

The CULTURE of
SIMPLICITY



Malcolm J. McLeod



UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
SAN DIEGO

Donated in memory of

John W. Snyder

by

His Son and Daughter

100
Net

Geo. L. Linn
from Mariposa

Dec. 27 111



THE CULTURE *of* SIMPLICITY

THE CULTURE OF SIMPLICITY

By

MALCOLM JAMES McLEOD

Author of

"Heavenly Harmonies for Earthly Living," and

"Earthly Discords and How to Heal Them"



NEW YORK CHICAGO TORONTO
Fleming H. Revell Company
LONDON AND EDINBURGH

Copyright, 1904, by
FLEMING H. REVELL COMPANY

FOURTH EDITION

New York: 158 Fifth Avenue
Chicago: 63 Washington Street
Toronto: 27 Richmond Street, W
London: 21 Paternoster Square
Edinburgh: 100 Princes Street

Foreword

THESE pages have been written in the interims of a busy life; the burden of their intent being to emphasize a saying of James Russell Lowell's that the "highest outcome of culture is simplicity." Much has been written of late concerning simplicity and simple living. It is the controlling note all but drowned, yet clamouring for a hearing, in a materialistic age. And we believe it to be a spiritual note too. Such at least we have regarded it in these chapters. The message of the Eternal is ever the same, but the language in which it is expressed varies with the type and temperament of the people to whom it comes; and to an age steeped in mammonism and worship of the flesh, the evangel calling for a voice and a deliverance is that simplicity is culture; simplicity is spirituality; simplicity is power; the spiritual is the solution of everything. Back to culture then, the culture of the cross, the culture that is towards the Christ. This is the gospel for an age of unrest.

MALCOLM JAMES McLEOD.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

Contents

I.	SIMPLICITY AND WAGNER	9
II.	SIMPLICITY AND THOREAU	15
III.	SIMPLICITY AND SPIRITUALITY	25
IV.	SIMPLICITY AND SOLITUDE	31
V.	SIMPLICITY AND HAPPINESS	43
VI.	SIMPLICITY AND EXTRAVAGANCE	57
VII.	SIMPLICITY AND GREATNESS	73
VIII.	SIMPLICITY AND THE HOME	85
IX.	SIMPLICITY AND TRUST	99
X.	SIMPLICITY AND RELIGION	109
XI.	SIMPLICITY AND SCRIPTURE	129
XII.	SIMPLICITY AND THE LITERATURE OF SCRIPTURE	139
XIII.	SIMPLICITY AND THE PULPIT	153
XIV.	SIMPLICITY AND SORROW	167
XV.	SIMPLICITY AND CULTURE	179



SIMPLICITY *and* WAGNER

“O friend, I know not which way I must look
For comfort, being as I am opprest
To think that now our life is only drest
For show; mean handiwork of craftsman, cook,
Or groom! We must run glittering, like a brook
In the open sunshine, or we are unblest!
The wealthiest man among us is the best!
No grandeur now in Nature or in book
Delights us. Rapine, avarice, expense—
This is idolatry, and these we adore,
Plain living and high thinking are no more—
The homely beauty of the good old cause
Is gone—our peace, our simple innocence,
And pure religion, breathing household laws.”

—*Wordsworth.*

I

SIMPLICITY *and* WAGNER

A VOLUME of essays entitled "The Simple Life," has recently come to us from the press, and has had a wide, extensive reading. The burden of the little book is a call to simplicity—simple thoughts, simple words, simple pleasures, simple needs, simple aims, simple beauty. The author, Charles Wagner, who has recently visited this country, is a Protestant pastor in Paris, born in a little rustic cottage amid the green valleys of the Vosges, where he soaked himself in the free fresh air of rural life. "Dear little corner of the world," he writes, "where I lived peaceful years that knew not evil, nor death, nor regret for the past, nor anguish for the future."

His father was a hard-working country minister, and early in life the son was firmly grounded in the doctrines of Lutheran theology. But the father dying when he was a mere child and leaving a poor widow with

12 The Culture of Simplicity

a family of five little ones, of whom Charles, then seven, was the eldest, they all retired to live with the mother's parents, even farther still in the solitude of the hills. Here Charles was turned loose into the fields of nature. He became intimate with the birds, the bees, the brooks, the trees, the ferns, the rocks. His last book is dedicated, "To my dear collaborators, the flowers, the insects, and the passers-by."

He loved to mingle with the peasants and early imbibed their folk-lore, their superstitions, their tales, their traditions. He learned to lift the axe and swing the scythe and milk the cow and follow the furrow. Thus did he acquire a strong, wholesome respect for honest labour, and a warm simple religious instinct won from living close to Nature's heart.

Wagner's great theme is the spiritualization of life by a return to simplicity and a controlling sense of the immanence of God. With him all questions are at bottom religious questions. The Creator cannot be separated from His work. God is in everything, in the flower, the stone, the bush, in history, liberty, law, government, in the great drama of human development. To

him nothing seems so full of God as humanity struggling through darkness towards the light. And so he loves to dwell upon the toilers in life's lowly lots. The soul of man striving, battling, suffering, yet never losing hope, is the eternal proof of the indwelling presence of God. So the highest expression of God is the suffering God. The glory of the Godhead is the cross.

"It has been given to me," he writes, "to be able to combine harmoniously in my soul, many forces hostile in appearance, but fundamentally united in one solidarity. I have lived with rich and poor, wise and ignorant, city folks and peasants, Germans and French, believers and atheists, the champions of the past and the champions of the present, and I have understood and loved them all. I love life and humanity under all their wholesome sincere forms, in all their griefs and their hopes, and even in all their tempests of thought and deed. 'I am a man and consider nothing human foreign to me.' Thus I have learned to love the blind bard of Tios with a love that grows daily more ardent. I am a pagan and an ancient, a child of Nature come to God through Christ. I belong not to the

14 The Culture of Simplicity

sad but to the joyous Christ. I follow Christ because I have heard Him speak the natural language—the language of humanity—and because I have heard beating in His heart the heart of all. Therefore, He is not for me a person who was and is no longer, but the Eternal Contemporary of us all, the Symbol of a Spirit which rests with us always. The visible truths of the human and divine Evangel rise every morning on my horizon like new luminaries, and I salute and adore them with the same admiration as if I were seeing them every morning for the first time. Miracles, dogmas, forms which worried me at first, worry me no longer. Across them all, I see only one thing—man in search of God, God in search of man.”

SIMPLICITY *and* THOREAU

“This is the house that I built ;
This is the man that lives in the house that I built ;
These are the folks that worry the man
That lives in the house that I built.”

—*Thoreau.*

“Indeed, indeed, I cannot tell,
Though I ponder on it well,
Which were easier to state,
All my love, or all my hate.”

—*Thoreau.*

“Surely, surely, thou wilt trust me,
When I say thou dost disgust me !
Oh, I hate thee with a hate
That would fain annihilate ;
Yet, sometimes, against my will,
My dear friend, I love thee still.
It were treason to our love,
And a sin to God above,
One iota to abate
Of a pure, impartial hate.”

—*Thoreau.*

II

SIMPLICITY *and* THOREAU

“It seemed as if the breezes brought him,
It seemed as if the sparrows taught him,
As if by secret sign he knew
Where in far fields the orchis grew.”

THUS sang Emerson of Thoreau, to which Lowell added, “He is a strawberry from Emerson’s own garden.”

Henry David Thoreau is America’s great Nature worshipper and apostle of solitude. He prided himself on being the disciple of a simplicity which many think however to have been a false simplicity. He preached but one sermon, and the text was “Simplify.” Instead of three meals a day, he suggested to eat but one; instead of a hundred dishes, to have but five or six; then reduce other things accordingly. “He was bred to no profession,” writes Emerson, “never married, never went to church, lived alone, never voted, ate no flesh, drank no wine, knew not the taste of tobacco. He

18 The Culture of Simplicity

refused to spoil the glory of morning with such muddy stimulants as tea and coffee." When asked at dinner what dish he preferred, he answered, "The nearest." John Burroughs says he was the wildest cultured man this country has ever seen; while Holmes calls him "that unique individual, half college graduate, half Algonquin, the Robinson Crusoe of Walden pond, who carried out his schoolboy whim to its full proportions, the nullifier of civilization who insisted on nibbling his asparagus at the wrong end."

Thoreau was a new star in the heavens and the law of his orbit was strange. He had a path of his own, eccentric we call it—away from the centre. He was a protestant against established custom, a man for whom the conventional had no charm, a man whose religion was to renounce. To the last fibre of his being he was a dissenter. "If I had bestowed on me," he writes, "the wealth of Croesus, my aims should still be the same." He would have abrogated the divine order and made six days rest to one of work, if he had had his say, and yet he was not lazy. "People make their pride," he once boasted, "in making their dinners cost much; I make

my pride in making mine cost little ;” and he did, for he lived on beans and potatoes. He believed that a life was rich in proportion to the number of things it succeeded in letting alone. So he curtailed his wants, studied what he could do without, always tried to say “No,” if possible at all objected.

Perhaps he is the best illustration in literature of the non-religious hermit—not irreligious, non-religious—for Emerson says he was a man of rare and real reverence, and surely reverence is close of kin to religion ; but he was not a St. Anthony. He built for himself a little frame hut in the woods apart from the people, and when it was finished, “returned the axe sharper than when he borrowed it.” Here he lived alone, claiming that the near neighbourhood of man was not necessary to a serene and wholesome life. Indeed, he felt that one could not have a deep sympathy with man and Nature both, that the qualities which drew you close to the one, estranged you from the other. He was an excellent swimmer, skater, climber, boatman. He scarcely ever travelled from home, but home he hunted and haunted like a stork. There was not a weed in the region for miles

around Concord with which he was not familiar. The whole country he knew like a fox. He would take out his vest-pocket diary and read the name of every flower due to bloom on a certain morning. It was said of him that if he woke up after a long trance, he could tell to within a day or so, the time of the year by simply looking at the plants. Wild squirrels would nestle on his shoulders. Snakes would coil around his legs, and fishes swim into his hands. The veery, the wood-thrush, the field-sparrow, the scarlet tanager, the heron, the duck, the muskrat, the loon, the snake, the otter, the frog, the cricket, the turtle—he knew them all, their nests, their habits, their tastes, their likes and dislikes. Indeed, he came to know beast, bird, and fish more intimately than St. Francis. He certainly knew animals better than men, and there can be little doubt that his heart went out to them more. He loved the Indian, seemed almost half Indian himself. He could smell anything afar, believed the nose more trustworthy than the eye. There was a streak of the wild man in his nature. Stevenson calls him the original of Hawthorne's Donatello.

Reading the life of Thoreau, such words as vanity, eccentricity, egoism, rush to our lips. Here surely is pedantry, we exclaim, priggishness. There is something unhuman here, a lack of sanity, something unreal. Such a passion as this is unhealthy, unnatural, impracticable, unbalanced. Does not the desire to be free from the rubs and contacts of human society savour of infirmity? Surely we are living in a world where we cannot be altogether indifferent to accepted customs. Thoreau seems to us to confound being simple with being singular, which is a different thing. To be singular in virtue is to be truly good, but to be singular in manner is to be affected. No wise man attempts to act regardless of public opinion, but this Thoreau did, and this is his master weakness. He is a self-worshipper. He is vain, theatrical, stagey. There is much of wisdom and loveliness in what he says, but the itch of eccentricity is in his blood. He seemed to labour to be odd, and oftentimes to act contrary just for contrariness' sake. Do you admire a tree for its symmetry? He will admire it for its deformity. Do you like a suit of broadcloth? He prefers homespun. Would you rather travel by

22 The Culture of Simplicity

Pullman? He will take the stage, or, what is more than likely, he will walk. The comforts he had a contempt for. "He insists on striking a light with flint and steel, when all the while a box of matches is in his pocket." He condemns the whole existing order. The great social, political, and religious questions of the day he either ignored, or else looked on with disdain. He vowed he would not run around the corner to see the world blow up.

All of which is strained, belaboured, affected. Simplicity should be free, natural, spontaneous, bubbling, artesian. It should not be negative; it should be positive. It should not be critical; it should be creative. It should not embitter character; it should mellow it. Such simplicity as this, however, rather sours than sweetens. It did in his case. He grew cynical as he grew older. He was naturally acidulous anyway. There was an element of kindness in his make-up, but it had worked. Fermentation had set in. His was a false simplicity, a false philosophy. For the soul of simple living is not withdrawing to some wilderness and seeking the solitude and plainness of the primeval. It is not coveting a convent. It is not going

into hiding. We are in the world to serve it, to minister to it, to uplift it. All things are ours—art, beauty, eloquence, song, happiness, amusement—all are ours. Whatever is grand, gay, beautiful, or sublime, is for us to use and to enjoy. We are not asked to turn our backs on the dainties and delicacies. These things need not hinder us from attaining unto the fullest strength and beauty. They may the rather be made a help thereto. It is possible to move amid luxury and yet remain strong, sympathetic, sincere, real. I once heard of a painter who was converted and who felt it his duty to give up his profession. But his minister said to him one day, “John, why rob your Maker of a gift He bestowed upon you in creation? Why not mix your colours in the light of the heavenly vision and fling a picture on the canvas for the glory of your Lord?” That is what Angelico did.

There is a story somewhere of a monk sailing up the Rhine with both eyes shut lest the beauty of the scenery prove a snare. But how false and foolish this! This is a “castration of the affections,” to use Nietzsche’s terrible phrase. Surely it is not a sign of holiness to be unable to read and

24 The Culture of Simplicity

write. Happily we are beginning to learn that God is artist as well as theologian, musician as well as lawgiver, architect as well as king.

In seeking beauty and culture and loveliness everywhere, we are seeking Him.

SIMPLICITY *and* SPIRITUALITY

He is the seer who can see
The hand of God in trap and tree ;
He is the wise man who can read
His writing in each daily deed.

“That they may lay hold on the life
which is life indeed.”

—*St. Paul.*

III

SIMPLICITY *and* SPIRITUALITY

THE movement towards simplicity is after all a movement towards a deeper spirituality which is a movement towards reality. Simplicity is getting to the heart of things, stripping them of their non-essentials and laying hold of the real which is the spiritual. And this is culture. Life has a fashion of surrounding itself with forms, clothing itself in barks and shells and husks, as the fruit encases itself in a rind of safety. This Nature does for self-protection. And much of it is true in society; much of it indeed, is necessary. Man must have food and clothing and a home. If he is a cultured man, he asks for better food and finer clothing and a more comfortable home. Simplicity is not savagery. It cannot be stated in terms of matter. It does not ignore the material. It simply pushes it back, down. When once the material is seated on the throne, just then and from that

28 The Culture of Simplicity

fountain-head, a stream of falsehood flows. Simplicity is uncovering the outer in order to unfold the inner, peeling off the skin and penetrating to the core. Thus it is at root a spiritual concept.

To love and reverence and worship are simple but eternal truths. Trust is the starting-point of the spiritual life and trust is a simple thing. He who is sure of the morrow is most liable to be disturbed by fears about to-day, how he shall live and provide for his little ones and meet each moment's demands. Is it not oftentimes true that he who is most liberally blessed with material mercies is not infrequently most unhappy—satisfied, yet discontented? With sadness indeed must it be owned that the supply of all our needs has made the race neither morally better nor spiritually happier. Nor has learning done what luxury has failed to do. For it is still true, as in the olden time, that "In much wisdom is much grief, and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow." Only the life that has learned to trust has found the secret of real peace. This is the controlling note of the Wagnerian philosophy. And who will claim it is a false note? Could we but grasp the true

nature of simplicity, our step would be steadier, our footpath firmer. So many of our fallacies come from false definition! If simplicity is not savagery, neither is it poverty. It may be; it need not be. It may be found in the beautiful home of the rich as truly as in the wretched tenement of the poor. It hath no visible tag or dress or vestment, being an invisible condition. Its home is the heart, not the hut or the habit. Full as easy to be natural in a drawing-room as in a desert, if one does not try to be! The trouble is, like Thoreau, we try to be. Simplicity is not trying to be. Simplicity is sincerity, naturalness, manliness, self-government, the subordination of the lower to the higher, of the higher to the highest—in one word, sacrifice; or if a fuller phrase be asked, finding the divine plan and fulfilling it.

Epictetus says, "If we accept the doctrine that God is the Father of all men in an especial manner, I suppose we should never have any ignoble thoughts about ourselves; but if Cæsar should adopt us into his family, none could endure our arrogance, and if we learned that we were the sons of Zeus, how elated we should be." And is not the great

stoic philosopher right? Connection with the great ones of earth tends to make us haughty, but with the great ones of heaven to make us humble. The consciousness of our divine sonship works in us for lowliness, yet self-respect. How noble does everything become when we relate it to God! Then even the common task becomes sacramental. Spirituality is the bringing of all things, even the meanest, into the Heavenly Presence and the regarding of them under the light of God. When that is done the most tangled truth becomes simple. Thus does simplicity in its highest phase become the spiritualization of life!

SIMPLICITY *and* SOLITUDE

LOOKING BACKWARD !

My heart aches, and a poignant yearning pains
My pulse, as though from revel I had waked
To find sore disenchantment,
Oh for the simple ways of childhood,
And its joys !
Why have I grown so cold and cynical ?
My life seems out of tune ;
Its notes harsh and discordant ;
The crowded thoroughfare doth fret me
And make lonely.
Darkling I muse and yearn
For those glad days of yore,
When my part chorded too,
And I, a merry, trustful boy,
Found consonance in every friend without annoy.
Since then, how changed !
Strained are the strings of friendship ; fled the joys ;
Seeming the show.
An alien I, unlike, alone !
And yet my mother ! The welcome word o'erflows the
eye,
And makes the very memory weep.
No, love is not extinct—that sweetest name—
The covering ashes keep alive the flame. .

