, endurance, self-giving in us which remain unsuspected until they have to be perforce brought into play. There is no greater temporal blessing than good health, yet even against the handicap of physical infirmity and suffering the will can prevail surprisingly. Here is a minister stricken down in health by the dreadful, insidious scourge of consumption. His one chance is to go and live abroad, in the air of Davos in Switzerland, which restored Dr. Aked, and kept John Addington Symonds alive for years. But this man has not the means to remain in that climate indefinitely in a sanatorium—what is he to do? I will tell you what he did do, and what always strikes me as one of the pluckiest things I ever heard of, a magnificent battle against odds. He knew some German before he went out; within two years he had so perfected his knowledge and power of using this foreign language that he was duly installed as a pastor of a German Evangelical Church in the locality where he had to live if he was to live at all. Don't you think it was fine? Don't you think there would be such a sense of triumph in a life so preserved as could never have come to him had he not had to wrestle for it as for a prize?

Another case of pluck versus luck under ill-health—again drawn from my personal knowledge. If there is a scourge more terrible than consumption, it is that of cancer, that mysterious evil whose cure seems to baffle the healing skill of the faculty. Two women consulted a physician, and in both cases the diagnosis was the same—it was a form of cancer; to both the same advice was given—"Your only chance of keeping these growths down is in hard work, in continuous exertion."

"Oh, I couldn't do that," said one. "Then I'm afraid you won't live long," was the candid answer—and she died in two months. The other is still living, keeping the enemy at bay by sheer ceaseless activity, actually nursing a daughter who is a permanent invalid, helpful to others instead of being helpless herself. What is it keeps the breath in that frail body? What but an indomitable will? And not a mere clinging to life for its own sake, but rather a mother's holy love and determination not to quit the post of duty while she can minister to her ailing child. Heroism? Don't open the pages of war-chronicles, of battles and sieges: you have it there, in a tiny suburban flat, humble but intensely real—the kind of heroism that keeps on keeping on. And will you tell me that we are mere playthings in the hand of destiny? Does it not rather look as though there were scarcely any conceivable ill or trial against which the human spirit cannot victoriously assert its mastery? Ah, Tennyson was right—you remember Enid's song:

Turn, fortune, turn thy wheel and lower the proud;
Turn thy wild wheel through sunshine, storm and cloud;
Thy wheel and thee we neither love nor hate.

Turn, fortune, turn thy wheel with smile or frown;
With that wild wheel we go not up or down;
Our hoard is little, but our hearts are great.

Turn, turn thy wheel above the staring crowd;
Thy wheel and thou are shadows in the cloud;
For man is man, and master of his fate.

And Browning, in his robust and heartening manner, enforces the same lesson again and again:

Let a man contend to the uttermost
For his life's set prize, be it what it will!

—he exclaims; and again he calls out to men who complain that life is too arduous and toilsome:

> Then welcome each rebuff
> That turns earth's smoothness rough,
> Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!
> Be our joys three-parts pain!
> Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
> Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the throe!

That is my message to you—"To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield"—to give no credence to the coward superstition about luck, but by God's grace, and under the leadership of Christ, to resolve strongly, to aim clearly, to run with patience the race that is set before us all, that race whose prize is the life which is life indeed. We are not responsible for our environment—true; but we are responsible for what we do with it, and make of it. Out of the same marble we may carve an angel or a devil; upon the same scroll we may write a tale of glory or of shame; out of the same substances we may mix a medicine or a poison; which is it to be?

"'If thou wilt, thou canst.' And he saith, 'I will.'" It all comes to that, really and truly.

X

The Soul's Three Tenses

"This one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal."—*Phil.* iii. 13.

THAT is a very remarkable summary of a life's programme, of a whole outlook and attitude of the soul, and it is none the less remarkable in that it comes from a man whose earthly race is almost run, who has lived an exceptionally full and strenuous life, and is now writing from prison, with the prospect of death hanging over him. It is a strange thing to us that a man so beset should write a letter so serene, so uncomplaining, as this Epistle of Paul's to the Philippians: how could he sit down and pen such a document under such grim and depressing circumstances? Isn't it more likely, says the sceptic, that the whole thing was invented, and the letter written years after the alleged events by some scribe who merely imagined the scene and surrounding conditions? Some years ago, Mr. Chesterton, dealing with just this sceptical temper which dismisses as untrue whatever is sublime, wrote a most stimulating essay on "The Heroic that Happened," and gave instance after instance of events, actions and sayings that ought to have been legendary, only they chanced to be absolutely historic. "A peasant-

girl, called half-witted, did promise to defeat the victors of Agincourt—and did it ; it ought to be a legend, but it happens to be a fact. A poet and a poetess did fall in love and eloped secretly to a sunny clime ; it is obviously a three-volume novel ; but it happened. Nelson did die in the act of winning the one battle that could change the world. It is a grossly improbable coincidence ; but it is too late to alter it now." Yes, the heroic is a fact, and it always happens with dramatic fitness ; it happened somewhere about the year 63 of our era, when Paul the aged sent his message of cheer from the gloom of prison in Rome ; it happened again when Captain Scott, with death in its most terrible form before his eyes, wrote *his* last message, so noble in its fortitude, so strong in its acceptance of a tragic fate, from the gloom and doom of the antarctic ice.

These are among life's possibilities, generally undreamt-of in our narrow round of doings and even sufferings ; and just because, though we call them unearthly, they thrill us, they afford us proof of the heavenly that slumbers within our own selves, and responds to the appeal of the sublime.

Well now, we turn to our text, and with your permission I will take the clauses in a slightly different order from that of the original : " Forgetting the things which are behind, this one thing I do—I press on toward the goal." That, I say, is the summary of a life's programme ; it denotes a definite outlook, it gives us the soul's three tenses. And may I in the first instance be allowed to insist strongly and emphatically upon the urgent necessity of having such a programme, of planning our life in some measure, of administering with care and foresight this estate of self with which we are entrusted, and from which we are expected to raise a

harvest? I know how much there is in life that is not at all in our hands, how large a part the incalculable and unforeseen plays in every existence. You tell me of the mere accident of a moment that has turned your life into wholly different channels from those in which it had been running previously, or seemed likely to run in after-days. You are not the same person you might have been, had you been born in a different part of the country; or had you fallen under different social or maybe religious influences; or had not a mere chance meeting led up to an intimacy which you may rejoice in or deplore, as the case may be, all the days of your life. I know that well enough; none of us have reached middle-age without learning that lesson, and being sometimes saddened and very often humbled by it. What then? What do you think follows? That we are to abandon ourselves like straws to every eddy, to say in effect that since we can do little, we will do nothing, but give in without a struggle to the world-forces, to do with us, make of us, what they like? I submit that the very opposite conclusion is the one which rationally follows. Supposing it is true that we have to say, with one of the characters in Bourget's *Le Disciple*, "*On n'a que soi*," "One's only got oneself," then that is surely ground for making the most of that self, developing all its resources, turning all its faculties to account, for the most careful and efficient piloting and steersmanship of that frail craft over the deeps and shallows of life! If that were impossible, how is it to be understood that so many of these vessels, no better built than ours, reach port? Just happy accident? That is not my reading of the lives that have mattered in the history of the world; making all allowance for the accidental and incalculable, for storm and stress, they

weathered the tempest because the ship of their soul had a captain on board, and the captain knew where he was making for! But how shall we get to a destination upon which we have never made up our minds, and for which we have never consciously set sail?

Now, for the first tense of the soul we turn to the first part of our text, "Forgetting the things which are behind;" we will call that first tense "Past Imperfect." Do you know that that is really the best thing we can do with quite the greater proportion of the items that make up the past—forget them? Drop the useless ballast overboard—lighten the ship, I say! In the most obvious sense, I am inclined to think that this is even true of a great deal of what is laboriously taught and committed to memory as history. No doubt these events were very important when they happened, just as these dead-and-gone sovereigns were persons of great consequence when they reigned, but it is time their reign was declared over and done with. Why on earth burden children's minds with all the tedious dates of battles, treaties and the like, which matter nothing to any living soul in the living present? I should favour a reducing of history as a school-subject to very simple outlines; the really important facts for us to know are those of the immediate past, such as we may read in that admirable work, Mr. Gretton's *Modern History of the English People*, which *begins* with the year 1880, and tells the story with a vivacity that takes you captive.

But applying this thought to more personal matters, I would really suggest that many—possibly most—people are hampered and hindered by not sufficiently cultivating the fine art of forgetting. We are not meant to carry about with us all the lumber of the bygone time. Whittier sang, and sang rightly, rejoicing

that "all the good the past has had remains to make our own time glad;" yes, but how much of all the *ill* the past has had remains to make our own time *sad*! The great emancipation so many of us need is from the imperfect past tense; not to be tethered and tied to traditions, ways of thinking, ways of doing things, that no doubt were very serviceable and excellent in their own day, but are now only fit to be laid aside and superseded by something that constitutes a step in advance. In the domain of religion, how often does one hear it said that "the Church, or the views, that were good enough for my fathers, are good enough for me"? There are even people who in all good faith believe themselves to be progressive, because they were so once upon a time, and it has never occurred to them that what were startling innovations in their youth have by this time become out-worn shibboleths. "Let me tell you," says a character in *Man and Superman*, "I was an advanced man before you were born." "I knew it was a long time ago," is the cool reply. We are here to do our duty in and to the present, and we cannot do that unless we have faith in our age having its own inspiration. Respect for the past is one thing; slavery to it is another. And it is not want of reverence which believes, to quote the Quaker poet once more, that "still the new transcends the old in forms and wonders manifold." There is not a more futile person than the one who everlastingly tells us of the great and palmy times of his youth, and how things have degenerated since; and you know this danger of old-fogeyism is a most insidious one, and attacks people at a much earlier age than is sometimes imagined. To yield to this temptation of idolizing the remembered bygone is to doom oneself to inefficiency; it is better to forget a

good deal than to remember too much. And what will help us to forget is quite simply the practice of storing our brain-cells with fresh and vital matter; for we are so constructed that we cannot carry more than a certain amount—though the amount is not fixed—and by giving the mind fresh work to do, fresh ideas to assimilate, a lot of old, dead matter is automatically eliminated and consigned to merciful oblivion. Believe me, all progress depends upon the faculty of forgetting things that are behind.

And in still more intimate affairs the same rule applies. Who has not known people who go about self-tortured by some memory of which—if they only knew it—it is their first duty energetically to rid themselves? Life's path should be an upward one; and no one can climb a hill with a dead-weight of unprofitable recollections tied to him. Has the past been imperfect, painful, troubled? Then why dwell upon it to the extent of allowing it to injure and poison the present? A good reason, surely, for forgetting! Memory is one of the most wonderful gifts of God; but, like all His other gifts, it is capable of being abused and turned to our own hurt. There are men and women who can never get over some past wrong they have suffered—they will expatiate on that theme as long as your patience lasts, and longer too; well, they are morbidly destroying their capacity for happiness, through not allowing that old wound to heal—and I almost believe that the one really unpardonable sin is the sin of not pardoning. I think the Lord Christ would forgive anything rather than an unforgiving spirit. Oh, if ever sin went paired with folly, it is here! Turn away from the grievous thing—the past injury, the past feud—resolutely; they are dead really, it is

only human foolishness that keeps them in a ghostly semblance of life! Turn to some living, healthy interest, and of itself the shadow will shrink, then show but a little on the far horizon, finally to disappear—forgotten, gone! Yes, it *can* be done, by the steady, systematic exercise of our wills, and by our spirits seeking the co-operation of the Spirit of God.

And there are others who go about permanently discouraged by some past failure; the prize has eluded their grasp, the effort been frustrated, the desire been denied its fulfilment, and now life creeps sadly along on broken wing. This baleful memory is always with them, clings to their heels, shakes its head at them mournfully when some new impulse or initiative comes over them, as who should say, "Haven't you had enough? Do you want to add to the record of defeat? Be warned: accept the verdict once pronounced—attempt no more!" Now that is horribly bad advice; be *taught* by failure by all means, learn from mistakes how *not* to do a thing the next time, but for the rest forget bygone unsuccess for the sake of the success yet to be won. The world has little use for the pathetic people whose one accomplishment is resignation, who are good at giving up and letting go, and at nothing else; who, if they lose the first round, retire from the contest. Nothing is hopeless till we have abandoned hope—nothing desperate till we have despaired. You know the story of the Taff Bridge, how it was destroyed by rain and flood, not once, but twice; and of Edwards, the engineer, so far from nursing the memory of these defeats, that he saw in them a challenge rather than a discouragement, and at the third attempt constructed the Rainbow Arch, as it is called, which has spanned the eddying river for more than a century and a half—

a magnificent memorial of magnificent perseverance. We have, if I might say so, to sort out our experiences, saying in some cases, "Grapple them to thy heart with hooks of steel"—and in others, "It is not worth the keeping; let it go."

To sum it all up in a word, whenever the things that are behind, or the memory of them, would cripple us, depress us, "down" us, our wisdom and our duty alike is to forget them as completely as ever we can. It may sound a little startling to you, but I would apply this even to the recollection of our own transgressions, errors, faults of commission or omission. It is no good to be for ever thinking of these; to do so is to suffer a creeping paralysis of the will. Far better sink them fathoms deep. No modern writer took a more serious view of sin than Robert Louis Stevenson; that gives all the more point to his advice: "Never allow your mind to dwell on your own misconduct; that is ruin. The conscience has morbid sensibilities; it must be employed but not indulged. . . . One of the leading virtues is to let oneself alone." And again he prays: "Help us with the grace of courage, that we be none of us cast down when we sit lamenting amid the ruins of our happiness or our integrity; touch us with fire from the altar, that we may be up and doing to rebuild our city." "*Up and doing to rebuild our city*"—what a glorious call! That means a turning away from the waste and welter of the past, and the effort itself is an earnest of success:

> Nor deem the irrevocable past
> As wholly wasted, wholly vain,
> If, rising on its wrecks, at last
> To something nobler we attain.

Sufficient unto the day—sufficient unto yesterday—is the evil thereof.

First tense, "Past Imperfect;" second tense, "Present Active:" "This one thing I do." That in itself is a most excellent motto: to be doing something —to be doing some one thing—that is the condition of moral health, a veritable means of grace, and we ought to give thanks daily to God for having so placed us that we have little choice but to be active. Concentration, exertion, the urgent necessity for employing our energies —that is Heaven's appointed cure for care, the healing draught "which clears to-day from past regrets and future fears." There is nothing better for a man or a woman than to have such a steady succession of healthy calls on their time and powers as will fill the greater part of their waking moments. That the claims and duties of the present should be insistent, not to be put off, is all to the good. You remember that dreadful old hymn which began with, "Let thy deadly doing be," and so forth: I do not think human perversity could go much further than in seriously uttering such sentiments, and that in the name of religion. We are meant to be doers, not mere lookers-on at life's spectacle, and in doing to discharge our debt and justify our existence. We must till our field, or it will bring forth weeds of itself. The common saying is quite accurate, which maintains that we require employment if only to be kept out of mischief. The idle classes of a community are its truly dangerous classes; and those who don't drive, drift. One respects people who, being so circumstanced that they do not depend on their exertions for a livelihood, give themselves up to the public service; and yet this entirely honourable instinct of theirs is also an instinct of moral self-preservation—these are men and women who want to be able to respect themselves, and who know by intuition that no

one who does not make some contribution to the world's well-being, no parasite or idler, can have self-respect. And so far from believing that labour was ordained by God as a punishment for man's disobedience, we rather agree with the great Greek thinker who declared that activity was in itself pleasurable—the workmanlike wielding of tools, the assured mastery of one's material, the shaping from the raw mass something that carries out a design, the mere act of expending energy wholesomely: all this has a pleasure and satisfaction of its own, which one would not exchange for æons of unlimited and unruffled ease.

