

THE MODERN MAN  
*FACING*  
THE OLD PROBLEMS

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▼ *ANDREW W. ARCHIBALD* ▼

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The Modern Man Facing the  
Old Problems

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# The Modern Man Facing The Old Problems



By

ANDREW W. ARCHIBALD, D.D.

*Author of "The Bible Verified," "The Trend  
of the Centuries," etc.*

"Act well your part, there all the honour lies."  
—Pope's *"Essay on Man."*



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*To the memory  
of my Father and Mother,  
Robert and Betsy Hamilton Archibald*



## Preface

**T**HE author's previous volumes, in the order of their publication, have been "The Bible Verified," "The Trend of the Centuries," "The Easter Hope," and "Biblical Nature Studies." Their themes might be stated as follows: God in the Word, God in the world of history, God in the future world, God in the natural world, and now in this new work, "The Modern Man Facing the Old Problems," we have God in the world of practical living. The logical succession of topics would put the consideration of the hereafter at the end, and with such a rearrangement we have a measurably complete line of thought, and one advancing steadily to a climax. But perhaps the most important subject is the last receiving treatment, namely, that of the following pages.

In this series of discussions, the studied aim has been to unfold every thought from a Biblical and therefore from an authoritative basis. The Psalmist was right when he said:

"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?  
By taking heed thereto *according to thy Word.*"

For this reason there is not only frequent citation of the literary and the historical and the scientific

and the philosophical, but particularly there is a constant appeal to Holy Writ. Conversely, while the positions taken are fortified preëminently from the Scriptures, they are also strongly sustained by very copious illustrations from literature and history and science and philosophy. A special use might be made of the sixteen chapters in furnishing a succession of studies for Men's Classes, so rapidly multiplying in the Churches and in the Christian Associations.

An indulgent public has given such a gracious and appreciative recognition of the writer's preceding efforts, that he is emboldened to make this farther venture into the field of literature.

A. W. A.

*Newton Center, Boston.*

# Contents

I.	TIME AND ETERNITY . . . . .	11
II.	THE REIGN OF LAW OR OF GOD, WHICH ?	22
III.	THE POWER AND PERSISTENCE OF MEMORY .	35
IV.	THE WILL AS A FACTOR IN DETERMINING DESTINY . . . . .	48
V.	CORNELIAN INQUIRIES AS TO THE GREAT ES- SENTIAL . . . . .	61
VI.	SOME PERTINENT THOUGH NOT IMPERTINENT QUESTIONS . . . . .	77
VII.	HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF OURSELVES .	90
VIII.	MASTERS OF THE SITUATION . . . . .	103
IX.	HOW THE FORGOTTEN PAST MAY CONTRIBUTE TO OUR FUTURE SUCCESS . . . . .	116
X.	THE MINISTRY OF ANGELS . . . . .	129
XI.	THE WEAVING OF LIFE'S WEB AND THE EN- GRAVING OF CHARACTER . . . . .	141
XII.	THE SILENT BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE . . .	157
XIII.	LIMITED THOUGH AMPLE OPPORTUNITIES .	170
XIV.	A LARGER SPHERE . . . . .	182
XV.	COMMENDATORY LETTERS: . . . . . Worth-While Testimonials of Things Achieved	195
XVI.	THE QUEST OF THE GRAIL AND OF THE CHRIST	208



## Time and Eternity

**T**HE modern man has to face the same problems as have ever engaged the attention of humanity. He is still baffled by the mystery of life with its outlook on eternity. He continues to ask the significance of the brief present and of the unending future. He exclaims with the Psalmist, "How short my time is." He likewise wonders what is to be his destiny in that Hereafter which Holy Writ tries to measure in the familiar, "A thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night."

I. We will endeavour, first, to get some conception of our ephemeral existence here. We recall what a poet has said :

"How short is human life ! the very breath,  
Which frames my words, accelerates my death."

The brevity of our earthly career is variously illustrated in Scripture, and always in a way to impress the mind.

We have all stood at the harbour, and watched the departure of ocean craft. There is something majestic in them as they steam away or sail away from the dock, and carriages and automobiles are

## 12 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

stopped, and people who have witnessed the sight scores of times will sit and look with a dreamy attention. There is a trace of sadness in their faces, as if they were reminded of the ocean of life, upon which so many set sail with high hopes only to vanish out of view in a few short years, landing on the far-away shore of eternity. In olden times there was a man of God, who doubtless had often gazed at the white sails on the blue Mediterranean. He had seen the ships bearing out to sea, he had seen them growing less and less distinct against the horizon, until they were mere specks, and finally they were entirely lost to the vision. Turning away in a pensive mood, he said, My days "are passed away as the swift ships," and we all feel the force of the picturesque characterization.

To vary the figure, Isaiah says, "Mine age is removed, and is carried away from me as a shepherd's tent." There is nothing permanent in tent life, it is a camping out from place to place. Especially must the shepherd, for the sake of pasturage, frequently shift his location. He settles down in some valley, hoists his canvas in the evening, and while the smoke may curl upward in the morning with the busy activities of breakfast preparation, at noon or by late afternoon there is hardly a vestige of his having been on the spot. He has struck his tent and gone. So it is with our earthly habitation, with the body in which we tabernacle here. We live our



little life in one brief generation, and the next generation finds scarcely a trace of our existence. Our lives have been removed as a shepherd's tent.

Again we are told in the Chronicles that "our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is no abiding." That makes a very definite impression on the writer's mind. Often has he sat on some slope of the Catskills, and followed with his eye the flying shadows. It is in the autumn when they are seen to the best advantage and with the finest effect. The atmosphere is dreamy, the leaves are sufficiently tinged with red and gold to speak of decay. The murmuring of the brook in the adjacent meadow, and the occasional lowing of the cattle can be heard. The whistle of the farmer's boy and the song of the bird seem to be in a minor key. There is plain-tiveness in every sound. You find yourself sighing involuntarily once in a while, and you cannot help feeling a little melancholy. You look over the landscape, and there are the shadows. There is something beautiful and yet saddening in the continuous procession which they keep up. No one of them takes more than a minute or two to traverse the whole stretch of country within the range of vision. Verily, our days are like the fleeting shadows: they chase one another very rapidly, and there is "no abiding."

Still farther, Job declares, "My days are swifter than a post." This figure is taken from an ancient

## 14 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

institution, which is thus described by the author of the "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire": "Houses were everywhere erected at the distance only of five or six miles, each of them was constantly provided with forty horses, and by the help of these relays it was easy to travel a hundred miles in a day along the Roman roads." Xerxes, in his famous march from the Orient to Greece, by such a postal arrangement kept in close communication with the most distant parts of his realm. Herodotus says that there was no more speedy way of travelling by land than on the post-horses. How the courier must have gone flying along! Art represents him spurring his steed to a full run. When Gibbon's "five or six miles" had thus been journeyed, the messenger would mount a fresh animal, and gallop away to the next stopping place, where there would be another saddled beast awaiting him, and with such postal conveniences 150 miles a day could be made. Even foot couriers, by being trained from childhood, used to travel 100 to 200 miles a day in Mexico, as we learn from Prescott's "Conquest." This historian expressly says, "Fresh fish was frequently served at Montezuma's table in twenty-four hours from the time it had been taken in the Gulf of Mexico, 200 miles from the capital." This feat was accomplished by a runner on foot, and not by one who was mounted, as the ancient postman was. We can imagine the latter literally dashing by the ob-

server, who would watch him as he ascended a hill, who would lose sight of him as he descended into a valley, who would see him appear again on a farther elevation of ground, who would see him growing smaller and smaller against the sky, till in a few minutes he disappeared altogether. Swifter than a post is our fleeting life, rising and falling on hill and in dale, till ere long it vanishes in the distance. Swifter than the modern post even, than postal telegraphy, are our days. *We* do not send messages by the mounted courier now, but by the electric flash. Quickly as that, in one view of the matter, do we run our earthly course. The Master Himself once said, "As the lightning cometh forth from the east, and is seen even unto the west, so shall be the coming of the Son of Man," in a moment. Down from heaven through intervening space with the velocity of light, which shoots through the air 186,000 miles a second, God sends the despatch, "This night is thy soul required of thee," and somewhere before morning there is an instant tragedy. There is a blaze of electricity, a blinding flash of lightning, followed by lurid darkness, for another life has ended.

It is likewise Job who says, "Oh, remember that my life is wind." Bring forth the anemometer, and let us measure the rapidity with which the wind moves. What is the velocity of that gentle zephyr whose motion can with difficulty be discerned? About a mile an hour. Let the tornado sweep

## 16 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

along, and what does the anemometer register? More than a hundred miles an hour. How long does it take the cyclone to do its awful work? There is a momentary roar like the deafening noise of ten thousand trains of cars, there is a bewildering sense of the passing of a blast of the Almighty's breath, and all is over, but what fearful havoc has been wrought by that brief whirl of wind. It is here and gone before one has scarcely time to think. As rapid sometimes seems the whirl of time. In such different ways do we have illustrated in Holy Writ how short our time is.

2. Turning to the other side of our subject, we will try to get some conception of the endless future, of Him who "inhabiteth eternity," and concerning whom Whittier says :

" From out whose hand  
The centuries fall like grains of sand."

A hasty sketch of the ages of geology will perhaps best enable us to understand how with God a thousand years "are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night." We will picture to ourselves the cosmos as evolved according to the nebular hypothesis, for though this should be supplanted by some other theory of the universe, it yet will ever furnish us with an impressive illustration of how absolutely unending is eternity.

We start with that indefinite "In the beginning,"

and we see this earth, as Scripture says, "waste and void," a vaporous mass, which cooled and condensed into a liquid sphere. This fiery, molten ball whirled round and round, and radiated heat, till it had a solid outside crust. Millions of years were required to make this "beginning" of our globe. The enveloping gases were precipitated into the waters of which they were the constituents, and a hot ocean completely covered the surface of the primordial earth. Slowly this deposited its sediment, adding grain to grain, until there was a formation five miles thick, and the Cambrian age had run its course through thousands of years, which, however, were only as a watch in the night in comparison with eternity.

There followed the Silurian age with a deposit of still greater depth, and we see the Rockies and the Alleghanies lifting themselves out of the water, while yet the greater part of North America was a rolling sea. This condition of things lasted for thousands of years, but the eternal God looked upon them as so many days, or even fractions thereof. The Devonian age succeeded, and more land rose from the vasty deep in the shape of numerous islands, such that, said the geologist Dawson, "the continental areas of the northern hemisphere must have much resembled the present insular and oceanic regions of the South Pacific." Only another day or watch in the night of eternity had passed.

## 18 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

The Carboniferous age came, and with it the elevation of more land in great swampy flats. America's inland sea became more and more contracted, and a boggy soil appeared where the prairies now are, and it was clothed in the most luxuriant vegetation under tropical conditions. Then came a mighty subsidence, and the vast swamps were overflowed, and the forests were covered with detritus, which gradually rose above the water to wave with another tropical forest, and that also sank and was buried in mud. Thus were the coal measures formed through thousands of years, which occupied only a part of a night for Him who was, and is, and is to be.

The Permian age continued the elevations and depressions through other millenniums, for everything was billowy and unstable yet. We pass down through the Messozoic ages, and see the Rockies and Andes submerged, and all Britain under water except the highest peaks, while chalk a thousand feet deep was formed by the almost imperceptible growth of microscopic shells. Then we see another tremendous upheaval, producing for the first the majestic mountain ranges of the Alps and of the Himalayas. The subsequent Tertiary age with its subdivisions introduces us to a succession of gigantic changes which speak of immeasurably long time. We see South and North America still separated by a sea, and no Panama canal was needed. We see northern Africa,

southern Europe, and western and southern Asia still constituting an ocean bottom. We see Greenland, now clad in ice, luxuriating in a mild climate and a rich vegetation. We see a cold wave indeed extending southward over the earth, till our present temperate zones were sheeted with glaciers, to be succeeded by a glacial sea which flowed more than a thousand feet deep over the plains of Europe, until there was another elevation producing more land than exists now. We see man appear, to experience perhaps that last geological subsidence of any great extent, whereby the earth in its present contour of continents and oceans was formed, and the promise was that the world should not be drowned again, should not be subjected to another deluge.

The modern man gets a more adequate conception of eternity than any in the past, because he has in geology a more satisfactory unit of measurement. How long were the geologic ages? Long enough for the formation of sedimentary rocks to the depth of at least fifteen miles, and that, too, by the depositing of a sand, as it were, at a time. Sir William Thompson (though later authorities make more moderate estimates) calculated seventy to a hundred million years from the first formation of the solid crust to the modern period. The cooling down from the first vaporous condition is supposed to have occupied an immeasurably longer time, and we can say with Longfellow :

## 20 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

“ The ages come and go,  
The centuries pass as years.”

All these form only a small section of eternity. Such infinite duration of personal existence staggers the intellect. With such a conception of this as we are able to get from our geological comparison, we can see the deep significance of the Lord's own statement, that it would be no profit to gain the whole world and lose the soul. We can say with Wesley :

“ And deeply on my thoughtful heart  
Eternal things impress :  
Give me to feel their solemn weight.”

Having thus set over against each other time that is so brief and eternity which is without beginning or end, in closing we recall a scene from Milman's "History of Latin Christianity." In one of the early Anglo-Saxon conferences to consider the question of accepting Christianity, a thane came forward and said, "To what, O King, shall I liken the life of man? When you are feasting with your thanes in the depth of winter, and the hall is warm with the blazing fire, and all around the wind is raging and the snow falling, a little bird flies through the hall, enters at one door and escapes at the other. For a moment while within, it is visible to the eyes, but it came out of the darkness of the storm, and glides again into the same darkness. So is human life : we behold it for an instant, but what has gone before, or



what is to follow, we are utterly ignorant. If the new religion can teach us this wonderful secret, let us give it our earnest attention."

The advice was good, and those early ancestors of ours well decided to accept the Christ, who "only hath immortality." In view of human life being like a bird flitting through a room on a wintry night, *we* cannot afford to leave out of account the Christian religion, which alone has a satisfactory solution of the mystery of our earthly existence flashing momentarily across the eternity wherein it is comprehended. Contemplating the swiftly-passing days of the present and the countless æons to come, and we recognize how true and how appealing are the lines of the poet:

" We live in deeds, not years, in thoughts, not breaths,  
In feelings, not in figures on a dial.  
We should count time by heart-throbs. He most lives  
Who thinks most, feels the noblest, acts the best."

## II

### The Reign of Law or of God, Which ?

**I**N the preceding chapter we reached the conclusion that the Christian religion is a satisfactory explanation of life, that opens up into an ever-expanding future. So widely has this view been accepted that we have what is known as Christendom comprising so large a portion of the race. It has been reserved for our day to throw doubt on the prevailing belief. Christianity itself has come to be questioned. With the larger knowledge of our age, we are impressed with the reign of law. We query if this is not inconsistent with the sway of a personal God. We do not quote with confidence the old Hebrew sentiment:

“ Who is like unto the Lord our God,  
That hath his seat on high,  
That humbleth himself to behold  
The things that are in heaven and in the earth ? ”

We are inclined to think that there is no great Being, who is concerned about what takes place either here below or in the sky above. At first certainly, modern scepticism seems to be justified by the revelations of science. But perhaps a deeper view will make for the old faith, that the Omnipotent does not relax His

control anywhere, and that He governs everywhere, though very likely by secondary processes. We shall attempt to see how law is only the method of His working.

I. First, God fills the earth. He is, to use a philosophic word, immanent everywhere, and there is nothing in the evolutionary theory ruling Him out of the universe. The creation is progressive, it is a development, the accomplishing of the divine purpose by long and intricate and subtle processes, rather than by quick and spectacular acts. Let us suppose that the nebular hypothesis is correct. In some mysterious beginning a fiery mist was revolving, though even then its laws of motion must have come from a personal Intelligence. Under the action of centripetal and centrifugal forces the original mass became separate globes which cooled and solidified, and one of these would be our terrestrial ball, which in the course of geologic ages became habitable.

How marvellous that the green earth could have come from the primordial material first noted, and what wisdom and power must have been in the Being who could cause such a development of a beautiful cosmos from the previous chaos! We may smile at Herbert Spencer's definition of evolution, "a change from an indefinite, incoherent homogeneity to a definite, coherent heterogeneity through continuous differentiations and integrations," and yet

## 24 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

the evolutionary in nature is widely accepted, and cannot indeed be disputed along many lines. If man himself as to his physical structure once existed in a lower animal organism, our faith need not be disturbed, since it is only a question of a quicker or slower formation of man, whose "ascent" indeed Drummond traced with an increasing reverence as he unfolded the story in his book on this theme. While other biologists have seen mainly if not exclusively the law of the struggle for life, resulting in the survival of the fittest, that is, of the strongest, he has exalted that coördinate working principle of the natural world, namely, the struggle for the life of others; so that animals, for instance, instinctively protect their young even at the risk of their own life.

Had it not been for this altruistic feeling in the very brutes, whole species must have become extinct, and death in time would have reigned supreme, for without tender care life in its infancy must perish. Not so strangely, therefore, does this distinguished writer claim that evolution is "a love story," and he could still maintain that "the greatest thing in the world," material as well as religious, "is love."

Not without suggestiveness is his illustration of how there may have been the dawn of mind, when the developing body reached a certain degree of fineness. He said that some portions of the Arctic regions know nothing of liquids. The thermometer

may range from 31 degrees below zero to 31 above, and there are only solids in matter: there is ice and there are glaciers. When the mercury marks 31 above, let there be a rise of only two degrees more, and behold the transformation. "The glaciers under the new conditions," to quote from my informant, "retreat into the mountains, the vesture of ice drops into the sea, a garment of greenness clothes the land. So," he continues, "in the animal world, a very small rise beyond the animal maximum may open the door for a revolution." That is, at a certain stage of the evolutionary there may be an inflow of human intelligence, the mortal becoming immortal. There is a place for God even in such a scheme, and perhaps a God more majestic and more glorious than enters into the ordinary conception of his way of working. Victor Hugo once said, "I am the tadpole of an archangel," and substantially such a glorification *is* yet to be ours when the natural unfolds into the spiritual, the earthly into the heavenly. If we feel that the divine inworking is needed to carry us up to this higher stage of development, we need not be so very incredulous about our present elevation having been primarily from much lower conditions under the moulding hand of the mighty God.

Whatever may be the truth as to race development, every individual *is* an evolution. Each child that is born starts in a single cell that is microscopic in size, and the embryonic changes, step by step,

## 26 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

have been noted by the biologist, and the marvellous transformations are such as to necessitate the bringing in of the divine agency. The wondrous evolution of what the Psalmist calls our "substance" into human shape and semblance, so far from ruling God out, makes Him essential to explain the mysterious development, and the devout exclamation of the inspired writer is ours also :

" My frame was not hidden from thee,  
When I was made in secret,  
And curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the  
earth.  
Thine eyes did see mine unperfect substance,  
And in thy book were all my members written,  
Which day by day were fashioned,  
When as yet there was none of them."

As there was an individual development, so a race evolution may be a fact. There is considerable evidence for this in the revelations of the very rocks. Primeval man is shown to have had implements of stone, and there succeeded a bronze age, and later still the use of iron was learned. Still, Professor Sayce of Oxford says: "The monumental history of Egypt gives no countenance to the fashionable theories of to-day which derive civilized man, by a slow process of evolution, out of a brute-like ancestor. On the contrary, its testimony points in an opposite direction: the history of Egypt, so far as excavation has made it known to us, is a history,

not of evolution and progress, but of retrogression and decay." But if the opposite conclusion be finally established to the satisfaction of all, we need not be disturbed in our faith, since God is needed in a long and laborious unfolding of humanity. The more minute and involved and prolonged the process, the more acute the intelligence that directs the movements of a steady progress.

It is the Omnipotent and Omniscient who makes the single drop of water to teem with life, and the solitary atom to be a thing of mighty potentialities. None but He could create the little ants, which with waving antennæ meet and hold evident communications with one another. He teaches the butterfly, as my scientific authority says, to place "the eggs of its young on the very leaf which the coming caterpillar likes the most, and on the under side of the leaf where they will be least exposed."