IV

SIMPLICITY *and* SOLITUDE

DAVID SWING, in an essay before the Chicago Literary Club, closed with these words: "Over almost everything save our virtues, there might be written the condemnation—too much." Medical science is a voice to-day in saying that we eat too much. Herbert Spencer dared to claim that we read too much; so likewise, Mr. Balfour! Many there be who hold that we travel too much, dress too much, doctor too much, and when the temperance lecturer mounts the platform and calls out his startling array of figures, he has no trouble in convincing us that we drink too much. Overdoing has become an epidemic. We overdo our work, our gifts, our pleasures, our worship—some indeed contending that we even crowd the Sabbath overmuch, religious dissipation being their charge. Are not our wedding days and festival days and anniversary days becoming a veritable

34 The Culture of Simplicity

bugbear to the poor? Does not the replenishing of the wardrobe drive many a woman to the brink of break-down? Aye, social demands have become a tyranny. No Draconian code was ever more relentless than that of King Fashion. The French word "trop" fits well-nigh every phase of our modern life. Quantity, not quality, is the all round ideal. Bigness is the American idol. Samuel Johnson once said that an author must turn over half a library to write one book; but the last literary star counts that year a failure that does not see two or three large volumes in the hands of his publisher. We do everything but love too much.

Well, perhaps that is saying too much, which needs to be guarded against too, for of late, exaggeration has become a far too frequently recurring feature of our tea-table talks together, but of this anon. The point intended to be taken is that we likely do not retreat too much. Solitude does not accord altogether with our modern mood. We are not temperamentally calm and passive. We are a noisy, turbulent, restless, rushing people. Hurry, like worry, has become one of our distinctive marks. Abroad,

we hear of Americanitis. Americanitis is nervousness, and if hurry is the father, worry is the mother of the mischief. Ours is an age of rapid transit. An eminent writer in a recent issue of a leading magazine, charges that we are "drunk with rapid transit." The youth asks a rapid transit through college. The man of business wants his lunch and wants it quick. The traveller pays his extra fare for "getting there" an hour or two sooner on the Limited. Our fathers considered it a wonderful victory when they travelled twenty miles an hour, but now we fly sixty and we are talking about one hundred. Everything is pushed. Boys are pushed through school. Girls are pushed into society. Every little town has its society of the younger set. Chickens are hatched by electricity. Wheat is sold before it is in the ground. The horse that can go the fastest commands the biggest price. Progress has become another name for speed. In 1806, the mile trotting record on the turf was 2:59, but by 1906, it promises to be considerably less than 1:59. A century will have clipt a full minute or more from the feat of Yankee. Forty years ago it took nine days to cross the ocean, but

36 The Culture of Simplicity

now the five-day passage is in sight. Even death, 'tis said, is in a hurry; "instead of the lingering ailments of our fathers, we succumb to apoplexy and heart failure."

When Perseus told Pallas Athene that he wanted to go forth and meet Medusa the fabled monster, the lady smiled and said, "You are too young, my child, and too unskillful: return home and do the work awaiting you there." Advice much needed to-day! We need to cultivate a spirit of patience, a quiet maturing of our powers. It is hurry that mars our excellence. We are impatient. We do not take time to perfect our plans. We dream of the battle-field and are restless. What a busy, bustling people we are! We act as though we were carrying the universe on our shoulders. Some one has remarked, "We not only burn the candle at both ends; we cut it in two and set all four ablazing." That nerve-shattering telephone is driving us to distraction. Few of us have the earnestness of Browning's grammarian who refused to hurry. We are overdrawn, overdragged, overdriven. The motto of the hour is, "Let us then be up and doing with a heart for any fate, still achieving, still

pursuing." "Work while it is day," is the watchword of the age, and it seems always day. "Why go to church?" the old lady inquired of her hostess. "Because our minister is a phenomenon of push and energy, and he will urge you to do something." "But I am tired," came the answer. A true confession that fits us nearly all! We are tired. There is no let up in the pace. Life has become one ceaseless wear and tear, until now, many with Cowper are ready to exclaim :

" Oh, for a lodge in some vast wilderness !
 Some boundless contiguity of shade,
 Where rumour of oppression and deceit,
 Of unsuccessful or successful war,
 Might never reach me more.
 My ear is pained, my soul is sick
 With every day's report of wrong
 And outrage, with which earth is filled."

Eighteen hundred years ago, the world's Teacher said to His little circle of scholars, "Come ye apart into a desert place and rest a while"; not a place barren of shrubbery, a place rather, deserted by the multitudes, a place of solitude, a quiet place, a refuge of retirement. Is not this the need of the hour? Would we not all be advan-

38 The Culture of Simplicity

taged by a little training in the school of silence? Are we not losing the art of meditation? Do we not need some ample, roomy spaces of stillness in our lives? Do we not need some long pauses and unin-
vaded retreats? At the world's Parliament of Religions, one of the chief charges brought against Christianity was that it was too military, too martial, that it lacked repose. I understand they have built a Buddhist temple in London, and it is said they are about to build another in Los Angeles. Think of it! The Anglo-Saxon race commencing to feel the need of the quiet doctrines of Buddha. Fortunate in many ways is the captive of solitude. He has no one to please but himself. His time is his own. He is free from interruption. He lives quietly, simply, unostentatiously, in great calm zones of leisure. De Sénancour says, "In the world a man lives in his own age; in solitude in all the ages." In the city, one feels imprisoned; the mind needs the nourishment of the forest depths, the venerable trees, the open sky, the touch of primeval nature, to do its best work. And how easeful the simplicity of this retirement is! How refreshing! What a freedom from fear

and care and worry. Many there are who buy books for show, as Montaigne confessed to having done in early life, but the true student takes his books as the wise traveller takes his luggage—what he needs. When will we learn to be satisfied with what we need? Give us this day, oh Lord, our daily bread, and make us content with that.

Think furthermore, how much we are indebted to the solitaire! John the Baptist was a wilderness man; so was Ezekiel; so likewise Daniel and Abraham and Isaiah; so was Newton and Turner and Goethe and Augustus Comte; so Petrarch and Shelley and Wordsworth; so was Hawthorne; so in a preeminent sense was Darwin. All rare and delicate minds have in large measure this instinct of aloneness. Von Moltke was said to be "silent in seven languages." He found such exalted fellowship in his own brain that he hesitated to make advances to what might be an inferior article. For the cultured man there is no solitude. He has a wealth of noble friendship within. Think of Copernicus pondering his great system of astronomy for three and thirty years! Did not Moses spend forty years in the desert? Did not Dante place the con-

templative in the seventh heaven? We need solitude to-day if for no other reason, as an intellectual stimulus. In the hurry of life there is a compelling temptation to shallowness. The answer of the old Quaker lady to Southey is most timely. The poet was telling with pride how his time was occupied. He went on to say how he studied Portuguese while he was shaving, how he translated Spanish an hour before breakfast, how he read all the forenoon and wrote all the afternoon, in short, how every moment of the day was filled in with something. The old lady listened and then said, "Friend, when does thee do thy thinking?" The Anglican Church brackets her ministers under three adjectives, high churchmen, low churchmen, broad churchmen. The late Archbishop of Canterbury—Dr. Benson—once remarked that what was needed was deep churchmen. The diagnosis we are convinced was correct. What the age needs to-day is deep churchmen, deep Christians, deep experiences, deep joys, deep satisfactions, deep convictions. There is a popular craze for liberality, but liberality only plays upon the surface. Liberality is good, but deliberation is better. Depth is better than

breadth. Liberality is freedom from narrowness, of wide and ample scope, a word of one, or at most, two dimensions. Deliberation is reaching down; it concerns the weight, the gravity. Deliberation is depth as well as length and breadth. And all depths are silent, depths of space, depths of ocean, depths of thought, depths of emotion. When grief becomes deep it is tearless and dumb. Whispered knowledge can never be mastered in the crowd. The voice which is a whisper needs the listening ear, the silent space, the quiet hour, the profound reflexion.

As we read the life of Jesus, we are struck with the number of His spare moments and seasons for retirement. A busy man was He, lacking leisure to eat and sleep and rest often, but He always had a great fund of leisure time for conversation and communion and love and prayer. Never do we find Him in a hurry, never disturbed, always the same calm, strong, tranquil man. No seeker was ever turned away because the Master was engaged. He had no "days," no "hours at home." He was always "at home" for an interview.

How hard it is to get at some people!

42 The Culture of Simplicity

They are "not in," or say they are not. They are so busy, so tired, so filled with engagements. They have no time to sit down and think and talk and open their hearts to their friends. They have time for everything but friendship. It has been well said that some people are so crowded trying to make a living, that they have no time left to try to make a life. But Jesus says, Come in, come in, My child; sit down and rest awhile. Tell Me your troubles; tell Me your temptations; tell Me your longings; tell Me your hot tears. You must not allow yourself to be so overanxious. Why art thou cast down? All is well. Just trust. Making a living is not the chief thing. Making a life is more than making a living. Come then, and lay thy burden at My feet, and "Whosoever cometh, I will in no wise cast out." Where Jesus lives there is no bell, no bolt, no bar. The door is open, always open; the welcome is warm, always warm; the interview is sincere, heart-felt, refreshing, sweet.

SIMPLICITY *and* HAPPINESS

CONTENT

O, soul of mine! What makes you
Grieve and fret?
Why linger in the shadow
We have met?
Why not embrace the hours
Of sunshine, and the flowers?
And all the dreary showers
Of tears, that have been ours,
Just forget.

What fretful trouble swells thy
Heaving breast?
Why let it rob thee of Heaven's
Rich bequest?
Dost thou not know that calm
Content's the healing balm,
That soothes the sharpest qualm,
And makes our life a psalm
Of peaceful rest?

Cheer up, then, soul of mine! Be
Not downcast.
The troubles, worries—all will
Soon be past,
Forget the things behind.
Press on. The world is blind,
Failure is ofttimes kind.
Who loses life will find
Gain at last.

V

SIMPLICITY *and* HAPPINESS

HAPPINESS is to be found in the simple things. The simple things invite us into their playground to run and jump and enjoy ourselves. If only we accepted the invitation with the glee of children how happy we might be, what a royal time we might have! No need to journey one thousand miles or pay a million dollars to find happiness. Our own shore is strewn with the pebbles and shells that make for delight. We travel around the world to find that after all the best is behind us. Our own birds sing the merriest, our own flowers smell the sweetest, our own brooks are the freshest, our own skies the bluest. Not necessary to sail for Switzerland in search of the sublime. A moonlit night is vastly more sublime than the Matterhorn, and that can be had cheap. Strange how sweet seems the kingdom of the unpossessed until we taste it. Then our own is better.

46 The Culture of Simplicity

The trouble being that we let familiarity rob sensation of its first flavour. Schopenhauer's philosophy was that man can never be happy in this world because he is by nature one thing, yet has within him the craving to be a thousand other things. Poor, he is yet haunted by the thought of unreachable riches; weak, he is nevertheless tormented with the vision of unattainable strength. He has ambitions he can never realize. Fate made her a dressmaker, and yet she feels within her the raw material of a duchess, a cook and yet she has the germs of an artist. Her dreams being the death of contentment. But this implies that happiness belongs to the outside of things, which is false. The secret of being happy is the secret of finding how deep down into the heart sink many of life's commonest blessings. It has been said that we cannot put a spade into the ground without upturning joy—so ready is everything for a laugh. "Every inch of space," said Ruskin, "sends a thrill through me." Wordsworth found delight on a spring morning in contemplating a greening tree. It was to him a heavenly rapture, a heavenly wonder. When the soul once finds its true life then

the simplest things bring happiness. Then man learns the "heart's laugh."

And the simple things again be it noted are all about us. No dusty pilgrimage need be made to some historic fountain. They are within reach, within reach of all. They are close to us, by our side, under our path, at our door. Happiness is a refreshing arm of life's great sea, into which every man may dip his little cup and drink. Every summer, several thousand people in our land leave their homes in pursuit of this age-long quest. They go to the seashore, to the mountains, to the lakes, to the pines, to the streams, to the brooks, abroad, north, south, east, west. But how unjust any law of life would be that made it necessary to leave home to find happiness! Such a rule would make this holy grail reachable only by those having wealth and those free to fly. That surely would be a cruel requirement that made it necessary to have riches before having joy, since then only a few in a great army could ever hope to secure the prize. And how equally unfair if one must be famous before being light-hearted, bright-hearted, as only two or three in any age are dowered with more than one talent! Such

48 The Culture of Simplicity

a Providence would not be worthy of Him who decrees that His sun rise on the evil and the good, on rich and poor, on wise and unwise, on just and unjust. The good, kind Father has made no such blunder as this. He causeth the springs of joy to bubble up on every side. He makes the flowers thereof to bloom under our very feet. We think the delectable places are in some far-away corner of the universe; we think they are over there; but not so, they are here, right here. Charles Dudley Warner, in his book, "A Little Journey in the World," teaches how we often journey away from the fairest and sweetest things that are lying round about us. Home should be one of the first spots to go to find the blessed prize—and it assuredly is—but best of all is it to look within, for the fullest fountains of peace and gladness are in the heart.

Some one notes that happiness and simplicity are old-time friends, and wiser words are rarely spoken. Happiness is found everywhere, but she prefers the common place—the quiet lane, the restful river, the simple toil and tool and task. She leans rather to the cottage than to the castle.

Think a moment, friend, and pick out the happy hours behind you! What hours were they? Were they the hours you spent in a mansion and in which you gave a delicate dinner to your friends? Were they the hours you passed in the ballroom on waxed floors or amid luxurious furnishings and gorgeous gowns and sparkling jewelry? No, these were not your supreme hours. Your supreme hours I will adventure to claim, were the hours you spent at home with a book or a pleasant companion; the walk in the woodland with your little girl; the moment when you whispered your love into the ear of another happy as yourself; the morning when some weight of anxious wonder was rolled away; the afternoon you reached home after a long absence and mother was waiting for you at the gate, and you sat by the fireside far on into the night and told the story of your adventure—these are the preeminent hours, the memorable hours. Full apt are we to set before ourselves as the essence of life's bliss, the great things, the showy things, the noteworthy things, but therein are we beguiled, therein are we blinded. Greatness hath little to do with happiness.

Learning has many charms, but happiness is not one of them. "In much wisdom is much grief." How pathetic the tale of genius! Fame how cordial but how fraught with jealousy! Marvellous how the vision of gold allures us, leads us on, then mocks us, teases us, tantalizes us! Mark the millionaire! He has no home; he has homes; and so many of them does he lay claim to that he never feels at ease in any—one in New York, one in Pasadena, one in Newport, one in the Adirondacks, one in Florida. So he hies off for the most part to a hotel. Only his servants have learned the blessed contentment of a home, their home being one of his houses, outhouses rather, in which they live long enough to learn to love its very walls and windows, and where they stay, seeing their moving master but rarely, keeping watch over his great, cold, commanding structure with its stone steps and imposing frontage and inner emptiness as of death. Oh, if one but had the seeing eye, it were not hard to tell which has the happier heart—mistress or maid. Listen, dear reader, it is common things that quench thirst, not rare things; ordinaries, not luxuries; not palatial houses,

but a home; not royal wine, but cold water. Good health, kind friends, encouraging words, loving deeds, duty done, heartaches healed, a grasp, a clasp, a kiss, a smile, a song, a welcome—these are the beams that bring summer into the soul and make us light-hearted and free and glad. Simple music! How we all love the old-fashioned strains! “Old black Joe”; “The old folks at home”! Riley says, “I want to hear the old band play.” And the old hymns, “Dundee”; “Duke Street”; “St. Martins”; “Ortonville”! Nothing like the old hymns! Live simply then. Enjoy the present moment. Do the duty next you. Speak the kind word waiting to be spoken. Do the kind deed tarrying to be done. Never will you pass this way more. Never will you be privileged to see this particular spot again. The next time you come by, it will be different. Something will be added; something will be wanting; something will be changed. Keep your heart free from hate, your mind from worry. Live simply; expect little; give much; sing often; pray always. Fill your life with love. Scatter sunshine. Forget self. Think of others. Do as you would be done by—these are

the tried links in contentment's golden chain.

To-day, people are becoming tired of daily duty and what they call monotony. There is an unhealthy appetite for change and high pressure. A spirit of restlessness is in the air. Pleasure seems to consist in overdoing things, attending some reception every afternoon, going out to some dinner every evening and meeting some new face every night; which is the falsest kind of a philosophy, which will sap the strength of any people. Give your child too many toys and teach him that he must expect some new excitement every morning, and you have harmed him. Teach him the rather to cultivate calmness, tranquillity, restraint, and to find delight in a few diversions and those of the plainest kind. This is best for him, best for you, best for all. There is something almost pathetic in the ferment that goes driving an automobile down the boulevard at break-neck speed for the sake of a new sensation. Pathetic because such people are striving to get out of sense what can only be gotten out of soul! And the pitiful part of it is that there should be so many of this type among us. They spend

fabulous sums on the machinery of living, on dress, drink, luxuries, dinners, costly entertainments, stables, yachts, functions, frivolities, in a word, on the body. The attitude is essentially vulgar. It lacks taste and balance and repose. It is noisy, but what an empty hollowness there is to the sound! Change of scene, change of pleasure, the making of each amusement more and more pungent, the cry for some new wonder more thrilling than the last, will soon drain a people of their industrial vitality and make them incapable of routine. And any people who have become incapable of routine, whose wealth is founded on quick strokes of fortune, on rare roads to gain, on the windfalls of life, must soon perish economically, and they cannot long prosper morally.

