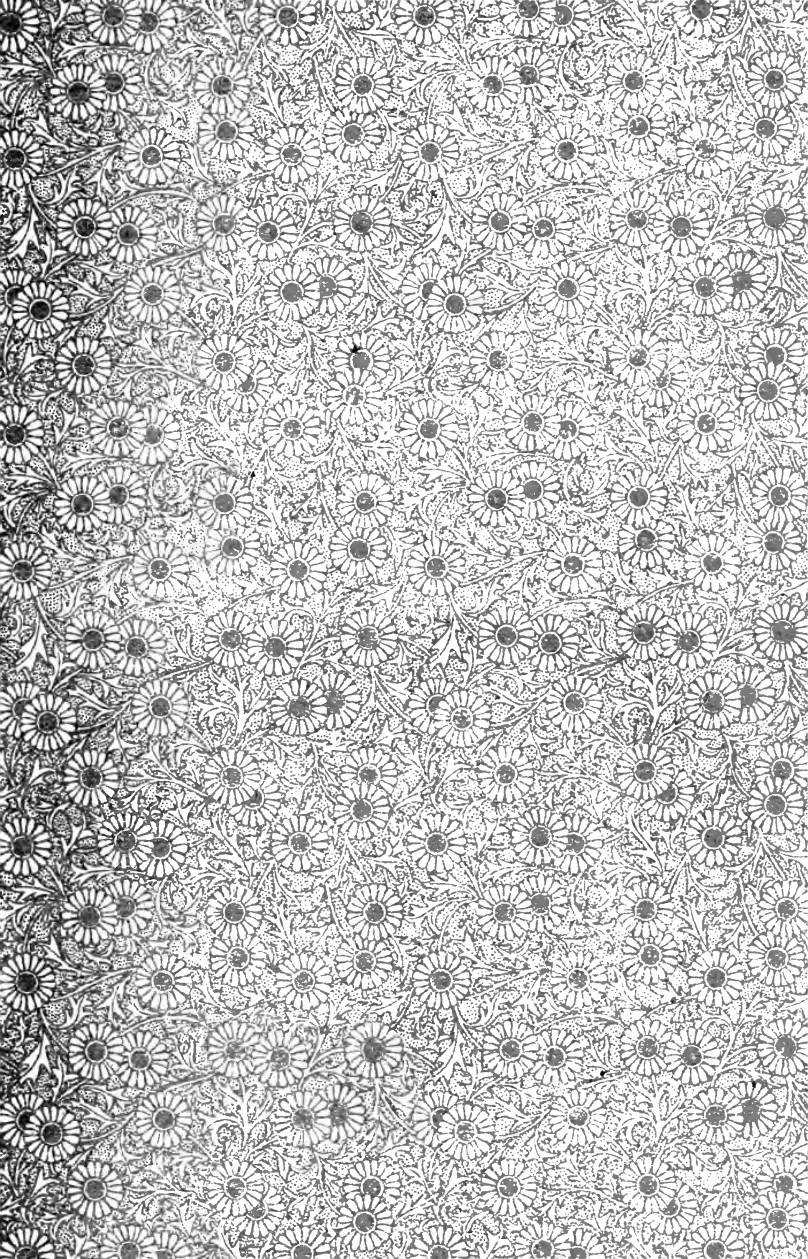

CHRISTIAN MORALS

A Series of Lectures

BY

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PREFACE.

In the preparation of these Lectures I have had three purposes in view. First, I have designed to present with scientific accuracy, yet in a popular form, the fundamental principles of Moral Philosophy. Secondly, I have sought to show its inseparable alliance, at every point, with religion, and especially with Christianity, which I regard, not as having had its birth midway in human history, but as Truth and Right, co-eternal with God, and revealed and manifested by and in Jesus Christ. Thirdly, I have wished to illustrate the principles of ethical science, as they are developed in its own and in human history, as they are involved in questions and subjects of current or recent interest, and as they are applicable to the concerns of daily life. These three aims have been so constantly united in my habits of thinking and teaching, that, with me, they are virtually one: it remains to be seen whether I shall have made them one to my readers.

ANDREW P. PEABODY.

Cambridge, Jan. 1, 1887.

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MORAL PHILOSOPHY.

LECTURE I.

HUMAN FREEDOM.

In commencing a course of lectures on moral philosophy, there is a preliminary question, — Is there such a science? Is there any essential difference between human acts and the changes that occur in the material world, — between the workings of a genial Christian life and those of a vernal breeze or of fructifying sunbeams, — between a Nero or a Borgia and a tornado or an earthquake? Can man do or have done otherwise than he does or has done? It is maintained by some philosophers that the human will is not a will, — that a series of causes began its course with the beginning of time or in a past eternity; that every subsequent event has been an effect of one or more of those causes, itself a cause; that the effect, being contained in the cause, can never have been

by any possibility other than it actually was, and that, so far as man is concerned, these causes have a definite, determinate, and absolute control over what are called his voluntary powers. By this theory, motives are forces of a calculable weight and power; and the question whether and how far they will prevail, is closely analogous to the problem of balls impinging upon one another. Given a specific human constitution and a specific motive or combination of motives, the resultant action is as truly inevitable as the result of a given mechanical force or combination of forces upon a mass of known bulk and weight.

Man's acts, then, are not his. If there be a God, he does all that man seems to do. If he is a beneficent being, then is the evil which man seems to do of beneficent influence; and human scourges of their race, like the fearful convulsions of nature, are incidental to the development of a system of things which has the highest good for its aim and issue. If there be not a God, then human conduct has no more of soul or meaning in it than there is in the vicissitudes of inanimate nature.

This theory degrades man to the lowest point. Either by unreasoning nature or by the arbitrary will of God, he may be made to serve the vilest uses, — purposes meaner and more loathsome than

are assigned to aught else in the universe, and that by no fault of his; for he is incapable of wrong. Nor can good come to the individual man from the vileness to which he is subjected. He may be the stepping-stone for good to others; but if he has no capacity of being otherwise than he is, he is none the less trampled upon and trodden down by them. Nor is there any dignity or merit in what is called his penitence, which is a mere change of the forces that work irresistibly upon him. Nor yet can he hope for any thing better in another life. He may be immortal; but if so, he must be subject in the future to the same conditions of being under which he has lived here. If there be no God, I know not why the possibilities of atheism should brighten with a change of sky; and if there be a God who has lacked either the power or the love to deal better with his human creatures — I will not say children — in this world, how can it be supposed that he will be able or willing to do better for them in any other condition of being? It is only when we consider the present state of things as a system of moral discipline, educational in its purpose, and as fitted for the highest development of the race, while that of the individual, if postponed, will not be suffered ultimately to fail, that the actual condition of aggregate humanity can be regarded as otherwise

than unspeakably wretched. But this is no argument. There is, however, a plausibility in the theory of philosophical necessity, which sometimes insnares unwary disciples, who are wholly unaware of the debasement and hopeless misery which it implies.

In the inquiry as to human freedom, it must be admitted, that, at the first aspect, a very strong case may be made in behalf of necessity. There is no uncaused event or phenomenon. Whatever occurs is an effect, and presupposes a cause. But whence comes our idea of causation? Suppose that precisely the same things that occur were to take place outside of us, and that we were intelligent beings as now, with full power of perception and reasoning, yet utterly incapable of doing any thing, of influencing in the least the course of things around us, should we have any conception of cause? Manifestly not. Antecedence and sequence would be all that we should know. The idea of causation comes from our own consciousness, — from the fact that we ourselves are causes. But how are we causes? Not by our limbs alone. I might use my hands and feet as I use them now, and they might seem to me merely parts of the universe around me, and their movements mere successive events, not my acts. An absolute idiot has no idea of causation in connection with

what he does. The first step in the education of the idiot, as of the infant child, is to make him connect what he does with its effects, and thus to bring his acts under the partial control of such mind as he has. My hand did not write this lecture. Nor did the mechanism of my limbs bring me hither to deliver it. My hands and my feet had no other kind of agency than belongs to the pen, or the locomotive engine, or the carriage. There was a cause behind my bodily organism which put it in motion. I am conscious that my will has a causative power, and I can get no conception of causation except through that consciousness.

Moreover, I can conceive of God as a cause only because I know that I am a cause. I can, at any point within the sphere of my action, arrest and change the normal order of nature, not, indeed, superseding its laws, but manipulating them as an organist manipulates the stops and keys of his organ, so that things will take place, which, but for my will, would not take place. The only reason why it can enter my mind that there is a causative power in the action of the moon on the tides, is that I have causative power over certain portions of the universe. I know, too, that what causative power I have is not in my bodily organs, but in a faculty which controls them, and which, be it what

it may, I call mind, and that apart from mind I do nothing. I conclude, then, that for me mind is the only seat of power; and I rise thence to the conception of a Supreme Mind as the seat and source of power in the universe at large, — as the initiating and controlling cause of all worlds, of all beings, and of the normal course of nature. Nor can I account for the existence and order of the universe, except by assuming the existence of a Supreme Will-Power of the same type with that of which I myself am conscious.

Now, is it not evident that the argument against man's freedom, derived from the supposed series of causes and inevitable effects, applies to God's freedom as well as to man's? If the chain is unbroken, then God has abdicated his control over nature, if he ever had any. If no event can take place without an adequate finite cause, then God has no more power in the universe than I have; and a God who has resigned his power, or never had any, is no God. If God is, we cannot doubt his power to arrest or change the course of nature. Whether he has ever done so, in what we call miracle, is an open question, even with those who believe, as I do, in the historical truth of events commonly termed miraculous.[1] But, however this

[1] How know we, that, in the very nature of things, a being so at one with God as Jesus Christ was, has not of necessity an in-

may be, it is conceivable that in our own time, and in all time, he may so modify the operation of natural laws, that their non-miraculous working shall be otherwise than it would be without his action upon them; in fine, that he may exercise precisely the supernatural power which we are conscious of exercising. He thus may, at any moment, without interfering with the laws of nature, indeed by the instrumentality of those laws, start a new series of finite causes. Now, this is precisely what we are conscious of doing. I will an act, and take the requisite measures for its performance. In so doing, I start a series of material causes and effects which else would not have been started. I am distinctly conscious of having not been forced to start this series. I know, so far as I know any thing, that I could have omitted to do this, or have done the opposite; and when I say that I am thus conscious of freedom, I mean that

tenser, more subtile, and more efficient will-power over nature than belongs to common men? On this supposition, what are called his miracles may have been no less normal and natural than what we are doing every day. Nor need we ascribe such power to him alone. Something like it may have been exercised by those who have approached nearest to him in character, or by those who have been energized and exalted by the consciousness of a special divine inspiration or mission. It may be, too, that like superior power over nature will become normal for renovated man in that remote yet anticipated era when the brightest pages of prophecy shall be re-written in human history.

I am in my own sphere and measure a first cause, an originating cause, even as God is in his universal domain.

But we are told by some extreme necessitarians, that consciousness is liable to mistake, and, therefore, not valid evidence; that the only things of which we can be certain are things that can be seen and handled, and taken cognizance of by the senses. But these are precisely the things which we do not know. I believe, but do not absolutely know, that these seats and walls and windows have an existence outside of my own mind. What I do know, is that I am conscious of certain images in my mind which I suppose to have their external counterparts. Yet to-night I shall, very probably, dream of this hall, and shall be conscious of precisely the same images in my mind that are there now, though they will have in my bedroom no outside counterparts. Consciousness, so far as we know, is infallible. Our senses are not so. Jaundice, disease, dream, delirium, may make them false witnesses. My feelings may be wayward, unreasonable, insane, yet they are real. I am never mistaken with regard to them, though I may be wide of the mark in my notions of persons and objects associated with them. Then, too, all reasoning rests on consciousness. If the evidence of consciousness is ruled out, I cannot be sure that even

what seem invincible arguments against human freedom are what they seem. If I cannot trust my own consciousness, I cannot trust the conclusion of a seemingly valid syllogism; for why may not the premises really authorize a conclusion opposite to that which to my consciousness is logical and just?

We have a consciousness of freedom, which shows itself in several different forms. We have this consciousness at the moment of action. We have it again, in retrospection, in which our thoughts take the form, not of self-congratulation or self-pity, but always of self-approval or self-blame. Now, if my boots were self-conscious, they might think themselves happy when I wore them on a smooth pavement and under a bright sky, and consider themselves as objects of pity when I dragged them through miry streets; but because they could not move without me, or stay at home when I wanted to wear them, it is impossible that they should think well or ill of themselves. But if I cannot do otherwise than I do, my moral position is precisely that of my self-conscious boots, and it is impossible that I should approve or blame myself.

Still farther, in our judgment of others we are distinctly conscious, not only of affection and dislike, congratulation and pity, but equally of approval and blame, — of approval, often, of those

whom we do not like, of blame of those whom we tenderly love.

But what is to be said of the power of motives? Are we conscious of being their slaves, or their masters? Are we wholly dependent on them for action? Can we in any case act without them? We cannot, indeed, initiate action without them; for they are what their name means, — motors, movers. A motive presents itself. It must somehow be taken cognizance of. We must do something; but it may be the refusal to do what the motive suggests, which, so far as the will is concerned, is action, — it may be the opposite of what the motive suggests. The motive is virtually a question, "Will you do this, or will you not?" We can, as we please, answer Yes or No; and if we answer Yes, there remains the choice of methods, as to which there may be no motive pointing in one direction rather than in another. The schoolmen denied the possibility of action when there is no determining motive in one way rather than in another. They said that an ass between two equal and equidistant bundles of hay would starve to death, because he would have no reason for making a choice between the two. How this may be, I cannot tell; but men are not asses, and we all have often made a choice when there was no reason for the specific choice. I often go from

Cambridge to Concord. There are two railway routes, to me equally convenient. I have no reason whatever for preferring one to the other. Yet I do not therefore stay at home when I want to be in Concord. I make an entirely arbitrary choice, — a choice, too, which in certain contingencies might be fatal, or might be of very important influence on my coming life, even, especially were I a young man, on my moral well-being and destiny. We are constantly choosing between two alternatives without any specific motive. In carrying a general purpose into execution, we often make an entirely unmotived choice among several ways, or places, or methods, or associates, for neither of which we have any conscious preference. We are, at the same time, conscious of power over motives when they are presented to us. We make them strong or weak by the element which our selfhood puts into them; and this often renders the motive which is intrinsically the strongest weak, because of its very strength. Thus, a great temptation may start into unwonted activity the moral selfhood of one whose drift has been in the direction of slight temptations to petty wrongs or sins, which have found the will-power passive and sluggish. It is not mere character or the strength of character that always decides on such occasions, but there is something like the summoning of

latent interior forces to active duty; and this we feel to be a process performed not for us, but by us, and of our own free choice and effort. We are thus distinctly conscious that it is our own selfhood that makes a motive stronger or weaker, — dominant or powerless.

But is not this selfhood a necessity? Can we do otherwise than our aggregate of character would prompt? Can we will to act, so to speak, out of character? In answering this question, I will ask your attention to the degree and the mode in which character affects our volition. When we perform a specific act or an act of a specific complexion for the first time, there is a conscious weighing of motives, and a resultant choice. Even if the prevailing motive be suddenly flashed upon us, and take us by surprise, still there is a hurried inward parley between opposing motives, — a rapid process of comparison, so rapid, it may be, as to lead to a different course of conduct from what our deliberate judgment would prompt. The next time the same, or virtually the same, question is urged upon us with the same or similar motives, there is a remembrance of the previous decision, which is very likely to preclude careful consideration; and to this may be added the satisfaction or pleasure derived on the former occasion, which is an addi-

tional reason for not trying the issue again. The consequence is, that there is less and less thought with every repetition, till the habit is so formed that one is no longer conscious of any thought in connection with it. Thus it is that one is prone to follow his own example rather than any other. But there always remains the power of reviewing the original decision, and discontinuing the habit; and the purpose of thus going back upon one's self may be evolved from within, without external prompting. Repentance and reformation may be the result of reflection which one is conscious of originating by a pure act of the will. Habits are probably fully as often broken by an unmotived interior process of reflection as by any outward inducement; and as regards an entire change of character, the only motive-power that can be traced is often voluntary and prolonged meditation on one's own past and present selfhood.

In immediate connection with repentance, I would name what may not unaptly be called complex, or collective, or comprehensive volitions, which embrace a large number and variety of separate volitions, and occupy a great part of a lifetime in their development. To this class belongs the religious purpose, — the determination to lead a Christian life, — the resolve to make duty supreme. This may be momentary, yet may

embrace eternity. It is, no doubt, in most cases, the result of a train of serious thoughts and devotional exercises, and in that sense it is of gradual growth. Yet must there not be a moment of consummation, when the purpose long conceived is born, — when the irrevocable position is consciously assumed, — when the soul says, "I will henceforth will only as God wills"? Now, this volition comprehends a vast bundle of individual volitions, which is untied, and its contents taken out one by one. The penitence which refers to the whole past, the reformation which includes the whole future, belongs to this class of complex volitions. Such volitions are sometimes made also with regard to objects of no ethical value, — sel dom, if ever, with regard to evil as such (for "Evil, be thou my good," is satanic rather than human), but not infrequently in the choice of some supreme end, as gain, or political influence, or public office, or a specific type of fame, as the aim to which everything else shall be made subservient.

Now, these volitions which cover the entire lives of very many persons, and include the greater part of their voluntary acts, transcend all that can be imagined of the power of external motives, whose force would be spent in inducing an individual, simple volition. The single external motive ade-

quate to this effect must be strong enough not only to create a single intense volition, but to maintain the will-power in tension years and years after the original motive has become faint in the recollection, and almost faded out of the life. Moreover, in many of these cases, there is not the slightest consciousness or remembrance of any such motive from without. The impulse is, so far as the testimony of consciousness can be relied on, entirely self-born.

This leads me to the mode in which our freedom is chiefly exercised. It is not at the moment of action; and in the phenomena of external activity, there is much that seems to favor the theory, not of a necessity from without, but of a necessity created by our own characters, though the cases are not infrequent, and probably have fallen within the experience of all of us, in which we have adopted a particular course of action for the very purpose of resisting and thwarting our conscious bent or bias, thus making it our express aim to act out of character. But we are the most active when we seem the least active. We will the most resolutely when we have the least consciousness of willing. Our quiet hours are our busiest. Our day-dreams, our cherished reveries, our prolonged musings in listless seasons, on wakeful nights, in our walks and our journeys, are full of embryo voli-

tions, which come to birth in our active life, but which are then already fully formed, and awaiting their birth-hour. It is at such times that we choose our aims, and plan our lifeway. Over these seasons we have control. The spirits come and go at our bidding. Those that we make welcome stay or return. Those that we resolutely spurn cease to seek an entrance. In fine, we exercise the power of attention, and are as capable of directing our attention at pleasure as we are of choosing what books we will read. The ultimate purpose which gives character to action is the result of prolonged attention, it may be with no specific purpose at the outset. Thus, a youth may seek a morbid satisfaction in acting inwardly vicious indulgences of which in the outward man he deems himself utterly incapable. But from such meditation the vicious will can hardly fail to shape itself; and when he yields to seductive evil, the will so to yield was born in the hours when he would have deemed such vicious acts impossible. On the other hand, a youth may, by prolonged meditation on a high ideal of character, give such a trend to his volitions, that he shall seem to embrace spontaneously opportunities for duty and means of spiritual growth; while, in fact, these volitions are the outcome of thoughts, visions, ambitions, which he invited, recalled, cherished,

made habitual by his own unmotived choice, when it was equally in his power to have shut out all these, and harbored in their stead imaginings and musings of a directly opposite type. Had the old prophet been versed in the profoundest speculative philosophy of human action, he could not have voiced it more aptly than in the simple exhortation, "Consider your ways;" for this is the most important thing that we can do, and in this power of directing our attention lies in great part our power of giving consistency and a fixed determination to our course in life, and thus of imparting definite characteristics to our volitions taken collectively.

As the early formation of character is due, for the most part, to the tendency to make volitions habitual by prolonged attention, the ability remains, with the hope that it may be employed, for one who has taken a wrong course to reconsider his ways, and thus to retrace his steps. He who feels himself almost irresistibly the slave of habit, may, indeed, make spasmodic efforts to escape the bondage, and may fall back in utter helplessness; yet he is still capable of willing profound, earnest, and prolonged thought upon his moral condition and habits, and such thought will almost inevitably give a new trend to the course of his volitions, and result in a change of life. The reason why

reformation after very early life is so rare, and the efforts made in that direction are so often made in vain, is undoubtedly the indisposition to that continuous thought, in which alone repentance can have any hopeful birth.

I now ask you to consider the objection to human freedom grounded on the divine foreknowledge. If God foreknows all events, then, it is maintained, they must of necessity be so predetermined that man cannot, in any case, do otherwise than he does.

I would first say, that, if man's freedom and God's foreknowledge are mutually incompatible, we still cannot deny man's freedom; for this is a truth of consciousness: and to deny the testimony of consciousness, would land us in universal scepticism. The very arguments by which we might attempt to prove the incompatibility of freedom and foreknowledge depend on the testimony of consciousness for their validity and force. If events contingent on human volition are, in the very nature of things, unknowable, then to deny the divine foreknowledge of them does not derogate from the perfectness and infinity of the Divine Being. Omnipotence cannot make two and two five, or do any thing that is intrinsically impossible; and, by parity of reason, omniscience cannot know what is intrinsically unknowable. Nor

need we lose even our faith in God's discretionary providence in denying his foreknowledge of contingent events. Man is constantly exerting, with reference to events as they occur, supernatural power, mind-power, will-power, over external nature by his manipulation of the laws of nature. God's power can be no less than man's; and he, without miracle, may so manipulate the natural laws which, in the last analysis, are but the chosen method of his working, as to adapt external events to the volitions and acts of human beings as occasion may require.

But in denying human freedom on the ground of the divine foreknowledge, we must take a farther step, which would be fatal to our recognition of a God possessed of the essential attributes of Godhead. If the divine prescience of man's volitions is inconsistent with his freedom, then is God's prescience of his own volitions equally inconsistent with his freedom. He, then, is, no less than man, bound by an invincible necessity; that is, he is not the Ruler of the universe, but he and man are equally under the dominion of an irresistible fate.

But are human freedom and the divine foreknowledge really incompatible? Neither absolutely excludes the other. The divine nature is incomprehensible by us. Some philosophers

make time merely a category of human thought. There may be in the Divine Mind what is ascribed to it in rhetoric and poetry, an "eternal now," — a simultaneous view of all time, as of all space, so that the past and the future are present. But not to dwell on what we cannot understand, we may derive some suggestions from our own experience. We frequently have foreknowledge where we exert neither control nor influence. I know, with virtually absolute certainty, how my children or my very intimate friends will act under any given condition. It is conceivable that he who foreknows the nature and surroundings of individual men may know how they will act in any and every contingency, though they be perfectly free. The probability that this may be so is enhanced by what we have known of the marvellous foresight of prophetic human minds that have mapped out the future of communities and nations, and have had their predictions literally verified, though, when they were made, they were received with scepticism, and even with ridicule.

I hardly need to say that the Christian belief, or rather, the belief of wise and good men of all ages, and under every culture, in the divine influence on the human soul, has no adverse bearing on man's freedom. Indeed, it is based on the assumption of his freedom, and is unmeaning and worthless

on any other ground. If man's volitions are not his own, he cannot be benefited by divine aid. He is at best an automaton, and the Divine Spirit can make of him nothing more or better. But on the ground of human freedom, man is a fit subject for good advice and influence, and is, of necessity, open to bad advice and influence, adapted, not to suppress his freedom, but to supply him with reasons for a choice, — reasons which it is competent for him to admit, or to set aside. If God influences man, it is in the same way, by inspiring thoughts which he may either cherish or spurn, and which differ from human counsel only in their reaching the soul, not in articulate words or in recognized personal communication, but through objects in nature, events in providence, or a direct action on the mind by avenues which it is hardly possible that the Creator of the human soul has not left open to himself.

We have, then, reason to believe man free. Yet it must be admitted that the exercise of freedom is in individual cases more or less narrowed and limited. A man may have such native proclivities to evil, or such a constitutional predisposition to right conduct, as in the former case to render virtuous living intensely difficult, though not impossible, and in the latter case to give a prophecy of goodness that is seldom belied. Great is the

power of heredity. The sins of the fathers are visited "to the third and fourth generation;" and there is no reason why the heritage of virtue, did it never intermarry with the seed of the ungodly, might not so descend as to make the thousands of generations in the Decalogue no hyperbole. Undoubtedly cerebral aptitudes and habitudes pass from parents to children, from ancestors to posterity. There are in the older parts of this country representatives of families that crossed the ocean more than two centuries ago, in whom the mental and moral traits of their progenitors are to be still recognized, and this in both extremes of society; for while there are names of honor on which no stain has ever rested, there are pauper and worthless descendants of ancestors who were a charge and a burden on the first settlers of our oldest States.

But there is one fact which shows the possibility of overcoming the power of heredity; namely, that the inheritance of character, in the common phrase, often skips over one generation, and reappears in the next. This phenomenon is easily accounted for. A shamefully bad man, a drunkard, or a profligate, often has children of superior excellence, because they are conscious of their evil heritage, afraid of it, and intensely solicitous that it should lapse. But their children inherit the

taint without the shame: the faultlessness of their parents leaves the alarm unsounded, and they yield to temptations from without corresponding to the evil proclivities within. You may see also striking cases of the reverse of this. A genuinely and sincerely good man, yet of an austere and stern temperament and habit, makes his goodness distasteful by rigid ways, unconciliatory manners, and over-punctiliousness in domestic discipline, and his children are, it may be, repelled and driven into evil by the unlovely aspect of their father's virtues; but when this is so, their children are almost certain to grow up, not only with good habits, which might be accounted for by disgust for their father's vices, but with manifestly strong constitutional tendencies in the right direction.

It may, then, be maintained, that heredity, though it may have a potent influence on the general course of volition, does not destroy freedom, nor even impair it in any other sense than that in which it is impaired by the close presence of example, or the intense pressure of outside motives. If like would always mate with like, as may gradually become the case when the laws of heredity are better understood, the result might easily be toward "the survival of the fittest;" for in the generations of the ungodly there would be a tendency to die out, while the saints would in due

time "inherit the earth;" and they, though potentially endowed with full freedom to do evil, would, in fact, exercise their freedom only in the broad and ever-broadening range of things excellent.

We need, in this connection, to take into account the cases in which a low condition and the utter lack of culture make men wholly incapable of moral choice or action, and render abjectness, squalidness, and vice an absolute necessity. This is manifestly the case with some entire races or tribes, especially among the Polynesians, and equally with the heathen of our great cities, who have often been found destitute of the most elementary knowledge of common things, and seemingly devoid of the sense of duty, of right, of obligation. It is evident that such human beings are not moral agents. They are in the same category with children of tender years. Their acts are in great part instinctive: and so far as they are rational, they are so in the same sense in which those of the dog or the horse are rational; that is, they adapt their conduct spontaneously to the circumstances of the moment, without knowing that there is a right or a wrong. There are others, probably not a few entire races, and certainly many in the lowest ranks of civilized society, that have only a very restricted knowledge of obliga-

tions, — a very narrow range of relations and objects as to which they have a sense or feeling of right or wrong. Thus, they may have a rude, yet ardent, patriotism. Or they may recognize the sacredness of some domestic bond, oftener the parental than the filial, and under the lowest culture either of these oftener than the conjugal. Or they may have a reverence for promises or oaths, or respect for some description of property, or a sense of the duties of hospitality and the rights which it confers. So far as this moral sensitiveness extends, moral freedom is exercised. There is the manifold temptation to violate the acknowledged obligation, to disclaim the admitted right; and there are occasions when the virtuous act is one of moral heroism, and when the vicious act is the result of as severe a conflict as is waged in the soul of the civilized man when the Right is almost, but not quite, the conqueror. The story of Pocahontas, as historians say, is a myth; but it is only verisimilitude that makes a myth: and there are many authentic records of cases in which a savage, in order to keep his word, or to serve his tribe, or to perform offices of humanity for some one cast on his protection, has shown the same spirit of entire self-sacrifice which has girded the brows of the Christian martyrs with the aureola of sainthood. "There is honor among thieves," and

that not without a moral preference for, and choice of, the right as to their mutual relations; while who shall say how far, among those whose training is in vice, there is a sufficient sense of the rights of other classes to superfluous property to make the observance or violation of these rights a matter of moral choice? All that we can affirm (and it is enough) of those who have but a restricted range of moral freedom in this world, is that they are only in the infancy of their being, as indeed we all are, and that if in their case such maturity, at the best immature, as we attain in the present life be postponed, there are time and room for it in the life eternal. At the same time, so far as the exercise of freedom is crippled and limited, there is a comparatively limited responsibility, and in the same proportion a less deep stain of guilt on the soul. You or I may do more harm to our moral nature by a willing though slight breach of the law of kindness, by a calumnious utterance, or by a selfish construction of the right, than is wrought by years of evil-doing on the part of one "altogether born in sin."

I have attempted in this lecture to demonstrate human freedom in the exercise of the will-power, while admitting that this freedom has its limitations, and that it exists imperfectly at a low stage

of development, so that deficient culture may be tantamount to infancy.

Let me say in conclusion, that the noblest use of our freedom is in the shaping of ideals which it shall be the continuous life-aim to realize. There are those who will only specific acts when there is occasion for action. There are others, whose days seem "bound each to each by natural piety." They determine at the outset what they will be, and their whole lifeway is a progress toward that end. Happy above all is he who wills beyond his power of earthly attainment, — who sets before himself a goal which he will not reach till he reaches heaven. The goal recedes as he approaches it, and holds a higher place in the firmament as he rises, — always near enough for his hope, always far enough off to call forth his strenuous endeavor. Such an ideal we have in the evangelic record, once realized on earth, now and ever the cynosure of faith and love and moral enterprise, and urging upon our choice the service which is perfect freedom, and in which alone human freedom finds its God-appointed field, mission, and destiny.

LECTURE II.

THE GROUND OF RIGHT.

HUMAN acts, or I would rather say the free acts of intelligent beings, are the subject-matter of Moral Philosophy, — yet not these acts in all the various aspects in which they may be considered. As prudent or indiscreet, they are to be judged by their effects rather than by their motives; and such character as they have in this respect may be given to them, not by the volitions from which they proceed, but by outward circumstances. As becoming or unbecoming, they are to be judged by an æsthetic standard which varies very widely in different times and nations, and in different portions of the same community. Moral Philosophy takes cognizance of human acts as right or wrong.

But what do we mean by right and wrong? I hardly need to say that these are figurative terms, *right* meaning straight, and *wrong*, wrung, distorted, crooked, out of line. The underlying idea is that of a linear measure, a carpenter's rule.

The right is that which lies even with the measure; the wrong, that which diverges from it.

But what characteristic is it that renders an act right or wrong? In other words, what is the ground, or the rule, of right? Were I to say, "The right is what it is fitting to do; the wrong, what it is unfitting to do," I might seem to be uttering a mere truism; yet in my belief I should be announcing the fundamental principle of Moral Philosophy, — a principle, too, which has by no means the universal, or even the general, consent of ethical philosophers.

I regard fitness as the ultimate and sole ground of right. Every object in existence has its proper place and its proper uses. There are purposes for which it is fit; others, for which it is not fit. It is either common property, and may thus fitly be in the hands of any one who can utilize it; or it is private property, and is therefore fitly in the hands of its owners, or of those to whom they grant its use. When we say that an object is in its right place, put to its rightful use, in the hands of its rightful owners, what we affirm of it is its fitness. Its wrong place, its wrong use or abuse, or its wrong owner, deprives it of the element of fitness. Now, every object in the universe is at every moment either in or out of its place, properly used or misused and abused, in the posses-

sion or out of the possession of its rightful owners, and is therefore in a fit or an unfit condition; that is, in a right or wrong condition.

Still further, every object in the universe is at every moment under the direct control of the Divine Being or of some created being, and it is by the agency of that being that it is or is not at any moment in the ownership, place, and use properly appertaining to it. As to what is under God's immediate control, we conceive only of the fitting, and therefore the right. Whatever is under the control of irrational beings may or may not be wrongly held and used, but we cannot regard their acts as possessing any moral character. As regards whatever is under the control of intelligent finite beings, if it be by their will kept in fitting condition, it is the object of right volitions; if by their will it be kept in unfitting condition, it is the object of wrong volitions. We therefore are doing either right or wrong in whatever we do with the external objects under our control.

Yet more, every human being has, by virtue of his being, his fitting place, relations, office, work, in the family, the community, the nation, the race, and with reference to God. There are certain things which it is fitting for him to be and to do, because they belong to him, or are incumbent on him, as a parent, a child, a neighbor, a citizen, a

man, a creature of God. These things are virtually appurtenances of his selfhood. They fit his inner man as his clothes, if well made, fit his body. The omission or the opposite of these things is unfitting. Because these offices to the family, the state, and the commonwealth of God's children are fitting, they are right; and the omission or the opposite of them, because unfitting, is wrong. You will find, that, whenever you use the term *right* or *wrong*, you can substitute for it *fitting* or *unfitting;* and there are no other single terms, I think, which you can employ as definitions of right and wrong.

The fitting is the rule as well as the standard of right. The questions that we virtually ask as to the right might resolve themselves into these: What is this thing fit for? What conduct is befitting under these circumstances? What befits me as standing in my various relations to man and to God? The answer to either of these questions determines what is right, and carries with it a sense of obligation, or of duty, — *duty*, that which is *due*, or which one *owes*, *ought* being but a past tense of *owe*. We feel that we owe the fitting under all circumstances and in all relations.

But here comes an important distinction. Infinite wisdom alone can know all fitnesses with certainty; men must often make mistakes. I may

administer a poison, believing it to be a curative drug; I may bestow alms where my gift will do harm; I may give my vote or my influence for a man or a measure under false impressions which I have no means of correcting; I may bestow my confidence where it is undeserved, or withhold it where it is merited. In all these cases I act rightly if I have not omitted proper means of knowing the truth; but I perform the relative, not the absolute, right. The relative right is what the moral agent believes to be right. The absolute right is what is right, not only in the intention of the agent, but by virtue of its actual fitness. As to the greater part of the acts of persons of moderate intelligence and culture, the relative and the absolute right probably coincide. Yet there are chapters of man's moral history which may well make us hesitate to pronounce positively as to the rightness of some things as to which the best men of our time have no scruples. John Newton, the author of some of the sweetest devotional hymns in our language, was master of a slave-ship; and though he subsequently took holy orders, he continued in the slave-trade for some time after he became earnestly religious, and had daily prayers on deck with his living freight in the hold of his vessel. Indeed, there is good reason to believe that negroes were first brought to America, under

the auspices of Las Casas, from motives of humanity to the native tribes in the Spanish colonies that were perishing under enforced labor. I remember when there were devout and philanthropic distillers and venders of intoxicating liquors in Massachusetts, and when our best churches did not consider such a calling as a disqualification for the office of deacon. With such reversals of the best public opinion as have taken place within the lapse of a century, who can say that a century hence the enslaving of domestic animals and the slaughtering of beasts for food may not be regarded on good grounds as unfitting, and, therefore, wrong? I do not, indeed, believe this; but equally little would the best men of the last century have believed that the very free sale and drinking of spirituous liquors would ever be regarded as unfitting and wrong.

In this connection I ought to speak of sins of ignorance, so called. There are none such. The relative right, however widely diverse from the absolute right, is not a sin, but a duty. It is my duty, in every case, to conform my conduct to what seems to me fitting; and, whatever may be the cause of my ignorance of what is really fitting, at the moment of action I am bound to act in accordance with my sincere belief. But while there are no sins of ignorance, the ignorance itself may

be a sin. It is intrinsically fitting, therefore right, and therefore my duty, to gain all the knowledge that I can on subjects on which I may be required to exercise my moral judgment. There are things which I ought to know, yet may not know; and if, with reference to these things, my act, in accordance with the best of my knowledge, is absolutely wrong, it yet is relatively right, while my ignorance is both relatively and absolutely wrong.

The question of the ground of right lies at the basis of moral science, and the different answers to this question impart their specific character to the various ethical systems of ancient and modern times. I cannot, within my proposed limits, give you an account of all these systems; but it may be of interest and service to you that you should have some idea of the ground covered by speculation on this subject, and of the principal systems that have had currency at different times. I might divide them into two classes, — those which assign to the Right a specific character of its own, and those which define it by its consequences; or, in other words, those which make virtue to consist in what it is and deem it worthy to be cherished for its own sake, and those which make it consist in what it does or in the good that comes from it. Each of these classes has several subdivisions.

Among those of the first are the theory which I have expounded, making the Right to consist in fitness; that according to which the Right consists in the divine will or law as such; that which makes taste or its æsthetic quality the standard of the Right; that which assigns this office to sympathy; and those that maintain the existence of an interior moral sense which instinctively determines the ethical character of acts. In the latter class are included all the utilitarian systems, alike those which make one's own pleasure and happiness, and those which make the greatest good of the greatest number, the standard of right and the rule of virtue.

We will first consider the system which makes the will of God the ground and rule of right. I might ask, with reference to this theory, What do we mean when we ascribe moral attributes, such as justice, holiness, benevolence, to the Supreme Being? Does not this imply our possession, independently of him, of a standard by which we can judge even his dispositions and acts? If we say that his acts are right, we mean that we have the same power of judging them that we have of judging the character of our own acts. In maintaining that his acts are right because they are his, we virtually ascribe to them no moral attributes, but merely apply to the Majesty of Heaven

the maxim outgrown on earth, unless at the court of Ashantee or Dahomey, "The king can do no wrong." There is nothing in mere omnipotence that can attach a moral character to the acts which it performs or requires. We can conceive of omnipotent malignity, of omnipotent unholiness; but we should have no means of detecting the malignity or the unholiness if the divine will is all that constitutes right. The only ground on which we can affirm moral attributes of God is in our regarding his decrees and acts as not right because they are his, but as his because they are right.

The Greek mythology has a very significant lesson for us as to this subject. Prometheus was the benefactor of men, brought fire from heaven for them, and for his philanthropy incurred the anger of Zeus, was nailed to a rock by the sea, and condemned to have his eternally growing liver eternally gnawed by an immortal vulture. The sympathy of the ancient world was with him, and the might of Zeus did not shield him in epic and in tragedy from the charge of the most atrocious tyranny and cruelty.

A conception analogous to that of Zeus has been rife even in New England within my memory, though now almost obsolete. In some of our churches it was currently said that the natural

man hates God; and converted men and women, in their (so-called) experience-meetings, were wont to say that they used to hate God. I knew a very devout schoolmaster who sometimes commenced his morning prayer by saying, in the name of his unregenerate pupils, "O God, we hate thee!" I have no doubt that these statements were true, and the only change on the part of converted persons was that they found in Christ a God whom they could not but love. Theologians of this type maintained the damnation of the heathen, and sometimes, of infants; believed that God arbitrarily elected certain members of the human race for salvation, and decreed, from all eternity, the wickedness of the wicked as well as their horrible doom; ascribed to his direct command the slaughter of the Canaanites, with their women and children, and represented his wrath as unappeasable, except by an innocent being's bearing the full punishment due to the guilty. Men's natural sense of fitness and of its equivalent, the Right, recoiled from such a God; and a great deal of the infidelity which prevailed two or three generations ago sprang from the impossibility, on the part of ingenuous minds, of believing in such a Governor of the universe, while its better forms were really more nearly Christian than the type of Christianity which they replaced.

The admission that the will of God is the ultimate standard of right, would open the way for every form of imposture and fanaticism; and the standard could be rendered availing only by an express revelation so authenticated that there could be no room for doubt, and so promulgated that it could be accessible to all men. So long as there is any thing less than this, the divine command may be imagined or alleged in behalf of any act, however foolish or wicked. The poor wretch in Massachusetts who a few years ago murdered his child as a religious act, was insane on no other point, but imagined that God had commanded him to make this sacrifice. Had he been taught that God himself cannot alter the qualities of moral acts so as to make wrong right, he probably would have been able so to try the spirits as to know that the murderous impulse could not be from God.

Of course, the disciples of every religion and of every Christian sect suppose that they derive their dogmas from God; and for whatever there is in their rules of worship or of fellowship that is less than generous, kind, and charitable, they allege religious reasons which resolve themselves virtually into the divine command. They ought to know, that were God to issue any command inconsistent with the precept, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor

as thyself," even he could not give validity to it, because it would be opposed to the principles of eternal fitness and everlasting right. Indeed, the strongest proof that Christianity came from God is the entire conformity of its teachings and of the divine life which it portrays with intrinsic fitness, —a conformity that grows upon us the more closely we study it, both in its source and in its issues, so that we get to look upon it, not as born with Christ, but as coeval with nature, as co-eternal with the Author of nature, and as in Christ but the revelation of what had always been.