In plant life there is a similar indication of divine design. When Herodotus more than two millenniums ago said that at a certain season of the year the priests went to the desert for branches of wild palm, and bringing them home waved them over the garden palms as a prerequisite to a crop of dates, they ignorantly were availing themselves of a natural law that is essential to fruitfulness, and how wondrously God does here work. The fertilizing pollen may grow on one plant, and the stigma to receive it on another, but God has a way of getting them together without

## 28 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

the help of any human priesthood. He has the wind to connect the two, or the bee flying hither and thither for a different purpose brings about the connection. The flower opens its heart of sweetness to the insect, and the latter bears away to another flower that which is needful to its blooming. Insects that are fond of darkness are provided with flowers which are white, or which reveal their location by exquisite perfumes.

To such small details does God descend. He gives delicate hues that are beyond the skill of human touch. As Shakespeare says :

“ To paint the lily,  
To throw a perfume on the violet,  
To smooth the ice, or add another hue  
Unto the rainbow, or with taper-light  
To seek the beauteous eye of heaven to garnish,  
Is wasteful and ridiculous excess.”

No one can rival God in those minute perfections revealed everywhere in nature. He is Lord of heaven and earth, and the deeper the insight we get into the material world, the more microscopic our vision, the more profound is our conviction of a divine hand that weighs the “small dust of the balance,” that arrays the lily, and that models our very substance.

2. Turning now in the second place from the earth to the heaven, the first effect of a larger knowledge here might be to cause a personal God to recede, but on maturer thought He is seen to be all the more



glorious because of the revelations which the telescope has to make. The wavering faith, which Drummond sought to reëstablish by his book on evolution, Chalmers endeavoured to confirm, when astronomy became a matter of common information, by preaching his famous "Astronomical Discourses," which have been preserved in a very readable volume. There was the same ferment of belief then as at present, the cosmic problem being no less serious than the biological. There was a tendency to unbelief on the ground that the Governor of so vast a universe could not be concerned for this paltry globe of ours, and for its comparatively insignificant inhabitants. If the splendid argument of the celebrated Scotchman were reproduced, we would be ready to entertain his view of God, of whom he said, "Magnitude does not overpower Him, minuteness cannot escape Him." He is concerned with "the things that are in heaven and in the earth." Though seated "on high," He condescends to what is of low estate.

And why should this be regarded as incredible? When Newton discovered the law of gravitation, God at first might seem to have been eliminated, but we have come to see in gravity a grander method of the divine working, and the great discoverer himself was a devout believer, as many an evolutionist is to-day. To be sure, there may be something bewildering in the fact that the telescope has brought within the range of vision more than two hundred million suns

### 30 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

alone, while each of these is doubtless the center of a system like our own solar group, with its planets and moons and a central orb. We feel the power of natural laws, their clock-like regularity and mechanical force, when we can predict to a minute eclipses and transits, and yet there ever recurs the question, Who made the great clock, who constructed the vast machine? In this way we are ultimately led back to an intelligent Creator.

But granting His existence, it does seem amazing that He should have condescended to save a little world like ours, when it could be dropped out of the immense universe and be no more missed than a solitary leaf that falls in the foliage of a forest stretching away for miles. Perhaps, however, the miracle of grace may not be so stupendous or rather so solitary as it appears to be. Other planets may have been redeemed as well as ours, two at least, Mars and Venus, of those in our small system being habitable on the highest astronomical authority, while in the endless stretches of boundless space may be numerous worlds that share in a redemption resembling that of earth.

Besides, to use for substance an illustration of Chalmers, the whole period of human history in an eternity without beginning or end is but a point of time, and so after all God's interest in humanity may be only like that of an earthly monarch, who has reigned as long as Victoria, for instance, did,—like

such a one turning aside for a *minute* to show a kindness to a suffering waif in the street. The royal attention is not bestowed beyond measure on the single child, not to the neglect of the interests of the kingdom at large. In this view of the matter, disproportionate attention may *not* have been paid to our comparatively insignificant globe. Moreover, we are to bear in mind that the Infinite is not limited as we finite creatures are in the range of attentions and affections which can be bestowed. *We* cannot take in too many things and persons without neglect somewhere, but the "high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity" is not subject to any such limitations.

And yet we are not to belittle the great act of redemption. There is no lack of, there is rather manifestation of, divinity in condescension. When a man of fame notices a helpless child, he rises in our estimation. The great orator Fronto, in the time of Marcus Aurelius, never commended himself more to posterity than when he asked his Majesty the Emperor to be remembered to his little grandchildren, and, says the historian, "to kiss for him their fat little feet and dainty hands." That showed that he had heart, and we commend him for his affectionate interest in those who might be supposed to be beneath the attention of a person of imperial eloquence. The divineness of the God of heaven is indicated in no way so much as by His stooping to the sons of earth and bestowing upon the prodigals even His redemp-

## 32 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

tive kiss. Horace Bushnell, playing with his children, is exalted in our estimation. Wilberforce is all the greater because he consecrated his magnificent endowments, intellectual and spiritual, to the securing of the liberty of poor slaves. Lincoln towers up all the more sublimely as President, because his heart was touched by some mother pleading for the life of her soldier boy, who in a moment of weakness and homesickness may have deserted from the army.

Condescension, so far from disproving, establishes divinity. When a single member of a large family becomes seriously sick, to borrow another illustration, all attention and tenderness are turned towards him, and the whole neighbourhood becomes concerned for his case. If anything glorifies human nature, it is such a fact as that, and so of the divine nature. When, therefore, one little world became sick unto death with sin, there is nothing incredible in the Scriptural representation of all heaven becoming concerned, angels, and most of all God.

The analogy of a nation's interest in its humblest citizen conveys the same lesson. If he is unlawfully arrested by some foreign power, the government of the United States would secure him his rights, if an army had to be enlisted, and the whole power of the country would be pledged to make his American citizenship good. A nation which will thus interfere in behalf of the most obscure is for that very reason considered great, and its flag is respected and cheered

on every sea round this terrestrial ball. The government of high heaven has commended itself to our admiration and enthusiastic loyalty by a similar interference in behalf of a humble world over which Satan presumed to claim dominion.

If the smallest island of the United States were seized by a hostile power, the tocsin of war would be sounded, the Congress would vote ample supplies for the necessary naval force to maintain national honour, patriotism would everywhere be stirred, and all the resources of the country would be enlisted for the sake of expelling the invader of the most insignificant part of our domain. When this globe of ours, floating on the ocean of immensity, was wrongfully claimed by his Satanic majesty, the rousing of high heaven and the moving of all the armies thereof and the pledging by God of all His resources even to the giving of His Son for the recovery of the merest islet in His vast kingdom of the universe,—all this is godlike, and is what we should expect and not doubt.

The astronomical as well as the biological argument adds to the glory of God. Whether with the microscope we study the earthy, or with the telescope survey the heavenly, God on reflection is seen to be more and more glorious in proportion to our enlarging knowledge, and we rejoice to feel that though the celestial sovereign is seated on high, He notices the very sparrows that fall to the ground, He numbers the hairs of our heads, He takes up His

## 34 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

abode in humble and contrite hearts, and makes all things work together in their highest interest.

“ I sing the almighty *power* of God,  
That made the mountains rise,  
That spread the flowing seas abroad,  
And built the lofty skies.

\* \* \* \* \*

“ I sing the *goodness* of the Lord,  
That filled the earth with food :  
He formed the creatures with His word,  
And then pronounced them good.”

### III

## The Power and Persistence of Memory

**T**HERE is mystery not only in the world wherein we are placed, and in our relation thereto, but also in our own strange personality. Modern philosophy has much to say of the subliminal. Our psychology never wearies of considering the subconscious self. It is the old wonder of the power and persistence of memory, to which the next few pages are to be devoted. We have here a most interesting faculty of the mind. We see it exhibited in a memorable experience of Nebuchadnezzar, when Daniel gives these various items regarding the king: "The thing is gone from me. . . . But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets. . . . That thou mayest know the thoughts of thy heart." The monarch had fallen asleep, thinking of his widely extended kingdom, wondering about its probable future, "what should come to pass hereafter." He dreamed about it, and it was a troubled dream, which he could not recall on awaking.

Most of us have had a similar experience. We have just an inkling of something which occupied

### 36 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

our minds during our slumbers, but as to what exactly it was we are left in aggravating ignorance. By mental efforts we try to grasp it, but it eludes us, and keeps vanishing from our almost successful endeavours. We sometimes have a like difficulty in recalling a thought of our waking hours. A name, which we know just as well as our own, escapes us, and we attempt again and again to seize it, but without avail. We have not really forgotten it, for if a friend repeats several names, and finally hits upon the fugitive, we recognize it at once. That is it, we say, how singular that we could not speak it for the moment.

So that we can understand the irritability of the oriental king, who insisted that the professed interpreters of dreams should reveal the escaped dream itself, as they should have been able to do, if they actually possessed supernatural knowledge. It was a very practical test, such as should be applied now to so-called spiritual manifestations. But modern mediums are as careful to maintain their reputation as the ancient magicians were. If they can only have a screen up, and an aperture cut into it, they are just in their element, and will caper around in great shape. They will make faces at you with their half-hidden smirks, they will shake the hand at you, and they will give you a message straight from the other world. But make a movement to go behind the curtain, and they are mightily indignant, and



## The Power and Persistence of Memory 37

they gather up their celestial robes, and depart in high dudgeon. They do not like too close inspection. It is because of the fraudulent nature of their claims that they always want to select their own ground, to impose their conditions.

Nebuchadnezzar did not propose to have any such foolishness. He meant business, and the astrologers were required to tell the dream itself, and not simply to give some general, enigmatic, and perfectly safe interpretation thereof. They declared that the royal demand was unreasonable and preposterous. But they would have had to pay the penalty of their false pretensions, had not Daniel come to the rescue. He and his religious companions prayed that the dream might be miraculously imparted to him, and it was. The thing had gone from the king, but God revealed the secret, and Nebuchadnezzar once more knew the thoughts of his heart.

Every one now in his more sober moments is apt to query what is to come to pass hereafter, what after the present is to be his destiny. Do the deeds of this life have any relation to eternity? A momentous inquiry is here started. Will all the past come up in judgment? Much of it has nearly if not quite faded from the mental vision, but glimpses of it recur now and then to the mind, as if to suggest that all lies hidden somewhere, and that there is needed only the proper exciting cause to bring it all clearly to light. Thackeray in his "Henry Esmond" says, "We forget

## 38 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

nothing. The memory sleeps, but wakens again. I often think how it shall be when, after the last sleep of death, the reveille shall arouse us forever, and the past in one flash of self-consciousness rush back, like the soul revived." Thus even the romancer felt the force of this truth which is stranger than fiction, that *nothing* is forgotten.

To be sure, Prof. William James, who for so many years gave distinction to the chair of philosophy in Harvard, demurred to the sweeping claim, calling it an "extravagant opinion that nothing we experience can be absolutely forgotten." Even he, however, made this significant admission: "The sphere of possible recollection may be wider than we think, and in certain matters oblivion is no proof against possible recall under other conditions." Certainly, therefore, very much more may be recalled than will be for our comfort, and *every* thing *may* be subject to recall at the quickening of the Omniscient. The scientist himself, Prof. Morton Prince of Boston, in a lecture to the Technology Biological Society maintained that every thought is retained by the mind, and that thoughts can be reproduced in a hypnotic state, showing that they are still existent though ordinarily lying dormant. "All emotions," he declared, "generate a galvanic current, which can be registered by a galvanometer." It is like an Edison record taking and holding with unerring fidelity whatever is uttered for its retention. You cannot eliminate part of what

has been said, all goes down. As Pilate would say, What is written *is* written.

I. Our first proposition, then, in considering the power of memory is, that nothing seemingly is absolutely forgotten. It may appear to be, but it really is not. We may say with the king, "The thing is gone from me," but after all we are vaguely conscious of its existence somewhere, and we feel that it may yet be recovered. We realize this very sensibly of some things, and a natural inference is that all thoughts are imperishable.

A marvellous faculty is memory, as is evidenced by the reading of metaphysicians, by passing in review established psychological facts. We stand in awe before such prodigies as the learned Scaliger of the sixteenth century, who memorized Homer in three weeks, and all the Greek poets in three months. We do not hesitate to say "the rare Ben Jonson" indeed, when he informs us that he could repeat all that he had ever written, and entire volumes of what he had read. We are astounded by what is recorded in our mental philosophies of the young Corsican, who after hearing words in Greek and Latin to an almost interminable extent, could reproduce them from beginning to end without the slightest error, and also backwards with equal readiness, as well as alternately, and in every other order, who did this on actual trial before a gathered company, and who claimed that he could thus recite to the number of thirty-six thousand words.

## 40 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

There is the familiar example of Seneca in the first century, who, bemoaning the loss of memory in his declining years, fondly and proudly recalled his youth, when, he said, he could repeat two thousand names in the order in which he had heard them pronounced. Tertullian, the early Church Father, could recite the Old Testament Scriptures, it is asserted, from Genesis to Malachi. Cicero is our authority for the statement that Themistocles could address by their names the twenty thousand free inhabitants of Athens. Pliny avers that Cyrus knew the names of all the soldiers in his army. Though at present we depend so much upon the arts of printing and stenography, upon our books of reference and other helps, yet once in a while there is a case of a phenomenally retentive memory as to persons and events and dates and figures. A recent example is Blind Tom, who could play on the spot the most difficult music he had heard. Lord Bacon could rehearse the whole of Tacitus, and Gladstone had only to be given the first line of a page of Homer, and the following lines would be recalled with the greatest exactness. Macaulay, the historian, could reproduce the whole of Milton's "Paradise Lost," and, he himself declared, all of Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress."

But the wonder of wonders is, that probably all retain every impression ever made upon the mind. The thing goes from us, we say, but it is not really forgotten, it may be and often is recovered from the

## The Power and Persistence of Memory 41

subconscious self after the lapse of years. We have merely for the time being lost the consciousness of what after all remains. We hold in mind, only hiddenly, more than the greatest prodigy, who has been instanced, was ever able to reproduce. We only lack his power of immediate reproduction.

Memory was well termed by Cicero a storehouse. It has many chambers, in which we frequently have to rummage around for a considerable time before we find what we want, and then perhaps we miss it because of its lying in some overlooked corner. A storehouse is a thesaurus, to use the Latin word, which has been Anglicized, and which Virgil employed once to indicate the cells of a honeycomb. There are a great many brain cells, in which sweet thoughts like honey are stored away, and in which the foul like worms lie concealed. They are all there, good and bad, and God has but to open the door of this cranial hive to have displayed as through transparent glass all that has been secret and out of sight.

The inner chambers, to vary the figure, are as multitudinous as those of any labyrinth, as those even of that most famous one which Herodotus visited in Egypt, with its three thousand compartments. The slayer of the Cretan Minotaur did not dare enter the labyrinthian retreat of that fabled monster, till the princess of the island, who had fallen in love with the hero, had furnished him with a clue of thread, by which he might make his way out after

## 42 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

destroying the half-human beast. God could give us a clue by which we would be able to thread the intricate mazes of memory, and such a search would doubtless reveal more than one monstrous sin lurking in some hidden recess.

Memory *is* a vast storehouse, is a complicated honeycomb, is a many chambered labyrinth, retaining everything that has been done or said or felt, holding in reserve for some future day of reckoning every deed and word and thought. It is, as Plato illustrates, a tablet upon which successive impressions are made, and this figure enables us to understand the indelibility of what is once committed to the memory. There are ancient manuscripts, palimpsests, which have been written over again and again. The first text has been erased, and a later one has been added. Sometimes there has been a third and a fourth writing, one above the other. Have the first characters been entirely obliterated? No, but to increase the difficulty of deciphering them, the vellum leaves frequently have been bound together in a different order each time, and often upside down. But by painstaking care, and by chemical applications, and by various expedients known to adepts, repeatedly has the original writing, after a supposed erasure, been restored. More than one classic of antiquity has thus been rescued from oblivion, and some of our oldest and most valuable Biblical manuscripts have in this way been discovered. Like oft-

## The Power and Persistence of Memory 43

used parchment is memory, upon which impression after impression has been made, and all in apparent confusion, but nothing is lost. There is needed only the revealing light of God, and the subtle chemistry of heaven, to bring everything out clear once more. As under some Scriptural might be a pagan writing, so beneath some good deed may be an evil one, lying there a secret sin, not entirely lost to memory by any means. It only awaits the reading of the great Decipherer of the heart's hieroglyphics, which are never wholly obliterated to His all-searching eye.

We shall remember more than earth's greatest prodigy ever did, when we appear "before the judgment seat of Christ." We can see from the illustrations which have been employed how probably nothing will be actually forgotten. "Son, remember," is what was said of the man in the gospel story, and straightway he recalled all the past, and he was filled with inexpressible sorrow thereby, because of the memory of neglected opportunities. The recollections of his earthly life followed him into eternity.

2. Directing our attention next to the more positive side of our subject, Is there likely to arise any crisis which *will* so stimulate the conscience, that faded memories will acquire their former vividness and distinctness? Nothing may be really forgotten, but if the undesirable thing is to be forever stored away out of sight in some hidden cell, or in some

## 44 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

labyrinthian chamber, to give us no farther uneasiness and anxiety ; if it is not to be discernible on the tablet because of subsequent and more agreeable impressions ; if it is to be practically forgotten, great relief would be afforded the mind and soul. Is there any reason for supposing that there will be a reproduction of what has been long dormant ? Can it be possible that what we were hardly conscious of at the time will be capable of being recalled ?

All who have pursued philosophical studies are acquainted with that incident, which Coleridge relates. A German servant girl, who could neither read nor write, in a fever astonished everybody by talking very correct Latin, Greek and Hebrew, and she was believed by many to be demoniacally possessed. An investigation was instituted, and it was ascertained that years before she had worked in the family of a very scholarly clergyman, who was accustomed to walk to and fro and to read in her hearing the Greek and Latin Fathers, as well as the Hebrew Scriptures and certain Rabbinical volumes. So many of the sentences of the young woman's ravings in her delirium of sickness were found upon examination to correspond exactly to passages in the books which she had heard read years before, there was no longer a question but that under a nervous stimulus and exaltation she repeated verbatim sentiments in languages which she did not at all understand.



## The Power and Persistence of Memory 45

If what memory thus ignorantly, and as it were mechanically, like a Victor record holds, can be called forth from hidden recesses under an excitation of the nervous system, how much more intelligent acts at the bidding of God, however far they may have receded in memory's labyrinth. Those who have been resuscitated from a drowning condition testify to their whole life, down to the minutest details, passing almost instantly in review before the mental vision. As Hamlet says of apparitions, "There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy." Not only is no impression apparently ever lost, but everything seems likely to be positively recovered, even to unconscious acts. We do not know what may be brought against us at the bar of God. "God shall judge the secrets of men," says Paul to the Romans, and to the Corinthians he writes that God "will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the heart."

There is philosophy in the Biblical teaching that for every idle word we shall have to give an account. Every recess of the labyrinth will be exposed. Every impression on the tablet will be made legible. Hence our fear that there may be sins, of which we know not, to rise up at last and call for an expiation. There is "the dread of something after death," as says the great dramatist, who adds,

"Thus conscience doth make cowards of us all."

## 46 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

Or, as it is expressed in Shakespeare's "King Richard the Third":

" My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,  
And every tongue brings in a several tale,  
And every tale condemns me for a villain."

To be sure, there are pleasant recollections which will arise in that judgment, into which is to be brought "every hidden thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil." There is a constant stream of the benevolent as well as of the malevolent. Wordsworth says:

" And, when the stream  
Which overflowed the soul was passed away,  
A consciousness remained that it had left,  
Deposited upon the silent shore  
Of memory, images and precious thoughts  
That shall not die, and cannot be destroyed."

There are, then, recollections both pleasant and otherwise that apparently will be carried over from this life to the next. If all the impressions ever made upon us abide, personality to which they belong must survive. Our separate mental acts form a continuous, and, we may logically infer, an endless chain. We have in the memory an explanation of the continuity of our being. In our intellectual processes, link is added to link ad infinitum. This makes a future so prolonged an appalling thing, especially when we reflect that our vices far outnumber our

## The Power and Persistence of Memory 47

virtues, that our deficiencies vastly exceed our excellencies.