Theodore Parker, it is said, knew all the wild flowers around his old home in Lexington. He would pluck the rarest blossoms, and when friends would ask where it was he found them, he would say, "If I tell you, you will go and pluck them up by the roots and I should have them no more." How often do we tear up the flowers of happiness by the roots and burden our arms with the

load till we tire carrying it, and so soon they too wilt and wither! So we add to our libraries books on books, and before we can read half of what we have, we are off purchasing more. Some rooms are so crowded with furniture that only with the greatest care can one move around. Some wardrobes are so elaborate that the good wife has difficulty in finding something to wear. The struggle of the age seems to be not for necessities, but for superfluities; not for money, but for a bank of money. How many a youth would be a scholar, if, like Lincoln, he owned no library! How many a millionaire, it has been said, would not be knowing sickness but for the invention of pills and medicines to make him well! I think it was Bronson Alcott who urged that society would be more law-abiding if we had no lawyers, that the race would be healthier if we had no doctors, to which Emerson playfully added that we should all be happier if we had no amusements. So it is that our wealth sometimes becomes our poverty and ease becomes related to disease. There are soils that are so moist and fertile that morning-glories and portulacas will not grow; these flowers need a little aid

from aridness. But we seem not to learn the fact. We keep on pulling up the choicest flowers in life's garden by the roots. We keep on multiplying our baggage—and oh the shame of it! The man is judged by his baggage.

Yes, the tragedy of success is life's pathetic spectacle. Success usually is a drag to the higher life, tending to a lower. And the struggle to attain is apt to resolve itself into a struggle to effect one's own ruin, which is life's great and glaring contradiction. George Müller, preaching in Bristol at the age of eighty-six, on Paul's words in Philippians, "Rejoice in the Lord alway," said, "I am a poor man but a happy man, and I have been getting happier every day for sixty-two years." Think on the other hand and by way of contrast, of the words of Lord Chesterfield, that pampered pet of fortune and mirror of politeness, who united so cleverly wickedness with the graces, who "took his thirty-third degree in the free masonry of sensual indulgence"; "I have been behind the scenes, I have seen all the coarse pulleys and the dirty ropes which move the gaudy machinery, and I have smelled the tallow candles which illu-

56 The Culture of Simplicity

minate the hollow decorations to the astonishment of an ignorant audience." And think yet again, of the irritable whine of that famous Hebrew, Heine, poet, critic, thinker, author of twenty-one volumes, who wrote in his diary these words: "What lists it to me that at banquets my health is drunk out of golden goblets and in the best of wine, if I, myself, can only moisten my lips with the physician's potion? What lists it to me that enthusiastic youths and damsels crown my marble bust with laurels, when on my real head a blister is being clapped by my old sick nurse? What lists it to me that the roses of Shiraz glow and smell never so sweetly? Alas, Shiraz is six hundred miles from Rue L'Amsterdam, where I get nothing to smell, in the melancholy solitude of my sick-room but the aroma of warm poultices." Behold the trophies of the world are wetted with a rain of tears! The reverberating plaudits which greet the world's successes only serve to waken the wailing echo, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity."

SIMPLICITY *and* EXTRA-
GANCE

“For art, for music overthrilled,
The wine-cup shakes, the wine is spilled.”
—*Emerson.*

VI

SIMPLICITY *and* EXTRAVAGANCE

EXTRAVAGANCE literally means a wandering beyond bounds, going without the limits laid down, which surely is one of the sins of the age. Extravagance in dress, in living, in pleasure, in taste, in word, who can tell the river of crime and sorrow that has flowed from this evil fountain? Living beyond our means, purchasing what we cannot pay for, running in debt, toiling to keep up appearances, waste, improvidence, unthrift, indulging in the superlative—what false and foolish notions of life are these!

The superlative is usually a stepping over the mark and thus is close akin to sin, for sin is a missing of the mark. In conversation, we are not satisfied to represent things as they are. Representing things as they are is tame and we tire of the tame. The average does not appeal to us. We want

60 The Culture of Simplicity

the unusual, the startling. So we overreach.

Society to-day it has been said has fallen into the evil habit of using adjectives and adverbs twice as large as the perfect fit, and we are supposed to make allowance just as some stores ask a price far in excess of what is expected, it being taken for granted that the purchaser will jew down. That is the silent understanding. It is like suing a railroad corporation for physical injuries sustained ; if you expect five thousand dollars, you must ask for fifty thousand. Bayard Taylor said that while talking to the Arabs, he never dared to tell a plain truth. He had to lift their sluggish minds to the level of fact by himself overstating. Similarly, when Henry Drummond was describing to a tribe of African savages the city of London, he was pressed into the same necessity. Homer said, "The sun went down in a bed of gold ; the moon touched all things into silver." The heroes too, of the olden world were giants. Richard could cut the iron bar with his sword. The horn of Roland could be heard sixty miles. The Cid could sleep with a leper and wake up clean. Hector and Ulysses were marvellous men. Thus

has the hyperbole become a favourite figure with our poets and missionaries and plaintiffs in the court room.

The same false tendency is noticeable in our waste of words. A choice word is a precious stone of great value. It should not be tossed about recklessly any more than a rare treasure. Such words as divine, glorious, adoration, sublime, love, majesty, mercy, should be handled sparingly. If we say that the evening's entertainment was glorious, what are we to say when we stand in the presence of something really worthy the word? Some beautiful landscape, for instance, some never-to-be-forgotten sunset, some immortal production! The word belongs to the higher functions of the soul. That was a high compliment paid to the Duke of Wellington when his documents were published. "Here are twelve volumes of military dispatches," said his biographer, "and the word glory is not found in one of them." So with the word love; how oft degraded! We hear people talk of loving meats and drinks and dresses, but we do not love things; we love our friends, our ideals possibly; we love our God and our neighbour; our homes but not

62 The Culture of Simplicity

our houses. We do not adore ice cream ; we like it. We did not have a divine time at the theatre ; we had a delightful time. All such straining talk is flirting with great symbols. Beautiful is pertinent to the rose, pretty to the pansy, grand to the oak, sublime to the mountain ; but such roots as glory, divine, love, worship, adore, belong to the soul's vocabulary and call for cautious treatment.

I think as a rule, it may be said that the superlative in word means poverty in thought, striving to make up in quantity what is lacking in quality. Emerson somewhere says, "The positive is the muscle of speech, the superlative the fat." And we incline too much to the superlative for strength. The strong, nervous, sinewy Saxon of simple, illiterate people is no longer ours. One can hardly help noting the popular fondness abroad for looseness of statement. We are so easily carried away in wonder ! "The grandest sight I ever saw" ; "Never in my life was I so moved" ; "The most eloquent sermon I ever heard" ! Oh, this ever and never ! What tales they tell ! "I was just knocked silly," a young lady remarked yesterday, speaking of a

certain acquaintance and something she did which she considered rather forward. "I thought I should die," is another favourite bar in this rag-time music. "I was almost paralyzed when I saw the number of houses put up since I left last fall," a man said to me quite recently. After hearing such empty explosives the plain simple facts become refreshing. The Scotchman is noted for his guardedness and reserve. He says "I'm doing fairly weel noo," if his venture in business has been especially successful, or, "I canna complain." If he happens to be blest with perfect health, the usual salutation is, "I'm able to be aboot," or, if the opposite be true, "I'm enjoying rather a puir winter." Might not a little Scotch caution add to the force of our interviews and serve us well?

We are suffering to-day from the deterioration of human speech. It seems as though one of the hard things were to stick to exactness. There is an excess of distortion, of illusion, of overdrawing, of caricature, of cartoon. The cartoon is exaggeration in its superlative form. How much in your morning paper is absolutely reliable? As you read, are you not always,

64 The Culture of Simplicity

unconsciously perhaps, making allowance? We have learned from experience, that to-morrow will correct much of to-day, or leave you to correct it. It is like the smile of the cat in the child's story book, which broadened and brightened while the cat gradually faded until finally, nothing but the grin was left. Mark Twain says, "It is better not to know so much, than to know so much that isn't so." Thoreau once remarked that we need to-day not a Nilometer but a Realometer to measure the freshet of slush and sham that has gathered in the current of our human movement. So he tried to get down to rock reality himself. Society says, "Win your point; if the facts will not win it, colour them; win anyway." But this is weakening, not strengthening. In the end it is disastrous. Truth is the capital coin of the commonwealth. It should never be debased. It should circulate as sterling currency. He who would be convincing, must be true, ever true. Nothing is worth speaking but truth. Nothing pays but truth. Nothing is wanted but truth. Nothing conquers but truth. Nothing survives but truth. Nothing is eternal but truth. The heart of humanity cries out,

Simplicity and Extravagance 65

“Tell us the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.”

“If I had a voice—a persuasive voice,—
That could travel the wide world through,
I would fly on the beams of the morning light,
And speak to men with a gentle might,
And tell them to be true.”

For after all, to be true is life's victory.

We need a revival in these latter days, of the simple yea and nay. “Let your communication be yea, yea; nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than that cometh of evil.” And we need a like candidness in our social community. Yesterday, I regarded a lady visiting a friend, attended by a chauffeur and a footman, and received on the door-steps of her friend's home by two footmen more. This is stiff and high and perilous and fatal to honest feeling. The sweetness of true intimacy cannot stand the strain of such cumbersome machinery. Suppose we met each other on the plane of perfect sympathy. Instead of a burning ambition to shine, suppose we had a burning ambition to brighten. Suppose we made our approach absolutely frank and aimed to fit each word exactly to our thought. How

many hurts would be evaded, avoided! Quite recently, a florist was finding fault with our present style of gardening, his criticism being that we have rooted up the old fragrant flowers and gone in for loud and flaunting colours; that we have swept away sweet shrubs and green lawns for violet ribbon borders and vulgar carpet bedding. Whether or not this be true in modern gardening, it is surely true in our social life. We are becoming spectacular. We are forsaking the old, sweet, simple ways for a gaudy style which is hurting us. Even in sorrow we are not guiltless. We are rapidly turning death itself into a display. What with expensive caskets, expensive flowers, expensive dresses, expensive carriages, an expensive burial plot—"for there are expensive seats in the churchyard just as in the church"—death is becoming a serious drain upon the poor man. It is a relief to turn to the last will and testament of John Wesley: "Let me be borne to the grave by six poor men; let there be no hearse, no coach, no escutcheon, no pomp, no funeral eulogy—nothing but the tears of those who love me." Witness too, the usual wedding in high life! Is it not al-

most a violation of the genius of true marriage? Are not the simplicity and reality gone therefrom? Is not the whole play a piece of glitter, show, pretense, extravagance? From the hour the engagement is announced, everything is theatrical. The bride-to-be is dined and wined. The functions are numerous and costly, the dresses rich and elaborate, the whole trousseau intemperate and wasteful. And then the week of the great event! What with fêtes and banquets and dances and dinners and receptions and theatre parties and card parties—the whole piece of flaunting folly culminating in a grand church exhibition of vulgar display in which the religious significance of the sacred covenant is almost entirely lost sight of—how unreal it all is, how vain, how empty, how loud! Sounding brass and tinkling cymbal! The beautiful, holy, spiritual ordinance has been converted into a coarse demonstration of parade and pomp. Against this tidal drift, there is likely to be a reaction soon. Love and trust and reality and simplicity should be the natural notes when a mutual attraction draws two young hearts together. It is not the time for advertisement. Life-ties

68 The Culture of Simplicity

made to be talked about are tearful trickeries. Alas, for the abuse of putting things on exhibition, especially sacred things. Nature does it not. Nature does her work without asking who is looking on. So should we. There is no wrong in having much, and there is no wrong in enjoying what one has; the wrong consists in displaying it. Possession is not a privilege to elate, but a responsibility to sober. Let each use his own as though it belonged to others; this is the divine way, this is the Christ way. Let each look upon what he has as a loan, be it little or be it large. Success within should be accessible to failure without. It should be a door, not a wall or a barricade or entrenchment. No life can live itself in a fortress anyway, because no fortress can shut out the great realities. Death is a great fortress-leveller. To be sure, there are beautiful spirits in the high places all about us—thousands of them. This let us cheerfully admit, and for this let us be thankful. And we love all such too. Humility is never so attractive as when it sits on thrones. Lowliness is never so lofty as when it is clothed in scarlet, unless it be when it is clad in the garb of loving service.

But if the privileged are wise to-day, they will shun as much as possible, the spectacular. They will read and study to interpret the writing on the wall, which writing to us spells ominous. Too apt are we to consider the lot of greatness a happy one, but greatness hath its own sore grief. "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown." Greatness calls for our pity, not our envy. Instead of criticism, let us cultivate the spirit of sympathy more; let us practice the presence of contentment; let us put the emphasis on truths, not things; let us take down our Stevenson and mark his sane, earnest message to our time; "To be honest, to be kind—to earn a little and to spend a little less, to make upon the whole a family happier for his presence, to renounce when that shall be necessary and not be embittered, to keep a few friends, but these without capitulation—above all, on the same grim condition, to keep friends with himself—here is a task for all that man has of fortitude and delicacy."

Neither Homer nor Virgil ever wrote sublimer lines than the lines of Thomas Gray. There is no war in heaven in the "Elegy," no roaring cannon, no magic

sword, no coat of mail made by Vulcan, no Cyclops or Circe or Ariel, no supernatural scenery, no golden fleece or lamp of Aladdin. There is no appeal whatever to the legendary or the mythical. The setting is the simplest; the curfew bell, the lowing herd, the ivy-mantled tower, the ploughman, the children climbing on the parent's knee, the rude forefathers of the hamlet, the short and simple annals of the poor, the cool, sequestered vale of life, the lap of earth, the dull, cold ear of death—all these homely truths are so woven together into one gem of beauty that the world will never forget to sing the immortal lament. They are great lines, lines full of pathos, full of power. There is a tinge of sadness to them, a pensiveness that soothes, a mellowness that lingers. The power of the poem is its polished appeal to the heart of the common people. It unites in itself the two things that make great poetry—perfect art and common things. It sings the glories of those unknown to fame and fortune. It is a tribute to the simple life, and as the eye reads, the heart melts. Simplicity is a great healer. It heals envy and jealousy and bitterness and hate. It bridges chasms of caste

and rivalry. It tunnels mountains of prejudice and bigotry. It acts as a balm to bruised spirits. It softens harsh feelings. It brings rich and poor together in loving brotherhood. It helps the employee to understand his employer, the employer his employee. It will go far to close the breach between labour and capital. It is good taste, good grace, good will, good fellowship. It is the Sermon on the Mount alive and active. It is the spirit of Christ. "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest; take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart and ye shall find rest unto your souls, for My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

SIMPLICITY *and* GREATNESS

To speak the truth, to live the truth, to love truth; to be kindly hearted and mannered in word and act, honourable without being harsh, self-respectful without being haughty; never to think ourselves better than others, no matter how poor they be or lowly; ever to remember that we are God-made not self-made, so to be humble in our successes, submissive and brave in our defeats; to shun pride and self-glorying as a great taint, to seek simplicity and lowliness as some priceless treasure; to be charitable for failings we see in our fellow men, penitent for those we discover in ourselves; to be sympathetic, feeling with men in their misfortunes, rejoicing with them in their joys; to be filled with a spirit of forgiveness, never resentful, ever sweet and cheerful, tender-hearted towards weakness, admiring towards loveliness; to think much about ourselves yet talk little, to talk about our neighbour's virtues only, to be always talking and thinking about Jesus; to hate nothing but sin and falsehood, to love everything true and pure and wholesome, to have the sense of the Divine Presence in our hearts at every moment—this is true Christian greatness.

VII

SIMPLICITY *and* GREATNESS

To be great is to be modest. This is a rule by which to measure men. Of course, there are exceptions to the rule, but after all is said the exceptions are few, and when exceptions do arise, it is to teach us the fallibility of human attainment. Every nature hath its own shortcoming; this is theirs. Be the intellect as cathedral as that of a Daniel Webster; be the genius as colossal as that of a Coleridge; be the spirit as sweet as that of a Cowper, across it somewhere will fall some dark line reminding us that there is none perfect, no not one; and anyway the rule is so infrequently broken that the law is well-nigh catholic.

True greatness is simple, artless, approachable, considerate, an excellent listener, and when self is at stake, a poor talker. Greatness never advertises herself being so exceeding modest, so unconsciously modest. Hers is the "art that conceals art." Some one notes,

by the way, that nothing advertises itself but a blemish, that only faults strive to attract attention. There is a sense in which this is so. Self-advertisement is weakness, always weakness, something to which only small men are prone. Littleness pushes herself forward; greatness retreats, retires. The man who tells his neighbour of some great deed he has accomplished confesses himself thereby an aspirant for applause, and greatness lives far up above the reach of applause. Who that has done this very thing has not felt afterwards a little cheaper and smaller for the telling!

This is not claiming that one cannot talk of one's triumphs without boasting, for such is hardly the case, but after all allowance for circumstances is made, it must be confessed not an easy task, and even when innocently meant there is the accompanying danger of misinterpretation. Silence is best. Great men follow the old adage which says that we have two ears but only one tongue, meaning that we are to hear twice as much as we speak. Of their victories especially, they talk but little. They do not need to indeed, as others will do it for them and do it better. No great man

tells of his wisdom. Wisdom falls on her face and weeps for consciousness of failure. It takes learning to reveal the lack of learning. As men go up towards culture, they go towards lowliness and humbleness of mind and heart. The field of one's ignorance is so much ampler than the field of one's knowledge that the spirit is sobered and saddened by the outlook. While others are praising him, the hero's head droops, his lip trembles. He feels foiled. He longs for a subtler brush to trace his vision, a richer language to tell his thought. He longs for finer tools and a more delicate equipment. The ideal keeps on receding and the real seems weak and poor. The ideal is a stern accuser. It makes us feel as Carlyle felt, when looking up into the brilliant heavens at night, he exclaimed to his companion, "Man alive, it's just dreadful."