And may I again insist that we ought to focus our powers on some particular task, to make our choice of an object in life, and abide by it. There is all the difference between "This one thing I do," and "This dozen things I play at." Activity is one thing—fussiness is another. We all know the people who are everlastingly after some new thing, some new toy, wrapped up in some subject to the exclusion of everything else for a month, or three months—and when next you meet them, and ask how this particular movement or scheme for reforming the globe is getting on, you find they have almost forgotten about it, but are up to the eyes in something else, which has the one merit of being of later birth. There is something very irritating about this futile kind of dilettante; he achieves nothing, all the time that he is keeping immensely busy, and represents only so much waste energy. The most prosaic plodding away at some unromantic task has more claim to our esteem than these undisciplined, short-lived and fruitless enthusiasms; it is far better to go in steady pursuit of such an avocation as will keep a family in decent comfort and health than to run in

excited chase after a score of will-o'-the-wisps. And the necessity of doing "this one thing" proves specially blessed and wholesome in seasons of stress and private grief; to know that, however sore your trial, duty is waiting to be done, the day's work is inexorably calling, the routine of business or profession has to be gone through—that these customers have to be seen, these invoices to be made out, the family dinner to be cooked—all this is discipline and medicine in one, in appearance a stern tax upon our energies, in reality a steadying influence, restoring our equilibrium, keeping our thoughts from turning inward overmuch, and compelling us, in Stevenson's phrase, to let ourselves alone, while earning our bread. Busy people, thank God, have no time to despair.

"Present active:" it is man's distinctive characteristic that he alone of all God's creatures is in the world as a maker; if his wants are to be supplied, if he is not to go without the necessaries of life, he must bestir himself, and produce something. Let me insist upon the fact that the world is being run on a system of short supplies, and that we are all consumers of the slender stores that would be exhausted in an incredibly short time but for the labour that is ever in progress, replenishing the inroads that are constantly being made. Paul, with all his interest in doctrine, had a firm enough hold upon reality: "For yourselves know," he writes, "how neither did we eat bread for nought at any man's hand, but in labour and travail, working night and day, that we might not burden any of you." Paul was a gentleman; I cannot say the same for the "waster" or "slacker" who looks out for a soft job and tries to subsist on the exertions of others. And while our business here is to be makers—whether we make homes or

laws or machinery or music or shoes or sermons or anything else—let me remind you that we are every one, all the time and inevitably, making or marring a self, and that "shoddy work makes shoddy men."

But it is time we reached the third stage in this grammar lesson. "Past Imperfect;" "Present Active;" you have already guessed, without my telling you, that the soul's third tense is "Future Perfect." "Forgetting the things that are behind—this one thing I do—I press on toward the goal." Do you realize that this pressing on is itself an act of faith—faith in the unseen goal, of whose existence we are convinced only by the sense of its magnetic attraction? Man is haunted by what Tennyson called "the type of perfect in his mind," compelled, if he allows his better nature a chance, to follow the gleam; and for the Christian, who believes that this "type of perfect" once took shape in an actual human life, in the Person of Jesus Christ, there is more than a mere gleam to follow—there is the steady shining of the Light of the World. In spite of the imperfections of which we are only too conscious; in spite of failures and stumblings not a few; in spite of heartaches and disappointments and blows under which we have reeled at times, we trust that somehow good will be the final goal of ill. Not the sense of attainment but the pressing on is the thing, obedience to the drawing power of that Eternal Goodness which we have seen looking at us from the human eyes of the Son of God. This is the faith that overcometh the world. What we need is an ideal greater and fairer than the actual, towards which to labour and strive, to struggle and aspire, undismayed though we never catch up with it, taking the broken arcs on earth as the earnest of the perfect round in heaven.

What are the hindrances to this "pressing on"? They are, firstly, self-complacency with what we have achieved; secondly, the peril of pessimism; thirdly, the illusion of progress as inevitable and automatic. Of the first I need say little, except that "to be contented is to be in danger;" but I would very emphatically warn you against the enervating luxury of pessimism, which has at all times struck some most seductive chords, full of a languorous sweetness—you know the style:

> So short is our life, yet with time for all things to forsake us;
> A bitter delusion, a dream from which nought can awake us,
> Till death's dogging footsteps at noon or at night shall o'ertake us.

For your own sakes, sirs, stop your ears against this sirens' song, or your barque will make shipwreck; meet it with a right brave melody, some psalm of life that will help you to be "up and doing with a heart for any fate;" in the realism of endeavour, these spectres will vanish. And beware, too, of the fallacy which imagines that progress is bound to come of itself, while we need only look on as interested spectators. That mistake is sometimes encouraged by a shallow reading of evolution, but it is quite a fatal error. Progress does not come of itself; whether in the life of the individual or of the nation, it is only achieved by whole-hearted effort, by concentration and consecration. We are not to be carried on by some stream of tendency, but to press on—frequently *against* the stream—and often it is an exhausting contest we have to wage, and the victory over evil is hard-won. Hard-won, but not impossible to win. Let me borrow an illustration. You know something of the marvels of radio-activity; how in Sir William Crookes' vacuum-tube we have a

rush of invisible molecules of such rapidity and force that under their impact a mass of metal will become red-hot, and will even melt if the attack is prolonged. So the invisible power of the will in its impact upon obstacles that seem too solid to conquer, yet through which human volitions will burn their way, ploughing their path to the goal. Only we must *have* a goal before we can advance towards it; we must fix our gaze on the something better we mean to do or be; we must believe that we can approximate towards it, and so stretch forward to the things that are before, that faith may become sight, and sight little by little give way to touch. The only failure we need dread is that of not trying, of not contending to the uttermost for our life's set prize. As the poet says:

> The sin I impute to each frustrate ghost
> Is the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin.

We are responsible only for the attempt we make, for the endeavour we put forth: the result is in God's hand. Ours only not to grow weary: in due season we shall reap if we faint not. Nor is all the sowing confined to this life, or all the reaping to the other; but in the providence of Heaven the opportunities of progress are unlimited there as here. And so, from Past Imperfect, through Present Active, to Future Perfect—"from good to better, daily self-surpassed"—a future far beyond the boundaries of this little span:

> Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,
> As the swift seasons roll!
> Leave thy low-vaulted past!
> Let each new temple, nobler than the last,
> Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,
> Till thou at length art free,
> Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's unresting sea!

XI

Wings to Rise by

"They shall mount up with wings as eagles."—*Isa.* xl. 31.

I SHOULD not be at all surprised to be told that some of those ingenious people who read the Bible principally in order to discover in detached phrases and texts alleged predictions of modern events, had pointed to these words as prophetic of the achievements of aviation. So much is certain, that the problem of flying, which the early twentieth century is just beginning to solve in a rudimentary fashion, is one that has been occupying the human mind since before the grey dawn of history. This mastery of the air, which is at length in process of becoming accomplished fact, has been haunting man's imagination since time out of mind—perhaps since the far-off era when winged monsters, part reptiles, part birds, inhabited the globe. We used to picture the incredulity of our great-grandparents if they could have been told of our being carried along from the North of England to London in under four hours, and thinking nothing of it; but how would they have received such an intimation as we may read in any morning's newspaper, of the First Lord of the Admiralty carrying out part of his duties of inspection by aeroplane, rising to a height of 2,000 feet, staying up

just as long as he wanted, and coming down in no wise the worse for his experience? Would they not have thought that some irresponsible romancer had been trying to palm off as fact the wildest and most transparent fiction?

From oldest times, I say, this problem of flight has exercised its fascination over man. Every one is familiar with the Greek legend of Dædalus, the cunning artificer, and how, in order to make a way of escape for himself and Icarus, his son, from Crete, he fashioned wings, fastening them on with wax; how he himself flew successfully across the narrow Ægean, but Icarus, delighting in his new-found power, rose too high, so that the sun's rays melted the wax, and he fell headlong into the ocean, the tragic forerunner in ancient fable of so many real tragedies of the air enacted in these latter days.

But what, then, was the old Hebrew prophet's meaning when he said that men—some of those to whom he was addressing himself—should mount up with wings as eagles? Of course, he was not referring to physical flight at all; his language is picture-language, unmistakable as such, a promise to a nation dejected, defeated, eating the bread of exile, telling them that those days of humiliation should not last for ever, that their destiny would take an upward course once more, that they should rise again from the slough of despond, and proudly soar aloft, a star in the firmament of nations. Would they believe his report? Would they so much as heed his words? Belief, indeed, was difficult; the catastrophe which had overtaken the Hebrews was so complete, so seemingly irretrievable; no doubt the majority accepted it as such, and thought of nothing save settling down for good in their land of

banishment. Why strive, why hope for anything more? By the waters of Babylon they sat—and wept no longer; that was the tragedy of it: resentment had cooled, and contentment of a kind had come, and their last state was worse than their first. Their spiritless acquiescence was far sadder than their former revolt against their fate; for you can take the saying, "Where there is life there is hope," and make it far truer by turning it right round—"*Only* where there is hope is there life," and the promise of life. It was Isaiah's task, as it has been the task of prophetic souls all through the ages, to re-kindle the imagination of the dull, to awaken belief in themselves in the breasts of men who believed in nothing in particular, to breathe into languid hearts the inspiration which would revive their aspiration, to give to these dwellers in the marshy plain the desire for wings—wings to rise by.

Now this is the first point I wish to insist on—the necessity, in every life that is to be more than a vegetating process, of wings, *i.e.*, of the faculty of aspiration, of ideals, and the craving to realize them. What we are going to make of our lives depends—I will not say entirely, but very largely—upon what we think life is for, what its possibilities are, what are the objects worth spending our energies upon. If we are so fortunate as to have a splendid view of life's possibles, there is at least a chance of our attaining to some of them—we certainly shall never reach what we are too inert to stretch out our hands after. The whole difficulty with the people whom the prophet of the Captivity addressed, was that they had ceased to think a return of happier conditions possible—they lay prostrate, their wings either broken or shrivelled up. And the whole difficulty with most of us is that we take a poor and

paltry view of what existence is for—we have not lost our wings, we have never troubled to grow them, never suspected our need of such equipment. And may I say, before going further, that the one thing which more than another will give us a fine and inspiring view of existence is, quite simply, religion? You see, that is what all the preaching is for, that at any rate is the true object of preaching—not to prove this or that abstract speculative doctrine, nor to supply people with a gentle narcotic which will enable them, while they breathe it, to forget about the rough realities of every day, but just to help men and women to live, to act as a tonic, not an opiate, to produce a finer manhood and womanhood. A religion which is not helpful, first and last and all the way through, would be a poor pretender.

But I put it to you that religion, and especially the religion which centres in the Person and teachings of Jesus Christ, helps us more than any other agency to form a noble and invigorating idea of life. It tells us that life is not an aimless struggle, in which brute force and cunning rule, but a great opportunity for building character and developing our spiritual natures. It tells us that we are not unregarded atoms, but related by closest bonds to a God who cares for us, desires our good, and with whom we may co-operate in the working out of His beneficent designs. It tells us that the true satisfactions, and those most worth labouring for, are those which we gain in obeying a law of righteousness and truth and love, and that if we are called on to suffer for right's sake, and truth's sake, and love's sake, we shall know an inner blessedness, our light affliction working for us a far more exceeding weight of glory. It tells us that so far from this brief span or glimpse of existence being all, it is merely a prelude to some

grander strain, some endless harmony, of which our individual note, too, will form part.

I am not even arguing for the moment that all or any of this is *true*; but I say that *if* it is true, then we have such a stimulus to right and worthy living as will indeed endow us with wings on which to mount up above what is sordid and low and tainted. Take the other alternative—assume that religion is illusion, that matter is all, that there presides over this Universe no Righteous Power, and that Death is the end—and life becomes an immeasurably meaner affair, in Macbeth's phrase, "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." And if so many individual lives approximate only too closely to that description, being worthless, purposeless, joyless, the explanation is in nine instances out of ten that they were *wingless*, borne upward by no strong beating pinions of religious faith.

Now, if I had to name this sermon over again, I might possibly alter the title a little, and call it "Clogs and Wings;" for what I want to do now is to inquire what are the forces that keep us down, that clog our progress, and then we shall see more clearly and readily what the forces are which lift us skywards, and enable the soul to breathe a purer air than that of the lowlands. Incidentally, I have named one of these clogs, the most powerful obstacle to idealism, already, viz., irreligion; by which I do not mean so much the outright—even blatant—denial of this or that fundamental belief, an active avowal of agnosticism or rationalism, but rather the far more widely-spread indifference which "cares for none of these things," cares, rather, for nothing except a good time, the temper which is frankly *uninterested* in religion. "What better should I be if I went to Church or Chapel instead of enjoying myself on a

Sunday ? " says the man of this type if, greatly daring, you tackle him. Shall I tell you—shall I answer that question by asking another ? What opportunity does the average, non-Churchgoing votary of " a good time " get for having his higher motives appealed to, for being made to feel that he is in this world for something besides business and pleasure, for being awakened to a sense of his own dignity and responsibility as a child of God ? Possibly enough he does not wish to be so awakened, to be told of the mystery of the wings he possesses and ought to unfurl, wings which will grow stronger with use and weaker with disuse ; possibly he prefers to remain on that deceptive dead-level of existence which so often insensibly becomes a downward slope ; all the greater is his real need to be brought under influences which will liberate what is better and best in him, and make of him what as yet he is not, but may become by the grace of God—a *man*.

People don't strive upward because they don't *look* upward, because their imagination is earthbound. One of the commonest and fatallest clogs is just content with things as they are, a frame of mind partly due to laziness, partly to timidity. In the Epistle to the Hebrews there is a very characteristic word recurring again and again—the word " better." We read of people who " desire a better country ; " of " God having provided some better thing concerning us ; " of " the surety of a better covenant ;" the readers are reminded that they themselves " have a better possession ; " nay, the writer even speaks, in words which fall on our ears with a strange sound, of obtaining " a better resurrection." Now there are people in whose vocabulary, or at least whose actions, the word *better* seems to have no place ; they are creatures of use and wont, to whom

the thought of improvement is foreign, and the thought of self-improvement most foreign of all ; there is little direction or aim in their lives, and what there is, is consistently low—no wonder they don't soar ! Their motto is, " Why bother ? " and their achievement is in accordance with that query. So many folk shrink from following after ideals because they seem so far off, the realization so remote ; and they find it easier to persuade themselves that they are unrealizable. Easier, certainly, for everything that is better means effort in the winning, and the upward path is toilsome. And to disturb the accustomed order of things by breaking loose from the established routine means manifold inconvenience, and may involve loss of popularity and worldly favour :

> And enterprises of great pith and moment
> With this regard their currents turn awry,
> And lose the name of action.

There is a modern play called *Chains*, which might serve as a parable of what I am trying to bring out ; the principal character is drawn by the vision of that freer, more satisfying life which he, the unwilling slave of an office-desk in the city, might make for himself in Australia—but at the last moment the chains prove too strong for him to break, or rather, before an unforeseen circumstance his resolution fails, and his chance goes by for ever. Alas, many are the people who do not even go so far as failure—because they have never attempted, never aspired after a wider outlook, a higher standard of living, never desired a better country.

Timidity, allied to self-interest, is the great bane which keeps men and women just where they are, and things just as they are, which closes the lips that would

proclaim unpopular truths, and paralyses the arm which would strike a blow for freedom. You remember Tennyson's poem, *Churchwarden and Curate*, a piece quite unusually barbed with satire, written in broad Lincolnshire dialect, where the shrewd, worldly, essentially pagan old farmer advises the lately ordained curate, that—

> If thaa meeans to get higher,
> Thaa mun tackle the sins o' the world, but not the faults of the squire,

and tells him that he must "never not speeak plaain out," but "creeap along the hedge-bottoms, and thou'll be a Bishop yit." Who can doubt that that kind of advice is given in many quarters and in varied forms, not always quite so crudely, but all the more insidiously? "Why should *you* stand out against received opinion, and make yourself obnoxious? Why should *you* by your frankness offend people who have it in their power to advance you or to keep you back? Why should you champion the side that is in a hopeless minority, even if you do think it is right?" *Why?* Let me again supply the answer: because that is the way to live, while the other is not even the way to die, but to class oneself among crawling things—and of those who select to take that course we may say, Verily, they have their reward!

But if irreligion, materialism, cowardice, selfishness—the idol-worship of the Unholy Trinity, Success, Expediency, and Circumstance—are the clogs which hold men down, what are the wings on which they shall mount as eagles? Faith, of course, in the very first instance, and in the widest sense of the term—"the assurance of things hoped for, the proving of things not seen." Nothing worth achieving has ever been accom-

plished without faith in those better possibilities which may be realized if we try, and only by trying. Such faith, as it is the root of all reforms, the mainspring of all progress, is an essentially religious endowment, even when it is held by people who make little or no religious profession. We have to believe in what eye has as yet not seen, in the finer character to be built up, the truer social order to be evolved, before we can resolve on the efforts and sacrifices necessary to make such a consummation come to pass; we must believe that we ourselves can become better men and women if we are to make the attempt to bring such a result about—and it was and is the great power of Jesus Christ that He was able to give that belief to quite ordinary sinful people, to inspire them with faith and confidence, to fan the dying embers of their immortal part into bright flame again.