This consideration causes us to wish to be true what indeed is held out in Holy Writ as a hope and even an assurance, that there *is* a forgetting on the part of the Infinite. Of Him it is said, "Their sins and iniquities will I *remember* no more." As the fabled ring of Gyges in classic story is said to have rendered the wearer invisible, so the ring which the Father places upon the hand of the penitent will forever blind even the all-seeing eyes to pardoned sins, and the prophecy of Micah will be fulfilled, "Thou shalt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." Memory's tablet at last will have the hitherto most indelible impressions of guilt perfectly erased by Him, who is represented by Paul as having "blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us, nailing it to the cross." We shall be troubled no more by our sins, for they shall be "nailed," nailed to the cross. In no other way can we escape the eternal uprising of guilty memories that like specters haunt the soul. Only by divine grace can we destroy those disturbing ghosts that lurk in labyrinthian recesses. Holding to the scarlet thread of salvation furnished us by the Prince of peace, we in the end shall have the satisfaction of seeing our most secret sins entirely overcome and completely eradicated from our natures. Memory shall be only a gladsome possession.

## IV

### The Will as a Factor in Determining Destiny

**O**UR next inquiry is as to how one can relate and properly adjust himself to the situation as outlined, to the strange environment wherein, without any choice of his own, he is so mysteriously born. What is it that determines his destiny? The Master gave a very specific answer to that question when He said, "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching." At another time He said in further elucidation of this thought, "Ye will not come to me, that ye may have life."

Man is a trinity. He is intellect, feeling and will. He acquires knowledge, he receives impressions pleasurable or painful, and he acts, he puts forth effort. Philosophy generally makes this threefold division of the mind. Or if now there is often a different nomenclature, we can at least say with Prof. Josiah Royce of Harvard fame, "That the traditional view has a real significance cannot be questioned." Following, then, what even he admits is "the usual division of mental life," there are the cognitive faculties by which we learn about an ob-

ject, there are the emotions which are produced thereby, and there are the consequent decisions which are made. In which of these does religious character lie?

We sometimes have confused ideas here, we do not have well-defined views. We have a good comprehension of the physical, of what we can see, or hear, or taste, or smell, or feel. We know just how many senses we have, and we understand what each of the five is for. We do *not* always have as clear a conception of the faculties of the soul. We do not seem to comprehend that mental phenomena spring from three separate and distinct functions of the mind, the power to know, the power to feel, and the power to act. Sir William Hamilton in his "Metaphysics" used an illustration that is worth recalling. One sees a beautiful work of art. He recognizes what it is, the faculty of knowledge is exercised. He experiences agreeable affections, the capacity of feeling appears. He decides to possess the treasure, the power of action comes into play. Now with regard to the material, one is not at a loss how to proceed with his senses. He looks, he listens, he uses his olfactory organ, he tests with the palate, he touches, applying to the object each of the five senses of the body. With equal facility, and with as nice a discrimination as to the peculiar use of each, should he be able to apply the three faculties of the mind. He should know the truth, he should be susceptible to it,

## 50 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

and he should choose it, and the last is what determines if he is a Christian. Knowledge and feeling are insufficient, unless they lead up to a choice.

1. First, as to knowledge. This includes all that can be acquired by the intellect, and that is not unimportant. Instruction in religious things is necessary. Here we find the reason for preaching, and no other religion compares with Christianity in that feature. There is something inspiring in the fact that every Sunday clear round the globe discourses are given on the noblest topics which can occupy the attention of humanity. The sermons preached on a single Lord's Day in the United States alone would make a library of immense proportions. How multitudinous would be the volumes, which should contain all the pulpit literature of our land for a whole year! We can scarcely measure the sermonic productions through all the years of the past, and for all countries. We might almost say of sermons what John said of the sayings of Christ, "If they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books."

Besides, there has grown up in the last century another agency for the impartation of knowledge, and that is the Sabbath-school. For every preacher there are several teachers, whose text-book is the Bible. Nor is it an occasional lesson which they give out of God's Word, but the instruction is renewed from week to week and from year to year:

Then there is to be added the knowledge gained of divine things in the home. Every mother instils the precepts of the Gospel in young minds. Children are taught the facts of religion in the very nursery, and they never forget what they learn from parental lips. Verily the opportunities for knowing about God are abundant. Literature, too, is full of sacred lore. The very newspapers which have enterprise report the teachings of the pulpit. The great Magazines and Reviews contain elaborate articles in the realm of theology. No one in Christendom need perish from lack of knowledge. The difficulty is not anywhere ignorance of the way of salvation.

People will say very frankly, We know that we ought to do differently, that we ought to be Christians, that we ought to be more consistent as church-members. And yet very likely, so far as taking a positive stand is concerned, they are waiting for clearer perceptions, not appreciating that knowledge at the best must be limited in our finite state. Now we know in part, says an apostle. There are and must be things which we have not satisfactorily settled. There may be questions about inspiration, about evolution, about the antiquity of man, there may be great moral and scientific problems, upon which we are intellectually befogged, and therefore if we are approached on the topic of personal piety, if we are urged to commit ourselves religiously, we hesitate and say that we do not know about it, for

## 52 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

there are some things we do not quite understand. We imagine or try to make ourselves believe that the obstacle is a mental one, whereas the great Teacher gives the true explanation of our attitude, when He says, "Ye *will* not come to me."

Our knowledge is sufficient, but our willingness is not. What we need to do is not to store the mind more, but to make it up. It is not a matter of intellectual comprehension so much as of moral decision. Absolute knowledge is not necessary, but the willing spirit is what is essential. With line upon line, and precept upon precept, from the pulpit, and in the Sunday-school, and within the home, and through the public print, we all have knowledge enough. Indeed we may have so far come into intellectual accord with the Gospel, our minds may have so far accepted the truths of Christianity, that we are resting in our mental beliefs. We have not made any choice in religion. The teachings of Scripture meet with our approval, but we have not consciously accepted their author. Our will has not acted, and until it does, all our knowledge will be in vain.

2. In the second place, religious character does not lie in sensibility, any more than in knowledge. There may be the capacity to feel, and to feel nobly, while yet there is no genuine religion. People may have high aspirations, they may be stirred by fine sentiments. They may be deeply moved by ex-



alted views of God. They may be able to portray the divine attributes with wondrous effect. And yet they may have no religious principles. *Irreligious* poets have written very excellent hymns, which the most devout love to sing. Horace Bushnell has very properly distinguished between a religious nature and religious character in a person, who, he says, "may even go so far as to enjoy the greatness and beauty of God, and have the finest things to say of Him, and have no trace of a genuinely religious character, any more than if he were enjoying or praising a landscape. He will do the two things, in fact, in exactly the same manner, and one will have just as much to do for his piety as the other," and we might add that neither will have anything to do therewith. Chalmers, the eloquent Scotch orator, made the same distinction. He produced a profound impression by his far-famed "Astronomical Discourses," which remain to us in published form. He closed the series with a sermon from that text in Ezekiel, "Thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not." From this passage of Scripture he deduced the theme of the futility "of mere taste and sensibility in matters of religion." He made bold to say, "that as much delight may emanate from the pulpit on an arrested audience beneath it, as ever emanated from the

## 54 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

boards of a theater, aye, and with as total a disjunction of mind, too, in the one case as in the other, from the essence or habit of religion." After he had made his vast audiences feel the beauties and sublimities and magnitudes and amplitudes of creation, he yet insisted that "conscience may be in a state of the most entire dormancy, and the man be regaling himself with the magnificence of God, while he neither loves God, nor believes God, nor obeys God."

So that it is not enough to be in sympathy with the truth at certain ecstatic moments. People will go to church and enjoy the singing. They feel uplifted by the prayers. They drink in with delight the elevated sentiments which flow from the sacred desk. They not only know about the kingdom, but they take a certain satisfaction therein. They experience pleasure in listening to the unfolding of some religious thought, to the development of themes that relate to heaven and eternity. They go from the house of God with nobler impulses, and with grander views of life. They have a good understanding of religion, and they have a great admiration therefor. They really would like to be Christians. And yet they may not be, though their intellects may endorse every utterance of the pulpit, and though their feelings may respond to every tender appeal.

Herod, the murderer of John, heard the Baptist gladly. Pilate was so impressed with the godlike

bearing of Christ, whom he yet delivered to the executioner, that he washed his hands as an expression of his desire to be held innocent of the great crime, with which nevertheless his name ever since has been justly associated. The feelings of both Herod and Pilate were moved, but their wills were not. Something more than religious susceptibility is needed. There is often too much reliance placed upon the emotions. Not that these are to be depreciated. They are natural and proper. There *should* be glow and rapture, when the things of God and the immortal soul are contemplated. But an occasional or a periodic excitation of our natures is not religion by any means.

It is too much like the famous Sabbatic River, to which Pliny refers, and of which Josephus gives this description: "When it runs, its current is strong and has plenty of water, after which its springs fail for six days together, and leave its channel dry, as any one may see. After which days it runs on the seventh as it did before, and as though it had undergone no change at all. It has also been observed to keep this order perpetually and exactly, whence it is that they call it the Sabbatic River," because it flowed only every seventh day. Thus intermittent is emotional religion, which flows full and impetuous in a rush of feelings on the Sabbath, but which has no steady current of principle and of purpose. It fails during the trials and temptations of the week.

## 56 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

It is wholly Sabbatic in its nature, or at least it does not pour forth a constant stream of good influences.

A moving of the sentiments is all right so far as it goes, but an act of volition, with an unswerving purpose subsequently, is what is specially needed. It is a mistaken notion to suppose that a religious life springs from uncertain and unreliable sensibility. And yet many are looking for some mysterious moving of this pool for spiritual healing, whereas they should be like the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda, who, after waiting for years to be put into the water when it was troubled, at last heard the voice of Jesus saying, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk," and who, it is recorded, "*took up* his bed, and walked." We want in Christianity no intermittent spring, no pool of Bethesda folly, but exertive power in response to the divine summons for action on the part of the lethargic will. To any, who excuse themselves from becoming Christians on the ground of a lack of feeling, on the ground of too great insensibility to sin and God's love, on the ground of not being profoundly enough moved,—to such the Master says that the real reason why they hold back is, "*Ye will* not come to me." The lack is not knowledge, they know enough to be saved. The lack is not feeling, they may be relying too much on the moving of the sensibility, which is not decisive of religious character at all. The lack is in the matter of choice, they do not will to become Christians.

3. There remains, therefore, only this one thing to do. It is to decide. "Choose you this day," said Joshua of old. Reverting to the philosophical analysis of the mind, cognition and emotion are only designed to lead up to volition. When we know about religion, when we are informed as to its excellencies, we feel that it is a good thing, we desire to be Christians, but unless we determine to be, unless our will acts, all is in vain so far as actual possession is concerned. We might be aware of the value of a diamond, or of a certain painting being by one of the masters, we might long to own the treasure, but unless we decided to possess it, it would never be ours. We may understand what is meant by the pearl of great price, in Pauline language we may earnestly covet this best of all gifts, but unless, as the parable says, we go and get it, unless our knowledge and feeling take shape in action, the gospel pearl will not be gained.

The whole responsibility is lodged in the imperial human will, which even Omnipotence cannot consistently coerce. What dignity is thus conferred upon man! His knowledge is superb, his sensibility is often exquisite, but his will is magisterial. It enables him to withstand God Himself. In intellectual capacity he cannot compare with Him who knows all things. In fine feeling he cannot equal the infinitely pure and holy One. In the wonderful power of choice he stands on the same level as his Maker,

## 58 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

to whom he can say, "I will," and "I will not." By this marvellous third faculty of the mind he can accept or reject salvation. There is where the determination of his eternity lies, in the will. If he wants to become a Christian, he can, by simply making the decision, without waiting for more knowledge or a deeper feeling. To be sure an apostle says, "It is God which worketh in you both to will and to work," but after all every one is consciously a free moral agent, and he realizes that in a sense he is the architect of his own fortune, that the determination of his everlasting destiny remains largely in his own control. Emerson with prophetic insight said:

" So nigh is grandeur to our dust,  
So near is God to man,  
When Duty whispers low, Thou must,  
The youth replies, I can."

God helps those only who help themselves. As He imparted strength to the palsied arm so that it could be stretched forth according to command, so He strengthens the enfeebled will.

There is no occasion for confusion here. We do not have to know or feel any more. It only remains for us to act, to choose. That is the final step to take in any department of life. In the matter of a profession, one may consult his acquisitions and his inclinations, but he becomes a merchant, or a lawyer, or a physician, by a definite, deliberate choice. A

woman may find out all she can about her suitor, she may consider the affections, but she becomes a wife only by a distinct, voluntary act. The really determinative faculty every time is the regal will. In the sphere of religion a person should get all the knowledge he can of God, he should be as susceptible as possible to spiritual impressions, intellect and emotion are not to be disparaged, but the supremely important thing is to choose, and the decisive choice can be made at once.

Pizarro, the conqueror of Peru, once summoned *his* hesitating followers to a decision. He gathered them around him, with his sword drew a line in the sand, and said that on the south side would be toil and hunger, though with a rich, final reward, while on the north side would be ease and safety, but with no satisfactory compensation in the end. Then came the ringing appeal, "Choose, each man, what best becomes a brave Castilian. For my part, I go to the south." Thereupon he himself stepped over to the southern side of the line. A few others did the same, but the rest returned northward. We all know that glory came to those who made the right choice, it came in the historic conquest of Peru. So it is yet. Happy will be all those who, at some sacrifice of the temporal, will resolutely step over the line to win the eternal. Every one, like Julius Cæsar, should cross his Rubicon, and with such decisive action he can say with him of the long ago in

## 60 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

terms of fine accomplishment, "I came, I saw, I conquered," or, as it is so strikingly phrased in alliterative Latin, "Veni, vidi, vici." This is the way to move on to the eternal city, not to that on the yellow Tiber, but to that on the river bright as crystal.



## V

### Cornelian Inquiries as to the Great Essential

**W**E have historic reference to "the noblest Roman of them all," but most Romans in the best days of the Empire were nature's noblemen. All the centurions mentioned in the New Testament were of high character. On the occasion of Paul's voyage Romeward, this was true of that Julius who courteously permitted the apostle though a prisoner certain liberties. During the stopping of the ship at Sidon, he kindly allowed him to go ashore, "gave him leave to go unto his friends and refresh himself." When the well-known shipwreck followed at a later stage of the journey, the soldiers wanted "to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out, and escape. But the centurion, desiring to save Paul, stayed them from their purpose." The centurion at Capernaum appears to an equally good advantage. He was deeply concerned for a slave of his, who, it is said, was "dear unto him," and whose recovery was besought of the Lord by the Jewish elders on the ground of his great generosity, "himself built us our synagogue." It was the centurion at the cross who, much impressed,

## 62 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

said, "Truly this was the Son of God." There was a fourth centurion, in whom Peter became much interested, and who is introduced to us by the book of the Acts, when there was a divine voice "saying to him, Cornelius." When like him the modern man responds to the appeal to live for what is highest, he yet may miss what should be the culminating experience. He may be satisfied with what is altogether excellent, while forgetting what is most vital. He may have various moral virtues, while lacking a deep religious experience.

In making inquiries as to the great essential in human life, we will direct attention to members of the great Cornelian family, which has had distinguished historical representatives, who are constantly being reproduced in their religious attitude. We may call them all Cornelians, which is also the name of a highly-prized gem, though the latter is more generally spelled with an *a* instead of an *o* in the first syllable, while yet both spellings are allowable. As a precious stone the cornelian was one of the twelve set in gold in the breastplate of the High Priest in Old Testament times, being more usually designated, however, as sardius. When the prophet Ezekiel wished to portray the magnificence of the prince of Tyre, he made the cornelian or sardius to be one of the costly gems adorning his person. The sixth foundation in the wall of the celestial city was the same bright-red stone. When the inspired reve-

lator set forth the glory of Him who sits on the throne in heaven, he likened Him to the sardius to "look upon." The cornelian's beauty of colour, therefore, may fittingly be made to symbolize Christ-like character.

Now we are to consider various Cornelians, who have adorned history, and who, all of them, might have become gems for the Master's own ornamentation, when He comes to make up His jewels, to gather His peculiar treasure. Gems in their natural state may shine, and yet be capable of a higher polish, thus attaining unto their fullest brilliancy. We shall have this illustrated in our consideration of various Cornelians under suggestion from the Cornelius of the New Testament. At Cæsarea were quartered Roman soldiers, one of whose bands, recruited from Italy, was commanded by a centurion, to whom a personal, religious appeal was made, and the result was that he became a Christian.

His conversion was the more striking because of his prominent position. The Gospel at first gained most of its adherents from the lower walks of life, but Julian, the apostate emperor of the fourth century, that intellectual and yet impotent opposer of the Church, admitted that Cornelius was one of a few persons of distinction who espoused Christianity. He, therefore, may have belonged to the great Cornelian family so renowned in Roman history. Highly favoured as he was in this respect, he was

## 64 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

not satisfied. There was a voice speaking his name, and not till he gave heed thereto did he find peace. There was started in his heart an inquiry which led to his listening to the story of the cross as told by Peter, and to his baptism on profession of a new experience and faith. It would have seemed that he if any one could have gotten along without any such revolution of character. He was as exemplary as the model young man of the New Testament. We are to see how much there was to make him contented with his lot, we are to make some exclusively Cornelian inquiries.

1. He was first of all in the line of military promotion and glory. He was an officer in the best army that ever marched to victory. Nor was he put in charge of mercenary troops, of soldiers enlisted from foreign and barbaric countries. His company was formed out of genuine Romans, out of the noble stock of Italy, the very center of power in the mighty empire. He was, we read, "centurion of the band called the Italian band." Nero afterwards had an Italian legion "of men," says Suetonius, "all six feet high." It was the material from which the emperors chose their body-guards. Such was the desirable command of Cornelius. There was before him, then, an honourable career, and all the more so because there coursed through his veins the blood of great generals.

Let me mention only one of his military ancestry.

When the famous Hannibal, whom at the early age of nine his father at a pagan altar made swear eternal enmity to Rome, when as a man this genius of northern Africa crossed over into Spain, scaled the snowy Alps, and descended into the sunny plains of Italy, when 45,000 Romans there fell in a single battle before the conquering hero, when among the killed were so many men of rank that three bushels of signet rings are said to have been gathered from the distinguished dead, when in this crisis with Hannibal thundering at the gates of Rome, it was seriously proposed by those in authority to abandon Italy, there rushed into the counsel chamber with drawn sword to protest against such cowardice a young man of eighteen, and his name was Publius *Cornelius* Scipio Africanus Major.

This Cornelian Scipio at the age of twenty-four defeated Hannibal's brother in Spain, and then proposed to measure swords with Hannibal himself, and how did he proceed? "He thought," says Plutarch, "the occupation of contesting Italy with Hannibal a mere old man's employment, and he proposed no less a task to himself than to make Carthage the seat of war, fill Africa with arms and devastation, and so oblige Hannibal, instead of invading the countries of others, to draw back and defend his own." The plan succeeded, and Hannibal was finally overcome on his own soil. It was a member of the Cornelian family who made this bold venture and gained this

## 66 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

splendid victory, and who thus gave rise to an expression which is heard to this day more than two thousand years after the event, namely, the expression, *to carry the war into Africa*, meaning thereby a sort of venturesome but successful flank movement. Cornelius Scipio Africanus was the name of the conqueror of Hannibal, and Cornelius was the name of the centurion of the Italian band, who heard a voice directing him to something better than military glory, of which he would seem to have been assured in view of his ancestry and his own present advancement. But he was not at ease.