Sometimes we meet with an affected lowliness which at heart is the worst form of pride. It is forced and is full as distasteful as a forced formality. Mock modesty we name it. But all valuable things have their imitations, and this is simplicity's counterfeit. Crime does not copy the spurious. Hypocrisy after all is the strongest

78 The Culture of Simplicity

testimony to the reality and genuineness of the original. So when we hear the false hollow ring of the unreal, we know that somewhere not far away the note of the real sounds sweet and low. There is an evil which I have seen under the sun and which is somewhat common among men, and that is to vaunt one's self, but to do it in a cunning, designing way, in such a way that some part of the glory given to others is reflected. The lecturer talks not of himself. He talks of the great men he has met, the great sights he has seen, the great books he has read. "When I was in Jerusalem," says the preacher, "I saw such and such," but the main thing meant is to let the congregation know that the speaker was in Jerusalem. The charming young lady breaks out into an occasional French saying, to impress upon her listeners the fact that she is standing on two shores, and that several continents have contributed to her making. Then, too, there are the pretensions of ignorance and the confident carriage that incompetence sometimes assumes, but all such is weakness. Strength does not boast. Strength is gentle. Gentleness is power in restraint. The man who tells you

that he is great disproves thereby his claim. "His saying so unsays it." I am to infer your wide reading from the wealth of your wisdom, not from your repeated vauntings. If Byron writes down to Scott and Scott writes up to Byron, it only proves that Scott was the bigger man. When Charles the Fifth picked up Titian's fallen pencil and handed it to the painter, remarking that he was proud to wait on his superiors, this monarch of millions made a brave and gallant confession. Abraham Lincoln was at home with the humblest, while at the same time being the wonder of the wisest. And this is greatness.

Morley, in his life of Gladstone, remarks on the striking humility of his hero. One day Mr. Bryce met him in the lobby of the House of Commons, when the conversation drifted on to Dante. Mr. Bryce was enlarging on the poverty of the great Florentine and how happy it was that in his last years he had obtained a lectureship which placed him above necessity; to which the Grand Old Man made answer, "How strange it is to think that these great souls whose words are a beacon light to all the centuries should have had cares and anxie-

80 The Culture of Simplicity

ties to vex them in their daily life just like the rest of us common mortals." And to this, Mr. Morley adds a beautiful tribute to Darwin whom he had met only a few days before. The noted naturalist had been speaking enthusiastically of a visit Mr. Gladstone had once paid him, and he said, "He" (Gladstone) "talked as if he had been an ordinary person like one of ourselves." What a delightful insight does this give us into the fine fibre of these two mighties! Such as this surely is the government seal of greatness. "For he that exalteth himself shall be abased, but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." It is the Lake poet who in one of his sonnets sings, "Plain living and high thinking are no more," and be it noted he likewise lived his lines. Strenuous thinking comes not from pampered living. "It is the body," says Bossnet, "that oftentimes drags us down from the loftier levels of thought." When the Master wanted disciples, men who could save men and be made men, and on whom He could build His Church, He turned to the simple ones of earth, to folk who had been fishers, to workers, to those whose hands were hard and whose skin was

browned. Interesting to read Xenophon's picture of himself in his tent just as the battle is about to begin, putting on his best clothes, that if slain he might not be treated with the disrespect likely to befall a dead private. Frederick the Great, contrariwise, to the end of his days slept on a truckle bed, and at the summit of his glory the Duke of Wellington lived a life simple as a common soldier's. This morning I passed a young lady walking down the avenue. She was dressed neatly in a beautiful costume of the latest pattern. Just ahead was an old man carrying a burden—a basket of fruit in either hand. As she overtook him she said in a manner most gracious, "Won't you let me help you, Mr. Thurman?" "Oh, no, thank you, ma'am," came the reply. But she insisted, and when I caught up and passed them both, she was bearing one of the baskets and saying, "I just love to go a-marketing." I must tell my readers who she is. She's the daughter of a millionaire. She is considered one of the belles of the city, but this is her smallest praise. She is an uncrowned queen. She belongs to the noble order of heaven's aristocrats. For the greatest are they

82 The Culture of Simplicity

who serve, and she is not ashamed of service.

Ah, when will the world learn the dignity and the glory of being simple? At all times and everywhere, simplicity is strength. It is the most powerful element in society, in life, in science, in art. Our greatest masters do not portray the magnificent things in nature. They sketch a ploughed field rather, a little ragged urchin, the life of some peasant or village smith. Millet's greatest picture represents a corn-field. It is sundown, six o'clock. To the left is a steeple. In the foreground is a working man and woman, a shovel and a hoe. There is no colouring. The colouring is sober and subdued. Ruskin considers Turner's greatest creation his "Crossing the Bridge." To the left is a group of pines. In the foreground a couple of children and a dog are sporting. There is a winding river, an old bridge, and in the distance a dilapidated mill. It is limited to grays and quiet greens and pale blues. The glory of the picture comes from the spiritual element that floods the canvas. Thus does a great heart illumine the common things of life until all tasks become transfigured, for the transfig-

uration of the ordinary is the extraordinary. This then, is the conclusion to the whole matter ; to be great is to be simple, to be pretentious is to be small. "Pride is the attic of the house, the highest room and the emptiest." Proud people are unimaginative, self-centred. They are so bloated with what they are that they are blinded to what they might be. Especially to the religious life is vanity an arch enemy. High-mindedness of spirit in the Church of Christ is doing much to destroy that brotherhood of man and sisterhood of woman for which the Church stands, yes, doing more perhaps than any other wile of the Evil One. A neighbouring pastor tells me that a lady in his church went to a friend recently, asking if she would not stand at the door of the sanctuary with her on Sabbath morning and welcome strangers as they entered, but the friend graciously asked to be excused. She then approached another party who also modestly "preferred not." Not disheartened, she made still advances to a third, who, hesitating for a moment, "Oh, come," she insisted, "you need not speak to them on the street." Than this could anything be at a farther remove from the mind

84 The Culture of Simplicity

of the Master? Is this not the very pith of pharisaism and pride? Is it not the very antipodes of that lowliness of mind and heart which is the gate to the new life? It is this spirit alas, that is damaging church work and blocking church progress to-day to an extent unrealized by the great body of the faithful. Verily, the very publicans are nearer to the kingdom than they of this temper.

SIMPLICITY *and the* HOME

“ From scenes like these old Scotia’s grandeur springs,
That makes her loved at home, revered abroad ;
Princes and lords are but the breath of kings,
An honest man’s the noblest work of God :
And certes, in fair Virtue’s heavenly road,
The cottage leaves the palace far behind :
What is a lordling’s pomp ? A cumbrous load,
Disguising oft the wretch of human kind,
Studied in arts of hell, in wickedness refined !

“ O Scotia ! My dear, my native soil !
For whom my warmest wish to heaven is sent !
Long may thy hardy sons of rustic toil
Be blest with health and peace and sweet content !
And, oh, may heaven their simple lives prevent
From luxury’s contagion, weak and vile ;
Then, howe’er crowns and coronets be rent,
A virtuous populace may rise the while,
And stand a wall of fire around their much-loved isle.”

—Burns.

VIII

SIMPLICITY *and the* HOME

“ 'Mid pleasures and palaces
Though we may roam ;
Be it ever so humble
There's no place like home.”

IT has been said that Jesus, home and mother are the sweetest words in language. Home is a safe place, the sheltered place, the peaceful place, the familiar place, the hallowed place, the place of refuge, the place where mother is, the place where life began and where deep down in our hearts we hope that it may end. For it matters not how far afield we wander, the old home left behind ever tugs at the heart. Man likes travel and sight-seeing and change of scenery, but soon his ardour for adventure cools and he looks back to find a resting-place, a place where peace and quiet may be found, a place of retirement, a place to stay, a place where love reigns. Such a place is home, for home is the kingdom that love

88 The Culture of Simplicity

sets up, and "love never faileth." It has been said that the man who wrote the familiar verse at the head of this chapter never had a home. Thirty years after he died—he died in Tunis in 1852—his bones were dug up and brought back from a foreign shore. But if he had no place when with us to call home, it is otherwise now that he is gone. He lives to-day in the hearts of his countrymen. In that noble lyric he has struck an immortal chord which has made his name and his hymn sacred forever.

One can hardly note the tendency of the day, becoming altogether too common we fear, to shift around without a feeling of anxiety and alarm. Home is a dwelling-place, an abiding-spot, not a camping-ground. "In My Father's house are many homes," mansions, remaining-places, literally. The word implies fixedness and stability. Is it not a misnomer to give the name of home to a flat rented by the month or year and which suggests moving rather than abiding? A large percentage of our population is on the move. They rent their homes or sell them every little while. They are here to-day, there to-morrow, tearing

up, patching, remodelling, buying, selling, changing, drifting. Nomads are they, lodgers, living a vagabond life. Oh for the old ancestral fireside where many of us first saw the light and where our fathers saw it before us and our forefathers before them! It speaks of sacred things and traditions that are precious. It links us to the past in a holy spiritual alliance. One of the best capitals a parent can bequeath his child is a fund of family feelings and folk-lore. They are the sacred relics of the domestic sanctuary. They cultivate in us a reverence for the old. Happy the man with such memories. They are a rich spiritual possession. Pity the poor fellow who has it not. Pity the lad who has never felt the wretchedness of homesickness. Maybe he has been shuffled around so much that there is no little green spot where he has been left long enough to learn to love its gentle charm. He has missed much.

One of the touching passages in literature is the love of Mr. Barrie for his home, as told in "Margaret Ogilvie." "When he was a bairn—so his mother used to tell him in after years—he saw nothing bonny, he never heard of her setting her heart on

anything that he did not fling up his head and cry, 'Wait till I'm a man.'" And when the boy did grow up to be a man he never forgot the old roof. Never was he too busy to write the mother daily. At a single word he would hurry off on a long journey, no matter how busy he was, to see her and linger round the venerable charm. Full oft he visits the old shrine still. "My thousand letters," he says, "that she so carefully preserved, always sleeping with the last under her pillow, where one was found when she died—they are the only writing of mine of which I shall ever boast." Audubon's love for home was only equalled by his love for birds. He would travel for weeks and months in search of some new species, taking his accomplished wife along with him. But when the children began to come this was not possible. So he must needs wander alone, up by the lakes of Canada, across the solitudes of Newfoundland, floating in a frail skiff down the rushing Mississippi, down into the pine barrens of Florida, sometimes threading the Yellowstone rivers or scaling the reaches of the Rockies. But he tells us he never went into a wood so thick or a wilderness so

lonely or scaled a mountain so precipitous that his heart was not away back in the little Kentucky cabin, and those who have read his life will remember how his voice breaks into singing in the oddest places as he thinks of the simple rustic cottage peeping through the elms and oaks, with wife and sons standing in the doorway, and with what a sprightly, eager, almost feverish step he hurried when it was time to turn thitherward.

“ Be it ever so humble
There’s no place like home.”

Perhaps the most democratic word in our language is this word home. It does not need great wealth or great possessions to set it up. Some of the sweetest spots are the most unpretentious. Man can go mad after bric-à-brac. He can ransack the earth till his halls are a picture gallery. His collection of curios may rival the British Museum, but a home is not necessarily a museum or a picture gallery any more than it is a restaurant or a sleeping apartment. Inside may be as a polished mirror, and yet the home idea may be lacking. Some of the loveliest homes are built of marble and

some of logs and thatch and the crudest lumber. The material has nothing to do with it. "There's beauty all around when there's love at home." Home is heaven in miniature, "a house not made with hands, whose builder and maker is love." For just as surely as fear is the fundamental note of the jail, so love is the basic principle in the home. When the atmosphere of childhood has been fresh and pure and sweet its memory can never be quite rubbed out. Life may become a sandy waste, but the smell of the native soil lives on like the fragrance of some precious musk that time cannot exhaust. It has been accounted as a strange thing how nearly all the great men of history have sprung from homes that were humble, which indeed is a fact worth regarding. The cottage has contributed more than the castle to the making of manhood. To have been born and reared and nurtured under a roof where luxury was not known, where however necessity was known, where perhaps poverty pinched, seems a help rather than a hindrance. Such boys begin life by breathing the fresh air and holy atmosphere of the fireside that lives by trust in the good Father for its

daily bread. They are easily led into having a wholesome respect for honest labour which is a big part of life's hard battle. It has been said that the best dowry for a child is the memory of a mother who prays. After which let us hasten to add as second only in importance, good health and a childhood spent in the open. The prominent men in our metropolitan centres to-day came up from the rural districts. A census of our colleges recently taken shows more than eighty per cent. of the students to have come from the farm. To the country and the common lot we must look for our coming seers and sages. Cardinal Wolsey and Daniel Defoe were the sons of butchers. Jeremy Taylor and Turner, the painter, were the sons of barbers. Bunyan was a tinker, Cary a cobbler, Ben Jonson a bricklayer, Copernicus a baker. Ah me, what a long list, and interesting, might be made! It would seem as though it were an advantage to a boy to have no advantage. In the cradle of hardship genius has rocked her biggest children. The royal road to success seems to consist in being handicapped.

But we have traveled far away from these

94 The Culture of Simplicity

former days. Fashion has come and simplicity has gone. Men waste themselves today in piling up fortunes. And why? To build mansions forsooth whose very vastness shuts out comfort. We have changed our menu from bread and butter and a glass of milk to nine course dinners. The little ones are starched and lined up for show, and on this torture table kept during their waking hours. Prof. William James asks in his Gifford lectures, "Whether the modern system of bringing up children is not developing a certain trashiness of fibre?" And the question is timely. Ah, we need to get back to a greater simplicity. Let the home be made more natural and free and wholesome; let it be bright and sweet and cheery; make it the sunniest spot to be found; see that it is built upon reality. What avails your teaching in integrity if the child is taught to be more concerned about clothes than about character? What avails your instruction in the fear of God if money is what you worship yourself and everything is gauged by the stock market? Of what use your prayers, and your preachments on truthfulness, if the home is founded on false appearances, on pride, and envy,

and the effort to eclipse, and the fierce strife for possession? Of no use! All is vanity, mockery. How foolish are they who sacrifice their home comforts for the demands of society! How unfortunate when there are any other conditions regarding the building of a home save love and fitness! How very unfortunate when false ideas of life and drudgery prevent two young hearts that love each other sincerely, uniting for this holy enterprise! It has been said that the greatest work two young hearts can do in this world is to create a true home. Home is one of the material expressions of our spiritual nature. "A true home is a little corner of the very bosom of God, where faithful souls are held close to the infinite Father-heart and carried safely to the Home above."

Ah, most earnestly indeed do we need to pray, God bless our homes; God save our homes. The home is an eternal thing. Man makes the club but God makes the home. A great statesman once remarked that he would be willing to rest the whole apology for Christianity on the home. Look how in every non-Christian religion the woman and the child are assigned to an inferior

grading. Mohammedanism for instance has much of good and much that is beautiful, but one has only to contrast a Christian home with a Mohammedan home to understand how far below the latter falls. The home is the key to the solution of many of our most perplexing problems. Unless the domestic life of the land is sound and wholesome the national life cannot be sound and wholesome. No nation is better than its domestic life. Undermine that and the public health is impaired. The home that has truth and love and purity in it is the pillar of society and the salvation of the state. In the words of a recent writer of note, the Christian home is the creation of Christ: "The Christian home—what sacred associations twine themselves round the name, what memories and hopes it stirs! —the Christian home is the creation of Christ. There were, of course, beautiful features in the family life of pre-Christian ages. Greece could boast of noble types of maidenhood like Nausicaa and Antigone; Rome could boast of a Lucretia and Virginia, and of great-hearted mothers like the mother of the Gracchi; later on, the Teutonic tribes of Central Europe could show examples of

wifehood and womanhood which woke the enthusiasm of the grave Roman historian, and all through the centuries when Greek and Roman and Teuton were playing their part in paving the way for our modern civilization, Judaism was helping on the development of a higher family life. Nevertheless, the Christian home is peculiarly the creation of Christ. Just consider. As compared with anything that went before, what are the distinguishing features of the family life of Christendom? We find them in elements like these—the emphasis laid upon personal purity, the higher dignity conferred upon woman, the consecration of childhood, the rooting of human love in divine love, and the transfiguring of earthly relationships in the light of the eternal world. Yes, Christ has created the homes of Christendom. Not by any direct violent activity, but by the silent penetrative power of His teaching and spirit, the purity of Christ has breathed purity into the home. Christ's reverence for woman has lifted the wife and mother to a higher platform of honour and influence. Christ's love for children has thrown a sacred halo round the little ones, and given them a cosier corner at the

98 The Culture of Simplicity

hearth. The spiritual presence of Christ in the home has made it a holier, stronger, and sweeter spot. The genius of Christ is stamped upon the home; it is His spirit that looks out upon us there. A Christian home is a veritable Gospel, telling us, as no sermon can ever do, what Christ is in His grace and love and power. A Christian home is the witness to Christ."

SIMPLICITY *and* TRUST

THE LAST THE BEST.

Lift up the windows of light, my brother !

Lift high and wide ;

The balmy morn is bracing, tonical,

Brilliantly dyed ;

And a glad tide

Of song flows from full-voiced tree-tops

Hard beside.

Swing back the shutters of life, my sister !

Swing them afar ;

The blush of dawn is painting the pansy,

Paling the star ;

While fingers are

Streaking the eastern heavens with

Bolt and bar.

Open the door of your heart, poor sinner !

Jesus is there

Standing and waiting, knocking and pleading—

Lovely and fair ;

And why ? To share

Thy warmth, thy cheer, thy feast, thy favour,

Grief and care.

Oh, let Him in ; let Him in then, sinner !

Make Him your guest ;

The darkness He'll scatter, the doubt remove,

The sin arrest ;

Sunshine and zest

He'll be at morn, at nightfall peace, and

Last the best.