It may here be asked, Is it not conceivable that God may issue positive commands, which are to be obeyed as such, without reference to the question of fitness? I answer, Yes; but they are to be obeyed, if not for their intrinsic fitness, on account of the fitness of obedience as regards the relation in which we stand to God. Yet were there any perception of unfitness or any absolute assurance of non-fitness, this would give us ample reason for believing that the command in question could not have come from God, however strong the external evidence that it came from him. Thus, religious institutions may be observed as of divine command, directly or through Jesus Christ, even though we might not deem them necessary. But should any such observance prove itself on pro-

longed trial utterly harmful to man's religious nature, or absolutely useless, we could not but regard the record of divine appointment as mythical. The Eucharist has in all ages been found edifying and helpful, and all its characteristics are those of fitness for its place in the Christian ritual. We may therefore well believe that Christ was divinely moved to ordain this mode of commemorating his love, though we may not see why some other mode might not have served the same purpose as well or better. Some Christian sects have adopted the washing of the disciples' feet into their ritual, believing it to have been appointed by Christ in his words immediately after he had performed this office of humility and love, — "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." But it is found not only destitute of edification, but possessed of a more than negative unfitness; and it has therefore been generally dropped from Christian worship, though resting on the same kind of sanction which we deem adequate for the Eucharist, — indeed, so sanctioned that every church in Christendom would practise it, if any good could come from it.

As for express commands from God, our position may be best illustrated by what takes place in a human family. A child worthy of the name cherishes and practises the virtues belonging to

early life for their sake and for his own sake, because he believes and feels their intrinsic fitness. He also performs certain services, errands, commissions, for his father, and he may not always know their meaning; yet, whether he knows it or not, such offices are intrinsically fitting to the relation between the father and the son. But should the father command any thing which the son knows to be immoral, or perceives to be utterly inane or foolish, the son is then authorized to decline obedience on the ground of his father's moral or mental incompetency, or on the more respectful, and perhaps more probable, ground, that he had misheard or misinterpreted his father's command. The point on which I would lay stress is, that obedience to God's well-ascertained and express command, in cases where the fitness is not at once manifest, is still based on fitness as appertaining to the relation between God and man.

Moreover, even in such cases, we should expect that the fitness of the command itself would become apparent, and that we should thus have new and ever growing evidence of its genuineness. Thus, to recur to the Eucharist, which we do not err in calling virtually of divine appointment, if ordained by him on whom rested the Spirit of God without measure, — this rite has ministered so largely to Christian edification in its symbolism,

is so apt as regards the family of disciples united at the same table, and has such hallowed associations accumulated from age to age, that the Church would continue to observe it for its spiritual worth and efficacy, even were biblical critics unanimous in maintaining that Christ never meant to extend or transmit it beyond the circle of his immediate followers.

The same thing may be said of baptism. I think it very questionable whether this rite was, at the outset, intended to be other than a token of admission to the Christian Church from heathenism or Judaism, — a rite, indeed, borrowed from the Hebrew custom of baptizing proselytes and their families; but its emblematic meaning, its sacred associations and its religious impressiveness render me, at least, entirely indifferent to any critical question as to its original design. It is altogether too precious for the Church ever to abandon it.

The observance of Sunday falls, as it seems to me, under the same category. The Decalogue constitutes so perfect a code of morals, and, with the exception of the fourth commandment, is so entirely ethical, that I am by no means disinclined to regard it as emanating from Him from whose bosom came Christ and his gospel. But whether it be God's express command or not, the law of

sabbatical observance is so written on the nature of man, and of beasts too, and even on some objects that have neither soul nor life, that it could be maintained on the ground of intrinsic fitness, though the Pentateuch were blown to the winds.

Think not that, in denying the validity of the divine will as the ground of right, I disown or undervalue revelation. I believe Christianity to be, not a mere development, but literally a revelation; that is, an unveiling of eternal truth, law, and right, which, before and else, man could not fully comprehend. But Christianity has its evidences, external and internal. The external evidences are all that they can be with reference to a series of facts that transpired in a land and age so remote as Palestine and the first Christian century, but not sufficient to substantiate aught that would be repudiated by sound sense and right moral feeling. Were the same amount of external evidence offered in behalf of Epicureanism, it would not begin to convince me that Epicurus was a Christ, a divinely anointed, inspired, and endowed messenger from heaven. It is the internal evidences of Christianity that turn the scale in its favor; and these internal evidences all consist in the correspondence of Christ's teachings and life with the fitnesses of nature and of human life, many of which fitnesses come to our knowledge through him, but

all of which are self-verifying. Now, if we abandon our ground of fitness, we have no remaining test: the internal evidences of Christianity are neutralized, and there can be no alleged command of God for which it could be possible to adduce the least shadow of evidence that it comes from him. If we are not to trust our natural sense of the fitness of things, we have no good reason for doubting that God commanded all the atrocities and barbarities which the Hebrews committed in his name. Cudworth, the greatest among modern ethical philosophers, goes so far as to charge with atheism those who make the divine will the standard of right: for, as he says, there is a natural right which man is capable of understanding and recognizing; it exists in the nature of things, independently of the Creator; it must exist of necessity, if there be any being; and the God who could transgress it, and could do or command what is intrinsically unfitting, would not fill out any rational conception of God, — would be no God in the sense which we necessarily attach to that term.

It follows from what I have said in comparing these two alleged grounds of right, that morality exists, in a certain sense and measure, independently of religion. That they are most intimately and helpfully allied, I hope to show you in a subse-

quent lecture. If they were identical, as they are sometimes affirmed to be, they could not be allied; for alliance implies duality. I may perceive unnumbered fitnesses of things without worshiping or owning Him through whose providence it is, as I believe, that "all things are double, one against another," so that "one thing establisheth the good of another." I may observe these fitnesses in my conduct without being a religious man. An atheist may be a rigidly moral man in the entire sphere of his earthly relations; for there is no reason why he may not discern their fitnesses, and he is capable of governing his conduct by them, though, in his destitution of the highest and strongest motives for their observance, he is in such imminent danger of ignoring them, that, while there have been individual atheists of blameless lives, there never has been an extended ascendency of atheism in any nation, community, or class of men, without its being accompanied by a corresponding decline of goodness, and growth of vice and crime.

I would next speak of Adam Smith's theory of morals. He maintains that sympathy is the sole ground, standard, and criterion of the Right. The trait of another's character or the act or conduct of another which commands our entire sympathy is virtuous; that which repels sympathy, and provokes antipathy, is vicious. The trait in our own

character, or the act or mode of conduct, in which we feel sure of the sympathy of those around us, is virtuous; that in which we know that we have not their sympathy is vicious. The degree of sympathy or of antipathy in each case measures the degree of excellence or of turpitude.

The most obvious criticism on this system is, that it makes our sense of right a superficial organ, like the stomach in some classes of zoöphytes. We must resort to society to know whether our acts are right. In practice, however, the test would be purely subjective; for, while we might measure the acts of all others by our own sympathy, for ourselves we should look far for sympathy if we could not find it near, and to coming time if we could not find it in our own time. This Smith virtually admits; for he says that we should sometimes have to resort for our imaginary spectators to remote posterity. But it is certain, that, though men in advance of their time often thus appeal to the better judgment of a more enlightened future, they do not dive at the outset into the future, to take counsel of the unborn as to what they shall do, or dare, or suffer. If sympathy be really the ground of right, it must be an active, real, present, audible sympathy; and were this the criterion of virtue, I know not how there could be any progress in goodness, or any instances of advanced,

heroic virtue. Wilberforce found no sympathy at the outset of his assault on the slave-trade, but only the antipathy of the best men in Church and State. Had actual sympathy been the sole criterion of right, slavery would have been perpetual; for there have been periods when universal opinion and feeling have been in its favor. This was the case at the Christian era; but Christian sentiment became enlisted against it, and it gradually declined, till in what seemed the depth of the (so-called) dark ages — during which, however, there were intense day-beams from the Sun of righteousness, though the light of classic civilization had been quenched — there came a time when there was not a domestic slave in Christendom. But the discovery of America gave slavery a new lease of life; and in the middle of the last century it again had universal opinion in its favor, so that Wilberforce, when he started on his career, knew not that he had any sympathy this side of heaven.

But were we to admit that sympathy is a safe and sufficient moral standard, what authority has it? It is but one of human instincts, perhaps not the noblest. There is no reason why one instinct should have supremacy over the rest. They are, all of them, parts of human nature, all of them legitimate within fit restraint and in due equilibrium; and because they are instincts, they all need

control, sympathy no less than the rest. Indeed, there are communities and conditions of society, in which sympathy is the most prolific source of moral depravity. I doubt whether sympathy could have been a safe criterion in Sodom; and it may help to explain the moral derelictions of Lot, who seems, in the scriptural story, to have brought away from the doomed city very little of the heritage of patriarchal virtue and piety that he carried to it.

It should be remarked here, that Smith urges as an argument for his theory, that, in point of fact, men do normally sympathize with all that is good, and are normally in antipathy against all that is evil. But were this true absolutely and universally, would not this very fact imply some other and higher criterion of right? It is merely a senseless truism, to say that whatever commands sympathy is right, and whatever is right commands sympathy.

There are some systems that virtually annul moral obligation. This, as I showed you in my last lecture, is the case with necessarianism. It is equally so with mysticism, which, as it has borne so large a part in the history of religion, may merit special consideration in its ethical bearings. Mysticism rests on two principles, one an indubitable truth, the other a baseless assumption. The

truth is one which is a prophecy of immortality, namely, that man is conscious of fitnesses for an immeasurably higher destiny than he can attain in this world,—a consciousness common to all men of lofty aims, and growing upon them faster than they can grow, so that it is the greatest minds and the noblest characters that feel the farthest from their ultimate perfection. This consciousness is a tonic to the moral nature, energizes and intensifies every power and faculty, and urges one on in every way of duty, selfward, manward, Godward. But to this has been added by mystics the delusive assumption, that what little can be attained, what small amount of good can be secured, in this earthly life, can be the result only of concentrated devotion,—of a mind secluded from all earthly cares and interests, and wholly absorbed in the contemplation of divine and heavenly things. God is the supreme good, heaven is the soul's only fitting home; and all earthly duty divides the soul from God, and shuts out heaven from the thoughts. The error consists in forgetting that there may be a latent sense of the divine presence, even though the thought be not expressly formulated at every moment, as there is on the part of the little child a latent consciousness of his mother's shielding presence, as real and vital when he is busy with his picture-book or his toys

as when he nestles in her arms; and that one may approach nearer heaven when breathing its spirit in faithful duty and in diffusive charity than when he is musing, or talking, or singing about heaven.

Mysticism, of course, throws all active duty into the background, and disclaims all sense of obligation with regard to it. It takes two directions. It has for the most part led to a life sheltered from the world's life, and divorced from its responsibilities, fervently devout, and in a negative aspect severely virtuous. The extremists of fanatical devotion, such as the pillar-saints and the monks of the Thebaid, come under this description; and probably there are still members of monastic orders, especially nuns of the more rigid disciplines, who are sincere and devout mystics.

But there have been periods, as at the era of the Protestant Reformation, when mysticism by a depraved logic has developed itself in revolting types of immorality, especially in unrestrained sensual indulgence. The reasoning has been in this wise. It is so little that we can do for ourselves in this world, that it is no matter what we do. What we call good acts are so defaced by indwelling sin, and so far beneath the standard of the divine approval, that they differ only infinitesimally from

what are termed immoral acts. If, then, we can do nothing here to win heaven, there can be no need of our bridling our appetites or our lusts. It will be all the same with us in the sight of God. Spiritually we can meditate and pray so long as the mind can bear the strain; and when the overbent bow must relax, let the string be untied, and let us yield ourselves to whatever our natural desires may prompt.

Historically, mysticism has given the world some of the loftiest types of piety and devotion: from the pens of mystics such as Thomas à Kempis, Tauler, Fénelon, Madame de Guion, we have had manuals of contemplative religion and of the interior life of faith and love, by the loss of which the world's religious literature would be sadly impoverished; and yet even in their writings, there are marvellous deficiencies. Thus, you might read through "The Imitation of Christ" by Thomas à Kempis, without learning from it that there is such an institution as the home or the family, or such a relation as that of husband and wife, parent and child, brother and sister; while yet the book bears the name of Him whose divine humanity gave a special sanction and blessing to home-life, nay, to whom we owe the home worthy of the name. On the other hand, there were sects of mystics, like the Brethren of the Free Spirit, and some bodies

of antinomian Anabaptists, whose immoral excesses were too loathsome for recital.

Another system, religious in form, which leaves morality without being and the Right without a ground, is pantheism. The pantheist denies the separate, detached existence of any being or object. Nature and man are, physically, manifestations of God in space; man is, mentally and spiritually, the thought of God. As the one blast of the organ-bellows may fill a thousand unlike pipes, and pour itself out in a thousand tones of every variety of compass and quality, so does the all-pervading Spirit become multiform in the vast diversity of outward objects which have their being in him alone, and many-voiced in the unnumbered modes of mental and moral activity which he inspires. All that is being literally but "the varied God," there can be nothing, whether of outward nature or of humanity, which is not good with reference to its place and purpose in the divine totality. What seems evil seems so only because we, being ourselves but parts of God, can see but in part, and cannot discern the relations which each part bears to the whole. As a sink or a drain viewed by itself is unsightly and noisome, while in a sumptuous palace in which cleanliness and salubrity are essential it has its full part in the perfectness and beauty of the edifice, so does

the character or the deed which seems to us most foul and detestable because we cannot see it in all its relations and fitnesses, bear an essential part in the totality of divine manifestation and expression, and as such ceases to be evil, or to merit reproach or reprehension.

Pantheism has two widely opposite types. One we might call *hypertheism;* the other is little more than a euphemistic term for atheism. The former represents God as, in essence, a spirit eternal, all-wise, almighty, who clothes himself in the forms of nature, and enshrines himself in all intelligent souls, those forms being but the outraying of his omnipresence, those souls but receptacles of his thought. This was the conception of Spinoza, who was almost a mystic in the intensity of his devotion, and whose philosophy is the outcome of a mind so filled with the thought of God, that it could not conceive of being except as identical with God. Schleiermacher, though a devout Christian, was a pantheist of this type. Indeed, mysticism always tends to run into pantheism. In fact, they are each other's feeders.

The other type of pantheism resolves the conception of God into that of a material universe, self-endowed with tendencies which evolved from chaos, successively, form, order, organism, life, soul, thought, aspiration. This universe in the

beginning possessed mere automatic force, an onward and upward *nisus*, a dumb yearning, an unconscious striving for an ever fuller and higher development. In man it first attained self-consciousness, multiform and nowhere concentrated, in its totality pure and perfect, though in its parts, taken by themselves, imperfect, and because of this imperfection presenting the phenomena which we term wrong and evil. This is the type of pantheism which has been most extensive and prevalent in the German philosophy.

Pantheism in either form involves necessarianism, and manifestly furnishes no ground of right, and thus no hold for moral obligation.

LECTURE III.

UTILITARIANISM AND EXPEDIENCY.

I PROPOSE to-day to discuss the several forms of utilitarianism, and the ethical position which rightfully belongs to expediency or utility. There might seem at first thought a wide distinction between the merely selfish and the more broadly utilitarian theory, — between that which makes one's interest, pleasure, or happiness his sole standard of right, and that which assumes for its standard the greatest happiness of the greatest number; but we shall find that they rest on the same foundation, — that the utilitarian regards general beneficence as the dictate and the outcome of an enlightened self-love.

We will consider, first, the purely selfish theory. According to this, the desire of pleasure, of happiness, of well-being, is inherent in and inseparable from human nature, and must lie at the basis of every volition. Will is but desire made active, and desire implies a conception of something by which one's pleasure or happiness may be in-

creased. A desire which means less or other than this is inconceivable. If I am seemingly beneficent to my own injury, it is because I expect greater pleasure from the exercise of sympathy, or from the gratitude of the person benefited, or from a reputation for generosity, than I lose by denying myself what I bestow. If I die for the True and the Right, it is because I anticipate in heaven a recompense far exceeding the earthly good that I shall forego. Disinterested action is utterly impossible; for one cannot cease to be his own well-wisher, still less can he be his own ill-wisher, which he must be if he willingly diminishes his own sum of happiness or well-being. What, then, is virtue, according to this theory? It is simply prudence, — a clear-seeing, deep-seeing, judicious self-interest, — the choice of that which will confer pleasure or happiness, the largest in quantity, the best in quality, and the most enduring, — the readiness to give up less pleasure for more, lower for higher, shorter for longer.

What obligation is there, under this system, to the practice of virtue? None whatever, except that under which a man is bound to eat his dinner, to quench his thirst, to cure his headache, — an obligation beginning, centring, and ending in himself, — an obligation in which he is both debtor and creditor, and from which he cer-

tainly has the same right to release himself that he has to stay away from an entertainment which he would enjoy if he is too lazy to go to it, or to omit some coveted indulgence because he grudges the cost. If my happiness is my standard of right, I am certainly entitled to make at my pleasure a selection from the various means of happiness; and if I make a bad choice, I am accountable to myself alone. Indeed, by this theory I cannot make a bad choice; for my desire is my only law, and I cannot choose what I do not desire.

The first thing to be said as to this theory is that volition is not always desire, — that it frequently has no reference whatever to the future, and therefore no reference to pain to be avoided, or pleasure to be obtained. The instinctive tendencies prompt the greater part of the volitions, and thus of the voluntary acts of children, and of men and women of a low mental and moral type, and a very large part of the volitions and voluntary acts of all of us. Now, in gratifying these tendencies we do not cater for the future: we merely yield, of our own accord, to an impelling force which we are consciously able to resist. I do not eat because I expect to feel the better for it an hour or a day hence, but because I have an appetite now; and very probably, if I am a con-

firmed dyspeptic, and know that I am going to suffer pain much more severe than hunger in consequence of my eating the food before me, I shall eat all the same. These instinctive tendencies may be best understood by comparing them with a scourge. Let a scourge be laid severely on a man's shoulders, he is able to stand still; but he will probably choose to run, though he knows that the man who is whipping him can run as fast as he can. Men are perpetually willing under strong impulse, while they know that they are capable of willing otherwise, and that what they will is to their misery, their harm, their peril, perhaps their ruin.

Then, at the other extremity of the scale, there are nobler impulses, instincts of a higher order, which one obeys without counting the cost, and which one never would obey did he stop to count the cost. It is not in character for a good man to say to himself when he performs a worthy deed, "This is going to accrue to my profit," nor yet for him, in forming some habit of virtuous conduct, to say to himself, "This habit is going to contribute essentially to my ease, or gain, or popularity." It was not from any calculation or expectation of happiness on earth or in heaven that Howard spent what would have been the sunny days of an affluent life in prisons and pest-houses. Epictetus

did not even believe in immortality; but no one can doubt that if he, being the man that he was, had had his choice between loyalty to the Right and death on the one side, and a life full of all things desirable, with a single falsehood or fraud or impurity, on the other, he would have chosen the former, and thus in his own belief have leaped out of being, and so out of all possibility of pleasure, happiness, or good. But this certainly would not be the dictate of self-interest rightly understood, which has its most authentic utterance in those words in the Book of Ecclesiastes: "Be not righteous over-much; why shouldest thou destroy thyself?" while it would undoubtedly add, as regards any excess in sensual pleasure, "Be not wicked over-much; why shouldest thou die before thy time?" In fine, the truly virtuous man does not, any more than the angry man or the drunkard, look carefully into his own future before he wills each separate act, nor yet is it in this way that he forms virtuous habits; for it is notoriously true, that a man who begins in his youth to calculate the recompense of the good he does, and to look out for his wages, whether in gain, pleasure, or praise, before he performs a right act, never becomes greatly good, hardly ever, even moderately good; and I have known not a few of these self-seeking youths, who in the judgment

of others, though not in mine, promised fair because they behaved so well, who have quite early deserted to the opposite camp where the pay seemed better because it came sooner. Longfellow's ballad of "Excelsior," which has been so foully bespattered by parodies and travesties as to make the very word almost laughable, yet which is really one of the grandest poems ever written, is a summary of the true philosophy of virtuous action. It symbolizes the life-path of the genuinely good man, who pursues his way, not for the joys of the way, but because it is *the* way, and it is not in him to halt on it, or to turn aside from it.

I would, in the next place, maintain that on the selfish theory virtue is not even a distinct and definite quality of character. It is maintained that every man, by his every volition, seeks to better himself, — to promote his own pleasure, happiness, or well-being. A does this by getting drunk; B, by breasting cold and storm on some philanthropic errand. Each, according to the theory, supposes that he is doing the best thing possible for himself; and I know not why the one is in the least a better man than the other. The difference is not of motive or of principle, but merely of knowledge, judgment, wisdom. If B were no wiser than A, yet without being a worse man, he would stay at home, and drink himself

into a fatuous slumber. If A were as wise as B, yet without being a better man than he is, he would start off in the cold to carry comfort to some home of sickness or poverty. By this theory, virtue is a matter of necessity, not of choice. A man cannot but consult his own happiness and well-being to the best of his knowledge. He has no choice. His belief for the time being determines his action. He is at no moment free to elect one of two courses.

On the other hand, if fitness be the standard of right, a man has the power of choice. That which accords with the fitness of things may be opposed to his interest, so far as he can see or know, — as in the case of the martyr for principle who lacks clear and full assurance of immortality, and who, therefore, is conscious only of loss and sacrifice, and equally, as I trust we all know from experience, in cases in which we have done what seemed fitting and therefore right with the distinct consciousness of self-denial.

Still further, the selfish theory precludes the possibility of merit for a good act, and leaves a bad act without any liability to blame. If the best thing that a man can do is to consult his own happiness, can there be any thing blameworthy in the inevitable ignorance which leads a man to seek happiness in a wrong way? If self-interest

be the essence of virtue, is not he who caters for his own happiness in the best way he knows, though it be a sordid and squalid way, virtuous to the full extent of his ability? and would he not forsake the only virtue attainable by him, if he practised temperance, honesty, or beneficence, with a consciousness of sacrifice? I cannot escape these conclusions from the selfish theory; and were not men wont to have a heart-faith better than their professed belief, I could have no more confidence in the moral purity or integrity of a man who held this theory than in that of a notorious debauchee, swindler, or liar.

Epicurus gave his name to this system as it was maintained in classic times. He flourished about three centuries before the Christian era. He was himself a man of simple tastes and virtuous life, and so were many of his disciples; while his was the favorite philosophy of men of loose principles and profligate lives, until the old civilization was entirely submerged by the in-rush of Northern barbarians. The licentious poems of Horace and Ovid are in entire harmony, if not with the original intent, with the inevitable trend of Epicureanism. According to Epicurus, there is no essential difference in acts, which would make one sort of acts preferable to their opposites. Their pleasure-yielding capacity furnishes the only standard by which

they are to be estimated. If unrestrained sensual indulgence would yield the maximum of pleasure, it would be virtue and duty. The only reason for moderating one's appetites is, that the pleasure derived from them will thus last the longer. Epicurus distinguishes between active and passive pleasure. Action has its re-action. The sense of satiety is a painful offset to free indulgence. But rest does not cloy. Repose always satisfies. Therefore the acme of practical wisdom, and thus of virtue, is attained by him who floats on the current of life with the least possible disturbance, without thought for others, with personal habits that involve the minimum of effort, and expose him to the minimum of disappointment and annoyance.

In modern times, Hobbes, the earliest English ethical writer of any celebrity, in the seventeenth century, revived the philosophy of Epicurus, though in an altered and a very peculiar form. He was a stanch royalist, and had the utmost horror of republicanism and puritanism, having lived through the period of the Commonwealth, and having had an eye only for its repulsive aspects. His philosophy is a blending of absolutism in politics with selfishness in morals. According to him, all men are by nature and of necessity supremely selfish. In the ignorant infancy of society, men naturally prey upon one another, and

promiscuous internecine war is the inevitable consequence. The first practical truth that they learn is, that under this condition of things no man can secure to himself the well-being which is every man's legitimate aim. Submission to the most powerful is the next step. But power is most forceful when concentrated. Hence absolute monarchy is by common consent made the refuge from intolerable anarchy. Passive obedience becomes the interest, and therefore the duty, of the individual subject, — an obedience extending to whatever the supreme power may enact or command. As religion, with its supernatural sanctions, is an efficient instrument in preserving the peace and order of society, — yet this, only if there be uniformity of belief and practice, without which religion is an element of discord, — conformity with the sovereign's religion is for every man's interest, and is therefore every man's duty.

This system, you will perceive, while retaining the name, eliminates the reality of duty; for if a man is to obey the king and conform to him solely for his own interest, it cannot be his duty any longer than he believes it to be for his interest. But he cannot control his opinions. He may regard revolt, rebellion, revolution, as for his interest, and in that case it must be his duty; for the general order, peace, security, is not his con-

cern, — he has only himself to care for. Virtue is also eliminated. For the loyal subject all duty is comprehended in obedience. What is commanded is virtue; what is forbidden is vice. Virtue, then, has no fixed definition, no uniform characteristics. What is virtue in one country is vice in another. Polygamy is as virtuous in Turkey as monogamy in England; and as for Utah, the moral character of the cherished domestic institution of the Mormons is a question between the national authority and Territorial rights. The system, in fine, merits this passing notice, only because Hobbes is a great name in English literature and philosophy, and one deservedly honored for affluent learning, cogent reasoning (for it is his premises, never his conclusions, that are at fault), and evident honesty and integrity of purpose.

From Hobbes to Paley we pass over an interval of a century and a half, and find the selfish theory in a greatly modified form, and with what seems to be, though put on in perfect good faith, a very thin veneering of Christianity. Paley's ethical philosophy is all comprised in his definition of virtue, — "The doing good to mankind, in obedience to the will of God, for the sake of everlasting happiness." This definition in its first part seems like the broader type of utilitarianism; but the last clause brings it down to pure selfish-

ness. We are to do good to others, not for their sake, but for our own. All that I have said about Hobbes applies here, with very slight modification. If I am to do good for the promotion of my own happiness, I certainly have the right to refrain from doing good if I do not expect to be the happier for it, and I have a right to do whatever I honestly believe to be conducive to my happiness.

All parts of this definition are faulty. "The doing good to mankind" is indeed virtue, but not the whole of virtue. Temperance and veracity are equally virtues, though no one be benefited by them. It is not surprising to find Paley very loose as to his notions of veracity where falsehood does no harm; and as to the Thirty-nine Articles, he says that they can be honestly subscribed by a man who does not believe them, unless he belong to one of the classes of people which the parliament that enacted the subscription meant to shut out from the Church, namely, Papists, Anabaptists, and Puritans.

"Obedience to the will of God" is an incidental, not an essential, part of virtue. God's will is in accordance with the fitness of things; otherwise it would be of no obligation. In the Greek myth, already referred to, it was virtue in Prometheus not to obey Zeus.

"For the sake of everlasting happiness" is the

most objectionable clause of all. It bears a close kindred to the sordid notions that used to prevail very largely in the Christian Church about salvation, which was regarded as exemption from hell, not as deliverance from sin. Men used to inquire diligently how little of Christian duty, and how late, would suffice for their salvation; and multitudes, whose orthodoxy was unimpeached, postponed the question — as some of the early (so-called) Christian emperors postponed baptism — till it became very certain that there remained for them in this world no more "pleasurable sin." If the winning of heaven be the sole motive for doing good to men, might there not often be a close calculation as to the amount of beneficence that would suffice to win heaven? Would not Howard, had this been his motive, have considered the opportunities of beneficence open to a rich English country gentleman enough to serve his turn? Then, too, what room for virtue is there for those who, unhappily, do not believe in heaven, or for those who, more happily, believe that the mercies of heaven are broad enough to take in those who have done nothing to deserve it? Paley has been commonly classed as of the utilitarian rather than of the purely selfish school; but the most that we can say of him is, that his philosophy marks a transition epoch.

Bentham may be taken as the best representative of pure utilitarianism. He assumes utility as the sole ground of right, and defines utility as "the property of any act to increase the amount of happiness, or to diminish the amount of misery, in the individual, or the body of individuals, acted upon." He starts with the selfish axiom that "it is the interest, and therefore the duty, of every individual to seek the maximum of happiness;" and then, having been no logician, he passes on, without any intermediate reasoning, to state "the greatest happiness of the greatest number" as the sole standard and test of right, and the sovereign rule for individual conduct. It subsequently appears that he reasoned in this wise. Each individual's means of well-being are limited, liable to be exhausted, liable to be interfered with by others. But if all the members of the community consult the good of all, the aggregate means of well-being constitute a common stock from which each is sure to receive his own proper dividend. Selfishness is thus made the motive, nay, the ultimate ground, of right. The individual is to contribute to the common good for the sake of his own share.

Were this principle fully acted upon, it would create a veritable Utopia; but it has no motive power. It depends on selfishness, and selfishness

can always find a cheaper way to its end than working for the general good. All systems of communism have been based on this principle; and the defect in their working has been that individuals, having a right to their share of the proceeds of the common labor, have taken the liberty to be idle, or to be remiss in their industry. Even among the elect souls that established Brook Farm, there were not a few hard thoughts about those who ate their full share, but were slow to earn it. Such experiments have succeeded only under two conditions; namely, when the governing power of the institution has been a busy espionage and an exacting tyranny, and when religious fanaticism has been the inspiration of the community; and they have been successful without drawback for a long series of years, only when, as among the Shakers, these two conditions have been united.

We thus see that the utilitarian and the selfish system are equally devoid of any real ground of right. But it may be asked, Is there any practical objection to deriving duty from considerations of expediency? Must not the right and the expedient always coincide? They must, indeed, under the righteous government of the universe. But the question of expediency often requires for its answer a deeper insight, a broader view, a

longer foresight, than man possesses. What seems expedient now may be in time to come of harmful influence. What is expedient for you and me may be of mischief for others. What as an isolated act might be expedient, is liable to be made a bad precedent, and may do an unspeakable amount of injury. Above all, what may be expedient for us as mere citizens of this world may be of detriment to us as immortal beings, even as we have reason to believe that God, in his providence, is training us for immortality in a very different way from that in which he would train us for an eternal slumber in the grave. Then, too, our appetites, passions, prejudices, in fine, whatever forms a part of our present selves, must of necessity bias more or less our judgment of expediency in our own case; and there are for the virtuously disposed man occasions when against the impulse of strong feeling he yields to his sense of the fitting and the right, while motives of expediency, if obeyed, would have led to conduct which would have given him only unavailing regret when the stress of feeling had subsided. It should be added, that, in the case of others, we are less likely to be good judges of expediency than in our own case; for no man can so put himself into another's place as to see what is best for him.

To test expediency as a rule of action, we will

try it under the head of veracity. There is, confessedly, a manifest fitness in making our speech always conform to the fact, our fulfilment to the promise. We feel that speaking the truth, and keeping a promise, are intrinsically right. But there are many occasions on which it does not seem that falsehood can do harm, many on which it would minister to the innocent amusement or entertainment of the listener, some certainly on which its immediate effect would be beneficial. We will take a case in which kindness would be the only possible motive for falsehood, — the giving false hopes to a person dangerously ill, or deceiving him by too favorable accounts of some one about whom he is solicitous. If this is to be justified once on the ground of expediency, it is to be justified always. If it is proper to resort to it in a single instance, it is proper to resort to it in all similar instances. It is, then, to be generally understood, that persons who are very ill are not to have the truth told to them. Conversely, every one knows that if he is very ill the truth will be hidden from him ; and this established custom will make every person who is seriously ill suspicious of what is said to him, disposed to fear the worst when the worst is far from the truth, and in utter and distressing doubt as to the actual facts concerning himself, or concerning the objects of his solicitude.

Thus, the resort to falsehood could be of any efficacy only on account of its rareness; while, if really expedient in itself, it would be so common as to be utterly useless.

Again, is a falsehood to be told when it will save us from great peril or loss, without injuring any other person? This seems expedient. But how great must be the harm or loss to justify a lie? Can you fix any limit? If for a cause of a certain magnitude, why not for a slightly less cause? and if for that, why not for one still less? We could not lay down any arbitrary rule which should determine where falsehood should cease and truth begin. The result would be, that we should deem it justifiable to lie whenever we could derive the slightest benefit from it without doing injury to another; and the reciprocal consequence would be, that faith in one another's veracity would be utterly destroyed, and no one's word as such would be believed.

The question has been raised whether a ransom promised to a bandit should be paid, — a question which in Greece and in Italy has till of late been a practical one, and has not yet ceased to be so in Sicily. Here at first thought the breaking of the promise might seem justifiable. But if I promise a ransom for my life, it is because I really regard my life as worth more than the money that I

promise to pay for it: had I the money on the spot, I would readily give it; so that I can make the promise in all good faith, and the bad character of the promisee cannot make it void. Other lives than my own, and worth as much as mine, will be in like jeopardy; and if I break my promise, those lives may be forfeited without being permitted the alternative of ransom, — so that in this, one of the strongest of cases, the plea of expediency fails.

But if I know that by falsehood I can prevent a great crime, perhaps save an innocent life, shall not expediency prevail over the rigid rule of right? I have lived a great many years, and never knew or heard of such a case as actually occurring, though the imaginary case has always been discussed. I doubt the wisdom of legislating on the case beforehand. Should it occur, a good man will know at the moment what he ought to do; and should he utter a falsehood under so sore a stress, the emergency would be one that would suggest and justify its own law, without throwing any mantle of amnesty or license over departure from the truth in cases of less imminent urgency or peril. As a teacher of morals, I would prefer waiting for the occurrence of such a case before establishing any rule of expediency which, once laid down, would only be continually warped and stretched to suit cases of greater doubt and less peril.

The Right, as I showed you in my last lecture, is that which is according to rule; and moral rules do not admit of exceptions, because they are founded on known fitnesses. It is admitted that these rules apply to the instances in which it is urged on the ground of expediency that they be set aside, — only it is claimed that in this and that instance they should be ignored because they bear hardly on individual cases. But they cannot be set aside in these cases without creating precedents which will be urged, adopted, followed, strained, applied to cases more or less analogous, till the exceptions overlap and merge the rule, and tend toward a state of things in which adherence to the rule will be the exception, while the rule still retains its reasonableness, its accordance with fitness, its rightful authority. We Christians derive our rules of right, mediately, from the teachings, and still more from the life, of Jesus Christ; and there is not one of these rules, however wide of the practice of the outside world, that does not justify itself by its intrinsic fitness. Probably no one who has governed his life strictly by these rules, and has had his heart pervaded by their spirit, has ever found reason for repentance or regret; while multitudes calling themselves Christians, who have modified these rules by expediency, have had the personal discomfort of trying to be in the service

of two masters and succeeding in neither, have injured the prestige and impaired the influence of the religion which they wanted to honor, and have found that they have done manifest harm where by departing from the rule they hoped to render some office of kindness or charity.

What place, then, has expediency? A most important, though a secondary, place. The word *expediency*, in its near kindred to *expedite*, suggests the idea of the shortest or most direct way to the attainment of an end. The term relates to ways and means, not to ends. The fitting, the Right, must be the uniform characteristic of our ends, and must at the same time limit our range of choice as to means. But there may be several equally right ways for the attainment of a right end. Among these ways we should endeavor to choose the most expedient, — that in which we shall have the least hinderance and the greatest amount of help or furtherance. Or there may be several equally right and desirable ends, only one of which we can pursue. Which of these we shall choose may be properly made a pure question of expediency. Thus, among several local charities of which my time and means will enable me to engage actively in but one, I may with entire propriety choose that which will best suit my convenience. So, too, of different courses of read-

ing or study, expediency as to my business in life, my taste, my profession, will be my best guide. In our social relations, whether of business or of pleasure, while truth, justice, and kindness are to be never violated or minimized, there is large room for expediency as to time, place, and manner. We are bound to bestow, and have a right to get, all the pleasure and profit which our social intercourse will permit us to bestow and to receive; and this depends in no small degree on the heed which we give to matters not of positive obligation, but properly belonging under the head of expediency. We have St. Paul's statement that he "became all things to all men;" yet with his sturdy, robust conscientiousness we cannot suppose that he ever made the slightest compromise of principle. But over and above his spontaneous courtesy, he undoubtedly studied, in the Latin phrase, the *mollia tempora fandi*, the fit occasions and modes of address, the topics that might bring him into relation with those under his wordfall, the ways by which he, for the sake of his holy cause, might win a favorable reception. It was a masterly stroke of expediency when, finding the assembly which he was going to address divided in opinion, the Pharisees being the majority, he began, "I am a Pharisee, and the son of a Pharisee; of the hope and resurrection of the

dead I am called in question," and thus produced a strong division in his favor; — and again, when, on the Areopagus, he started with the clear and emphatic statement of the truths which he held in common with the prevalent schools of philosophy.

I am sorry to find in Renan's autobiography a confession that he had been wont, all through his life, to carry expediency of this complaisant type beyond the bounds of truth, and that, while guilty of no other falsehood, and in a life of maidenly gentleness, innocence, and purity, he had never been able to refrain from such falsehoods as would please, conciliate, or flatter those with whom he was brought into friendly intercourse.

The subject of expediency is one of prime importance to the public teachers of religion.[1] In this respect St. Paul is their best model. Their aim, without which they have no title to their office, should be to exert the maximum of influence within their power in behalf of the True and the Right, and especially in behalf of truth that is the least welcome, if it be only of vital interest and worth, — of duties that are the most neglected, if they only form a part of the eternal right. Now I have seen two extremes among

[1] These Lectures were first delivered before the students of a divinity school. Special reference was therefore made, in two or three instances, as here, to the clerical profession.

really good men who wanted to do good. I have known those who if they had offensive truth to utter, made it tenfold more offensive by a defiant, aggressive manner, by assuming an antagonistic attitude, and by side-thrusts at those who did not agree with them, showing that they meant war, and thus awakening hostility, and then handling their weapons so unskilfully that they did more harm to themselves by their recoil than they could do to the falsities assailed. I have known others, who were so afraid of giving offence that for the sword of the Spirit they showed only a jewelled scabbard in which it was supposed to be sheathed. They diluted the truth as the original disciples of Hahnemann diluted their drugs, and evidently supposed, as they did, that dilution conferred strength. They rejoiced in the quiet assent of their hearers to unpopular truths so reduced to unemphatic platitudes as to leave but an infinitesimal difference between them and their opposites. Those who undertake the office of public teachers are bound to give distinct, unmistakable, strong utterance to the truth as they believe it, and especially to point out, with a clearness that shall give no possibility for mistake, the way of duty, and to rebuke, not, as is the wont of some, the sins of other people or other times, but the sins and evils rife then and there, — calling things

by their right names, so that men may recognize their own moral portraiture. But the castigation must not be administered as if one enjoyed it, and took credit or pride to himself for it. There should be a blending of gentleness with firmness, meekness with courage, modesty on one's own account with directness and boldness for the sake of truth and right. One may thus make his way to the minds and the consciences of men; while he who carries the war-spirit into his work is apt to find those whom he wants to attack defended by impregnable armor. What I have said is applicable not to the members of one profession alone. Reformers of every class and description need to learn what force there is in sweetness, what might in meekness, what penetrating power in a spirit no less gentle than resolute.

Permit me to add to what I have said about selfish morality, that there is still, under the most rigid rule of right, room for self-seeking, if it only take, not even the second, but the third place. The fitting, the Right, is always to be first considered. Next, where the Right is not compromised, our second thought is to be given to expediency as regards the good of the community, or that portion of it with which we are connected by domestic, neighborly, social, or official relations. Then, as regards our own well-being, present or

future, it is our right, nay our duty, to avail ourselves of such advantages, helps, benefits, as we can make ours with no sacrifice of the absolute right or of usefulness. This is our duty, not to ourselves alone; for the better our position, the greater is our power of usefulness. Anthony Trollope writes (and baldly as he says it, it is not without truth), "We know that the more a man earns, the more useful he is to his fellow-men." The essential element of usefulness is the mass, the quantity of character. What a man says or does or gives is a comparatively small multiplicand, of which what he is, is the much more significant multiplier, and the product depends mainly on the multiplier. Nor can the multiplier be increased by any merely outward advantage. But the multiplicand may be thus largely increased; for whatever advantage one gains gives him added occasions and opportunities for putting what he is to use for the benefit of those around him. Thus, wealth honestly obtained and generously used, social position earned by deserving it, or reputation worthily won, while it does not of itself make the man better, enables him to employ his selfhood in more numerous ways and directions, and for the benefit of a more extended circle of his fellow-men. I have known cases in which the increased power of usefulness was the manifest motive for the increase

of wealth already abnormally large; but it was evident in such instances that the noble, generous, loving selfhood put into the gifts of these men to the needy, and to public institutions, made their benefactions much more efficient for good than if there had been the gift without the giver. There is a chilliness in a bequest, or in what is given for show, or in alms doled out from a reluctant heart; but the truly generous man will give himself in all that he bestows on his fellow-men, or on any cause of learning, virtue, or piety.