Nor are people now at rest, though getting on well in secular life. They may be doing a good business, they may be in the way of professional promotion, they may have everything to encourage them in the prosecution of their worldly plans, but to Cornelius there was as much if not more to make him content, and yet he was not. There was a suggestion that he had not yet gotten in the line of true glory. Not till he became a soldier of the cross, not till he was assured of a crown in heaven, not till he had seen that he could become a king to reign to all eternity, not till he had been baptized in this faith, were the cravings of his nature met. To every one now however successful in life comes a voice pointing from the earthly to the heavenly. As the Roman officer was exhorted to become a Christian soldier, so the merchant is urged to lay up treasures on high,

the doctor is advised to consult the great Physician, the lawyer is referred to that "Advocate with the Father" who alone can plead his case before "the Judge of all the earth," every one is entreated to place his affections on things above, on what alone can satisfy the deepest wants. Cornelius became a true Cornelian. The immortal soul needs to be saved to shine as a gem of the first order.

2. Cornelius also was evidently happy in his family, as well as fortunate in the way of personal success. The sacred narrative mentions him in connection "with all his house," and intimates that they were animated by one purpose. When Peter came, the whole household were together, waiting in unison. It was no divided home, harmony and love prevailed. Probably Cornelius was as domestic in his tastes as that ancestress of his, the daughter of Cornelius Scipio to whom allusion has been made, who bore the family name, being known as Cornelia. "Her character," says the American Cyclopædia, "was the purest of any woman's mentioned in the historical period of Rome." It was she who was so devoted to her children, and who, upon being asked to show her jewels by a caller profusely decked out in this regard, sent for her two boys, and when they appeared she said, "These are my jewels, and their virtues are my ornaments." This scene art has preserved in the picture not infrequently seen of a mother and her children, while below are the suggestive words, Her

## 68 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

Jewels. Thus long, for more than twenty centuries, has Cornelia been remembered for her devotion to her children, for her domestic excellencies.

The Cornelius under consideration, a descendant presumably of hers, seems to have taken equal satisfaction in his home. But while his felicity in this respect was well-nigh complete, there was a voice which woke an echo in his soul, which roused slumbering and unmet wants. He was not content till under his roof the One altogether lovely had taken up an abode. Nor does the home now, approximate as it may perfection, meet all the wants of the soul. A mother may rejoice in her children, as Cornelia did, but when particularly they are called to "cross the bar," there is a sorrow which cannot be comforted without Him who is "the resurrection and the life." A daughter may have ever so attractive a home, she may be fondly loved there, but so long as she does not respond to a heavenly voice within, she is not entirely happy. Not till one joins the household of faith, not till he becomes a member of God's family, does repose come to the heart. Not till natural traits are supplemented by graces of Christian character, do any become the shining gems which it is their privilege to become, do they display the beautiful features and colours of the resplendent cornelian.

3. Still farther, Cornelius was a man of public spirit, of popular sympathies. He gave, it is said,



“much alms to the people,” and we are informed that he was “well reported of by all the nation of the Jews.” In this respect he was like some of his ancestors, for instance, like the Gracchi, Cornelia’s two sons, to whom reference has already been made. At the time that they lived, Italy was in a deplorable condition. The country was owned by a few large proprietors who had forced the smaller ones to sell, and the vast estates were worked by hordes of slaves.

Originally there had been a law limiting the possessions of any single individual to about 330 of our acres, but this law was evaded by the rich getting land in other people’s names, and after a while it was openly defied as they recorded deeds with their own signatures. This continued until, says Plutarch, “there were comparatively few freemen in all Italy, which swarmed with workhouses full of foreign-born slaves.” It was an abuse similar to that which exists at present in Great Britain and which causes the Irish agitation, and which in these days of growing monopolies is the increasing danger of this country, and which is everywhere developing the spirit of socialism and anarchy.

The two Cornelian brothers set out to rectify this wrong, and to relieve the consequent distress. Their idea was to break up the great estates into small farms, to revive the old agrarian law. Tiberius Gracchus used this forceful illustration: “The savage beasts in Italy have their particular dens, they have

## 70 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

their places of repose and refuge, but the *men* who bear arms, and expose their lives for the safety of their country, enjoy in the meantime nothing more in it than the air and light, and, having no houses or settlements of their own, are constrained to wander from place to place with their wives and children." This was all too true, and he farther called attention to the absurdity of generals urging soldiers to fight for their altars and their homes, when there was neither altar nor home to defend, when the poor men in the ranks, says an ancient classical writer, "had not one foot of ground which they could call their own." The Cornelian brothers wanted a reform, wanted the country possessed not by a few great proprietors but by a multitude of small farmers. When King Attalus died and willed his treasures and kingdom to Rome, they proposed that the money which had been left "should be distributed," says the historian just quoted, "amongst such poor citizens as were to be sharers of the public lands, for the better enabling them to proceed in stocking and cultivating their ground." This beneficent revolution, however, was fought by the interested wealthy, and both brothers met with violent ends. They were martyrs in a worthy cause, they died for the people.

Their broad sympathy, their interest in the general good, their humanitarianism, was inherited by that descendant of theirs at Cæsarea, who "gave much alms to the people," and who endeared himself to a

whole "nation." Surely a person of such a philanthropic disposition, so public-spirited a man, who interested himself in the welfare of others, who had a national reputation for benevolence, *must* have been content. But he was not, for his repose was disturbed till under the instruction of an apostle he became a Christian, receiving the baptism of the Spirit and of water. Likewise one at present may be generous. He may be liberal in the support of the church. He may be recognized as invaluable to the community in which he lives. He may be alert to all sociological problems which to-day are absorbing attention, till some seem almost ready to substitute sociology for the Gospel. He may be a great believer in social settlements which improve the environment, and in everything of that kind, which indicates a noble nature that cares for the poor and unfortunate. More than this, could he rise to a position where his services would be appreciated by a nation, as Cornelius did, there still would be one thing needful, and he would not attain to perfect peace, till led to become a disciple of the Lord. Though he may be concerning himself about others, as the Cornelian Gracchi did and as the Cæsarean Cornelius did, though he may be receiving the admiration and the applause of those about him, though he may be an excellent and eminent citizen, there is a voice which will not be silenced till he has found favour with God as well as with man. Both divine

## 72 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

and human responsibilities need to be recognized. The nature needs to be regenerated, the gem in the rough needs to be cut and polished, before it attains unto the lustrous beauty of the cornelian that is worthy to flash on the breastplate of Him who is our prophet, priest and king. Natural goodness needs to be supplemented by the spiritual, or if you please, by the spirituelle.

4. Once more, Cornelius was after a fashion a religious man. He was "devout," he "prayed." To this extent he was *unlike* one of his ancestors. We have been tracing family resemblances, and now comes a contrast. One of Rome's illustrious dictators was Lucius *Cornelius* Sylla, who was brutal in the extreme. *Our* Cornelius called in his servants to go on a religious errand, and they returned with Peter who made known the way of salvation to the centurion "and his kinsmen and his near friends." Near the close of Cornelius Sylla's life, in fact, "the very day before his end, it being told him that the magistrate Granius deferred the payment of a public debt, in expectation of his death, he sent for him to his house, and placing his attendants about him, caused him to be strangled." No such ghastly scene was witnessed in the household of Cornelius of Cæsarea. Messengers were despatched for a certain person, to be sure, but it was that the centurion and all the rest might hear the word of God. That is to say, unlike the wicked Cornelius Sylla, Cornelius of

Cæsarea was a religious man. Nevertheless there was an intimation that something more was essential.

What lacked he yet? It was a *vital* religious experience which he needed, and when he had that, when the fullness of the blessing came like a refreshing flood upon his soul, when his heart was changed and new affections were kindled, when religion became to him a living, thrilling reality, and when he had identified himself with God's people, then he was satisfied, and the reproofing voice was no longer heard. He had been a Cornelian by inheritance, but he became one of the shining-gem order in the attainment of genuine Christian character. One still may be religious in a sense, he may have the habit of prayer, he may reverently worship in church, and yet because of one thing lacking go away sorrowful like him of old.

The whole thought, then, is that one must have more than honourable success, more than domestic felicity, more than a philanthropic, and even religious nature, if he is going to be such a Christian as he should be. He may belong to the great Cornelian family with certain distinguishing and excellent traits of character, and yet not belong to the Christian household, or at least to the inner circle thereof. In such exemplary persons, however, the Gospel ought to awaken an immediate response, and it does in those who have the true Cornelian spirit. We could believe that if Peter had preached to the others of

## 74 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

that illustrious family of antiquity, they would have accepted the truth, as did the one whom we have been considering. Indeed it is gratifying to read from a page of Gibbon descriptive of the fourth century this sentence: "The Gracchi embraced the Christian religion." This was more than 500 years after the two eminent brothers, the progenitors of these, had died. It is also pleasant to learn that Paula, the celebrated Roman matron who devoted her large fortune to religion, and who was the helpful friend of Jerome, the Scriptural translator giving us the Latin Vulgate, descended from the Scipios and the Gracchi. Any to-day with recognized excellencies may become genuine Cornelians, gems that at last shall shine among the Lord's "precious jewels."

5. There is a final word of encouragement for any to enter upon the distinctively religious life, to become Cornelians in the double sense indicated, as belonging to the great and noble family furnishing one of its finest specimens in the Cornelius of the Acts, and as belonging to a collection of rare stones, none of which shine more attractively *than* the cornelian. Some fear to start lest they may not gain the victory. Their foe does seem stronger than they, but God is on their side, and by many promises assures them of triumph. To give one more Cornelian illustration: in the annals of Roman warfare as carried on by Cornelius Sylla, sixteen cohorts under one of his generals were facing fifty cohorts of the enemy.

The Romans being less in number and also inadequately armed delayed the attack. They stood timid and irresolute, till, says Plutarch, "a gale of wind, bearing along with it from the neighbouring meadows a quantity of flowers, scattered them down upon the army, on whose shields and helmets they settled and arranged themselves spontaneously, so as to give the soldiers, in the eyes of the enemy, the appearance of being crowned with chaplets." Animated by this beautiful omen, they joined battle and gloriously won.

Even so when the spiritual foe seems to us as fifty against sixteen, and when, poorly equipped as we are, we hardly feel like venturing to go forward, there come floating to us from the sweet fields above on the breath of the Spirit such promises as these: "My grace is sufficient for thee," "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life," "Ye shall receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away,"—these precious promises from Beulah Land rest like fairest flowers upon our shields of faith and our breastplates of righteousness and our helmets of salvation, and they presage certain victory. Encouraged by these sweet reminders of coming triumph, we can enter upon the Christian life with confidence and gladness, singing as we go:

"A sweet perfume upon the breeze  
Is borne from ever vernal trees,  
And flowers that never fading grow  
Where streams of life forever flow.

## 76 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

O Beulah land, sweet Beulah land,  
As on thy highest mount I stand,  
I look away across the sea,  
Where mansions are prepared for me,  
And view the shining glory shore,  
My heaven, my home, forevermore."

Thus in the city whose walls are precious stones, and whose sixth foundation is sardius, shall we be sardian gems, beautiful cornelians that shall sparkle as "the stars for ever and ever," and ourselves sharing in the splendour of Jerusalem the golden we can with jubilant feelings say :

"What radiancy of glory,  
What light beyond compare !"



## VI

### Some Pertinent Though Not Impertinent Questions

**I**N the last chapter having inquired as to the great essential in human life, in this we proceed to some more definite questions that are pertinent though not impertinent. They were originally addressed to Jonah, but they are capable of the most up-to-date applications. The modern man needs frequently to face the call for personal action. There are put to him interrogatories which are meant to line him up to duty. He may be restive sometimes under the appeal that comes close home, but he ought not to resent what is undoubtedly for his good. He should meet squarely any summons to do his best.

The prophet of old came to a crisis in his career. He had been commanded to go and preach to the wicked Ninevites, but he rebelled. He heard a voice calling him to a specific duty, but he tried to get away from the divine summons. He went in an exactly opposite direction from Nineveh. He fled to Joppa which was fifty miles from his Galilean home, and at that seaport he boarded a ship bound for

## 78 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

Tarshish which was probably in Spain. He paid his passage, and set off with some heathen sailors over the Mediterranean. Thoroughly exhausted after the struggle of mind through which he had gone, and unhappy in his conscious wrong-doing, he retired to a place of quiet, and soon was fast asleep. He was not awakened even by the terrific storm which arose, and which threatened to destroy the boat. He knew nothing of the excitement of the mariners, who were now praying and again were throwing overboard whatever could be spared to lighten the ship. He had to be forcibly aroused by the captain, who urged him to add his prayers to those already being offered. He was next designated by lot to be the one on whose account the tempest had been sent, and he was asked in rapid succession these questions: "What is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what is thy country? and of what people art thou?"

He confessed all, and as the sea grew more and more tempestuous, he saw no relief except in his own sacrifice. But not till the sailors had made another and last desperate effort to row back to the shore only to see themselves more and more at the mercy of the waves, did they consent to his proposition to cast him into the raging deep. *He* did not experience the comparative calm which followed, for he was in mid ocean wrestling with the angry billows. He was supernaturally rescued according to the Bib-

lical story, but he never forgot how he felt when, to use his own words,

“The waters compassed me about, even to the soul ;  
The deep was round about me ;  
The weeds were wrapped about my head.  
I went down to the bottoms of the mountains.”

After his miraculous deliverance, he hesitated not to obey the Lord, and he did a great work at Nineveh. His preaching there produced a profound impression. The people repented literally in sackcloth and ashes. They all put on the garb of mourning, and the city was saved from destruction. Though Jonah himself was dissatisfied with the result of his labours, he received honourable mention long afterwards from Christ, and he doubtless now is rejoicing in a crown many of whose jewels are the setting of the mission which he so reluctantly undertook.

It all grew out of a storm in which he nearly lost his life, and in which there came to him thick and fast questions that set him to thinking. Josephus describes a storm that occurred in his day at the same point where the prophet so nearly found a watery grave. This is his language : “ Now as these people of Joppa were floating about in this sea, in the morning there fell a violent wind upon them ; it is called by those that sail there the Black North Wind ; and there dashed their ships one against another, and dashed some of them against the rocks, and carried

## 80 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

many of them by force, while they strove against the opposite waves, into the main sea." There, of course, is the greatest consternation, and the utmost solemnity, at such a time.

So it will be when the ocean of life is struck by the great Black Wind from eternity. How would it be with us in such a crisis? Plutarch tells us that Julius Cæsar once entered a boat in disguise, intending to make his way over a sea covered by a vast fleet of his enemies. He floated down a river towards the ocean till the salt waves therefrom by a strong wind were forced up the channel of the fresh-water stream. "The current was beaten back with such a violent swell that the master of the boat could not make good his passage, but ordered his sailors to tack about and return." In this emergency came the thrilling command: "Go on, my friend, and fear nothing; you carry Cæsar." The rest of the tale is not usually told, how the mariners for a while did bend anew to the oars under the inspiration of so august a presence, but how he himself, as the danger increased, meekly consented to a return. When his life was actually in peril, he lost his bravery.

Occasionally there may be one like Hume, who in the midst of the dark river, in the swelling of the Jordan, in the passage of the classical Styx, can jest with the imaginary ferryman of the dead, bantering "good Charon" for just a little more time, as the infidel historian did, but most are rendered thought-

ful at that supreme moment of our earthly existence. So long as they glide along a smooth current, and even when they catch some of the swell from eternity, they cry, "Go on, we are not afraid of the future; this boat carries Cæsars, courageous spirits." But as the waves mount higher and higher, and the billows dash over them with increasing force, and the breakers become deafening in their thunderings, the bravest are apt to desire a return. They are not quite ready to pass out into the mysterious hereafter, they would like to tarry here a while longer, so as to accomplish something in the world, they say, before going hence.

Now what are some of the questions which all eventually will have to face? They will be those which were directed to Jonah, only in a deeper sense.

1. First it will be, "What is thine occupation?" It is a very important matter, when one comes to decide upon a vocation. Mercantile life has its attractions. The legal profession has its advantages. The healing art is by no means to be despised. Teaching furnishes a rare opportunity for usefulness. A literary career may well tempt the most ambitious. The humbler employments even should be chosen with moral deliberation. There is dignity in common labour, ever since the Lord worked at the carpenter's bench. But there is a calling superior to all these, and to be followed in conjunction with

## 82 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

these, and that is what Paul terms "the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." The same apostle speaks of being "called to be saints," and in the Epistle to the Hebrews we read of being "partakers of a heavenly calling."

When there bursts upon us the black tempest, like the frightful Euroclydon encountered on the Mediterranean, in such an ordeal, what will most concern us will not be the manual skill that may have been ours, nor the professional, nor the commercial success with which we may have met, but it will be the degree of Christian faithfulness that may have characterized our life. All else will dwindle into insignificance. We shall recall with alarm how often like Jonah we ran away from duty. We shall be amazed and humiliated, that we could have been interested so much in the world and so little in religion. Once in a while even now there comes to us a revelation of our indifference to the things of God.

Horace Bushnell one day awoke to a realization of this fact. He laboured for years for the beautiful park, which has since been made to bear his name in the city of Hartford, where he was so long a distinguished Congregational pastor. He wrote a letter containing this language, "This park matter has been a kind of revelation to me, which I pray God I may never forget. Why should I carry a park to bed with me, and work it over in my dreams during the

night, and wake in it in the morning, and yet be so little exercised in the magnificent work of the Gospel and the care of souls?" Does not our business, or our profession, or our daily toil equally monopolize our attention? We do not ordinarily seek first the kingdom. We are apt to make religion a secondary consideration; we are more likely to be active in secular than in the Christian life. "What *is* thine occupation?" It should be more and more the heavenly, as some day every one will wish it had been. If any have been lacking in attention to the highest things and in religious faithfulness, they will then be conscious of having been as poor Christians as Jonah was of having been an unworthy prophet, and they will be filled with the deepest regret.

2. "And whence comest thou?" was the second question. This primarily was an inquiry for the prophet's native town. He, however, did not apparently answer, From such and such a place in Galilee, from Cana or Capernaum or Nazareth, but he spoke of having "fled from the presence of the Lord." That is whence he came.

Likewise the question, Whence comest thou? as it will be heard at the hour of crisis will take us back to the very beginning of things. There has been an attempt to get away from the thought of God in the materialistic theory of man's origin. The eminent naturalist, Huxley, had a good deal to say about "The Physical Basis of Life," with an

## 84 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

evident leaning to the doctrine of spontaneous generation. The idea is that one arrangement of molecules produces an animal, and another disposition of them a plant. So one aggregation of brain atoms gives rise to the emotion of love, and another shift of them to the feeling of hate. Everything has a physical basis, and if we only knew how to put dead matter together properly, and we may yet learn how, *we* could form man out of the dust of the earth, even as God is said to have done. We could thus create his soul itself, including intellect, will and conscience. "Whence comest thou?" Out of a certain molecular compound, replies the materialist, and the one already referred to expressed himself in this wise: "With organic chemistry, molecular physics, and physiology yet in their infancy, and every day making prodigious strides, I think it would be the height of presumption for any man to say that the conditions under which matter assumes the properties we call *vital* may not some day be artificially brought together."

A physical basis may thus very plausibly be given to that mind which has wrought such marvels in the intellectual world, to that conscience which places man so far above the beast, to that immortal spirit which has aspirations after the infinite, but at the crucial period of human existence if not before, the question, "Whence comest thou?" will bring a different answer, even the prophet's: "From the presence



of the Lord." The words of inspiration will then be felt to be true, that the dust shall return to the earth as it was, and the spirit to God whence it came. There will be no scepticism when the Black Wind and Tempest strike us; our origin from God, and our destination up before the bar of God, will be very keenly realized, and will give us pleasure or pain, according as we may have lived.

3. "What is thy country?" is the next question, and Jonah replied, "I am an Hebrew." "So am I," was Paul's proud claim, and he still further gloried in being "a Hebrew of Hebrews." With no less complacency of feeling, many a one used to say, "I am a Roman citizen," as he thought of belonging to the mightiest empire of antiquity. The Englishman to-day rejoices that his ensign, the Union Jack, is recognized on every sea, and the American's heart glows with satisfaction because the stars and stripes are now so widely known and respected.

Grander than all, however, is that kingdom of the truth which Christ established, and which so impressed the great Napoleon that he made this memorable confession on the island of St. Helena: "Alexander, Cæsar, Charlemagne, and myself founded empires. But on what did we rest the creations of our genius? Upon force. Jesus Christ alone founded His empire upon love; and at this hour millions would die for Him." Nay, an apostle says with reference to Christians, "Our citizenship is in heaven."