Now this faith in the thing which may be will, of course, take the form of an unquenchable discontent with the thing which is—discontent with ourselves, which is the earnest of all self-improvement, discontent with the world, which is the dynamic of all advance. As Mr. Chesterton once said, we don't want the person who can get on with the world, but the one who desires to get the world on. I always remember a piece of dialogue, which is none the worse because it occurs in another modern play, a dialogue between a cynical man of the world and a social reformer. "You take a leaf out of my book," says the one—"I enjoy life! I take the world as I find it, and a jolly good world it is! And if it's good enough for me, why isn't it good enough for you, eh?" Swift as lightning the idealist's answer comes back: "This world is not good enough for me, because it holds men like you!" Don't you see—the

worst, the most self-revealing and self-condemning thing the other could have said was that the world such as it is, with all its tears and sorrows, all its sin and shame, is good enough for him ; in that one illuminating phrase he takes his rank—and it is low down in the scale.

But let me remind you, if I may, of one or two discontented men, whose discontent was, as I said, only the other side of faith, and who found in it the power to rise and raise others with them to loftier levels, in strong and determined flight. Here is young Mazzini, at the age of twenty-five, imprisoned in a fortress for planning the liberation of his country from the Austrian yoke. How tempting it would have been to persuade himself that it was no use crying for the moon, and to devote himself simply to the furthering of his own prospects ! But he had chosen otherwise, and as he lay in his cell high up in the tower of Savona, there was born in his soul the burden of his prophecy, expressed in the cry, " God and the People ! "—there was born in him the vision of a free and united Italy, which he was destined to see arise, nay, to help into being, largely by means of his own labours and sufferings, one of those miracles which only an undying faith in the ideal can bring to pass. Was it not worth while—was he not borne aloft as on pinions, drawing his nation after him to light and liberty ? And here is William Lloyd Garrison—do you remember the story of how he started to fight the wrongs and cruelties of slavery, twenty-six years of age, unknown, without capital, yet fired by a holy resolve that a great evil should cease ? See him in his third-floor workshop, furnished with a long deal table, a desk, a few chairs and a second-hand printing press—the place where he worked by day, writing and printing his anti-slavery paper, and slept on the floor by night ;

"I will be harsh as truth," he registers his vow, "and as uncompromising as justice. I am in earnest. I will not equivocate. I will not retire a single inch. And I will be heard." You know Lowell's lines on Garrison —suffer me to repeat them:

> In a small chamber, friendless and unseen,
> Toiled o'er his type a poor unlearned young man;
> The place was dark, unfurnitured and mean,
> Yet here the freedom of a race began.
>
> Help came but slowly. Surely no man yet
> Put lever to the heavy world with less.
> What need of help? He knew how types were set,
> He had a dauntless spirit and a press.

And a dauntless spirit and a press overcame prejudice, bigotry, persecution, the power of money and vested interest.

Here again, in quite another field, is John William Colenso, the Bishop of Natal, a scholar of singular independence and integrity; when his researches lead him to reject the traditional view of the Pentateuch having been written by Moses, and the stories of the Creation, the Fall, the Flood being literal history, how much safer and more profitable it would have been for him to keep a discreet silence, if only on the ground that it would not do to disturb the faithful. But he, too, chose the difficult, uphill path, in simple obedience to truth; he could not rest satisfied until he had proclaimed the new and more accurate views at which he had arrived, though he knew that his punishment would be ostracism, the loss of friendships, the sacrifice of his worldly prospects. Unmoved by outcry, cruel misunderstandings, virtual deposition from office, he persevered in his line of patient study, never quailed in making the results known, and so, by his faith in the supreme value of truth, effected as real a liberation in the domain of

thought, and from as real a bondage, as Garrison did in his championship of the slave.

And let me say this—If we would rise above expediency-hunting and the swamps of compromise, we must have and cherish a power of hating a wrong so as to give it no quarter. I have never believed in people who tell you that they "sympathize" with such and such a cause very much, but want to do their sympathizing very quietly and privately, without coming into the open and risking anything in the process. The most ineffectual person in the world, and the one who in the day of crisis will do you positive harm, is the one who describes himself as your well-wisher—he probably wishes the other side well, too, only more so. There are people who call themselves broad-minded when they are merely flabby: all "breadth," and no mind. No, we have to be indignant with wrong, and up in arms against it. Righteous indignation will carry in a day entrenchments round which you might walk in procession and intone chants of moral suasion for ever and a day without effect. Let me ask you one question—Who liberated Dreyfus? I know that a great many people contributed to that result, but the one man who burst through that awful clerical and militarist conspiracy was an intensely angry man called Zola, flinging into the midst of official pretence and obstinacy his bomb-like challenge, that Open Letter, *I Accuse*, which made history and unmade a French President. True, Zola risked all, and lost most he had of income, popularity, and the rest; but you know instinctively that the loss was compensated by a far greater inner gain—he had chosen that good part which no one was able to take away from him. When we are face to face with abuse, oppression, treachery, the true Scriptural advice

to follow is, "Be ye angry, and sin not." He who is but moderately opposed to evil will be but moderately in love with good. You remember the condemnation pronounced on the Church of Laodicea: "Because thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spew thee out of my mouth." To return to our simile—Such feeble wings will never win great heights.

I have left myself with little time for the one or two concluding remarks I want to make; let me put them as briefly as I can. In the first place, may I remind you that flight is one thing, fluttering quite another. When we speak of people as being in a flutter, we don't mean that they are moving very fast, or rising very high, or in fact getting anywhere in particular. But we are to aim high, and to aim steadily, and to make in the direction of our aim all the time, *i.e.*, if we are really to mount on wings as eagles, and not merely to flutter round with the aimlessness of butterflies or the feebleness of barn-door fowls. We must set our minds on the things that are above, derive inspiration from the finest examples of devoted lives, lives of service and striving, and then, with hearts aflame, bend our energies in some one particular direction, not scatter them in half a dozen, but seek to reach some given goal, to attain some end we have set before us.

And, in the second place, let me repeat that wings, like all other organs, need to be exercised if they are to prove strong and serviceable. You can only remain, say, a swimmer by swimming, a fluent speaker of a foreign tongue by speaking it; you can only retain your faculty of flight by flying. Keep your faith, your courage, your discontent well and constantly exercised; you cannot with any safety lay them aside for awhile, thinking that by and by you will take them up again—

all power comes and grows by use, and by use alone is preserved.

Lastly, let us remember that there is one point we need to outfly, to soar beyond, and that is *self*. I mean what the Apostle calls the natural man with his egoism, his self-indulgence, his earthly longings and the rest; we have to get away from these in order to find our true selves in unselfishness, in living for others, in the imitation of Christ, who Himself was lifted up that He might draw all men after Him; "Who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the Cross, despising shame," "and having been made perfect, is become to all that obey Him the Author of eternal salvation." So beating our wings, not ineffectually, but in the strength of His might, may we rise to the upper air, and join

> the choir invisible
> Of those immortal dead who live again
> In minds made better by their presence: live
> In pulses stirred to generosity,
> In deeds of daring rectitude; in scorn
> Of miserable aims that end with self.

That is a great scripture; may it be prophetic of us, and find its fulfilment in us.

XII

Main Lines and Side Tracks

"The word of the Lord came unto Jonah, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh . . . But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish."—*Jonah* i. 1–3.

THE Book of Jonah is one of the most misunderstood writings in the whole range, not only of the Bible, but of all literature. In the popular mind it is almost exclusively associated with a miracle so incredible that it has become a matter for jest—there is something that makes, not for edification but for irreverent hilarity in the story of Jonah's three days' sojourn in the big fish; even a highly orthodox preacher like Dr. Len Broughton, who accepts the story as fact, cannot allude to it without cracking a characteristic joke, which I do not feel called upon to repeat. Now the average reader—or non-reader—of the Bible would be greatly surprised to learn that the episode of the big fish is the least important feature in the whole narrative, and quite immaterial to its real purpose; he would be surprised to find—and yet he would do so by merely reading this brief document, forty-eight verses in all—that this is one of the most religiously elevated books of the Bible, a passionate protest against narrowness, bigotry, lovelessness, such as flourished in later Judaism; a manifesto asserting the wideness of God's

mercy, and proclaiming the belief that that mercy glorieth against judgment. History, of course, it is not; like the Book of Ruth, which belongs to the same period, it might be justly described as a religious novel with a purpose, and that purpose to show that God's care was not confined to the little Hebrew nation, but embraced those whom these would-be monopolists of Divine favour bitterly despised as mere heathen, human rubbish; a warm-hearted plea that these, too, had their share in God's gracious plan, which was for all mankind, not for one single tribe.

But in addition to all this, the Book is remarkable because it contains a most intimately-sketched portrait of a temperament, none the less worth studying because it is an imaginary portrait. Here is this man Jonah, the son of Amittai, who is singled out by God for the performance of a special duty, made the mouthpiece of the Most High, and entrusted with an important embassy. There must be something in a man so chosen, given such a commission, to qualify him for it—some sensitiveness of perception, some eloquence of speech; anyhow, he has received Jehovah's command, and cannot doubt its supreme authority. What does he do? He considers the task irksome, uncongenial, possibly fraught with danger, and straightway takes boat for quite another part of the world, as far from Nineveh as he could get. He is either so light-minded that he thinks his disobedience won't matter or will escape attention, or he means to put off an unpleasant duty on the pretext that he has some urgent business to attend to elsewhere first—he will carry out the Lord's behest at some more convenient season, unless he can in the meantime contrive to forget all about it. I think that, probably, was his

unavowed hope. With that hazardous commission weighing on his mind, he suddenly, and with positive relief, remembered some long-standing invitation to some friends living in far-off Spain, and half-persuaded himself that it was nothing less than a duty to comply with it there and then; the other affair—*God's* business—well, that must wait, and "let us hope," he added mentally, "that by and by the necessity for dealing with it will have disappeared altogether. If only I wait long enough, either the Ninevites will reform, and then I need not go; or they *won't* reform, and meet with destruction—which will be even better—and then there won't be any Ninevites to go to: in any case I am well rid of an unpleasant and unprofitable job." In very good spirits with himself, he books his passage for Tarshish—single, not return—has his luggage conveyed on board, and as the vessel slips slowly out of the Joppa harbour, engages in a little friendly chat with the mate as to the weather prospects, and as to whether they are going to have a smooth voyage. Presently the land recedes from view, the sun goes down, and Jonah, well satisfied with himself, retires to his berth; he really could not with any decency—so he tells himself before he falls asleep—have let his friends at Tarshish wait any longer!

That is Jonah's account of the matter, but it is not the Bible's; in that plain-spoken book we read that "Jonah rose up to *flee* unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord"—and, deny it as he might, that was the real truth of the matter; he was bent on flight. Jonah is the great classical example of the side-tracked, the man who thinks he can branch off from the main-line when he does not quite like the direction in which

it would take him, and who persuades himself that it is really ever so much more sensible and profitable to make for a different point of the compass. And then the story goes on to enforce the lesson how vain is this attempt to flee from the presence of the Lord, to find refuge on our side-tracks, how punishment and disaster overtake the fugitive, and the deserter finds his way of escape cut off. "If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; if I say, surely the darkness shall overwhelm me, and the light about me shall be night: even the darkness hideth not from Thee, but the night shineth as the day."

Well, now, turning from the Biblical narrative to our wider subject, I need perhaps hardly say that the "main-lines" along which we are intended to travel are those principles of conduct proclaimed to the conscience by the voice of God, while the "side-tracks" are those suggested and made inviting by our self-will, self-indulgence and self-deception. And if so often we do not feel that our deviations from the straight course are intended for flight from God, it is because nine times out of ten we do not admit to ourselves that the lines we avoid are laid down by Him. You remember the oldest of all excuses for wrong-doing, the serpentine suggestion, "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not?" The first thing that occurs to the old prophet when he realizes what a bother it will be to go to Nineveh, is to conjure up a doubt as to whether that is the Lord's meaning and intention for him. Perhaps he has misunderstood; perhaps the command is not authentic, or referred to some other city, or was meant for somebody else to fulfil; perhaps God did not want him to embark on the undertaking *now*, but in a year or two's time—ah, friends, have

we not all of us argued like that with ourselves, and deliberately beclouded our own clear perception? So many, many reasons always for *not* doing the difficult right thing, so many, many side-tracks always alluringly spreading in all directions save only the straight one, each of them promising far greater delight and profit, such pleasant travelling as cannot but lead to a pleasant goal. It need not be Tarshish—any place will do so long as it is not Nineveh! . . . And then, long before the goal is in sight, darkening skies, mountainous waves, doom and disaster, tragedy and shipwreck, humiliation and bitterness.

I want now, in the first place, to say that there is no moral fixity or safety for us until we realize, without any attempt at self-delusion, that our main-lines are determined by God, with whom there is no variableness neither shadow of turning, and that in order to travel securely we must travel by these, and no others. That is really one of the great requisites for want of which any number of lives are marred—to recognize the Divine authority of "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not." Men and women come to grief just because they do not acknowledge the absolute nature, the supernatural sanction, of the moral law; because their actions are regulated, not by fixed principles, but by shifting expediencies, because they do not believe that *this* is God's command, and against *that* He has fixed His everlasting statute. And until we get into the habit of referring our actions to a Power not ourselves which demands righteousness, a Supreme Will which can be neither bribed nor cheated, our life will be like a vessel without rudder, at the mercy of every gust of passion and every current of self-interest. What we are suffering from to-day is not

the agnostic intellect so much as the agnostic conscience, which does not believe in the compelling character of God's command, but smilingly sets out for any convenient Tarshish if Nineveh does not take its fancy. To ascertain what God wants us to do, to lay our hearts open to His influence, to wait on Him for guidance when we are torn hither and thither between conflicting motives—that is to be saved from being side-tracked and discomfited.

And, secondly, will you allow me to say—and I know this forms the burden of much of my preaching—that the man or woman who desires to make the best of life, and so to discharge his or her debt to God and man, will seek to find out the true governing principles of conduct, the high-roads marked out plainly on the map of life, and so avoid becoming lost in a maze of bypaths and blind-alleys leading nowhither. These high-roads once discovered, it will be a case of "let thine eyes look right on; make level the path of thy feet; turn not to the right hand nor to the left." And the same applies to the business of finding out what is our purpose in life, what the special task we can best fulfil—for that, we may be almost sure, is God's will for us—and then to devote ourselves to that task, to pursue that purpose, with entire and undivided devotion. In my youth a much older guide, philosopher and friend used to remark to me, "If people would do what they're best fitted for, what progress the world would make!" But the trouble lies with the tendency to take things easy, to eschew searchings of heart and mind, to drift through life with as much comfort as we can, to be little enamoured of great principles, to have no central object, but to be swayed this way and that, treading the primrose

path of dalliance, as chance and desire may direct. It is, of course, the absence of main-lines, discerned with sufficient clearness, which sends people to lose their way on all manner of side-tracks.

Be careful in the choice of your road, but having chosen it, cling to it tenaciously, unless there are plain and compelling reasons to the contrary. Your best success, your dignity, your inner content are involved. To man alone of all creatures is given the capacity of planning his life—yet one cannot but feel how little that great privilege is used and realized. Early manhood and womanhood has the priceless prerogative of asking and answering the question, What shall I be? What shall I do with my life?—but let us understand that the prerogative is fleeting, that each added—still more, each wasted—year narrows our scope. How important it is that in those formative years we should be fired by fine ambitions, that we should see visions and dream dreams, and be haunted by splendid possibilities to be striven after and by the grace of God made concrete. Why, to say it once more, what else is all preaching for—so far as I am concerned—but to beset and stimulate you to worthier aspirations after the things which are above? And what a pity—what a pity—when we are not so moved, but abandon ourselves to each current, each motive in turn, when we are too dull or too frivolous to aim at anything better or higher than the obvious and earthly things—possessions and pleasure and ease—when even young lives slip without an effort into some stagnant backwater, or for want of resistance are drawn nearer and nearer to the engulfing rapids! What a pity when the disciple of Jesus Christ that might have been becomes the idolater of

Mammon, or the brainless devotee of brainless pleasure; when the fine, upstanding citizen the youth has it in him to become is lost, and his place is taken by the gambler, the waste-product of society, or the slave of alcohol! God grant that it be not so with anyone who reads these pages, and therefore I say, Look out for your main-line and keep to it.