LECTURE IV.

CONSCIENCE.

My subject to-day is Conscience. I would give as a provisional definition of conscience, — It is the perception or feeling of right and wrong in voluntary human acts, whether our own or those of others. It bears a close analogy to what are called the bodily senses, and may not improperly be termed a sense. It has, indeed, no specific bodily organ; but the senses, commonly so called, belong no more to the body than the conscience does. It is not the eye that sees, or the ear that hears; but sights and sounds ordinarily reach the mind through these loopholes in the body, — yet not always; for I think that there can be no doubt that in somnambulism and other abnormal states objects are perceived without the intervention of these organs, and we certainly can conceive of perception independently of them in the disembodied spirit. The mind discriminates between acts as right or wrong in very much the same way as that in which it discriminates between objects

as black or white, by immediate and what may not unfitly be termed intuitive perception. There is as much reason for believing the one sense as for believing the other to be innate. Nay, conscience seems even a more essential part of human nature than the bodily senses are. We regard a man born blind or deaf as none the less a man, entitled to all the rights and privileges of humanity; but in the rare cases in which a person is wholly destitute of the moral sense, to whom murder seems as good an act as almsgiving, no matter what his mental capacity may be, we regard him as less than human, as not to be treated as a man, as more nearly allied to beasts than to his human kindred.

I have said that conscience takes cognizance of voluntary human acts; but by a human act I do not mean a mere movement of the body. It is on the movements of the mind that conscience passes judgment, and it often suspends judgment because it does not appear what the bodily act means. Were I lecturing in a language with which you were unfamiliar, and were I to employ vehement gestures expressive of intense indignation, you would neither approve nor blame me. But were I in plain English with such gestures to denounce some form of imposture or some act of defiant guilt, your consciences would bear me ap-

proving witness, — condemning, if I were thus giving utterance to wanton petulance or wounded vanity. Conscience seems to judge of the outward act, merely because in the vast majority of cases the same act proceeds from the same or a similar motive. There is indeed some hypocrisy in seemingly good acts, — some, but not a great deal. There never can be much; if there were, it would cease to deceive. Counterfeits can obtain currency only when they are issued in very small proportion to the genuine coin.

Is conscience an active principle? Not in itself or of necessity. It is the same feeling that judges of the moral conduct of others and of our own. But in our own case it prompts to action in a way analogous to the way in which the bodily senses prompt to action. Sight is not an active power. We see unnumbered things that suggest no action. Yet nine-tenths of our acts are prompted wholly or in part by what we see. Hearing is not an active power. We hear a great many things without doing any thing about them. But a great deal of what we hear leads to specific action. Conscience, in like manner, passes judgment on what we read and learn of events that transpired a thousand years ago, and on what is going on now in the other hemisphere; yet it prompts no action about these things: but when

there is a moral choice to be made, conscience shows us what choice should be made. It is with conscience as with the sense of sight. I am walking to this hall, I will suppose, from some spot out of town. I must plant my next footstep somewhere. Where shall I plant it? My eyes tell me, — not in that mud-hole, — not on the railway track, with an approaching train, — not in the middle of the street where I may be run over, but on the clean, safe sidewalk. I am on my lifeway. I cannot stop. Somehow or other there are next steps to be taken. Conscience shows me the bearing of the several steps which I may take. This step is unfitting, and therefore wrong, because it will soil the purity that belongs to an immortal child of God; this, because it is unsuited to my condition and circumstances; this, because it interferes with another's rights; while there yet remains a step which is fitting so far as I am concerned, and violates no known fitness as regards any other being or object.

We next ask, Is conscience always to be relied on? Is it never liable to be deceived? I answer, It is always to be relied on, and always liable to be deceived. Its judgment is always correct with reference to our knowledge of the case in hand, and is therefore our only accessible rule of action; but we can never be certain that we have full

knowledge of the case, and thus our right may be wrong by a perfect standard. Conscience is like a judge too wise and learned to make any mistake as to the law, but who may have the case before him imperfectly or falsely represented by perjured or incompetent witnesses, and may thus give a decision right in law, but wrong with reference to the actual facts of the case. I might take as an illustrative instance one which we have considered in another connection, negro slavery. As to slavery, both parties had equally conscientious men in their ranks, and there was relative right on both sides. Neither party maintained that beings who were equals before God could rightfully enslave one another. Neither party denied that it was right to enslave beings of an inferior order, still more, if they were doomed to slavery by a special curse of God. Southern divines used to preach, and the Southern people undoubtedly believed, that the negroes were of an essentially inferior race; that God had cursed them through Noah, though Noah was drunk when he pronounced the curse; and that all the posterity of his son Ham were by and in that curse divinely doomed to perpetual slavery. If I believed this, I would as readily own a negro as a horse. The abolitionists believed negroes to be men, with all the rights of men, our potential equals, and, if now inferior,

rendered so by the temporary condition of things that made negro slavery possible. We now have no doubt that their relative right was in close accordance with the absolute right. Their only error was that they were slow to believe that there could be pro-slavery men fully as true to conscience as they were.

Can conscience be educated? Yes; but not in the sense in which the education of conscience is commonly spoken of, — not by the increase of knowledge, but by the careful and faithful use of conscience itself. If Satan is the real personage that he is in the popular theology, he has a knowledge of right and wrong hardly less profound than that of God himself, but not therefore an educated conscience; while the most ignorant person living, if in every daily concern he asks what he ought to do, and never fails to actualize the answer, has as well educated a conscience as if he were equally sage and saint. It is with conscience as with sight. A man may travel all over the world and see all its wonders, and yet his vision may be no more keen or accurate than when he started; while the watchmaker, who hardly looks at any thing but a watch, yet trains himself to detect therein the slightest misplacing of a pivot or the minutest particle of dust, has his vision rendered by exercise to the last degree keen and true.

We need both kinds of education. We need as large an acquaintance as we can attain with the nature of things, that we may know their fitnesses; but our consciences are not thereby educated, nor are we morally any the better. We need, still more, the habit of looking with the watchmaker's practised and penetrating vision at the right and wrong in every thing that appertains to our conduct, and of always embodying in action what we perceive to be right. Thus only can we truly educate conscience.

An important discrimination ought here to be made. What is called the moral improvement of society is not so much a growth in conscientiousness as the inevitable increase of such knowledge of moral fitnesses as belongs equally to bad men as to good men, and of which Satan himself might be the master. I do not believe that we in general have as highly trained consciences as the New-England Puritans had two hundred years ago, and yet they did from their ignorance of the nature of things, always under the urgency of an exacting conscience, some things which we know to have been very wrong, and other things which we now see to have been very foolish.

I have said that I regard conscience as innate, and, if so, as universal. But it is maintained by not a few writers on moral science, that conscience

is entirely the result of culture; and in support of this view, it is alleged that there are savage tribes that perform acts which it is impossible that conscience should sanction, even at the lowest grade at which man can be above the brutes, such as cannibalism, the murder of infirm parents, the exposure to certain death of children that are regarded as superfluous.

There is a mystery about cannibalism. There is reason to believe that it may have originated in some superstitious notion about the transfusion of an enemy's strength or courage into the soul of the warrior who feeds upon his flesh. There is some reason, also, for supposing it to have been at the outset a religious sacrifice, and then a feeding upon sacrifice. These suppositions do not indeed make it otherwise than atrocious and revolting to the last degree; yet I doubt whether civilized man is now in a condition to cast reproach upon it. The day will come, if Christianity be, as I believe it is, the everlasting gospel, when the nations of modern Christendom will be classed with the cannibal tribes as co-barbarians; for the bush-fights between a few scores or hundreds of half-naked savages, whatever the sequel, can present nothing so abhorrent to reason or humanity as the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of men in the late Franco-Prussian war, in a dispute without merit

and almost without meaning on either side, between an ambitious statesman and a usurping emperor. Yet Prince Bismarck is supposed to have a conscience, and would claim its enlightenment by religious faith; and on the other side we can hardly believe the Bonaparte family to have been wholly destitute of the moral faculty, though they have never made much use of it.

As for the barbarous treatment of old people and children, I can easily conceive that it may have had its source in humane feeling. In the lowest savage state, especially in roving tribes, with perpetual exposure to the elements, with dangers from wild beasts and from enemies hardly less brutal, and with the most precarious supply of food, life at its best estate must seem hardly worth living; it cannot be looked upon as desirable for children, unless of the most robust and vigorous constitution and promise; and it is not inconceivable that for those who have reached a helpless senility, the certainty of want and suffering without any possible relief or offset may have led to the slaying of aged parents, if that has ever been practised, — which may be doubted, for there is much less than assured authenticity in the reports of it that have been transmitted to us.

In the question of the universality of conscience a low state of morals does not prove that there is

no sense of wrong connected with immoral acts. In civilized life there are, besides moral principle, a thousand restraints preventive of crime. Were not certain tempting forms of immorality sure to destroy one's social standing, is it certain that all who now abstain from them would remain innocent of them? But in savage life there is no privileged social position which one forfeits by gross immorality. Theft has been thought very common among uncivilized races, and there is no doubt that savages will generally steal whenever they can from travellers and from ships. But they have the temptation of rare and novel articles of ornament and use, and they have, too, the disposition common to almost all nations out of Christendom, ancient and modern — typified in the double sense of the Latin *hostis* — to identify strangers and enemies. But Mungo Park, writing of a certain African tribe that stole from him every thing that they could get hold of, says, "They themselves regard theft as a crime, and they are not in the habit of stealing from one another." He at the same time speaks of certain noble and delicate traits of character among the lowest of the African races, — of gratitude for kindness, loyal affection for their benefactors, and fidelity in keeping and restoring objects intrusted to their care. He says that he never, in his many years of sojourn in Africa, wit-

nessed a single instance of hardheartedness in a woman, or a single breach of motherly kindness or of filial reverence. Livingstone says substantially the same, and sums up his account of one of the tribes in which he had witnessed instances both of heroic virtue and of almost incredible cruelty, by saying, "After long observation I have come to the conclusion that there is in them the same strange mixture of good and evil that we find in mankind generally."

The Australians are undoubtedly at a still greater remove from civilization than even the rudest African tribes. They have been described at their worst mainly in the interest and through the reports of those who would gladly see them exterminated; but whenever one who cared for them has given any account of them, they have been represented as sensitive to moral distinctions within their very narrow range of knowledge, and as capable of gratitude and of fidelity.

To recur to a distinction at which I gave a cursory glance in speaking of the education of conscience, the phrase "improved condition of society" which we see and hear used with regard to the morality of the present time as compared with the past more or less remote, has two meanings, one of which may be, and, as I fear, is, false. From my definition of the Right as that which is

intrinsically fit, society must of necessity be continually improving in its knowledge of the Right, and therefore in its practical science of morals. You cannot name an item of knowledge which may not have its moral relations or attachments. There is not an invention, or a product of art, or a useful or usable commodity, which is not susceptible in some way of misuse or abuse, and with reference to which there may not be a crisis involving some grave moral question. One of the most laborious achievements of legal genius and science combined has been the application of the principles of the common law to questions that are arising in connection with steamboats, railways, telegraphs, and telephones. In like manner, the practical moralist has new questions to settle with regard to every fresh form of industry and aspect of social life, each having its own peculiar moral relations, its own specific right and wrong. Now, an all-knowing age like ours cannot but have a clear and what seems a full knowledge of right and wrong; for a knowledge of the relations of persons and things to one another comprises all of moral knowledge that there is. An age like ours, then, may criticise all earlier ages and lower conditions of society as morally deficient, while the deficiency may be in knowledge alone, and may be due to no moral cause. But it may be fairly

questioned whether our superior knowledge is conjoined with a superior quickness and tenderness of conscience as regards the contents of that knowledge, — whether its mechanical and economical relations are not throwing its morality into the background, — whether for instance, the painstaking and often painful industry with which our ancestors applied themselves to seek out and extirpate imaginary crimes, such as witchcraft and sorcery, does not indicate a higher type of moral character than the readiness with which we condone swindling, bribery, and corruption, when the perpetrators can break the meshes of the law. I have no doubt that the whole enlarged field of our knowledge is to be ultimately conquered and governed by conscience. But we are now too busy in taking possession of our new domain to provide for its government. "First that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual."

I have spoken of the general increase of knowledge as providing materials which equally crave and direct the activity of conscience, and thus in the popular, though not in the true, sense of the terms, contribute to the education of conscience. In this sense I now ask you to consider the office of law as an educator. Law has the fitting or right for its basis. The only object of honest legislation — and there is little of actual legis-

lation or law-making that is not honest, the greater part of the work of our legislators relating not to law proper, that is, to rules for the government of life, but to local and personal interests in which there is full play for lobbying and intrigue — the only object of honest legislation is the framing of portions of the Right into rules to be observed under penalty for their violation. The laws express the average knowledge and moral feeling of the community, not the moral convictions of the best and most enlightened few; for what they know the many do not believe, — not those of persons of a very low moral grade; for mediocrity in morals is less patient of what falls below its own standard than is that superior excellence, of which forbearance and hopefulness for what is beneath itself, are essential traits. There is in law something below what ought to be in men's minds. Its standard is beneath what zealous purists would have it; but it is all the better for this. Laws too nearly perfect would be constantly evaded and violated, would fall into disesteem, and would not even need formal repeal to be practically set aside; so that the friends of good morals ought to be as much afraid of too good laws as of bad laws.

The laws, such as they are, have a most important educational influence, and they probably

in this way supersede the possibility of a great deal more of crime and wrong than they prevent or punish. A great many people, instead of looking for themselves into the nature of human acts, take precisely the estimate of their moral worth or demerit that is given them by the laws. They regard as intrinsically vile and disgraceful the acts which the law visits with ignominious punishment; as very much less shameful those that are punished only by a fine; and, too often, as not deserving any severe moral animadversion such bad acts as the law does not or can not reach. Children grow up into this moral estimate; and you would find, in our public schools for instance, that the average boy or girl has very much the same tariff of moral demerit and shame as that which would be derived from a superficial knowledge of the law of the land.

In this estimate there have been some marvellous changes within my remembrance. Let me cite a case in which a grievous wrong in one direction has lapsed into one of an opposite character still more grievous. I remember when imprisonment for debt was the law and the practice, and it was possible for a man honest, but unfortunate, to be shut up with the worst of felons for a month at least, till certain tedious formalities for his release could be completed, and

often for many months, or even years, if there were an alleged flaw in these formalities, or an alleged but unproved suspicion of concealed property. In that condition of the law, public opinion bore very hardly on an insolvent debtor. His known blamelessness of character in previous years did not suffice to ward off disesteem and obloquy. Failures in business were rare, and the bankrupt was treated with the utmost severity. Every thing not absolutely necessary was taken from him, carpets were stripped from his floors, superfluous beds, blankets, and crockery were confiscated, and he and his entire family were obliged almost to sit in ashes, and made to feel the ban of the whole community, — all this because its relation to the jail made insolvency disgraceful. Now that legislation is largely in the hands of the debtor classes, and the law uses no severe measures to enforce the payment of debts, but on the other hand gives the bankrupt every facility for liquidating his debts without paying them, a bankrupt incurs no reproach, though he makes not the slightest retrenchment in his expenses, nor even if he seems as rich after his failure as before, and a man may hold his position in respectable society when it is perfectly well known that he never pays a debt which he can postpone or evade. On this whole matter of pecuniary

obligation the law has created a loose tone of feeling, and is undoubtedly answerable for many really callous consciences.

Another subject on which law has done and is doing an incalculable amount of mischief to the general conscience, is the sale and use of intoxicating liquors. The brunt of legislation is directed against the sale of such liquors, while a drunkard does not come anyhow under the cognizance of the law until he has reached the most squalid condition. The consequence is, that the moral feeling of the community takes the trend of the law, and holds the vender of strong drink as worthy of execration, — the drunkard as an object of pity, to be cosseted rather than condemned, and, if he suspends drinking for a while, to be wreathed with the aureola of sainthood, and welcomed as a public teacher on the platform or in the pulpit. Now, I have no apology to offer, either for the seller or for the drunkard. But the drunkard is the principal; the seller, the accessory. Moreover, the drunkard necessitates the seller. Demand will somehow create a supply, if not by legal, by illegal means, — if not openly, still worse, clandestinely. The law, so far as it makes the business infamous, puts it into worse and more dangerous hands, but does not and can not destroy it. What is needed is to attach to

drunkenness itself the most disgraceful stigma with which the law can brand it. Let the law treat the drunkard with as little mercy as it shows to the pickpocket, and society will follow the lead of the law, and put the drunkard under its ban; and the aim of parents and householders thenceforward will be to exclude from their tables, their houses, and their use, save in the stress of need, that which might bring "shades of the prison-house" on their homes, and place their children in the same category with thieves and vagabonds.

The law also mis-educates conscience in its attaching greater ignominy to crimes of violence than to those of lust. I am by no means clear in the conviction that capital punishment is necessary; but if it be so, I know not why seduction should not be thus punished, and so made infamous in the last degree: and short of hanging, there are no penalties that would more than express the righteous indignation with which this whole class of crimes ought to be regarded, and with which they will be regarded whenever the average opinion shall bring the law up to its proper standard; while till then debauchees, because they can escape the prison, will still hold their unchallenged place in what calls, but for that very reason miscalls, itself respectable society.

But whatever its shortcomings, the law is of

unspeakable worth in furnishing the consciences of those who can not or will not think for themselves an approximate standard of right. While it remains stationary, it is raising the mass of the community toward its own level; and as fast as it does this, it is lifting the average opinion and feeling above that level, and thus insuring and effecting its own improvement.

The efficacy of law in giving conscience its standard may be seen in the case of sins which from their very nature it cannot reach. Take for instance such sins as slander and calumny, whether in conversation which, instead of "grace seasoned with salt," as St. Paul recommends, is all salt and no grace, or through the press in such guise as just to evade prosecution for libel. It is hard to overestimate the foulness and vileness of this form of guilt; and yet because the law cannot reach it, one's reputation is not sensibly damaged by it. The tale-bearer, whose tongue is more poisonous than the fangs of a rattlesnake, may be a welcome visitor, and even a favored associate, with persons who would shrink from the companionship of a much less dishonest and less harmful offender on whom the law had laid its hands. The editor, too, or the newspaper correspondent, whose words sting like an adder, and who is aware that his victim's only demerit is that of not belonging to

his own party, may be a public favorite, while guilt of a far less culpable grade, yet punishable by law, would bring upon him social ostracism. The very fact that inactive conscience leaves uncondemned so much which the law cannot reach is a strong attestation of the educational power of the law; while it may well serve as an admonition against implicit reliance on any standard other than our own unbiassed sense of fitness and right. It indicates also the direction in which men need moral enlightenment. There is no necessity of inveighing against offences on which the law lays its grasp. If men commit them, it is with open eyes, and with an entire willingness to do wrong. The field for moral teaching is the broad ground that lies between legal rightness and faultless excellence, — between the ethics of the statute-book and the ethics of the Sermon on the Mount.

Permit me now to show you what conscience is not; for it has not a few counterfeits that usurp its name and cast reproach upon it. It is no uncommon thing for men to think and profess that they are acting conscientiously when they are really obeying some *fetich* of their own making, which they have enthroned in the place of conscience.

Thus, it is very common for persons to substi-

tute the conscience of others for their own, and to call it their own. They go into the street, or on 'Change, or to the church, or the public meeting, or they resort to the daily press, with the cry, "Men and brethren, what shall I do?" and when they get the answer, they call it the voice of conscience. Most of the really right-meaning pro-slavery people in the Northern States before the war of the Rebellion, consulted instead of their own consciences a public, national conscience, largely formed by slaveholders and their interested abettors; and in every reform-movement a great part of the opposition comes from those whose own consciences would be on the right side, but who have more confidence in the general voice than in such decisions as they would reach by their own serious thought. Now, there is so much that is individual and peculiar in every life, that He alone who knows the heart, and whose voice the loyal conscience is, can be a safe counsellor. The testimony of every faithful soul is, "I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with me." Nehemiah, next to Moses the greatest personage in Hebrew history, who did hardly any thing in which he had human countenance or sympathy, and who in his holy and patriotic enterprise gives us as close a blending of the hero and the saint as we have on

record, says, "I consulted with myself, and I rebuked the nobles and the rulers," who seemed his natural advisers, but whom if he had consulted, the walls of Jerusalem would never have been rebuilt.

In the next place, we are very apt to take strong feeling, especially if it seems justified, for conscience. Thus, resentment, when we regard it as righteous, often usurps the office of conscience, and acts in its name. We think that we "do well to be angry." Perhaps we are right. But indignation has for its due objects, not persons, but deeds; and when it extends to persons, there is always room to question its dictates.

We are liable also to let our tastes, our likings, our prejudices, assume the place of conscience, — to imagine every act or utterance that is genuine, honest, sincere, in the common phrase, "in character," to be conscientious, though in the particular concerned our character may be precisely what it ought not to be. No man was ever more thoroughly honest, or acted more entirely "in character," than St. Paul when he assisted at the execution of Stephen, and started on his sanguinary mission against all the Christians that he could find. But it is wrong to say that he was conscientious in so doing, nor did he in his subsequent life justify himself on that ground. Had he looked

deep enough into his own heart, he would have found there, bearing the Creator's imprint, laws of truth, justice, and love, against which he was sinning most atrociously while he thought that he was doing God service.

In St. Paul's case it was loyalty to Judaism that took the place of conscience, and there is no pseudo-conscience to which good men are so apt to render their allegiance as zeal for their religious sect or party. The harsh and bitter stress laid by some religionists on metaphysical dogmas, by others on posture and millinery, by others, still, on organization, making kind and brotherly treatment contingent on them, is, I have no doubt, genuinely sincere and honest, yet not therefore conscientious; for it involves the violation of justice and love, which are the only standard that conscience recognizes between man and man. I read not long ago the Life of an eminent dignitary in the English Church, who evidently thought himself among the foremost Christians of his time, but whose conscience, it seemed to me, had lain from the day of his ordination in a Rip Van Winkle sleep, and what he called "church principles" had taken its place. In his correspondence he never speaks of dissenters without expressions of contempt, hatred, or both; evangelical members of his own church he treats with still greater

severity, as, not deeming them beneath ridicule, he blends for them ridicule with hatred and contempt; with the Romeward-leaning among his own high-church party he deals more leniently, and yet still with distrust of their motives and character; and he leaves the reader with the impression that the proportion of really wise and good men among English Christians is hardly as great as would have sufficed to save Sodom from destruction. It is no uncommon thing to find fully as harsh judgments, with less of bitterness it may be, but with more of supercilious scorn, among persons who pride themselves on their broad liberality, and who seem able to tolerate every thing except serious, definite, and earnest religious convictions. Such censoriousness in its several forms, however sincere and honest, has no claim to be considered as conscientious, its judgments being shaped by the standard of personal feeling, and not by that of the fitting and the Right.

Another way in which conscience is liable to be betrayed is by substituting reasoning for feeling. A striking instance occurred not many years ago in the vote of the large majority of the English bishops in the House of Lords in favor of the needless and aggressive Afghan war. One of the sacred college wrote a labored argument in justification of his conduct and that of his colleagues.

His reasoning was in this wise. Pure Christianity ought to be maintained in the ascendant in the East. England is the sole fountain and representative of pure Christianity. English supremacy in the East must be maintained, else Christianity will lose its hold on the Asiatic races. Therefore this war, which is for supremacy, and especially to ward off the incursion of Russia and the Greek Church, should be supported by the votes and influence of all Christian men. Now, had that prelate only placed side by side the Afghan war and the fundamental principles of human brotherhood which every enlightened Christian must recognize, he would as soon have recommended a general massacre of dissenters or agnostics in the British Empire as have expressed approval of a war so abhorrent to humane sentiment and unsophisticated Christian feeling. I apprehend that we are all liable, though it may be in less atrocious forms, to similar sophistry. If a cause or interest approves itself to conscience as intrinsically worthy, we are over-prone to adopt or sanction methods of supporting or advocating it which conscience would not authorize, especially if such modes are the most direct, the most practicable, or seemingly the most efficient.

Let me say in conclusion, A genuine conscience is a growing conscience, — one that is perpetually

becoming more prompt, more keen, more tender. It is in this mainly that the growth of character consists. But even in good men I apprehend that the growth of character too often bears a very close analogy to that of the body. During the early years of life more food is taken than is necessary to maintain the body in its present state, and there is a constant increase. But when adult years have been reached, nutrition no more than replaces the normal waste of tissue, and growth ceases. In like manner, character often appears to grow, up to a certain point; then there seems to supervene what I might call the consciousness of an adult state; and then growth ceases, though at a stage far below the measure of perfection attainable in this world. From that stage, also, there not infrequently seems to be an unconscious decline. Indeed, where there is no increase of moral excellence, there is always danger of decrease. Conscience without fresh stimulants is prone to grow inert, and this the rather as the life becomes less diversified and more a routine. But there is always room for growth in the principles by which conscience forms its verdicts. In purity, there may be an ever more lofty and delicate type, from the cleanness of heart without which no man can gain a glimpse of divine realities to that heavenly frame of spirit which

is the mirror of God, — in truth, from the mere absence of falsity to that perfect fairness, candor, integrity of thought, which more and more excludes all coloring of prejudice, and has pure, white light for its only medium of vision, — in love, from that lower yet essential form which works and wills no ill to its neighbor to that disfusive philanthropy which holds every human interest dear, and emulates Him of whom the most divine trait on record is, that He "went about doing good." By thus cultivating our moral nature and capacity, we are constantly bringing conscience into ever more entire supremacy. Its judgments, as I have said, are always true; but at the lower stages of moral progress we are over-prone to substitute other standards for the Right, as clearly perceived and felt by our own minds and hearts. With every stage of progress onward and upward, conscience becomes more and more the sole and sovereign arbiter, not of word and deed alone, but primarily of thought and feeling, whence word and deed must flow.

LECTURE V.

VIRTUE AND THE VIRTUES.

VIRTUE literally means manliness. It is derived from the Latin *vir*, which differs from *homo*, the latter denoting man as distinguished from woman; the former implying man with the characteristics of mind and soul that ought to belong to him. There is the same difference in the Greek between ἀνήρ and ἄνθρωπος; and ἀνήρ, the old grammarians say, is closely allied to Ἄρης, the god of war, from whose name is derived ἀρετή, the Greek synonyme of the Latin *virtus*. The word *virtus* has passed into the languages of Southern Europe derived from the Latin, and, probably through the Norman-French route, into the English. In each language it denotes the attributes that are regarded as the most manly. There is one seeming exception, which yet is no exception. In the Italian, *virtu* is employed to denote *taste;* and though *virtuoso* may mean a virtuous man, it oftener designates a man of taste. In this latter sense we have borrowed the word, as *virtu* also, objects of

virtu being sometimes spoken of. Words not only tell history, but there are many words that hold a deeper history than they can tell, being themselves history. There was a time when political and pontifical oppression had crushed out of the heart of the Italian people all the elements of manliness, and left refined and exquisite artistical taste as the only attribute on which they could base any feeling of self-respect; while in this they were as far in advance of the other civilized nations as they were behind them in all the hardier elements of character. This, then, became their manhood, till they had strength to throw off their double yoke; and its record remains indelible in their language.

Virtus, that is, virtue, in the earlier time, meant courage in war. As philosophy gradually made men understand and feel the room and demand for prowess in the warfare within, in the conflict with appetite and passion, in the unceasing contest between the flesh and the spirit, the word took on a moral signification. We accordingly find it used in both senses in the Roman classics, and it is sometimes difficult to determine in which sense it is used. In the English language, virtue, so far as I can trace it back, has always had a moral signification when applied to men, though it means force or efficacy when

applied to things, as "the virtue of this medicine," or "by virtue of that recommendation." Early English writers were wont to use the word with special reference to militant goodness, — to the strength of the inner man in the conflict with evil. It has of late, however, been employed to denote moral goodness, without reference to the trials encountered, the obstacles surmounted, or the difficulties overcome. Yet we do not use the word where wrong-doing is impossible. We call a little child, not virtuous, but innocent. We do not call God virtuous; yet why should we not? If he is omnipotent, evil is within his power: he freely chooses the right, and it is on that ground alone that we call him good, just, and holy, — on no other ground can we affirm moral attributes of him. In his own eternally righteous will he is himself the supreme exemplar of virtue for the whole moral universe, thus enabling men in their right-doing to be, in St. Paul's intensely significant words, "followers of God as dear children." The best definition of virtue, in the present use of the term, is conduct in conformity with the right, or, more briefly, rightness, or righteousness.

Rightness is one as to intent and purpose. There may be degrees of virtue, various types of virtue, as men differ in capacity or proclivity, or as they have been for a longer or a shorter time in

the practice of virtue. There are too, undoubtedly, persons of blameless lives who are not virtuous, and persons of very faulty lives who are virtuous. But every person either is or is not virtuous; that is, has or has not the predominant, prevailing, pervading intention or purpose to conform his conduct to the right. There is profound ethical truth in St. James's saying, "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all;" that is, if a man voluntarily yields to temptation at one point, voluntarily releases himself from one duty or class of duties, without any doubt that it is morally incumbent upon him, because his vicious inclinations tend in that direction, he shows as much contempt for the Right as such, as unright, as unvirtuous, a frame of mind and soul, as if he sinned along the whole line of the commandments. Moreover, he makes it certain, that, whenever equally strong temptations present themselves in any other direction, he will yield to them also. Thus, a man willingly vicious in any one direction cannot be trusted at any point. The debauchee may seem honest, yet I should not dare to leave a large sum of money with him over night. The man who cheats me may seem chaste or temperate, yet it will require no great stress of temptation to make him as vile as he is dishonest.

Virtue, then, is one, and, so far as motive and principle are concerned, it is indivisible. But in practice it is divisible, and the occasions for its exercise must determine how it shall be divided The Right toward God and toward man, toward a father and toward an enemy, with reference to inevitable calamity and with reference to strong drink, is one and the same right, but with widely different manifestations. "Cardinal virtues" is an old term in ethics,—cardinal, from *cardo*, a hinge, — the essential virtues, those on which the character *hinges*, or turns. Thus, honesty must be either the whole or a part of a cardinal virtue, as without it one cannot be a virtuous man; while gentleness, precious and lovely as it is, is not a cardinal virtue, there having been virtuous and even saintly men who were ungentle.

Different writers vary greatly in their lists of cardinal virtues, and I might fill the hour with an enumeration of their respective lists and the reasons for them. But they are, most of them, to me unsatisfying, because they are not exhaustive. We want a division of virtue which shall include all the essential forms of goodness, — a list of the virtues all of which shall be found in a really good character, and the absence of any one of which would be incompatible with a virtuous character. Of course, under whatever division we make, there

must be subdivisions. Let us now see if we cannot map out the whole ground of the Right.

In the first place, there is a right as regards ourselves, body, mind, and soul. We may take for this the name of prudence, which is broad enough to include all the care that we ought to take of ourselves, and all that we ought to do for ourselves. There is also a right with regard to our fellow-beings, God, man, and even beings of races inferior to our own. This we may term justice; for justice implies the rendering to others their due, what we owe them, and we owe to God piety and its observances, — we owe to man charity and kindness no less than veracity and honesty. Then, as to outward events and impersonal objects, a part of these are beyond our control. What we need with reference to events and objects of this class is, that we keep our own manhood uncorrupted by prosperity, unscathed by adversity. This we may call fortitude, which literally means strength, and is most appropriately applied to the inward might by which a man holds his own against the outside world, whether in resisting the enervating influence of wealth, success, or human favor, in withstanding peril, in submitting to disappointment, or in enduring loss, pain, or grief. Then, finally, there are outward objects which are under our control, and our dealing with which

makes a large part of our lives. As to these objects, duty suggests such questions as, When? Where? How? How much? Time, place, manner, and measure may all be comprehended under the head of order.

Prudence, justice, fortitude, and order, thus defined, make up the entire duty of man, — the entire right. They are all cardinal virtues, nor can either exist without the others. No man can be true to himself, without piety, justice, and kindness, without the ability to hold his own against the outside world, or without making a fitting disposal and use of the objects under his command. No one can do his duty to God or man who does not make the most of himself that he can make, who suffers either prosperity or adversity to throw him off his balance, or who misuses the objects of use and enjoyment. No man can meet the events and changes of life as he ought, without due self-culture, without the consciousness of right relations toward God and man, or without the habits of self-command that are implied in the virtue of order. At the same time, order, with the numerous sub-virtues which it includes, can hardly be expected of one who is not self-governed, who has not a due sense of the rights of others, or who is liable to be unmanned by either prosperous or adverse fortune. We thus see how

the cardinal virtues hinge into one another, and mutually sustain and subsidize one another, each rendering every other easy of cultivation and practice. Let us now consider these virtues separately.

We first have prudence, or duty, that is, what is due, to one's self. How can I owe myself any thing which I have not a right to remit? Surely I, the creditor, can absolve me, the debtor, from any debt. If I see fit to stint myself in mental or moral culture, and to lead a lazy, self-indulgent life, so long as I do no harm to others, whose concern is it? May I not do what I will with my own? I should not know how to answer these questions on any other ground than that of intrinsic fitness as the basis of right. But on this ground we may, in the first place, consider our several native powers, faculties, capacities, and affections as objects which have their respective fitnesses. Every property of my nature is a fitness. Indeed, this is what the word *property* means, — that which is appropriate, or fit for. My several powers of body are fitted for specific uses, either to myself or to my fellow-beings, and by excess or neglect or abuse with regard to any one of them I thwart this fitness, — I do what is analogous to my treating carelessly, or employing for mean purposes, implements or utensils of the

finest temper or the most costly material. *Unfitting* tells the whole story as to all bodily wrong-doing; and by the fitting use of every member, appetite, and faculty of the body we incarnate in this mortal flesh the full meaning of St. Paul, who used no words without meaning, when he bids his readers glorify God with their bodies, and present their bodies a living sacrifice, and reminds them that their bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit.

In like manner every mental faculty is fitted for some specific use, in our own culture or in our life-work. The faculty which we cramp, or starve, or gorge, or overwork, fails of its fitting uses. The mind can be kept in working order only by the symmetrical and proportionate exercise of all its powers. Excess in any one of them may be fully as harmful as under-culture. Take the memory, for instance. Its office is to treasure up and to keep within reach materials on which the reasoning and the reproductive powers may work. He who is too lazy to memorize principles, general laws, salient facts, the elements of science and of knowledge, may condemn the more active powers of the mind, if they work at all, to work as a mill might with nothing to grind; and we certainly have read, or have refused to read, writers, and have heard preachers and lecturers, who ground very well, while the vessels into which the meal

or flour should have fallen were in chronic emptiness. The words were well chosen and beautiful, if they had only meant any thing. On the other hand, I have known men who so overloaded the memory that the other powers had ceased to work. They could quote, but had lost the capacity of reasoning. Such men have reminded me of the little coasting-vessels that in the Atlantic States used to carry freight before the time of railways. I have seen these vessels not only with holds crammed full, but with loose freight lying round on the deck, on the cabin-stairs, in the gangways, and wherever foot could want to tread, so that it was a mystery to me how the sailors could so thread their way about as to work the vessel. This example may illustrate the necessity of giving to every power of the mind its proportionate culture and exercise, so that each may fully do its fitting work.

The affections also have their fitting objects. This is true even of what are called the malevolent affections, which are malevolent only when cherished to excess and misdirected, and much more, of the benevolent affections, one or another of which is adapted to keep us in our fit relation toward every being in the universe.

These powers, all cultivated as so many properties or fitnesses, each applied and kept to the

work for which it is fitted, make up a selfhood, human, yet in the image of the divine, mortal, yet bearing the signature of immortality.

Then, too, my will-power enables me to regard and treat objectively this aggregate selfhood. My selfhood as a whole has its fitnesses, — its relations, which are themselves full of fitnesses, to God, to my family, to my friends, to the community, to mankind. Unless I do the best that I can for myself, and make the most that I can of myself, I forfeit my fitness for and in some or all of these relations. Considering myself as a part of the machinery of the universe — no matter how large or small a part I am destined to be, whether a driving-wheel or a mere pivot — I am essential to and in my place (for even the least members are necessary), and it is my duty to keep myself, body, mind, and soul, in fit working order. Thus we see that our first cardinal virtue comprehends every form of self-care, self-government, and self-culture. All this the truly prudent man must do for himself.

It is only he who is thus prudent in the broadest sense of the word, that is fully prepared to actualize the second of the cardinal virtues, justice, which is the rendering of their due to all beings in the universe, — to God and to all his children and creatures. He who believes in God

cannot but regard him, not only as the ultimate Cause, but as in plan and purpose the Giver of whatever life has of enjoyment, of happiness, of blessedness. Much of it, indeed, comes through intermediate agencies, yet they can be only of his appointment. We can hardly call love and gratitude duties; for the affections are not directly under our command. But prolonged and reiterated thought on the relation in which God's benefactions place us to him is so manifestly our duty, that the opposite would be in the last degree unfitting; and there can be no doubt that such thought will awaken profound feeling, will spontaneously rise in thanksgiving, and make itself permanent in love. The obligation which thus lays claim upon our thought, and through thought on feeling, is intensified by God's manifestation in and revelation through Jesus Christ, inasmuch as through him we are endowed with the power to perfect this earthly life after a type which only the example of a divine humanity could fitly frame, and only an assured hope of immortality could energize. Our relation to God, I hardly need say, implies the obligation of ascertaining his will for us to the best of our possible knowledge, and actualizing it to the best of our ability.

As to the relations of the family, they contain in themselves their respective laws and measures

of fitness and obligation, and I need not enlarge upon them. Yet under this head there is one subject on which, as I think, public feeling in our country is retrograde and dangerous. I refer to the growing facility of divorce. Manifestly the chief office of the family is the care, nurture, and education of children; and it is absolutely certain that under any other social organism, this great interest of each successive generation must suffer detriment. The father and the mother are both needed for this office. Those bereaved of both parents are looked upon with universal commiseration, and the loss of either can be in some measure supplied only by the capacity and willingness of the surviving parent to perform in very large part double duty. It is an office which can be fitly performed only when it is a labor of love, which it may, indeed, be with step-parents, but only when there are no associations with that relation to make it offensive or odious. The successor of a deceased wife or husband may be specially chosen for the children's sake, or may for love of the parent grow into love for the children. But not so the husband or wife who replaces the divorced parent. The children are regarded with aversion, as tokens and reminders of a relation to be as far as possible forgotten or ignored.

In the best days of ancient Rome, divorce was

hardly known. The subsequent freedom of divorce, while in part the effect, was still more a cumulative and accelerating cause, of the moral corruption that made Clodius and Catiline, Caligula and Nero, possible. The term *noverca*, step-mother, came to be regarded as a name of reproach, and suggestive of neglect, cruelty, poisoning; and even now, so prone are we to retain obsolete meanings of words, the adjective "step-motherly" is seldom used in other than a bad sense. But such associations are due solely to the fact that the Roman step-mother almost always succeeded a divorced mother, whom she had superseded by her intrigues, and whose children were to her offensive and hateful. The consequence was, that in later Roman history we no longer read of Cornelias showing their children as their jewels, but only of children educated almost wholly by slaves, who, though often more intelligent than their masters, had like vices, only of a coarser type.