IX

SIMPLICITY *and* TRUST

THERE is a passage in the writings of Saint Paul that is almost always quoted wrongly. It is found in his second letter to the Corinthians: "I fear lest your minds be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." Taking up the American Revision, we observe that the preposition "in" is changed to "towards," which is certainly the correct rendering. For it is not the simplicity that is in Christ that the apostle means, but the simplicity that is towards Christ; not a quality in Him but an attitude in us. Not that Christ is not simple. He is. He is the soul of simplicity, in His life, in His character, in His essential teaching. Never was life lived so free and open and transparent as The Divine Carpenter's. Hear His words, "I am the Bread of Life"; "I am the Living Water"; "I am the Way"; "I am the Door"; "I am the

Vine"; "I am the Light"; "I am the Good Shepherd." What modest words are these! But the immediate burden of the apostle's prayer and godly jealousy was not that they imitate Him in this regard, but that they cling to Him with that single affection and whole-hearted loyalty which every chaste virgin cherishes for her espoused.

Aye, verily indeed, the Master was simple and His message is simple too. Refreshing to study the Word packed full of mysteries as it unquestionably is, and yet how direct and straightforward is its story! "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." This is its glad and vital evangel. Simply believe! Surely the wayfaring man though fool need not stumble here!

" Why should we wrestle with fears,
And doubts which the Spirit may grieve?
And why should we linger in sorrow and tears
When there's nothing to do but believe?"

We are not saved by learning or scholarship or culture. We are saved by faith, and faith is trust, and the little child knows what trust is. This is the glory of the gospel, its appeal to the child-heart. "Except

ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom." It is a rule in mechanics, the fewer wheels and screws and wedges, the better. Machinery that is involved is apt to get out of gear. For just as too much foliage indicates an absence of fruit, and too much ornament an absence of taste, so complexity is weakness. We hear much to-day about the exclusiveness of Calvinism, but the exclusiveness of Calvinism, if such a thing there be, would be a little thing compared with the exclusiveness of culture. Salvation by faith is the only gospel that could have been given to the race even on the ground of social democracy. I think it is Mr. Moody who tells of going to preach to the inmates of a feeble-minded institute. He says, "As I stood and looked into the faces of more than two hundred invalids, I realized as never before that if ever there is a time for a preacher to be simple, now is the time, and after it was over, I felt, 'Thank God for a gospel that is profound enough for a Gladstone and simple enough for an idiot.'"

Now Scripture speaks of a relationship, and it calls that relationship one of sim-

plicity, sincerity, singleness. The thought is whole-hearted devotion to the Master, a faith that looks solely to Him for light and leading, and a supreme love for Him that is exclusive and that knows no admixture. Simplicity is not a talent like music; it is not a strength or infirmity of our nature like self-control or selfishness; it is not a fruit of the Spirit like love; it is an attitude, an attitude of receptiveness. Faith in Jesus Christ is simply receiving Jesus Christ. It begins in receiving and ends in receiving, and all the way between is receiving. Salvation is not a matter of sacrifices, or ordinances, or works, or observances, or self-denials, or creeds distinctly articulated, or sacraments apostolically administered. So many, alas, get wrecked on this rock of error! Let us insist on it with the force of a great cardinal axiom; salvation is receiving. "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God." "The free gift of God is eternal life." "And of His fullness have we all received and grace for grace." "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you." "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give Me to drink;

thou wouldst have asked of Him and He would have given thee living water.”
“Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”
“And whosoever cometh, I will in no wise cast out.”

Thus we note that the emphasis of these Scriptures and such as these, is on giving and receiving. And giving and receiving what? Rest? Nay, nay! Peace of mind? Not so! Forgiveness of sins? Not primarily! Strength to do the will of God? None of these! Faith is receiving Him. “As many as received Him.” The Master did not say, “It is the way,” but “I am the Way.” The Christian is he who has admitted the Christ—a living Person, not a dead principle—into his life. Salvation is welcoming a guest into my home, to live under my roof, to walk in company with me, to inspire and help me at every turn of the tide. When a traveller wishing to go east finds himself going west, he turns about; that is conversion. Conversion is an attitude. It is turning around and going the other way. We have made it mystical and magical and nebulous and vague, but it is none of these. It is an attitude, we re-

peat. It is turning right about and going towards Him.

Ever need we to remember that religion is a science, but a science of the heart. Faith is the knowledge of the heart. Too apt are we to confuse religion with the philosophy of religion! How came sin into the world? What is the nature of God? What the different theories of the atonement? Define the trinity. Analyze the different kinds of faith and repentance. All such problems belonging not to religion but to the philosophy of religion! This is how there grew up the creeds and formulated articles and metaphysical subtleties of the middle ages. Then when the Church invaded the Roman Empire, she became Romanized. The kingdom of God became an ecclesiastical instead of a spiritual kingdom. An elaborate ritual was drawn up. A beautiful liturgy was adopted and a priesthood ordained. But again all this is philosophy, not religion. How came sin into the world? That problem pertains to the realm of philosophy. How can I get sin out of my heart? This alone belongs to religion. Philosophy concerns itself with form and dress, religion with life. The dif-

ference between religion and philosophy, it has been well said, is the difference between plants and botany. Botany is the science of plants, but botany is not a plant. Astronomy is the science of the stars, but astronomy is not a star. God cannot be found through the intellect. Christ cannot be approached through the sense. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." "God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God."

How simple a thing then does salvation become! It is receiving Him. Justification is a free gift; so is faith; so is forgiveness; so is eternal life. They are all gifts given freely, richly, lavishly, ungrudgingly. And it is because the human heart is proud and does not take to gifts that we have made our Christianity such a complex thing. Man likes to regard himself as the end of his endeavours, and so there thus arises all such subtle sophistries as penance, incense, the mass, self-mutilation, and all that savours of personal merit. But trust is simple and natural as childhood; it is indeed the charm of childhood. It is the single eye, the believing heart, the obedient will. It is the

108 The Culture of Simplicity

unbarring of the gate to the entrance of
friendship.

Open the door of your heart then, sinner !
 Make Him your guest ;
The darkness He'll scatter, the doubt remove,
 The sin arrest ;
 Sunshine and zest
He'll be at morn, at nightfall peace, and
 Last the best.

SIMPLICITY *and* RELIGION

“The quality of mercy is not strained,
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath. It is twice blest;
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes.
'Tis mightiest in the mighty. It becomes
A throned monarch better than his crown.
It is an attribute to God Himself,
And earthly power doth then show likest God's
When mercy seasons Justice. Therefore, Jew,
Though Justice be thy plea, consider this,
That in the course of Justice none of us
Should see salvation. We do pray for mercy;
And that same prayer doth teach us all to render
Deeds of mercy.”

—*Shakespeare.*

X

SIMPLICITY *and* RELIGION

How simple a thing is true religion, and yet from the beginning how men have sought to make it hard and difficult! The story is in print somewhere, of a company of clergymen spending the evening together, and being asked to give in the simplest line the sum of all religion. "Strip it of all accretion," said the questioner. "Let no extraneous growth remain; boil it down to its last analysis; cut out every phrase, every word, every syllable that is sparable; let there not be a lavish letter." For a moment there was pause. Then came the answers thick and fast. "Pure religion and undefiled," began the first, "before God and the Father, is this, to visit the fatherless and widow in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world." "Fear God and keep His commandments," said another. "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness," rejoined a

third. The last to speak was a mystic, and his answer seemed to touch the little company, because of its brevity, as he said quietly, "Thy will not mine be done!"

For a moment there was pause again. "But are there not two needless words there?" the questioner at last broke in. "Why not just say, 'Thy will be done'?" "By no means," replied the mystic; "these words are the point of the sentence." For God is omnipotent and all wise. He is sovereign ruler and judge. He doeth all things after the counsel of His will. None can stay His hand or say unto Him, "What meanest Thou?" But when we come to grace, prayer is a power. The Lawgiver is more than law; He is love. His throne is not marble. His heart is not brass. His throne is wax; His heart is pity. "Ask and ye shall receive," is the promise. Justice and mercy are knit together. God and man are companions, co-partners, friends. We are members of a family, and could anything be more fitting than that the child should say to the parent, "Father, not my will but Thine be done!"

There can be little doubt that this is a short and simple answer to the question of

religion. One criticism, however, we must urge against it—it is ultra negative. Religion is not chiefly a negative force; it is a positive, active, working power. Resignation is one side of religion, but religion has two sides. “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you;” these are the two sides, and so the answer fails from being exhaustive; it lacks being a complete and final statement of the essence of our faith. There are several other Scriptures that it seems might fulfill much better the definition demanded. Jesus says, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and strength and soul and mind, and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” That is the Master’s challenge. Micah exclaims, “What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God?” This is the Old Testament reply. Of these last words Professor Huxley wrote in 1885: “In the eighth century, B. C., in the heart of a world steeped in idolatry, the Hebrew prophet put forth a conception of religion which appears to me as wonderful an inspiration of genius as the art of Phidias or the science of Aristotle—

‘What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God?’” And when some years ago, President Elliott of Harvard was asked to write eight inscriptions for as many tablets to stand under eight allegorical statues in the Congressional library at Washington, he wrote for the religious pedestal this same memorable verse.

It will be observed that there are three duties recognized in this prophetic strain; two towards man and one towards God. The ship at sea has two methods of reckoning, the sextant and the sounding-weight. The man with the weight takes soundings from below, the man with the glass takes bearings from above. And this, too, the prophet does. First he computes from below, then from above. “What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly?” Justice is a sacred word; it is a divine word. The court room is a holy place. The heart feels like saying as it enters, “The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him.” Right and proper that we should look upon the ermine with venerable regard, because the ermine stands for unspottedness, for purity, for fair deal-

ing, for righteousness, for strict equity between man and man. Is not this indeed the temple of justice? Is not he who sits here God's minister? A judge who is mercenary, who takes pay for his decisions, how we contemn! How base a word is bribery! We recall that story of a judge in the time of Cambyses who took graft and sold his judgment. A poor widow who had been wronged complained to the Emperor. The Emperor, hearing her tale of woe, caused the man to be put to death, his skin peeled off and made into a leather covering for the judicial throne which he was wont to occupy, in order that all his successors might forever be admonished; which gives us a heathen estimate of the evil far back in the midnight of moral darkness.

There is an old saying of Cervantes that "honesty is the best policy." The saying has passed into a proverb, notwithstanding the fact that at heart the phrase is false. For honesty is not a policy, but a virtue. The man who is honest simply because it is policy, is not really honest; he is only politic. Let us not get our terms tangled. Let us not speak of the tricks of trade! Let us the rather speak of the crimes of trade.

116 The Culture of Simplicity

Venality is not a policy; it is a crime. Graft is not a policy; it is a crime. Crookedness is not a policy; it is a crime. The trouble with our country to-day is a tendency to euphemism. Policy and polite, be it remembered, are from the same root. Oftentimes we are polite because it is policy to be polite. We do not like to call a "spade" a "spade"; we prefer to say, "an implement for excavating." "Stealing" sounds harsh; "appropriation" has a Latin polish to it. We consider it abrupt to blurt out, "he gambled"; we oil our tongue and say, "he won the prize." Some one charges that bribery is a crime in England and a profession in America. Robbery on a smooth and ample scale we palliate. Robbery is all right if it be only big enough. Little larceny is jailed, but grand larceny is sent to Congress. There is a trick in algebra by which an equation can be run out to infinity and one proven equal to two; so here dishonesty raised to a generous power becomes honesty. The old couplet read,

"It is a sin to steal a pin,
Much more to steal a greater thing."

But the modern version of these lines would be,

It is a sin to steal a pin,
A merit to steal a greater thing.

The politician who can steal a state or a ballot-box, or a government trust, the boss who can grip the throat of a great city—he is a social lion; he is banqueted. The clumsy bungler gets haltered, but the sharp, slick, fine-fingered pirate slips the collar. Did not a demagogue recently say that it was easier to buy legislators than to elect them? We have quacks in medicine, jugglers in law, mountebanks in the ministry. We have roguery in the realm of trade. Every coin hath its counterfeit. “The warehouse of shoddy is well stocked.” The temple of justice is desecrated.

Now let us back to fundamentals. Religion is a simple thing. A lie is not measured with a twine or a tape; that is the first axiom. A lie is like a line; it has length but not breadth. Falsehood is not a matter of bulk or gravity. What makes a thing false is not its corpulence, but its colour. Some generous heart may give millions to missions, but if he has made his money by anything shady, the benefaction will not make the black spot white. Let us speak plain. Truth takes to simple words.

118 The Culture of Simplicity

Truth dislikes dress. She prefers to come to us naked, without cloak, mantle, drapery, millinery. Truth follows a line, and that line is astonishingly straight. Let us not be swerved; let us not be hoodwinked. The line between right and wrong must never be blurred. Samuel Johnson, in the preface to his dictionary, says, "I am never so lost in lexicography as to forget that words are daughters of earth and things are sons of heaven." Justice literally means loyalty to the "Jus," the right, and the right is a direct path leading straight to the standard of spiritual values. Justice is a coin that carries the ring of truth. To tell the truth, to live the truth, to be the truth, to give sixteen ounces to the pound, to pay one hundred cents on the dollar, to do unto others as we would that others do unto us—this is to be just. Justice is the genius of the Golden Rule. The man who lives on the principle, how would I have my fellow men treat me, he has caught the spirit of justice. As well undertake to construct a table of logarithms on two and two make five, as to build up a permanent business on injustice. No contractor can ignore the plumb line. No merchant can ignore the

plumb line. The Golden Rule is the plumb line. The moment we use a loaded glove or strike below the belt, we are unjust. Justice, like the plumb line, has the universe on its side. Injustice has all heaven arrayed against it. "An honest man's the noblest work of God," and this is the first requirement which the law of heaven lays down. Could anything be simpler ?

But this is not all. A man may be just, and yet according to the divine law, he may give a foul blow. Justice is cold. It is possible to be so just as to be cruel, just as one may stand so straight as to be crooked—not humpbacked, humpbosomed. "What doth the Lord require of thee but to love mercy ?" God is justice ! No, not so, God is not justice. He is just, but He is not justice ; He is love. Justice is one factor in God's nature, but justice is not God's nature ; love is God's nature. God is mercy ! No, God is not mercy ; He is merciful, but He is not mercy. Mercy is one element in the divine essence, but mercy is not the divine essence ; the divine essence is love. Water is composed of two elements, hydrogen and oxygen. Water is not hydrogen and water is not oxygen ; water is the union

of both. God is not justice and He is not mercy ; He is the union of both ; He is love. Love is the union of both. Love is justice and mercy blended—not a mechanical mixture, a chemical amalgam.

Now what is mercy ? What again saith our lexicon ? “ Mercy is a kindly abatement of what we might justly demand as our own, and a hearty desire to be lenient.” The student who takes his concordance and runs through it will be surprised to find how often the word “ oppression ” occurs in the Bible—about one hundred and twenty-five times. “ Deliver me from the oppression of man,” says the Psalmist. “ He that oppresseth the poor, reproacheth his Maker,” exclaims the prophet. “ Men who love oppression,” laments the apostle. And the claim on us is to love mercy, not oppression ; not simply to do mercy, but to love mercy—to love to do it. Mercy is not a matter of doing, but of loving. So if justice belongs to the head, mercy’s seat is in the heart. He is not the just man who inflicts no wrong ; he may not have the timely opportunity to inflict a wrong. He is the just man who inflicts no wrong when he has the opportunity. He is the truly merciful man

who, when the favourable moment comes to do a harm, does instead, some real help. So justice is negative, mercy positive.

Positivism argues that we are the servants of humanity, but this is a degrading doctrine. This doctrine is the parent of oppression and cruelty and crime and hate. Let us hasten to challenge it. We are not the servants of humanity; we are the brothers of humanity. To say that we are the servants of humanity is to preach slavery. We are the servants of God. "Call no man, master, for one is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren." There are those who look on their fellow man not as a brother, but as a booty; such men are oppressors. There are those who live to coin calamity into cash; all such are oppressors. If a lady drives to a store in her shining Victoria, and buys some article of clothing that she could not have made herself for many times what she paid for it, she must know that some poor, struggling girl living on some back alley, "paid the biggest part of its value by her health, and possibly a little of it by her virtue." The Consumers' League tells us that needlewomen make pants for seven cents a pair, and use their own ma-

chines, and find their own thread. They make shirts for thirty-five cents a dozen. "Don't see how you keep body and soul together," said Mr. Jacob A. Riis to one of this army. "Bless you," she replied, "we don't; I got rid of my soul long ago; who's got time to think of souls here; 'tain't souls that count, but goods."

" Oh men, with sisters dear !
 O men with mothers and wives !
 It is not linen you're wearing out,
 But human creature's lives !
 Stitch, stitch, stitch !
 In poverty, hunger and dirt,
 Sewing at once with a double thread,
 A shroud as well as a shirt."

The Old Schoolmen had a quibble, "How many souls could be supported on the point of a needle?" A student once asked Robertson that question. "Oh, that's easy," said the great preacher. "As I was walking home the other night, I passed a house where a widow lives. Her husband was drowned at sea last winter. She has five children, and as I peered through the pane, I saw two little curly heads in bed, another in the cradle, and two at the mother's knee. She was working away with her needle, which was flashing in the firelight. So I

know now how many souls can be supported on the point of a needle—five, don't you see ?”

“ Work, work, work !
 Her labour never flags ;
 And what are its wages ? A bed of straw,
 A crust of bread and—rags,
 That shattered roof—and the naked floor —
 A table—a broken heap !
 O God ! that bread should be so dear
 And flesh and blood so cheap ! ”

The Lord asketh mercy. Again, could anything be simpler ?