And next, mark this: the people whose lives have counted in the world have nearly all been people who consciously, and with the sense of a religious vocation, adopted a given course, having heard a clear call, and resolutely refused to be side-tracked. You take a man like Paul, most variously gifted, who gives us one of the secrets of his amazing success in the confession that he was resolved to know nothing save Christ—he just did not trouble so much as to interest himself in all manner of other topics on lower levels, the chatter of the market-place, which would have distracted his mind from the one great aim on which he was set. You take a man like Tennyson, who, recognizing his vocation in poetry, gave himself absolutely and entirely to poetry, and so achieved supreme excellence. Or you take a man like Immanuel Kant, who, convinced that the field he could most fruitfully till was philosophy, gave himself with all his powers to that one pursuit, and counted the world, with its distractions and rewards, well lost.

You must put aside, give up many things in order to attain some *one* aim worth reaching. And for us, who are neither poets nor philosophers nor apostles, there is one highway to follow—shall I describe it? Well, in Switzerland you sometimes find the road to a summit indicated for the climber by means of red marks painted on trees or rocks at short distances from

each other ; and we, too, can find the best road, the road to the goal, without overmuch perplexity—a road which has been trodden by certain pierced feet which have left indelible marks, standing for patience, self-sacrifice, conquering love. To keep to that upward road without being drawn to right or left, that is the wisdom of life for us. It is by looking unto Jesus, letting Him hold our attention and our affection alike, that our actions will be determined for good, and our feet kept steady, and our character formed in His image.

Well, now, turning to another aspect of our subject, let us glance at one or two of the main-lines of right living, and at some of the corresponding side-tracks into which it is so easy to stray. You remember that saying of Stevenson's, "The world must some time or other have done with the word reward, and come back to the word duty." He meant that we must return to the code which asks us to do the right, not for the sake of any advantages that may follow, but for right's sake. Now I readily admit that there are cases where it is not easy at a first glance to say positively what is the right, cases where we are troubled by a seeming conflict of duties ; that means that the conscience, like every other faculty, requires to be trained and enlightened—it means, above almost everything, that our moral judgments ought to be based on the fullest available knowledge of *all* the facts ; nevertheless, I believe it to be true that in ninety per cent. of the matters we have to deal with every day, there is not much real difficulty in telling the difference between right and wrong ; the difficulty is in doing the one and shunning the other. Let us realize that the side-tracks are many ; given a hard, exacting task we would gladly avoid, our capacity

for self-deception may be relied upon to furnish any number of plausible excuses. Go over your own life, my brother or sister, and how many, many times you have succeeded—we have all succeeded—in investing our inclinations with a glamour which made them look almost a higher, holier sort of duties, so that in following them we felt quite a glow of righteousness, a sense of having chosen the better part, something far better than yielding plain obedience to the plain dictates of prosaic duty! Again—we have, most of us, told ourselves at times the fairy-tale, so agreeable to our vanity, that these stern, hard, angular commandments were all very well for ordinary, commonplace mortals to observe and be fettered by, but not for us, beings either of superior clay, or placed under exceptional circumstances, to which the general standards do not apply. I do not wonder that the particular side-track where this fairy-tale is sung in every key enjoys a very high popularity; but we had better face the fact that it *is* a fairy-tale. Brethren, *all* circumstances are "exceptional" circumstances, if we like to present them so, and nobody's case is just like anybody else's; but if everybody were to enter that plea, the result would be moral anarchy, and we should have the vividest hell imaginable, for the nature of things does not listen to our sophisms, but exacts the penalty from those who will not respect the law.

And here is yet another of these substitutes for right-doing, and again an extremely popular one: there are any number of people who make up for the practice of the virtues by warmly approving and applauding the highest and most unexceptional sentiments. Not only is this a peculiarly inexpensive substitute—a

cheap and heady intoxicant, the effects of which are warranted to wear off in an hour—but it fills those who use it with a specious self-approbation: they *must* be rather fine specimens of humanity, or these things would not so appeal to them! Think of Society crowding to hear Father B. Vaughan denounce the sins of Society! Now I have no hesitation in saying that this merely emotional enthusiasm is not simply a barren, but a pernicious luxury, just because it deceives us about ourselves, and blinds us to our faulty practice. Every preacher hopes that his hearers are moved by his commendations of goodness, and stirred to sympathy with fine action; but if the sympathy is of only a transient, superficial nature, if he has not touched and vitalized the springs of conduct, if these folk are not going to be any better in their day-by-day relations for what they have heard on the Sunday, he has failed. The strong common sense of the Apostle James applies: "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deluding your own selves. For if any one is a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a mirror: for he goeth away, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was." And mark this—all the side-tracks along which we try to escape from duty, as their end is grievous, cannot give us the simple and abiding satisfactions we shall find on the main-line of duty, that "stern lawgiver," as Wordsworth addresses her:

> Stern lawgiver! yet thou dost wear
> The Godhead's most benignant grace;
> Nor know we anything so fair
> As is the smile upon thy face;
> Flowers laugh before thee on their beds,
> And fragrance in thy footing treads;

> Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong,
> And the most ancient heavens, through thee, are fresh and strong.

I had intended to show that as it is with duty, so it is with religion ; but my time is almost gone, and what is to be said must be said very briefly. Religion, friends, represents a plain highway, and we woefully mistake our life's meaning and purport if we decline to walk in it. Here, and here alone, is the inspiration which will help us, amidst the trials and difficulties of existence, to live up to the familiar motto : " To be honest, to be kind, to earn a little, and to spend a little less, to make upon the whole a family happier for our presence, to renounce when that shall be necessary, and not be embittered, to keep a few friends, but these without capitulation—above all, on the same grim condition, to keep friends with ourselves." These things, Stevenson truly said, constitute " a task for all that a man has of fortitude and delicacy ; " and religion, I say, will enable us to prove ourselves equal to that task, by assuring us that so to live is to be in harmony with the great purpose that pulses through the universe, that Divine Purpose which cannot be defeated, but must prevail.

But, friends, let us be sure that it is religion which claims us—the persuasion of God's presence, goodness, wisdom, righteousness, pardon, the acknowledgment of God in Christ, governing all the relations of life—and not any of the specious substitutes or side-tracks that offer themselves in its stead. All through the ages you see superstition rearing her head and personating faith, filling the chambers of the mind with gibbering horrors, inspiring dark and terrible deeds, and bringing religion itself into disrepute. And

scarcely less pernicious a masquerader in the guise of religion is that type of orthodoxy which lays all the stress on right doctrine, or the profession of certain beliefs guaranteed to be correct, and dismisses right doing, brotherliness, devoutness, courage, self-dedication, as much more trifling matters. And a third plausible pretender is religiosity, an unwholesome pietism which revels in sentiment, indulges the emotions, but too often separates belief and practical ethics, on the supposed ground of what it calls "the finished work of Christ." But religion, brethren, true religion and undefiled, always manifests itself in practice, always demonstrates its faith by works, always issues in a stronger, finer manhood and womanhood. Keep to that main-line, let your eyes look right on, turn not to right or left, and you will not miss the goal.

I see a place far away, a solitary mountain spot, where in the grey hour before the dawn a Man wrestles with Himself, striving to come to a momentous decision. He has heard a call, is conscious of an invisible urge, and knows what yielding to that pressure, acceptance of that call, implies—danger and death. Shall He, like the faithless prophet, flee and set sail for some far-off Tarshish? And while He so wrestles, there appears a first, faint flush on the rim of the sky, growing more roseate with each minute; and now the darkness is slain, and the conquering orb of day appears in fiery splendour; and as its first rays strike the Man, He rises to His feet, and takes a long breath, and then a long glance toward the South, where His fate awaits Him; and in that hour "He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem." Shall we, like Jesus, listen to the Divine voice, follow the Divine leading, that so in the end we may receive the crown of life?

XIII

Hindrances and Opportunities

" Ye were running well ; who did hinder you ? "—*Gal.* v. 7.

ON an autumn evening towards the close of the fifteenth century a tall, grey-haired man, accompanied by a little boy, knocked at the gate of the Franciscan monastery at Palos in Spain, asking a crust of bread. If ever mortal could have spoken of the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, it was this beggar, who at the age of fifty had nothing but failure to point to. He was the son of a woolcomber in Genoa —and I don't imagine that woolcombing was a luxuriously paid occupation in that age and country any more than in ours ; at fourteen years he had gone to sea, and ever since geography had been his passion, and drawing charts the means whereby he obtained a livelihood of some sort. He might have lived in decent obscurity and free from actual want if he had not had a fixed idea—an obsession at which the learned smiled because it was absurd, and the pious frowned because it was irreligious—the idea that the earth was a globe and everywhere navigable, and that by sailing West and ever West land could be reached. Genoa, Portugal, England had refused to aid him in such an insane expedition, and now in extreme poverty he was making

his way to the Spanish court. For seven long years more he was to live in that state of hope deferred which maketh the heart sick—bantered by courtiers and badgered by priests—before, in 1492, he sailed with his three little ships to the unknown, and after a voyage of ten weeks, with doubt and discontent and almost mutiny on board, touched the New World.

About the same time as Columbus set out on his immortal quest, a poor miner's son was singing in the streets of Eisenach, in Germany, for alms, and by his good voice attracted the attention of a kindly lady whose charity made it possible for him to complete his schooling. He makes his way to the University, takes his degree, and presently enters an Augustinian monastery, takes priest's orders, and becomes a theological lecturer, A dozen years later this man of humble birth is the centre —the storm-centre—of a movement with which both the secular and the ecclesiastical authorities try in vain to cope, and which is shaking the rotten fabric of Latin Christianity to its foundations; and standing before the highest tribunal in the land, presided over by the Emperor himself, the obscure monk refuses to retract his opinions, with the words: "Unless I be convinced by Scripture and reason, I neither can nor dare retract anything, for my conscience is a captive to God's word, and it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. There I take my stand. I can do no otherwise. So help me, God. Amen." And with that declaration Luther did in the realm of the spirit what Columbus had done in that of land and sea—he opened up a New World.

Why do I rehearse these familiar facts? Because the subject of this sermon is Hindrances and Opportunities, and the men of whom I have just spoken seem

to me typical of what we find again and again to be the case—the seeming paradox which decrees that the world's achievements should stand in the name of those to whom the world was most grudging with its favours. If you want to see this in clearer relief, brought out by contrast, let me point you to a case such as you saw in the papers lately, and may see at frequent intervals—a young exquisite, the son of a strenuous, energetic, immensely wealthy father, brought up with every advantage of education money can secure, removed from the temptations with which the starved, monotonous life of the poor is beset, he has had the chance of becoming acquainted with all the best in literature, in art, in travel—nothing to stint him in the cultivation of any worthy taste or interest—and as the result of all this, behold him at twenty-odd up for examination in bankruptcy, and as the headline in one of the newspapers said, "explaining how he made the money fly." Such instances are only too common—I merely quote one of the latest—but the question they suggest is, What are opportunities and what are hindrances, after all?

Plainly, the subject is not quite so easy of determination as appears on the surface; and yet the question is one we ought to try and find an answer to.

In the first place, I suppose it is true that all our social reforms, all our ameliorative efforts, aim at removing real and grievous hindrances, and at bringing the best opportunities within the reach of as many as possible. We say, and say rightly, that the social and economic conditions in which so many have to live are bars and obstacles to their development, that these multitudes are terribly handicapped from the very start—yes, handicapped before birth—in all manner of ways: by the poor food eaten, and the bad air

breathed, and the toil and anxiety of their mothers; by bad housing and poor wages, by the temptation to seek relief in drink and the premature closing of the mind through the necessity of starting to earn money at an age when the children of the better-off have years of schooling still before them. In Manchester it was pointed out not long ago that half-timers employed in the mills are actually taller and stronger age for age than children allowed to attend school; and the fact occasioned much wonder until the simple and tragic explanation came forth, viz., that it is the strongest and healthiest youngsters that are sacrificed to the Moloch of industrialism, while the more delicate are allowed to complete their schooling—a pitiful state of things!

Against these and a score more hindrances the reforming spirit of man has declared war and will not rest until they have been got out of the way. It is quite true that you get your exceptional men, your David Livingstone who, with the first pence saved as a child-worker in the mill, bought a Latin grammar, and inscribed his name in letters of gold upon the scroll of Christian heroism; a Keir Hardie, who taught himself shorthand while a miner, and raised himself above the rancour and ridicule of the "classes" as one of the founders of a new and powerful party; or, perhaps more wonderful still, a woman like Frau Adelheid Popp, who has given us her autobiography—raised in a Viennese slum, one of a huge family of children, with a drunken father; leaving school at ten to crochet shawls at a halfpenny an hour, and sometimes taking more work home after her twelve hours' day; while to-day she is one of the most influential of Labour leaders in Germany, indefatigable as speaker, writer, organizer. We point to such as these and say, What

chances did they have? What good fairies surrounded their cradles? Is it not possible that had they been reared in luxury, pampered and governessed, it might have been their undoing? Very possible, we answer; but if their cases are put forward as a reason for not trying to do away with the conditions over which they triumphed, we say that that is an entire misunderstanding of the situation. For the one exceptional individual who triumphs over such surroundings, there are hundreds and thousands crushed or maimed by the same causes, and it is for their sakes, for the sake of normal, average humanity, that we have no choice but to strive to abolish these social ills. To be well born, with all that the phrase implies—to come of sound stock, with pure blood running in one's veins, untainted by excess, nor impoverished by privation—that is the kind of minimum opportunity which ought to be the right of all humanity, and to that end I have no doubt legislation will bend its energies increasingly, though legislation alone without individual effort and individual sense of responsibility will never accomplish it. Such instances as I have just alluded to, where an apparent step-child of fortune has successfully battled against an adverse and unpropitious heredity or environment, or both, prove many things, at some of which we shall glance presently; but they do not prove that wretched poverty, slumdom and sweating are desirable or to be retained in our social and economic fabric.

But now, from these preliminaries, we go a step further. Granted we all want opportunities for the unfolding of our life and our capacities; granted, as Huxley said in his famous lecture on "Evolution and Ethics," that instead of contenting ourselves with the

survival of the fittest, we ought to make such conditions as will fit as many as possible to survive, the question, as we ought to frame it, is this :—*What are the opportunities you want* ? And that means, *What is your scale of values* ? On the answer to that depends almost everything. In a play I saw the other day, a weak young fellow, just discharged from his situation, describes with envy how he has seen a former schoolfellow of his drive past in a long motor-car with silver fittings and luxuriously upholstered, while *he* stood on the kerb of the pavement, and finally in a spasm of feeble rage he exclaims, shaking his fist, " My God ! *I'll* have a motor car some day ! " You know, it struck me as quite horribly true, a transcript from life ; I seemed to have known that young fellow, with his imagination wholly captured by the show and glamour of things, his mind set upon nothing better than a life of pleasure and indulgence, and vaguely feeling that fate has been unkind and unjust to him in denying him the opportunity of a big unearned income. There is no poverty quite so appalling or so widespread as the poverty, the shabbiness, of people's ideals. The man or woman who interprets opportunities merely in terms of egoistic enjoyment, freedom from exertion, satisfaction of the senses and their appetites, is bound to make a failure of life. I say deliberately that if the world held nothing better than what so many people make their end-all and be-all—ease, amusement, material gratifications—and if these opportunities were open to all without limit, and to be partaken of without ceasing, then we might think that this scheme of things had been framed by a malevolent and mocking Intelligence. You might call such a place a world ; but it would be my notion of hell—a place of eternal boredom.

Look at the people who have more than heart can wish, whose existence is taken up with inventing new forms of pleasure, new extravagances in dress and adornment — do they strike you as particularly happy? You read the other day about a freak-dinner given in the States, the host and invited guests being pet-dogs, and the banquet having all the paraphernalia of flowers, cut-glass and silver—don't you realize the pitiable mental condition, the real insanity, which reveals itself in such an exploit? These people have all the opportunities others enviously sigh for—and this is the use they make of them! Can it be that such "opportunities" are themselves of the nature of hindrances? All history seems to teach that lesson; and if there is one thing I conceive to be the task of the modern pulpit, it is to help men and women to ennoble their ideals, to revise and raise their scale of values.