The plea currently urged for divorce is incompatibility of temper; but the very possibility of severing the connection is undoubtedly the most frequent cause of the genuineness and urgency of this plea. The incompatibility, perhaps, exists at the outset in the majority of cases, and in none more than where mutual love is the strongest. If

compatibility were the ground of choice, which it seldom is, the acquaintance before marriage can hardly ever be intimate enough to give assurance on this point. But if two persons of good character love each other well enough to marry, and expect to live together always, the process of mutual accommodation, nay, of assimilation, goes on rapidly, and in nineteen cases out of twenty, before there is time for the growth of mutual dissatisfaction, they will attain to so entire harmony in tastes, dispositions, and habits, that they will even outgrow the remembrance of such divergence as there once was. On the other hand, the possibility of parting will be as a hammer on a wedge, constantly widening any discrepancy that there may be in taste or temper, till reconciliation is no longer possible. In France, where divorce is difficult, with those who have not broken with the Church impossible save for the gravest cause, and with all infrequent, there is probably more of domestic harmony, happiness, and mutual helpfulness in the respectable middle classes than anywhere else in the civilized world.

But in this matter I would plead mainly for the children; and in domestic life there is nothing more atrociously unfitting or glaringly unright than that children should be bereaved of their parents, except by the providence of God, or by

such gross criminality as ought to put any parent out of office.

Under the head of justice come, of course, veracity and honesty. Veracity must be defended, as I said in a former lecture, not on the ground of expediency, which would leave so many openings for falsehood that truth-telling would become only a contingent, not an absolute, duty; but there is an intrinsic fitness in the correspondence of what one says, or writes, or in any way intimates, with things as they actually are. The obligation of uniform and unfailing veracity is impaired in the general mind by oaths, which create two classes of assertions, assign to what is sanctioned by a special appeal to God the sacredness which fittingly belongs to all affirmations and promises, and thus trains men to imagine that there is a lower degree of binding force where the solemnity of an oath is wanting. There can be no doubt that false testimony in a court of justice ought to be punished with unsparing severity; but it is the opinion of not a few of our wisest jurists, and those of the largest experience, that the interest of truth and justice would be better served were credence given to testimony on the ground of the witness's character rather than on that of his oath.

The duty of honesty cannot need special expo-

sition. But though it be beyond the province of a scientific lecture, I will give in passing a word of counsel, which business men may think superfluous, but which probably many persons not in the habit of keeping accounts, and certainly many in my profession, need. I have known several, I can almost say, in my long life, many, instances in which persons whom I believe to have been honest as the day have incurred blame, sometimes suspicion, by carelessness in their accounts of trust-funds, charity-funds, and the like. As for clergymen, if one becomes unpopular, and is vulnerable at this point, he is sure to be attacked. Now, whether a man keeps his personal accounts more or less accurately, or not at all, is his own affair; but for every cent of money that is not his own, he ought to keep, and to be able to show, as fair an account as a trained book-keeper could exhibit.

Beneficence is a part of justice. The Hebrew Psalmist understood this when he wrote, "The righteous showeth mercy, and giveth." Otherwise he would not be righteous. The needy, distressed, and helpless are as truly our creditors in the sight of God as is the man who has our note of hand. But it is not mere alms that constitute beneficence. They are often given to get rid of an applicant, or to preclude an uneasy feeling in case of refusal. Such gifts, though they may

warm and feed the body, freeze and starve the soul, dispirit the receiver, and, when continued, permanently pauperize him. Nor is this the worst of it: for pauperism is hereditary; and, as I said in a former lecture, there are old towns in which it has descended to a later than the third or fourth generation. Public alms have always a depressing and debasing influence. It is commonly said that the poor are ungrateful for what is by a strange misnomer called public charity. I have no doubt that they are so; if not, they ought to be; for there is no heart in such enforced gifts, grudged as they are by the givers. It is only kindness, that is, a recognition of one's kind, a manifestation of kindred, that wins gratitude, and only the charity with which the heart goes and in which the heart shows itself, that can be of any enduring value. The Hebrew prophet understood this when he added to his description of almsdoing, "That thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh." This was the way of Jesus Christ. He did not stand afar off, and utter the healing word, — he touched the leper, loathsome as he was; and I know of nothing that at the present moment gives such assurance that his spirit is not utterly whelmed by the rampant earth-spirits of our time as the large number of refined and delicate women from affluent homes, who all over

Christendom are devoting themselves to the lowliest offices of charity, and shrink no more than did their Master from the touch of disease and suffering in their direst forms.

It must be borne in mind that the duty of beneficence is not limited as to its objects to our own race, but extends to all forms of sentient being, to every living thing that can enjoy or suffer. "The whole creation groans and travails" for redemption from man's abused lordship over this lower world, from his wanton indifference to suffering, from his selfish pleasure pursued at the cost of life which is of right no more his to take away than it is his to give. Nor can I think it without meaning that in the prophetic pictures of a regenerated world man's humbler co-tenants always bear their part in the universal peace and gladness. Still more, while in these same pictures all the trees of the wood rejoice, the desert blossoms, and sheaves of grain ripen upon the mountain-top, I cannot but read in them a stern rebuke of the coarse Vandalism which can deface and destroy to no profit those forms of life in tree, branch, leaf, and flower, though unconscious, still sentient, that seem to woo the kind forbearance with which their grace and beauty are in such sweet accord.

The third of the cardinal virtues, fortitude, concerns those outward objects and events which are

not under our own control. To use the world and not abuse it, would perhaps be the best summary of what this duty requires. There is no condition of things which may not be tributary to our growth in the quantity of being, in mind and soul; there is none which may not harm us; and the alternative lies within our own choice. Prosperity, never unwelcome, is perhaps more perilous than adversity; and when it does not make a man better, it is sure to make him worse. What one needs is to keep his external condition outside of him, instead of making it a part of himself. The man of large wealth whose perpetual self consciousness is that of a rich man as contradistinguished from those who are not rich, has but a mean, poor spirit. On the other hand, he whose self-consciousness is that of a man having outside of himself large ability to be generous and helpful, but not therefore any more of a man, maintains the separation which it is fit for a human soul to maintain from its outward belongings and havings, and he makes of himself more of a man, not by having wealth, but by so using it as to have less of it.

Among adverse outward circumstances, or rather among those commonly so regarded, are obstacles in the way of our plans and our endeavors. They are adverse if we make them so, not other-

wise. If we let them stop our way, or go out of our way to avoid them, or meanly crawl round them, they retard, and hinder, and dishearten us. But *obstacle* is a figurative word that is full of meaning, and so is *surmount*, the verb which we are wont to apply to it. An obstacle is a stumbling-block, and to surmount it is to mount upon it, and thus to rise into a clearer air, with a vigor made elastic by climbing. It has been no uncommon thing for a man to look back upon the obstacles that he has surmounted as the most efficient factors of his character and of his success in life. This is the case with almost all of those who are termed self-made men. Obstacles have borne a very large part in the making of them.

Then, there are perils to be encountered on our lifeway; and these must be met, not with the reckless bravery called physical courage, which is the result of animal spirits, not of virtue, but with the profound and ever-active feeling that no cause of alarm, not even death itself, can impair the soul's true life. There is, too, a moral courage, which physically brave men have often lacked; for men have often thrown away their lives because they were afraid to do right. Thus, among those who have fallen in duels, there have been not a few who have regarded duelling as morally wrong, but who dared not to face the shame of

refusing a challenge. At transition-epochs in political life, at times of religious persecution, and in the progress of great moral reforms, men have often suffered worse than death, in the sacrifice of a good name on earth for a "name written in heaven," in the desertion of friends, in the scorn and hatred of those whose esteem they would have most prized, and not infrequently in making enemies in their own families.

Then, again, there are disappointments which sometimes involve a change of the entire lifeway, or the failure of plans reaching very far on into the future. Here we need to feel that the life, that is, the inward life, is the one momentous interest, and that its way, the way to its consummation, is a matter of entirely secondary concern, inasmuch as the life can always light and smooth and gladden the way.

There is also the demand for patience under sickness, infirmity, suffering, privation, bereavement, — burdens, not infrequently, from which there is no possible relief in this world. The inner life, as we have all seen, may be made not only serene, but radiantly happy, under the most adverse outward conditions, and there is often under their pressure a growth of character so rapid as to indicate their special adaptation to the culture of the highest spiritual graces. In many

years of experience in ministering to the afflicted, a service in which I have often been conscious of receiving in mind and heart much more than I could give, I have found patience sustained, first, by faith, confirmed by experience, in the beneficent design of an afflictive Providence; secondly, by the example of Him who, as the Scriptures say, was "made perfect through sufferings;" and thirdly, by an assured hope of immortality, so that one could look beyond earthly endurance to the full enjoyment of its revenue where there will be no grief or pain.

The fourth cardinal virtue, order, embraces a large portion of the conduct of daily life. It comprehends the fit division of time. A vast deal of time is wasted from not being properly laid out. He who is irregular in his industry is often at a loss what to do next, and forfeits also the unconscious preparation in thought and feeling which one can hardly fail to make for what he knows that he is going to do. Procrastination is, of course, to be shunned; and it would be superfluous to lay stress on the trite rule, "Never put off till to-morrow what ought to be done to-day." But I attach almost equal importance to a rule by no means trite, "Never do to-day the work that belongs to the morrow." The work done too soon is apt to be hurried, to lack due preparation, and

to put what belongs to the passing day out of place.

Punctuality in one's engagements is to be regarded as an essential part of honesty. What right have I to steal other men's time that is often worth more than money, which would not permit me to steal their money too? Yet having myself been trained and accustomed to exactness in keeping appointments, I have been restrained only by my respect for rhythm from substituting *punctuality* for the word which Young employs in that so often quoted verse, "Procrastination is the thief of time."

Order in place helps order in time; for he who does not put things where they ought to be, wastes time in endeavoring to find them. Order in place, too, has a deeper moral significance and value. It is essential to neatness, in person, and in the apartments where one works or lives; and in the absence of neatness, there can be no attractive power. The unneat home repels its inmates; and many a dangerous place of resort owes its throngs of customers to the slatternliness which supersedes the quiet and comfort that befit the domestic hearth, and in which, if one sought repose, he would be, to borrow a scriptural figure, like him "that lieth on the top of a mast."

Under the head of order comes the question,

How much? which is to be asked especially with regard to every thing appertaining to the indulgence of the appetites and the festive side of life. With reference to all these things, the question is between excess, temperance, and abstinence. I am speaking now, not particularly of strong drink, but, in general, of all objects of desire and modes of enjoyment. As to what is injurious in itself, or necessarily of bad example, there can be no question that abstinence is a duty, and it is on one or the other of these grounds that rests such obligation as there may be to shun entirely the use of distilled or fermented liquors. Whether wine comes under this category, it will be time enough to say when we have wine to dispute about. In this country we have little pure wine in our market, even from California. A very large proportion of what is offered for sale as wine is of home manufacture; and much of the rest is so adulterated that the vine, were it self-conscious, would never recognize its own pretended product. But with regard to objects of desire in general, luxuries, amusements, recreations, I need not condemn excess, — no one pleads for it; but I will say that excess in food, though less discreditable, is hardly less blameworthy, than excess in drink, nor yet less injurious, though it is stupefying rather than maddening, and is,

of course, less dangerous to the peace of the community.

Abstinence, on the other hand, has nothing to commend it. It grew from the Oriental dualism, according to which Satan made men's bodies and the outward world, while God made the soul; and Satan therefore was most effectually defied and affronted by abstinence. Hence the origin of fasting as a religious observance. The Jews had no fasts till they learned to fast religiously in Babylon. Their law has no fast-days. Jesus Christ evidently thought very little of fasting, and we have no tokens of the practice in the primitive Church. The Christian Lent was at the outset a dietetic practice. The principal animal food in the East was obtained from the young of domestic beasts; and Lent came at a time when they were too immature for use, while the spring vegetables were in their prime of succulence and flavor. In our climate it comes too early. For all things not bad in themselves, or of bad example, temperance, not abstinence, should be the rule. Were the necessaries of life alone used, half the world would be idle. It is by the manufacture and sale of superfluities that the majority of mankind supply the needs and comforts of daily life. Taste and refinement would perish were abstinence the rule. They are educated and satisfied almost

wholly by luxuries, gratifications, and amusements which a rigid ascetic would spurn. Moreover, there must always be in every community the young and the gay, who cannot be bound by any rule of abstinence, but who by wise counsel and example may in their recreations be guided in choice, and restrained in measure, if those of maturer wisdom and ripe moral discernment will show and lead the way. The less of asceticism there is among the older and more serious members of a community, the less tendency is there to excess and dissipation on the part of those who might be easily tempted to evil.

I ought to add, though in the fewest words possible, that under the head of order, and under the question How? good manners form an essential part of good morals. "The Christian is the highest style of man," says the poet, and I would turn the line into prose by making the affirmation of the Christian gentleman; for he, whatever his religious profession or seeming, is not half regenerated, and needs to be born again, whose soul is not penetrated through and through, and his whole life irradiated, by the gentleness, meekness, courtesy, sweetness, kindness, inseparable from a mature Christian character.

LECTURE VI.

PRINCIPLES, RULES, AND HABITS.

PRINCIPLE means a beginning, — that which is taken first. In every science, the principles are the ultimate truths, behind which one cannot go, from which all other truths may be inferred, and by which all alleged truths may be tested. It is the property of a principle that it cannot be defined, or reduced to any thing more simple than itself. Thus, in geometry the few self-evident axioms are the principles of the science, and all the complex and intricate theorems about cones, pyramids, and spheres are derived from those principles. In conduct, principles are ultimate laws, self-justifying, not to be reasoned about, but containing their own reason, — laws from which all right rules of conduct must be derived, and to which all right conduct must be conformed.

This is not the way in which the word is commonly used. How often do you hear a man speaking of something as against *his* principles! as if he had a certain set of principles as his own

private property, which authorize for him a course of conduct that would not be required of any other man under like circumstances. I can have no principles but those which you and all mankind have, or ought to have. If I have any thing else which I call by that name, my calling it so cannot make it so; and if I refuse to perform an act of justice or of kindness, or perform an act of an opposite complexion, on the plea of principle, I am doubly guilty, for the specific act, and for the alleged principle which is nothing else than a continuous and chronic sin.

Principles in morals have the force of reasons. The ultimate laws of conduct must contain the reasons why I should do, or not do. The cardinal virtues define what I ought to do; moral principles contain the reasons for those virtues. These reasons must be founded on my own nature, such as I can discern intuitively and feel spontaneously, without needing to arrive at them by a process of argument.

I think that we can reduce the fundamental principles of human duty to three, — purity, growth, and love. These principles run along the whole line of the virtues, comprehend them all, sanction them all, and can sanction nothing that is outside of them or inconsistent with them.

Purity, as a principle of conduct, is a necessary

and self-evident inference from the dual nature of man and the universe, from the juxtaposition of soul and body, of flesh and spirit. I have no doubt of the reality of this distinction as a physiological fact; but even if mind or soul be but a development or a modification of matter, it yet, in all that appertains to human character and conduct, is a distinct entity. There is a selfhood, a character, endowed with such properties as mere matter, or mere body, cannot have; and there are ways in which this selfhood is impaired, coarsened, degraded, by material associations. There is a cleanness of soul, which the developed soul knows intuitively to be its right and its duty. There are bodily conditions and acts which inevitably make the soul impure,—which equally proceed from and inspire thoughts and feelings that are to the soul what mire is to the hands or feet, or bilge-water to the nostrils. There are human associations which, unless one enters into them with the purpose, energy, and zeal of an antagonist and a reformer, are necessarily defiling. There are uses of outward objects, apart from their employment for the gratification of the appetites, which adulterate the spiritual nature. Thus, avarice, or the over-earnest pursuit of wealth, introduces into the interior life elements essentially mean and base, justifying the apostle's phrase

"filthy lucre," and making the term "vile," which we sometimes apply to pecuniary transactions, not metaphorical, but literally true. Too close dependence, even on the legitimate comforts and luxuries of life, materializes the soul, blends with its life elements that do not properly belong to it, and thus makes it less than pure.

All the duties under the head of fortitude are demanded by purity as a principle. Fortitude consists in warding off the outside world from the soul, — in not suffering either prosperous or adverse events so to mix themselves with it as to impair its integrity. The soul's life ought to flow on through the world like a river which takes no soil from its banks, but draws into itself only pure rills and brooks that swell its volume, and speed its course. Thus, by means of the virtues comprehended under the title of fortitude, the soul, in passing through its various fortunes, takes into its bosom nothing that can befoul it, but only those influences through which, under the alchemy of God's spiritual providence, all things work together for its good.

This leads me to the next principle, — growth. The very capacity of growth makes it a fundamental law of our being. We cannot say why; we cannot go behind this law to justify it; therefore it is a principle. We instinctively feel that

a stationary human mind and soul would be an absurdity, an unseemly excrescence on human society, a being wholly out of place, and this, even for the few years of our earthly being, immeasurably more so, when we consider man as endowed with the power of an endless life.

This principle finds expression in all four of the cardinal virtues. The chief parts of prudence are self-government, which prevents the soul from becoming less, and self-culture, whose office is to make it more. Fortitude, as I have said, extracts from both sides of human experience all that can minister to the soul's increase, while it rejects whatever they have of the earthy element that can obstruct its growth. In our intercourse with our fellow-beings, if it be just and kind, we are receiving while we give, and are the more richly receivers the more freely and disinterestedly we give; while in rendering to all, to God and man, their due, there are some of these dues which are directly and intensely helpful to the growth of those who render them, — as when we offer to God the tribute of praise and prayer and loving contemplation, and when we enter into the relations which love and reverence demand with our superiors in wisdom and goodness. Then, again, all of order that we establish and maintain in the microcosm under our immediate control, is of

essential service in our self-discipline, — in the order and harmony which ought to reign in and among our appetites, desires, affections, and active powers, and without which there can be no healthy growth.

In the third place, love toward all our fellow-beings is a principle. Why should we not love them? Who can say? Equally little can we say why we should love them. All that we can say is, that we feel that we ought to love them. Love, then, is an intuitive principle. It inspires equally piety, what is commonly called justice, and beneficence, thus embracing the negative of all that is unfair and unkind (for "love worketh no ill to its neighbor"), and the positive discharge of the entire round of relative duties.

All right rules, as I have said, must be conformed to principles. It is so in the mathematical and physical sciences. In these the rules are but the application of principles; and as they often save time, strength, and labor, they are of vast practical benefit. Thus, in arithmetic, the old "rule of three" — I do not know whether it is in the school arithmetics now: if it is not, it ought to be — was founded on the eternal principle that in a proportion the product of the means is equal to that of the extremes, and it solved an ordinary arithmetical problem in half the time that it

would have taken to examine the principle afresh, and to start from it anew. So in moral conduct, it is an economy of time and thought, as to a question or a class of questions that is likely to recur often, to have a fixed rule by which to determine action in each particular instance.

Then, too, there are occasions when strong and not very wrong feeling might lead us to a wrong or dangerous act, but for a rule which would preclude it. Let me illustrate what I mean by a very simple case, the like of which may occur in any young man's experience. A student, very fond of whist, on entering college, laid down for himself as a rule, that he would, on no account whatever, play for money. On one occasion he found himself in the company of men considerably his seniors, one of them a graduate, who needed him to make a complement for a couple of whist-tables. He took his seat, and found that a small stake was to be played for. The men were not gamblers. The stake was little more than nominal. He rose from the table, declined playing even for the smallest stake, and was at first laughed at for his scruples; but as he was needed for the game, they yielded to him, and he kept his rule inviolate. Had it not been for his rule, he would undoubtedly have surrendered his preference in that one instance, have had no scruples of

the kind afterward, and might not improbably, with his love of the game, have become a gambler. Who can say how many there are whom such rules have kept, and how many more they would have kept, from that neutral border-ground on the confines of the Right and the Wrong, which is Satan's chief hunting-ground?

Under the head of purity, our rules will be, for the most part, exclusive rather than permissive. Whatever we suppose to be of harmful, or even doubtful, influence, demands not to be temporized with, but to be utterly renounced. If there is any recreation, pursuit, indulgence, association, by which our tone of feeling is lowered, and our better nature worsened, total abstinence should be the imperative rule.

But in all matters of this sort as to which, on general grounds, there is room for question, we should make rules for ourselves alone, instead of attempting to force them on others, or blaming others for non-compliance with them. Thus, he who regards wine-drinking, however moderate, as perilous for himself, is bound in duty to abstain entirely from it; but it is not his duty to speak or think ill of his really worthy and temperate neighbor who holds a different opinion. If I think that I should be a worse man for frequenting the theatre, nothing ought ever to tempt me to go;

but I have no right to blame my friend who says that he has found the theatre a school of good morals. Constitutions of soul vary no less widely than those of body, and there are few specific rules that will apply equally to all. There are many strange idiosyncrasies of soul. One of the most devout men and impressive preachers in the ministry of the last generation was a devourer of good novels, and professed to be nourished by them in mind and soul, and often to find in them the best preparation for the pulpit. It was a unique case, like that of the Bavarian peasants who thrive on arsenic. But as a prudent man knows and shuns the food that is wont to hurt him, and would deem himself weak and foolish were he ever to touch it, so, as moral and spiritual beings, we should take distinct cognizance of the things that do us harm, and not indulge in them occasionally and moderately, but forsake and renounce them absolutely and utterly; and we do this the more easily if we lay down for ourselves imperative rules concerning them.

There is one thing to be borne in mind with regard to these rules. If they are adopted for the sake of the character, they are not to yield to any alteration in our outward circumstances. Right and wrong are not affected by change of latitude. If for my own sake I avoid a recreation, or amuse-

ment, or indulgence in my present place of residence where it is neither prevalent nor fashionable, my relation to it will not be changed if I go to live where it is both prevalent and fashionable. It can be no more salutary to me in one place than in another. Conformity in mere matters of taste and custom is always graceful; but where moral well-being is concerned, one should carry his soil with him when he transplants himself.

I doubt whether there will ever be any actual need of our repealing the class of rules of which I am speaking, — exclusive rules, rules for abstaining. It is hardly possible that any thing which we forbid to ourselves as injurious to our well-being can become of essential benefit to us. The only justifying reason for repealing a rule once established is a change, not in our own social medium, but in the nature of what we thought it good to abstain from. For instance, when I was a young man, the theatre in Boston, and probably elsewhere, had, and undoubtedly deserved, so low a moral reputation that a soberly trained youth, who cared for his own moral well-being, was bound in duty not to frequent it, and it would have been better for him not to go to it at all; and there are probably among my surviving coevals those who have adhered to the rule against theatre-going which it was fitting for them as

young men to form. But so great a change has taken place in the theatre, its actors, and its frequenters, that a young man of excellent aim and purpose might now see no good reason for forbidding himself occasional attendance.

As regards growth, there are abundant reason and scope for rules as to times and ways. There must be methods and fixed seasons for study, in order to any adequate progress in knowledge or in the capacity of utilizing what we know. As to the exercises of devotion, there is no little reason for system in the fact that a very great part of our every-day life, while it makes large drafts on religious feeling, does not directly feed it. In not a few of our ordinary and necessary pursuits, the fire on the heart-altar, if kept alive, must be sustained by such fuel as we carry with us, not by what we find. Hence the fitness of stated times when we can lay in such fuel. Of Sunday-keeping I shall speak in another connection. I would now simply suggest the intrinsic fitness of the seasons for self-recollection, devout thought, and communion with the Supremely Good, commended from earliest time by saintly precept and example, before the beginning and at the close of each day's active life. He who should make this the rule, with exceptions only when they were of absolute necessity, would find the aroma of the

morning incense lingering in the soul till mid-day, and the smoke of the evening sacrifice beginning to rise when the shadows turn. Still further, as at once hallowing and sweetening home-life, I attach no little importance to the old and obsolescent rule and practice of family worship; and for him or her who exercises this home-priesthood, the service must be of hardly less worth than the more private exercises of devotion.

Under the head of purity, I have said that our rules should be rules of exclusion: under that of love, they should be rules, never of exclusion, always of the widest comprehension. No matter how just an exclusive rule under this head may seem, and how just it may really be in nine cases out of ten, if there can possibly be a tenth case in which it will be unfair or unkind, the rule is an immoral one. Some man may say to you, with a self-righteous air, as if claiming superlative credit for practical wisdom, "I make it a rule never to give any thing to a beggar at my door," or, "My rule is never to look at a subscription-paper," or, "It is my invariable rule never to give any thing to an able-bodied man." Yet in all probability this person will now and then dismiss unaided some worthy applicant. On the other hand, the man or woman, who in a place small enough to render this possible, should frame the rule,

"Whenever a person living here applies to me for alms, I will look into the case, and act as may seem best:" or, if one will make the more general rule, "Whenever I am asked for alms, I will inquire into the case so far as I am able, and act according to my best discretion," such a rule in its comprehensiveness is in harmony with the principle of love, aside from which any special rules of conduct that we may shape are merely selfishness systematized. In fine, under the head of love, no rules can be self-justifying that leave out of their scope any human being that has a right to our sympathy and our charity.

Rules, of course, create habits; and without express rules, habits are continually in the process of formation in the earlier years of life, and have largely the control of its later years. I know nothing more closely applicable to an extensive class of habits than Christ's words to Peter: — "When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not." How many there are who are either the slaves of habit, or have been emancipated only by what seemed a life-and-death struggle! Yet this represents only one side. In other aspects, the capacity of forming habits is of

inestimable value; and there are two classes of habits of which this is true. There are, in the first place, habits which have in themselves no moral character, yet have a large moral value in facilitating the movements of daily life, and in smoothing and sweetening the intercourse of home and of society. In business of every kind, fixed ways of doing things not only give the minimum of personal trouble and vexation to the individual man, but are of hardly less advantage to partners, helpers, and all who transact business with him. In home-life, regular habits not only oil the wheels of the domestic economy, but they are threads around which crystals form. They furnish points of support for those attentions and endearments which keep the domestic bond as close as it is tender. The details may seem of small moment taken one by one; but could you gauge the joys — slender individually, vast in their aggregate — of a normal family, with wife and children, you would find an immense difference between that of a man whose goings and comings can be foreknown, prepared for and waited for, whose movements are time-marks on the dial-plate of daily life, and that of the man, in all essentials of conduct blameless, yet erratic and incalculable, so that the order of the household must be either perpetually deranged on his account, or maintained

independently of him. The same difference may be traced, in a marked though varying degree, in the entire circle of one's relations in business and in society. Prime value is, of course, to be attached to a pure and upright life; but in addition to this, fixed habits have their highly important office in conciliating intimate regard and unreserved confidence.

There are yet other habits of thought, speech, and action, which have in themselves a transcendent moral value. We speak of forming good habits; and the very word "forming" implies some kind and degree of labor, of mind-work, heart-work, or both, in their formation, — work which is not required for their continuance. It is the nature of habit, that, when started, it will run of itself. Whatever good habits we have, once cost us toil, self-inspection, vigilance, and, it may be, repeated failures: they now seem spontaneous, instinctive. Thus, I have known persons who by intensely hard labor with and upon themselves have reversed unfortunate tendencies in speech and manner, and, undoubtedly, in thought and feeling also, and substituted for them habits of gentleness, amenity, and grace, indicative of careful Christian self-discipline. The toil and strain have now ceased. What was once arduous task-work has become a second nature. Now, suppose

that, in order to maintain this better frame and habit of soul, lifelong endeavor and unceasing toil were necessary, I know not what time or capacity there could be for further improvement. If only continuous effort could sustain good habits, their number would be very small; the men who had not glaring moral deficiencies would be very few, and the foremost saints would have but a piebald and meagre type of goodness. Habit is of unspeakable worth in a way which I can best illustrate by what takes place in manufacture. The value of a labor-saving machine consists in releasing for other industries a large portion of the strength and skill thus superseded, so that more work is done, and the variety and fulness of the stock of objects of desire and use are largely increased. Habit performs an analogous office for the spiritual nature. It is a labor-saver. When a good habit is formed, a certain amount of moral and spiritual force employed in forming it is released for other service. It may be, and probably will be, employed in forming additional good habits; and if the whole outward life be at length conformed to the soul's ideal, and the habitual course of thought and feeling be brought up to the same standard, there are the more delicate traits of high spirituality, of an interior life shaped after the divine pattern, which may be the object of ever more successful en-

deavor. These more recondite graces of character multiply to the thought, become more distinct to the view, and present a stronger attraction, as one grows in goodness, so that while this mortal life lasts, and how much longer we cannot say, habit may succeed habit, the series beginning as ever-brightening steps on the earthly lifeway, and gradually rising into rungs of the ladder from earth to heaven.

When we speak of habits, we generally refer to speech and conduct. Still more important are those of thought and feeling from which the speech and the life flow; and these, as I said in a previous lecture, are best formed in early life, and are really formed in the process of castle-building (so called), which is often regarded as merely permitting idle day-dreams to flit through the mind, but in which the boy or girl may build "a house not made with hands," which shall be "eternal in the heavens," or which the first breath of heaven would dissolve into empty air. Accordingly as these castles are built low, mean, and shabby, or of fair yet earthly proportions, or roofless, with spires and turrets pointing heavenward, the life-habits will be sordid and vicious, decently selfish, or thoroughly noble and generous.

Society has habits, or customs as we more commonly call them; every age, every community,

every class and circle of society, has its own customs; and it may be well for us to consider their ethical relations and character. Like laws, they can never represent either the lowest or the highest tone of opinion and feeling. They may be fairly assumed to be on a level with the conscience and culture of the majority. They cannot be in any respect below this standard; for in that case the dissenters would be too numerous for the custom to retain the general respect. They cannot be much above this standard; if they were so, conformity would be hypocrisy on the part of the greater number, and hypocrisy is too unnatural ever to become the habit of an age or a community. Moreover, were it general, it would lose its efficacy, and would no longer deceive.

Customs have a strong *vis inertiæ*. They are changed only very gradually and with great difficulty; or if under some strong excitement a sudden change is made, it is very soon unmade, and the old customs are re-instated. Thus, reformers sometimes think their work done, and live to see it undone, for the simple reason that no permanent reform can be made in the customs of a community, unless it be wrought in the sincere conviction and profound feeling of the people, — a process like the working of leaven in a mass of dough, and in which it is sometimes forgotten, but needs to be

borne in mind, that the leaven works by being kneaded into the dough, not by being thrown at it. The reformers who fail, and those who succeed, may be equally worthy of success. The difference is, that the latter are the product, while the exponents, of advancing public sentiment; the former, a sporadic growth, out of season, before their time.

With reference to the temperance reform, I have witnessed, as I think, both permanent success and temporary failure. In my early boyhood the drinking habits of New England were such as would seem fabulous now. The old Puritans drank largely and solemnly. It was their only recreation. All others they renounced and denounced. They, however, limited their potations to what was reputed to be temperance, giving to the word, indeed, a somewhat latitudinarian meaning. The disorders coincident with, and consequent upon, the war of the Revolution, together with the exposures and temptations of camp life, intensified the sober drinking of the fathers into habits which kept a large portion of the people on the brink of inebriation, with many constantly falling over the brink, till at length the most solemn occasions — funerals, ordinations, even meetings of the clergy — presented scenes of shameful excess. I remember in my boyhood having

been taken to a town-meeting, at which a man of high standing and character moved the abolition of the daily ration of strong drink for men who worked on the highways, and substituting its value in money, and he was almost hooted down, a man of similar position in the community anathematizing him for attempting to grind the faces of the poor. The habit of social drinking on all occasions when men came together was so universal, that at the earlier meetings of the Massachusetts Society for the Suppression of Intemperance, the oldest temperance society in the world, there was the usual array of decanters, and the members prepared themselves for their discussion, as the mediæval knights prepared for the conflict in their tournaments, by friendly conference with the enemy with whom they were going to fight. But one of their number, at whose house a meeting was to be held, after spreading in array brandy, rum, and gin, at the last moment, moved by a sudden inspiration, took them from the sideboard, put them under lock and key, and reported to his associates what he had done. They at once started on a vigorous warfare against the established drinking-customs of (so called) respectable society, having previously directed their attention chiefly to the more vulgar forms of excess. They found their world ready for them; large numbers of right-thinking

and right-feeling people had in their hearts been long rebelling against customs with which they dared not break; and in a marvellously short period the habitual use of distilled liquors in good society, and on various occasions on which it had been regarded as essential, was discontinued, and observances that had been held as almost sacred, became utterly disreputable.

That those who have attempted to banish fermented liquors from general use, have not had permanent success, is not their fault. They have been earnest, faithful, self-sacrificing. Their intense zeal and untiring effort have had paroxysms of seeming success, which have been of more value than they think; for in each of them individual salvations have been multiplied: and they are all the while doing their part in educating society up to their standard. But they have failed of general and lasting success, simply because public sentiment is slow of change. It had changed when the old Massachusetts Society began its work, and its members were but the mouthpieces of a waiting public. It has not yet undergone the farther change, of which the more zealous reformers of the present day are the forerunners, not the exponents.

The slowness of change, or, in other words, the permanence of customs and habits, is regarded with impatience by reformers, but wrongly. The

tyranny of custom has its good side, its beneficent influence. It excludes a large amount of evil, and effectually stops out evils that have once been outgrown and repudiated. Those who are the most pertinaciously attached to existing customs, are the most ready to condemn and to keep at a distance all that made the past worse than the present. Custom, while it gives a longer life than might be desired to the evil which it tolerates, is equally inexorable in adhering to the good which it recognizes, and thus fastens down and secures against retrogression the successive moral gains and advances of society. On one of those almost vertical railways on which tourists now ascend Mount Washington or Vesuvius, there are mortises that stop the cogs of the wheels, so that there can be no retrograde movement; and the rapidity of the ascent is of small importance compared with the means employed to prevent an abnormal descent. Customs are mortises in the upward movements of human society, and it is to the last degree undesirable that the wheels should revolve so fast as for the cogs to miss the mortises.

In taking a view of society at remote intervals, it is impossible not to mark stages of progress from which there has been no retrogression. Thus, in the Hebrew history, if you will inspect the record even of court-manners in the times of Saul

and of David, and compare them with Jewish life as it was in Judæa at the Christian era, you will see that the world was growing through those centuries. You cannot conceive of a Peter, or a John, or a Paul, having been prepared to be a potential minister of the gospel of Christ in the "school of the prophets," or minstrels, which Saul, in his frenzy, stripped off his clothes to join. The type of society which we see among the fishermen of Galilee had in it a refinement, a susceptibility of culture, a capacity of moral discernment and impression, of which we discover no traces in the best men under the Hebrew monarchy. The Jewish civilization, in its moral tone, in the thoroughness with which it permeated the whole body of the people, in its tendency to level upward, represented the highest social condition that man had attained at the Christian era. It did not really perish, but became so decentralized and dispersed that we can catch but rare glimpses of its survival and continued advancement; while it left the Roman civilization morally at an immeasurable distance beneath it, as the starting-point for post-Christian history. Of this we are the inheritors, or rather the continuators; for it never died. Its metropolis was removed to Constantinople; but it lingered in Rome, moulded the conquerors of the Western empire, transfused itself through the

European nations, and has had a continuous existence till now.

But with what immense improvements! The rudeness of the Middle Ages had none of the nameless vices of which in Rome's palmy days no one was ashamed; and its coarse festivities lacked revolting features which almost sicken the reader in some classic pages. The moral habits of the Stuart dynasty would have been disgraceful under the Georges; and at the present day, England looks back upon the Georgian period as scandalously loose and low in its morality. We see and feel the defects in our own ethical standard; but when we look at the somewhat remote past, we may well take to ourselves the scriptural exhortation, "Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this."

The progress that has been made has been in the direction of each of the fundamental principles of moral action. As regards all that appertains to purity, in the broad sense of the word, there has been a gain that can be measured only by a series of comparisons, whose coarser terms would be any thing but savory. As to growth, all the habits of society favor intellectual culture to a degree beyond the most sanguine expectations of those who gave the earlier impulses to

such progress. As regards spiritual culture, too, I cannot but think that the habits of society, while less favorable to mere religiousness as divorced from duty, are better adapted to cherish a piety active both Godward and manward. As to love, in all forms of philanthropic interest and action, and especially in the mutual sympathies which transcend dividing lines of class, race, and color, the advancement of society has been sure and rapid; and that, all over the civilized world.

We now ask, in conclusion, What are the ethical relations of the individual to social customs and habits? How far is he bound to conformity? When and how is he to assume a protestant attitude? In the first place, as regards customs in all respects blameless, conformity is more than permissible. It is obligatory. Social customs have a unifying power in society. They render intercourse harmonious and easy. They are a conventional sign-language by which a great deal of kind feeling is interchanged. He who sees fit to transgress them, and to lead an eccentric life, not only loses much that society might give him, but withholds much which he might give. If he has any social work to do, he does it at a disadvantage. If he has a reform to advocate, he forfeits the leverage which would be given him by relations, at other points, of unrestrained fellowship.

His word has less weight; his example, less influence. The narrative of the life of Jesus Christ would lead us to believe that he conformed genially with the customs of the society in which he was for the time being. Apart from the interest that was felt in his work as a teacher and a reformer, we see numerous tokens of strong personal attachment to him, which could hardly have been manifested had he not borne his full and friendly part in the common life around him.

There are, in the next place, customs perfectly right in themselves; if wrong, wrong only in degree. Here he who feels the wrong is, of course, bound to avoid all blameworthy excess for himself and for those immediately under his control; but if he wants to extend his influence to a larger circle, he must be careful not to swing to the opposite extreme. I know little of the matters involved in the (so called) dress-reform. It relates to mysteries which the uninitiated dare not penetrate. But I do know that the cause has been thwarted by the hideous guise in which its advocates have attired themselves. It is a matter in which I believe that sacred interests, even the solvency and honesty of many heads of families of moderate means, yet in what calls itself society, are involved; but those who would use their example and influence in behalf of the economy so

sorely needed, should do so, as I know that they can, in careful harmony with decency, comeliness, and good taste. In like manner, as to whatever is excessive in social customs, he who feels the excess as a wrong that ought to be remedied, should be especially careful not to offend, in his personal reform, the æsthetic feeling of the community. In this way, if he can do no good, he at least does no harm. But the æsthètic element enters so largely — and by good right — into social customs, that no essential reform can be made in defiance of it.

As to customs wrong in themselves, or wrong in our honest and deliberate opinion, protest, open, strong, and earnest, is our duty even more than our right. No matter how hopeless the case may seem. No matter if, so far as we know, we stand alone. This we can never know. The utterance that we make, others may be on the point of making, and waiting only till they know that they will meet with sympathy. At any rate, numbers, majorities, are formed one by one. Moreover, the question of numbers can affect no one person's duty or responsibility. I am answerable for my own position and action if I am alone: I have neither less nor more responsibility if I am one of thousands. There is an old parable, that all the inhabitants of the earth once agreed to raise a

simultaneous shout, that the people in the moon might hear; and when the moment arrived, every man, woman, and child, except a man in China who was stone-deaf, stood silent, with suspended breath, in a listening attitude. Just so, on matters of intensest moral interest and moment, men and women who see and feel the right, and are ready to join in the outcry if it be raised, wait to hear when they ought to speak. Were it only the habit of society for one to utter on matters of moral right and obligation what he believes and feels, all other reformation would have free and speedy course toward a happy issue.

LECTURE VII.

ETHICS OF THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES.

THERE are various theories with regard to the date and the authorship of the Pentateuch; but into these it is not my purpose to enter, nor yet into any questions as to what is technically called inspiration. The divine inspiration, as the source of whatever in ethics or theology so far transcends its time as by no possibility to have been a natural development, if in any respect an error, is so because it is held in too narrow a sense, and applied only to the great teachers in the line of descent from Abraham. The Christian Fathers, especially those of the Alexandrian school, applied it equally to Socrates, Plato, and all the chief luminaries of the heathen world, whom they regarded as holding by divine ordination the same office with reference to the Gentile races that was held by Moses and the prophets in the Hebrew commonwealth. This I believe. At the same time, I have not found adequate reason to deny the great antiquity of large portions of the Penta-

teuch, or the general authenticity of the Old-Testament history, though it is not without the legendary additions, the confusion of names, dates, and numbers, and the duplication of narratives with variance of details, which occur in all ancient history, and are, indeed, indelible time-marks of an authorship in the remote past.

It is generally admitted, even by those who assign the latest date to the compilation of the Pentateuch, that the Decalogue, in substance, was first promulgated at the time of the exodus, and was thenceforward regarded by the Hebrews as their fundamental moral law. Now, when we consider what the people were at that time, a horde of fugitive slaves, with so little of religious knowledge, faith, and culture, that the second man in their company made an image of a calf for their worship, and the whole people danced round it in a vulgar paroxysm of fanatical idolatry, — a people, too, ready for centuries to adopt the gods of whatever tribe happened to have the ascendency over them, we cannot suppose that this sublime ethical compend was developed from the heart of such a nation, or even of their leader, who had not been guiltless of deeds of violence which this code condemns. I cannot read those ten commandments, and assign to them their due place in the early history of the Hebrews, without giving

my full assent to the prefatory statement in the narrative, "God spake all these words, and said." To my mind they are equally his words, whether he spake them in the thunders of Sinai, or through the lips of the great law-giver, or, if the latter, whether with his distinct consciousness of special inspiration, or through that unconscious influence by which in all time the men whom God chooses are inspired and empowered for their life-work.