## 86 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

Here is a kingdom which sweeps the earth below and the heaven above. Nineteen centuries ago a Roman theater rang with applause when the now familiar line from Terence was first heard :

“ I am a man ; nothing that affects man is indifferent to me.”

More inspiring than this cosmopolitan citizenship is one that is also celestial, embracing two worlds. What, then, is thy country? Is it the better, is it the heavenly? Is it the kingdom of the truth, which so blessedly links the here and the hereafter? More satisfactory than to say, I am a Hebrew, or a Roman, or an Englishman, or an American, will it be to say before the throne, I am a Christian.

If any would bear that glad testimony at the last, they must seek the kingdom now, and seek it earnestly and supremely. “ The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence,” said the Master, “ and men of violence take it by force.” It is those who venture at what seem great hazards, it is those who have the spirit of conquest, it is those who are determined to conquer or die, it is those who say they can but perish if they go and they are resolved to try, it is those who gain the kingdom. They press in for its possession. What if they do fall? They can rise again.

When William of Normandy landed in England, “ as he leaped on shore,” says Hume, “ he happened

to stumble and fall, but had the presence of mind, it is said, to turn the omen to his advantage by calling aloud that he had taken possession of the country." He did not let the unfortunate fall turn him back, but he sprang to his feet and pressed on, fought the celebrated battle of Hastings, and became William the Conqueror. Suetonius relates a similar incident of Julius Cæsar: "Happening to fall, upon stepping out of the ship, he gave a lucky turn to the omen by exclaiming, I hold thee fast, Africa." The same spirit is needed in the religious life, if any would come off conquerors and more than conquerors. They must not be discouraged or hindered by falls. They are to recover themselves as soon as possible, and march on to the conquest of the kingdom. They are to take it by force, as the Captain of their salvation has said. They are to venture something in order to gain that which follows. They are to start in the Christian life, though they may stumble at the very outset. They are to persevere, and they will gain the victory, and at the end when each is asked, "What is thy country?" he will be able to answer with a joyful confidence, "The kingdom of the truth; my citizenship is in heaven."

4. Once more, the question is, "And of what people art thou?" One might live in America, and not be an American. If he is a foreigner, he must decide formally to transfer his allegiance from one government to another, he must get his naturaliza-

## 88 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

tion papers, he must become a citizen according to certain prescribed, legal forms. In like manner one may live in Christendom, and not be a Christian. He may be an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, he may be a stranger and a foreigner. He should by a definite, outward act change sovereigns. He should confess with the mouth as well as believe with the heart. He should stand up, and, so to speak, swear his allegiance to him whose follower he becomes, and whose leadership and Lordship he acknowledges.

In our day a good deal is being said about "outside saints," and men of the present are inclined to range themselves with these, whereas they should commit themselves religiously, they should be found inside, if they would make the most of their powers. Every analogy of life establishes this as a fact. What would be thought of a woman who would not take the name of her husband? Would it be sufficient for her in spirit to be a wife? Nay, she must appear at the marriage altar, and there publicly plight her faith. Likewise should the disciple assume the name of Christ by becoming a professed Christian. He should meet the conditions of citizenship in heaven, and these are, Confess, and you should be confessed, Deny, and you must be denied, before the angels of God.

The final question, therefore, recurs, and it will come up with renewed force as we peer into the

future, "Of what people art thou?" If any belong to the people of God, they should indicate it by an open stand. They will not regret it, when they are caught by the tempest raised by the Black Wind from the eternal shore. No one should be willing to be like that English king, who is known in history, not as Ethelred the Great or Good, but as Ethelred the Unready, because he was never ready to proceed against the Danes, his enemies. *We* are to be ready, for at such an hour as we think not, the Son of man cometh. We are to identify ourselves with God's people, as we say with the devout Ruth, "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." In the swelling of the Jordan, in life's Euroclydon, we will wish that we had.

## VII

### How to Make the Most of Ourselves

**T**HE man of to-day likes to do his best. He wants to make the most of himself, and the word, efficiency, is much on his lips. He often needs the stimulus of some inspiring example. He responds to the appeal of some striking personality. There is this one, and there is that one, serving as a concrete ideal. What particular case shall now be cited for its encouraging influence? An Old Testament writer points out a definite one, when he says, "There is little Benjamin." If we enter somewhat into detail here, we shall feel the force of an admirable career.

Benjamin was one of the sons of Jacob, from whom sprang the twelve tribes of Israel. The patriarch believed that there was to be an important future for the child, and for his posterity, and this hope was realized, for though the epithet "little" was always applicable in the literal sense, in achievement there was abundant cause for satisfaction. The descendants of Benjamin in Egypt during the long centuries of sojourn there became a considerable number, and yet at the time of the Exodus they were with one exception the smallest of the twelve tribes. In the

assignment of territory in the promised land, Josephus says they had the smallest allotment. They, however, had the finest of warriors, who indeed constituted the best part of the army, and who could, we are assured, "use both the right hand and the left in slinging stones and in shooting arrows from the bow." They had the distinction, too, of furnishing the first king of Israel, in Saul, who in his noble youth disclaimed the exalted honour of proffered royalty in the immortal words, "Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel?" So also this little tribe, during the Babylonian captivity, gave Queen Esther to Xerxes, one of the mightiest monarchs of the orient, and gave him his prime minister in Mordecai, who, says the sacred record, was "the son of Kish, a Benjamite." At the return from exile to rebuild the waste places, the choice remnant is indicated by a passage in Ezra which says, "Then all the men of Judah and *Benjamin* gathered themselves together unto Jerusalem." Little Benjamin was not one of the lost ten tribes, but one of the faithful two, standing alongside of proud Judah in the restoration. Coming down to the next great epoch in Jewish history, the chief of the apostles in New Testament times was, as he himself expressly testified, "of the tribe of Benjamin."

Benjamin *was* small, small in numbers, it was the least of the tribes; small in territory, it occupied a belt of land only twenty-six miles long by twelve

## 92 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

broad. But it had a fiery energy, which had only to be chastened to accomplish the grandest results. Quality and not quantity is most important. Electricity is something so subtle as to have escaped man's attention for ages, but how potent its influence in the realm of nature, and now in the world of mechanical appliances as well. Gravity is a force which has never been seen, but which is evidenced in the tremendous water-power of a Niagara, and which is felt to the uttermost bounds of the universe. What is true in the natural and industrial sense is true in the intellectual, in the political, in the moral sphere.

We might illustrate indefinitely along this line. There is little Greece. But from that small country came art, literature, culture. There is little Rome. But from the seven hills came law, jurisprudence, the best type of human government known to antiquity. There is little Palestine. But from that narrow strip of land came the religion of Christendom. The classic river of Athens is insignificant as to volume. When former President Felton of Harvard went to see the Ilissus, of which he had read so much in his Greek, on reaching its bank, the story is, he stooped down and drank up the whole stream. Nevertheless, because of a wealth of associations, this that is least is mightier than our Mississippi, or even than the gigantic Amazon, neither of which historically stands for very much. There is a mere youth, only a



“stripling,” as an Old Testament king said contemptuously of David, but what a future he had! More splendid was it anciently than that of his royal detractor. “There is little Benjamin.” We are to see what conduced to the relative importance of that small tribe. We are to see why it played such an important part in the history of the twelve tribes; why it produced such leading characters as Saul and Esther and Paul, king and queen and apostle; why it figured so prominently in the military annals of Israel, furnishing the flower of the army; why it contributed so largely to the distinctively religious welfare of mankind, being identified with the faithful few who returned from Babylon to Jerusalem to provide a setting, a favourable environment, for the establishment of Christianity, and giving one of its number to plant the Gospel more extensively than any other person.

There must have been reasons for little Benjamin attaining to such a splendid eminence. If we can discover the causes, the humblest to-day may become great in the best sense, may rise to the enviable position which calls forth the divine commendation, the praise being none the less because delicately and indirectly expressed. How, then, can we make the most of our comparatively feeble powers, of our relatively small endowments, of our confessedly single talents? The finite can so act as to make the Infinite say approvingly and complacently, “What a creditable

## 94 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

career!" There are two explanations of little Benjamin doing so well.

I. For one thing, Ramah was within the domain of this tribe, and at that place we first hear of the schools of the prophets. Schools! To be sure, there were no palatial buildings such as adorn the campus of Yale or the yard of Harvard, but we do read of "Naioth in Ramah," and scholars tell us that Naioth meant originally rude dwellings. They were leafy huts, but even with such primitive accommodations students gathered under the Presidency of Samuel, who is represented "standing as head over them." There were no such fine libraries as Oxford and Cambridge can boast, but we *are* informed in the Chronicles of *books*, "in the history of Samuel the seer, and in the history of Nathan the prophet, and in the history of Gad the seer." The instructors had prepared certain volumes. Older than England's two most celebrated Universities, which date back to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, are the Schools of the Prophets, which existed at Ramah in little Benjamin. In referring to their establishment Dean Stanley said: "This is the first direct mention, the first express sanction, not merely of regular arts of instruction and education, but of regular societies formed for that purpose—of schools, of colleges, of universities. Long before Plato had gathered his disciples round him in the olive grove, or Zeno in the Portico, these institutions had sprung up under

Samuel." In little Benjamin's educational advantages, then, consisted one reason of its superiority.

What gives New England a greater influence in the Union than its size would seem to warrant? Its colleges of world-wide reputation, and its literary men produced thereby. Of the Old Bay State Daniel Webster could say proudly, "There she is, . . . there is her history, the world knows it by heart," the statesman could say that of her because of her unexcelled institutions of learning which have been diligently used, till an investigator has found, says Dr. N. D. Hillis of Plymouth Church, "that in ninety years" she had mentioned "in the American and English encyclopædias" "2,686 authors, orators, philosophers, and builders of States." Or, take a single community of this commonwealth, and we can say, There is intellectual Northampton. We can say this with pride, because on the authority of the one just quoted this little place "has sent out 114 lawyers, 112 ministers, 95 physicians, 100 educators, 7 college presidents, 30 professors, 24 editors, 6 historians, 14 authors, among whom are George Bancroft, John Lothrop Motley, Professor Whitney, the late J. G. Holland; 38 officers of State, 28 officers of the United States, including members of the Senate, and one President."

Why does Congregationalism command a respect, which naturally would not attach to it as being one of the smaller or at least not one of the largest de-

## 96 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

nominations? Because it founded Harvard and Yale, Amherst and Williams, Dartmouth and Bowdoin, Oberlin and Beloit, and because this is always and everywhere its spirit, and because it thus draws to itself a support and constituency of more than ordinary intelligence. The Schools at Ramah, and also afterwards at Jericho in the territory of the same tribe, doubtless developed little Benjamin, gave it among the tribes an intellectual prominence, by which like Saul physically it towered head and shoulders above its fellows; so that when Israel wanted a king for the inauguration of a new form of government, a Benjamite was chosen; so that when Christ wanted a great leader for the establishing of His Church, another Benjamite was selected for the important trust.

In all this we have a suggestion that we should make the most of ourselves mentally. Education should not be neglected. School and college are rightly exalted. There is too much haste to get into business, or into a profession. There is too great eagerness to go into society. Minds are thereby dwarfed, not gaining the breadth necessary to the highest efficiency. To be sure, there are self-made men who make a mark in the world. Andrew Jackson is an example. When Harvard conferred upon him as President of our country the honorary LL. D., to the demurrer of some critic that he was not sufficiently educated for such a degree, that he

could scarcely write his own name, the bright retort was, He at any rate can make his mark, and *has*. But no one can doubt, and such prodigies usually admit it themselves, that they would have accomplished far more with a better intellectual training.

Nor should any indulge the fancy that high standing in studies is to one's disadvantage rather than advantage. President Tucker of Dartmouth made an investigation regarding the graduates of that college for two decades, 1850-70, to see how many of them had found a place in "Who's Who in America," a volume giving brief biographies of the "notable men and women of the United States." He discovered in it the names of fifty Dartmouth graduates for the twenty years, and out of these forty-one stood in the first half of the class as to scholarship. From this he concluded that those who forge to the front in the class-room as a rule do the same in the world. That is why Benjamin led the van in the march onward of the twelve tribes; it beyond the rest had educational facilities, of which it made the most. After the same manner can any yet rise in the scale of being and of accomplishment.

2. The tribe of Benjamin profited not only from its schools, but also from its containing the sanctuary, the place of worship. At first this was at Bethel, which was well called the house of God, the gate of heaven, in view of the significant dream which Jacob there had of a ladder reaching into the sky. With

## 98 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

such associations it fittingly became a place for the religious gathering of the tribes. Then at Gibeon, the tabernacle of wilderness fame was located, and great congregations worshipped there. Again at Jerusalem the temple was finally erected, and thither was conveyed the tabernacle of Gibeon, that venerable relic of precious memory, and also, according to tradition, the stone of Bethel, which had been the patriarch's pillow when he had his wondrous vision, and which is said to be that now encased under the coronation chair whereon all Great Britain's sovereigns for centuries have been crowned, and which those female furies of England to their shame have tried to blow up. Both Bethel and Gibeon were exclusively in the territory of Benjamin, and Jerusalem was at the outset, and later was the joint possession of Judah *and* Benjamin. So that the little tribe was highly favoured in containing the center of worship, it did not neglect religion any more than education. Its character was undoubtedly moulded by the worshipping assemblies, which met at its stone of Bethel, at its tabernacle of Gibeon, and at its temple of Jerusalem.

That nation to-day, which contains chapel and church and cathedral, most commands the divine admiration and our own high regard. There is little Scotland. Her crowning glory is confessedly her religious spirit. Of her family worship Robert Burns said most charmingly :

“ From scenes like these old Scotia's grandeur springs,  
That makes her loved at home, revered abroad.”

There is little Geneva, a city of only 12,000 inhabitants in the time of Calvin. But from that small place, with the sturdy Reformer to give it character, came the influence which has been developed into Presbyterianism, a mighty factor in forming our present Christian civilization. There is little Epworth, but from that small village came John Wesley, and Methodism whose adherents are now numbered by the millions. There is little “Rhody,” the smallest State in the Union, but there that man of God and of Providence (of Providence in a double sense, for he founded the city of that name), there Roger Williams started the great Baptist denomination in this country. There is the little *Mayflower* which landed the Pilgrims at Plymouth, but from her small cabin came Congregationalism. And so it has been of every branch of the Christian Church, the grand development has been because of the Spirit of God each time in what at first was a very humble movement. The superlative worth of little Benjamin arose not alone from its enjoyment of educational advantages at Ramah and later at Jericho, but also from its sanctuary privileges of which it availed itself at Bethel, at Gibeon, and at Jerusalem.

The *individual* attains his highest development, not at the university of learning, but when he also takes a course in God's university of soul culture.

If a man would come to his best, he must cultivate his faculties to the utmost, and he must be a devout worshipper. Thus apparently did the smallest of the tribes gain its preëminence. It started at a disadvantage, with less than the others in number, and with less of territory, but its schools of the prophets, and its carefully cultivated devotional spirit steadily advanced it to the front, until God Himself said with a certain degree of pride and gratification, "There is little Benjamin." He desires to see us, who perhaps feel that we have inferior abilities, rise by a similar process of intellectual training, and of religious consecration. The school needs to be supplemented by the church. Adequate mental equipment will give us power, but the culmination is reached in that spiritual enduement which comes from being personally religious. Only as we work up this climacteric can we make absolutely the most of ourselves.

There is a closing scene. In connection with the mention of little Benjamin, an imposing procession is described. "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands upon thousands," we read. The inspired reporter continues, "Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led thy captivity captive." There are also enumerated "the goings" of God. Another feature was, "The singers went before, the minstrels followed after." It is a grand triumphal procession which is being pictured, but the proudest exclamation of all is, "There is little Benja-



min." It will be worth while if, insignificant as we are, we can have God direct special attention to us as we sweep along with the redeemed and sanctified host over the streets of gold in the New Jerusalem. There is one who did what she could. There is another who outstripped others of greater natural capabilities. There is a third who was faithful over a few things. How sweet will be such commendation! The thousands of chariots, the goings of God Himself, His innumerable train of followers, the singers and the harpers, will all be noticed only to heighten the effect of that magnificent climax, "There is little Benjamin."

There is a humble Christian who made the most of his finite powers, who did better than others more highly endowed. In the great saved throng, if we cannot be rewarded for conspicuous service, we can be those whose names shall receive personal mention from the lips of the Lord Himself. We can be among those whose faithfulness in expanding the intellect, and in seeking spirituality, shall at last be gloriously and divinely recognized. It will be a satisfaction indeed to be singled out in that triumphal procession with which human history is to culminate. When the marching columns swing round in review before the throne on which will be seated the Judge of all the earth, shouts of hallelujahs will ascend, as this and that one is named with honour, not altogether for mental attainment, however desirable that

## 102 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

may be and is, but more particularly for excellency of character and for achievement of religious results. No encomium ever received will equal that of the heavenly Potentate, as again and again He says with glow of feeling, "See what he made of *himself!*"

## VIII

### Masters of the Situation

**I**F the modern man can boast of anything, it is of being masterful. Amid all difficulties he rightly feels that he is a dominating force. With a challenging statement less capable of denial than that of Cowper's Alexander Selkirk, and from a serene elevation, he says,

“I am monarch of all I survey.”

It is an element of strength for one to be sure of himself. Failure to attain not infrequently is due to a lack of confidence. One distrusts his own powers. He needs to be imbued with the idea of human capability. There is no finer picture of mastery of the situation than that painted by the writer of the First Gospel, when he said, “An angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled away the stone, and *sat upon it.*” There is a simple majesty to that portrayal of a well-known, divine exploit. We feel the grandeur of the removal of the great stone from the mouth of the sepulchre in which the Lord lay, especially since it bore the seal of the formidable Roman government, and since it was closely

guarded by soldiers representing the mightiest empire of antiquity. The angel of the Lord feared no earthly sovereign, and with superhuman strength rolled away the stone. The triumph was complete, and particularly when, as we are informed, he "sat upon it," indicating a conscious power and an easy accomplishment of the task.

The very climax of victory is reached by us when we can say of some opposing force or movement, that it has been literally "sat upon." An opponent is felt to be practically annihilated, when we can use regarding him that common expression. Our colloquialism gives a correct representation of the conquering power of God through the agents He employs. We are impressed with the mighty reserves of His strength, as again and again He is pictured in a sitting posture. His absolute control of every adverse circumstance and His elevation above all His enemies are vividly depicted in the Psalm which says:

"He that *sitteth* in the heavens shall laugh :  
The Lord shall have them in derision."

We have there no excited and nervous moving hither and thither as if uncertain of the issue of the conflict, but there is the very personification of repose and confidence.

The Emperor Constantius, son of Constantine the Great, tried to produce an impression of greatness by

assuming this same attitude. Farrar says of him, "Nothing pleased him better than to assume the awful immobility of an idol, as he sat in the mid-splendour of his court, or between the gold-embroidered banners on his triumphal chariot. He would not move or cough, lest the impression of his divinity should be weakened." To be sure, in all this *he* presented a ridiculous figure, because in his case it was littleness putting on pompous airs, posing as greatness. Nevertheless he saw what was a fact, that the sitting attitude speaks of superiority and adds to dignity. A king does not rise from his throne, but he remains seated at the approach of his subjects. There is a no more sublime description of God in the whole Bible than that found in the prophecy of Isaiah, "It is he that *sitteth* upon the circle of the earth." An impressive truth, therefore, is contained in the declaration of the evangelist, that the stone was not only rolled away, but was also "sat upon."

1. We learn, first, the lesson of the resistless power of God and of the godlike over physical forces. The angel of the Lord made use of an "earthquake" to open the closed sepulchre, and not only did the earth quake, but, we read, "the watchers did quake." The almightiness of God appears in nothing else perhaps so much as in a convulsive throe of nature. The helplessness of man before this manifestation of divine power is indicated by the great number of lives that have been lost in connection with various

historic upheavals on the surface of our globe with its molten interior. We have a recent example of this in the quarter of million of people who were said to have perished in Messina and vicinity at the close of 1908. Before such demonstrations as that in San Francisco in 1906, we are not slow to admit that God "sitteth upon the circle of the earth," that He commands all the giant forces of this terrestrial ball from center to circumference. In the presence of some seismic disturbance like that in 1755 at Lisbon, which shook the coast of Sweden and caused the Alps to tremble, we are made deeply sensible of human impotence and of divine omnipotence.