Further. While we are all agreed that certain evil conditions ought to be abolished, that those obvious obstacles to a godly, righteous and sober life of which we spoke ought to be removed, we must beware of the fallacy which lurks in the popular phrase, or demand for, "equality of opportunity." You can clear stumbling-blocks out of the way, you can see to it that no class or individual shall suffer from patent disabilities, but you will never have equal opportunity in any true sense, so long as men are not all reduced to a dead level of equality. What set of circumstances is to be a hindrance or an opening, to prove a stimulus or a drag on the wheel, must in the last resort be determined by each man's personality; what will hold the one back will help the other on. Precisely because we are not machines, nor mere casts in clay, you cannot foretell with exactness that if you place a man in such or such

surroundings, he will turn out so and so. Is not that what we have already seen when we referred to such personages as Livingstone and the rest? The same event, the same outward circumstances, will paralyse the activity of one man and set free that of another. You know the person who goes down under difficulties, permanently felled and foiled, and the other who goes down perhaps, but only to rise again with doubled resiliency. If there is one thing every day teaches us, it is that men do not behave identically under identical circumstances; life may provide them with the same materials, but the one builds a hovel, ill-graced and a miserable shelter, the other a counting-house, the third a temple of the living God. Or, to vary the simile, I sometimes think that we may broadly distinguish two types of people—one man who believes that he is a statue, and the other, who knows that he is a sculptor; and the belief of the one and the knowledge of the second will, of course, produce vastly different results. What is more, we can be statues or sculptors, made or makers, according as we believe. Thomas Carlyle finishes the first volume of his monumental *French Revolution*, and the MS. is burnt by the carelessness of a servant—a calamity the full extent of which only a literary man can gauge. Well, Carlyle sets a stiff lip to a steep brae, and just writes the book over again from the start, and probably writes it better; yes, but he also writes himself down a man of stronger calibre, of more persevering will—the hindrance has become an opportunity. All the rude buffetings of fate could not deflect that Genoese woolcomber's son from his project, however much some might scoff at it, and others threaten him with the fate of previous scientific heretics who had gone to the stake; being such as he was, he

conquered his obstacles—being such, he created his opportunities.

> O well for him, whose will is strong!
> He suffers, but he will not suffer long;
> He suffers, but he cannot suffer wrong.

I think we are beginning at length to see a principle emerge from all this. While we are striving, and rightly striving, to improve external conditions, to hasten so far as in us lies the advent of the Kingdom of God without, yet the decisive factor is that of human personality; in other words, the real Kingdom of God is within. That is what is meant by saying that you cannot make people moral by Act of Parliament. People generally use that phrase to imply that social legislation is useless—which is quite absurd: you *can*, by wise enactments, remove certain glaring temptations from men's paths, and that is worth doing in all conscience; but it is true that in the last resort the man himself must throw his weight into the scale, must say, "I will," or "I will not," and so prove himself captain of his soul.

So, then, I would say that all the hindrances and all the opportunities that may come from outside are, after all, of secondary rather than primary importance; we need not under-estimate, but we certainly should not over-estimate them. Let us go to the root, deal candidly with ourselves, and we shall find that the most serious obstacles we encounter and have to overcome are those we find in our own souls. I have referred to the poverty of ideals so commonly met with, as one of these obstacles; people try for the wrong things, they strain and run after paltry prizes in life, and miss the things worth having. A dislike of strenuous thinking, strenuous principle, strenuous effort, content to live

entirely on the surface and for the most fugitive enjoyment, marks considerable strata of our people, including our young people, and clogging their progress. As a thoughtful writer expressed it the other day, "there are large classes of people . . . to whom civilization has come primarily to signify, not ampler opportunities for progress towards a higher intellectual or spiritual life, or vigorous co-operation with their fellow-men for the enlargement of the human life, but a secure environment for a prolonged career of timid self-indulgence." It is this fundamentally frivolous and unworthy view of life of which we have to beware. We are called to life as to a fine adventure, as to a great enterprise, with a bigger and more serious meaning than the maximum of comfort and safety and playtime, and the avoidance of responsibility. Let us get rid of this hindrance—this poor outlook upon existence—and the whole picture will change for us. The want of purpose which simply drifts and maunders through the years; the moral feebleness which never responds to the trumpet-call of duty, of love, of self-sacrifice; the materialism which loses the instinct for spiritual things, which has forgotten, or haply never learnt, how to shut out the world and its clamour and to be alone with God, drawing strength from His eternal strength, and bringing the human will into accordance with the mind of Christ: all these are the real bars and impediments, and they come from within. They come from within, but that does not mean they are irremovable; as a matter of fact, I believe it is true of most of these so-called rooted habits, that once we give a determined "pull all together" at them, they come out, root and all, with far less effort than we had thought necessary. We like to think that we cannot get rid of our present

infirmities, and make that an excuse for not trying ; but we can, if we will. Yes, I think the greatest hindrance of all is just slightness and lightness of mind ; you remember Tennyson's unspeakably contemptuous summing up of Gawain, in the *Idylls of the King* :—

> Light was Gawain in life, and light in death
> Was Gawain, for the wraith is like the man.

But what are our opportunities, those that matter in the last analysis ? Well, let us bear in mind all the way through that the only opportunities which count are those we turn to account, that what we do with our material is far more interesting and significant than the material itself. I think you will agree with me that there is within the reach of every one amongst us the opportunity of *knowledge*—the opportunity to enrich the mind, to enlarge and adorn our inner world. There is no need for anyone here to inhabit a dull and uninteresting universe, because the universe is one vast and thrilling romance, crowded with marvels, adventures, pathos and humour, facts that outvie fairy-tales, wonders unexhausted and inexhaustible. As I told you on another occasion, we can live in any world we choose, move in company the most exalted or the most fantastic, share now the adventures of a climber or explorer, now those, no less adventurous, of a thinker or visionary, visit strange climes and remote civilizations, become, in Plato's grandiose phrase, spectators of all time and all existence. There are more masterpieces of literature than we shall ever master : if we dwell in a dreary, circumscribed sphere, unpeopled by glorious images, unvisited by the creations of poets and dramatists and romancers, we must at any rate not say that we had not the *opportunity* of inhabiting one altogether different. Believe me, that is one of the

reasons of the meagre, superficial existences lived by so many—they have never entered the treasure-houses whose contents would transform life for them. And even from the most severely utilitarian standpoint, no knowledge is useless ; it is better to approach work and duty again with a mind that has in the interval of leisure found refreshment on mountain heights of thought or in wayside gardens of fancy.

And then there is the opportunity of *service*, which is denied to no one, and which, if it were only taken advantage of, might bring in God's Kingdom so much more quickly. Most of us have some spare time, spare energy, and there are such abundant fields for its utilization. Whatever, or however modest, our gifts, they can be turned into a fruitful channel ; some one, or some unselfish enterprise, would be the better, the more efficient, for our service ; some Guild or Institution, some Boys' Club or Children's Holiday Camp, could just do with what we have to offer—and (I say this not as an incitement, but as stating a fact) we should receive so much more than we have to give. There is a satisfaction about all rendering of help, when the motive is the *desire* to help, which never waits on self-seeking, which gives a deeper worth to life, and sets a diviner stamp upon our personality ; happiness lies that way, as the servants and helpers of their kind with one voice confess—and the opportunity to join their ranks is abundant. Why not take it ?

Knowledge—service—we pass on to yet another, higher opportunity, that which is offered to every one, yet missed by so many : *worship*, communion with the Highest, in the act which transfigures life with a glory not of this earth, and reveals to us the secret of our own being and status as children of God, and co-heirs

with Christ. It is tragic to see so many people pass through this earthly span without, seemingly, ever discovering for themselves that secret which to those who know makes all the difference—without understanding or caring to understand what is the experience of which the Psalmist speaks as "abiding under the shadow of the Almighty." The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the greatest opportunity in the world for bringing man's life into harmony with God, and those who have accepted its offer are well content.

Lastly—and I have kept this to the last because it is to many minds so alien a thought—I suggest that in every life there are, and are meant to be seized, opportunities of fighting to the glory of God. I view life not at all as an idyll, and very much as a tourney or even a battle-field, where we are set as God's knights to champion the right, and challenge and vanquish ill in every form. Perhaps one reason why God has allowed evil to exist in the world is to give scope for that active love of goodness which shows itself in whitest glow in a resolute campaign against the works and workers of darkness. Paul knew that feeling of satisfaction to the full when he wrote, as part of his epitaph, "I have fought the good fight;" Heine, with all his weaknesses, claimed to be remembered as "a good soldier in humanity's war of liberation;" Stevenson's gallant spirit joyously avowed that he was "made for a contest," and expressed itself in the lines:

> Since I am sworn to live my life,
> And not to keep an easy heart,
> Some men may sit and drink apart,
> *I bear a banner in the strife!*

There is no need to particularize the enemy you should

fight ; to every one who has really grasped some principle of right there comes the opportunity—which is also a privilege and a duty—of striking a blow on right's behalf, and that privilege he may not decline if he is loyal to his Lord. I say, join the army of the children of the light, attack some abuse, lay siege to some citadel of iniquity, and if necessary endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

Friends, in this world of mingled hindrances and opportunities it is we who, after all, are called to determine the character of either, so far as their bearing upon ourselves is concerned. If we shun cowardice and love of ease, low content and poor ideals, if we treat life as a noble adventure, even the things which hinder shall become tributary and helpful by spurring us on to more determined efforts, calling out what is best in us, and wresting victory even from seeming defeat. We began with the picture of Columbus, the splendid venturer, repulsed but unsubdued, derided but never losing faith, his great enterprise still unabandoned in his mind ; let me close with some lines that breathe the very spirit of adventurous faith, undaunted, unafraid, and destined to prevail—a religious poem, if only you will rightly look at it :

Spring winds, and the boats are ready ;
Top-mast, main-mast, mizzen and boom—
Down the Channel, and keep her steady !
There's little comfort, and little room ;
So why are we going so far, so far,
Out where the great grey rollers are ?
Why are we leaving the lee of the hill,
That shelters the bay where the seas are still ?
Why are we going ? *Because we will !*

Turn of the year, and the leaves are falling;
Something beckons from East or West,
North and South are for ever calling:
"Back, come back, to the endless quest!"
But why are we going so far, so far?—
Prairie, jungle, and Polar star—
Why do we scramble and tramp and roam
Over the rocks and the ice and the foam?
We like it better than staying at home!

Hard roads and a struggle before us,
Hunger and poverty, cold and strife,
Enemies eager to triumph o'er us,
Toss and tussle for limb and life—
Why are we leaving the beaten track
That the old men made for us long time back?
Out where the world is bare and new
There's little to look at and much to do;
Why are we going there? *Why aren't you?*

This—if only you are able to receive it—this is the faith that overcometh the world.

XIV

Appearances and Realities

"We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."—2 *Cor.* iv. 18.

LAST summer I had the pleasure of taking a little lad abroad with me to Switzerland and giving him his first glimpse of some of the wonderful scenes that were already familiar to me from previous visits. Let me assure you that if there is a greater delight than that of enjoying any grand or beautiful sight for the first time, it is that of seeing it again through a new pair of eyes, of introducing some one else to what already lives in your own memory—always assuming that the new pair of eyes is capable of seeing, the new beholder capable of appreciation. Yes, here was the same eternal snow and ice on which I had gazed years before; here was the same angry, grey Alpine torrent rushing along as swiftly as of yore; here was the same silvery-white waterfall bursting with terrific force and noise through the cleft it had made in the rocks, and thundering down as it had done without ceasing during all the interval since I had last visited the Lauterbrunnen valley—as it is doing at this very moment.

And then, at one point, the thought suddenly came home to me—the most obvious of reflections, I readily

admit— that this seeming identity was the merest illusion : the snow and ice we trod together were not the same that I had seen there last ; the torrent not the same torrent, for the waters I had seen rushing past had long since mingled with greater waters, been drawn up into the atmosphere, descended as rain ; and so, of course, with the wild, turbulent waterfall dashing itself down the rocks with headlong impatience, its spray shimmering in rainbow colours in the sunshine— it was the same, yet not the same ; the identity was only apparent—what was the reality ?

And insensibly I found myself pursuing a line of thought, by no means profound or original, I grant, which brought me straight to the general problem which is to engage our attention in this sermon, that of Appearances and Realities ; and may I say that if by any chance you should think it a little abstract and remote, I hope to show you before I have done that it has a very direct and practical bearing upon life. What is the substance behind the show, what the real behind the fleeting and evanescent, what the permanent and abiding underneath this continual flux of things ? From our earliest childhood upwards one lesson is brought home to us in a hundred separate experiences—the lesson summed up in the trite and threadbare line which tells us that " things are not what they seem." Your senses are not the infallible witnesses they pretend to be ; their testimony, taken at its face-value, tells you that the earth stands still, that the full moon is not much larger than a big coin, that the stars are mere points of light, that the sun makes a daily circuit of the sky, that the sky itself, as seen on a clear day, is a solid dome of blue. And all this, which we believed as children, humanity most seriously believed during its period

of infancy and long after—could not help believing till after much research and the perfecting of instruments of research the reality turned out far other and infinitely grander than the appearance. Instead of a stable earth, obviously flat and stationary, the centre of creation, a little globular planet swinging round one of possibly millions of suns; instead of specks of light, flickering like candles and showing up rather than illumining the darkness, vast celestial bodies so awesomely far that the light of some of them, travelling at the rate of nearly 200,000 miles a second, takes thousands of years to reach us; instead of the fixed vault of the firmament, thought to be a few miles overhead at most, space, and beyond it illimitable space again—a universe inconceivably more majestic than the little toy-world constructed by our unassisted senses. However much the ultimate reality may loom beyond our ken, we are nearer to it to-day than when the first chapter of Genesis was accepted without question as the last word of truth on the subject.

But what, then, is that ultimate reality, we ask; is it material, is it perceptible by sense at all? You shall see in a moment how intimately the answer we give to that question touches us, and influences all our thinking and conduct. We speak, it is true, of the *phenomena* of nature, and "phenomena" is only Greek for appearances—things as they seem, not as they are—but do we mean it? Are we not inclined on the whole to identify the real with the visible and tangible, the palpable and concrete? Does it not require an effort for us so much as to believe in the existence of the spiritual, for the one and only reason that the spiritual is precisely that which cannot be taken cognizance of by eye or ear or any other sense? "Seeing is believing," we say, forget-

ting the tricks our senses play us. "You, my Christian friend, have never *seen* God," said Mr. Blatchford triumphantly, and felt that with this profound remark he had pretty well settled the issue. "I have swept the heavens with my telescope," said the eighteenth-century astronomer, Lalande, "and have not found a God"—and that, too, was supposed to be a final disproof. We may not go so far as this explicitly, but how many of us—I put the query quite simply—how many of us, if we were quite candid, would confess that after all we have no proof of the existence of spiritual things, that if we admit such realities, they do not make much difference to us? Even the people who call themselves spiritualists only show what inveterate and incurable materialists they are by the stress they lay upon the purely material proofs they adduce for the existence of spirits!

We are all, I say, more or less tarred with the same brush; our tests of reality are expressed in terms of matter: a truth, we say, stands "firm as a rock," our convictions are "solid as the ground beneath our feet." Alas, *how* solid are the rocks, *how* firm is the ground? Take a long enough survey, and the rocks over which the waterfall makes its tempestuous way are no more permanent than the waters that wash and wear them. You may remember the late Professor Tyndall's eloquent account of his reflections on the summit of the Matterhorn:

"Hacked and hurt by time," he says, "the aspect of the mountain from its higher crags saddened me. Hitherto the impression it made was that of savage strength; here we had inexorable decay. But this notion of decay implied a reference to a period when the Matterhorn was in the full strength of mountainhood. Thought naturally ran back to its remoter origin and sculpture. Nor did thought halt there, but wandered on through molten worlds to that nebulous haze, which philosophers have regarded as the source of all material things.

I tried to look at this universal cloud as containing within itself the prediction of all that has since occurred. I tried to imagine it as the seat of those forces whose action was to issue in solar and stellar systems and all they involve."