Among all compends of moral duty, the Decalogue holds by far the pre-eminence; and of all ethical systems, that which it embodies yields place only to the Christian. Yet in saying this, I ought not to forget that the Mosaic Decalogue stands not alone. Brahmanism, too, has its decalogue, covering almost the same ground with the Hebrew, but less completely. Buddhism abounds in precepts enjoining purity of life and the passive virtues. Confucius left maxims full of practical wisdom. In fine, all the sacred books of the Eastern World have an ethical value, which we Christians, so far from underrating it, ought to recognize with gratitude as showing us that God has never "left himself without witness."

But the Decalogue is complete in this sense, — that its prohibitions comprehend all the great sins and vices that prey upon human society, that entire obedience to it would imply a thoroughly

blameless and exemplary life, and that it would be impossible to add an eleventh commandment on the same plane with the ten. The eleventh commandment, if we had it, would either belong to that interior life beneath whose surface the Decalogue does not pretend to go, or else it would appertain to details of conduct under some one of the great heads which give title to the ten commandments. The precepts are in form precisely adapted to a people still rude in culture, yet there is not one of them that can ever grow obsolete in this world; and they are all so perfectly in accordance with the needs of every grade of society, that we can fully sympathize with the sanction given to them by the Author of our religion, and can feel that they are not inaptly used in Christian worship, and are by no means out of place in an ante-communion service. At the same time, there underlie some of these precepts, in their present, which may or may not be their original, form, certain great principles, which anticipated extra-scriptural philosophy by many centuries, and into the recognition of which the civilized world has hardly yet grown. Let us consider these precepts one by one.

The first commandment prescribes as the fundamental principle of all duty, the recognition of the one Supreme God, Law-giver, Witness, Judge.

"Thou shalt have no other gods (or god) before me." This commandment does not imply, as it is sometimes said to imply, the existence of other gods, who are not to be preferred to, or placed before, Jehovah. The Hebrew words mean, "in my face," in my presence, that is, in defiance of me.

The second commandment was necessary to insure the keeping of the first. If primeval man was a monotheist, he undoubtedly ceased to be so by making visible symbols or remembrancers of his God, and first worshipping him in them, afterward them instead of him. At any rate, as the Hebrews were surrounded by idol-worshippers, there was imminent danger of their beguiling themselves into like worship by persuading themselves that they were but worshipping their own God in a new way and in a visible form. We see what the process has been in the Romish Church. Images and pictures were at first, and in the minds of intelligent persons are now, mere helps to worship; but there can be no doubt that they are really worshipped by the more ignorant.

This commandment is sanctioned by a truth which has been regarded as a scientific discovery of our own time, — "Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation, and showing mercy unto thousands [that is, of generations] of them that love me, and

keep my commandments." The Christian Church long merged this truth in the dogma of original sin as a taint transmitted from Adam's first transgression to all his posterity; and in the protest against this absurd and cruel dogma, the more liberal theologians were wont with equal unreason to scout the notion of hereditary depravity. But we have now learned that man acts not for himself alone, that his sins die not with him, that the baleful heritage passes on, gradually expending itself, indeed, yet inevitably showing its virus, if not in actual guilt, in evil proclivity, down to the third or fourth generation; while, as I said in a former lecture, a God-loving and commandment-keeping race holds its own, sometimes through a long series of generations, till the entail is docked by a fatal intermarriage, thus rendering it possible, that, if men so chose, the heritage might be passed on to the end of time, and, moreover, giving us hope in the law of heredity as the ultimate means of purifying and beatifying the whole human family. At the same time, we have here the strongest possible dissuasive against the indulgence of evil appetite and passion, in the assurance that the parent thus brings an inevitable blight and an intense probability of shame and moral ruin on the very beings that are dear to him as his own soul. The law of heredity seems to me ineffa-

bly beneficent in its designed and ultimate working. But, be it beneficent or not, it is not a little remarkable, on any theory save that of divine inspiration, that it should have been so clearly announced in the world's rude infancy, and then lost from sight and thought for so many subsequent ages.

The third commandment still further guards the worship of God by prohibiting the irreverent use of his name, which, when it does not flow from impiety, cannot fail to generate impiety.

Then comes the fourth commandment, that of the sabbath, which has been too generally regarded as a ritual observance, Hebrew in its origin and purpose, binding on Christians only as a matter of expediency, and fastening upon the entire Decalogue the stamp of Judaism. On the other hand, I believe that this commandment is here, because, like each of the others, it prescribes a duty of universal validity and obligation, or I would rather say, puts into the form of a precept an inevitable law of nature. If the narrative in the Book of Exodus be authentic, the sabbath was not a new institution when the Decalogue was given. We have traces of it in other ancient nations, and probably references to it in Homer and Hesiod. The law of the sabbath appertains to natural religion, or, rather, to the physiology of man at least,

if of nothing else in the universe. Man cannot bear a perpetual strain of continuous labor, whether of body or of mind. The maximum of work is accomplished, only if there be a periodical season for rest, or for change of work. Wherever there has been no regular sabbatical rest, its purpose has been served, though imperfectly, by Saturnalia feast-days and public games. The beasts that aid man in his work are equally unable to bear the strain of labor without intermission. Nor are there wanting instances in which even inanimate industrial agencies have seemed to manifest a like necessity. Physiologically, the one day's rest in seven has shown itself to be, for man, neither too much nor too little; and it is of no small significance, that when, in the climax of anti-religion in the French Revolution, one day of rest in ten was substituted for one in seven, the peasantry in some of the rural districts resumed the old order of the week, saying that their cattle could not bear nine days' continuous labor. On the other hand, the multiplication of holy days, which have everywhere become holidays, has been prejudicial to the habit and the results of industry, and is one of the most obvious causes of the lack of diligence and thrift in some of the Roman-Catholic countries of Continental Europe.

For worship and religious culture, the sabbath

is equally essential. Public worship would be impossible, were there not set seasons for it; and for individuals, the rush of business and the pressure of care, if never arrested and relieved, would preclude continuous thought on the highest themes of thought, and whatever of devout feeling there might be would be frittered away by the perpetual friction of uncongenial scenes and occupations. The weekly rest is also of untold service to home-life, especially in our busy age, when the members of a family have, each with all, and all with each, only the most hurried intercourse at uncertain intervals. The interposing of a frequent day of rest tends, too, to allay the vehemence of political excitement and party strife, and to remind those who feel very far apart of the higher obligations and interests that overlap and overtop their differences.

Nor let this commandment be complicated in thought with the austerities and the penal sanctions of the Hebrew sabbath. These form no part of the Decalogue. They are entirely Jewish. If they ever had any worth, they lost their value many centuries ago; and as adopted by the English and Scotch Puritans, they have only served to bring sabbatical observance into discredit, and to produce the re-action toward the opposite extreme which we witness now. The Decalogue prescribes

for the sabbath, rest and worship, — of course, by any reasonable interpretation, rest from needless labor, and such exercises of private and public worship as may edify without wearying; for we do not obey this commandment if we let even devotion deprive the day of its restful uses. The commandment may be observed in its true sense, yet so as to make the day the happiest as well as the best of the week, while its rest shall lighten the toil, and its devotion hallow the mirth, of the six following days. Let me be distinctly understood. I do not regard the law of the sabbath as any more a Jewish law than the laws against theft and murder, but as a law of nature so far as man's needs are concerned, and its observance as the dictate of natural piety. I hardly need to say that the controversy about the seventh and the first day of the week is utterly idle and inane; and yet we have a pretty numerous sect of Seventh-Day Baptists, who do not think it so. The worth of the commandment is in the proportion of time that it assigns for rest and worship; and I cannot but think that those who are compelled by professional duty to work for others, and can do but little for themselves, on Sunday, may do well to take Monday for a sabbath day in both senses and for both uses.

If you will pardon a slight digression, I am in-

clined to believe that we owe to the established order of the week, the mould in which the narrative of the creation in Genesis is cast. I do not suppose that the author of that sublime epic (for such it really is) had any more intention of writing literal history than we have of belief that we are reading it. His purpose was a religious one. He wanted to exclude the possibilities of false worship, by enumerating as the works of God the whole range of the objects that were worshipped by surrounding nations. With this design he cast the drama of creation into six acts, with the divine sabbath at the close, as an aid to the memory and the devout thought of his readers, when meditating, as the commandment bade them, on the glory of God in the creation. Very probably the form of the commandment in Exodus, differing from that in Deuteronomy, may be due to the author of the first chapters of Genesis.

The fifth commandment is of special interest for the reason annexed to it, "That thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." This is evidently not a promise of long life to the dutiful child. The commandments are addressed to the nation collectively. "Hear, O Israel," are the prefatory words. "In the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee," was certainly not addressed to the individual child; for in what

other land could he expect a long or a short life? It was the nation whose permanent abode in the land was to be contingent on the exercise of filial piety. It was time that they ceased to dwell in it, when even their most religious men had reached the point of making a fictitious dedication of their property to the temple-service in order to absolve themselves from the obligation of supporting their aged parents. Many centuries after the promulgation of the Decalogue, Aristotle based his system of polity on the family as the norm of the state, as the sole nursery of civic virtue, and as the little commonwealth on which the well-being of the nation must be wholly dependent. This doctrine of his has been regarded in modern times with unbounded admiration, as a marvellous discovery for so early an age. How much more surprising is it, that, in the dim dawn of civilization, from the heart of this semi-barbarous people, unless indeed "God spake all these words," there should have come this maxim of the profoundest wisdom! It must be ever true, that what the families of a nation are, the state will be. The family must be the nursery of public virtue, and wise family discipline alone can give the state good citizens. The decline of domestic order, of parental authority, of filial obedience, must of necessity train those who issue from their native

homes to form homes of their own, to be factious, turbulent, reckless citizens; and the state in whose families parents obey their children, and the elder serve the younger, must be given over to demagogism, anarchy, or despotism, and, not improbably, to all three in succession.

Next comes the law against murder, essential, of course, in every state, and requiring no special comment.

Nor need we pause on the essential law for the preservation of chastity, — a law the violation of which among the Hebrews was not only liable to the severest punishment, but was regarded all along the Hebrew history with detestation, while in other ancient nations, the early Romans alone excepted, very slight account was made of sins against chastity.

We have next the law against theft, which sufficiently explains and justifies itself.

The ninth commandment, condemning false testimony, though in form limited to legal transactions, in its spirit applies, of course, to all that one can say of his neighbor.

The tenth commandment on its face relates not to outward conduct, but to the movements of the soul that may issue in sin, — "Thou shalt not covet," which, if obeyed, would supersede "Thou shalt not steal." Deep into the heart as this

commandment seems to reach, I am inclined to think, that, like the rest of the code, it applied primarily to conduct. Stealing must have been very easy, especially the stealing of cattle; for there were probably neither enclosures, nor brands of ownership. As for the neighbor's wife, too, certainly while they lived in tents, and hardly less when they began to rear their first rude dwellings, there could have been little of the privacy and defence for female virtue which a civilized home affords. Both these kinds of vice referred to in the commandment were facilitated by the unsettled condition of the people and the time; and he who meant to be honest and chaste, with such opportunities for sinning as he could not but have, needed to keep his heart with all diligence, and to abstain from coveting what, if coveted, he could so easily obtain or attain.

Such was the fundamental moral law of the Hebrew people, and we have reason to believe that it insured a higher standard of practical morality than we can trace in the history of any other ancient nation. At the Christian era, corrupting influences had entered largely into Jerusalem and Judæa proper. The reign of the Herods was as depraving as it was tyrannical and cruel. The court of the Roman procurator was not a school of good morals. The Pharisees furnished exposi-

tors of the law, who were more skilful in showing how it might be evaded than solicitous to inculcate its due observance. But in Galilee, where these malign influences were weakened by remoteness, and where Pharisaism never had its strong hold till it was driven from Jerusalem and purified by its expulsion, we have reason to believe that the people retained no little of the real righteousness of their law. They were despised in aristocratic circles, not for moral delinquency or deficiency, but because Galilee, until it became the cradle of Christianity, produced few or no eminent men.

But we have not done with Hebrew ethics. The poor-laws of the Hebrews transcend those of all other nations in humanity, and in wise economy no less; for they are as well adapted to preclude as to relieve want: and there is, in the whole of Hebrew history, even to the present day, after so many centuries of denationalization and dispersion, no token of the prevalence of abject poverty, while the spirit of this humane legislation is still surviving and efficient among the Jews throughout the world. Of course, it is impossible to determine the precise date of these laws in their present form, unless we can fix beyond dispute the date of the several portions of the Pentateuch. But if, in the form in which we have

them now, they were reduced to writing in Hezekiah's, or Josiah's, or Ezra's, time, they were already parts of the law of the land, and must have been of earlier origin. Moreover, there is much in their phraseology which indicates with certainty a very early date, such as references to the Egyptian bondage, to a condition of things belonging to a country recently settled, and to the government by kings as not yet begun.

I know of no other laws which are of special interest for their language alone; but these blend with the precision of statutes the tenderness and sympathy which are worth immeasurably more to the poor than the most liberal almsgiving where the heart goes not with the hand. Let me cite a few specimens. "When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it. . . . When thou beatest thine olive tree, thou shalt not go over the boughs again. . . . When thou gatherest the grapes of thy vineyard, thou shalt not glean it afterward: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow. And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt." "If thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee; then thou shalt relieve him: yea, though he be a stranger, or a sojourner. . . . Take thou no usury of him, or increase." "If

thou at all take thy neighbor's raiment [that is, his tunic or outside garment, used as a covering by night] to pledge," "thou shalt deliver him the pledge again when the sun goeth down, that he may sleep in his own raiment, and bless thee." "Thou shalt not . . . take a widow's raiment to pledge." "No man shall take the upper or the nether millstone to pledge [that is, of the domestic mill to grind the corn for daily use]; for he taketh a man's life to pledge." "Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren, or of thy strangers that are in thy land within thy gates: at his day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it, . . . lest he cry against thee unto the Lord, and it be sin unto thee." "If a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him. But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt."

In addition to these humane provisions, there was a law preventing the permanent alienation of farms and family homesteads. Every fiftieth year there was a general release of mortgaged property, except of houses in towns. This law served the double purpose of diminishing the capacity of incurring debts, and saving the owner or his family

from losing hold on an inherited estate. Of course, the amount that one could borrow on the security of his farm depended on the number of years for which the mortgage could run. This law prevented also the growing up of large estates in land, secured the continuance of the greater part of the farm-land in the ownership of small proprietors, and thus tended to check pauperism. Then, too, if a man or woman incurred servitude for debt, or voluntarily on account of poverty, the time of service could last only six years; and it was enacted, "When thou sendest him out from thee, thou shalt not let him go away empty. Thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock, and out of thy floor, and out of thy wine-press. Of that wherewith the Lord thy God hath blessed thee, thou shalt give unto him." If a servant thus released chose to remain in service for love of his master's family, it was permitted as a privilege.

I have not done this subject justice. I never open my Bible in Exodus, Leviticus, or Deuteronomy, without alighting upon some token of the benignant spirit which pervades these else dry records. All along, alternating with the obsolete details of rite and sacrifice, are these sentiments glowing with the richest inspiration of Him whose tender mercies are over all His children. The precepts of Christ, indeed, prescribe even more

than those of the Hebrew law; but if, copying from the fathers of Connecticut who voted to govern themselves by the laws of Moses till they could make better, Christians would adopt the poor-laws of Leviticus till they can fully drink in the spirit of Christ, we should have a far better and happier world than we are likely to see till the dawn of the millennium.

The Hebrews had slaves, as all nations of the Old World had. They were chiefly captives of war; and it must be borne in mind that this utilizing of the members of a conquered tribe or race marks a great stage in moral progress, the original mode of disposing of them having been indiscriminate slaughter. The Levitical law contains various precepts of mercy to the slave. The master who killed his slave incurred the punishment of death. For a severe injury not mortal, the offending master was compelled to let his slave go free. The fugitive-slave law of the Hebrews, as compared with that which cost our country its millions of precious lives, throws the Congress of the United States back into comparative barbarism. "Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant which is escaped from his master unto thee: he shall dwell with thee, even among you, in that place which he shall choose in one of thy gates, where it liketh him best: thou shalt not oppress

him." That escape from slavery was very rare, we may infer from its being mentioned, after this law, only twice in the Old Testament, once as having actually occurred, and in yet another instance, when David and his followers of the free lance are taunted as being runaway slaves. The condition of the slaves was by no means one of hardship. They were employed in confidential relations and offices, were sometimes made the heirs of their masters, and sometimes married in the family to which they belonged. It must be remembered that the Hebrew law did not create slavery, but found it already existing and incorporated with the whole life of the age, so that when the Hebrews ceased to be slaves, it was inevitable that they should have slaves. In all probability, too, slavery was a protection and a benefit to its subjects. It was, therefore, to be regulated, not abolished. But nothing could have shown more ignorance or wrongheadedness than the attempt to buttress by scriptural sanction and Hebrew example an institution like our negro slavery, which had not in it a single element of protection or relief, except when the master was better than the system, in defence of which the humane master who wanted to escape ostracism or worse was compelled to hide his hand in showing mercy. In the later period of the national

history, we hear so little of slaves as to make it probable that the institution, unabolished, had dwindled and decayed; though undoubtedly the Roman officials, after Palestine came under the imperial sway, had families of slaves there, as elsewhere.

As regards war, it must be admitted that in the destruction of the Canaanites and in other horrible barbarities on record, we have atrocities unsurpassed, but not unequalled, in profane history. But we are apt to forget that, certainly till the time of Solomon, the standard of civilization among the Hebrews was very low. The glimpses that we have of David's time, and of the manners and customs of the royal family and of the chief people in the kingdom, show not many degrees above the rudest savage state. But the law was more humane than the people. The legislation recorded in the Pentateuch furnishes the earliest instances in which any attempt was made to mitigate the horrors of war. It is there enacted, that, before laying siege to a city, the assailants shall offer terms of peace, and if they be refused, and the city be taken, that the women and children shall be spared. There is also one provision, which modern civilization has not yet recognized, — the prohibition to destroy fruit-trees, even to be employed in a siege. "Only the trees which thou

knowest that they be not trees for meat, thou shalt destroy and cut them down."

I am much impressed with the mercy to beasts in the Hebrew code. The ox that treads the grain to separate it from the husk must not be muzzled, but must be suffered to take beforehand his share of the food that he is preparing for his owner. The mother-bird is not to be taken with her eggs or her young brood. "Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk." "Thou shalt not see thy brother's ox or his ass fall down by the way, and hide thyself from them." These are only specimens of a tenderly humane spirit towards beings of a lower order that recurs repeatedly in the Pentateuch. It was so far in advance of the time, that ages afterward, even St. Paul could not appreciate it; for he asks doubtingly with regard to one of these laws, "Doth God care for oxen?"

Another subject which claims emphatic attention is the marriage-laws of the Pentateuch. It must be remembered that the Hebrew history abuts upon that period in the infancy of the Eastern nations when the marriage bond was so loosely held that kindred was reckoned only on the mother's side, paternity being always a matter of question. In Egypt, the earliest of civilized countries, the marriage of brothers and sisters was not deemed unfit for many centuries afterward;

and such marriages were contracted by some of the Ptolemys in Egypt's most palmy days. Similar marriages were not deemed scandalous in the mythical history of Greece, which is true to the conceptions, and therefore, probably, to the permitted practice of primitive times. Even when the intermarriage of children of the same mother came to be unlawful, children of the same father, but different mothers, might intermarry without discredit. Abraham married his half-sister; and in one of the unsavory narratives of David's family, it is intimated that he would readily consent to the marriage of one of his sons to his half-sister. This story might seem to give reason for supposing that some of the most important of the marriage-laws were of a date subsequent to the time of the early kings; and yet in those days the king and his family would have deemed themselves above law, and competent to revive obsolete traditions and practices.

Leaving the time-question aside, the prohibition of marriage within certain carefully defined degrees of kindred, a list which purists of our own day would enlarge only by adding first cousins, has nothing that can be compared with it in all pre-Christian legislation; and the Romish Church has done the world incalculable service by adhering in this respect — with a tenacity which has

been so seldom bribed as to make the few instances marked events in history — to the Levitical law as of sacred authority and indissoluble obligation. It is impossible to over-estimate the degree in which this code has contributed to the chastity and purity of family relations, whose intimacy might often lead to temptation but for the ban on undue familiarity which has remained unlifted since the Hebrew law had birth. I am inclined to believe, however, that in one respect the Church has misinterpreted the Pentateuch. I do not think that the marrying of a deceased wife's sister is forbidden or even named in the Hebrew law. What is forbidden is the marrying of a second sister while the first is still living. I do not believe that the marrying of two or more sisters could have been prohibited in a code which requires a brother to marry his elder brother's childless widow, — a provision the design of which, no doubt, was to keep property from going out of a family.

Polygamy, which was universal among the Eastern nations, is not forbidden in the Hebrew law; but the only two recognitions of it are prohibitions, namely, that to which I just now referred, and the injunction on the king when there shall be one, that he shall not "multiply wives unto himself that his heart turn not away," which, if it was really given before their time, David and

Solomon ignored to their shame and bane. The compiler of Genesis, whoever he may have been, manifestly held polygamy in the utmost disesteem and abhorrence, and it was, I think, one of his special aims to throw discredit upon it; for he gives several instances of it, from Lamech onward; and there is not one of these narratives in which he does not ascribe dissension, calamity, crime, murder, to polygamy as a cause. Polygamy gradually faded out of practice among the Hebrews: but few instances of it are on record after the Babylonish captivity, and conspicuous among these is the case of Herod the Great, who had nine wives, but who owned no law, whether of man or of God.

Precisely what the Hebrew law of divorce was, no man knows. It depends on the actual meaning of the word in our version translated "uncleanness," which, in my opinion, denotes some grave moral cause of offence. This, among the later rabbis, was the opinion of the stricter school, that of Shammai; while those of Hillel's school maintained that it included any cause of dissatisfaction, however trivial, even a mere whim. However this may be, the law interposed difficulties in the way of divorce. The husband was obliged to give the wife a "bill of divorcement," and in the days when the art of writing was by no means in

common use, a man would have to go for this to the priest or Levite, — that is, would have to state his case to a person in authority, who might act as judge, and refuse to furnish the requisite document. It seems to me probable that the law in its meaning and purpose excluded hasty, wanton divorce, without grave cause, and that the lax interpretation of it came only with the decline of morals.

There is one article of the Hebrew code which would hardly demand comment, had not Ruskin recently attempted to elevate it from a special restriction into a universal law; namely, the prohibition of interest on money, which the Jews have generally interpreted as applying only to loans to their own brethren, and have indemnified themselves by imposing, when they could, all the heavier rates of interest on Gentiles. The law was probably designed to affect only such loans of mutual accommodation as might be made between neighbor and neighbor. It was enacted, undoubtedly, at a time when agriculture was the chief occupation, and there was no extensive commerce, foreign or domestic. It may have been even intended by the law to prevent the people from the enlarged and corrupting intercourse which commerce would imply or bring. But with the growth of means of communication, and the increased

demand for commodities other than the products of one's own farm or vineyard, commerce was inevitable, credits and loans became necessary, and money, if retained or borrowed, could not but receive, directly or by some legal fiction, the market-value for its use, nor could it obtain more. The worth of its use must always obey the law that regulates the relations of supply and demand, and any thing that is required or paid beyond is in the nature of insurance for an extra-hazardous risk of non-payment.

In this connection I ought to speak of the stress laid in the Hebrew law on strict and literal honesty in dealing. "Ye shall do no unrighteousness in meteyard, in weight, or in measure. Just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin, shall ye have."

I might, had I time, adduce still other features of the ethics of the Hebrew law that would illustrate its pre-eminent wisdom. I wish that some careful hand would select from the Pentateuch all that is ethical, and publish it under its several leading heads. It would awaken surprise and profound admiration. All this is now so interspersed among, and hidden by, ritual directions, which have lost their interest for our time, that of lovers of the Old Testament in general, few know, for instance, what a rich vein of pure and

high morality crops out in almost every chapter of Leviticus.

The Hebrews, indeed, never lived up to the standard of their law, nor approached it, unless for a brief season under Ezra and Nehemiah, and then again under the rule of the Maccabees. But as compared with other pre-Christian nations, they were, at the worst, as a light shining in an else very dark world. Christianity could have its birth and early nurture among them, though with scant reception and stinted hospitality. It may be doubted whether, at the Christian era, the whole world beside could have given to the infant Church a John, a Peter, a James, a Paul, or have furnished a soil in which the seed of the divine word could have started into life.

LECTURE VIII.

CHRISTIAN ETHICS.

It is often said, in depreciation of Christian morality, that it has nothing of its own, nothing new, — that the sages of the East, the Hebrew scriptures, the earlier rabbis cited in the Talmud, the Greek philosophers, Cicero in Rome, had anticipated every precept of the gospel. This is nearly or quite true; but what of it? Suppose that the contrary were true. Would it not present a strong *a priori* case against Christian ethics? Can we conceive that God would have left the world for so many thousands of years utterly unenlightened as to right and wrong, good and evil? We have seen that the Right is the fitting, — that which is conformed to the nature of things. From the very nature of the case, even without special illumination from the Spirit of God, which yet I cannot believe to have been wanting, man with his growth of knowledge and his progress toward civilization, must have discovered very many fitnesses, and shaped them into moral rules. Were Christian

morality wholly new, it must have been spurious and non-divine.

What we claim for Christian ethics is not originality, but perfection. According to the Mosaic cosmogony, and equally in accordance with the nebular hypothesis, light existed before the sun; but none the less glorious was the orb which collected the wandering fires, and was thenceforth the centre and source of a radiance clear, intense, and penetrating, instead of that which had brooded dimly and flashed fitfully over weltering chaos. Thus, in scattered rays, blended with the night-shadows, had the antecedent ages seen and rejoiced in the glimmerings of those daybeams which in full-orbed glory shine from the Sun of righteousness into the hearts and upon the lives of men. A single flaw vitiates a moral system as inevitably as a small aperture in the bottom of a tank will make it useless; for who shall say what amount or power of evil may insinuate itself through the avenue left unguarded, through the ignoring of the one omitted virtue or the sanction of the one licensed sin? Almost Christian as are large portions of the ethics of Plato's "Republic," the adoption in full of his moral code would make his ideal republic a pandemonium. He sanctions some of the worst forms of licentiousness, regards drunkenness as allowable at the feasts of Bacchus,

and recommends the murder in infancy of feeble, sickly, and deformed children. Zeno, the founder of the Stoic school, and most of his followers, regarded suicide as a privilege, or even a duty, in irremediable adversity or in hopeless illness or decline; and Zeno himself set the example, which was followed by some of his best and most illustrious disciples. Cicero, who transcends all other pre-Christian moralists, lays it down as a fundamental rule, that one should do no harm to his neighbor, unless provoked by injury done to himself. Now, in the morality of the gospel you can find no weak point, no opening for the intrusion of any form of wrong-doing. Nor can you conceive of any condition in life in which the true rule of action is not prescribed by the precepts, suggested by the spirit, or clearly indicated by the example, of Jesus Christ. Still more, you can conceive of no higher law for heaven, or for any order of beings below the throne of God. Wherever in the universe you could embody this law in the lives of all who dwelt there, you would have all the essentials of heaven.

The perfectness of Christian ethics may be best tested by comparing the characters nurtured or transformed under Christian influences with those under the best antecedent systems. Jesus well said of John the Baptist, as representing the cul-

mination of all previous moral culture, "The least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." There were among the Hebrews some magnificent characters, such as Ezra, Nehemiah, the heroes of the Asmonæan family; yet there is about them a hardness of fibre, a lack of the gentler elements. They were the men to fight the battles of Jehovah, and just the men on whom the evangelic graces, if grafted, would have shown in their blossoming and fruitage how noble a stock was blending its sap with theirs. In all history, there is hardly a personage for whom I have so much admiration as for Nehemiah; yet I do not think that I should have wanted to live with him. But in the Hebrews we witness, as I believe, the spiritual culture by which the divine Providence was preparing a birthplace for Christ and his gospel.

Outside of Palestine, before Christ, I do not find a single type of virtue that we should want to hold forth as exemplary. Socrates was wise, and died bravely; but even without going beyond Plato's or Xenophon's record of him, there was about him a coarseness, and a companionable, and virtually an approving, sympathy with licentious and profligate persons, which would be at harsh variance with the purity and delicacy of the Christian standard; and it is by no means certain that his life was, by that standard, free from gross, yet

then tolerated, vice. Cato the elder was regarded by the Romans as their model man. Even Cicero, who was immeasurably better than Cato, evidently looked upon him as the cynosure for universal reverence and admiration. I had occasion not long ago to study Cato's life; and it occurred to me to take my New Testament, and to try how the Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount would harmonize with his character. I found that there was not one of them with which his life was not glaringly in contrast, unless he might have claimed the blessing on those "persecuted for righteousness' sake," on account of the more than forty lawsuits brought against him by implacable enemies. He was ferociously upright, bitterly patriotic, malevolently courageous. But he was mean and miserly, horribly cruel, an exacting and tyrannical slave-master, unrelenting in his enmities, and neither severely pure nor rigidly temperate. Cicero comes nearer the Christian standard than any other pre-Christian, whether Greek or Roman: yet, while I am among his warmest admirers, I must confess that there are aspects of his character and passages of his life which admit of a less favorable construction than I am inclined to give them; and if they belonged to one on the list of Christian saints, they would make his aureola a penumbra.

After Christ, we have among non-Christians not a few specimens of genuinely Christian virtue; and in a future lecture I shall attempt to trace its source. Suffice it now to say that there is a contagion of goodness as well as of evil, and that when the light shines in darkness, and the darkness comprehends it not, those in the dark may light their lamps at a flame that comes they know not whence.

Let us now consider some of the peculiar features of Christian morality; for, however little of originality there may be in its details, as a whole it has characteristics of its own, which give it a just pre-eminence among ethical systems. Jesus verified in his teachings the prophetic saying, "Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low." He reversed the world's ethical scale, dug valleys where the mountains stood, reared mountains where the valleys were. What we call the passive virtues were before his time held in the lowest esteem, or rather, in no esteem at all. They had not even respectable names. The Latin *humilis* denotes grovelling on the ground; and its Greek equivalent, ταπεινός, has a similar derivation and meaning. In fine, Christianity had to pick up its best words from the rubbish and dust-heaps of language, and to pass them through a baptism of regeneration.

But we wrong these virtues when we call them passive. In their highest form and fullest development, they require and indicate a compact, tempered, and accumulated strength of character far beyond that of the virtues which make more show, even as the spring which will sustain a continuous pressure, will bend under an added weight without breaking, and will recoil with undiminished elasticity when the weight is removed, is of a stronger as well as of a finer staple than the instrument designed to strike single heavy blows. These silent virtues are in their quiet way intensely active, as are those powers of nature that every spring noiselessly heave the winter-bound earth-clods, push up the grass-blades, throw out the leaf-buds, and without voice or sound renew the whole face of nature.

These virtues are the most aggressive of moral forces. Every great cause of human progress and well-being has had for its most efficient workers men whose resistance has been submission under meek protest; and when force has seemed to crown the work, as in the great contest with slavery, success has been made possible only by men who could not strive or cry, but who could bear testimony to the True and the Right in loss and shame, in bonds, and even unto death. Indeed, it is superfluous to multiply instances, when

the cross, the symbol of meek endurance, unwearied forbearance, and unquenchable love, has been the sole power on earth that has never known decline or retrogression, has from the first hour pursued its course conquering and to conquer, holds at the present moment its supreme yet serenest empire over its myriads of souls, and gives sure presage of a sovereignty before which every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall own the lordship of Him who bore it, and whom it bore.

It is these gentle virtues that created home. There were no homes in the ancient world, because there was no tolerance for these virtues. The Greek, the Roman, household, was in the best times a despotism; in the worst, an anarchy. The wife, the mother, never had her equal, honored place, nor had the children the discipline which recognized at once their needs and their rights, their dependence and their incipient and growing power of self-control. Nor yet can the Germans, or any of the northern or eastern tribes that overran the Roman empire, have moulded the Christian household from elements indigenous in their rude life. To be sure, their women had a certain intrepid nobleness, and a fierce, aggressive equality with the men of their tribes; but it was not such women that could become priestesses of the home-altar. Home first came into being when the fam-

ily received the impress of the command, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ," — when the domestic circle was pervaded by the spirit of the great Master, embodied in the precept, "Be kindly affectioned one to another, in honor preferring one another."

We shall find, too, that these gentler virtues underlie all that is healthful and happy in the social life of modern civilization, while its deficiencies and faults may all be traced to the imperfect way and degree in which they are embodied, practised, and manifested. True refinement is made up wholly of these qualities of character. Society is attractive in the proportion in which it is pervaded by them. Most of the unhappiness in the intercourse of kindred, neighbors, and friends, proceeds from their violation. Without them the hardier virtues might minister to the public peace, and to progress in the arts of life; but it is from these gentler graces that flow the little rills of content, happiness, and good cheer, which twine round home-scenes and social gatherings and quiet hours, and, as they flow together, swell into a full, rich stream of beatific influences, whose volume none can measure and none can over-estimate.

There is another point at which we may claim originality for Christian ethics. We talk of the Christian system of morals, — and rightly; but

where is the system? The Master seemed to give none. His precepts were dropped by the way, without connection or arrangement. They met the case in hand, and often seemed to do no more; though I believe that we shall never look into the full meaning of one of these miscellaneous and scattered sayings without seeing that it involves a great law of life, includes an entire class of cases, and is of enduring validity and worth. But there is a system wherever there is a great general law from which all else is deduced, and to which all else is referred; and in every science the aim has been to find such a law. Thus, in mechanics, the law of gravitation comprehends the theory of all the mechanical powers, — the lever, pulley, wedge, and screw; and all the complicated theorems which define their working are inferences from the mathematical formulas that measure the tendencies of mutually gravitating bodies. In morals, the great sages of antiquity had their characteristic precepts, which their disciples regarded as fundamental. Such was the "Know thyself" of Thales, — a maxim of most momentous significance and value, yet not all-embracing. It was with some such expectation that the lawyer asked Jesus, "Which is the great commandment in the law?" The answer was not Christ's own, but, as the question seemed to demand, borrowed, word for word,

from the Hebrew Scriptures; yet he rendered it peculiarly his own by putting upon it the emphasis which it had not before, and making it comprehensive of all human duty, so that love to man is but a corollary from it; and with this corollary distinctly implied, we have, in the love of God with all the heart and soul and mind, every thing that man is bound to do and to be, — every thing of vital interest contained in the Law, or preached by the prophets, or promulgated by him in whom the Law is consummated, and prophecy becomes history. This law gives the only sure directory to the cultivation of virtue and the attainment of moral excellence. In defining goodness, it unifies it. The several virtues are, indeed, to be made each the object of earnest endeavor and faithful self-discipline; but it is to be borne in mind that there is a virtue which contains them all, and without which they can have no sure root or healthy growth. They are to be cultivated successfully only through that love of God of which they are a part, and from which the fertilizing influence flows into them all, as the life-giving juices from the root flow into the branches and tendrils of the vine.

It is equally to Jesus that we owe the unifying of sin. Sins were recognized before; sin, first by him. The Jewish law had its fine or sacrifice for

every individual transgression, and the sinner deemed himself cleansed from the specific stain for which he had brought his sin or trespass offering to the altar. The psalmists and the prophets show some sense of the possibility of a general defilement from which particular sins must of necessity proceed. But sin, as a definite quality, apart from sins, and possible even where there are no conspicuous sins, is an exclusively Christian idea; and it is of infinite moral importance. Sin is hydra-headed, yet has but one heart. You may cut off head after head, and each will reproduce itself, or will be replaced by one more hideous. Its heart is autonomy, self-will, the ignoring of the divine will and law, the living without God in the world, — a condition which, did it produce no evil, is in itself evil. The fatal stroke must be aimed at the heart; and when that is stilled in death, what of life lingers in the heads can be extinguished, though they may need to be separately dealt with; for, as is the case with mollusks and reptiles, sin does not die at once in all its parts, though with its heart they all be death-stricken. This is the Christian theory of repentance, *μετάνοια* in the Greek, which signifies change of mind, the first word in the preaching of Jesus, and the key-word to all that he taught. This is the idea that underlies what he says about the

ceremonial washing of the hands and of the outside of the cup and platter, while from within, from the heart, "proceed those things that defile a man."

Another feature of Christian morality is that it is prevailingly positive. Other moralists forbid more than they command. Prohibition rather than precept characterizes the Confucian and the Brahmanistic ethics. This is pre-eminently true of Buddhism, which is hardly less thorough in its prohibitions than would be demanded by the highest Christian standard, and would make its disciple negatively pure, yet to a very limited extent actively virtuous. The Decalogue is prohibitory. "Thou shalt not" is the form of eight out of the ten commandments; the stress of the fourth rests on the prohibition to work on the sabbath; and the fifth, that enjoining filial reverence, is the only one that is positive both in form and in meaning. In this respect the Law was, not the "schoolmaster" (for the word so rendered in our English Bible denotes the slave that leads the children to school), but the servant to bring men to Christ, — to fit them by abstaining for doing, by shunning the wrong for practising the right. For nations and races, no less than for the individual man, ceasing to do evil must precede learning to do well. Jesus does not abrogate the prohibitions

of the Law, but he complements them by precepts of active goodness. The contrast of which I have spoken reminds me of the Egyptian ritual of the dead; that is, the formula of the judgment through which the dead must pass as they enter the life beyond death. It is all negative. The man arraigned before the judges who are to determine his destiny is made to say, if he can say it with truth, "I have not done violence, I have not defrauded, I have not committed adultery, I have not perjured myself," and so on through a long list of sins, from which, if he can thus purge himself, he is received into paradise. All this Jesus would have his disciple to say; but if he could say no more, he would not be his disciple. The virtues of the Beatitudes are none of them negative; or rather, they all are much more than negative. They are not filled out by the absence of impurity, of unmercifulness, of arrogance, of strife. There must be the cherishing of pure thoughts, the showing of mercy, the meek and gentle bearing, diligent peace-making.

I am thus led to speak of the Christian ethics as demanding active no less than passive goodness. There was in the primitive days of the Church so much to be suffered, as to give a trend to the early Christian literature in the direction of patience, submission, brave endurance; but it

must be borne in mind, that, in times of intense trial, these become active virtues, demanding the very stoutest moral fibre, and evincing an inward might adequate to the most energetic toil. Those who had nothing to do for their faith but to die for it, put into the final conflict strength that might have more than sufficed for a long lifetime of arduous duty. When the dying sacrifice is no longer demanded, its place can be taken only by the living sacrifice of mind and soul and strength in the service of man, and of God through man. The Christian is he whose lifework glows and grows under his hand, who is conscious of an unceasing call for strenuous activity, who takes for his watchword the great apostle's question, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?"

We will now inquire how far Christianity contributes to our knowledge of duty, that is, of the fitnesses of things, — the knowledge which is not conscience, but which conscience needs, and may always use. When the astronomer wants to present a perfectly accurate view of the solar system, he shows and describes it as it would appear from the centre of the sun, — gives what he calls heliocentric angles and distances. In the moral universe, Christianity gives us heliocentric views, — shows us things as God sees them. We thus learn the transcendent worth of the soul, of character,

of inward truth, purity and love, as compared with the body and the material world. Aside from Christianity, while we might attach a superior value to the soul's life, yet things spiritual and things outward would differ less in our estimate than they do now, and we might deem it fitting to make some compromise or sacrifice of the inward life for very great outward gain. But Christianity attaches the value of an actual appraisement by weights and balances to the question which has not lost its significance by being supplanted in the Revised Version of the New Testament, "What is a man profited though he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" The clear revelation of immortality makes an almost entire revolution in the realm under the special cognizance of conscience. Not that there could be, even were we going to die as the brutes die, any fitness in vice, or any unfitness in virtue. Yet if our life here were our whole life, it would undoubtedly be fitting for us to fill it as full as it could hold with sober and honest pleasures, and, without neglecting mind and character, to give the body its ample share of enjoyment. But if the body is to last only a little while, and the soul to live forever, then there is a manifest fitness in our giving supreme regard to the furniture and possessions of the soul, to what it may carry with and in it-

self through the death-passage, and attaching a diminished worth to possessions and endowments of which our tenure at the best is exceedingly brief and frail.