But this is not all either. A third requirement is to walk humbly with our God. And this is faith. Enoch walked with God ; that was faith. The man who takes God with him on the journey is the man of faith. It is put last, but only for a climax. “ The last shall be first,” for the first is only possible when the last is actual, factual. Justice and mercy are impossible in the large, rich, Christian sense save by the grace gained in the closet of communion. No life can walk humbly with God and haughtily with men. The story is told of Leonardo, that when he painted that immortal picture, “ The Last Supper,” he had a bitter quarrel with a man and vowed to do him an injury ;

so he sketched his face for the face of Judas. When he came to our Lord's portrait, the fugitive ideal failed him, the "phantom excellence" could not be caught. Meanwhile, there was growing up in his heart a sense of shame at the injustice done the man. The feeling grew and gave no rest until he had sponged the image of his enemy from the canvas, and then that bitterness had been put away, the story goes on to tell how the vision of our Lord swam into clear and lovely outline. For no brush can paint the Master, that beareth malice in its touch; and no pencil can do Iscariot justice, until pity, like some sweet goddess, hath taken possession of the palette and looks upon her subject with the eyes of Christ. "If we love not our brother whom we have seen, how can we love God whom we have not seen?" True, but also true that no man can truly love his brother whom he hath seen, till he hath first felt deep down in his heart the love of Him whom no man hath ever seen or can see. Fellowship with the Father is the fount of whatever excellence is ours.

Here then, is our dynamic—companionship with the Unseen. "Walk humbly with

thy God." Talk to God; let God talk to thee. Do not simply ask; commune. Ask is good, but commune is better. Tell Him everything—thy hopes, thy plans, thy fears. Tell Him all that is in thy heart. Then be still; humble thyself in His presence; let Him tell thee all that is in His heart. Fear not for familiarity. Familiarity and humility make an ideal blending. "Let us come boldly to the throne of grace." Many shrink from this. They do not like intimacy, they say. They are content with a distant acquaintance—just talking terms. But this is wrong. You do not enjoy a walk with a companion if you are only on talking terms. The experience will tire you. One of the richest words in Scripture is the word fellowship. "Our fellowship is with the Father." Fellowship presupposes familiarity. Our God is not a hard Master; He is a tender Father. He is not a surly tyrant; He is a loving friend. He is not difficult to approach; He is easy to approach. He is not severe; He is sympathetic. He is not domineering; He is endearing. God is goodness. God is love.

How simple a thing then, is true religion! Justice, mercy and communion with the

Eternal—this is true religion and this is Christianity. There are no infidels to Christianity when once Christianity is stated. When our faith is stripped of all foreign adhesion and held up in its native glory, the tongue of unbelief is silent. There have been infidels to churches, it has been said, infidels to creeds, infidels to the imprecatory psalms, infidels to popes and priests and sacraments, but to the pure Christian life, never an infidel. Voltaire never once attacked the religion of Jesus; what he attacked was the religion of the Roman Church. There are infidels towards verbal inspiration, but this is a theory. There are infidels towards baptism, but this is an ordinance. There are infidels towards foreordination, but that is a doctrine. There are infidels towards the atonement, but that is a dogma. There are infidels towards heaven and hell, but heaven and hell are pictures, and just how much of these pictures is colour, he is a bold man who professes to know. The religion of Jesus is not what Thomas Aquinas taught, nor what Peter Lombard taught, nor what John Calvin taught, nor what Jonathan Edwards taught. The religion of Jesus is what Jesus

taught. If Micah contradicts Jesus, Micah must go. Jesus is final. Jesus alone is final. Nothing can be considered for a moment that takes issue with Jesus. But the prophet and the Master are one. Their message is one, strong, comprehensive, and yet how clear and simple! Think by way of contrast, the definition of religion as given in the Spencerian philosophy: "Religion is the ultimate and vital apprehension by the individual of what is conceived to be reality in its fullest sense, the inner truth of things; whether such reality be regarded as coextensive with, as included in, or as distinct from the world of natural phenomena, it always, however, being regarded as in some way related to the individual himself; any such apprehension embracing belief, emotional response and the determination of conduct, in so far as conduct is supposed to have a bearing on the connection of the individual with such reality." This, no doubt, is exhaustive and profound, but the prophet suits us better. The prophet is briefer; he is clearer; and we cannot but feel that he delves down deeper, "What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God?"

SIMPLICITY *and* SCRIPTURE

THE POWER OF SHORT WORDS.

“ Think not that strength lies in the big round word,
Or that the brief and plain must needs be weak.
To whom can this be true who once has heard
The cry for help, the tongue that all men speak,
When want or woe or fear is in the throat,
So that each word gasped out is like a shriek
Pressed from the sore heart, or a strange, wild note
Sung by some fay or fiend? There is a strength
Which dies if stretched too far or spun too fine,
Which has more height than breadth, more depth
than length.
Let but this force of thought and speech be mine,
And he that will may take the sleek, fat phrase,
Which glows and burns not, though it gleam and
shine ;
Light but not heat—a flash but not a blaze !

“ Nor mere strength is it that the short word boasts ;
It serves of more than fight or storm to tell—
The roar of waves that clash on rock-bound coasts,
The crash of tall trees when the wild winds swell,
The roar of guns, the groans of men that die
On blood-stained fields. It has a voice as well
For them that far off on their sick beds lie ;
For them that weep, for them that mourn the dead ;
For them that laugh and dance and clap the hand ;
To Joy’s quick step, as well as Grief’s slow tread,
The sweet, plain words we learn at first keep time ;
And though the theme be sad or gay or grand,
With each, with all, these may be made to chime,
In thought, or speech, or song, in prose or rhyme.”

—*J. Addison Alexander.*

XI

SIMPLICITY *and* SCRIPTURE

I THINK it was Archbishop Trench who first noted that more than ninety per cent. of the terms used in our English Bible are simple Saxon idioms. Of seventy words in the Lord's Prayer only six have a foreign citizenship. In the twenty-third Psalm there are but five Latin words out of one hundred and seventeen. In the first four verses of the Gospel according to St. John there is no Latin word at all, and all but one is a monosyllable. Is it not a rather pregnant fact that in the first twelve verses of the fourteenth chapter of John there are but four foreign roots? The strength of our King James' version is its nervous, sinewy Saxon. It was finished in 1611, after the labours of a century, and is a model of literary excellence. The simple phrases are the strong phrases, and the nearer we get to simplicity the stronger English we write and speak. Should long words ever

be used? Surely! There are times when a long word and no other will fit, but when a short word does fit, and fits as well, use it, always use it. This, says Edward Everett Hale, is the first rule in good writing. You do not rush out into the street and say, "there is a conflagration in my parlour"; you say, "my house is on fire," and you say it quickly, earnestly. The sophomore searches for long Latin derivatives, but the master moves the heart of humanity to tears with the native idiom. He makes us laugh, makes us weep, makes us hope, makes us fear, makes us glad by words so simple as to be commonplace. Thoreau says, "As for style in writing, if one has anything to say it drops from him as naturally as a stone slips to the ground;" to which Stevenson adds, "It is only out of fullness of thinking that expression falls perfect like a ripe fruit."

Lowell, in his "Bigelow Papers," says, "The highest outcome of culture is simplicity." The Master of all right living says, "I am the bread"; "I am the water." He does not call Himself by some elaborate theological formula; He calls Himself the light, the door, the way, the truth, the life,

bread, food, meat, water. This is one of the beauties of Ruskin. In "Modern Painters" we rarely run against a many-syllabled obscurity. This likewise is one of the charms of Stevenson, of Van Dyke, of Hawthorne, of Irving and all great writers. Bunyan is a model of simplicity. The fight between Christian and Apollyon is classed among the finest passages in English letters; it is unconsciously great, easy flowing, spontaneous, and yet "Pilgrim's Progress" is really a book for children. So with the Bible; there is a clearness and mastery of idiom; there is a purity of diction; there is a naked accuracy and directness. Perhaps nothing is so disastrous to a writer or speaker as a long roundabout way of saying a thing. Instance our Acts of Legislature and Official Reports! How big and bloated the vocabulary! how involved the construction! "The long way round is the sure way home." No, not in literature. In literature the long way round is the perilous way home. The straight path in letters is the safe path, the sure path. The Bible is a very direct book. It is a brief book. Perhaps it is not going too far to say that it is the best illustration of brevity ever put in

type—the multum in parvo. The world has many sacred books, but ours is far and away the briefest; the Veda of Brahmanism being full four times as voluminous. What life of any truly great man has ever been pressed into so small a compass as the life of Christ? The record tells what is vital, nothing more. Unnecessary details are eliminated. It is most wonderfully weeded. And this is characteristic of the whole record; it is a chronicle of principles, of facts frankly told. It is idiomatic, epigrammatic, pointed. It does not say that the child suffered grievously from a bodily ailment; it simply says “the child was very sick.” It does not say, like addle-pated creatures of the ovine species we all have deviated from the path of rectitude. That is what some Samuel Johnson would have said. It says, “We all like sheep have gone astray.” Even in the thrilling tragedy of Calvary there is no attempt at fine writing, no labouring for effect. The crucifixion is the black crime of history and yet not a trace of passion appears upon the page. St. Luke simply writes, “And there they crucified Him.” Were some modern newspaper reporter writing up the startling story of the resur-

rection, what a roll of thunder there would be in his belaboured periods! But the evangelist simply says, "Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre and they found the stone rolled away, and they entered in and found not the body of the Lord Jesus." Thirty-eight words and twenty-nine of them monosyllables! If the historian were concocting that tale he certainly never would have told it as easily and ingenuously as that.

"Our language, like our daily life,
 Accords the homely and sublime,
 And jars with phrases that are rife
 With pedantry of every clime.
 For eloquence it clangs like arms,
 For love it touches tender chords,
 But he to whom the world's heart warms,
 Must speak in wholesome, home-bred words."

Coleridge once said that a fine style means, at bottom, fine thought. Perhaps it is because of the thought of the Bible that its style is so perfect and so far above criticism. However that may be, the student cannot help remarking how in a strange degree it combines the simple and the profound. This it is that Gregory the

136 The Culture of Simplicity

Great meant when he said, "The Bible is a book in which an elephant can swim and a lamb wade." It localizes the Deity, yet fills all space. Instance the first chapter of John. It was noted that the first verses were mostly little words. The child knows their meaning, and yet the greatest scholars have written volumes trying to plumb the depth of their philosophy. Or take the birth of the Bethlehem babe as recorded in Matthew! How humble the actors! How elementary the speech! The mother, the manger, the cattle, the shepherds, the flocks! Could the whole drama have been in a setting more simple? There is nothing august, nothing select, nothing grand. Everything is homely, commonplace, familiar. Suppose some modern historian were to begin as Matthew does, "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham, . . . the son of God," and write a history to suit it, what kind of a history would it likely be? Would it not almost surely be majestic and overpowering and unnatural? About the last thing he would do would be to make Him simple, and yet simple is the very thing He is. He is hungry, thirsty, weary, sleepy, sad. He

the supernatural, is the supremely natural. St. Peter was an ordinary fisherman, nothing more, but he wrote a little letter of five short chapters—in words the length of the Sermon on the Mount—which has had the attention of some of the greatest church scholars since the time of Jerome. I see before me two considerable volumes expounding this brief letter. They were written by Archbishop Leighton, and the other day in a theological library I counted on a shelf twenty-four commentaries on First Peter by some of the profoundest English and German specialists. Not infrequently we hear it said that the greatest verse in all the Sacred Record is John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Twenty-five words in all, let it be noted, and nineteen of these monosyllables. This is one of those sentences that remind us of the marvels of the microscope, infinities of meaning wrapt up in infinitesimals; and the keyword is the smallest—“God so loved.” Ah, no seer has ever fathomed the depth of that adverb. A like illustration may be found

138 The Culture of Simplicity

in John 14:20: "Ye in Me and I in you." Who ever spoke thuswise? This is probably the profoundest phrase that ever dropped from the lips of man, clear as the day, deep as the night. Truly indeed, no man ever spake like this man, whose lips dropped wisdom.

Here is the profundity of true simplicity, the
Simplicity of the really profound.
Here is literature.

SIMPLICITY *and the* LITERA-
TURE OF SCRIPTURE

“ Wholly apart from its religious or from its ethical value, the Bible is the one book that no intelligent person who wishes to come into contact with the world of thought and to share the ideas of the great minds of the Christian era can afford to be ignorant of. All modern literature and all art are permeated with it. There is scarcely a great work in the language that can be fully understood and enjoyed without this knowledge, so full is it of allusions and illustrations from the Bible. This is true of fiction, of poetry, of economic and philosophic works, and also of the scientific and even agnostic treatises. It is not at all a question of religion, or theology, or of dogma ; it is a question of general intelligence. A boy or girl at college in the presence of the works set for either to master, without a fair knowledge of the Bible is an ignoramus, and is disadvantaged accordingly. It is in itself almost a liberal education, as many great masters in literature have testified. It has so entered into law, literature, thought, the whole modern life of the Christian world, that ignorance of it is a most serious disadvantage to the student.”

—*Charles Dudley Warner.*

XII

SIMPLICITY *and the* LITERATURE OF SCRIPTURE

LITERATURE is that part of the world's thought that is beautiful. What painting is to colour, what music is to sound, what sculpture is to stone, that literature is to words. Words are the raw material. They are the stuff with which the writer starts—matter and theme and tool. A wise critic once remarked that literature is the best that has been said or sung or thought in the world. Beauty is the language truth speaks when it reaches perfect expression; or, as Virgil puts it, "Truth is the tusk of the elephant, literature the polished ivory."

We have been noting the simplicity of the Bible. Much also has been written concerning its literature. Indeed it has been called the world's great classic, the supreme masterpiece of the literary output of all nations and ages. And it is a book preemi-

nently true to life, for it could not be literature without being this. It glosses nothing, not even death; compliments no man, not even Naaman. It is the complete mirror of human nature, a very image of things as they were three thousand years ago, as they are to-day; for, although an old book, it is yet up to date, holding its regnant place by sheer excellence and worth. There is a majesty in its style, a strength as of the oak, a purity like unto snow new fallen, a soberness that appeals and a sympathy that disarms. There is a tone and a touch that does not disappear even in the risk of translation. The ripest fruit in Latin poetry is the work of Horace, but in translation how the tang and tint are lost! His "Ars Poetica" is conceded to be the best essay on style ever written, but it is untranslatable. The Bible has gone into almost three hundred dialects, and yet its strength and beauty abide. Not many years ago some distinguished men were asked by a leading periodical for the one hundred best books in the world. If I remember rightly, every one put the Bible first. This could not have been altogether an empty compliment, because such names as John Morley

and Frederick Harrison and Herbert Spencer and Leslie Stephen and Thomas Huxley are not given to compliment when sacred things are at stake. The artistic beauty of the Bible is a source of perpetual delight, even our enemies being judges. It is the oldest book in the world, and yet it is the newest, the truest, the purest, the loftiest, the chastest. No one has ever answered for us the question, What is poetry? Even Coleridge did not settle the matter, and where the author of "Literary Remains" failed, smaller men are not likely to succeed. Nor is it probable that the word literature will ever be so clearly outlined that every one can place it and trace it and map it. Poetic things are poetically discerned and all have not this necessary insight. The old Greeks used to ask "How many black hairs must a white cow have before she becomes a black cow?" And we might ask how many gray hairs must we have before we become gray-headed? But this we cannot answer; nor can we tell how many beauties an ambitious writer must have before he becomes a man of letters. No one can say where east stops and west begins. The line of transition is

blurred. 'Tis always twilight in this territory.

The Latin language, until we come to Virgil, is verbose. The style of Hortensius was so florid that even Cicero called it Asiatic, and Cicero himself could not afford to throw stones, for the great Roman Demosthenes is wordy. In these olden days speech and written thought were among the greatest of the fine arts. To be able to use choice language was the greatest accomplishment possible to a Roman. Augustus is said to have written down and memorized the remarks he was about to make to his wife. So their prose became over-ornate. Women sometimes dress so excessively that their native beauty is lost. They pass the happy point of propriety; so writers are sometimes guilty of a like extravagance. There is such a thing as leaping the limits of good taste and pelting us with roses until we well-nigh faint under the fragrance. In this way we lose zest for the strength and beauty of the simple just as the spoiled child of the ballroom becomes blind to the beauty of the heather. We add French names to our menu cards, but the names do not improve the food, nor do they tempt

the average appetite. Once, in the Trosachs of Scotland, I sat down to a table where the bill of fare was all in French and the waiters were Germans; this mark in the Highlands of Scotland; which is affectation, which is put on. Scripture never affects, never puts on, never tries to speak fine, uses no flourishes. There is no striving to avoid the commonplace. It takes ordinary material and moulds it into extraordinary form, and it does it with ease and grace and naturalness. It goes straight to the point. Its language is ever dignified and clear. It uses no slang, no colloquialism, no vulgarity, no slovenly grammar, no staleness of form or thought. It is choice in its wording. There are no banjos or fiddles or Jew's-harps in the book; it is trumpets and harps and stringed instruments, sounding brass, tinkling cymbal. There are no furnished rooms or shanties or bungalows or adobe houses in Scripture; it is palaces, homes, mansions, temples. The Bible is the daintiest kind of a gleaner among words. It is a wonderfully fastidious book. There is a tone to it. Its society is select.