So far the great Victorian physicist, who in imagination saw the solid mountain melted back into the primeval fire-mist; but we must carry our analysis even farther back and ask, What is matter? If you say, it consists of molecules, and molecules of atoms, then what is the constitution of the atom? And the answer is that the most modern science resolves the atom into nothing material at all, but into mere electricity. All this seeming-solid earth, all its myriad phenomena, are but the passing manifestations of invisible forces, the temporary appearances under which the reality veils itself; the seen is only the apparent, the unseen is alone the real and abiding. To deny the unseen is sheer folly. Let me appropriate an illustration. Who has seen the force of gravity? Yet who denies its existence?

"If there were reaching from the sun to the earth—to that side which faces the sun—steel wires of the thickness of a telegraph wire, if there were four of these fastened to every square inch of the earth's surface, and then all strained until almost ready to break, that would represent by comparison this invisible, intangible power of gravitation by which the sun holds the earth in its place."

What are all our boasted mechanical contrivances compared with this mighty force which we cannot see, but only infer, and which we know is the real thing, after all? In one word, the apparent is the realm of sense—the real is the realm of spirit; matter is merely the temporary form—spirit is the eternal force which manifests itself in and through the things of sense.

And now, don't you see where all this is leading to, and

its close application to life? In judging between appearances and realities, the error to which we one and all are prone is just this—our tendency in practice to ignore the spiritual side of things, and to submit to the domination of the material. That which is not obvious to sense we are tempted to put in the background as of lesser importance; and so we are overmuch busied with the outside, the show of things, neglecting the substance; we aim at the wrong objects, and bestow our efforts on those things which cannot satisfy us. You remember the saying, "Things are in the saddle and ride mankind;" that only means we have enthroned matter and dethroned spirit—we are anxious to seem rather than to be.

Let me point you now to one or two aspects of this prevalent delusion—and we will take for the first one which allows us to see it writ large. What is our conception—I mean the governing conception, that held in governing quarters—of the true basis of our national greatness? What are the means by which our rulers most earnestly strive to preserve and enhance our eminence among the nations? Here are the words spoken on a public occasion by Mr. Winston Churchill, no doubt with the full knowledge and consent of his colleagues:

"All our science, all our wealth, the moral qualities of our sailors, and the glories of our history," he said, "were directed to one object, '*the manifestation at some special place, during the compass of a few minutes, of shattering, blasting, overpowering force.*'"

I say without hesitation that for sheer unabashed materialism such an utterance from one claiming to voice the responsible statesmanship of the country would be hard to equal. "The manifestation of shattering, blasting, overpowering force"—that is the end to which all the resources of our wealth and

science are to be devoted: here we have the deification of brutality, the worship of a brazen idol, and a woeful misreading of the real, as distinguished from the apparent, guarantees of our national future. It is not necessary to observe that, when it comes to force, more than one nation can play at that particular game, and brag about the mailed fist; but the deplorable part of the business is that we should not see what all history teaches, namely that, in spite of the cynics, God in the long run is not on the side of the big battalions —that the qualities which ensure the ultimate greatness of a people are spiritual qualities, spiritual ideals, the cultivation of mind and heart. What turned back the tide of Napoleon's victories was a spiritual uprising among the peoples of Europe, the sense that this man was too deadly a menace to liberty, that he meant to shackle the free spirit of the nations—and when that consciousness had once gained ground and taken root, not all the generalship of the conqueror, not all the valour and devotion of his seasoned troops, could stave off the ultimate disaster. Napoleon had disregarded and despised spiritual forces such as love of country, the passion for freedom, and that proved his undoing, as it will prove the undoing of all who imitate his idolatrous reliance on physical power. Everybody knows by this time that Wellington never said that the battle of Waterloo was won on the playing-fields of Eton—and that if he had said it, it would not have been true; on the other hand, the German people won their War of Liberation against the legions of Napoleon because their poets had roused them to the point when they preferred death to submission, because Schiller, in *William Tell*, had glorified a nation struggling to be free, and a whole host of singers and thinkers took up the immortal chorus.

So, then, the real foundations of a people's greatness are not material, but spiritual—a passion for unseen, invisible things, a passion for ideals of justice and liberty finding embodiment and realization in the laws and lives of the citizens, a passion for the things of the mind, opening the pathway to the highest culture for the poorest child. These are the realities to strive after—and where these are lacking, or considered as of lesser account, not all the appearances, not all the apparatus of material power, will save a people from decay. Here is huge Assyria, the incarnation of shattering, blasting, overpowering force, hurling herself upon little Israel, as Babylon hurled herself a short while later upon little Judah—and it was just the easiest thing in the world for these giants to blot out those two toy-kingdoms; yes—but Judah and Israel stood for certain ideas and ideals, belief in a living and righteous God, and all the might of Assyria and Babylon could not touch these, and they live and energize in the world's life to-day, while who is there that cares about those proud Eastern Empires, so long since crumbled into decay? The real and abiding is the unseen and spiritual; whilst

> All valiant dust that builds on dust,
> And, guarding, calls not God to guard,

is simply marked out for oblivion.

But now from this larger issue let us turn to the more intimate one of personal happiness—that end which we all of us pursue our lives long, seldom with complete success, often with very indifferent aim, but always lured on by the instinctive conviction that it ought to be ours. And the instinct is true, the conviction perfectly well founded, for happiness should, under normal conditions, be within the reach of all God's children; the pity

is that our search should be so persistently and pathetically misdirected, our conception of what constitutes happiness so utterly at fault! Again, it is a case of chasing appearances, and then wondering that we miss realities. Is not this the hallucination, the obsession we are under, to imagine that happiness resides in *things*, and the possession of things—more and more varied, more and more plentiful, but always tangible, always concrete things, to be seen and handled and measured and counted? We are obstinately convinced of this, stubborn in our assurance that if we only had such and such things we should be quite happy; and the result is that we prove for ourselves, and in our own case, the accuracy of the wit who said that there were only two kinds of disappointment in the world—not getting what we wanted, and . . . getting it! Well, the fact is, if we would only credit it, that things do not and cannot make us happy, and we fundamentally misread our own nature in cherishing the contrary notion; and if we will seek satisfaction in the wrong direction, we must not complain if it eludes us. We have had the plainest warning in Christ's deliberate statement that a man's life consisteth not in the multitude of the things which he possesseth—and if we choose to disregard that, we must discover its truth in the school of experience. One would think that a very elementary reflection would convince anyone that the man with, say, an income of £3,000 a year is *not* ten times happier than the man with £300; in other words, that after a certain fairly modest maximum has been reached, possession can no longer add to our real content. Yet the mad chase for *things* goes on, and the thirst these are to allay remains unslaked.

Listen. You may recollect my recommending you

to read a novel called *Dominy's Dollars*, by Mr. Paul Neuman ; well, I would follow that up by an earnest recommendation to read an earlier book by the same author, called *The Greatness of Josiah Porlick*, the life-story of a man who from an office-boy worked himself up to the position of a kind of Whiteley. Never was mortal more utterly mistaken in his valuation of the real and the apparent, never was man's aspiration more completely limited by the seen, the solid, the metallic ; hard in all his dealings, overbearing to his subordinates, domineering in his relations to the members of his family and to his employees alike, you watch his progress along the road of material greatness, and note the spiritual shrinkage of the man—you see how all the time his outward gain is balanced and more than balanced by inward loss and impoverishment, and how, in spite of the vast emporium, and the pretentious villa, and the purchased knighthood, when the final summons comes in the shape of painful, lingering disease, it finds him in utter isolation and pitiful disarray. A tired, lonely old man—old before his time, and lonely by his own acts—" so his doctor found him in the fading light of a bitter January day, propped in his arm-chair, facing a modest fire, grasping a slip of press-cuttings that set forth the unblemished reputation and spotless integrity of Sir Josiah Porlick, one of our merchant princes—his eyes in a fixed stare that might express fear, astonishment or anger—dead." And this, the author grimly says, by way of close, " this was the end of the greatness."

What was the worth, what the inner happiness, of a life such as this ? To hustle and hector and haggle, to bully and bargain and best his neighbours, and then to be bested in the long run, to have cheated oneself out of all soul-satisfying joy, to have chosen appearances

in lieu of realities—what a career, what a life, and what a death! Vanity of vanities!

"Goddess," he cried, "thou knowest my stainless youth,
The days and nights spent at thy hallowed shrine:
Fame, power and riches, say in very truth,
Shall these be mine?"
"Yes," she made answer, "these shall all be thine."

Broken and aged before the appointed span,
Fame, power and riches crowded round his gate;
His neighbours envied, "Lo, the happy man,
Rich, wise and great!"
He only moaned, "Alas, ye come too late!"

And railed against the goddess, whose decrees
Had cheated his ambition at the goal.
"Fool," answered she, "thou wouldst for things like these
Barter thy soul,
And seeking half life's good, hast lost the whole."

What is the truth of the matter? The truth, I think, has been excellently put by a French writer who said: "Happiness is not an obvious affair; it is difficult to discover in ourselves, and quite impossible to discover elsewhere." *Quite impossible to discover elsewhere*—let that, at any rate, be understood. Difficult to discover in ourselves—perhaps, but at any rate not anywhere but there. The reality of happiness lies in the sphere of the real, that is to say, once more, of the unseen; it is a disposition, an outlook, a temperament, which may be either inborn in us, or be acquired and cultivated, but which cannot be nurtured upon material things, though it may be hidden and overlaid by them. If this source of supreme content is difficult to discover even in ourselves, it is because we allow so much that is deceptive and unprofitable to accumulate there—dust and rubbish to choke the life-giving spring we are in quest of. And yet the secret of happiness is an open secret, in the sense that anyone who chooses may put its dis-

covery to the test—it is to set oneself deliberately to give happiness to others ; hardly any of the troubles and trials which beset our path will defeat such a resolute attempt. If you want to see how this works, I refer you again and yet again to the life and writings of Robert Louis Stevenson, the inventor of that noble phrase, " My great task of happiness." How did this chronic sufferer and invalid, living for years in the region and shadow of death, achieve that task ? In passage after passage he supplies the answer : " The kingdom of heaven," he says, " is of the childlike, of those who are easy to please, who love and who give pleasure." " To be honest, to be kind—to earn a little and to spend a little less, to make upon the whole a family happier for his presence, to renounce when that shall be necessary and not be embittered, to keep a few friends but these without capitulation—above all, on the same condition, to keep friends with himself—here is a task for all that a man has of fortitude and delicacy." And again, " So long as we love, we serve ; so long as we are loved by others, I would almost say that we are indispensable." Small wonder that such a happy spirit, looking forward without dismay to the last earthly change, wrote, seven years before his death, the wonderful *Requiem*, which was inscribed upon his tomb at last :

> Under the wide and starry sky,
> Dig the grave and let me lie.
> Glad did I live and gladly die,
> And I laid me down with a will.
> This be the verse you grave for me :
> *Here he lies where he longed to be ;*
> *Home is the sailor, home from the sea,*
> *And the hunter home from the hill.*

I think we might without irreverence coin a fresh beatitude, in the spirit if not the letter of the Gospel :

"Blessed are they who make others happy, for they shall obtain happiness."

I come to a last question—What are we ourselves, the reality as distinct from the appearance? Is it this complex organism of flesh and blood, nerve and muscle, instruments of sense, nutrition and the rest, which we call the body? But the body is as little permanent as the waterfall, it is perpetually in process of dissolution and reconstruction, and your body of to-day is as little identical with that of a few years ago as the foaming torrent bursting through the rocks in the Lauterbrunnen valley at this moment is identical with that which I saw last year. The form is the same, more or less, but every particle has changed. That which assures you that you are the same self that you were ten, twenty, thirty years ago, is something wholly *immaterial*, something no eye has seen, no scalpel can lay bare—your self-consciousness, your memory, these give you your sense of personal identity: the irrefutable demonstration is in the realm of the unseen. The earthly tabernacle is dissolved and renewed at every moment—its guest abides; the body passes, the self remains; the body is the phenomenal, the invisible self is the real. Do you doubt the existence of God because He is unseen? But you, the real you, the permanent behind the flux of atoms, are as unseen as He. You use the body and all its several faculties for purposes of self-manifestation—ay, one body after another you use and then cast away. And since we outlive many bodies in the course of an earthly span—like garments that are worn-out and cast off—is it so unreasonable to believe that the real, spiritual self will outlive whatever may happen to be its last suit on this plane of the visible? "We are," says the poet, "such stuff as dreams are made off," and I willingly

accept the words as a true and most hopeful statement ; for dreams are the realities which shape events and order the destinies of the world ; dreams, aspirations, ideals are the true powers which mould the plastic material of the world of appearances into the form it is to take ; dreams of a better future compel the future to take that shape and colour— dreams of an unattained perfection shame our imperfection, and draw our faltering feet toward the heights. The dreamers are the makers of the world ; and if we are such stuff as dreams are made of, it is because we belong to the world of reality, the unseen and eternal. What is all that is best in the unfolding life of the world and humanity but the gradual coming true of a dream which was dreamed nineteen centuries ago by a young mechanic in an obscure hamlet in Galilee ? Civilizations have arisen and passed away, but the dream proved real enough, and never more compellingly so than to-day.

Let us live in the real and for the real, discerning it behind this fabric of the apparent, the phenomenal ; let us set our hearts on the things which abide, which eye hath not seen—lay up for ourselves incorruptible riches, treasures of the mind and soul, which wax not old, neither are consumed by moth or rust.

> The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
> The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
> Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
> And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
> Leave not a rack behind.

Yes—the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment ; but the true realities—God and the soul, goodness and truth and love—these shall by no means perish, nor pass away for ever.

XV

Illusions and Disillusions

"A parable to this end, that men ought not to faint."—*Luke* xviii. 1.

WE have again been reading that famous and familiar chapter in which an old Hebrew writer, using the name and speaking in the person of King Solomon, expresses his utter dissatisfaction with life, his sense of its uselessness and fruitlessness, his general contempt for all it has to offer. He has, so he tells us, had all the chances most people long for and long in vain—great possessions, varied interests, resources above the ordinary; he has tried turn by turn the life of action and the life of thought and the life of pleasure —and his conclusion is the despairing one, "All things are full of weariness; man cannot utter it." To increase wisdom is to increase sorrow; laughter is mad, and mirth profitless; labour is striving after wind; vanity of vanities, all is vanity!

This philosophy of disillusion, of which you get the classical exposition in this Book of Ecclesiastes, has always had its votaries, some of them men of fame and eminence; and again and again the suggestion made in these quarters is to the effect that faith in life and its golden possibilities is the prerogative of inexperience; that as we grow older, and see things as they are, our

thoughts take on a sadder or at least a soberer hue ; youth is the period of enchantment, of happy, shimmering illusions, which contact with the realities of life will soon enough disperse and shatter. The kindly thing is to leave the young as long as possible in possession of their fond fancies, since they so evidently make them happy—not to anticipate the work of disillusionment which time will surely accomplish, and that quickly enough. Let the children dream of high ideals and achievements ; their awakening will come, when they will find that all human actions are governed by a very few motives, and those anything but glorious, and that the sum and substance of existence amounts to very little : by the time they have solved the enigma —the " age-old, tormenting riddle " of life, as Heine calls it—they will know that it was not worth their effort to solve.

In one way and another this temper, this attitude, has been fostered by some of our poets. Everybody can repeat Wordsworth's lines by heart, which declare that—

> Heaven lies about us in our infancy !
> Shades of the prison-house begin to close
> Upon the growing boy,
> But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,
> He sees it in his joy.
> The youth who daily further from the East
> Must travel, still is nature's priest,
> And by the vision splendid
> Is on his way attended ;
> At length the Man perceives it die away,
> And fade into the light of common day.

There you have it all : infancy, childhood—that is the age of heaven, because it is the age of illusion ; with the growth of reason and maturity the heavenly visions become fainter and fainter, until in manhood they

dissolve altogether "into the light of common day." And poor Tom Hood tells practically the same story in lines which have become as familiar as anything he wrote:

I remember, I remember
The house where I was born,
The little window where the sun
Came peeping in at morn.
He never came a wink too soon,
Nor brought too long a day;
But now I often wish the night
Had borne my breath away.

I remember, I remember
The fir-trees dark and high:
I used to think their slender tops
Were close against the sky,
It was a childish ignorance;
But now 'tis little joy
To know I'm farther off from heaven
Than when I was a boy.

You see—childish ignorance again praised as better, at least happier, than the knowledge of manhood; heaven receding from us in the measure that we grow older and wiser.