Christianity also reveals to us our fellow-men as related to us by more intimate ties than we might else recognize, as fellow-children of the Infinite Father, fellow-subjects of his benign providence, fellow-heirs of the life eternal. Now, men of different conditions and races diverge very widely in this earthly life; and where no other life has been held in view, there has been little sense of fitness in the relations between race and race, or class and class. Among some of the most enlightened ethical teachers of the old time, including even Socrates as Plato reports him, we find precepts tantamount to the maxim that had become current among the Jews, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy." Cut off from collective humanity its common base and its common architrave, you leave only separate groups with no more necessary mutual relations than different races of beasts have. The Caucasian sees no reason why he may not reduce the Hottentot as he would the horse to bondage, or hunt the Australian as he would the ostrich. But when we trace men with all their diversities, perhaps with no common earthly parentage (for I do not think

that even the biblical narrative implies a common human ancestry for all men), when we trace them, I say, back to a common Father whose image is impressed on them all, and on to a common home in the many-roomed mansion of that Father, we see the fitnesses of human brotherhood, which have been realizing themselves in emancipation, in the missionary enterprise, in protective colonization, and in the establishment of mutually beneficent international intercourse. In these ways Christianity has very largely increased man's knowledge of the fitness of things, so that under its guidance one need never be at a loss as to what is fitting and right, or as to what is unfitting and wrong.

Christianity also acts directly upon the conscience, stimulating it to activity, to watchfulness, to keenness. The divine presence, the power of an undying hope, the example of perfect humanity in Jesus, the feeling of intensest interest in one's own character, the fellowship of kindred minds and hearts, all prompt one to the careful consideration of the right and the wrong in every case offered for his decision, and thus to even the minutest scrutiny of whatever may bear upon the question of right.

The influence of Christianity has had one singular consequence in the literature of ethics. It

gave birth and long life to the science of casuistry; that is, of special cases of conscience. At a very early period, Christian writers began to discuss the question of duty in difficult and doubtful cases, sometimes real, perhaps oftener, imaginary. In the Middle Ages, among the schoolmen, there was little writing on morals except in the department of casuistry; and even as late as the seventeenth century we have a large volume of casuistry from Baxter. The discussion of special cases has almost ceased now, not, as I believe, because men are less solicitous to know their duty, but because they have attained to a clearer knowledge of it. Christianity awakened in the minds of its sincere disciples everywhere an earnest desire to know the right, and the aim was to converge the light of Christ's teaching and life on every separate department of duty. The result was a series of discoveries in every department, — the creation of luminous patches where there was dense darkness before; and now these patches have run together, and the light of the gospel rests full and clear on the whole field of human duty, so that we seldom need to ask, What ought I to do? Our one present need — never so intense as now — is the ready will to do all that we know.

This leads me to say that there is still one form of casuistry that most injuriously affects the Chris-

tian Church. The question is virtually asked, and very often, "How little of duty can I do, and yet remain a Christian? How far can I avail myself of what Mammon and Belial have to give, and yet not forfeit my part in the benefits at Christ's bestowal?" Those who thus strive to make their way between wind and water often have hard cases of conscience, while they attempt to harmonize opposite polarities, and to negative the infallible words of Jesus, "No man can serve two masters." But to him who is willing to serve only one master, Christianity seldom or never leaves conscience in doubt. While he who attempts to see double finds the light within him darkness, the single eye is full of light.

I ought to add, as the culminating prerogative of Christian ethics, that we have in Jesus the embodiment of all that he taught as to human duty, so that he teaches us even more by his life than by his words. The Gospel of Mark gives but few of his discourses, and those few abridged; and yet there is not a lesson of truth or duty drawn out at length by the other three evangelists, which we may not read as distinctly and impressively in Mark's condensed narrative of Christ's daily walk, of his intercourse with all sorts and conditions of men, of the divine humanity from which there is a perpetual effluence of all that is most winning

and endearing, stimulating to the conscience, fraught with instruction in rightness. It is impossible to separate his ethical teaching from his life. Here he stands alone. There are great moral teachers, whose writings would be worth fully as much as they are if they were anonymous. There are some, like Seneca, whose works would be of much greater value were there not a harsh discrepancy between their writings and what is known or suspected of their lives. There are good lives which we contemplate with admiration and love, but which teach us only what they themselves derived from Jesus, and which differ from his life in that they reflect the light kindled from his spirit unevenly, so that they are models of some, but not of all, virtues, and even when such seems not to be the case, that they have about them the coloring of their country, time, and circumstances, — that they are not cosmopolitan in such a sense as to be equally impressive, edifying, and instructive to persons of all ages, lands, and conditions. But Jesus is at once identified with and detached from his surroundings, and he could not be the one without the other; for those traits of perfect humanity that were in him could have their full manifestation only in the actual world in which he lived, and yet they are to that world like the circumambient

air, in contact with every being and substance, yet never yielding up its specific properties, — with and in all, yet its identity unchanged. Though among Jews, he is no more of a Jew than if he had lived in Arabia. We never feel that the peculiarities, much less the prejudices, frailties, and follies of his age and people cleave to him, or dim his lustre as the Sun of righteousness for our whole race, or make his example any the less the cynosure for those of all nations, for man so long as he shall live on earth, so long as he shall live with God in heaven,

We have seen what Christian morality is. An ethical system, however, needs more than itself, — more than principles and rules of duty. It fully as much needs motive-power. There is a Chinese legend that illustrates this need. The three great religious teachers of the Celestial Empire, from their heavenly abode beholding with profound sorrow the degeneracy of their people, and mourning that their lifework seemed so entire a failure, returned to the earth, in order to find some suitable missionary whom they could send forth as a reformer. They came in their wanderings to an old man, sitting as the guardian of a fountain. He talked to them so wisely and so earnestly of the great concerns which they had most at heart, that they came to the conclusion that he was the

very man for the work which they wished to accomplish. But when they proposed the mission to him, he replied, "It is the upper part of me only that is of flesh and blood: the lower part is of stone. I can talk about virtue and good works; but I cannot rise from my seat to perform any righteous act." This apologue indicates the moral condition in which even a perfect ethical system might leave its disciples. The words which Ovid puts into the mouth of Medea, *Video meliora, proboque, deteriora sequor*, "I see and approve the better; I follow the worse," express the utter moral inability which is by no means a rare state of consciousness. Christianity supplies the requisite enabling power. It presents in the divine providence, benignity, fatherhood, every motive that can flow from reverence and love; it appeals to man by the love and sacrifice of Christ, and by the power of his cross; it pledges the aid of Omnipotence to supplement the feebleness of those who have but the will to do right; and its worship and ordinances are oft-recurring remembrancers of duty, keeping its own working-force in constant activity, and feeding the strength that might else be wasted and lost. Its revealed immortality is a moving no less than a teaching power. It proclaims an inevitable retribution, and that by no arbitrary decree, but by the law of continuity;

and as no man can wish to outlive what he most craves and enjoys, there is no need of any harsh theology to make men seek in a virtuous life that which alone can have any heritage beyond the death-shadow. Thus Christianity furnishes power to actualize its own ideal, — to make men what it bids them be.

We can hardly dismiss Christian ethics without referring to the wide difference between the ethical standard of the Christian Church and that of its Lord and Master. I was once visiting a magnificent church edifice with a friend learned in church lore. I called his attention to the unlikeness of the eagle used as a reading-desk to the eagle of the skies. "Yes," said my friend, "you are right; but this is the ecclesiastical eagle, precisely as it has come down to us from the Middle Ages." Just so, there is a traditional type of the Christian that has come down to us from how remote a time it is hard to say, but certainly not from the skies, and not from Christ. The Christian, as such, is expected to do certain things and to abstain from certain things, to attend public worship when convenient, to observe Christian ordinances, and to keep a prudent silence when Christianity is assailed or vilified. But it is not regarded as absurd to speak of selfish Christians, miserly Christians, unforgiving Christians, which

ought to be deemed no less self-contradictory terms than Mahometan Christians or atheistical Christians. It is easier to account for this condition of things in the past than to excuse it in the present. During the first three centuries, when Christianity was making rapid progress, its very growth rendered it legitimately less pure than had it lingered in its work of reformation. A large proportion of the converts, however sincere in their adherence to the new religion, brought into its fold habits and tendencies engendered by their previous belief and culture, which were not wholly washed away in their Christian baptism. How far the cleansing process was carried, and in how many illustrious examples it seemed complete and entire, is among the greatest marvels of history; and had the Christian faith remained a century longer under the ban of the empire, its tens of thousands might have vied in moral purity and excellence with the little band, wont before the first Christian Pentecost to meet in the large upper room in Jerusalem. But when Christianity became the established religion of the empire, it had to take on, and found it impossible wholly to cleanse, the impurities, falsities, and wrongs of high station, court-life, and arbitrary power. It indeed modified what it could not remove, and utilized much which it could not make better.

But the term, Christian, in the imperial palace meant less than in the amphitheatre of savage martyrdom, and conversion to a court-religion was something very different from a conversion which might consign the new disciple to the stake. Then, too, it was almost inevitable that the Church should assume the power so readily granted by emperors who made bishops their conscience-keepers; and this power, in order to maintain itself, could not but lay the intensest stress on formal unity in the Church. Hence the paramount importance attached to creed and ritual as the only means of insuring uniformity, and consolidating power. Heresy thus became the one unpardonable sin; and orthodoxy, the sole test of Christian standing.

The Protestant Reformation was one of allegiance and opinion, rather than of morals. The corruption of the Papacy, indeed, did much to initiate and energize it; but civil power, both in Germany and in England, had too large a part in the movement to give it the ethical character which it had, and still to a marvellous degree retains, in Scotland alone. But even there, and wherever throughout the realm of Protestanism there has been any thing like religious earnestness, the prime test of the Christian estate has been conformity to a prescribed standard of belief rather

than of character. It is impossible that two collateral standards should be of equal validity and worth. One must be paramount; the other, secondary. Bimetallism is practically as impossible in the Church as in the money-market. If assent to a creed be so inexorably required as a title to Christian recognition and communion, that without such assent the most Christlike man living will be discarded as no Christian, it is absolutely impossible that character as a test and standard should not be held as of comparatively little worth or significance. Not that the creed will pass into a church a very bad man; but it will put a very moderately and imperfectly good man in a position in which he will be entirely satisfied with himself, and will regard himself as fully competent to judge the Christian character of others, and of those much better than himself.

There are those of a more liberal faith, or of a broader church, who have done well in renouncing creeds as tests of Christian character. But they none the less need a test. If they have no right to account men as Christians for believing as they themselves do, still less have they a right to regard common non-beliefs as a ground of Christian recognition or fellowship. Christlikeness should be our sole standard of self-judgment; and while we should be very slow to judge our

fellow-men, we cannot account as of the true household of faith those who claim their place in it solely on the ground of belief or of non-belief, but must so regard those only whom, in the exercise of the broadest charity, we can recognize as bearing, or at least as desiring and endeavoring to bear, a moral and spiritual kinship to Christ.

LECTURE IX.

MORAL BEAUTY.

MORAL beauty is that which produces directly on the mind an effect closely corresponding to that which is produced by physical beauty through the eye. It would bear painting, would stand the severest tests of art, and in its pictorial presentation would impress the beholder with its loveliness. It has often furnished subjects for painting and sculpture, and the crowning merit of many of the greatest works of art is that they represent it to the moral sense as vividly as to the eye skilled in the science of form and color. They sometimes give a grace that is even more than beauty to objects which, by the ordinary standard of judgment, are any thing rather than beautiful. Thus, in Domenichino's picture in the Vatican of the Communion of St. Jerome, you might search the almshouses of Christendom in vain for so worn, wan, ghastly, and even squalid, a face and form as are given to the old saint; and yet even to the ordinary beholder, much more to one of cultivated

taste, the figure is made beautiful and glorious by the glow of sight-like faith in the dying eyes, by the visible peace of God that rests on the wrinkled and wasted countenance, and by the suggestive paraphernalia of the holy rite that is to give the Christian soldier his viaticum for his last conflict, in which he seems already to hear the plaudit that awaits his victory.

On the other hand, there are favorite subjects of mediæval art, which no charms of physical beauty can make otherwise than disgusting. Thus, there are no more magnificent female forms than the Judiths, there is no more fascinating loveliness than in not a few of the Herodiases; but the dripping heads which they carry, and our associations with the savageness of the one, and the heartless wantonness of the other, completely neutralize the physical beauty by the sense of moral deformity.

I have seen almost all the great pictures in Europe, and I cannot recall one that has left on my mind the impression of beauty, which would not, if translated into life and reproduced in action, be beautiful. To be sure, there are, as in the last scenes of our Saviour's life, in many of these pictures the figures of persons that are the opposite of morally beautiful; but the picture is beautiful, only when the person or the act that is morally

beautiful is made so prominent as to render all else accessory to its representation. Thus, in many of the pictures of Christ before the judgment-seat and on the cross, the beauty of the whole is enhanced, because cunning, treachery, stupidity, malice, and rage are so grouped and painted as to bring out into all the stronger light the loveliness and majesty of the principal figure; while in the comparatively few instances in which art has expended its strength and skill in representing the Saviour's sufferings rather than him suffering, there is no beauty whatever. I have said thus much to illustrate the position that what is morally beautiful is what would make a beautiful picture, and thus, that the same elements underlie beauty in nature, in art, in action, and in character.

As the beautiful in nature is more than the useful, so is the beautiful in action and in character more than the good. Straight lines and sharp angles do not look beautiful to the eye; nor in life, speech, and conduct do they seem beautiful to the mind. In natural beauty the lines seem continuous, so gently does curve melt into curve. In character, however good, there is no beauty in sharp angles, in *brusquerie*, rudeness, abruptness, least of all, in fits of goodness which have their beginnings and endings, with the life, though not

bad, on a lower plane, in the intervals. Even when there is no lack of continuity, a character may have inflexible rectitude, literal veracity, habits sedulously conformed in the smallest minutiæ to the rule of right, and it may have our entire approval, our sincere though cold admiration, yet may have no beauty. There is a style of goodness that reminds one of a skeleton hung on wires, in which conscience is unrestingly active, but the imagination torpid even to death, — which repels sympathy, and makes virtue unlovely. A heaven thus peopled would seem no paradise. Grim piety may be of subjective worth to the individual soul, but its objective value would be represented by a negative sign.

On the other hand, there is a beauty of holiness, in which there are the hardier muscles and sinews that do the heavy lifework, but filled in and rounded out in perfect symmetry and grace. Such are the characters that wear the aureola of a perpetual sainthood, recognized not by this or that sect or party, but by all who love what is good of every type, the Fénelons, the Oberlins, the Florence Nightingales, those whose names the heart thrills in hearing, those who cease not to shine on earth when they become stars in heaven. It is beauty that makes their sainthood as precious to man as to God. Without it, they

might still be diamonds, yet diamonds in the rough, of which only the expert can know the value; but God, when he "makes up his jewels," polishes the precious stones, cuts facets on them for the multiform reflection of his own ineffable beauty, and sets them in the purest gold.

As in character, so in individual acts, there is goodness without beauty, and there is goodness that is intensely beautiful. Thus, pity, divorced from kindness or fellow-feeling, — a worthy sentiment indeed, but the same that is felt for a suffering beast, — may go about doing good, and its cold, sharp-angled formalism may chill and starve the souls of those whose bodies it feeds and warms; while kindness may be almost empty-handed, and yet for the loveliness of its beauty be blessed by the eye that sees and the ear that hears. There are right and virtuous acts performed from a reluctant sense of duty; and these I would by no means undervalue, especially as they mark the first stage toward the condition in which one can say, "Oh, how love I thy law!" But while we recognize these acts as fitting and meritorious, we see no beauty in them. There are other not unlike acts into which heart and soul are put along with mind and strength, and these seem as beautiful as they are good.

Indeed, the element of beauty bears a very

large part in beneficence. (We do good, in very great measure, by the virtue that goes forth from us, by the aroma of character.) I said in a former lecture, that, in reckoning the product of beneficence, what we give, or say, or do is the multiplicand, ourselves the much larger multiplier. Now, in that multiplier such grace and beauty of soul as we may have constitute the principal factor. Influence is often neutralized by the unloveliness of those who most earnestly strive to exert it for the Right and the Good. Remonstrances are rendered unavailing by the lack of a meek and gentle spirit. Example is bereft of its due power by defect in point of symmetry and gracefulness, and not infrequently by the clumsiness and awkwardness that always disfigure an example that is formally set, even in cases where the same example left to set itself would be graceful. But genuine moral beauty will do its beneficent work without attempting it, or even being conscious of it. However lowly, it cannot be hidden. It shines through the thickest veil, and makes the most opaque medium transparent.

We have the fullest manifestation of the worth and power of spiritual beauty in the life of Jesus Christ on the earth. In its gentleness and sweetness, its compassion and mercy, its self-forgetting sacrifice, its unremitted care for the welfare and

happiness of the ungrateful and the sinful, we have not a mere teacher from whose lips we are to receive the law of right, nor a mere exemplar after whose pattern we are artificially to shape our conduct, but one whom to know is equally to admire and to love. We cannot become familiar with his walk among men, and with the heart whose pulses are all laid open to our view, without our souls being suffused with the radiance of a beauty in whose incarnation we see the foreshining of heaven, — a beauty like that of nature, infinite and exhaustless, like the flowers and the stars, the glowing sunsets and the sparkling waters, the more beautiful the longer and the oftener we look upon it.

If it be asked what constitutes moral beauty, I hardly know a better answer than might be given in the one word *moderation*, if you will take into view all that the word means. It is derived from *modus*, "measure;" and in its proper use it signifies not imperfection, or slowness, or backwardness, but the due proportion in life of all the elements that go to make up a good life. Of virtue there can be no excess; and we have had, as I believe, the ideal of perfect virtue actualized but once on earth. But individual virtues may exist in such excess, so out of due proportion, as to cease to be virtues. The beauty of

Christ's character consists, in great part, in its perfect balance. Probably among those who most opposed him there were not only bad men and hypocrites, but specialists in virtue, — men who nursed some one virtue out of due proportion, and held others in inferior esteem. Were he living on earth now with no external token of Christhood, among his strongest opponents would be some of the extremists in morals who call themselves by his name. I am inclined to think that their types of virtue would find as little sympathy from him as he would show with the vices that they denounce.

Aristotle, whose ethics, while defective in furnishing no sufficient basis or ground of right, are fraught with practical suggestions of enduring value, makes virtue to consist primarily in the avoidance of extremes. Each virtue lies between two vices or non-virtues, — as temperance, between excess and asceticism; courage, between rashness and pusillanimity.

As in nature and art, so in character, there is sublimity where there is no beauty. A really grand character, in some respects even grandly good, may have defects which will not let it be beautiful. Indeed, grandeur is sometimes created by such defects, as a steep ravine at its side will make a mountain look higher than it is. On

the other hand, there are characters which escape being called great only by their beauty, by their roundness and evenness, by the unbroken uniformity of their goodness.

Let us consider some of the things that are not beautiful. Passion is never beautiful. Its name defines its nature. It differs from patience, though derived from the same verb, — patience, from the present, the active participle, denoting suffering, and connoting the brave spirit in which it is borne; passion, from the past and neuter participle, denoting entire subdual and subjection, — a state in which the man does not possess himself, but the feeling possesses the man, gets supremacy over his will-power, and forces him to do what he else would not do. This position of a human being's will-power is in itself so unbecoming that it is not in any of its forms susceptible of beauty. There is no need of my saying this of the malevolent affections. They are capable of grandeur, nay, they are almost essential to tragedy, and play a large part in sensational romances and novels; but except when they are made the background for some intensely lovely character or act, they exclude the drama or fiction in which they are portrayed from the catalogue of the beautiful in literature.

But not only the malevolent affections, even love, while as an affection it is in every aspect

and manifestation beautiful, ceases to be so when it becomes a passion. In the entire range of ancient and modern literature, there are no more beautiful characters than those of Andromache and Penelope; while Helen, though for physical beauty she wins the prize in competition with the very goddesses, repels, even in her woes and her bitter end, the sympathy which we feel so profoundly with the faithful wives. In the Æneid, too, our pity for Dido is largely alloyed with disgust. Love, as an affection, is reserved, modest, self-sacrificing, utterly unselfish, desiring above all things that its subject and its object may be worthy of each other by the highest standard of excellence. Love, as a passion, is demonstrative, fierce, truculent, exacting, selfish, or, if self-sacrificing, always ready to sacrifice its object with itself.

Ambition, as an impelling motive on an honorable career, is beautiful, as it maintains that equilibrium of the higher nature, in which the powers are evenly balanced forces, and act in harmony and mutual helpfulness; while it sees in those above itself goals to be reached, or, if possible, passed, as mile-stones on the ascending way, not rivals to be supplanted. But envy, hostile rivalry, the desire to excel, not by outrunning others, but by tripping them up in the race, makes ambition

hideous and hateful; for then it has become a passion, without any moral will-power to withstand or temper it.

Even the most sacred religious affections, when made passions, or carried to excess, cease to be beautiful. Fanaticism is sincere and earnest, but it makes a passion of an affection. Prayer, praise, and all forms of worship in which a truly devout spirit seeks its natural utterance, are as beautiful as they are holy, when they recognize the divine presence as the one supreme fact of human existence, and recognize, too, the sacredness no less than the lovingness of that presence. But fanaticism presents an idea of the Supreme Being which would give us repulsive associations with a human potentate. His favor is capricious, and needs to be taken by storm. He has his favorites, and they obtain their place by noisy importunity, and keep it by vulgar familiarity. Men are to be heard for their "much speaking," rather than for the quality of their prayers, or of the hearts that pray. In fine, there is no point at which there is not the broadest discrepancy between the fanatic's God and the Father, equally of all men and of every man, whom Jesus Christ revealed and manifested, — whose very presence is a law of beauty, and, so far as it is felt, must make his worship the beauty of holiness.

There are hardly any two words that from their derivation ought to be of closer kindred and significance than sanctity and sanctimony; and there are hardly any two that are farther apart. Sanctity is always beautiful. There have been those on whom rested visibly the seal of God in lip, and brow, and mien, whose presence was a benediction, who never obtruded sacred themes, but made common themes sacred by the unction from the Holy One which shed its fragrance over and in all their social intercourse. We know such persons now. I have had such guests in my house, and have had in them all that I could have enjoyed in angels' visits. I have received such guests as strangers, and have found that I was "entertaining angels unawares." These are the persons who literally "pray without ceasing;" that is, devotional thoughts have so incorporated themselves with their whole inward being, that the consciousness of the present God forms an inseparable part of their own consciousness, and is thus an inseparable element in all that they say and do. Now, sanctimony, meaning to be a copy of this grace which cannot be copied, becomes its unsightly and disgusting caricature. It saddens and lengthens the countenance which there is no flame of devotion to light; it substitutes a sepulchral whine for the strains as from silver bells in which true god-

liness finds utterance; and in air and manner it puts on the holiness which it has not taken in, and the mask fits so ill as to show all its seams and sutures. It is often a mere shallow pretence, at the outset devoid of sincerity, and becoming sincere only in the limited sense in which an actor grows into the part which he has played often and long, or in which a mask, that so stuck to the face that it could not be torn off, would become a part of the face. When there is in it any degree of inwardness or of genuine feeling, it must be the rareness and unfamiliarity of the feeling that clothe it in so grotesque a garb.

Asceticism is another form of false or mistaken devotion that is wholly destitute of beauty. It had, indeed, as I said in a former lecture, its origin in the unlovely conception of the almost semi-omnipotence of Satan. If you will look through the Hebrew and the Christian Scriptures, you will find them pervaded by the idea that the moderate, yet free and generous use of what God has given us is at least one of the ways in which he would have us own his goodness. Wanton, needless self-denial, the refusal on the ground of piety to avail one's self of benefits and blessings from the hand of God, is as unbecoming and unbeautiful as it would be for children to spurn and throw away a father's or a mother's Christmas presents because

they were so tasteful and elegant. Yet for many centuries, scorn of the comforts of this life was thought the surest way to heaven. Even the luxury of decency and cleanliness was renounced and denounced. It was the boast of Thomas à Becket, that, from the time that he became Archbishop of Canterbury, no water ever came into contact with his body; and among the many blessed tokens of sainthood in Francis of Assisi, the mediæval chroniclers numbered the disgusting fact, that, at a certain stage of his growth in grace, street-offal was his chosen food. Self-denial for the sake of others is always graceful and beautiful; but even more so is the sharing of whatever belongs to the sunny side of life with those who can be brought over from the shady side, thus creating a community of feeling which is often of more worth than mere gifts can be. The sending to those in need what the giver deprives himself of for their comfort is lovely and beautiful; but far more so would be the literal carrying out of our Saviour's exhortation, "When thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind." Such a feast might, I think, make a fair show in Christian art; and I am sure that it would bring down heavenly witnesses who would pronounce it beautiful. But monasticism, cenobitism, and all self-imposed austerities, are unlovely in their exterior aspects, and

fully as much so in their meaning and spirit, in which they are inseparable from the theory that gave them birth, that of Satan's power in the creation and government of the outward universe.

To pass to the second great commandment, philanthropy, when made a passion, loses all its beauty. Nothing can be more lovely than the life devoted with perfect singleness of purpose to the doing of good; and since in this, as in every department of life, a division of labor economizes power, and enhances its products, it is certainly desirable that every servant of man should have his or her special branch of service and walk of usefulness. But when one comes to regard his as the only service and the only work, and his specific way of doing it as alone worthy of tolerance, he in his passion makes his work unlovely, his cause repulsive, and to many undiscerning minds philanthropy itself odious. As the rapid runner makes the breeze that stops his breath, so does philanthropy of the type of which I am now speaking create the opposition with which it wrestles, and the best causes have often found their greatest hinderances in their advocates. Such philanthropy has hatred as vehement as its love; and whatever odium it attracts, it receives no more than it bestows.

Here we see the need and the efficacy of our

Saviour's making the two laws of love to God and love to man one and the same law. Neither can be parted from the other without losing all its beauty. They are needed to clarify and sweeten each other. Nay, they are both needed for each other's fulness. Piety needs love to man, that its glow may neither cool in its source nor slacken in its flow. Philanthropy needs love to God to redeem it from acridness and bitterness. It is for lack of this union that Christianity has often been unlovely, and while in fact the most beautiful child of heaven, has dragged her honor in the dust. The persecution of Christians by Christians has been often, no doubt, urged by a piety, sincere after its sort, but not by a man-loving piety. When human wrongs have been violently wrested into right, and Satan has been cast out by Satan, it has been by a philanthropy, however earnest, not God-loving.

I have spoken of passion or excess as fatal to beauty in character. This leads me to name self-government and self-discipline as among its essential factors. Do not imagine that the self-contained and self-controlled spirit lacks depth. It is the shallow lake that has a quick, short swell, and can be lashed into fury by a breeze that will not quicken the ocean's pulse. The descriptive terms which St. Paul applies to the character that

ought to be, — "steadfast, unmovable," — were virtually applied in the Hebrew Scriptures also to the higher forms of excellence. "He that doeth these things shall never be moved." There is a repose, a quietness of spirit, which indicates depth and fulness, which has no spring-tides because it has no neap-tides, in which devotion has not its fitful sojourn, but its settled home, in which not man collectively, but individual men, whatever their needs or their sins, can always find heart-room, in which there is fervor without effervescence, charity without favoritism, — a walk with God in which "Our Father," not "My Father," is the formula of devotion, a walk with men in which the common divine fatherhood is never lost from thought; and in such a soul and life we have the most perfect illustration of ethical beauty, of spiritual loveliness, of the type of character which it was Christ's mission to create among men.

At the close of a former lecture I spoke of manners as an important part of morals. Indeed, I think that we have reason to regret that we have in our language different words to designate manners and morals. It were better if, as in the Greek and the Latin, we had but one word; for we are too prone to assign to manners a lower place, while in a large proportion of the intercourse of life, manners are the only morals that

we can put into practice. They have a most momentous æsthetic importance. In a certain sense and degree they are the outcome of character, and yet they need thought and care on their own account. The character that is not beautiful may have elegant manners, graceful manners, fascinating manners; yet still the manners will lack a grace that can come only from within, and cannot be put on or copied. I think that we always recnize the outwardness of the manners when they do not correspond with the character. But a thoroughly beautiful character may fail to do itself justice in manners.

In manners, as in character, moderation is the law of beauty. There is an overdoing of sincere kindness which is oppressive in its very ardor and earnestness; while kindness may make itself felt in less demonstrative and more quiet ways. There is, on the other hand, a reserve or backwardness, often proceeding from diffidence, which has much of the outward bearing of haughtiness or pride, and which precludes the expression of the genuine good feeling that is smothered behind it. Now, while affectation in manners is only and hardly less displeasing than hypocrisy in character, it is every man's right for his own sake, and his duty for the sake of others, to give full expression in manners to what he is conscious of feeling and

of being; and therefore manners, not as a substitute for character, but as the sign-language of character, deserve special heed, and even careful culture. They have too important a part in the happiness of society to be a matter of indifference, and they are often of inestimable worth in opening avenues of usefulness, and making a good life helpful and serviceable. I am very much impressed with the traits of genuine courtesy in the life and writings of St. Paul. It evidently was a part of his plan of duty to conciliate good will in all matters in which there was no question of right or wrong, that he might thus gain access for the truth that he taught; and we have ample evidence that he thus found an acceptance for his evangelic message — as among the Athenians, before Roman officials, on shipboard, and with the people whom he encountered at Malta — which could not have been accorded, even to a man of his undoubted ability and power of persuasion, had there not been a beauty of holiness in his address and manners, the counterpart of the qualities which made him in spiritual power foremost among the apostles of the new faith.

What I want to emphasize, and I would fain do it by so illustrious example, is the ethical importance of manners as an expression of character. Courtesy, which is the sum of whatever is beauti-

ful in character, deserves its place among the virtues; and in our division of the virtues it properly belongs under two heads, — under that of justice, as to its motive and its spirit; under that of order, as to its means and methods. These methods always claim careful attention; for that — be it word, or look, or posture, or gesture — which has been habitually used to express a particular feeling, is the readiest and best mode of expressing it, and the feeling may not be understood or inferred, if not expressed in the accustomed way.

But the feeling from which courtesy proceeds demands our foremost consideration, and we may have a clearer comprehension of it if we consider the sources of discourtesy. It always comes from selfishness in some one of its Protean forms, — self-conceit, usurping a higher than its due place, and claiming more than its due deference; self-indulgence, shirking the restraint and obligation of watchful kindness; self-assertion, jealous of another's worthy claims on regard; self-love, so intense as to be unconscious of the boundary between its own and another's rights; self-exaltation, so inflated as to seize precedence without so much as imagining that there can be a rival candidate for it. "In honor preferring one another," is the precept without obeying which courtesy cannot be.

Yet how can this precept be obeyed? We have our differing measures of intelligence and worth, our rightful places, our due claims to esteem, regard, and honor. How are we to ignore these, and thus to misplace ourselves by preferring others? I answer, that if we feel our superiority, we shall not ignore it, and discourtesy will become our settled habit. If we are not lowly in spirit, we cannot observe due courtesy in our social relations. But there are views that ought to make us lowly. The moon and the planets have a very sensible parallax as seen from different parts of the earth's surface; while the fixed stars are so far off, that they appear at the same, or nearly the same, point from opposite sides of the earth's orbit, thus annihilating in comparison with their immense distance the earthly distances that seem so vast. So, when we barely look at one another, we may seem very far apart, and on widely different planes; but our distances dwindle into naught in our common distance from the infinite God, the sinful from the Holy, the ignorant from the Omniscient, the feeble from the Omnipotent, the child of the dust and the prey of death from him whose years are eternity. Such views, while they elevate our aspirations and our hopes, level our self-esteem. While they forbid us not to deem ourselves the brethren of angels, they make us

more than we else can be, the brethren of all men.

Then, too, as regards the very advantages the possession of which is most prone to make us discourteous or non-courteous to those who lack them, there may well come to us the question, "What hast thou which thou hast not received?" To say nothing of the divine Giver, the advantages on which men are prone so to plume themselves as to withhold courteous observance from those who have them not, are precisely those which they have had no agency, or but a secondary agency, in procuring for themselves. Parentage and family are not of their own selection. Wealth either is inherited, or has grown under conditions often not at one's own command, which, slightly changed, would have issued in failure. Culture, for the most part, had its beginnings, its directions, and its good promise, from parental oversight. Social position one is oftener born into, or grows into unconsciously, than he makes it for himself. He who feels all this will bear his advantages meekly, and they will be but the measure of the kind courtesy which he will deem it his privilege to render.

But, above all, piety toward God, sincere and pervading, cannot but show its beautifying power in every form and observance of courteous bear-

ing and conduct toward men. We cannot wound where he blesses. We cannot be rude to those under the smile of his infinite benignity. We cannot be unmindful even of minute amenities and kindnesses where his love flows, not only in the grand current of a general providence, but in the slender yet unceasing rills of mercy that ripple by every hearthstone, and gush and sparkle for the refreshment of every living soul.

But while courtesy can have its perennial source only in profound religious feeling, it requires, like every other specific virtue, vigilance and painstaking, that it be guarded, directed, and nourished. In this matter, as in so many others, it may be said with emphasis, "Whoso offendeth not in word, the same is a perfect man." Selfishness, subdued and controlled in every thing else, is prone to take the tongue for its last stronghold. We are tempted thus to show our superiority, though it put others to shame, — our large liberty, though they be scandalized by it, — our wit, though it be at their expense, and to their keen mortification. We find it hard to forbear from what may interest or amuse for the moment, may help our favorable reception, may win for us greedy listeners, yet may leave a sting behind, and inflict a rankling wound. Who is there that has not been thus made a sufferer? Conver-

sation is often, under the show of friendliness, a covert strife, — a mutual attempt to mortify self-love, unduly strong, it may be, on either side, unduly sensitive on both. This gift of speech is a most perilous endowment, demanding the highest, though we are prone to give to it the lowest, measure of Christian restraint and discipline. With regard to this, as to every other department of social life, the sum of courtesy, and thus of moral beauty, is comprised in the law, "Do to another only that which thou wouldst have done to thyself." When we thus make our expectation our rule, it can hardly fail to be a rule of right. I have given this large space to courtesy, because the æsthetic side of moral duty is neglected or slighted in most ethical treatises, while next to the primal duties of purity, soberness, truth, integrity, and charity, there is no quality of character that contributes so largely to social and domestic happiness and well-being.

This type of virtue has its claims to the careful observance of those whose profession places them in peculiarly delicate relations with society, especially of physicians and clergymen. To speak of my own profession alone, there have been, indeed, great preachers who have been boors, and sometimes almost brutes, in their manners. But such men are unfit to be seen or heard anywhere save

in the pulpit, and there are wholly out of place. A minister has to meet those under his charge at those critical seasons when every sensitive fibre is ajar, when only a hand as gentle as it is firm can guide them through the stress of trial or of grief, when only a voice as tender in its utterance as it is strong and confident in its affirmation of eternal truths can give consolation and peace. The minister, too, in this as in all that is excellent, should be an example to his flock. He can gain nothing except a brief notoriety, which is not reputation, by rude speech and rough ways. They will give him no credit where credit is of any worth; and, what is of more consequence, they will give no credit to the religion which he is bound to cherish and defend, but will only multiply those worst of wounds, of which it never received more than now, in the house and at the hands of its professed friends.

I have in this lecture spoken of goodness in its higher forms as always beautiful. Why, then, may not beauty be taken as the test of moral acts, so that we should consider ourselves as bound always to do that which is beautiful, instead of attempting to determine what is fitting? I answer, first, that, though the will of a Supreme Being who loves beauty no less than goodness has made the good and the beautiful identical, beauty

does not necessarily carry with it the idea of obligation. Because an act looks beautiful, I do not therefore feel bound to perform it, or self-condemned because I omit it. But I cannot perceive an act to be fitting without feeling that I ought to perform it, and condemning myself if I leave it undone. Fittingness has obligation inseparably bound up with it: beauty has not. Indeed, the beautiful covers a much wider ground than the fitting. Though nothing bad is beautiful, there are many beautiful objects and acts that have no definite moral character. There are large departments of art, taste, social refinement, which embrace various details of beauty, of even exquisite beauty, worthy to be prized, admired, sought, and cherished, yet as to which conscience has no word of approval, still less, of censure. I may cultivate the beautiful largely and sedulously on the neutral ground as to which there is no direct moral obligation, though on this ground, as on every field which human action can cover, there may arise questions as to moral obligation.

In the next place, beauty cannot be a moral test, because beauty is the characteristic of composite and matured goodness rather than of individual acts, and when of individual acts, of the acts and their grouping taken collectively. The lily is a beautiful flower; but you are in no way

impressed by the beauty of a single petal taken from the flower. All that you can say of it is, that it is not the opposite of beautiful. But if you leave out that one petal, you have spoiled the beauty of the flower. So, in moral conduct, the individual right act, especially while it remains an object of choice, may not impress you with its beauty, and a very different act in its place may seem to you more beautiful. But that right act, as one of the petals of your virtue when it shall have attained its full bloom, will have its part in the blossoming beauty, and its absence will be a sad blemish in that beauty. Let me illustrate what I mean by a supposed case. I have a sum of money in hand, more than I need for immediate use, but it may be several months before I shall again, if ever, have a surplus beyond my necessities. I owe a debt, which I ought to pay, yet can postpone, but with some risk of not being able to pay it. An urgent demand is made upon my charity, in a case of extreme need and one that claims my warmest sympathy. If I merely ask myself what is the most beautiful thing to be done, I certainly shall give my money to relieve the distress which craves my aid, and trust, not to Providence, but to improvidence, for some now unforeseen means of paying my debt. If I ask myself what is fitting, I shall pay the debt, and

yet I shall feel at the time that in dismissing this call of charity I am doing what is not beautiful. But in the aggregate of an upright life, if I shall lead such a life, this turning of a deaf ear to the call of pity will look beautiful, and had I wronged my creditor to relieve the sufferer, there would have been a petal wanting in my lily, — a lack of the perfect beauty, which can be made up only by parts and pieces, but to which entireness and symmetry in all its parts are absolutely essential.

We are, then, to make the fittingness or rightness of each individual act our standard, our reason for doing or for not doing; while the hope of building up a character that shall be beautiful in our own consciousness and in the sight of God may well be among our foremost motives to individual acts of duty. We may feel, too, that this inward beauty is of indefinite growth, — may be constantly adding to its fineness of fibre, its richness of tint, its delicacy of outline. Still more, it is its own beautifier. It constantly suggests ways in which it may be brought still nearer perfection. Beholding in God the Supremely Beautiful, the nearer its approach to him, the more clearly does it see what in itself may yet be corrected, added, supplied, filled in. Therefore is it that those who are the nearest to perfection are prone to feel themselves farthest from it, so that even a Paul

can say, "Not that I have already attained, or am already perfect." These saints are not less good than they seem; but the perfect beauty of holiness keeps them perpetually aware of what is still wanting in themselves, and therefore perpetually growing into the perfectness that globes itself in ever richer radiance to their view, as they themselves bear more and more of its image.

LECTURE X.

HEDONISM.

THE ethics of the latest physical philosophy will be my subject to-day. I might entitle my lecture "The Ethics of Positivism," for I believe that all the leading positivists of the present time are evolutionists; but it has been and might be otherwise: while it is of the connection of ethics with one phasis of the evolution-theory that I now propose to speak. I doubt whether the extreme evolutionists can be said to have any system of morals; for with them the moral faculties are physical instincts, and nothing more; but we want to know how they treat these instincts, and what they make of them.