The literary loveliness of the Bible is al-

146 The Culture of Simplicity

lowed by all. Passage after passage might be quoted that rises to the level of the finest finish. Instance this from Job: "There the wicked cease from troubling and there the weary be at rest." Who does not see the beauty of this line? There are seven t's and eleven e's and six r's in it. Why, here is the rhythm of perfect poetry. It will be recalled that Tennyson uses this line in the *May Queen*, changing only one word, "The wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest." No doubt the laureate changed "be" to "are" in order to harmonize with the "ar" in weary. For sublimity, read the eighteenth Psalm and see the poet's picture of a thunder-storm. And for soaring vision, lyrical wealth and pictorial beauty, who that has read Alexander Von Humboldt's favourite, the one hundred and fourth Psalm, has not remarked its excellence? I am rather inclined to think that for musical sweetness, the richest chapter in the Old Testament is the twelfth chapter of Ecclesiastes, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, etc." Note the consonance. Consonance is not alliteration. Alliteration is beginning words with the same letter, but consonance is more

subtle and ingenious. Consonance is musical correspondence of note. "Remember now thy creator." The ear detects the trill of the r's—Remember, Creator—this is consonance. In all fine writing liquids are sweet, diphthongs are solemn, gutturals are stern and strong. Now mark the sixth verse! Notice the l's and the o's; "Or ever the silver cord be loosed or the golden bowl be broken." This with its long o's reminds us of Byron—"Roll on, thou deep and dark blue ocean, roll." Or take again verse five: "Because man goeth to his long home and the mourners go about the street." Who does not feel the solemn swing, the m's, the o's, man, mourner, long home? "Or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern." Pitcher, fountain, cistern. Why, here is mastery over all the witchery of cadence. And this is consonance. We mark it in that sweet and soothing welcome of our Saviour, "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart and ye shall find rest unto your souls; for My yoke is easy and My burden is light." A

148 The Culture of Simplicity

strain of truly spiritual grandeur! There being a genius for the inevitable word! The ear that does not catch the music has no sensitiveness to word melody. The man is tone deaf, colour blind.

And the book is brimmed with these beauties. So familiar have they become to us that we do not appreciate their loveliness, and when we begin to analyze and take apart the whole process seems cold and cruel and mechanical. When the flower is dissected the glory is lost. Not that consonance is everything. Consonance after all is but a little part, but it is tangible. There is a subtle something about all art that eludes analysis. It is what fragrance is to the flower, what holiness is to the character. Holiness is the fragrance of character; it cannot be weighed. Gas can be weighed, but not odour. The saltiness of salt weighs nothing, nor does the sweetness of sugar. You cannot put in a scale the scent of the honeysuckle, and he whose nasal nerve is affected cannot be made to feel it. The attar's aroma cannot be photographed. What the warm spring wafts from the woodland wilds cannot be seen, cannot be measured, cannot be heard, can only be felt.

Perhaps the most remarkable fact about the Bible as literature is the way in which it has entered into and enriched our language. One might almost say that it is the mother of two tongues. For our English vernacular owes everything to Wycliffe and Tyndale, and all educated Germans admit that Luther's translation has permanently enriched German letters. It inspired the immortal song of Dante, likewise of Milton—two of the world's five great creations. It kindled the genius of Bunyan and gave us "Pilgrim's Progress." Dr. Van Dyke tells us that he has found more than four hundred references to the Bible in the poems of Tennyson. Shakespeare quotes freely; so likewise Wordsworth and Browning. It inspired the art of Fra-Angelico and Raphael, the music of Handel and Mendelssohn. It lent Murillo his "Madonna" and Titian his "Transfiguration." Hall Caine tells us that "The Deemster" is the story of the Prodigal Son, that "The Bondman" is the story of Jacob and Esau, that "The Scapegoat" is the story of Eli and his son with Samuel as a little girl, and that "The Manxman" is the story of David and Uriah. Sir Edwin Arnold once con-

fessed, "I owe my education as a writer more to the Bible than to any other one hundred books that could be named." Daniel Webster once said, "I have learned vigour of thought and purity of diction from the Bible"; while perhaps the most interesting of all is from John Ruskin, "This book has taught me art." And if it is true that only living things can create, may we not claim for it that it is a living book? The daily newspaper is a living organ, but how ephemeral its life! Born in the morning, it dies in the evening—birth, youth, activity, old age, death, all crowded into one short twenty-four hours. Yesterday's newspaper is as dead forsooth as yesterday's dinner. The morning *Times* is waste paper by noon. Here on the other hand, is vitality that defies the day, the year, the century. Here is perpetual youth, perpetual life, perpetual beauty and bloom.

One of the interesting volumes that has come to us from the press during the past decade is a work by Frank T. Bullen, called the "Cruise of the Cachalot." The story of the author is full as interesting as any fiction. As a boy he was a street Arab. Shipping at New Bedford some twenty years

ago before the mast, a young sailor reckless and penniless, he went on from being a waif on the streets of London to being a waif on the ocean. He was shipwrecked twice before he was thirteen. He was treated cruelly under drunken officers, and from mingling with debased associates, became thoroughly debased himself. No early training had he, no education, no ambition, and yet he has given us several volumes that rank with anything that Kipling or Clark Russell ever wrote. Indeed Kipling has confessed to his literary mastery of the main. His pictures of the "remote, unhearing ocean" are some of the most vivid things in letters. There is an unstudied simplicity and charm about them. An air of enchantment haunts the home of Neptune that reminds one of Homer. There beats the very surging of the surf through his pages. He is full as fresh as the waves that tumble on the beach. There is the savour and salt of the sea on every leaf. What may be the explanation? Why, during one of his longest voyages, the only book on board was the Bible. He read it through sixteen times. He tells us he almost memorized the four gospels. When ashore, one of his favourite diversions was

reciting chapters of them to mixed audiences on the street corners. To-day he is an earnest Christian worker and a literary star. If the Bible creates literature, then it must be literature. Botanists tell us of wild plants whose seeds are sticky. When some passing animal rubs against them the creature carries the seeds along. Thus are they scattered. The Bible has this gift of clinging to the memory and fructifying the great field of letters. Lowell says of Emerson, "Search for his eloquence in his books and you will perchance miss it, but meanwhile you will find that it has kindled your own." Is the Bible inspired? Surely! Why? Because it inspires. In the "Cruise of the Cachalot" Mr. Bullen speaks of that curious substance known as ambergris. It is found floating on the water every time a whale is killed, and its use is to heighten the odour of scent, being employed in commerce for that purpose solely. It gives a fragrance to more than one hundred essences and yet it is absolutely odourless itself. But this book not only lends a sweet odour to all literature; it has an incense of its own. Verily indeed, it is the "world's great classic." And the child can read it.

SIMPLICITY *and the* PULPIT

To speak that which we know and testify that we have seen, to speak it lovingly, to testify it boldly ; never seeking to raise doubts, ever aiming to kindle faith and hope ; to be receptive in the study, an empty vessel sanctified and waiting to be filled from the ever open fountain, then in the pulpit to aim to take of this fullness and shew it unto others ; not primarily to proclaim a doctrine but rather to tell a story, to tell how it has affected our own lives ; to have as the heart's desire the longing to give our people a taste of some precious blessing that we have found ourselves in the secret place ; never to be trifling or self-advertising, ever to be tremendously in earnest and when possible at all, self-effacing ; to bathe in the Book till it enters into the very texture of our speech ; to love men, to be moved with a great pity in their presence, to see not merely a sea of faces but rather a company of spirits, to compel their ears, to touch their consciences ; never to allow ourselves to be turned aside to wrangle, negation or debate, to avoid technicalities and trivial things, to magnify the certainties and things of vital moment ; to lift up Jesus to the eyes of men, to proclaim His love, His forgiveness, His cleansing power, His joy, His hope, His glory ; thus to create in your listeners a hunger for holy living by backing up a great message with a great, noble, loving life ; in one word to ever bear in mind that there is in the audience One listening whose we are and whom we serve, and to aim to please Him and Him only—this it is to be a Christian preacher.

XIII

SIMPLICITY *and the* PULPIT

THERE never was a time when good preaching was so much in demand, never a time when it commanded such a price, never a time, many are telling us, when the article was so rare. Even the little villages down yonder in the valleys have made up their minds that the man who has the honour of ministering to them must be a great preacher, and the marvel is that our schools of the prophets, finding out how many a Paul or Apollos is needed, do not turn out a larger supply, when the country is flooded with so many who have been fashioned in the common mould and run in the common ruts. Paul Veronese once said that the painter is a gift from God, and there can be little doubt that of the preacher the same thing is true, and that when God wants a peculiar man to do a peculiar work, He goes down into His peculiar workshop and moulds him and makes him and sends him angel-guarded.

156 The Culture of Simplicity

But these are the geniuses of the pulpit—the Liddons and Parkers and Spurgeons and Beechers. The great majority, let us hasten to admit, are not geniuses, but contrariwise, just plain ordinary people. They belong to the big army of the one talent men. What they dig out they dig in the old-fashioned, brown-faced way of honest industry—hard work and plenty of it.

Speaking from a human standpoint, doubtless the first rock-bottom need of the pulpit to-day is scholarship. This has been the history of the church from the beginning. God can use weak minds to proclaim His truth, but rarely has He done so. The pathway to the throne of power is lined on either side with the monuments of mountain-minded men, from Paul to Jonathan Edwards. It is in the study that ministers gain their mastery over men. Pride of learning is a blow to pulpit power, but pride of ignorance is a greater blow. The preacher is a herald, but the herald of old was more than voice. He was the official bearer of important tidings. He was a man clothed with authority. He was judge and referee. His costume was emblazoned with the armorial bearings of his chief. His

person was inviolable. And the preacher, let us insist, is a herald. He, too, is a man robed with authority. He, too, has a great message to deliver. How important that he have the needful qualifications! Nowhere is there such an array of scholars as in the history of the sacred desk. The preacher who is not scholarly is not in the line of apostolic succession. The sermon that is not ripe with culture is not a sermon, for a sermon is a fruit, not a manufacture. Fruits cannot be made; they grow. A true sermon is a growth from the soil of culture. It has been accounted as a strange thing that there are so few ministers of the Word who grow. They grew and that was the end of it. Some, like wasps, are bigger when they come out of the seminary shell than ever after. Some are green; some evergreen. Herein is found the need of thoroughness. A scholar who is not a student will soon cease to be a scholar. And the preacher who is neither, why his pastoral pilgrimage is brief. The days thereof are swifter than a weaver's shuttle. For sermons age rapidly. Only a few weeks and lo, they are "gray and bald and toothless." Then, too, nothing is so dry and

juiceless as an old sermon. When the gospel orchard is ripe and laden, how lazy must he be who puts canned goods upon the table!

But we are firmly convinced that if scholarship is needed—and there can be little doubt that it is—something else is needed even more,—simplicity. The crying need of the pulpit to-day, we cannot but feel, is a simple directness. Some one notes that the true laws of eloquence are, first, to have something to say, and secondly to say it. To say it plainly, to say it attractively! And this is style. To be clear, to be fresh, to abhor the vague, to keep wide of the moloch of indefiniteness, to know what is mist and maze as well as what is rock and river! It is not possible to see six inches into the depths of a puddle, but one can look down twenty fathoms into the waters that wash the shores of Catalina Island. Guthrie says, “Mind the three p’s—proving, painting, persuading,” by the which he means to address one’s self to the reason, the imagination, the heart. And yet it is possible to be clear and still to be dull. The preacher must of all things be interesting. Dullness is the unpardonable sin of

the pulpit. He need not be dull if he is simple and keeps close to nature. There should be a spiritual refreshment about every preacher. Every Sabbath he looks into the eyes of tired, sad, anxious hearts. They have come to him for uplift and wing, for comfort and cheer. They have come for a breath of spring and tonic, a breeze from the heavenly hills. What a crime if he grows laggard and tedious, if he droops and drones and becomes tiresome! Contrariwise, what a mischief done when one becomes unnatural and starchy and walks on stilts, so that the very children take note thereof! When one forgets that he is a man and becomes a mannerist! Than nature nothing is more simple and refreshing. Thus should every minister be nature's child, nature's scholar, nature's copyist. The artful manner, the convincing tongue, the pleasing address, the polished style, the graceful gesture, the simple speech—all are needed for the true expounder of holy things. Grandiloquence should be avoided till of a surety something grandiloquent be forthcoming. Then constructing ornament will not be laboured so much as ornamenting construction. Then every illustration will ad-

mit light and illustrate ; for illustrations are windows, and no window doth call attention to itself by crying aloud on street or market-place, *i. e.*, no clean window does.

Austin Phelps once remarked that a passionate rather than a profound pulpit was the need of the hour. "Sermons should inform and inflame," says George Herbert ; and Mr. Binney used to say that "preaching was gathering material in the study and setting fire to it in the pulpit." "First make your homily heavy and then make it hot," for the blacksmith can do naught when his fire is out. Alas full oft to-day, Christ is buried beneath a snow-bank of philosophy. Many a minister knows the Hebrew when he knows not the human. While some have cultivated fire and lost aim, others let us hasten to admit have gained aim and lost fire, which were a fault more grievous. Congregations will pardon almost anything if the discourse be only alive. A sculptor was once comparing a celebrated classical horse with his own. Faults he found everywhere, but, he added, "I must confess the villainous beast is alive and mine is dead." The story is true of sermons as well as stones, for there are "sermons in stones."

The preacher is the man who can give them life. It was said that while Orton was lighting a match, Bunyan was setting the world on fire. Some natures are heavy and soggy. They need to be saturated in petroleum. They are deliberate in debate, doctrinal in style, dusty in delivery. Never was there a great preacher whose nature was not combustible. The Welshman is never happy save with a tear in his eye. Every true preacher has a tear in his voice, therein reminding us of the celebrated musician who said of his pupil, "If I could crush you, you would be an artist." Thus each pulpit voice has felt somewhat of life's heart-breaks. For the Wesleys and Whitfields and Spurgeons of earth have not been those who could not be touched with a feeling of life's infirmities, but men, rather, who could suffer and sympathize and fellow-feel.

Preaching is the art of skillfully and persuasively delivering a message, and the true ambassador is the man who can put the truth before human souls in such a way as to convince and lead to holier living. A trumpet is he, therefore, not music-box! An organist, not hurdy-gurdy grinder.

162 The Culture of Simplicity

“No jesting,” says Voltaire, “in a treatise on mathematics ;” no declamation in a work on physics. No clever genius can compose a comic trigonometry. Surely a comic sermon were as fully incongruous. Sensationalism therein should be as much out of place as cheap wit in a tragedy. For each herald of our glad evangel stands between two worlds, the ambassador below of the Royal Court above, the representative of holy things, God’s messenger to man’s immortal longings. His speech and behaviour should surely be as becometh the servant of the King. He cannot be too direct. He cannot be too simple. He cannot tell his message too plainly. “Feed My lambs,” are His orders. Never should there be any doubt as to where he stands or what he says. Out of his own heart’s experience let him speak and confess what the Lord hath done for his soul. How foolish to silence the testimony of the inner life! It is when in simple terms one tells out what he knows that he speaks with authority and convincing power. In Emmet’s great speech before his execution, there are but ten lines and yet in those ten lines there are fifteen references to self. James Russell

Lowell says of Dante, "His works are all, with the possible exception of 'De Vulgari Eloquie,' autobiographic, of which the central point is the individuality and experience of the poet." Dante has been called the first great poet who made a poem out of himself. In "Samson Agonistes," Milton is his own Samson. In "Coningsby," Lord Beaconsfield is his own Sidonia. Byron was his own Don Juan. In Moody's sermon, "Christ Seeking Sinners," the personal pronoun is used ninety times. This was the secret of the authority of Jesus. From first to last there is an unbroken chain of "I say unto you." Beecher was bigger than any sermon he ever preached. What a blunder to hide Beecher! Then were the biggest part unfelt, unseen. The most powerful thing the preacher possesses is his personality. If he hides that he is like Samson shorn of his locks. Every true sermon is the simple outflow of the speaker's abounding life.

For no matter how many other gifts a man may have, he cannot be impressive unless there is a ring of authority about him. He needs a lofty moral make-up. He needs a conscience astrally-timed, and as true to

164 The Culture of Simplicity

its orbit as the planet Mars. Nothing can take the place of this. He may succeed without it as a lawyer. Without it he may rise to the topmost rung in Senate, Congress Hall or Forum; but without a grand resonating, moral nature towering mountain-like above every other endowment, he cannot be a great preacher. For without it he cannot have magnetism and without magnetism he cannot preach. It is the witchery of pulpit power. It is the bloom on the fruit, the fragrance on the flower. Natural bodies throw off emanations. The rose-tree fills a modest area. The honeysuckle throws itself out farther and fills a wider circle. The orange-grove flings its fragrance far afield, flavouring whole valleys with its freshness. So is it with men. The lion-tamer, it has been noted, masters the beast first with a red-hot iron; afterwards his eye avails to keep the brute at bay. This is what Horace Bushnell meant speaking of a certain orator, "His eyes blazed and blazed until they seemed to me like a double-barrelled revolver pointed at each hearer." Look at Jesus. It was not His speech, not His eloquence, not what He said, not what He did, not how He said it

or did it, but rather the "auroral glory of His person." Doth it then follow that the power of the pulpit is declining? Has the time come at length when the world can dispense with the spoken Word? Not surely while the human eye can flash and fill. Not while the human heart can burn and beat. Not while the human voice can plead and thrill and quiver. Not while the simple experience of the spiritual life can be told to others in love and tenderness, and living sympathy.

SIMPLICITY *and* SORROW

TEARS

“Thank God, bless God, all ye who suffer not
More grief than ye can weep for. That is well ;
That is light grieving ! lighter, none befell
Since Adam forfeited the primal lot.
Tears ! What are tears ? The babe weeps in its cot,
The mother singing ; at her marriage bell
The bride weeps ; and before the oracle
Of high-famed hills the poet has forgot
Such moisture on his cheeks. Thank God for grace,
Ye who weep only ! If as some have done,
Ye grope tear-blinded in a desert place,
And touch but tombs, look up ! those tears will run
Soon in long rivers down the lifted face
And leave the vision clear for stars and sun.”