A few years ago in the Franconia Notch of New Hampshire, the power of God was shown upon a great stone. In some long-past geological age a mighty convulsion had made a great rent in the side of Flume Mountain. This fissure was so narrow at the top, there long hung in the opening, between the gigantic jaws, a huge boulder weighing many tons. No human hand could spring it from its sockets. But when God in a tremendous storm by an immense landslide put forth *His* hand, it went crashing and roaring to the bottom. The stone, at which giants might have tugged in vain, and which had resisted the storms of centuries, when God really laid hold of it, was rolled away, and was, so to speak, ruthlessly "sat upon." This superb mastery of the

physical belonged also to the angel of the Lord, and likewise belongs to us, who with dynamite blow up a hell-gate at the entrance to a harbour, or who tunnel mountains, or who bore a passageway for trains under majestic rivers, or who cut a continent in two with a Panama Canal, making us thus, says Scripture, "but a little lower than the angels," who can shake the solid foundations of the earth. Through an inspiration breathed into us from above, *we* are conquering the forces of nature, and sitting thereon, monarchs of all we survey. In view of such splendid achievements, our immortality cannot very well be doubted, that we are destined to live forever. In the language of the book of Job, "there is a spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty giveth them understanding." Even our intellectual accomplishments are thus rightly attributed to the understanding given us from above, and very significantly material progress itself is confined to lands having knowledge of the Bible. That is why we are sitting upon, triumphing over, stones concerning which there once was defeat because of ignorance.

The modern world is familiar with the claim of the ancients that they possessed here and there stones which had descended from the sky, from a supernatural source, the temple of Diana, for instance, at Ephesus containing such a venerable relic, as we learn from the book of the Acts, where we read of "the image which fell down from Jupiter." We to-

day have scientific knowledge of these stones which formerly were superstitiously regarded, and the aerolite, known now to be of natural origin, is eagerly watched as it shoots down through the air, blazes its way along, and buries itself deep in the ground, and is carried off in triumph by the fortunate finder to some college or institution of learning, where it brings a rich pecuniary reward, and where it is analyzed till it discloses its constituent elements. It no longer frightens people into an unenlightened awe, but it is coolly "sat upon" by scholars and geologists and meteorologists, and it is made to yield up its secrets.

Examples of human conquest under the inspiration of the Almighty might be multiplied. Take the photographic art. In 1838 Madame Daguerre in France consulted a medical celebrity as to her husband's mental soundness. The strongest evidence of his insanity, she said, was his belief that he would succeed in fixing one's shadowy outline on magical metallic plates. The distinguished physician at this manifest indication of a deranged mind advised that Daguerre be quietly sent to a lunatic asylum. Two months later the world was astonished to learn that human shadows had been actually caught and preserved in pictures called from the man who first executed them daguerreotypes, and there are few families which cannot produce from some hidden source samples of this first photographic work. The



French Academy in 1839 well crowned the supposed lunatic of the year before the father of photography, which has seen such marvellous developments, till, according to Prof. Percival Lowell, it reveals canals on the planet Mars, whose geometric regularity, and whose nice articulation at the junctions, prove the existence there of a high order of intelligent, constructive life. This fine art also catches on sensitive plates impressions of hitherto undiscovered worlds in the stellar spaces, as the very skies are photographed. In that initial success of the early half of the preceding century, another difficulty had been overcome, another stone had been rolled away and sat upon in the progress of humanity.

Hervey's discovery of the circulation of the blood was discredited; Franklin's announcement of the identity of lightning with electricity was derided, though the outcome has been a succession of miracles; Stevenson's project for travelling by steam, by railroad, was at the outset hooted by the British House of Commons; the preliminary disclosures as to the telegraph and telephone and phonograph and wireless despatching were received with incredulous shakes of the head and with derisive comments. But all these stones lying before the door of this and that chamber of hidden mystery have been removed. We, who a few years ago pronounced aerial navigation to be a dream of fools, can now ride with the

lunatics through the air over houses and trees, while we glorify the inventors as the lords of creation, and while also we feel that we were the foolish ones for being such doubters. Man's conquest of what only recently was the exclusive element and domain of the birds makes us recognize that he *is* but little lower than the angels. We ought to realize what our capabilities are, and we ought to be stimulated so to live as not to fail of the immortal destiny which can be ours. It doth not yet appear, we are taught, what we shall be. There can be through the ever living One an unfolding of our powers to all eternity. We can be among those who become partakers of the Holy Ghost, and who taste the good word of God, and, says an apostle, "the powers of the age to come." In order to this, every temptation to wrong, every solicitation to an irreligious life, should be resisted and mastered. The difficulties in the way of living the Christian life may seem insuperable, they may loom up in the pathway like great stones, but the indomitable spirit that has overcome these along natural lines should say of spiritual obstacles what Napoleon said of the mountains barring his advance to Italy, "There shall *be* no Alps," and there *were* none, and *shall* be none in the future to such courage.

2. We are to consider also the *moral* triumphs which can be and have been won. The power of God and of man working in harmony with Him has

appeared in the progress of the Gospel, as well as in the more material progress that has so far engaged our attention. William D. Howells the author, in his "Altruria," says that in our national history there have been several changes in the type of man to whom greatness has been ascribed. From the Revolution, for a considerable time onward, the statesman filled the public eye. Then literature monopolized the attention, and Longfellow and such as he came to the front. The war of the rebellion enthroned the soldier, the general, and only a military man could aspire to the Presidency. Finally, he said, there has come the era of fabulous fortunes, and the millionaire is now king, money rules the nation. There is a certain amount of truth in these successive stages, that are noted, of our national development, but it is to be hoped that the type of manhood soon to follow shall be that in which Christian character is dominant. Indeed if we take a comprehensive view of the course of human events, we see that Howells was not altogether correct, we are struck with the fact that Christianity is already in a large way dominating the world.

There is recalled the significant observation of Gibbon, that enemy of Christianity, with reference to the first three centuries of our era ; his memorable words were these: "A pure and humble religion gently insinuated itself into the minds of men, grew up in silence and obscurity, derived new vigour from

opposition, and finally erected the triumphant banner of the cross on the ruins of the Capitol. Nor," he continues, "was the influence of Christianity confined to the period or to the limits of the Roman Empire. After a revolution of thirteen or fourteen centuries, that religion is still professed by the nations of Europe, the most distinguished portion of human kind in arts and learning, as well as in arms. By the industry and zeal of the Europeans it has been widely diffused to the most distant shores of Asia and Africa; and by means of their colonies has been firmly established from Canada to Chili, in a world unknown to the ancients." That is all very true. Never did a *friend* more eloquently sketch the triumphs of Christ, who ascended the throne of an empire declining to its fall, and who sat victor thereon. Every obstacle to the establishment of His principles in the European States that subsequently rose, and in the other continents that are being steadily Christianized, has been rolled away, until now there is confessedly no such all-pervasive influence as that emanating from the Gospel.

Whether the Apostate Julian exclaimed at last, "O Galilean, thou hast conquered," whether that was his dying testimony or not, it was the truth. When this Emperor with some show of success proceeded to revive pagan worship and to dethrone Christianity, it was sneeringly asked, "What is the Galilean carpenter doing now?" The sufficient an-

swer was, that the Carpenter of Nazareth was "making a coffin," the coffin of Julian's greatness and of his system of paganism, and it was even so. His imperial majesty might have been a ruler famous and not infamous in history, had it not been for the stand he took against the rising power of the Christian religion, before which he went ignominiously down. The Carpenter is still making the coffins of all opposers and of all opposition. Every stone in the way of the coming of His kingdom is being summarily removed.

Our subject has not only a general but also a very personal bearing. There are foes not only without but also within. Our own evil propensities should be dealt with vigorously, till *they* are utterly subdued, and very realistically "sat upon." Paul with a similar idea talked about keeping "the body under," as if one should get another down and sit upon him, and he spoke of *mortifying the members*, fairly pounding the offenders. Not that we should go to the extreme of monasticism, which was unnecessarily severe with the human. Jerome, for instance, carried self-mortification too far, when he groaned over his sinfulness in that he was naturally fond of the classics, in our judgment not a very serious offense. He once felt himself to be face to face with the Judge of all the earth, who, to his faltering plea that he was a Christian, was made by his distorted imagination to thunder out, "Thou liest, thou art a Ciceronian, not

## 114 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

a Christian; for where thy treasure is, there is thy heart." Then he endeavoured to dissuade another from reading classical literature, as he said, "What has Horace to do with the Psalter? Virgil with the Gospels? Cicero with the Apostles?" But the great Monk outgrew these abnormal views and this narrowness, himself afterwards quoting freely from Roman and Greek writers, while he left to the world that literary monument, the Latin Vulgate, that translation of the Bible into the common language in his day of the people.

There is sometimes yet a sort of monastic severity, as something entirely innocent is condemned by a strained and morbid conscience. Abstinence from meat during the Lenten season, or from a harmless recreation, or something else of a similar kind, is rigorously exacted of the Christian. We, however, need not worry over imaginary sins, when there are so many that are real to engage our most strenuous efforts for their subjugation. Gregory of Nazianzus, who is revered as one of the best of the church fathers, saw the essential thing, when to cure himself of speaking too much and too harshly he devoted one whole Lent to silence, that his tongue might learn its place. Abstinence from speech might be better for us now than refraining from this or that which may be quite immaterial, but which may be censoriously judged by some. Hasty and inconsiderate criticism is a stone to be rolled away and sat

upon very hard, if it is to be entirely overcome. Gregory himself had suffered and he knew whereof he was speaking in this respect. When even in his declining years he retired from the activities to which he long had been given, and when he found enjoyment in his garden with its cooling water and with its delightful shade, he was charged by an ascetic with living in luxury. His life was simplicity itself, and yet had its critic.

We want no monastic severity, but we do want to be severe with real sins, with unchristian judging, with displays of temper, and with whatever else is alien to the mind of Christ. Our natural quickness to resent an injury, our sharpness of speech, or some other besetting sin, may be hard to get rid of, it may lie before us like a great stone, but with the aid of the Master it can be rolled away, and actually sat upon in the completeness of our victory. However difficult the situation, we can be masters thereof, and we can enter into the spirit of Henley, when he wrote :

“ Out of the night that covers me,  
Black as the pit from pole to pole,  
I thank whatever gods may be  
For my unconquerable soul.

\* \* \* \* \*

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

## IX

### How the Forgotten Past May Contribute to Our Future Success

**A**CCOMPLISHMENT is not the achievement solely of the present. Victory is never the product of the moment. The forgotten past repeatedly contributes to our future success. Seeking again a Scriptural embodiment for our thought, as we steadily have been doing, there comes to mind an incident in David's life. When he defeated Goliath, he drew the fallen giant's own sword from its sheath, and with it he cut off his prostrate enemy's head. He thereupon carefully laid the weapon away as a kind of sacred trophy. He seems afterwards to have forgotten all about it, and where it was. But there came a crisis in his life, when it unexpectedly came forth to his help.

He was fleeing from King Saul, who had determined upon his death. He fled from the enraged monarch in such haste that there was no time to get any armour. He was absolutely defenseless. In his flight he arrived at Nob so hungry that the priest there was induced to give him some of the holy shew-bread. With his appetite satisfied he next inquired of the friendly priest if there was not lying



about an unused weapon which he might have, and the reply was that there was nothing except Goliath's sword, which the refugee himself had in the past taken from the giant, and which was kept sacredly wrapped up as a precious memorial of a signal triumph. That information brought from David the well-known words, "There is none like that; give it me." He had forgotten all about the weapon having been laid up, and he certainly had never expected to use it again, but here in an emergency it, so to speak, sprang to his need from its scabbard behind the ephod where it had long lain. That is just the thing, said the warrior, as if in recognition of an old friend. In every conquest of ours there is laid up that which may for a while sink out of memory, but which at some time or another serves our purpose again, coming in unexpectedly to fortify us when we are in the midst of peril. So that each triumph helps us sooner or later some other to win.

I. First, this truth applies along natural lines. The Northmen, for instance, would never have spread the fame of their name so widely had they not long inured themselves to the hardships of the sea. Steadily they built up their naval power, venturing farther and farther over the ocean wilds, each voyage helping them in another of wider sweep. And therefore more than a thousand years ago Charlemagne, looking out over the blue Mediterranean and seeing their galleys gliding over its sur-

## 118 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

face, is said to have wept, because he saw in these alien but enterprising people coming from afar a spirit of conquest, which was ominous for his descendants. And he was right in his forecast of the future from what he saw in his day. Those sea kings, or Northmen, did afterwards establish themselves in the realm of his successors, in northern France which accordingly was named Normandy. Our proud *English* ancestors were compelled to pass under their yoke. Canute, who sat on the beach at Southampton and pretended to order back the rising tide, was a Danish before he was an English king. He sat conqueror of England if not of the Ocean.

Then there was the Norman Conquest nearly a century later, when the celebrated battle of Hastings was fought. Who gained that victory over the English? William of Normandy, whose ancestor was Rollo, the sea king who came from the same north country. These people likewise discovered America 500 years before Columbus did. Why all this splendid history? Because each victory was followed up by another, each advantage gained stimulated to new effort. The whole was the result of a steadily cumulative process. The sword, with which one giant's head was severed, though laid aside it may be for a while, came into play for the overcoming of another Goliath. There was a subtle, though sometimes unrecognized, connection between each brilliant achievement and the humbler triumphs of the past.

Every voyager, availing himself of the knowledge and experience of his predecessor, must have said for substance, "There is nothing like that," while he swept out beyond the point already reached.

Take again nature laying up its coal formations. The rank vegetation that once luxuriated over swampy continents was practically forgotten. It lay buried beneath the accumulation of ages, but in the economy of the universe there came a period when fuel seemed likely to fail unless reserves were tapped. Unnumbered forests had been felled, the wood supply was becoming less and less, while with railroads and blast furnaces and immense factories in operation the demands were becoming enormously larger. As the need became increasingly urgent, suddenly there was revealed the hidden coal that centuries ago had been stored up, and the world cried, "There is none like that, give it me." Thereupon a mighty impetus was given to the progress of mankind in the development of material resources, which place this age far in advance of all the ages that have preceded.

The same principle operates in the growth of the physical man. A youth resolves to refrain from all sinful and even merely hurtful excesses. He admires young Hercules, who as a child falling asleep was awaked by two serpents, which, according to the classical story, glided into the room, "twisted their long coils round the cradle, and peered upon him with their cold, glassy eyes," while he grasped

the hissing creatures by their necks and choked them to death. The young person to-day, who wishes to become a Hercules in strength of character and in power of achievement, destroys at once that which at last biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder. He avoids *every* harmful bodily indulgence whereby disease is fastened upon more than one who goes into a mysterious decline, and who early falls a victim of his own sinful folly. Let one from the beginning keep absolutely free from the vices indicated, and from others that are similar, and he finds himself better equipped to fight life's battles. He may be brought down with sickness, but the doctor says that he has a good constitution which he can call to his help, and he responds, "Sure enough, there is nothing like that," and by the aid of an unimpaired physical organism he rallies and recovers, when another debilitated by habits which are too common goes down.

Or, he sees a fine opening for business, if only he had anything to invest. Has he accumulated the necessary funds? He looks over his bank account, the savings of years, and yet only the equivalent of what others have wasted on foolish indulgences, and with a great leap of heart he says, "It is sufficient, there is none like that, give it me." He thus becomes a man of means and of influence and of character, while others fritter away all these. No victory over sin and self is lost, there is invariably laid up a

Goliath's sword, which may temporarily pass out of mind, but which in time of need proves a most useful weapon. Every sin against the body is so much spiritual impairment also, and every conquest over what Paul calls the flesh brings a fresh increment of power for other conflicts that are sure to follow.‡

2. A second application of the truth under consideration may be made to the intellectual life. The sentiment of the young should ever be, We ought to do our best along mental lines, and we *will* seek the best equipment possible in this respect, with the assurance that the improvement of present opportunities will not be lost, however blind we may be now to the future availability of the knowledge and discipline received. There is sometimes an outcry at the uselessness of studies that are disliked. They will never be of any practical value, we say. We carry this rebellious spirit even into college, where we ought to know better. We will burn "Conic Sections," or we will bury Greek to show the contempt in which we hold the mastering of this language. But not infrequently what is acquired as part of a regular curriculum or in the course of the ordinary pursuit of knowledge, does come into unexpected and very practical use.

Prescott on hearing Ticknor give some lectures on Spanish literature was thereby influenced to study the Spanish tongue. The fruitful result of this he did not anticipate at the time, but he was thus intro-

duced to historic researches, which led up to the production of his memorable works, "Ferdinand and Isabella," "The Conquest of Mexico," and "Philip the Second." When he wished to satisfy himself on some controverted point in history, how gladly he must have said, Here is where my knowledge of Spanish gained as a pastime or as a study of youth comes in to help me. As he consulted the archives of libraries in Spain, he would recall his Spanish with the exultant remark, "There is none like that; give it me," while he accomplished what he could not have done with his English alone. But even if our mental training does not always issue in anything practical, it gives us a discipline which is invaluable. The young person, who can hold himself firmly to a distasteful study till he masters the same, who is determined to stand high or at least creditably in his school, acquires a trait which will put him well to the front in the general world. Cæsar in crossing the Alps and in passing a small village of barbarians remarked, "For my part, I would rather be the first man among these fellows than to be second in Rome," and it was because he did become first in *Gaul* that he was enabled subsequently to take the same position in the imperial city on the Tiber, whence he ruled the whole Roman Empire.

There is rarely any such thing as genius in the common understanding of that term, for genius generally is only hard labour, it is, as Edison has said,

ninety-nine per cent. perspiration and only one per cent. inspiration, it is indomitable perseverance, making each victory count for another, utilizing past achievements for future triumphs. Daniel Webster himself, whose fine periods are often thought of as purely spontaneous and extemporaneous, elaborated them with great care, and wrote them out, or laid them up in memory, for use when they could be worked into one of his magnificent orations with appropriateness. That glowing sentence, which we have all admired, about England's drum-beat following the sun around the globe, this was studied and pruned till it assumed its present perfect shape.

Noah Webster, who brought out his "American Dictionary of the English Language," laboured for twenty years before he saw it completed. Naturally he trembled with excitement, on his own confession, when what has formed the groundwork of every *Webster* issued since was finished, when he wrote the last word. How did he build up that massive book? Word by word, making use of each bit of information gained to carry the work forward to completion.

The Elder Pliny, who perished in that eruption of Vesuvius which buried Pompeii and Herculaneum in 79 A. D., who became a great naturalist, and who was a voluminous writer, succeeded only by the utmost diligence. He was so industrious that at his meals he had a book read to him, and when one day a friend stopped the reader, who inadvertently had

mispronounced a word, and who was asked to correct the same, Pliny asked the person interrupting, "Did you not understand the word?" When the reply was in the affirmative, the reproof was, "Why then did you stop him? We have lost more than ten lines by this interruption." Pliny's genius was only a most diligent use of time.

Agassiz in our day rose to fame by the same application, step by step gaining his scientific lore. In proof of this we need only cite his conduct at a certain time when he could not use his eyes, which had been weakened by his unremitting studies. He had to remain in a darkened room, but he continued his work upon fossils by the use of his hands, and when his fingers lost their sensitiveness, he applied his tongue so as to determine all the lines that were so delicate.