Permit me, at the outset, to state my own position with regard to the evolution-theory. I have no objection to it on theological grounds, and, still more, as in contrast with the old belief in specific creation, I regard it as embodying the probable truth as to the lower orders of organized being, though it seems to me questionable whether it is

applicable in part, and certain that it is not so in its entireness, to man. Yet if one sees ample reason for saying "to the worm, 'Thou art my mother and my sister,'" I cannot gainsay him on any theological or Christian ground. As a matter of taste, I greatly prefer the genealogy too long to cite in full, which has for its ultimate links, "Which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God." But if I am compelled on adequate physiological grounds to trace my parentage back through a line of ambitious apes, frogs of advanced intelligence, and aspiring tadpoles, to homogeneous specks of protoplasm, I shall cling with only the stronger confidence to the last link, "Which was the son of God;" for I know that nothing short of omnipotence could give birth, growth, flowering, and fruitage to such an ancestral tree. Moreover, if self-consistency should compel me to derive all that Jesus Christ was "according to the flesh" from such a line of progenitors, I should be only the more imperatively compelled to own in the divineness of his humanity the "Lord from heaven." But, leaving man's spiritual nature aside, — when I contemplate the evolution of the universe — suns and systems, inorganic being, organized life, animals, and, it may be, the human body too — from pristine star-dust or star-mist the first thought that suggests itself is

that of a more profound sense of Almightiness and of Infinite Wisdom than was ever forced upon me by the popular cosmogony, and it is only with enhanced fervor that I rehearse the Apocalyptic song, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty."

Yet we must not forget that the evolution-theory, though not disproved, is not proved, and perhaps does not admit of absolute proof. All that we can say of it is, that it is an admirable working theory for the investigation of nature. But it must be confessed, first, that there are in the alleged chain of development missing links, and many series of continuous missing links, some of which may, however, yet be discovered, and add new weight of proof to the theory; and, secondly, that there seems no reason why the several thousand years of authentic human history should not have witnessed phenomena of the same order with those that preceded the birth of history. That the present tendency of scientific belief is in this direction is no argument; for science has repeatedly gone off with the fullest assurance on a false scent, and we have no more reason to place undoubting confidence in the theories of the nineteenth century than in those of the seventeenth. There is a broad difference between the comparatively little that science has actually discovered and the

inferences from that little that are extended over realms of fact and being of which there is not now, and perhaps can never be, clear and accurate knowledge.

I hardly need say that the evolutionists are divided, as to supersensual conditions, facts, and phenomena, into two classes. Those of one class believe that all organic being, man included, has been evolved from homogeneous protoplasm, but maintain that man has, in addition to what is of earthly extraction, a spiritual nature, with corresponding relations and affinities, and that God not only is, but is in a certain sense and measure cognizable by the human soul. Darwin, I think, never failed to admit, and to recognize with reverence, the being of a personal God. There are certainly in his works many passages that can have no other possible meaning than this. Asa Gray, who, as I suppose, is now acknowledged to be the chief expositor of evolutionism, is not only a theist, but a Christian believer, and a devout member of a strictly orthodox church. Men of this class do not of necessity have a peculiar system of ethics. They may or may not have one. There is no reason why they may not ascribe the phenomena of man's moral being to supra-material causes.

But many of the best known evolutionists are agnostics. Atheists they would not call them-

selves. There may be a God, for aught they know; but they have not been able to discover him by the microscope or the scalpel, and it would be very strange if they could. Their philosophy is complete without him. They know how the present universe came to be what and as it is. They can account on their theory for every thing that comes under the cognizance of their senses, and they are not willing to believe that there exists any thing of which the senses cannot take cognizance. It is their system — or substitute for a system — of ethics that is now before us.

Pleasure, they say, is the instinctive aim of every sentient being. It was the aim of man's brute ancestry, which, as they rose in the scale of being, were able to plan more intelligently for the procuring of pleasurable and the avoidance of painful sensations than at earlier stages of progress. At first, man can have had no knowledge or sense of the ulterior consequences of his acts. But experience at length taught him that certain acts which gave immediate pleasure were followed by much more than the pleasure's worth of pain, and that there were pains, and especially labors, not pleasurable in themselves, which were followed by much more than their counterbalance of pleasure. The habits of mature and foreseeing men and women gradually conformed themselves

to these discoveries; and there thus grew up an unwritten code of sanitary and self-protective rules of living, which were observed by persons who had a judicious regard for their own permanent well-being, were inculcated on children, and in some particulars were enforced on the community by the governing powers. The acts thus enjoined were deemed good in the same sense in which sunshine or a timely rain is good; and the omission of them, or conduct opposed to them, was deemed bad in the same sense in which a pestilence or a famine is bad. In fine, the ultimate and only meaning of good and bad as applied to conduct, and to habitual conduct, which is character, is precisely the same sense which they bear when applied to unconscious objects or agencies.

But this is not all. In the lower forms of animal life, there is no need of parental care for the preservation of species. The production is so large, that only a small proportion of the young are needed to replenish the stock; while the conditions of life are so simple that parental aid or oversight would be superfluous. The more advanced types of animals are less productive; and the young need for short periods nourishment from, or through the agency of, the parent. The perception of this need gives birth to the instinct for its supply. The ape-mother finds her young,

for a time, nearly as dependent on her as those of her savage human descendant will be on their mother. The instinct grows to meet the demand made upon it. When the human race has so far advanced that the child needs clothing and training, the parent not only sees this increasing demand, but feels the instinctive prompting to meet it. Growing dependence creates an ever-increasing intimacy of relation; and with this, parental love is developed in a way analogous to that in which home-love is formed from living long in one home, or in which one becomes attached in feeling to any oft-recurring association, or posture of circumstances, or mode of living. With this feeling, the parent's aim is to preserve the child's life, and to prepare him to receive the maximum of pleasurable sensations that his life can yield. This is what good nursing and good training mean and accomplish; and a good parent is good simply as the medium of procuring for the child's life, as a whole, an aggregate of pleasurable sensations and experiences which could not have accrued to him under nurture of a different type.

Another stage of human development is reached as man grows into a knowledge of the relations of human society around him to his own comfortable being. Mutual antagonism is the primitive state of society, inasmuch as every man is liable to

crave whatever possession or advantage any other man may have acquired. But mutual hostility and annoyance must have cost each member of society much more than they could gain for him; and the discovery must have been made at an early period in human history, that the *laissez faire*, the "let alone" system, was a means of securing the possession of pleasurable objects in hand, and of avoiding fear, discomfort, and pain. Thus there grew up the habit of armed, and gradually of unarmed, neutrality and non-interference among neighbors and fellow-tribesmen, and peace came to be regarded as good, because it was found essential to the maximum of pleasure and the minimum of pain; while war, which was and still is natural, and to which the native instincts still have frequent recourse, was acknowledged to be bad, because it was found to diminish pleasures, and to multiply pains.

In lapse of time, the interchange of mutual kindnesses was found to multiply pleasures and to diminish pains; and thus beneficence came to be regarded as good, simply because it blessed the giver by insuring ample return. Sympathetic relations grew up from this experience. As there is more pleasure than pain in almost every human life, and as pain is lightened when shared, it gradually came to be perceived that mutual fellow-

feeling added largely to each one's pleasures by participation in the pleasures of others, while each for the pain of sharing in the griefs of others was fully remunerated by the sympathy that lightened his own burden in the stress of pain or grief. Beneficence, with its whole train of virtues, graces, and amenities, thus became good, as a multiplier of pleasures, and a lightener of pains.

There is, according to this theory, no intrinsic quality in the acts called virtuous that could make them preferable, did they not insure a preponderance of pleasure. The opposite acts, if they on the whole yielded more pleasure, would hold the place of virtues. But society demands of its individual members the acts and habits which will yield to society the largest amount of pleasure, and this demand is all that there is in what moralists call the stress or urgency of duty. Duty has no meaning, as expressing what is due to any being or object outside of one's self. But one owes to himself his own happiness, which he forfeits unless he practises what are commonly called virtues. Bain expressly says that external authority, enforced by penalty or punishment, is the sole ground of obligation; and John Stuart Mill maintains that the fear of pain alone can create the sense of obligation implied in the word "ought" and in kindred terms. Thus, the proper mode of

impressing a sense of obligation has its type in the story in the Book of Judges, in which it is said that Gideon "took thorns of the wilderness and briers, and with them he taught the men of Succoth." Our fathers, a century ago, when the sternest domestic discipline was in fashion, were certainly in advance of their time in their realistic mode of enforcing obligation by the free and vigorous use of the rod; and I am surprised that evolutionists do not recommend the revival of ancestral methods.

Conscience, according to this theory, is entirely factitious. It is, in great part, hereditary; for in a family, habits of conduct, when general and long continued, modify the structure of the brain and the nervous organism, so that the child has a native propensity to do what his ancestors have done; and there is a disturbance of cerebral action, a flow of nervous fluid or force in opposite directions at the same time, if he does what his ancestors have not done, or omits doing in fit time and way what they have done. Still further, if his father and his ancestors have acted counter to their better proclivities, and have had in consequence this disturbed nervine circulation, he may inherit equally their disposition to do or to omit doing and the interior disturbance consequent upon it. Race-characteristics also have their coun-

terpart in brain and nerve; and he who acts otherwise than they would prompt, suffers in brain and nerve for his dissent from his race. But this, so far as it goes, is a physical suffering. It has no more of what most persons call a moral element in it than dyspepsia, to which in many particulars it bears a close analogy.

What is called conscience results, also, in part, from the observation of what is approved or disapproved by parents, by society, by mankind in general. In the direction of their approval, the nerve-force is well balanced and untroubled; while it is disturbed and made abnormal by acts which they disapprove. Were the habits of society such as we call immoral, the physical conscience would be in their favor. If it be not a myth that the Spartan boys were educated to steal, and received the highest praise for stealing adroitly, it would have been the honest boy that had the troubled conscience.

This theory, of course, dispenses with religious sanctions. Religion is a development of fear. Fear prolonged deepens into awe. Awe of things distant, grand, immense, rises into reverence. These sentiments were originally felt for the whole realm of the unknown, and for whatever was mysterious or unknown in objects partly known. Thus religion, in its rude beginnings,

when man was profoundly ignorant of all things, attached itself to every object. But as man's knowledge advanced, the mysterious receded, and had for its objects of dread and awe things either incomprehensible or beyond human control; and as even these gradually became the objects either of accurate knowledge or of plausible hypothesis, religion changed its ground to an imaginary realm of being, wherein were the still unknown and unimagined causes even of familiar objects and phenomena. But polytheism was still inevitable; for nature was full of contrasts, antagonisms, conflicts, indicating separate and even discordant divinities. These gods, having finite natures and human passions, could be appeased and flattered by worship, and propitiated by offerings. Hence the entire paraphernalia of images, shrines, temples, priests, and sacrifices. Not till the harmonies of nature were discovered, and glimpses were obtained of the cosmos as a whole, did monotheism begin to enter timidly and tentatively into the speculations of a few far-seeing philosophers, still scorned and scouted by the multitude. But more frequently, especially in the East, even with advanced philosophers, monotheism recoiled before the unsolvable problem of evil. Hence the dualism — the tokens of which still linger within the precincts of Christianity — which shares omnipo-

tence between rival and opposing divinities, Ormuzd and Ahriman, God and Sàtan, the supremely good and the supremely malevolent. A still higher philosophy expels both from the realm of thought. The innate power of combination and development in primitive atoms is sufficient to account for all the phenomena of the universe. Given the original nebulous world-mist (how that came into being, these philosophers do not pretend to know), given the world-mist and a past eternity, self-organization in the lapse of ages was inevitable. When this is clearly seen, man will be ultimately emancipated from religious belief into full faith in the omnipotence of automatic nature. This happy condition has as yet been reached only by a few precursors of the race, — prophets they, destined to be the fathers of a new era of a philosophy wholly material and terrestrial, which will believe only what it can see, handle, analyze, and label, and which will in due time extend its sway over the entire realm of things seen, and will spurn the existence of the unseen as the superstition and fable of ages of darkness and ignorance.

The most plausible argument for the evolutionist-theory of morals is that it seems to correspond closely with certain obvious and well-known facts of observation and experience. What is called

virtue is undoubtedly productive of a preponderance of pleasure, and a perfectly virtuous world would be a perfectly happy world. On the other hand — it is urged by the evolutionists — were not virtue the surest way to happiness, it would be unfavorable even to the continued existence of the race; for it is only by a preponderance of pleasurable sensations that life is made endurable and desirable, while under adverse conditions the race would gradually die out. Thus, were not virtue necessarily pleasure-yielding, the prevalence of virtue would be fatal. This statement of the case is not entirely true; for it has been found that when, from other causes than virtue, life becomes hardly worth living, the rate of growth for the population is increased, in the absence of all prudential checks upon early and improvident marriages. But these philosophers are right in saying that virtue is pre-eminently pleasure-yielding; and there are two reasons why it must be so, even though it have intrinsic properties of its own, entirely independent of its capacity to yield pleasure. In the first place, what is virtuous is fitting, and we should antecedently expect that the fitting would yield more pleasure than the unfitting. Secondly, if the Supreme Being himself recognizes the fitting as the Right in his administration of the universe, his providence cannot but favor

those who make the same choice and obey the same law with himself.

But there is reason to believe that there is in man a moral faculty, peculiar to him, native in him, and not to be traced, even in its rudimentary forms, in the beasts that else approach the most nearly to him. We discern in these beasts no sense of the intrinsic fitness of things. We must admit that they have general ideas, and are therefore capable, in a certain sense, of abstraction. A horse can evidently practise the logical processes of induction and deduction sufficiently to know as a stable a building that he sees for the first time. But we have no proof that any of these animals have ideas corresponding to other than material objects. We can detect in them no traits or tokens of moral self-consciousness. They seem to have no original sense of right and wrong as qualities of acts; and with them so far have all symptoms of a moral nature been wanting in the higher stages of development, that man's reputed nearest kinsman, the monkey, were he deemed a subject for moral characterization, would be regarded as totally and unredeemably depraved. Of all the beasts with which man is ever brought into close relations, this creature is the very one on whose honesty, good behavior, and trustworthiness he places the least dependence. Nor in beasts of the

best nature and the most pliant susceptibility of training do habits that have almost a moral aspect leave any permanent traces in the character of the race. Take the descendant of a long line of those noble St. Bernard dogs that have been employed for centuries in the most humane services, and give him to a brutal owner, — it will require but a month or two to make him as savage as his master, ready to spring at the throat of the transient wayfarer, or to bear a gleeful part in any act of lawless depredation, and he will show as much self-complacency in so doing as his ancestors ever did in drawing a benighted traveller from a snow-drift. Nay, give one of these beasts to a Christian gentleman, who will train him in all humane and courteous ways, if there be a flock of sheep within running distance, he will slink off by night, and slay, not one lamb for food, but as many as he can kill, in mere wanton sport. Docility and obedience are the nearest approach to morality that any beast has ever made, and there are never any tokens of relenting or recalcitration under any mode of training or type of required service.

There are, in the next place, facts in human nature and history for which it is impossible to account on the theory that pleasure is man's sole good, and pleasure-seeking his highest aim, — a theory to which I will give the name by which it

is often called, hedonism,[1] from the Greek ἡδονή, *pleasure.* I cannot see that this theory accounts for parental love, even in beasts, still less, in human beings. It is, indeed, necessary that the higher races of animals should be cared for; but the care is in a large part pain, and beings whose very nature is more than all things else pleasure-loving and pleasure-seeking could hardly be expected to court pain. The theory signally fails as to birds, when we consider the foreseeing labor of nest-building for the sole purpose of sheltering the young that are to be, the untiring vigilance of the male and the unwearied patience of the female bird during the incubation, and the judicious as well as painstaking choice and preparation of food for their progeny. All this looks like, not merely mind and purpose, but a love that even anticipates its object. It is instinct indeed, in a certain sense blind instinct, but, according to the hedonic theory, by no means a natural development. All that we can say is, in the spirit of the old classic dictum, *Deus est anima brutorum*, "God is the soul of the brutes."

To pass to the human parent, by the theory of

[1] A term first employed to denote the philosophy of Aristippus and the Cyrenaic school, according to which virtue has no characteristics of its own, but is to be sought and valued only for the pleasure which it gives, pleasure being man's sole aim.

hedonism parental hatred would be inevitable. The first impulse of hedonism would be to put the child out of being; or if there were some hesitation at the thought of infanticide, the minute, incessant, annoying labor which the child's necessities crave could create only disgust and abhorrence; for enforced labor is pain, and whatever gives pain is, on the hedonic theory, an object of dread and hatred. Even were it contended that the mother's intimate relation to the child would make her love her offspring as offspring, as virtually a part of her own being, no such consideration could account for the father's love, care, and self-sacrifice. In fine, the theory under discussion reverses all conceivable conditions. That love should prompt painstaking labor, and make it appear necessary, seems and is perfectly natural. But that the necessity of preserving the species should prompt beasts at a high, or man at a low, stage of development to painstaking labor which serves no selfward end, and that this labor should generate love, is what we can hardly conceive of in the nature of things, if that nature be spontaneous evolution, and not a Supreme Will. Moreover, that parental affection is not co-ordinate with the degree of physical and mental development, and is therefore not natural in the merely physical sense, may be seen from the fact that it has

been at a very low grade in countries and times of advanced civilization and refinement, so that St. Paul hardly exaggerates the known condition of domestic life in Rome itself, and in the age immediately post-Augustan, when he speaks of the heathen as "without natural affection." Infanticide was then common in the Roman Empire, and was thought no crime; while, in the ages deemed retrograde in civilization and refinement that succeeded the Christianization of the Roman Empire, we have reason to believe that children's lives were held sacred.

The theory of hedonism is, I cannot but think, false to the inmost consciousness of those who profess it. If one of them would recall his earliest remembered self-consciousness, he would find that he had a sense of the Right before he began to anticipate any other than the immediate physical consequences of his acts; that he felt it wrong to lie before he knew whether lying would do him good or harm; that the sense of the pleasurable and that of the Right, though generally coincident in their objects, have in themselves been always separate, and sometimes divergent; and that, except when he is reasoning on the subject, he habitually thinks of the rightness or the wrongness of acts, without thinking of their pleasure-yielding qualities, and, conversely, of

the pleasurableness of objects, without thinking of their moral bearing or character. Moreover, there is an inverse proportion between the intensity of conscience and that of the hedonic impulse. In little children, who, if they love pleasure, have not yet learned how to seek it for themselves, conscience is often exceedingly quick and tender, — often so in a painful degree, which ought not to be the case with an hedonic faculty. Among adults, too, it is the least pleasure-seeking who are the most conscientious; and there is never brought to the tribunal of conscience the question of pleasurable or painful, but only that of right or wrong, without reference to consequences. So far as we can trace the sense of right back to its source, it certainly seems to be innate; and the distinction between the Right and the Wrong would not seem to us, constituted as we are, otherwise than clear and reasonable, were they equally pleasure-yielding. On the supposition that a man could be persistently false, treacherous, intemperate, or unchaste, and be therefore none the less happy in this world or in the world to come, there would still remain in the consciousness of moral agents precisely the same feeling that now exists as to the intrinsic wrongness of these vices, and the intrinsic rightness of the opposite virtues. Probably there is no more distinct

consciousness of the intrinsic difference between right and wrong than in the minds of those who find pleasure only in the wrong, and regard virtue as uncompensated self-denial. They know that there is a radical difference between the Right and the pleasure-yielding; and it is because there is no natural or intrinsically necessary connection between the two, that they are so blind to their general coincidence in their methods and objects under the ordering of a Providence both right-loving and joy-giving.

To pass to another head of argument, there is an entire upper realm of virtue, in which hedonism bears and can bear no part. There are many self-restraints and self-denials, not required even by the highest hedonic standard, which can by no possibility yield any selfward revenue, yet in which men will persist, with not the slightest expectation of pleasure from them. There are philanthropists, patriots, martyrs, who know that they are yielding up every thing pleasurable in this world, yet who shrink not from the severest torments and the most horrible modes of death. Nor can it be said that it is the hope of heavenly happiness that forms their inspiring motive. They would spurn indignantly the idea of purchasing heaven by earthly doings or sacrifices; and except where the alternative is denial of one's faith or martyrdom,

they would not suppose their heavenly happiness contingent on special, unusual, unrequired modes or acts of self-devotion. I have no doubt that the hope of heaven often bears a large educational part in making them the brave men that they are; but the mere love of pleasure, or quest of happiness, could never give birth to these exalted virtues and these noble characters. Still further, not only those who sacrifice themselves for existing institutions, interests, and faiths, equally the pioneers in moral progress, give the lie to the hedonic theory. They plant the standard in advance of their brethren at the risk, when not of life, of reputation and of worldly well-being. The foremost ranks, like the forlorn hope of an army, are sacrificed for the victory which they expect that not they themselves, but their successors on the field, will win.

In fine, virtue, in its highest sense, begins where pleasure-seeking ends. This I think that we shall see the more clearly, if we will analyze our own consciousness of merit. There is, you will undoubtedly admit, a sense of merit entirely distinct from, and bearing no kindred to, the sense of success in pleasure-seeking. When you have performed a duty, your consciousness is not, "I have gained a new pleasurable sensation," but, "I have done what I ought to have done." Suppose that

your life were so mapped out before you, and you so wise, that you could plan your conduct with a single eye to the attainment of the maximum of pleasure, and there were not an item of that conduct which was not right, yet if you pursued that course simply and solely because it was going to give you the maximum of pleasure, would not the consciousness of merit be entirely wanting? and would you not lack the very thing in which you really take more pleasure than in aught else, the ability to say to yourself, "I have done right"? You would feel that there could be no merit in doing right for the revenue that it will bring. If virtue is really the offspring of selfishness, then is the sun the child of Erebus, and the moon the daughter of Night.

Religion, too, disowns the parentage assigned to it by the evolutionists. So little has fear to do with it, that it may be said to be hopefully begun in the individual soul only when fear ends. In all the higher forms of religious consciousness the element of terror is entirely wanting. It is equally wanting in the initial stages of judicious religious culture. There is no purer religion than in the heart of the child whom his mother has taught to love, but never to fear, his unseen Father. His only thought is that of a genial, beneficent presence, of which his mother is the type. He prays

in his innocence to that Father, and has not a doubt that his prayer is heard as lovingly as it is offered; and no shadow of dread passes over his spirit till he comes into contact with those who make religion a terror, and under whose influence his religious feelings, so far from being quickened, are, more probably than not, enfeebled or dissipated.

These higher faculties, the moral and religious, are, then, if of brutal parentage, cut off from their ancestral tree, and show no token of their lineage. They manifestly have no affinities with brute instincts, and cannot by any possibility have been derived from proclivities which are entirely earthward, — which belong only to beings that have their destiny rounded off in this world, and to man solely in his earth-limited being.

Carlyle wrote many years ago, "There is in man a higher than love of happiness: he can do without happiness, and instead thereof find blessedness." Spencer, in his "Data of Ethics," ridicules this saying, which perhaps is not logically accurate, yet is profoundly true in its real and only possible meaning. What Carlyle calls blessedness is undoubtedly a happy state; but it is a type of happiness of which neither the desire nor the fruition can be brought within the range of the evolution theory. I could tell you of suffer-

ers whom I have known, whom I still know, who have been for years, in one case for thirty-eight years, deprived of the power of locomotion and of self-help, with never an hour of undisturbed sleep or a painless moment, and with no hope of recovery; in one such case that I well know, the privations and anxieties of extreme poverty are added to those of bodily infirmity; and these sufferers have been among the happiest of persons. It has been impossible to create a gloomy atmosphere about them; the sad have been made cheerful in their presence; and a settled serenity of mien and aspect has evinced that the cheerfulness in the presence of friends was not the result of spasmodic effort, but the fixed habit of the soul. This is a happiness or blessedness — call it which you please — which shows that there are phenomena of human experience for which physical evolution will not account. These thoughts of peace, these emotions of trust and gratitude and immortal hope, cannot have their origin in mere sensation, which in some of these cases is unceasing torment, so that life is made endurable only by closed and bandaged eyes, and the noiseless tread and subdued voices of attendants; nor yet in associations with these blurred and muffled sensations; nor yet in the remembrance of sensations, which in some instances have from infancy or early youth

been more or less painful; nor yet from the nerves themselves, which have become a rack of incessant torture. The entire realm of physical nature can have made no contribution to the happiness of these sufferers. They live in a world of affections and supersensual experiences, and from this world are poured in upon their strained and pain-stricken nerves the emotions that make their life, and peace, and joy.

These phenomena do not, indeed, belong immediately to the department of ethics, and yet they have a most momentous bearing upon it; for they demonstrate that human experience has a hold on a supersensual sphere; that it is susceptible of affections and conditions of feeling that cannot be brought within the line of evolution, and, still more, that there are states of mind or soul which so far transcend the pleasure or happiness that can be evolved from physical sources and by the physical organism, that the sufferers would gladly buy this blessedness at the cost of continued suffering, and would not resign it even for the promise of perpetual health and undecaying vigor. Now, it is in this region — not of necessity in its empyrean, but within its precincts — that morality has its place. If man, the sufferer, can scorn suffering for a higher than physical joy, man, the doer, is equally capable of spurning pleasure in

the discharge of duty, — of incurring even what seems to him evil beyond remedy, that he may preserve the testimony of a good conscience. Moreover, though the elevated condition of religious trust, peace, and joy, of which I have spoken, be not a frequent experience, I think that we shall find in our own consciousness that in all virtuous conduct there is experience differing from this, not in kind, but in degree. Virtue, the hedonists say, conduces to happiness. Of this I have no doubt; but in a very large number of instances, it is pleasure-yielding solely because it is virtue, and but for its property of rightness would give us no pleasure whatever.

We may test this statement by the remembered consciousness of our early childhood. Did we not then often perform very wearisome tasks at the bidding of our parents, go on their errands when we might have been on the playground, and put all the strength that we had into such assistance as we could render to them? And were we not always happy in thus doing? But it was the rightness of these things alone that made them a source of happiness. They were not things that we should ever have thought of doing in the quest of pleasure. Farther on in life, the youth of sound principles avoids the beginnings of evil, parts company, it may be, from more agreeable

companions than are left to him, shuns recreations and indulgences that are intensely appetizing, not because he is afraid of pain from what he foregoes, or because he doubts — however much reason there might be for his doubting — that he could be sufficiently moderate and self-restraining to prevent all unpleasant consequences from cautious and measured transgressions of the law of right, but solely because what he shuns is not right; and he is happy in making his ways clean, and keeping his youth undefiled, not because such conduct in itself yields superior pleasure, but because its rightness does make him immeasurably happier than it is in the power of the whole physical universe to make him. He has made himself a citizen of the supersensual realm, which yields a happiness that eludes, because it transcends, all physical standards of measurement.

In like manner, all along in life, the man who means to do his duty has to do many things the opposite of which would yield him more sensible pleasure, and very many more things the omission of which would conduce to his ease, comfort, and enjoyment; but they make him immeasurably happier than he could be made by omitting them or doing their opposite, solely because he feels their rightness; and he knows no happiness — or blessedness he might prefer to say, notwithstand-

ing Spencer's cavils — that can be brought into momentary comparison with the consciousness of rightness in his lifeway, and with the thoughts and purposes that give the trend and the impelling force to this lifeway.

In point of fact, we may turn the tables upon the hedonists. So far is its pleasure-yielding capacity from constituting the Right, that the Right by mere virtue of its rightness is the supreme pleasure-yielder. Still further, when we do right for the good that will come to us from it, for the income that it will bring us, we forfeit the income; for the rightness thus motived is on too low a plane to deserve to be called right. It is only when we do right because it is right, that we reap what is called in Holy Writ "the peaceable fruit of righteousness" in a happiness than which we can desire or imagine nothing higher or better.

LECTURE XI.

THE ETHICS OF THE STOIC SCHOOL.

I PROPOSE to give you, in this lecture, some account of the Stoic philosophy of morals, of its founder, its principal luminaries, and its influence. I single out this from other ancient systems for special description, because we have in the ethics of the Stoics the germ and partial development of the moral philosophy which underlies all modern systems that discriminate right from expediency.

The founder of the Stoic school was Zeno, a native of Cyprus, who came to Athens about 320 B.C. He lectured in the στοά ποικιλή, or "painted porch," a covered walk near the market-place; and this gives the name to his school. He was a man of singular simplicity, uprightness, and purity. He reached an advanced age in sound health of body and mind; but having met with a slight accident, — the breaking of a finger, — he took this as a warning of Fate that his work was over, and, in accordance with his own teaching, killed himself, in this respect leaving an example which was

followed with sad frequency by some of the greatest and best of his disciples.

According to his system, conformity with nature is the supreme good; that is, conformity, not with one's own nature alone, but with the nature of the universe. This conformity is virtue, and it is happiness. The reason is the faculty by which it is to be ascertained what nature requires. Wisdom is, therefore, essential to virtue, nay, practically, is coincident with virtue; for it is impossible to have a clear knowledge, a vivid perception, what we, in our common speech, term a realizing sense, of what is conformed to nature, without acting in accordance with it. The perfectly wise man, then, must be a perfectly good man. Just at this point there is a striking parallelism, yet with a difference, between Stoicism and Christianity. The Stoics maintained that the perfectly wise man had not made his appearance upon the earth. They denied this title even to Zeno. The Christian ideal has, in like manner, been approached by unnumbered aspirants, realized only in Him from whose life it is drawn.

Zeno maintained that there are no degrees of good or of evil either in character or in individual acts. The truly wise man has an intuitive knowledge of the right, and needs no teaching other than his own. He who is not wise is incapable of

the right as such, and it is by mere chance that in conduct he sometimes conforms himself to nature. All acts not wrought by a truly wise man are equally bad. Here we have a close parallelism with the Calvinistic dogma, which Genevan influence foisted into the Articles of the English Church, in the words, "Works done before the grace of Christ and the inspiration of his Spirit are not pleasant to God; yea, rather, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin." There are, according to Zeno, no comparative degrees of moral excellence.

Pleasure, it was maintained, is not to be considered as a good. It may accompany virtue, not, however, necessarily or always; but it is not a motive to virtue. Were it so, virtue would be its slave. Virtue and pleasure differ in essence. Pleasure may attend immoral conduct, and is its most frequent motive. Virtue requires labor, and may bring loss, pain, and suffering. The virtuous man is happy; but his happiness is rather negative than positive. It consists rather in the consciousness of freedom and the just equilibrium of all the powers and the affections than in what is commonly termed enjoyment. He who is in any way or degree dependent on outward circumstances cannot be happy; for he is always insecure. But he whose only cherished property is

the consciousness of virtue, is perfectly happy, because he cannot be moved or reached by any vicissitude of outward fortune.

The highest good, that is, perfect conformity to nature, is a law. The mere perception of it constitutes obligation. Emotions, whether of pleasure or desire, care or fear, are disturbing forces, befogging the reason, and, therefore, to be extirpated and abjured. The wise man is emotionless. Pain he must endure without yielding to it. Slander or abuse he ought not to feel, for it cannot affect the substance of his being. He has no vanity, and, therefore, he can be neither elated by honor nor depressed by dishonor. He has no pity for others; for what they endure would be to him of no account. How can he have compassion for that in others which in himself he would not feel?

According to the definition that has been given, virtue is, of course, one and indivisible. The several virtues differ not in their nature, but are only names for the kinds of occasions on which the one virtue is to be exercised.

From what has been said, you will see that the doctrine of universal human depravity, though commonly called Augustinian, is older than Christianity. The Stoics regarded all men as naturally depraved, and those of them who admitted the possible existence of a truly wise man believed in

instantaneous conversion. Up to a given moment a man belonged virtually to the depraved section of the human race: at that moment he passed into the permanent consciousness of sinlessness and of inability to sin. Extreme as this statement seems, is there not something like truth in it? Though the change of character is generally gradual, must there not be in the consciousness of every one who has been addicted to evil, a crisis, almost momentary, when the scale turns, when he virtually says to himself, "I will henceforth will only what God wills"? The error of the Stoics was in accounting wrong-doing after this crisis as impossible, even as the Christian Perfectionists maintain that sin after sanctification is impossible.

The Stoics also believed at the outset, though some of their great teachers afterward thought differently, that the wise, and therefore perfect, man, could never fall away from his estate of perfect wisdom, — a doctrine corresponding to the Calvinistic dogma of the perseverance of saints. You will mark how many parallelisms there are between Stoic and Calvinistic dogmas, making Calvinism seem almost a Christianized Stoicism.[1]

[1] This constitutes no objection to Calvinism. If I were a Calvinist, I should find confirmation and comfort in my beliefs, as I do with regard to certain great principles and laws of ethics, in their seeming to be part of God's unwritten revelation to the greatest and best minds and souls of the pre-Christian ages.

As to outward objects of desire, the Stoics recognized three classes. There are, first, those which, not good in themselves, may be auxiliary to virtue, as health, strength, wealth, social position, and the like. These, while not to be sought as ends, are not to be spurned as means. They are to be prized, yet not in or for themselves, but solely because they multiply opportunities for the exercise of virtue, and often add to its efficiency. Secondly, there are objects and pursuits which are directly contrary to nature; and these are, of course, to be shunned. In the third place, there are objects and pursuits so entirely indifferent that they cannot by any possibility be the objects either of choice or of antipathy. Objects of the first class, while they are never to be coveted, when possessed, are to be made availing, and to be resigned whenever they offer the slightest hinderance to the pursuit of the supreme good.

As regards society, the early Stoics attached very little importance to the family or to the state, but the utmost importance to the solidarity of the race and to the fraternity of its members. On this ground they advocated the humane treatment of slaves. They also laid intense stress on justice in all its forms, and on mercy, too, not as the impulse of pity, but as a part of justice,—as a debt which man owes to his fellow-man.

Passive submission to destiny, including under that head not only what we term the acts of Providence, but equally human tyranny, oppression, and wrong-doing, they regarded as of strict obligation, with two exceptions, namely, first, that it is a wise man's duty to take his own life rather than to yield to unmerited indignity or dishonor, and, secondly, that it is a wise man's privilege to escape in the same way from irretrievable calamity, incurable disease, or the failure of the active powers of body and mind inevitably consequent upon declining years.

Some of these dogmas were modified in the lapse of time. Degrees of demerit were recognized, and thus, virtually, degrees of merit, though still the perfectly wise man alone was pronounced virtuous in the highest sense; but while he existed only in theory, those the nearest to him were deemed abundantly meritorious. Then, too, there came to be recognized a class of secondary duties called "common" (*communia*), also "intermediate" (*media*), as midway between the perfect duties of which only the wise man is capable and the acts that are absolutely opposed to nature. These secondary duties were regarded as within the competency of persons not perfectly wise; they could be embodied in precepts, and inculcated by teachers; and by the discharge of them

one could grow into the condition of the perfectly wise. For the performance of these duties, men deserved to be characterized as good, though not as wise or perfect. Nor did the later Stoics treat outward goods with the utter disdain with which the early disciples of Zeno affected to regard them; and though they still contended that the perfectly wise man could be perfectly happy without them, they did not deny their value, when rightfully obtained, as factors in the happiness of those who made the nearest approach to perfect wisdom. These modifications were made before Stoicism obtained a permanent foothold in Rome.

The earliest Stoic philosopher of whom we hear in Rome was Diogenes of Babylon; but the member of the school who had the greatest influence in the imperial city was Panætius, the intimate friend of Scipio Africanus the Younger, whose treatise on "Duty," long since lost, was the source from which Cicero drew most ot the materials for his "De Officiis," the first and second books of which he himself characterizes as a free translation or paraphrase of the work of Panætius. The "De Officiis" is the best statement of the Stoic ethics of its time, and is also in some important particulars the master-work of all time in ethical philosophy. Strange to say, Cicero was

not a Stoic. He professed to belong to the New Academy, whose system was a hybrid of Platonism and Pyrrhonism; but he wrote this treatise for the benefit of his son, who — then at school in Athens — had been wild and dissipated, and had given his father a vast deal of trouble and apprehension. Cicero evidently thought the Stoic morals better for the youth than the somewhat looser code provisionally maintained by the philosophers of his own school. It was very much as if a Mahometan sage or a Jewish rabbi were to write for his son a treatise on the Sermon on the Mount, as likely to do the youth more good than the moral teachings of the Koran or the Talmud. The "De Officiis" is more Christian-like than any other pre-Christian ethical treatise. I could count on the fingers of one hand the sentences which a Christian might not have written; and the division is so exhaustive, and the arrangement so perfect, that there is room for the insertion of such maxims and principles as can be derived only from Him who "spake as never man spake." It professes to treat of the secondary or intermediate duties, which are, in fact, by the Stoic theory all the duties incumbent on the perfect man, with only this difference, that the perfect man is a law to himself, and in no need of teaching, while those on the lower plane, or rather on the upward

acclivity, need to have the steps of their ascending way clearly defined. The treatise is divided into three books. The first treats of the Right, as derived from and shown by nature, under substantially the four divisions which I designated as cardinal virtues. The second has for its subject the Expedient; and its aim is to show what outward goods may be secured, and how, consistently with the Right. The third discusses cases in which there seems to be a conflict between the Right and the Expedient, and maintains that the conflict is only seeming, never real, and that by no possibility can the right ever be inexpedient, or the wrong expedient.

Not a few of the best men among Cicero's coevals were of the Stoic school; and pre-eminent among them was Marcus Porcius Cato, who perished at Utica, — who, though as to his domestic relations he could hardly claim approval by the Christian standard, was regarded as the most inflexibly virtuous man of his time, and of whom it was, that, as to the civil war in which he slew himself rather than accept the pardon and peace which Julius Cæsar wanted to offer him, Lucan said, "The victor cause had the approval of the gods; that of the vanquished, Cato's."

Under the Roman emperors, Stoicism obtained growing ascendency in the best minds. With the

inrush of luxury, prodigality, and sycophancy, the opposite polarity had an irresistible attraction for characters of a better mould. A very large proportion of the victims of imperial jealousy and proscription, especially under Nero, were of this school; and there was a glorious array of noble women, too, some suffering with their husbands, others not attaining this privilege, yet by their courage making those dearest to them feel that it was far better to yield up life than to sacrifice integrity or honor. In the darkest times, there were Stoic philosophers who played the part of propagandists and missionaries, and others who went from house to house to minister strength to the death-doomed and consolation to the bereaved. We have instances on record of their having been sent for in crises of need and peril, as Christian ministers are now often called to the bedside or the house of mourning. In better times they found access to the throne, and no complacency for the purple or the diadem made them reticent as to the responsibility and the obligations of a ruler over men.

I propose now to give you some account of the leading Stoics in imperial Rome. First of all was Seneca, both greatest and least of all, — greatest as a writer, least as a man. His eulogists maintain that he was a man of pure character; but he

was repeatedly brought into such close proximity to evil, and incurred so many and diverse charges dishonorable to his reputation, that it seems difficult to make of him a consistently good man. Where there is dense and continuous smoke, there must be fire, even though you cannot see the blaze. Seneca was born in Spain, came to Rome in his childhood, studied rhetoric and philosophy, and acquired considerable reputation as an advocate. He was banished to Corsica by Claudius on the charge of a criminal intrigue with the emperor's niece; yet the charge, it is said by his defenders, was fully as likely to have been invented to account for the banishment as the banishment to have been the consequence of actual guilt. After eight years he was recalled through the influence of Agrippina who had just married Claudius, and was made tutor of her son Nero. It is claimed, on the one hand, that the good promise of Nero's early youth, and the mildness and clemency that characterized the beginning of his reign, were due to Seneca's healthful and intenerating influence; while it is alleged, on the other hand, that the debaucheries at which his tutor connived were the first stages on his vile and fiendish career. It is claimed for Seneca that he remained at Nero's court in the hope of exerting a salutary restraint on his lust and passion; but the restraint cer-

tainly left no traces in the record of Nero's reign. Whether Seneca counselled or abetted Nero in the murder of his mother and his own benefactress, does not clearly appear; but there can be no doubt that he wrote Nero's letter to the Senate, charging his mother with a conspiracy against him, and asserting that she committed suicide. Seneca was very rich, and lent money on what now seem usurious rates of interest; but it may have been that large emoluments of office came to him without his seeking them: and, as for usury, I doubt whether, in any age or state of society, money will ever command a higher rate of interest than may be measured by the profit of the borrower and the risk of the lender; and this last item under Nero must have been a very heavy one, as suspicion and the trail of the informer, who hardly ever failed to be a defamer also, followed all the routes where money made its way, and rested wherever money was to be found. When the tyrant had made all the use he could of the philosopher, and Seneca knew that his official career was over, he sought, by retiring from the palace, and offering to give up his property, to save his life; but, under the undoubtedly false pretext of his complicity in a plot against the emperor's life, he had the alternative presented to him of dying by another's hand, or by

his own. He chose the latter. His closing hours were tranquil, as became his philosophy. His personal habits were, at least after his return from Corsica, severely simple, almost ascetic; and his mode of living, though he was surrounded by splendor and luxury, could hardly have been more self-denying had he been dependent on casual alms.