—*Mrs. Browning.*

XIV

SIMPLICITY *and* SORROW

How simple a thing is sorrow! Yet how mysterious and strange! One hardly knows which is the more arresting, the light or the logic thereof. Full well the little child knows the fact of pain, but the why of it has puzzled the philosophers since the time of Job and Paul and Plato. It is the problem of the ages. Some make a show of their sorrow as of old the Jews put on sackcloth and went about a-mourning through the streets. They thrust their personal ailments forward. The soldier is not prouder of his scarlet jacket nor the prince of his purple robe than these are of their crape. It is rich and artistic in their eye as any Parisian texture in "Vanity Fair." Others contrariwise hide it from the gaze of even kindred and friend and sympathy. They shrink from every trick and evidence of grief. They wear their sackcloth within. But the sting touches all—rich and poor,

170 The Culture of Simplicity

learned and unlearned, wise and unwise; and all alike feel its wound, wealth no more than poverty, culture no more oftentimes than ignorance. The heart of humanity is one in this regard, one as to sensitiveness, one as to laughter, one as to tears. Sorrow teaches us life's solidarity, and as a rule makes us sterling and true, strips from us all pretense, disrobes us of all seeming and gets to the naked heart, the real man.

In that immortal utterance that fell from the lips of the Master of Sorrow as He saw the gloom of His life impending, He begins by giving His treatment of the accident of trouble. "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in Me." Brave words! Blessed words! Words of tender and suggestive ministry! Wine to the weary of wing! Cordial to the flagging and faint of heart! Trouble! How familiar the word! The intimate of all times, all climes, all tribes, tongues, families, ranks! For ours is a world of trouble. If all the tears shed since David wept for Absalom were gathered together there would be another ocean. If all the sobbing since the time of Rachel were rolled into one wave of sound, there would be a new thunder-

clap louder than ever crashed across these Sierras. Is not man born to trouble as the sparks fly upward? "Youth is a blunder," penned the poet in pessimistic mood, "manhood a struggle, old age a disappointment." "I have been forty years a Caliph," said the old Ottoman prophet, "and thirty-nine of them were years of torture." Goethe once remarked that he had never spent a happy month in his life, and even brave, bright, cheery-faced Stevenson tells us in one of his letters how he remembers a brief pause in the long agony when the morning stars danced and sang and made merry, when there was a "splendour in the grass, a glory in the flower," but never since has he tasted the tingling tonic. All has faded into the drab of common day.

And the troubles of life are multiform, troubles of head, hand, watchings, worryings, troubles of choice, troubles of conscience, troubles of prosperity, troubles of adversity, mental troubles, bodily troubles, family troubles, business troubles. How many and varied are they! But what troubles like those of the heart? Full well the heart knoweth its own bitterness. How edged the hurts that touch the seat

172 The Culture of Simplicity

and centre of the affectional nature ! When this sacred spot is bruised and bleeding, how the whole man calls for comfort and finds vent in prayer !

“ I to the hills will lift mine eyes
From whence doth come mine aid ;
My safety cometh from the Lord,
Who heaven and earth hath made.”

Aye, blessed words, these of the Master, surely ! Sublime in range and quality ! Our long acquaintance with the landscape has stolen away its vivid and suggestive freshness. Could we for the first time and with the wisdom of years, but open our eyes upon the outlook as once we did in childhood's happy hour, how full of glory it would seem ! There is a tone of tenderness and yet an accent of finality in every syllable. The twelve, let it be remembered, are sitting in the upper room inclining to the last message of their loved leader. He tells them of His coming deliverance already so hard at hand. Four and twenty hours more and He would not be with them. The shadow of an awful sorrow looms large before Him, before them. In that dark hour He who needed comfort turns to bequeath

it. Gracious, beautiful bequest! Once it was our privilege to minister to a dying friend. Reading the twenty-third Psalm, the heart was overcome at the fourth verse, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me." "Speak it out," the dying one whispered, "it is my great support; 'Thou art with me.'" The reproof went home. The weak seeking to stimulate the strong! The fabled nightingale sings with his breast against a thorn; and it was on the darkest night of the world's history, and from the Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief, that there came the cheering, strengthening, heartening message that wipes away all tears.

And what may this message be? Where must we go to find the oil for restless hearts, the balm for wounded spirits? Some would find it in work, some in retirement, some in stimulus, some in culture, some in restraint, some in music and the fine arts. Milton, even in poverty, had an organ in his home to solace his dark hours. The Christian's catholicon is trust. "Ye believe in God, believe also in Me." The great antidote to trouble is trust. "Thou wilt keep him in

perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee." It is either troubled hearts or trustful hearts. When trust enters the soul-temple, trouble straight-way departs.

"Just as I am, though tossed about
With many a conflict, many a doubt,
Fightings and fears within, without;
O Lamb of God, I come, I come."

"Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." Have a like trust in Me as in the Father, saith the Master,—nay, not a like trust, the same trust. Could claim be clearer, calmer? In words transparent, He asks from us the same attitude of mind and heart we give to the Father. "Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill Him because He not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God." In that they understood Him aright. Jesus Christ is the interpreter, the revealer, the manifestation of God, the supreme object of man's worship. "In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God." Faith in Him is not a transfer, but rather a focusing of our trust. Trust in

Christ is trust in God. "I and My Father are one," one in person, one in essence, one in interest. "For he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." And no singular passages these wrenched from their settings! This is the current tone of His teaching. Everywhere this gracious aspirant for divine honours claims our faith, our love, our final and complete devotion. He makes everything to turn on the act of trust, and trust, note, in a Person and that Person Himself. Other faiths appeal to fear, to fasting, to penance, to peace offerings, to apologies. Truthfully has it been said that no religious system has ever lost prestige for its strictness. The faith of self-sufficiency is ever a favourite. Man takes pride in regarding himself as the end of his endeavours. Jesus says, My child believe; simply believe; do naught but believe. "For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God."

"Let not your heart be troubled"—agitated literally, as water is beaten into foam and ferment. "For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool and troubled the water"; the same word being used! "When Herod the king had heard these

things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him"; the same word again. The Master Himself, in full view of the end, sighed in spirit and said, holding still to the pregnant root, "Now is My soul troubled." And 'tis He, even He, who shows us the glory of a holy and complete surrender. Trust in the Father sustained Him. "Lo, I have come to do Thy will; I delight to do Thy will, O my God." "He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." He committed the outgoing spirit into His Father's hand. "If ye keep My commandments ye shall abide in My love, even as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love."

Let us then nail this thought in our hearts with a firm and final finish, that trust is the taming of all trouble, the quelling of all turmoil. Trust brings tranquillity. Nothing else does. Always the cure for care is trust. In mythology we read of one of the gods fettering a wolf with a silken thread. Christ with the thread of trust tames the wildness of our savage impulse.

"He makes the wounded spirit whole,
And calms the troubled breast."

We are saved by trust; we are sanctified by trust; we are satisfied by trust. "Perfect trust casteth out all fear." God's peace is the peace of final conquest. And the victory comes from companionship, for this it is that trust brings. Some one to bear the burden with us! Some one to weep with us! Some strong arm to fight the tempter for us! It is not, "Do not be troubled, hope," for hope may be deferred and far away. Nor is it, "Do not be troubled, love," for oftentimes love leaves a pain in the heart; but "Do not be troubled, trust." How simple a thing then are our tears, but how equally simple is the antidote! The child understands both. Both are natural as breathing. So easily do the tears start down the little face, but straightway the mother kisses them away, while meantime the little eyes look up and the little arms clasp the neck in sweet and full reliance. It feels the mother's sympathy, her partnership, her presence. The consciousness that she shares the heartache calms and cheers. "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." Verily the child is our teacher.

SIMPLICITY *and* CULTURE

CULTURE

“Can rules or tutors educate
The semi-god whom we await?
He must be musical,
Tremulous, impressional,
Alive to gentle influence
Of landscape and of sky,
And tender to the spirit-touch
Of man’s or maiden’s eye;
But, to his native centre fast,
Shall into Future fuse the Past,
And the world’s flowing fates in his
own mould recast.”

—*Emerson.*

XV

SIMPLICITY *and* CULTURE

THERE were two great apostles of culture in the last century, Matthew Arnold in England and James Russell Lowell in America. Of the former, Frederick Harrison once said, "Culture has long been a synonym for our dear lost friend," and of the latter, Hamilton Wright Mabie in one of his books remarks, "He is probably the highest representative of true culture on the page of American letters." According to Arnold, culture was to know the best that had been done or said or thought in the world, in short, to be a study and pursuit of perfection, with one great passion—the passion for intelligence and beauty; according to Lowell, it is the drawing forth of all that is potentially in a man, the educating of his powers to their highest pitch and the directing of them to their best and noblest ends.

"The highest outcome of culture is sim-

182 The Culture of Simplicity

plicity" was Lowell's apt and searching phrase already quoted. The more of culture one possesses, or rather, to speak more correctly, the more of culture that possesses one the simpler does he become in his life and aim and thinking, the less is he aware of his culture and the less does he profess it. For culture shuns professionalism and pedantry as one might shun some vulgarity. It shrinks from the manner in which a thing is done by getting to the impulse, the motive, the reality, the fact. It is vital, not mechanical; natural, not artificial. It is not information, or dates, or data stored in the memory. There are men who are walking cyclopædias yet who are not cultured men. Possibly no deeper thinker than Aristotle ever lived, but he was not a cultured man. At least the critics say not. Plato was and richly so. For culture is never an acquisition, but an evolution. It is the vitalizing of our powers, the growing into some new power, the education, *i. e.*, the leading out of the whole nature, the ripening of the personality. It is not something that separates from one's surroundings by some outward polish or some social fastidiousness. It is not putting on a gar-

ment of the latest pattern. That is to say, it does not belong to things, but to life. It is not physical, not intellectual, not emotional, not literary, not social, not moral or spiritual; it is all these together; it is the complete expression of the whole nature; it is the putting forth of the soul. Patience, endurance, self-denial, self-surrender, self-restraint, work, vigilance—all are elements that enter into the full ripeness of the artist. When education passes through vital assimilation into becoming part of the man himself, then it is culture.

Now this comes from letting truth take possession of us and govern us. Culture is simply the perfect development of the life within, in accordance with the laws of truth and beauty; which means that it is a flower, a fruit, not a manufacture. The differentiating charm of the cultured man is the quality of his mind and heart, not the extent of his reading or learning. Culture is wisdom, not knowledge; enrichment, not information. It is truth, life, beauty, not facts, form, livery. We cannot live by bread alone; we may exist but not live. Living is the full play of all our powers, the full expression of all our possibilities, the

184 The Culture of Simplicity

full satisfaction of all our capacities. The man of culture realizes that every person he meets, it matters not how humble, has something to impart to him, and that every happening and activity and movement has a message to his soul. Lincoln was a cultured man, but his culture was not academic. When he was elected president, a teacher in one of our great universities said he would need some trained statesman to write his messages and speeches for him, and yet these very messages and speeches are now conceded to be the only real literature that has been bequeathed to us from the period of the great struggle.

One of the signs of the simplicity of culture is its freshness of feeling. It invests the most familiar objects with interest and newness, being in this regard the opposite pole of criticism. It is positive, not negative; active, not passive. The story is told of John Morley that a company of scholars were one evening met together. The question was asked, "If you were cast adrift on a strange and desert island, and if you had the offer of some companion, whom would you choose?" All answered on a ballot, and nine of the ten present wrote,

“John Morley.” It is this youthful eye, youthful mind, youthful heart, youthful attitude, that is one of the charms of the great English statesman and man of letters. He is a man of culture and vision power. Culture is hopefulness of mind and heart, lightness of touch, deepness of insight, freshness of feeling. It has been said that were it not for the children the world would soon grow old. The cultured man is a child in his magical power of seeing things joyously, surprisingly. He retains the delight of the first impression, be it the beauty of a poem or the glory of an art creation or the loveliness of some landscape. To be able to see a familiar object the one hundredth time with that same approach of surprise and charm and enthusiasm that you saw it the first time; to see with fresh eyes and feel with a fresh heart is one of the happy and helpful things some carry with them from childhood over into middle life, and a rare and fortunate few even down to old age. Skylarks had been singing ever since the morning stars sang together for joy, but Shelley heard that song “from heaven or near it,” as though it were the first bird that ever pealed forth its shrill delight. Fortu-

nate indeed he who ever thus sees the freshness and newness of life. Every morning he will be learning something, for every morning brings a new world with new visions, new glories, new mercies, new lessons, new hopes. Too apt are we to toil along with eye closed and heart sealed against the beautiful things around us. In one of his stories George McDonald tells of one of his countrymen going regularly each day to the top of a cliff from which a wide view of the lowlands could be had, and taking off his hat and standing bowed for some moments as if in prayer. A friend noting the regularity of his seeming devotion made reference to it. "Aye," he responded, "every morning I come yon to take off my bonnet to the beauty of the world." Happy, thrice happy, he who feels like kneeling each morning before the world's beauty. He must needs surely grow into a larger, better, purer man.

I think that one of the finest characters I ever was privileged to meet was a man under the spell of whose rare rich nature I fell in my college days. He was professor of Greek in a New England university, a man of large mental endowments and pure

Hellenic culture. He was well travelled, had written books, had inherited wealth, and all his life long had breathed the atmosphere of refinement. His wide travel had made him broad-minded and he had touched the world at so many points that he had lost all localism. But his sweetness of spirit and modesty of manner and simplicity of speech and ripeness of thought—his poise and sanity too—won us boys in our tramps together across the fields or as we explored the streams. He made us feel so entirely at home that it was an event looked forward to when we were invited to join him in his occasional outings. He was one of us. There was no standing apart, aloof. He did not strive to instruct us, but rather to learn with us and to learn, as it were, aloud. And how he opened out to us the loveliness of things! Everything seemed to glow and take on colour when he spoke of it. He was an expert florist and he would point to a certain familiar flower and we all felt as though we had never seen it before. The trees too took on life when he drew our attention to them, the stars likewise, the leaves, the grass. He seemed to be always “aware of nature.” He

188 The Culture of Simplicity

seemed to see the world with eyes in which the primeval wonder still lingered. And to a remarkable observation he added also a most penetrating discernment. He gave us breadth of view, accuracy of vision, depth of insight. His presence was more than intellectual; it was vital. There was such a simple relationship between him and nature, and he seemed to communicate the same connection to us. He was not didactic or scholastic. He did not strive to teach us, but rather to discover what nature had to teach him. His mind was open, alert, responsive, ready. He keyed himself into harmony with the deep wood about him or the clear sky above him. Thus everything became fresh to him, and so to us. He did not write the poetry, but he was a poet and saw the poem, and made us see it too. Is not this the charm of Homer? The whole epic is out of doors where everything is seen, heard, felt. Then too all is simple, healthy, sane. There is the rush of the waves, the roar of the surf, the swell and the smell of the ocean. There is the breath of the brine, the murmur of the trees, the solitude of the woods, the wildness of the moors, the height of the hills, the purple of

the evening, the rosy-fingered touch of the dawn. From first to last full of change and movement and adventure, full also of accident and mishap and struggle and suffering. But the happy things always outweigh the unhappy. The brave and true are ever in the ascendant. If Ulysses is now and then cast down he is never a pessimist. His courage and gladness and hopefulness continue with him to the end.

Another of the fundamental articles in true culture is its unconsciousness. Mrs. Ward describes one of her characters as having passed through a great culture into a great simplicity of nature. This is evidenced in many of the great leaders in the world of letters. What a genius was Voltaire! How keen and subtle his insight! But this he lacked. The unconscious side of his nature was stunted. He had not that fineness of fibre that belongs to the cultured man. Shakespeare contrariwise, saw deeply, but what he saw had become so almost completely a part of himself that he ceased to be conscious of it and knew not his own powers. It has been said that the greatest generals in time of war are cool and calm and collected and composed. This, by the

190 The Culture of Simplicity

way, is one of the elemental signs of greatness—the power of restraint. Extravagance in any form is never the sign of the artist; rather is it the badge of coarseness. Only as a man masters first himself and then his work, does he attain unto self-unconsciousness and thus to his fullest strength. Great artists like Hugo have been great egoists, but not in their supreme and memorable moments. The finest work is always done easily and without effort. Anything that robs work of repose robs it of power. Weariness, for instance, is a weakness. How effective is ease in a speaker! This is the power of reserve, restraint. In every fine work all trace of toil is hidden. Ruskin says that every great creation makes you feel the presence of a great power but never of a great exertion. The artist works without effort. There is a freedom from strain and strenuousness. This again is the simplicity of culture. So Shakespeare took the story of “The Tempest” as he found it in some Italian tradition. The rich soil of his nature absorbed it and there came forth, and with the ease and freedom with which a seed turns into flower, such a wealth of splendour as only Nature herself can show.

How unconsciously Sir Walter Scott told his great stories! He was a man of child-like simplicity. He seemed not to be aware of his greatness. No truly great man is. Prosperity did not make him giddy and adversity did not daunt him. He is as simple and natural and true and wholesome as the Highland hills from which he got his matchless tales. Amiel too is a case in point. He was a professor in a Swiss university. In youth his friends predicted a career for him for he was brilliant, but in the end he proved a failure. One rainy day he went out and purchased a memorandum book and that evening began to write a diary. He wrote down his thoughts about himself, his every-day experiences, the humdrum, the weariness, the duties, the drudgeries. He kept his journal for his own eye alone, never intending that any other should ever see it. But now that he is gone we have this diary in two large volumes. Sad and tearful reading it is, but nevertheless one of the world's great classics. He did not realize at the time that such a simple thing as keeping a diary, not teaching æsthetics in a university, was to be his life-work, but it was. And to-day Amiel's journal is one

192 The Culture of Simplicity

of the text-books of culture, because it is the growth of a human soul. Yes, that is the heart of the whole. Culture is the human soul grown ripe. It is the complete nature at its richest, fully unfolded, evenly balanced, wisely directed, adjusted. The cultured life is the trained life, the finished life, but ever and everywhere the simple life.



104389

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



A 000 717 266 1