So that the youth in school, and the man in business, and every one in his work needs to learn that application is what counts. Every time we cut off a giant's head we lay up a Goliath's sword, which temporarily may be a forgotten weapon, but of which we will some day say, "There is none like that; give it me." We should value the strength laid up in the mastery of every task as it comes to hand. For the time being we may not seem to be accomplishing anything, while yet we are. It is a suggestive picture which Mary Lamb gives of her literary brother Charles. She says that they both wrote at the same



table, and she represents him "groaning all the while and saying he can make nothing of it, which he always says till he has finished, and then he finds out he *has* made something of it." Of course he did, or we would not now have his inimitable essays whose reading is our delectation. The young, therefore, should make the most of their opportunities for improving the mind, since every mental acquisition will rise up in the future to bless them in the greater things they will be enabled to accomplish. God requires of them a right use of their time and talents, and they themselves will yet regret any failure to make the most of their early days. On the contrary, with faithfulness in youth they will be able to summon every mental acquirement to their aid in making a success of life in general. Of the tenacity of purpose gained in some intellectual task, of the knowledge acquired that will be serviceable, of the discipline which a stern application gave them, of every such acquirement, they will be able to say, That is just what we have needed time and again in life, when God was summoning us to do our best.

3. Once more, there is a distinctively religious view to be taken of this matter. Each time we go to church as reverent hearers and worshippers, there is put into our character a new element of strength. We are unconsciously fortified as against the day of temptation and trial. We cannot listen to the range of elevated topics discussed in the pulpit from week

## 126 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

to week for a succession of years without gaining much that is valuable. Supposing one is found in the sanctuary every Sunday from the age of ten to thirty. That would make twenty years of Sabbaths devoted to the culture of the soul, or three full years, or, counting out vacations, four school years, as much time as is spent in college. A single Lord's Day may seem to have no perceptible influence, its lessons may be quite forgotten, but the sum total of religious impressions received is very great, for there is the training of four collegiate years in God's university. In this way a matchless opportunity is afforded for becoming acquainted with the Bible, the Book of books. People do not realize what they are missing by neglecting this steady acquiring of Biblical knowledge. The acquisition of one Sunday may not be so very noticeable, but multiply this by what can be acquired through a conscientious use of all the Sabbaths in a lifetime, and there is no calculating the benefit that can be derived in enlarged conceptions of Scriptural truth and in a corresponding betterment of human lives. Let one use well each passing opportunity, and the cumulative outcome will be most gratifying.

He can again store his memory with the divine promises by learning a verse each day. A friend of mine had the habit of memorizing a golden text of Scripture, while he was dressing and making his morning toilet. He was like Archimedes the great

mathematician of antiquity, who said he could move the world had he a place to rest his lever. When he was taking his bath and was being anointed after the fashion of his day, he used to trace "geometrical figures," "diagrams in the oil on his body." In a similar manner we should be diligent in storing up the promises especially of Holy Writ. The one we learned to-day or next Sabbath may be forgotten for a while, as it lies unused in the memory, but there will come some crisis in life when we will need it, and by some providential association of ideas it will spring to our help in the emergency, as Goliath's sword, laid away in its wrapping, leaped from its scabbard for David when he was caught unarmed, and it will then be appreciated as never before. Such will be the fact with reference to every Scriptural truth which we may have acquired by redeeming well the time. Every spiritual acquisition that we may make, every giant that we may overcome, will leave in our possession a sword, which may be forgotten when all is tranquillity, but which will be our strong defense in some dire extremity. As surely as bodily strength comes from a continuous observance of hygienic laws, as certainly as mental force is developed by the usual educational processes, so will Christian enlargement follow systematic attention given to the religious.

The conclusion of the whole matter is, that past successes along every line will avail us much in the

## 128 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

future. We can go still farther and say, Our very failures can be made to serve us, if only we have the grace, the happy faculty, of learning from our mistakes. We can say with Tennyson :

“I hold it truth, with him who sings  
To one clear harp in divers tones,  
That men may rise on stepping-stones  
Of their dead selves to higher things.”

## X

### The Ministry of Angels

“**B**Y the help of Almighty God” is a truth of which almost every man, however self-reliant, acknowledges the need. But as to one phase of this assistance by divine grace, namely, through ministering angels, he is not so very clear. Practically he does not count much on any reinforcement from unseen spiritual sources of this kind. To be sure, he reads in his Bible this question, “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation?” He, however, is inclined to relegate to the realm of the fanciful the teaching that seems to be implied in the Scriptural interrogatory. Indeed in this matter he often is utterly sceptical:

1. Our discussion will first proceed from a general standpoint. Formerly, angels both bad and good were recognized as sustaining a close and active relation to this world. The stars were thought to be moved in their orbits by them, and all natural phenomena were attributed to the same superhuman agency. This has led the rationalist to consider them only poetical personifications of the forces of nature. Nor was it in the natural realm alone that

they were supposed to act. They were likewise believed to be instrumental in shaping human history and in ordering daily events, and it depended upon the sort of result whether the moving spirit was bad or good, although the evil angels were more frequently called demons or devils. Luther said: "Let no man doubt when a fire breaks out which consumes a village or a house, that a little devil is sitting there blowing the fire to make it greater."

Witchcraft, which the most intelligent persons two and three centuries ago accepted as real, was this evil angelic influence. The conservative Dr. Charles Hodge of Princeton has told us that "the most enlightened men of Europe" gave credence to it in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Thousands were put to the most cruel deaths because they were regarded as being in league with evil spirits or bad angels. The execution at Salem, Massachusetts, of nineteen persons on this account will ever stand out in history as the culmination of the long and ghastly tragedy. Those were times when the very atmosphere was peopled with spirits, and *nothing* was done without their agency, and good angels and bad were everywhere present. Their influence was vastly exaggerated. God was crowded out of the universe by the innumerable divinities and demons. The former were worshipped, and the latter were feared. Angel-worship and witchcraft, both of which the Bible condemns, became prevalent even in the Church.

Then came a mighty reaction. The spiritualistic bent of mind was followed by the materialistic. We are disposed to laugh at the hobgoblins of the past, at Shakespeare's creation of the witch Ariel, which he made

“ To run upon the sharp wind of the north.”

We are inclined to resolve everything into natural force. We have become very Sadducees, saying with them that there is “ neither angel, nor spirit.” To this position the extravagances and follies of modern Spiritualism have assisted in driving our minds. For one reason and another we have drifted away from the doctrine of the Scriptures, which teach us that we “ wrestle not against flesh and blood,” but “ against the spiritual hosts of wickedness ;” not against the human but against the superhuman, against hosts which march and countermarch in the air above us, making onslaughts on the soul from time to time. What are the mysterious and sometimes unaccountable uprisings of evil within us but suggestions whispered to us by malignant spirits about us, marshalled and led on by him who is called by an apostle “ the prince of the power of the air ” ? We are surrounded by an atmosphere, which is a vehicle of communication, and through this medium would seem to be communicated to us by the prince of the air and his legions sinful thoughts and desires.

Such certainly appears to be the representation of

## 132 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

Holy Writ, that evil spirits, bad angels, are all around us to tempt the soul. In this materialistic age it is well to get back to Scriptural ground, although this does not mean the extreme of two and three centuries ago, when the devils seemed to receive more attention and to have more power than God Himself. Moreover, while evil spirits thus approach us, good angels likewise come, with noble suggestions. Why do holy aspirations and promptings to the right at times rise so strangely and as it were unbidden in our hearts? God may have sent His angels forth to stir within us just such feelings, to do precisely this service for us who are heirs of salvation. This is a truth, which should bring consolation to us, but with our materialistic tendency and trend of thought, and in the tremendous reaction from the angel-worship of some, we have ruled angels almost if not altogether out of our creed. If their agency occurs at all to our minds, it is with no positive comfort. We are as uncertain as the venerable but doubting Dr. Archibald Alexander, who in prayer is said to have used this expression, "We thank Thee, O Lord, for the ministry of angels—probably." Their blessed ministry, however, would seem to be not only a probability, but a Scriptural certainty. We can consistently come to the position of Bishop Phillips Brooks, who lamented that belief had faded away "in a universe all full of unseen forces." He thought that the absurdities of witchcraft and the like had



caused this. "When men can get rid of the paraphernalia of ghost stories and the false supernatural," he once said, "I do believe that we shall see a great restoral of healthy belief in spiritual presences," and he preached a sermon with the title, "Unseen Spiritual Helpers."

2. We will now turn to various specific teachings of Holy Writ. Our appeal will be "To the law and the testimony," for we must move carefully here, not along the lines of reason, but of inspiration and of positive revelation. Note, for instance, what Christ's experience was. When He was tempted in the wilderness among the wild beasts, when He fasted till He was weak and faint from hunger, when after His intense spiritual conflict He realized the nervous drain that had been made upon every fiber of His being, who at that critical moment "came and ministered unto Him"? His mother, the tenderly sympathetic Mary? No. John, who had but recently baptized Him for His great work? No. Who, then? "Angels," says the record. When at the midnight hour He went out to the garden of Gethsemane, when He kneeled in prayer under the shadow of the olive tree whose gray leaves glittered in the moonlight, when in His agony there started from every pore of His body, not the cold sweat of approaching death, but the red perspiration of redeeming blood, who appeared in the midst of that amazing scene "strengthening Him"? The dis-

## 134 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

principles? No, He had left most of them at the entrance to the garden, where they were to stay while He went to pray some distance beyond. But He took with Him farther on Peter, James and John, and *they* must have been with Him to strengthen Him; *were* they? On the contrary, they had fallen asleep. Who did go to Him with sustaining influence? "An angel from heaven," is what we read in the sacred narrative. In the life of Christ, therefore, we do have the ministry of angels. But He was God, is a very natural demurrer that is entered, He moved amid the celestial in a way we do not. The miraculous entered into His experience, and the day of miracles, according to the belief of most, is past. That is granted, but the day of angelic ministration has not gone.

We are taught by Paul in his first epistle to the Corinthians that angels are present when believers are met for worship. He exhorted the Christian women of Corinth to appear veiled in the public assembly, to observe the proprieties of the time; why? "Because of the angels," are his exact words. Hence Chrysostom in commenting on this says, "Knowest thou not that thou standest with angels? With them thou singest, with them thou praisest; and wilt thou stand laughing?" This distinguished Greek preacher of the fourth century urged proper decorum in the house of God on the same ground that Paul of the first century urged it, namely, because the holy

angels were present. Theodoret and others anciently, and Alford and others more recently, give this same interpretation. Those bright beings from above are all about us in a church service; "the whole air is full of them," as said the golden-mouthed orator of old.

Nor are they with us simply when we are gathered together. The Master said, "See that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father." That is, by these messengers they have ready access *to*, and they have great influence *with* God, and they are not therefore to be lightly esteemed. The reference apparently is, not only to children literally, but to all disciples, who are Christ's little ones, and the intimation here as elsewhere would seem to be that Christians have guardian angels. They guard possibly against accident and danger. Doddridge once dreamed that he had gone to heaven. He was ushered into a room, where soon he noticed that depicted on the walls were scenes in his life from the cradle to the grave. One picture was that of himself falling from a horse, and that had actually occurred on earth. At the time it was a complete mystery to him and everybody why he was not crushed, and how he could have escaped with his life. Now the secret was disclosed. The picture showed an angel keeping the horse from falling directly and with full weight upon the thrown rider. This may not have been all a dream; it could

## 136 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

easily have represented a fact, for are there not guardian angels? Says the Psalmist, "He will give his angels charge over thee."

They are present to help when we are tempted; they are with us to strengthen in sorrow and in every time of need. How came we successfully to resist such and such a temptation? We almost yielded, but we did not; why? Because a good angel whispered to us a better purpose. Or in the presence of death, we were on our knees in a very agony of prayer, and it seemed as if we could not possibly drink the cup pressed to our lips, but suddenly we felt reconciled, and we could say with a quiet resignation, "Not my will, but thine, be done." Whence came this strength? Exactly where Christ's came from: "There appeared unto him an angel from heaven, strengthening him." There is where time and again we derive our help, from heavenly visitants.

Helen Hunt Jackson, author of "Ramona," not only a novelist but a poetess, has said:

"Oh, not with any sound they come, or sign,  
Which fleshly ear or eye can recognize;  
No curiosity can compass or surprise  
The secret of that intercourse divine  
Which God permits, ordains, across the line,  
The changeless line which bars  
Our earth from other stars.  
But they do come and go continually,  
Our blessed angels, no less ours than his;

\* \* \* \* \*

Whenever in some bitter grief we find,  
All unawares, a deep, mysterious sense  
Of hidden comfort come, we know not whence ;  
When suddenly we see, where we were blind ;  
Where we had struggled, are content, resigned ;  
Are strong where we were weak,  
And no more strive nor seek,—  
Then we may know that from the far glad skies,  
To note our need, the watchful God has bent,  
And for our instant help has called and sent,  
Of all our loving angels, the most wise  
And tender one, to point to us where lies  
The path that will be best,  
The path of peace and rest.”

The angels do take a deep and very personal interest and part in human struggle and victory. There is joy in their presence, we are taught, over one sinner that repenteth.

Nor do they simply stand afar off and applaud our efforts to do better. They may sweep their golden harps before the throne, they may make heaven's arches ring with their praise, but they also come down to this globe of ours, and speak encouragement to those who are heirs of salvation. Jacob's ladder still remains, with its foot on earth and its top in the sky, “ and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it,” said the matchless teacher. There is free communication between the other world and this, and the procession of radiant messengers on their errands of mercy is never broken. There is good cheer for us here. In the midst of temptation, in

## 138 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

the midst of trouble, in all the trying emergencies of life, "The angel of the Lord," we are authoritatively assured, "encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them." The angelic hosts encircle us round and round. Said Spenser long ago of these beings, fairer than his Fairy Queen :

"How oft do they their silver bowers leave,  
To come to succour us that succour want !

\* \* \* \* \*

They for us fight, they watch, and duly ward,  
And their bright squadrons round about us plant ;  
And all for love, and nothing for reward ;  
O, why should heavenly God to men have such regard !"

In the great Christian conflict we feel sometimes as if the battle would go against us ; the enemy presses us hard on every side, and threatens to break in upon us at this point and at that, and we are discouraged and disheartened. We forget that the angels are encamped about us, like line within line of soldiers standing guard. What if we do not see them? They are about us all the same. A clergyman-poet of my acquaintance has written :

"By every troubled soul some angel stands  
And stretches forth her gentle, pitying hands."

Milton himself said :

"Millions of spiritual creatures  
Walk the earth, both when we wake, and when we  
sleep."

These are entirely Scriptural conceptions.

That was an impressive Biblical scene in the career of Elisha. The king of Syria had determined to make the prophet a prisoner. He heard where the man of God was, and in the night when his movements could not be detected, he marched his army to the city where Elisha with his servant was sojourning. The servant arose early in the morning, and what was his consternation to find that they were surrounded with a mighty host, with horses and chariots, and in dismay he cried out, What shall we do? The prophet perfectly calm replied: "Fear not: for they that are with us are more than they that are with them." Then came the climax: "And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw; and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." If our eyes were not "holden," if they were opened, we doubtless would see *ourselves* encircled by angelic hosts. With our imperfect vision, with our lack of spiritual discernment, we do not actually see the flaming spirits, we walk by faith and not by sight, but their ministrations are none the less real. Sometimes we do feel their subtle touch, and we hear them in the still small voice that speaks to our inner heart.

A last incident that will be mentioned is connected with the death of Lazarus. He was, we read, "carried away by the angels into Abraham's bosom." That

pictures a happy termination to the righteous life. It portrays a heavenly escort through the gates of pearl into the streets of gold. It reminds us of Bunyan's delightful imagery, of his Christian and Hopeful, who on leaving this world were compassed about, says the dreamer, "round on every side; some went before, some behind, and some on the right hand, and some on the left (as if to guard them through the upper regions), continually sounding as they went, with melodious noise, in notes on high; so that the very sight was to them that could behold it as if heaven itself was come down to meet them." With these celestial beings thus attending us through life and up to the very last, we surely can appreciate their service. They will not usurp in our affections the place of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, but in their subordinate position, as agents of the divine, they will bring us nearer to God Himself, and our sentiment will be,

"Angels to *beckon* me  
Nearer, my God, to *Thee*,  
Nearer to *Thee*."



## XI

### The Weaving of Life's Web and the Engraving of Character

**T**HE greatest problem of all to face is the simple *living* of the Christian life. In order to this, the average man of to-day is too much impressed with the spectacular. He is not altogether like those of the first century, who wanted a "Lo, here," and a "Lo, there," and who thought the kingdom was to come "by observation," whereas they were divinely taught that it was something "within you," in the heart. Shakespeare does not give the best representation of life when he says :

"All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players :  
They have their exits and their entrances."

Says the same dramatist in another place :

"A stage where every man must play a part."

But the figure of the theatre is not the best that can be used for inciting to right living. One will be more encouraged if he can think of himself not in dramatic but in humbler aspects. A religious life is not a matter of "acting," in the theatrical sense, so

much as of weaving and of engraving. These are Scriptural metaphors, and we are to see their fitness in setting forth the facts.

1. It is Isaiah who said, "I have rolled up like a weaver my life; he will cut me off from the loom." In Grecian and Roman literature, in classical story, three Fates were represented as presiding over human destiny. One held a distaff and spun the thread of life, another twirled the spindle or directed all the movements, and the third with shears cut off what had been woven. King Hezekiah is made by Isaiah to give a clearer and truer conception of life, when he compares it to a web which each weaves for himself, rolling it up as he proceeds, while it remains with God to cut it off. *Our* concern should be for the make-up of the web.

We are too inclined to be indulgent with ourselves, to excuse our lapses. We say, We have such manifold infirmities, so many inborn weaknesses, that we cannot very well help ourselves. We speak apologetically of poor, frail human nature, and we call it a bundle of contradictions. We are too easy-going as to the interweaving of evil. With Shakespeare we say rather nonchalantly:

"The web of our life is of a mingled  
Yarn, good and ill together."

The idea is that vice is a necessary complement of virtue, that our life must be a mixture.

Scripture, however, tells us differently. In Leviticus we read, "Neither shall there come upon thee a garment of two kinds of stuff mingled together." In Deuteronomy the command is, "Thou shalt not wear a mingled stuff, wool and linen together." A strange prohibition is that, is it not? What could it have meant? It must have had some significance in the pictorial religion of the Hebrews. It was one of many Biblical types for the conveyance of truth. It was an exterior representation of something interior. The unmixed garment which was to be worn pictured what our moral robing should be, there should be unmixedness of character. This is only another way of saying that we cannot serve God and Mammon, that saints should be separate from sinners, that there should be a clear line of demarcation between the two. In the web of life should be the pure linen, and no wool, which is of animal origin. There should be spirituality unmingled with carnality or worldliness. When Ezekiel would draw a distinction between the holy and the profane, he says of the former, "They shall be clothed with linen garments; and no wool shall come upon them." Then he adds by way of explanation, "they shall not gird themselves with anything that causeth sweat." In the sultry climate of the orient, woolen which caused perspiration became a symbol of uncleanness, and therefore was not to be worn. The outer garment was to typify the inner life; wool and linen were not

to be interwoven. The web of character was to be kept "unspotted from the world." That this is the truth conveyed is still more manifest from that passage in the Revelation, where the heavenly attire of the bride is described: "And it was given unto her," says the divine John of the purified Church, "that she should array herself in fine linen, bright and pure; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints."

Is our life being woven as exclusively as it should be of righteous acts, or is there a good deal of wool in the web? Take the simple matter of worship on the Sabbath, and there is not apt to be that singleness of service which ought to be. "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God," is the Scriptural direction. That is, we are to give our mind to what we are going to do. We are to go to the Lord's house on His day with some preparation of heart. We are not to go, if we would get the most possible out of the hour, from the reading of a secular newspaper, our thoughts being all occupied with the things of the world. We are not to go chafed with the cares of the household. We are not to go fretted with business. We are not to go in a soul-sweat because of a spiritual investiture of wool. We are to be arrayed in cool linen, in a religious calmness of spirit.

Our attention is too likely to be distracted in the very temple of God. We sit in the sanctuary itself

and spin out thoughts of a wholly worldly nature, or at any rate our devotions are too much mingled with the things of the earth. On the Sabbath at least we should give our undivided attention to the kingdom, we should seek it first and supremely. How is it with the web we are weaving? We know that the shuttle is moving very swiftly, and we ought to consider very seriously the nature of the garment we are preparing for ourselves, whether its warp and woof are those of the garment of salvation, of the robe of righteousness. We may be weaving a web of "mingled stuff, wool and linen together," as the inspired writer says, or our web of life may be, as the great dramatist says, "of a mingled yarn, good and ill together."