Now, what is the truth in all this plaintive story?—for, I don't know whether you agree with me, but for my own part I believe it is better to know the truth than to dwell in a fool's paradise, it is better to prepare oneself for the inevitable conflict of life by looking at things as they are. I suppose such a belief implies in itself the underlying belief that the truth is not hurtful, that we need not dread it—but let that pass for the moment. It is, of course, the merest truism that a child's world and a man's world—for the matter of that, even the universe as we envisage it at twenty and as we see it at thirty—are different; that is because during our period of growth we keep building up our

ideas of the world and of humanity, and a good many of those ideas are only provisional, and have to be replaced by truer ones, as we learn more and understand better. We shall glance at these inevitable changes that come over our outlook a little more in detail in a moment or two. And another thing bears as little doubt, and we had better understand it sooner than later : if at the outset of life we imagine that we can dodge the consequences of our actions, that we can sow and not reap, or not sow and yet reap—*that* is an illusion of which time will infallibly and quite ruthlessly cure us, or at least it will demonstrate our folly to us, and cast us in damages for our trouble. But the man who in middle-age finds that a youth spent in dissipation and pleasure-hunting leaves him but poorly equipped for the duties and responsibilities of increasing years, unfitted for the position he ought by that time to occupy, and who sees himself thus outstripped in the race—perhaps cast aside—such a one may present a very pathetic spectacle ; but he has no right to rail at destiny, and if he grows maudlin into the bargain and talks of himself as disillusioned, he will excite, not the sympathy but the disgust of right-minded people. If he really cherished the fancy that he could attain without striving hard, that he could waste his spare time and spare energy and get on as well as those who made the best use of theirs, it was only his self-indulgent temper that persuaded him to believe such a flagrant, glaring untruth.

Just suffer me here to branch off for a moment or two. We hear a great deal nowadays about so-called blind-alley occupations for boys, occupations which fit them for nothing in particular and leave them, when they reach early manhood, to swell

the ranks of casual and unskilled labour. That is quite true, and an evil that requires careful attention; but, keeping my eyes tolerably open, I see multitudes of young men who are only fitting themselves for a kind of blind-alley employment all their lives —I mean, who will be earning very little more at thirty-five than at twenty-five, because on the whole they won't be worth any more, although their wants will have gone up enormously by that time; because at twenty-five they have still no other interests than sport and amusement and a pleasant succession, or shall I say variety, of fugitive attachments. Now the prizes go to the men who in those years master the trade or profession they are engaged in, who acquire some technical knowledge with, maybe, a language or two, and who incidentally cultivate strong principle by keeping in touch with religion. You see them in the prime of life, with their feet securely planted some little way up the ladder; they don't regret the sacrifices they made ten, fifteen years ago, and if you want to listen to the note of disillusion, you will not hear it from them.

But, returning from this momentary digression, I now wish, taking my courage in both hands, to declare in direct opposition to the poets we quoted, that so far from manhood being the age of disillusion, disillusion is rather a disease of youth, a kind of psychological measles or chicken-pox. Now, of course, if we have got to have the measles, we have got to have them, and get it over; but I suggest that we need not run after them and cultivate them—and a good deal of this juvenile pessimism is just an affectation or a fashion, a pose of superior wisdom and experience. There is something striking, so we think at a certain age, in being able to say that we have seen through the hollowness of life

and its pretences; we imagine ourselves men of the world when we repeat such an epigram as that life is a comedy to those who think, a tragedy to those who feel—and we leave it to be guessed whether we have thought the most or felt the most at twenty-odd; we are surprised and subtly flattered by our own cynicism when we declare (strictly at second hand) that "to be understood is to be found out," or that not only is the world an empty show, but that it is not worth the price of admission. And all the time this kind of talk is quite unreal, and we indulge in it, not because we know so much of life, but because we know so little: our pretended disillusion is only an inverted kind of illusion which we shall shed as we gain real experience.

Read Goethe's *Werther*, the product of his salad-days, full of maudlin sentimentality and despair of life, and then compare it with the mellow wisdom of the Second Part of *Faust* written in his old age, and you see this truth writ large: Goethe's pessimism belonged to his immature, youthful period—at fifty, at sixty, at eighty he looked back on triumphs after triumphs, finding life ever more abundantly engrossing and worth while.

And now, harking back once more to Wordsworth and Hood, their exaltation of the bliss of childish ignorance and their wails over the loss of idealism that is supposed to come with riper age, let me ask, Was it true in their own case? That, after all, is the fairest test. Is it a fact that Wordsworth's "vision splendid" faded into the light of common day when he reached maturity? Why, read his "Ode to Duty," his sonnet on Milton, his "Lines Written near Tintern Abbey," to name only three familiar compositions, and in them he sounds notes of such grandeur, such sublimity, such surpassing

beauty and insight as would have been quite outside his compass in boyhood and adolescence. He saw the ideal side of life in clearer radiance than before ; what had passed away were only luminous mists leaving a far more glorious reality exposed to his poet's gaze. And as for Hood, was he farther from heaven when he had grown to man's estate than when he was a boy? Of course not ; he grew, as we all do, too big for the little toy-heaven he had believed in as a child, a locality just beyond the tree-tops. He grew to stir the heart of the nation against the evils of sweating in the immortal "Song of the Shirt," with its indignant cry :

> Ah, God, that bread should be so dear,
> And flesh and blood so cheap !

He wrote that other wonderful plea for compassion on hapless frailty, "The Bridge of Sighs," with its haunting lines :

> Alas for the rarity
> Of Christian charity
> Under the sun !
> Oh ! it was pitiful !
> Near a whole city full,
> Home she had none.
>
> Touch her not scornfully,
> Think of her mournfully,
> Gently and humanly ;
> Not of the stains of her—
> All that remains of her
> Now is pure womanly.

Was that getting further away from heaven? Why, heaven had got right into that man as he advanced in years ; the Christ-spirit—"Neither do I condemn thee" —had taken possession of him, as it could not have taken possession of a mere pensive child, nor of a

romantic, inexperienced youth, with no knowledge of the world.

But now, perhaps, our best plan will be to glance at some of these "lost illusions" of which people complain, either in accents of lament, or with a more than half-feigned flippancy. You started life with all sorts of beliefs in the good, the true, the beautiful, and one by one they were dimmed by the world's tainting breath, or corroded by some sharp, poisonous acid, until now, having barely crossed the threshold of manhood or womanhood, you find yourself bankrupt of faith. Very sad, very pathetic; now let us go into a little more detail, if we are to help you. Very well, there is human nature, which is not at all what you imagined it to be ere you left the protecting walls of home, and got your first taste of the real article. You did not know, you had not guessed, how hard, how unkind, how untruthful, how unprincipled men and women could be, and the discovery has broken in rudely upon your earlier imaginings. At College we had a legend of a first sermon preached by a very young student, beginning with this profound observation: "There is far too much sin in the world; *in fact, I feel sure there is.*" And I remember a very little Hampshire maiden once saying, with intense seriousness, "When you find out how deceitful people are. . . ." Disillusioned, you see, at sixteen! Well, we smile, but not unkindly, for they mean it, and their hurt is real enough; and mark you, it is no discredit to you or to anyone that this first vision of the seamy side of human nature should prove a real shock to you, and provoke something akin to dismay. You mark how in business there is cheating and sharp practice, tricks and chicanery—how here there is an employer expecting his assistants

to give misleading descriptions of the wares they sell, and there employees guilty of petty acts of dishonesty, and not ashamed of them; and straightway you set business down as daylight robbery, where the sharps exploit the flats, where the cry is, "Each for himself, and the devil take the hindmost"—and there is one illusion gone. You begin to take an interest in politics, believing that parties are—or at any rate your party is—inspired by nothing but single-eyed concern for the public weal; but presently the knowledge is forced upon you that politicians will advocate or oppose measures from mere motives of vote-catching expediency, that members will go into the Aye or No lobby at the crack of the party Whip, that elections are won and lost by mean, underhand manœuvres, that in order to compass the defeat of the other side newspapers will circulate barefaced falsehoods—and "politics is a dirty game," you say, and there is another illusion gone.

And in your personal relationships much the same thing happens. The fervent friendships you formed at the outset do not bear the stress of some testing-time, your friend proves unreliable in the hour of crisis, or simply grows cold towards you, heaven knows why. Yes, and in your most intimate concerns the identical painful experience awaits you: the being you dowered with all possible and impossible perfections proves all too humanly imperfect, perhaps inconstant, perhaps capricious, or nearer acquaintance has revealed unsuspected defects of character, perverseness, an impossibly exacting temper, or what not; in one way or another the idol has turned out to have feet of clay, and since one or two subsequent experiments have led to similar results, you now conclude that these things, too, must be numbered illusions—that friendship is mere self-

interest, and that love is only passion with a fine name.

And even this is not all. Turning from business and politics and personal relations to yet another aspect of life—to religion—you say you were brought up in certain beliefs which you took over unexamined, beliefs in an infallible written revelation, in a story of creation, fall, atonement, heaven and hell, which—alas!—the moment you did examine them, were seen to be fabulous, mythological, fancies of the child-mind, the child-soul, which the dry light of reason has proved unsubstantial; and now you are spiritually homeless, and know only this, that you were happier when your childhood's faith was undisturbed, and before some sinister angel, armed with the two-edged sword of criticism and science, forbade your return to that sheltering paradise. A phrase in a modern French book may correctly describe your case: "I had seen the head of that good old man they call God disappear in the clouds;" and you feel like saying with James Thomson, the luckless poet:

> Ah, woe is us, for we are souls bereaved!
> Of all the beings under heaven's wide scope,
> Most hopeless we who once possessed most hope,
> And most beliefless who once most believed.

Religion, then, has to be added to the list of exploded superstitions you have given up—there remains for you nothing but the wistful grey-in-grey of agnosticism, with a leaning to the side of negation. And now, have you quite finished with your list of lost illusions? No, not quite; there is one item in the catalogue you have forgotten, but of that I will remind you presently, for now we will examine your case.

So you have found out, have you, that there are rogues and knaves in the world, that there is cruelty and treachery, unkindness and deceit, envy and malice,

hatred and all uncharitableness, and have framed your indictment against human nature accordingly? Poor human nature! And any morning's paper bears testimony to the accuracy of your diagnosis, and as you muse over the daily tale of misdoings held up to the public gaze you feel inclined to echo Paul's quotation, "There is none righteous, no, not one." But stop a moment; it is quite true that these various crimes, offences and misdemeanours have been committed as set forth in the public Press, but what does that prove? Just this, and only this, my friend, that they are exceptional occurrences, or they wouldn't find the way into print! Some years ago the witty Irish-American writer who calls himself Mr. Dooley coined the epigram, "Sin is news, and news is sin." It sounds very grim and cynical, but is in reality the very reverse. Sin, for all that it is so old, always strikes us as news; which means, that it is a real departure from the ordinary. Good behaviour is too commonplace to get the smallest paragraph; it is the expected thing, and takes place with most unexciting regularity. Imagine a newspaper with headlines like these:

HONESTY OF A CASHIER.
AN AFFECTIONATE MOTHER IN ——
NEIGHBOURS WHO LIVE ON GOOD TERMS.
WELL-KNOWN LOCAL FIRM MEETS ITS OBLIGATIONS.

Wouldn't you think the reporting staff and editor had gone a little mad? Wouldn't you suspect it was a new kind of joke? And why? Because honesty, affection, neighbourliness, fidelity in business are the rule and not the exception; you, the severe and despairing critic of human nature, for all your professions of disillusion, know that so well that it would amaze you

to see such things thought worth chronicling. It is the facts that *don't* get into the papers—the kindliness, dutifulness, self-denial, courage, faith-keeping, right-doing, loyalty—that make up the unrecorded ninety-nine per cent. You have heard it said that happy countries have no history; in the same way, the vast majority of simple, useful, unromantic lives provide no "copy" for reporters, or sensational news-items for a public greedy for sensations. Business could not be kept going for forty-eight hours if it were the nightmare-welter of dishonesty imagined by the unreflecting; for business reposes on credit, and credit means trust, and if that trust were habitually broken, business as we know it would be at an end. We presume that men will keep their word, fulfil their engagements, deliver the goods up to sample, behave decently to one another; and the presumption is based on long previous experience, and is practically always justified by subsequent experience. Do I say human nature in either business or private relationships is perfect? I am not so foolish; but I say that human nature is better, and not worse, than you imagined before you became what you call disillusioned; because in those early days, with your inexperience, you did not know of the temptations that have to be fought, the lures that have to be resisted, the desperate conflicts between duty and desire that have to be waged. Get a bigger outlook, go more deeply into the facts, and gather your facts from a sufficiently wide area—from life, and not merely from the newspapers—and your disillusion will give place to the conviction that, on the whole, workaday men and women give a fairly good account of themselves in this workaday world, making due allowance for its obstacles, and that in business, as in politics, the sum of honest purpose and

effort vastly outbalances the evil. The veriest trickster and impostor has in his operations to rely on the fact that truthfulness and straightforwardness are everywhere *expected*; in other words, the exception proves the rule.

But I turn to those more private matters we touched upon in passing—the disillusions or otherwise of friendship and love. May not the reason for your disappointments be sought in two very simple directions? On the one hand, if we start by expecting impossible perfections from our fellow-mortals, we really have no right to blame them for not coming up to our arbitrary and fanciful expectations; we must try to love people for the qualities they possess, instead of falling in love with our own imaginary pictures of them, and out of it because the reality does not correspond. What if others pitched their expectations of us in the same transcendental key, and turned away from the poor actual, faulty and blemished, that we have to show? And that brings me to my second point. You remember that I hinted an omission in your catalogue of lost illusions—here it is: have we, after travelling a little distance along life's highway, quite the same exalted opinion of ourselves as that with which we may have set out—our powers, our motives, and the rest—or have we not found a pretty earthy admixture in our own natures? When we think of ourselves at our worst, we shall for very shame abate our extravagant demands of angelic or heroic virtue in others; and in striking a juster balance we shall find—not heroes or angels, to be sure, but friends worth the name and worth the keeping, who will stand by us in the dark hour, and whose tried loyalty will not fail; and a love, too—not at the first or second trial, perhaps—in which soul par-

takes as well as sense, the heavenly shining through and transfiguring the earthly part, an affection and a tenderness, allied to a strong mutual esteem, which grow with the years, and deepen with each shared happiness or sorrow. That is neither dream nor mere theory, but is borne out by common rather than uncommon experience ; and in the light of that experience cheap sneers and cheap cynicism count for little.

Am I, then, denying that there are real griefs, cruel blows and disappointments to be met in these very domains ? No ; but I say that even so we need not go down under them, we need not let them crush us to the ground. In the last resort, I come back to this—the effect of events *upon* us depends on what events find *in* us. Listen. On the Borromean Isles, in those wonderful sub-tropical gardens, they show you a plant, the Flor de Pasque, which has this peculiarity, that if it receives a cut anywhere, the whole of its sap, its very life-blood, runs out, and the plant bleeds to death—unless the flow can be staunched. And the only way to do that is to sear the wound with a red-hot iron. I dare say it hurts the plant, but it saves its life. Which things are in truth a parable. There are hurts through which your strength, your very being, will ebb away unless you take strong measures. Apply the hot iron. Stand it. Stand it. Set your teeth, and don't flinch. It will sear, but it will save, and you will look back upon the pain with gratitude in days to come.

And what of religious disillusion ? Well, the religion of the man or woman—of the thoughtful man or woman —cannot be the same as that of the child : not the same, but better and truer. Do not imagine that when your nursery notions of God as a benign old Man, of the Bible as literally inerrant, or even of this portent and

that marvel, have gone to pieces, that religion has therefore come to an end, and is proved an illusion or delusion; you are growing into a bigger world, and—with whatever growing pains—have to enlarge your ideas, your idea of God among the number. I dare say you are an evolutionist, and know that in your bodily structure you sum up all the previous phases the animal creation has gone through. Now there is a corresponding spiritual evolution clearly traceable in the Bible itself, from cruder to loftier, from the Fire-God of some of the older patriarchal stories to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Spirit who is to be worshipped in spirit and in truth—and again, you sum up in yourself all the phases of faith through which the race has passed. The tale is a tale of progress; the earlier ideas are surrendered only to make room for more adequate and exalted ones, and when the more perfect comes, the less perfect passes away. And so, do not let us bewail our apparent losses in this region overmuch, for they are outweighed by far greater gains. The alternative to the faith of childhood is not unbelief, but a loftier faith in God than was possible for the less awakened, less mature mind and soul. Let this and that legend, once deemed to be fact, be frankly acknowledged as poetry; the truth of religion, the basis of religion, the reality of religion—the fact of God seen in the face of Christ—these remain unremoved. It is unbelief that is the illusion; dismiss it—get rid of it—transcend it.