Seneca's ethical works comprise treatises on a wide range of subjects, besides a large collection of letters to Lucilius, a young man to whom he stood in a relation like that held by spiritual directors in the Roman-Catholic Church. His moral precepts and the tone in which they are given are, for the most part, so thoroughly evangelical as to have led to the unauthentic tradition that he had made St. Paul's acquaintance, and had derived from the apostle the pervading sentiments of his moral writings. The tradition is very little to the credit either of the apostle or of the philosopher; for St. Paul ought to have made a more loyal convert than Seneca can possibly have been; while Seneca, if he had known Paul, might in some form or way have interposed in his behalf, — a step which would have left some record of itself in Christian history, if not in Seneca's own writings. Whether Seneca believed in the immortality of the soul, is a matter of doubt. He speaks

not infrequently of the future after death; but it is hard to say whether he means that men live on in fame and influence, or in their own proper selves.

Epictetus, a little younger than Seneca, was for many years the slave of a freedman and favorite of Nero. He was treated brutally by his master, who amused himself by twisting his slave's leg with some instrument of torture, and at length broke the leg, and lamed him for life. While still a slave, having undoubtedly brought from his native Epeirus the germs of liberal culture, he became a Stoic. How he obtained his freedom does not appear; but after he became free, he lived in a dilapidated hovel, and gave his instruction, without price, to all who were willing to be his learners. When Domitian banished all philosophers from Rome, he returned to his native country, and lectured there. If he wrote any thing, it is lost. What we have of him was written from notes taken from his lips or from memory by his pupil Arrian. He was universally esteemed for his purity and loftiness of character; and after his death he was held in such reverent remembrance that his lamp of coarse pottery was sold to a relic-hunter for three thousand drachmas, — a sum equivalent to seven or eight thousand dollars.

Epictetus summed up human duty in two words,

which might be rendered, "Bear" and "Forbear;" that is, endure bravely whatever comes upon you, and refrain from whatever can becloud your reason, impair your freedom of soul, or degrade you in your own esteem. There is not the slightest token of his having had any knowledge of Christianity or of its sacred books; and had he been acquainted with them, it is hardly possible, that, with a soul so well fitted for continued being, he should not have welcomed the revelation of immortality, which was manifestly beyond his belief and hope. But he evinces a profound and controlling sense of the divine presence, and a cheerful and loving trust in the divine providence. His idea of the true mission of the public teacher of philosophy is at once so lofty and so just that it might well serve in spirit, though not in its details, as an efficient charge to teachers of religion under Christian auspices. Non-Christian, indeed, we call him; but he certainly belongs among those of whom Jesus Christ says, "Other sheep I have, who are not of this fold." Take as a specimen the following passage: —

"Know, first of all, that whoever engages in so great an enterprise without the help of God becomes the object of the divine displeasure, and will only cover himself with shame in the eyes of all. Above all things else, he who is going to be

the preceptor of the human race must take himself in hand, must extinguish within himself his passions, must purify himself, must say to himself, 'My soul is the raw material which I must work up as the carpenter does the wood, or the shoemaker the leather.' Thus prepared, he must know that he is an ambassador of Zeus with men. He must preach by example; and to the poor, the disinherited, who complain of their lot, he must be able to say, 'Look at me. Like you I am without country, without house, without goods, without slaves. I lie upon the ground. I have neither wife nor child. I have only the earth, the sky, and a cloak.' Take counsel of God; and if he encourages you in your enterprise, know that he wishes you to grow great by suffering. The philosopher may be beaten like an ass; but if so, he must love the very persons who beat him, as a father and a brother of all men."

Epictetus equally wins our sympathy in his pious and fervent adoration of the Supreme Being. In one passage, after enumerating the benefits received from God, and lamenting man's ingratitude and indifference, he bursts into what needs only rhythm to become a hymn of praise.

"Since you, men, are most of you blind, is there not need of one to sing for all the hymn to the Deity? What can I do, old and lame as I am,

but to sing God? Were I a nightingale, I should play the part of a nightingale; were I a swan, that of a swan. I am a reasonable being: I must sing God. It is my business, and I do it. It is my part, and I will perform it as well as I can; and I beg you all to sing with me."

From the slave we pass to the throne. The Stoic philosophy had been, while Christianity was emerging from obscurity into the broad light of day, the only antiseptic which had preserved Roman society from utter and loathsome corruption; and its last triumph is in a Stoic emperor, Marcus Aurelius, who, together with the traits that render him truly great as a commander of men at home and in the field, manifests the simple virtues that would have made private life illustrious. In him the hardness of the old Stoicism has entirely disappeared. His philosophy is a gentle, tender, loving spirit, full of resignation, trust, and piety in its Godward aspects. He, of course, had no interior knowledge of Christianity, with which he could not have become acquainted without recognizing it as at every point in harmony with his own spirit. He persecuted it on political grounds, as threatening the unity of the empire; and he probably had no knowledge of the character of the Christians. He was educated with the utmost care, and under the happiest influences, and —

what is of at least equal importance — he seems to have inherited the finest traits of character. I have repeatedly spoken of heredity as a factor of character. I can hardly illustrate my belief on this subject better than by quoting from Marcus Aurelius his *résumé* of his obligations to those who had transmitted even more than formed his character: —

"From my grandfather [who brought him up] I learned good morals and the government of my temper; from the reputation and memory of my father [who died in his early boyhood], modesty and a manly character; from my mother, piety and beneficence, and abstinence not only from evil deeds, but even from evil thoughts, also simplicity in my way of living, far removed from the habits of the rich; from my grandfather, not to have frequented public schools, and to have had good teachers at home, and to know that on such things a man should spend liberally," — this last, at first sight, not a matter of heredity, yet virtually so; for Marcus Aurelius, while frugal, equally as to both personal and public expenditure, spared no cost in the encouragement of learning and of learned men.

He was, in the highest sense possible for those who had him in charge, consecrated from his infancy. At the age of eight he was made a priest

of Mars, and as such sang hymns in the temple, and took part in religious processions. At twelve he was already a professed Stoic, and commenced practising the ascetic usages and wearing the costume of the teachers and advanced disciples of that school, who formed what bore much of the semblance of a monastic order. He, at first, slept on a bare board, and only at the importunity of his mother consented to make use of the simplest and hardest of mattresses. When he became head of the empire, he had already had large administrative experience as the colleague of Antoninus Pius, whose adopted son he was. His reign was distinguished by rigid impartiality in the administration of justice, and by clemency wherever mercy could be a virtue. He gave personal attention to whatever affairs were brought under his cognizance, and availed himself of every opportunity of learning the actual needs of his people, and the ways in which those needs were met by his subordinates. The empire was declining. Internal grangrene was, indeed, checked to a great degree under his rule; but it had already become incurable. Outside barbarians were constantly crossing the frontiers, and encountering ever more feeble resistance. The army gave hardly less trouble than the enemies, composed as it was of various and discordant races, — mere merce-

naries, with no show or pretence of patriotism, and virtually holding the controlling power of the state. Marcus Aurelius was, during a considerable portion of his reign, absent from Rome on distant and arduous campaigns; and though the days of Roman glory were passed, he displayed as a commander an energy and skill worthy of the best times of the republic.

Of his writings we have, besides a few letters, his "Meditations,"—a journal probably intended for no eye but his own. In accordance with the practice recommended first by Pythagoras, and after him by philosophers of various schools, he was accustomed at the close of each day to pass its events and experiences in solemn review, that he might mark for correction or supply whatever had been wrong or defective, and might take his bearings for the next day's lifeway. The "Meditations" are the outcome of these hours of self-recollection. They consist, very largely, of self-examination, of reflections on the duties and on the mysteries of life, and, especially, of tenderly devout aspirations, indicating a firm and loving faith in the divine providence, and a sense of close spiritual union with the one Supreme Being. There is a constant recognition of the heavy responsibilities resting on a monarch's conscience, showing that his imperial dignity was regarded as

a sacred trust for his fellow-men, but for himself as a burden to be submissively borne, rather than as an elevation to be coveted. A pensive spirit runs through the entire book, as of a soul weighed down and weary. There is no clear expression of a faith in immortality; yet it is very evident that he had visions of a life beyond death, and longed to find them true. This diary was continued during his campaigns; and it would seem that no weariness, anxiety, or peril was permitted to interfere with his nightly soul-shrift.

He survived his senior colleague in the empire nineteen years, and died of a camp-fever near the site of the present city of Vienna, shortly after having obtained a signal victory over the rude German hordes that infested the eastern borders of the empire. In him Stoicism may be said to have found its consummation, and his is the last great Roman name that is specially identified with the Stoic school; though of the distinguished jurists in succeeding reigns, there were several known to have professed allegiance to the philosophy of the Porch.

At an earlier date, there was a Greek, who, though not professedly a Stoic, was so in principle and character, and whom I want to name as foremost among all the non-Christian ethical writers of antiquity, namely, Plutarch, a native of Bœo-

tia, who would probably have called himself an Eclectic, perhaps, a Platonist, who wrote against the Stoics, but only against those extreme dogmas which never had currency in Rome, and whose ethics are in most respects as closely conformed to the doctrines of the Stoics as if he had never had a thought beyond their pale. He was born about the middle of the first Christian century, and died at about the time that Marcus Aurelius was born. His "Lives" were written with a manifestly ethical purpose, "for reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness." He evidently felt and mourned the degeneracy of his time, was profoundly aware of the worth of teaching by example, and was solicitous to bring from the past such elements of ethical wisdom as the records of illustrious men could be made to render up. True to this aim, he measures the moral character of such transactions as he relates by the highest standard of right which he knows, and that is always virtually the Stoic standard, namely, truth to nature, or what we might, perhaps, more aptly term the intrinsic right; and no person or act is suffered to pass without the clear-cut stamp of his approval or censure. The only seeming exceptions are when, in a person renowned for really worthy traits of character and noble deeds, he is inclined to ascribe what is bad or wrong to

defective knowledge rather than to defective principle.

But the "Lives," though the best known, are but a small part of Plutarch's works. The treatises included under the general title of "Moralia" are, most of them, on distinctively moral subjects, and cover a very wide range of topics, discussing at length what are commonly, though wrongly, called the minor morals, that is, the evils that infest and disturb the happiness of families and of social life, and their opposite virtues, and no less full and thorough on the reputedly larger subjects usually treated in works on moral philosophy. Thus we have, on the one hand, essays on Idle Talking, Curiosity, Self-Praise, and the like; on the other hand, such grave themes as "The Benefits that a Man may derive from his Enemies," and "The Best Means of Self-Knowledge." There is in these essays a blending of common sense and of keen ethical insight; and so little does human nature change with its surroundings, that a very large proportion of Plutarch's counsels, cautions, and precepts are as closely applicable to our own time as if they had been written yesterday. There are, too, letters of consolation, rich, sweet, and tender, and breathing so firm a faith in immortality as to be hardly transcended by the most glowing utterances of St. Paul when

the crown of martyrdom seemed close at hand. There is a letter to his wife on the death of a daughter two years old during his absence from home, which contains very little that a Christian father might not have written, and which seems to me to surpass in elevation and purity of thought and feeling, in spirituality and heavenly-mindedness, all other writings of the kind that I have ever seen. I cannot but feel that somehow Easter-morning rays had struggled through the dense Bœotian atmosphere, and that Christ had spoken to the receptive hearts of those whose "eyes were holden so that they could not see him."

The most remarkable of all Plutarch's writings is a dialogue on the "Delay of the Divine Justice," or retribution. It treats of what from the earliest time has been a mystery to serious minds, and an objection urged both by malignant irreligion and by honest scepticism against the supremacy of the divine justice in the government of the world, namely, the postponement of the penal consequences of guilt, sometimes till there are no witnesses of the crime left to behold its punishment, sometimes till the offender himself has lost the thread between the evil that he did and its retribution, sometimes till the offender has gone to the grave in peace, and left innocent posterity

to suffer for his sins. Plutarch, with his unquestioning faith in immortality, doubts not that guilt has its due retribution in the life to come. But, as he says, retribution, though it may have its consummation in the future life, is never delayed till then. It seems late because it lasts long. The sentence falls upon the guilt when it is committed; and however its visible execution may be postponed, the sinner is thenceforth a prisoner of the divine justice, awaiting execution. He may give splendid suppers, and live luxuriously, yet it is within prison walls from which there is no escape.

This is universally and inevitably true with reference to deliberate guilt and to continuous depravity. Yet there are cases of a different kind, in which the delay of retribution has a directly merciful purpose. As the most fertile soil may produce before tillage the rankest weeds, so in the soul most capable of good there may be, prior to culture, a noisome crop of evil, and yet God may spare the sinner for the good that is in him, and for the signal service, which, when reclaimed, he will render to mankind. Plutarch gives several instances of this, to which Christian history might add many more from St. Augustine down to our own day.

Then, again, as Plutarch says justly and impres-

sively, by the delay of visible judgment God gives men in his own example the lesson of long-suffering, and rebukes their promptness in resentment and the hot haste in which they are prone to revenge injury.

Still farther, when the penalty appears to fall on the posterity or the successors of the guilty, and a race, a city, or a people seems punished for the iniquity of its progenitors, Plutarch brings out very fully the absolutely essential and necessary solidarity of the family or the community, which can hardly fail so to inherit of its ancestors in disposition and character as to invite upon itself, and to merit for itself, the consequences of ancestral guilt. At the best, the alternative will be the guilt, or the punishment which may deter from sin and issue in the purging away of inherited evil.

This treatise is all the more valuable because not written by a Christian. It shows that the intense stress laid by Christianity on a righteous retribution lasting beyond the death-change is not a mere scriptural dogma, but the postulate of the unsophisticated reason and conscience of developed humanity.

LECTURE XII.

THE INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS ON ROMAN LAW.

CHRISTIANITY must very early have acquired an influence in the aristocracy and the governing classes of Rome and the Roman Empire. To be sure, its profession was at first almost wholly confined to Jews and slaves. But the very banishment of Jews from Rome by Claudius — a decree the force of which was soon spent — shows that they were an important factor of Roman society; and as large numbers of the Jews not in Judæa were merchants, and many of them persons of superior culture, their ideas and sentiments could easily have obtained currency among both the speculative and the active members of the community. Moreover, though the social relations of Jews in Rome with persons of high office or position cannot in general have been intimate, we have record of some very close intimacies of that kind, as of the Herod family in all its branches with the family of Pollio, and with those of other

chief men of the state. In the Roman mind it was long before Christianity assumed a form distinct from Judaism; and it is by no means improbable that among the few Jews who lived in terms of familiarity with distinguished Roman families, there were some Christians.

That there were many Christian slaves in Rome during the first Christian centuries, we very well know. It must be borne in mind that slavery, though absolute in its sway, and often abject in its condition, gave numerous special opportunities of extended and enduring influence. The offices of secretary, amanuensis, librarian, and instructor of youth were generally filled by slaves, as were the nearest and most confidential relations of domestic service. In very many cases the slaves were the most intelligent and the best educated members of the family. St. Paul, writing from Rome, speaks of the saints, or Christians, in Cæsar's, that is, Nero's, household — slaves, of course, or freedmen — as persons well known and highly respected in Christian circles, who must have been capable of exercising a somewhat extended influence. Now, in what form would this influence have been exerted? Seldom in any direct attempt at proselytism. For the most part, not even in an open profession of the despised and suspected faith; for there was doubtless sincere loyalty to Christ in

many a soul not ambitious of the crown of martyrdom, — in men who would not for their lives have denied their Master, yet were not unwilling to shun needless publicity in their adherence to their religion. The genuinely Christian body-servant, scribe, or instructor would rather have availed himself of his familiarity with the teachings of Christ by giving utterance to a higher ethical wisdom than the world had known before, by breathing and diffusing a more humane, tender, philanthropic spirit, and, wherever it was safe to do so, by giving prominence to that idea of brotherhood and equality in the sight of God which so strongly characterized the precepts and spirit of Christ. Such ideas would have taken root and fructified in contemplative and philosophic minds, and would have manifested themselves in literature before they could find embodiment in legislation, thus modifying the administration of the law before they could obtain distinct recognition in its text.

Stoicism at and after the time of Nero bears this imprint, having passed, in the Latin phrase, *per saltum*, "by a sudden bound," rather than by insensible gradations, from a hard and coarse asceticism into an ethical system pre-eminently humane, genial, fraternal, and catholic. As I said in my last lecture, there is no reason to suppose that Seneca ever saw St. Paul, or had any knowledge of Chris-

tianity as such, though there is extant a spurious correspondence between them, evidently a figment of the Middle Ages; but that both he and Epictetus, and equally Plutarch in Bœotia, had ethical notions derived really, though indirectly, from Christian sources, I have no manner of doubt; and as for the Romans whom I have named, the position of Seneca as Nero's tutor and prime minister, and that of Epictetus as the slave of one of his freedmen, would, not unnaturally, have brought them sometimes under the wordfall of Christian lips. Moreover, the Stoic philosophers, in reigns when philosophy was not under the ban of the empire, were generally public teachers, and at all times exercised quite largely, as Epictetus did after his emancipation, a ministry not unlike that of the Christian pastorate. In ways like those which I have specified, I think that we may justly ascribe to the indirect agency of Christian sentiment a gradual preparation of the more intelligent and virtuous non-Christians for the improved legislation under the Christian emperors. Here we cannot but recognize the appropriateness of the figure, trite only because so very apt, by which Christ is called the Sun of righteousness. The sun cannot mount above the horizon without its light penetrating into recesses and depths which its direct rays can never reach.

So the morning beams of our unsetting Sun were reflected upon regions of humanity in which the name of Christ was utterly unknown, and on which its direct rays shone not till it had ascended far toward the zenith.

The efficient reformers of the Roman law were, all of them, nominally Christians. Constantine, in the interior, spiritual sense of the word, can hardly be called a Christian, certainly not, if judged by the aggregate of what is known of him; but he called himself a Christian, and his improved legislation was dictated by bishops who were his conscience-keepers. Justinian, the greatest legislator of all time, was a zealous Christian, in some respects only too zealous; for he was an unrelenting persecutor of heretics, Jews, and pagans. Of the series of Christian emperors in the early centuries, there was hardly one whose decrees and enactments did not bear the impress of his faith, and effect something in vindication of the rights of long-oppressed humanity. To verify this statement, let us consider under several heads the influence of Christianity upon Roman law.

To begin with slavery, there has never existed elsewhere in the civilized world a system of slavery to be compared in point of barbarity with that of Rome, — all the worse because its victims

were so often the equals or superiors of the enslaving race, and capable, therefore, of feeling its indignity to the full. It was the general custom of Roman commanders, in taking a city, to put into the slave-market all the inhabitants that they did not slaughter; and prisoners of war, when not slain, redeemed, or exchanged, were always enslaved. Romans themselves might be made slaves. By a law of the Twelve Tables, of the repeal of which we have no record, though the last clause probably fell into disuse, a debtor who remained insolvent after sixty days' imprisonment might be sold as a slave, or killed, and his body divided among his creditors. The master's power over his slaves was unlimited. The slaves had no legal rights. Their testimony was taken only by torture, and they could be scourged or branded at the master's pleasure. They were often killed on frivolous pretexts, for slight offences, for the amusement of guests, as targets for archery, for the fattening of lampreys, in passion or in sport, on groundless suspicion, or to gratify the pique or whim of an imperious mistress or a spoiled child. If a master were murdered by an unknown hand, it was lawful to kill the entire family of slaves on the contingency that one of them might have been the murderer; and there were instances in which hundreds of lives were sacri-

ficed under this law. The slaves had no property except by sufferance, and what they were permitted to have became the master's property when they died.

Under Nero, yet certainly not out of his own heart, but very probably from the prompting of some of the Christian influences that must have been at work in his court, it was enacted that a magistrate might receive the complaint of a slave against his master; and it is on record that rescripts of Antoninus Pius, in whose reign Christian influence was already largely felt, declared the master who killed his slave guilty of murder, and ordered the sale to other masters of such slaves as took refuge in temples or under the statues of the emperor, in case the magistrate ascertained that the charge of cruelty was well grounded. But these ordinances must have been mere dead letter, for there is not the slightest mention made of them till they are cited in Justinian's "Institutes:" and though the literature of the first three Christian centuries throws a most ghastly light on the horrors of slave-life, and though Seneca is unsparing in his denunciation of cruelty to slaves, there is before Constantine's time but a single instance of any penalty imposed on a cruel or tyrannical slave-owner; and that is the case of a young girl who was condemned by Hadrian to

banishment for the atrocious torture of her female slaves.

Constantine, after his nominal conversion, issued the first edict for the protection of slaves which seems to have had any actual efficiency; and from that moment a new era took date, and the slave thenceforward lived, like the free man, under the shelter of the magistracy and of the imperial power. Constantine enacted that the master who killed his slave, or subjected him to any one of several species of torture specially enumerated and defined, — all so horrible as to be unfit for quotation, and showing how little difference there is between humanity at its worst estate and the popular conception of the arch-fiend, — should be arraigned and punished as a murderer. He also made the manumission of the slave a religious act, to be performed in the church, with the attestation of the bishop; and in the spirit of this edict, when in process of time other business came to be prohibited on Sunday, manumission, as a religious duty, was not only permitted on the Lord's Day, but was regarded as specially appropriate to its consecrated hours. Constantine also granted to the clergy — thus showing the mind of the clergy in this matter — the privilege of emancipating their slaves by mere verbal concession, without

legal formality; and the clergy in great numbers availed themselves of this privilege.

Under Constantine, also, the freedmen obtained for the first time the full rights of citizenship. They had before been obliged to perform certain prescribed services for their masters, and to support them if they became impoverished; and if the freedman died intestate, his entire property became that of his former master. But Constantine completed their enfranchisement.

Justinian made numerous provisions in favor of emancipation. It is impossible to say at what date, but not far from his time, it became a maxim of the unwritten law, recognized in all the courts of the empire, that the child followed the fortunes of the father, so that the acknowledged child of a free man by a slave mother was free, — a maxim which was generously extended to all cases of doubtful parentage, — humanity often finding easy tolerance through a legal fiction.

From the very first, slaves were admitted to holy orders without reference to their servile condition, on the ground that the gospel treated with equal honor, as Jew and Gentile, so bond and free; and we have the names of several men of high rank in the Church who were ordained as slaves, and of several eminent martyrs, some of them canonized saints, who were slaves. The Christian

emperors, from Constantine onward, encouraged and facilitated the emancipation of slaves in orders, till at no late period a bishop or priest was pronounced free by the mere fact of his ordination. Slaves that anyhow became the property of churches, as they often did by legacy or gift, were almost invariably set free; and slaves were not infrequently bequeathed to churches, with an express view to their emancipation under conditions that would insure to them sympathy, protection, and help. At an early period it became discreditable to an ecclesiastic to hold slaves.

The Christian clergy from the very first discouraged the vague and irregular matrimonial unions which prevailed among slaves, and we find before Constantine's time tokens equally of their strong feeling and of their almost utterly ineffectual action in this behalf; while under the Christian emperors, though they were always in advance of the law, the law followed their lead, until, long before the cessation of domestic slavery, slave-marriage was under the same legal restraints and sanctions with the marriage of free men and women.

As regards labor, the Christian emperors extended to the slaves the same prohibitions that were imposed on free men. Constantine forbade all labor on Sunday, except such as might be

necessary to save exposed and imperilled crops and fruit. Valentinian prohibited labor, also, on Christmas, on Epiphany, in Holy Week, and on the festivals of St. Peter and St. Paul. At the same time, under directly Christian influence, largely aided by the legislation which it prompted, labor was clothed with dignity and honor; industry became respectable among free men, which it had long ceased to be in Rome and its dependencies; arts, trades, and manual labor in agriculture, were no longer regarded as menial, and the slave ceased to be degraded by industries which, in the earlier days of the empire, had been tokens of disgrace and infamy.

Thus, in many and diverse ways slavery was ameliorated long before it ceased to be; the distinction between the slaves and the free was gradually obliterated; and at the same time the number of slaves was constantly decreasing, till about the time when the power of the Church reached its culmination the last vestiges of chattel-slavery vanish from history, and the great curse is exorcised, the crushing burden rolled off from all Christendom, to re-appear only when Christ and the earth-spirit are in conflict for supremacy in our New World, and the arm of the Church — not unready to bear part in the struggle — is too feeble to wield its power across the intervening Atlantic.

We will next consider the action of Christianity on the Roman law as to the sacredness of the marriage covenant. The legal liberty of divorce on the part of the husband, even in the purest days of the republic, was unlimited, though then hardly ever exercised. As Rome grew rich and luxurious, divorces became frequent, and were made on the most frivolous grounds. Paulus Æmilius, who was eminently virtuous in the estimation of his contemporaries, divorced his confessedly blameless and excellent wife with no other excuse than, "My shoes are new and well made, yet I must change them, — no one but myself knows where they pinch." In Cicero's time, divorce had become so common among men of good repute that Cicero's own case was a rare one, inasmuch as he could give plausible reasons for divorcing his thirty years' wife and the mother of his children, in her bad temper, her extravagance, and her disposal against his interest of some separate property of her own, as also for the divorce of her successor Publilia in her lack of sympathy with him in his grief for the death of his daughter. You are all familiar with the story — too disgusting to be repeated in its details — of Livia's forced divorce, to be married to Augustus Cæsar. From his time onward for three centuries, no husband whose personal endowments, rank, or wealth

made him an object of desire could escape the intrigues of shameless women seeking to supplant his wife in his household. Meanwhile marriage *cum conventione in manum* (so called), the only marriage by which the wife became legally a member of the husband's family, was almost disused, and marriage *sine conventione*, that is, without a legal change of the wife's family relations, gave her the same right of divorce which the husband had always possessed. Accordingly, wives were on the watch to improve their condition; and we read of women who reckoned their husbands by years, and changed them as often as the municipal elections came round.

This freedom of divorce was bemoaned and denounced by the Christian Fathers, and was not tolerated in Christian society; but it received its first legal check from Constantine. He issued an edict, by which a wife could obtain divorce from her husband, only if he were a homicide, a magician, or a violator of tombs, whether for plunder or with sacrilegious intent; and a wife could be divorced only if she were an adulteress, a dabbler in the black art, or a procuress. Edicts still less favorable to divorce were issued by Honorius and other later emperors; and Justinian's code left the law of divorce, if somewhat less rigid than that of the New Testament, still in a much more

healthy condition than prevails at this moment in any part of the United States. In all the countries of Southern Europe, whose codes were founded on the civil or Roman law, under the growing ascendency of the Church, the law of Justinian's code was so far modified as to make adultery the only ground of divorce, and to incapacitate the divorced husband or wife from forming new matrimonial relations.

As to the definition of the degrees of kindred within which marriage was authorized, I know not of any prohibitory legislation in pre-Christian Rome; but custom had in this respect followed the leading of nature, except that there were instances of the intermarriage of uncle and niece. But the Christian emperors very early made the prohibited degrees of the Levitical code the subject of positive enactment.

Another important department of legislation is that which relates to the *patria potestas* (so called); that is, the father's power over the child. By the old Roman law this power was unlimited, extending even to the child's life. Our common phrase, "to bring up" a child, is derived from the Latin *tollere*, to "lift up" from the ground or the floor; for in the early time it was by this symbolic act, or its omission, that the father signified his determination whether the new-born child should

live or die. The father, so long as he lived, had sovereign power over his child's destiny, services, earnings, and domestic relations. The only exception was that of the *peculium castrense*, that is, the wages of military service, which under Augustus, and not earlier, was made the son's own property; and this exception was due, not to any sense of the fitness that men in their full maturity should have something that they could call their own, but to the desire to enlist larger numbers of native Roman citizens in the army, which had become to a dangerous degree, and continued to be, for the most part, a band of mercenaries from remote provinces.

While adult children might still continue subject to a father's tyranny till they themselves were old men, the practice of infanticide remained without legal check or hinderance; and, at the begining of the fourth century, Lactantius speaks of it as a common practice, to which was attached neither penalty, reproach, nor shame. It was not till near the middle of the third century, that the right of the father to kill his adult children was legally repealed, though we find no mention of its exercise after the reign of Nero; and the last instance of it on record, was one in which the father hardly escaped with his life the indignation of the public. Until near the close of the third century,

a father might sell his children, of any age, into slavery. Diocletian limited this right to the sale of new-born children by parents in extreme penury. Of course there was little demand in the slave-market for slaves of so very tender age. Children had previously been, to a very considerable extent, bred for the slave-market; and this edict of Diocletian multiplied largely the cases of the exposure of children with a view to their perishing.

In this whole field of legislation, Constantine was a vigorous and efficient reformer. He issued the first edict, so far as we know, in the whole Gentile world, which made infanticide a crime; and he placed it as to penalty on the same footing with any other form of murder. He also enacted the earliest poor-law on record, except those in the Hebrew Scriptures, — a law by which the children of parents too poor to support them were provided with food and clothing from the public treasury. He also extended the exemption of military wages from paternal control to the compensation of the numerous functionaries employed in the imperial household; and his successors enlarged it still further, so as to include all public and *quasi* public charges, whether civil or ecclesiastical. Constantine also made children the sole heirs of their mother's property, which had previously been

merged in the father's estate. Gratian made the children of a deceased wife the immediate heirs of their maternal grandparents. Justinian secured to children the entire control of whatever property or revenue might accrue to them independently of their fathers, limiting the father's control to such property as might have come to the child by the father's gift, which he was at liberty to reclaim or control at his pleasure.

I might specify in this connection the laws of inheritance and succession, whether as regards the rights and limitations of testamentary bequest, or the disposal of the property of intestates; but it would involve technicalities better suited to a law-school than to a general audience, and at the same time these topics seem to have a less directly ethical bearing than those which I have brought before you. Yet they have an ethical significance and value; and in this entire branch of legislation, wherever principle is concerned, we see very clearly the influence of Christian ideas as to domestic relations, and as regards the mutual rights and duties of kindred. The old Roman law of succession and inheritance was vitiated throughout by the ramifications of the father's absolute power and by the legal nonentity of women. Under Constantine and his successors this whole department of law was pro-

gressively modified, so as to invest the adult son with all the rights of property that belong to manhood, and to make the woman, whether virgin, wife, or widow, capable of holding and transmitting property on an equal footing with the man. There can be no question that in all matters relating to the transmission and inheritance of property, the countries that have derived their jurisprudence from Roman sources have made the nearest approach which legislation has anywhere made, and I might almost say, the nearest approach that mere legislation can make, to the Christian standard of right; and in England and the United States the progress of law in this entire department has consisted chiefly in the adoption of principles and maxims derived from the civil or Roman law.

It is on account of the perfectness of the Roman law as compared with other codes and systems, and because, as I said in a former lecture, law has the moral education of the people for one of the most important of its functions, that I have thought fit, in a course of ethical lectures, to show in this conspicuous instance what law owes to Christian ethics. There can be no reasonable doubt that the Roman law derived from Christianity the very traits in which consists its pre-eminence, its perpetuity, its adapta-

tion in principle and spirit to our time and to all time.

But it may be asked, Was not the civil law, as matured under the Christian emperors, the natural and inevitable outcome of the genius of the Roman people, as a people from early time, so to speak, addicted to law, law-making, and (except at revolutionary epochs) law-keeping? I answer, first, that the Roman people had ceased to give law to the world, and, as to unmixed nationality, had ceased to be. The seat of the Roman Empire had been transferred to Constantinople, which was peopled by the confluence of adventurers from the whole civilized world and beyond it, among whom Roman traditions and the corresponding mental and moral habitudes had but a very limited currency. In the second place, not one of the law-reforming emperors was of Roman birth, parentage, or lineage. Constantine and Justinian were both born on the eastern coast of the Euxine Sea, and the others were of various races which two or three centuries before would have been accounted as barbarians at Rome.

Then, too, the reformation of law took place in precisely the directions in which Christian thought, teaching, and writing had confessedly led the way. The Christian Fathers, including the apostolic Fathers (so called), so far as the works that

bear their names are genuine, laid intense stress on the equality of all men in the sight of God, on the inviolable sacredness of the marriage covenant, and on the relative rights and obligations of the members of the Christian family; and their writings, especially those of Tertullian and Lactantius, abound in lamentations over the very evils against which the legislation of these emperors is chiefly aimed. We might fill a volume with exhortations, denunciations, pictures of society as it was, and as it ought to be, under the several heads which I have specified in this lecture. The same writers are also mindful of the laborious and humble callings of the apostles, and of the traditions which represented their Lord and Master as having himself worked in Joseph's carpenter-shop previously to his baptism and his public ministry; and they accordingly always attach dignity and honor to labor, and are sedulously anxious to relieve it from the menial associations which had clung to it in the classic nations and ages, — deeply feeling, as we are prone not to feel, that such associations cast shame and reproach on the Founder of their religion and on his foremost followers. The Church was thus thoroughly leavened with the principles which embodied themselves in laws as soon as the empire became nominally Christian. It must be remem-

bered, too, that the law-reforming emperors, — Constantine and Justinian, more worthily surnamed Great than nine-tenths of the sovereigns that have borne that appellation, and the others, some of them men of signal administrative capacity, — while differing widely as to the evidence which they gave of personal piety, were all of them what is scornfully called "priest-ridden," and priest-ridden to the best possible purpose. Their improved laws were suggested by their ecclesiastical advisers, and often dictated to them with the exhibition of formidable weapons from the well-stocked arsenal of ecclesiastical pains and penalties.

In fact, in all matters that could be common to the two,[1] the canon law and the civil law were identical in Justinian's time, the latter being little more than an authoritative registry and promulgation of the former. The canon law subsequently became encumbered with subtilties, anomalies, and absurdities, due in part to the growing ignorance and incapacity of the clergy, in part to the same cause that is now constantly creating muni-

[1] This statement includes laws relating to marriage, domestic relations, wills, and all the matters within the jurisdiction of our probate courts. There was a body of canon law with reference to offences strictly ecclesiastical, which had attained a considerable growth before Justinian's time, and which existed, and in great part still exists, independently of municipal law.

cipal law not written in the statutes, namely, the converting of particular cases into precedents of universal application.

It may be objected to the agency which I have ascribed to Christianity in the ethical superiority of the Roman law, that in the legal writings of the great jurists prior to the age of Constantine, such as Gaius, Paulus, Papinian, and Ulpian, there are to be found many traces of an humane and philanthropic spirit, and many maxims that seem to have a Christian trend; and yet none of these men are known or supposed to have been Christians. I would answer, first, that several, if not all, of these writers were Stoics; and I have already given my reasons for supposing that leading Stoics under the empire had unconsciously, or perhaps consciously, imbibed ethical notions from Christian sources. In the next place, these men were not legislators, but commentators, without authority when they wrote, and elevated into authority only under later Christian auspices. We have no proof, and no reason to believe, — on the other hand, in the wording of Constantine's edicts we have ample reason for not believing, — that the maxims of these writers had before the age of Constantine any influence in the administration of law. Still further, we have no proof that some or all of these men may not have had, and it is

intrinsically probable that they had, actual conversance with Christian teachers, and with the Christian Scriptures, which, after the middle of the second century, must have been sufficiently diffused and circulated to attract the curiosity and interest of cultivated men. Indeed, Ulpian says so many things, not only of a Christian type, but even in a Christian-like style and manner, that we can hardly imagine him to have been ignorant of Christian writers, or unfriendly to their religion. Lactantius, indeed, speaks of a certain Domitius as unfriendly to the Christians; and Ulpian's first name was Domitius. But that cannot have been an uncommon name, and Lactantius may have been speaking of some other man. If not, all that is laid to the charge of his Domitius is the recital, in some work of his, of certain imperial rescripts against the Christians; and this certainly does not imply approval of them. If they were a part of the municipal law of his time, he could not have left them unnoticed.

We have reason, then, to believe that Christianity was a chief forming element in the civil law as shaped under the early Christian emperors into the most perfect legal structure of all time, — a structure which has long outlived the empire that gave it birth, has insured the rights and liberties of nations that had not then begun to be, and is

destined to exert an extended influence for ages yet to come.

It is impossible to over-estimate the moral power of the Roman law in creating all that is most precious in modern civilization. The civilization of the old Roman world was in intense need of regeneration. It was draining the life-blood of the nations within its pale, enervating them, even depleting their numerical strength, and very rapidly, too, so that it was incursion and immigration from races that had till of late been deemed almost savage, that kept up the population of the empire. The dark ages were inevitable, because the oil that fed the light of the Old World was burned out. The only light left was that which is destined never to expire, but was not as yet far above the horizon. Even the Christian religion, as a religion, can hardly be said to have survived, except as the woman in the Apocalypse who had "a place prepared of God for her in the wilderness." The ritual remained; and there was, undoubtedly, the true apostolic succession that never ceased, though hidden in the fastnesses of the Apennines, and beyond the reach of papal ban or sword. But happily, before Christianity had lost its identity, its ethics were embodied by the great imperial lawgivers. Because their laws were Christian, the Church had them in charge. The clergy had

a monopoly of such scanty intelligence and learning as remained; they had unlimited power over sovereigns and rulers; and thus the great principles of ethical right were, for the most part, held in reverence, and the laws founded upon them were executed as regarded the people at large, though immunity from them could often be purchased by the rich, or enforced by the powerful. In particular, the marriage laws, which lie at the foundation of all social well-being, were held with great strictness by the Church; and dispensations from them were so costly, and involved a process so long and tedious, that they were seldom sought.

Had the darkness come on before these laws were enacted, it is easy to imagine the utter depth of depravity into which the world would have sunk, almost beyond the possibility of redemption. By far the greater part of the homes in Christendom were, during the (so called) dark ages, built after the Christian model, with parents united in irrevocable wedlock, and children growing up under the shelter and guidance of parental love; and society thus ordered, to however low a plane of intelligence it may have fallen, has in it the prophecy of a resurrection, the elements of progress. In fact, during that period there was a perpetual growth under the cloud. Humane principles and maxims were taking root and gaining

strength; the spirit of honor that had its embodiment in the institutions of chivalry was nurtured and cherished; respect for woman became a pervading and ruling sentiment; the savage laws of war were ameliorated; the claims of conquered enemies began to be recognized, and mainly through the agency of Christian ethics embodied in the civil law the world that emerged from obscurity with the foregleams of the Protestant Reformation showed an immense advance in all the elements of Christian civilization beyond the world that had passed into the age-long sleep.

But while we justly attach this transcendent value to law, it must be remembered that it was expressly religious institutions that preserved the law, — that maintained its working-power and its place in the reverence of the general mind. There were the clergy, in all the orders of the imposing hierarchy; there were the mysterious rites that enforced their authority by the powers of the world to come; there was the fearful array of penance and punishment, in which the arm of flesh was always ready to strike where the sword of the spirit directed and aimed the blow.

We are perhaps too prone to undervalue mere religious institutions, but, if so, wrongly. In the first place, they never are mere institutions. However perverted and corrupted they may be,

something of their spirit still broods over them. Then, too, they would not remain in being were they not reverenced; and reverence itself has an ethical value, even though its objects be dimly apprehended. There is, also, always a possibility of revival in spirit while the institutions remain. There is a hearth on which to light the fire. But without a hearth, how shall the fire be built, and how shall it be kept burning?

One word in conclusion. In what I have said about the Roman law as more nearly perfect than any other system, it must not be inferred that it was wholly free from defects and faults. There were individual enactments, both laws and penalties, that belonged to a less enlightened age than ours. But what I mean to say is, that in its fundamental principles, in its foremost aims and in its pervading spirit, it left, as codified by Justinian, a structure of law that needed not reconstruction in any essential department or element, but only improvement with enlarged culture, and adaptation to altered conditions. Moreover, while for some of the emperors called Christian we must say less, Justinian was a firm Christian believer, and, with many faults of character, still manifestly had a Christian ideal before him in his legislation. His aim was to embody Christian ethics in the laws of the empire; and Christianity

has been the salt that has preserved the civil law, and has made it a perennial agency in public order and social well-being. The work was slow; but there was no slackening or retrograde movement. Justinian came to the throne about two centuries after Constantine commenced his career as a Christian legislator. Next to the first Christian century, those two centuries were of more moment for human happiness and welfare than any other period in the world's history. They gave the world its first specimen of laws which had for their foundation the principles of the eternal Right, — principles which must underlie all institutions and enactments that will live and last, while those that rest on any other foundation must meet the fate of the house built on the sand.

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