And so, perhaps, life, when we see it steadily and see it whole, will be found not to lose in value by larger experience, but to take on a new and higher value; not to be empty, but fuller of meaning and goodness than we suspected; inviting us to live it bravely, cheerfully, hopefully, and, seeing we are compassed about with

such a cloud of witnesses, to lay aside every weight, even the sin which doth so easily beset us, and run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith. And when even falls, may we say:

Life, we've been long together,
Through pleasant and through cloudy weather.
'Tis hard to part when friends are dear;
Perhaps 'twill cost a sigh, a tear.
Then steal away, give little warning,
  Choose thine own time;
Say not Good-night, but in some brighter clime
  Bid me Good-morning.

XVI

"O Love that wilt not let me go!"

"I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."—*Rom.* viii. 38, 39.

IF these words were an anonymous fragment discovered in some Eastern monastery, or an inscription on some ancient monument unearthed the other day; if we thus read them for the first time, as a novelty, having no clue at all to the writer, we should know that here was an utterance of the highest religious genius, and we should marvel at a faith so absolute, so joyous, so triumphant. We might fall to wondering what the writer's life must have been like to allow him to keep that faith so intact, and imagine its tenor to have been a singularly even and sheltered one, preserved from all untoward happenings, surrounded with every circumstance making for security and ease. But our text is no such fragment of unknown or uncertain authorship, and its writer is not one of those who are mere names to posterity; he is, on the contrary, a man concerning whose career, whose inner as well as outer life, we have extraordinarily full and detailed information, and that information supplied at first hand, from his own pen; and the last thing we should say of that

existence is that it was placid, sheltered or unexciting. A thing of tempest and tremendous adventure, rather; of conflicts material and spiritual; of struggle against fearful odds, with danger for its daily companion; of griefs and disappointments, of heart-ache and almost heart-break. There never were franker self-revelations than those which we find scattered up and down Paul's correspondence; and everywhere these letters tell of storm and stress, of toil and travel, of labour and sorrow, of scourgings and imprisonments, of sickness and anguish. "For we would not have you ignorant, brethren," he writes to Corinth, "concerning our affliction which befell us in Asia, that we were weighed down exceedingly, beyond our power, insomuch that we despaired even of life; yea, we ourselves have had the answer of death within ourselves." And again, "For even when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no relief, but we were afflicted on every side; without were fightings, within were fears." Turn to the Galatian letter, and you have the story of his wearing battle against the narrowness and the persecuting manœuvres of the Judaistic party; turn to the Seventh of Romans, and you behold a mighty soul in agony, and hear the strong crying of a strong man shaken to the depths. And then—then we are in a position to form an estimate of this text of ours and what it stands for, the assurance it expresses of that love of God from which nothing is able to separate, which nothing can quench or cancel. It is an amazing profession to make, an amazing certainty to hold, for a man so buffeted and tempest-tossed as Paul, so acquainted with every kind of misery; and there is only one explanation for it—Paul had seen that Divine love which is to him so real, so vivid, revealed in and through Jesus Christ,

in the life and death of the Son of God; the Light of the World illumined for him all the world's darkness and woe, comforted him in his manifold afflictions, and promised a solution of problems which he himself was not able to solve. Christ—this was the fixed point in all his vicissitudes—God in Christ loved us and had given Himself for us; with that supreme fact firmly fixed in his mind, all became bearable, life's sufferings were seen in their transitoriness against the eternal background of the intuition, "The Father Himself loveth you." I had a letter lately from a correspondent who wrote, not for the sake of any help I might perchance have been able to give him, for he does not sign himself, but simply for the relief of self-expression—a letter that has haunted me by the depth of sorrow and utter loneliness it reveals in turns of phrase that sear the imagination like a branding-iron; and the one prayer one can form for the writer—and how many wounded spirits!—is that it might please God to reveal His Son in him, that he might know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that love of God which is mightier than the scorn and indifference of man, and from which nothing is able to separate us. You have seen a woman pick up a child who had hurt himself, cradle the mite in her arms, and whisper, "Never mind, mother loves him!"—and presently the sobbing ceased, and the sharp pain lost its edge; so, what better anodyne to our childish griefs and piteous disappointments is there than this—"Bear up, be brave; your Father loves you!" Once we know that, believe that, hold to that, nothing else matters overmuch.

Now the great hymn which furnishes us with our subject in this sermon has this for its outstanding characteristic—it springs from a strong, invincible

sense of the love of God, and is able, as only a sincere deliverance is, to strengthen the same sense in us. It is very noble poetry, charged with tenderness and courage; and it is in the truest sense an inspired message, something which the writer himself felt to have been given to him rather than produced by him. As you know, Dr. George Matheson, whose name will rest securely upon these four stanzas, was blind, and as sometimes happens, the deprivation of outward sight was accompanied by an extraordinarily rich inner life, a life of vision and communion with God. There are certain achievements which it is very hard to understand; nevertheless, it is a fact that this blind youth had a brilliant University career, that he became the author of important theological works, and a preacher of the front rank in Edinburgh, a deeply original mind, nurtured on the best, and in turn nourishing others. He excelled in brief devotional meditations, compressing within two or three pages a wealth of choicely expressed thought, and his *Words by the Wayside*, *Messages of Hope*, and *Leaves for Quiet Hours* form a devotional treasury to which one may repair again and again without exhausting its riches. But in addition to all, and above all, he wrote the hymn, "O love that wilt not let me go"—a composition which must take its place among the permanent possessions of the Christian Church. "My hymn was composed," he related afterwards, "in the manse of Innellan on the evening of June 6, 1882. I was at that time alone . . . the rest of the family were staying overnight in Glasgow. Something had happened to me which was known only to myself, and which caused me the most severe mental suffering. The hymn was the fruit of that suffering . . . I had the impression rather of having it dictated to me

by some inward voice than of working it out myself. I am quite sure the whole work was completed in five minutes, and equally sure that it never received at my hands any re-touching or correction." Now that is what I mean by saying that we have in this hymn a genuinely inspired, God-breathed utterance, something in which the human agent is less the originator than the transmitter : a greater Power works and expresses itself through him, and enables him, as in this case, to find the perfectly fitting form with an ease and sureness that astonish himself. There is no groping, no searching such as the literary craftsman knows ; the right thought clothes itself spontaneously in the right words, and we feel that it had to be so, could be only so. That is inspiration ; and when we behold it, we know that it is the Lord's doing, and wonderful in our sight.

Well now, we turn to the text of our hymn, and to my mind the very first line is arrestive and suggestive of thought. We think of the Divine Love rejoicing in man's obedience and filial reverence, when man is conscious of being God's child, and in that consciousness yields Him his unreserved confidence and submission ; we think of that great love going forth in Christ to seek and to save that which is lost, when man in his wilfulness has wandered away from the Father's house—and how good it is to be assured that there is never any bar to our return to that all-compassionate, all-pardoning affection, that, while man can repent, God will forgive ; but here we have a poet-seer who tells us something more of that Love—that *it will not let us go.* That, I venture to think, is the assurance we supremely want, and which alone can satisfy us. The bond by which God holds us to Himself is infinitely elastic and infinitely strong ; we can lengthen the distance between

our Creator and ourselves, but we can never break the golden chain, never break away from Him utterly. *He will not let us go*: that is a blessed thought to hold present in our minds, when darkness and loneliness are around, and all the billows seem to have gone over us. *He will not let us go*; that is the ray of hope which cannot be quenched even in the bitter hour when conscience convicts us of having wilfully defied God's decrees and disobeyed His law. "You may rebel against Me," He is saying, "go your own way and discover how unprofitable it is, deny Me in theory or in practice, and fare accordingly—but one thing you cannot do, and that is to make Me let you go. To all eternity you are Mine. 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness will I draw thee.'" We may resist that Divine magnetism for long, but in the end it is bound to conquer our stubbornness, our doubt, our indifference; we may exercise our self-will to our foolish hearts' content, with heart-soreness for result, but in the end God's Will, not ours, must triumph—that Will which is altogether good, and desires our good.

On the consciousness of that love, from which there is no escaping, the poet tells us that we may rest our weary souls—it claims us, it holds us, it will save to the uttermost; it is the ocean from which the river of our life has sprung, and in conscious communion with God man's life is freshened and filled and enriched, and flows along with a strong and healthy current. I give it to you, brethren, not as a speculation nor a pulpit-phrase, but as a fact of experience, that here is the blessed anodyne for grief, the renewer of our energies when we feel faint and spent and well-nigh ready to give up the struggle—the sense of God's

affection which will not let go, nor forsakes us for a single moment. *How do we know?* In the same way as Paul and all the saints have known: they saw, and so may we, love made manifest in Christ, and in Him crucified, suffering for our sakes, redeeming us by His agonies, calling out for all to hear, "Be ye reconciled unto Me!" We wrong God when we imagine Him as hard to be entreated, as all but implacable in His wrath: there is never more than one obstacle to man's reconciliation with Him, and that obstacle in man himself: it is never God who needs to be reconciled, but man. Once more—the chain may be stretched, but never snapped; as another spiritual singer has it:

> And though we turn us from Thy face,
> And wander far and long,
> Thou hold'st us still in Thine embrace,
> O love of God, most strong.

God is love—God is light, the Master Light of all our seeing. Take these two lines, with which the next verse opens:—

> O Light that followest all the way,
> I yield my flickering torch to Thee,

an image full of beauty and tenderness. I remember a night two or three years ago, on a Southern lake, full of subtle magic, the breeze a caress, the boat gliding quickly over the rippling waves, and a glorious full moon rising from behind the mountains, queenly in silver splendour, its reflection making a broad shimmering beam on the waters; and as the oars with rhythmic beat sped us along, I noticed that wherever we went, this reflected glory seemed to pursue and envelop us—we could not escape from those glistening meshes—and there and then I felt most powerfully reminded of the Light that follows all the way. Friends, to the seeing

eye God is like that, His Presence never withdrawn—hidden, if at all, only by earthborn vapours of self-will; clouds may dim or hide that Unbegotten Radiance, but It endures, and will endure long after every cloud shall have melted into thin air. And it remains ever true that in His light we shall see light, when our own flickering torch is woefully insufficient, and fails to show us where our feet may safely step, and where we must tread warily. Youth is the age of self-confidence and self-sufficiency, and it is well that we should develop initiative and even over-rate our powers in the opening stages of life; but if there is one conviction which deepens in me with advancing years—as it has surely deepened in those of you who have reached or passed middle age—it is that which the prophet expresses in the words, "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." We scheme and plan, we counsel and contrive—yet how small is our wisdom, and how short a way we can see ahead! The time comes when we recognize that we can only do our best, and humbly commit the issue to the mighty hands of God, knowing that in those hands it is safe; that "the lot falleth into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is with the Lord."

And especially helpful is this thought in those seasons—which no one is spared—when we feel only too painfully conscious of the limitations of our powers and our knowledge, when some grievous thing has befallen us, some stroke we quite fail to understand, and when, left to ourselves, we should indeed be in darkness and chill and dreary shadow. But we are not left orphaned, or desolate, with only ourselves to depend on—at any rate, we need not be; His Light follows all the way, and even where we cannot discern the meaning

of this or that dispensation, we may be conscious of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, and so possess our souls in patience and in hope.

Now I own that I cannot quite go with the sentiment expressed in the words, "My heart restores its borrowed ray"—gives it up or gives it back—as if we were called upon to renounce all reasoning of our own, and simply to yield passively to God's ordinances. That may sometimes be the wisest, the only wise, plan; but generally I would say that our business is to make all the use we can of our reason—which is God's gift—and only where it proves inadequate to resign ourselves to the reflection, "After all, though I cannot understand or fathom this, God understands, He wills my best, and in that thought there is a peace not of the world's giving, nor in the world's power to take away." But by all means let us use the light God has given us as well and as bravely as we are able; it was kindled at His own light, for we are His offspring, and at His altar fire we may re-kindle it, when it seems all but extinct. You remember the Psalmist's experience when he was sorely exercised with a problem that has exercised many a soul since his time—the seeming impunity of sinners, the unabashed and gaily-flaunted success of the wicked: "When I thought how I might know this, it was too painful for me, until I went into the sanctuary of God." Exactly; he re-lit his dying candle at the eternal Fire, and in prayer at the footstool of God's throne found illumination—and so may we.

And now, with the opening of the third stanza, the note deepens—deepens but to swell. We know that this hymn was written under the stress of an extremity of suffering—a sorrow the more severe since, for reasons doubtless sufficient, it was unshared, and had to be

borne quite alone. There is nothing that so reveals the quality of a soul, nothing that so brings out and records, infallibly and indelibly, its essential nobility or ignobility, as the effect upon it of a great trouble; it is at such times as these that we need to keep watch and ward over ourselves, over our immortal part, for they must be either our making or unmaking. We are, perhaps, never in greater peril than when we are tempted to feel sorry for ourselves—a very natural temptation, but a very insidious one: self-pity is one of the quickest roads to deterioration. Blessed are we if in a day of crisis a great principle, a great faith stands beside us and sustains us; for in that case we shall win through, because we shall not weakly despair, and even while we are treading the winepress alone, or passing through some furnace seven times heated, we shall be conscious of the purifying effect of the flame of fiery trial. Paul, who knew what he was speaking about, uses this very image when he says that the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is—consuming the base and vain, but refining the gold in our natures. And we know that all experience bears out the reflection of the author of Hebrews—addressed to those who had more than their share of tribulation—"All chastening seemeth for the present not joyous but grievous: yet afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that are exercised thereby, even the fruit of righteousness." And the sense that it is even so transfigures sorrow; we shall at any rate be less afraid of evil tidings, knowing that our times are in His hand; so that the poet is only putting in clear and exquisite form what innumerable human souls have felt, when he exclaims:

O Joy that seekest me through pain,
I cannot close my heart to Thee;

I trace the rainbow through the rain,
And feel the promise is not vain,
That morn shall tearless be.

What a glorious phrase that is—the Joy that seeks us through pain, God's own messenger once we have taken the trouble to pierce the disguise in which it comes! Do you know, a man's heart had to bleed before he wrote that, for it could be written only in heart's blood. And once he had grown conscious of that messenger's true nature, he could not close his heart to it, could not but listen to its promises, nor, believing them, fail to find them true. Yes, it remains true, and all experience confirms it, that while our pleasures, our amusements, our seasons of placid and unruffled ease leave their traces only on the surface, quickly faded and effaced, our character is moulded and enriched, our inner life is ennobled and has a stamp set upon it, by our conflicts, the crises we pass through, the stress and strain of our existence. Whosoever has not known these, we instinctively feel, has not really lived: we do not envy him on having escaped something—we rather pity him for having missed so much. And the last word, the final outcome, of these wrestlings and agonizings is something deeper than ease, nobler than pleasure, something that can only be described by the great word *Joy*. The rainbow is already implicit in the rain, the morrow will smile though weeping may endure for a night: let trial be manifold—bear and dare, strive and thrive, and count it all joy; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

And so to the great final invocation, with its note of mystical rapture:—

O Cross that liftest up my head,
I dare not ask to fly from Thee!

We do not know what personal and private Gethsemane is veiled by the allusion; but we remember Paul's words about his filling up that which was lacking of the afflictions of Christ—how he felt that he was called upon to share the Saviour's agony, and rejoiced in being found worthy to do so. At some time and in some measure the like experience comes to every disciple of Christ, whatever its shape and occasion; may it be our lot then to feel that the Cross we bear bears us in turn—that it truly lifts up our head, that it is not an instrument of death but a means of grace. Of all the vast effects of the work of Christ I sometimes think that for the world of struggling, labouring men and women this is the greatest—that His holy Passion has sanctified pain and grief, and made us see in them God's agents, touching us to finer issues, and lifting us into a rarer atmosphere.

The Love that will not let go; the Light that follows all the way; the Joy that seeks us through pain—all these are manifest upon and stream from the Cross of Calvary, three in one: let us look upon them, feel their drawing, raising, regenerating power, seek to interpret their message aright, and we shall find it to be the Gospel of LIFE—the Life that is hid with CHRIST in GOD.

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