Is there this mingled yarn, this mingled stuff in *our* life? A poet has said:

"All day, all night, I can hear the jar  
Of the loom of life, and near and far  
It thrills with its deep and muffled sound,  
As tireless the wheels go always round.

"Busily, ceaselessly goes the loom,  
In the light of day and midnight gloom.  
The wheels are turning early and late,  
And the woof is wound in the warp of fate.

"Click, clack! there's a thread of love wove in:  
Click, clack! another of wrong and sin!  
What a checkered thing this life will be  
When we see it unrolled in eternity!"

## 146 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

Are there in our life these commingling, opposing elements? Does our character show such an admixture of traits? People would cherish the Christian hope, while yet they acknowledge that they are not doing just right in some respects. They are neglecting little duties, they are committing what seem to be trivial sins. But Jude speaks of "hating even the garment spotted by the flesh." We should seek to have upon us no marks or stains even of sin. We should avoid the very appearance of evil, making our life as nearly perfect as possible.

There are many *imperfect* places in the web that is being rolled up, and that ultimately is to be cut off. Here is a sin of omission, and there another of commission. Here is a secret thought which was evil, and there is a spoken word which ought to have been left unsaid. None of these is lost, being rolled up in the past. The record that is unrepented of cannot be changed. Pilate was uttering a great and melancholy truth when he said of a requested alteration in the inscription over the cross, "What I have written I *have* written." He would have been glad afterwards to have had all of his unhappy connection with the crucifixion effaced, but there it was, part of his life as a Roman governor, and history still repeats in the words of the creed, "suffered under Pontius Pilate." There is no getting away from that damning record. It has survived through nineteen centuries, and eternity cannot blot it out. We think that our

unforgiven sins will be forgotten, do we? They never can be, they are woven into the warp and woof of our character. Those of a year or of five years ago may be turned in out of sight, but the web is to be cut off and unrolled some day. After death is the judgment, when there shall be disclosed "every hidden thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil." The books of human destiny are to be opened, and all that has been written is to be read. We are to be judged for the deeds done in the body. The thoughts and intents of the heart are to be discerned, and all things are to be "laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do." The web of our entire life is to be unrolled for the inspection of the Judge.

Such considerations should lead us to endeavour to keep out all admixture of wool, and to weave in only the pure linen, saying with a certain poetess :

"I will weave it fine, I will weave it fair ;  
And ah ! how the colours will glow, said she ;  
So fadeless and strong, I will weave my web,  
That perhaps it may live when I am dead."

Their works do follow those who die in the Lord, who have lived a good life, and in view of the judgment to come, of the minute examination to be made of the warp and woof of our whole life, we should be as intent upon working out our salvation as Archimedes was in solving his mathematical problem. He

## 148 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

was so absorbed in this that he did not know when the city of his nativity was taken by the Romans. When the threatening sword was raised above his head, he only asked the soldier, says Plutarch, "to hold his hand a little while, that he might not leave what he was then at work upon inconclusive and imperfect." All the same he was cut off before he had finished his problem. We should settle the question of what constitutes right living and of our eternal destiny *before* we are summoned hence. We should not be in the *midst* of that great problem, What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul? We should have been working that out all through life, if we would be found at last with the wedding garment on, in that spiritual vestment, in that religious character, growing out of years of trust and prayer and activity. Then shall we be among those of whom it is said, "Which did not defile their garments, and they shall walk with me in white." The unrolling of the web of life in that event will give us only satisfaction, for it will be all that it should be, it will be washed white. The loom will stop running, because the web will be complete, like Christ's robe, which, says John, "was without seam, woven from the top throughout." With such a glorious result attained, the movement of the weaver's shuttle will cease naturally, and one will come to his end like him of whom Dryden sings so charmingly :



“Till, like a clock worn out with eating time,  
The wheels of weary life at last stood still.”

Even though trying experiences may be ours, the patterns woven need not be dark. On the contrary, they can even then gleam with bright lines, provided only that we heed the divine summons: “See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern that was showed thee in the mount.” The truthfulness of Jean Ingelow's lines will then appear:

“ Your life is one, and in its warp and woof  
There runs a thread of gold that glitters fair,  
And sometimes in the pattern shows most sweet  
Where there are *somber* colours.”

2. We said in the beginning that life finds illustration not only in weaving, but also in engraving. This, too, gives a different and a more satisfactory representation of Christian living than that of any dramatic “acting” on our miniature stage. We speak of the shaping of *character*, which is from a Greek word meaning “to engrave.” This brings in the divine agency. Haggai portrays God as saying of His servant, “and will make thee as a signet.” Anciently the signet was of great value and importance. It often contained, with other devices perhaps, the name of the owner. Instead of subscribing with pen and ink, the custom used to be to affix one's seal. This instrument in a modified form is still employed in legal transactions and in matters of

## 150 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

state. The Seal of the County, or of the Commonwealth, or of the Country, is supposed to add binding force to the conveyance of property, or to the proclamation of a ruler. Kings of old had their seals, which gave the stamp of authority wherever impressed. Private citizens even had their signets, by which legality was imparted to any document that might be stamped.

What was thus universally used, and not exceptionally as now, meant a great deal more than it does at present. It was worn every day, suspended from the neck or arm, or set in a ring upon the finger. The pledge asked of Judah in patriarchal times was, Give me thy signet and thy cord; that is, the seal which he carried, and which hung from his person by a cord. The proud trophy sent to Carthage by Hannibal, after the great victory of Cannæ, was said to have been three bushels of rings gathered from the Romans he had slain. He had taken from the dead bodies the precious signet rings, which adorned the knightly hands of those who had fought their last battle. An Englishman of to-day congratulates himself upon being the fortunate possessor of the well-authenticated signet ring of Cheops, the builder of the Great Pyramid six thousand years ago. The one hundred thousand men, who are said to have wrought for years upon that prodigious pile which rose to the height of nearly five hundred feet and covered an area of about thirteen acres, probably felt the full force of

commands issued to them under the seal of that little finger ornament.

The signet, therefore, was something which was most valuable. It accordingly was made very early out of the most costly stones, engraved with all the skill of a perfected art in this respect. Of the exceedingly nice work done upon the breastplate of Aaron, it is said that the twelve precious stones, which glittered and flashed thereon, were engraved "like the engravings of a signet." That indicates the exquisite fineness of the workmanship. On emerald, amethyst, and diamond, and upon nine other precious stones were engraved the names, one by one, of the twelve tribes, which the High Priest was thus represented as bearing "upon his heart," when he appeared before God.

Now the soul is God's signet. When saved, He delights in it as in a precious stone, which has been cut and polished. He wears it, so to speak, upon His person, upon His arm, upon His hand, or upon His neck as it lies near His heart. Hence the significance of the prayer in the Song of Solomon, "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm," while in the prophet Jeremiah God speaks of one being a "signet upon my right hand." It is saved souls which thus shine and sparkle, and it is these which constitute the Lord's precious jewels, His "peculiar treasure." Of an ancient orator, who rivalled Demosthenes in eloquence, and who surpassed him in

## 152 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

character, his wife once spoke with special admiration. A visitor, says the historian, having "showed her all her rich ornaments, made of gold and set with jewels, her wreaths, necklaces, and the like," this response was called forth: "For my part, all my ornament is my husband, Phocion." But God antedated this beautiful thought when He said of a servant of His, "and will make thee as a signet."

Like the precious stone therein, the soul at the outset is found in the rough, and it has to be cut and polished. Take a diamond of the first water, which looks so much like a drop of clear spring water, and in the state of nature it is a comparatively rough pebble. It has to be subjected to the lapidary's art before it attains its lustrous beauty. So must the emerald and ruby and all the stones of their class. There must be scientific cleavages made. The various angles must be gotten just right. Revolving wheel and emery powder must do service to give the final finish. Months of labour, and sometimes two whole years of work, are expended upon a single diamond.

Before the soul can flash as God's signet, it must be brought out of the rough state of nature. It must be subjected to wondrous processes of grace. There is required, for instance, some deep cleavage of conviction. The defects caused by sin need to be cleared away. In order to this, the great Artist cuts straight into it with the sharp truth of His Word. He says, Thou hast sinned in deed, word, and thought. With

this discerning of the very intents of the heart, there is that which is "sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit." The whole being sometimes seems to be rent through and through by the awful consciousness of guilt. One feels his essential meanness, his great unworthiness. He is cut to the heart because of his manifold sins, and he longs to come into the beauty of Christ-like character. One of God's methods for preparing a soul to be His signet is by the cleavage which comes from conviction of sin.

There is also in human life what corresponds to the lapidary's wheel. There is many a turn of varying fortune; sometimes one is on the top, and again he is rolled under. He is prosperous, and then he meets with adversity. He is in the full flush of success, and again he knows what financial stringency is. It is the great Artist's wheel whirling him through the different experiences needful to develop the best character. God thus tries to make the life religious. Or He brings affliction and sorrow, which are like the fine emery powder, grinding upon the sensitive heart. A divine purpose is thereby answered. The perfectly smooth surface of a polished stone sometimes has to be roughened a bit, that definite lines and impressions may be made thereon. The soul, that has been roughened by the abrasion of trouble, is better fitted to receive the delicate engravings of God in what are called spiritual impressions.

## 154 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

In these several ways does God take a soul in rough, in a state of nature, and by the disciplinary, and by transmutations of grace, He makes it an engraved stone, fit to be worn as an ornament on His own hand. One can be brought after this fashion to shine to the glory of God. While perhaps adorning in a way society, there should be a distinctly Christian setting.

The empress of Russia wears a diamond, which is said long to have served as one of the eyes of a pagan idol. A person may be shining from some worldly standpoint, the eye of some idol, when he could be flashing with splendour, with bright religious character, as one of the great King's jewels. He was not created to remain in the dullness and imperfection of his natural state, but to be developed by the skill of the divine Artist into a bright ornament. In other words, he should become a shining light, a Christian radiating brightness, like a signet in which the owner takes infinite delight. Every conviction of sin, every reverse of fortune, every infliction of trouble, is designed to bring out the full beauty of the stone. Afflicted Zion is represented by Isaiah as saying that she was forsaken of God, who however assures her, "Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands," and "I will lay thy stones with fair colours."

The signet, however, is to be useful as well as ornamental, serviceable to others as well as beautiful in

itself. It was designed originally *to* seal, to make an impression. It is not sufficient to become simply professed Christians. Counterfeits are made of all the precious stones. There are regular manufactories of artificial gems, and the imitations cannot be readily detected, cannot easily be distinguished from the genuine, except by an adept. In the ring, in the circle of disciples constituting the Christian Church, are the real stones and also the artificial, are genuine and also counterfeit Christians. They seem to be of about equal brilliancy, but God sees the difference, and we can by close observation. The professed believer merely does no work, he is not living his religion, he is making no impress on others. He is not acting as a seal upon God's hand to make upon plastic natures religious impressions. He is not making others *feel* his Christianity, he is not living in such a manner that his acquaintances are taking knowledge of him that he has been with Jesus.

There *are* impressible natures, which we can influence, if we have real Christian character, if we are God's signet and not an artificial gem, if we are the Revelator's "white stone" whereon is written the "new name." We do not have to be any particular stone to act as a seal upon others. We may not be a "brilliant," a diamond, we may not have shining ability, we may not have resplendent talent, but we can be some one of the twelve gems, by which the different qualities of the twelve tribes were indicated.

## 156 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

We can do something for the Master. There is some one, over whom we can exert an influence for good, and upon whom we can place the stamp of our consecrated personality. We should endeavour to be the very diamond, with its cutting power and its flashing radiance, or if not that, some other stone such as He can use more or less effectively. God stands ready to make each of us just such an instrumentality for good, taking us in the rough and making us Christlike, and then using us to impress others religiously. He will not only bring out in *us* the perfected beauty of the precious stone, but He will give the Christian character thus formed such a favourable setting upon His own hand that we shall be able to influence and shape other lives. We can thus be not only ornamental, as Titus says, "adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour," but we can also be useful, contributing to the progress of the kingdom.



## XII

### The Silent Building of the Temple

**C**ONSPICUOUS in the world at present is the militarist type of man. He answers to the description of the "war lord." He is aggressive, brutally disregarding of the rights and feelings of others. Shakespeare seems to have him in mind when he writes :

"Man, proud man,  
Drest in a little brief authority,  
Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven  
As make the angels weep."

The modern man, in order to be masterful, need not be domineering. He need not ride rough-shod over others. He need not bluster. Indeed, in order to the ideal, a milder quality must enter into his make-up. He must be able to say with David, "Thy *gentleness* hath made me great." Our greatest dramatist endorses this Scriptural conception of strength of manhood when he says :

"His life was gentle, and the elements  
So mixed in him, that Nature might stand up  
And say to all the world, This was a man."

The unobtrusive, the unostentatious, is what we should seek. The building of character should be

## 158 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

like that of Solomon's temple, concerning which we have this record: "And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready at the quarry; and there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building." The growth in nature is gradual and quiet. Let one accustomed to the hubbub of the city go into the country, and how peaceful everything seems. There is no ringing of bells, no blowing of whistles, no clanging of hammers, no whirl of machinery. A solemn hush rests on the whole rural scene. There is quiet in the valleys, there is repose in the mountains. There is stillness in the woods, there is serenity in the sky. A solitary voice attracts attention, as the farmer speaks to his team. The silence is so marked that a hollow echo is noticeable. And yet mighty forces are at work, upbuilding the vegetable kingdom. There is being made to appear the blade, and the ear, and the full corn in the ear. There is being brought forth leaf, and flower, and fruit.

What a transformation again is wrought in nature by the succession of the seasons, and yet there is no noise. One of our little puffing road rollers makes more commotion than all the wheeling spheres moved by the hand of Omnipotence. It is the silent process that speaks most of power, and that most commands our admiration. Says John Burroughs of the vast ice-engine, which ploughs out huge val-

leys like the Yosemite: "A glacier is almost as silent as the slumbering rocks, and, to all but the eye of science, nearly as immobile, save where it discharges into the sea. It is noisy in its dying, but in the height of its power it is as still as the falling snow of which it is made." This author further says of the disintegrating forces of nature, silent and yet powerful, "They are grinding up the rocks everywhere—pulverizing the granite, the limestone, the sandstone, the basalt, between the upper and nether millstones of air and water, to make the soil, but we hear no sound and mark no change; only in geological time are the results recorded."

It is the same in history. The great building eras are the years of peace, and not those of war, and historians are increasingly recognizing this fact. They used to relate little more than the conflicts between alien races. They filled their pages with accounts of bloody struggles between hostile nations. They wrote almost exclusively of wars, and rumours of wars. Modern writers very fittingly are dwelling less upon the sanguinary, and are giving more attention to art, and architecture, and agriculture, and industrial growth, and advance in science, and progress in invention, and moral and religious development. They are telling less how people fought, and more how they lived. We are being reminded that the silent building going on during the years of tranquillity is more important and more to be desired than the

## 160 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

tumult of battle. We abhor the clash of arms that involves all the continents of the globe. We are learning to appreciate the substantial rather than the showy. We have come to admire the Augustan age of the Roman Empire, because then the temple of Janus was closed as emblematic of the fact that no wars were being waged, and because at that time appeared the Prince of peace on earth.

We are seeing more and more the glory of Solomon's reign, to which even Christ called attention, because under him the kingdom of Israel had rest from its adversaries, and because on that account there was time, and there was opportunity, for the development of the religious. The building of the temple is what specially made his administration glorious. David was divinely forbidden to erect the house of God, because he had been a man of war. This great and beneficent enterprise was left to Solomon, whose very name means "peaceful." He could and did enter into the true spirit for the erection of the edifice. He felt that it should go up without noise. Accordingly he had the timbers all hewn in their native forests that waved in primeval beauty and strength from the heights of the Lebanon range of mountains. He had the stones, enormous as they were, some of them measuring seventeen and eighteen feet in length when dressed,—he had all these prepared in quarries as distant as the forests, or deeply secluded underneath the city, within whose

excavated and hidden recesses modern tourists wander amid a profound silence. Not that noise was absolutely avoided. There must have been tumult enough in the forests and mountains and quarries, where the basal work was done. There 30,000 were employed to cut the timber. There 80,000 were hewers of stone. There 70,000 were porters. There was a regular army of labourers, and the ring of the axe and the sound of the hammer must have been incessant at Lebanon, and the air there must have been filled with din and confusion. But the actual rising of the walls at Jerusalem was in silence. As a poet has said :

“ Like some tall palm the noiseless fabric sprung.”

1. We can apply this truth, first, to the silent building of a church. Private differences of opinion should rarely be carried to the point of controversy and open collision. The peace of Zion should be maintained, even if individual views have to be held somewhat in check. The less agitation and discussion, the less accentuation of differences there may be, the better ordinarily. Most of us have ideas, which if aggressively expressed would antagonize, which it is not necessary sharply to define and urgently to press. We are stones in the rough, and we need hewing, we need to have some of the angles taken off, if from us collectively a beautiful and symmetrical temple is to arise.

For this reason we should be charitable rather than censorious as regards one another. Instead of assailing others or their views, we can well take ourselves in hand, we can search our own hearts, we can look for our own faults and defective conceptions. Then, as we become associated with others, we will recognize not only diversities of gifts but also of temptations and concepts and failures, and we will fit in better with those who are seen to be of like passions with ourselves and who yet are dissimilar. Let there be less strictures upon others and more private quarrying, more hewing at our own character, and they and we together will constitute what Peter calls a "spiritual house," and what Paul terms "a holy temple," "a habitation of God," "fitly framed together." That is what it is to be a church that grows silently, like Solomon's temple, without sound of axe or hammer, without the personal antagonisms which sometimes prove so destructive. We are to keep the axe and hammer, the hewing and the hammering, to their proper sphere, to their making of ourselves "living stones," or as the Psalmist says, "stones hewn after the fashion of a palace." Such stones, like sculptured pillars, will gracefully drop into their niches, will take their place in with the rest without a jar, and with the silence and peace that breathe in the great cathedral, whose tranquil calm is never broken by sound of any iron tool.

2. Silent building is needed in the home as well

as in the church. Business, for instance, does not go right. There are annoyances in the office or in the factory or in the store. Some one did not get his order filled satisfactorily. There has been complaint because goods were not delivered promptly. A customer, in buying an article, says some sharp and unjust thing, and that causes an angry retort of which the unpleasant recollection does not easily fade. A clerk makes a blunder, and gets things sadly mixed. There *are* these commercial and similar professional distractions. Carry such things home, and the whole household is disturbed. Irritation is made to reign there.

There may be times when it is proper to seek sympathy from the rehearsal of worries and troubles, but a daily, a constant turning over to the family of the perplexities and vexations incident to business or to our work is not healthful in its influence, is not promotive of the highest good. Many things should be rigorously kept to the counting room, or to the shop, or to the study. They cannot be shared with others to any advantage. They may even poison the whole domestic atmosphere, causing there a constant ferment which is destructive of all quietness of mind and serenity of living.

Or the difficulties may come from the other side of the house. The servant spoiled something, she broke a choice piece of ware. There was friction between the housekeeper and her help. Added to

## 164 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

all was the misbehaviour of children. This one did that, and another did something else. There was a good deal of disturbance the whole day, and at the evening meal it is all gone over, and the entire family is made unhappy. As a consequence the children scatter as speedily as they can, and the husband seeks relief in the club or in some other place of resort. Here, too, is it true that some things should be settled at the time, and by the parties directly concerned. Not that the head of the house should be unwilling to carry in part the burdens of domestic life, but things should not unnecessarily be put upon his shoulders. He should not be compelled, with his heavy outside responsibilities, to be a listener to chronic complaints. Let the hewing be done, let the chips be made to fly, if need be, in the quarry, in the nursery, in the kitchen, but do not let the spirit of these rule the whole house. When the family come together, let the pleasant and agreeable, so far as possible, be uppermost.

Petty vexations on both sides should be left in the quarry, in their proper place, and there should be brought to the building up of the home what would not break the holy calm and the peaceful silence of a temple. Let there not be sound of axe and hammer, but an atmosphere of repose and restfulness. There will have to be hewing to the line, there will have to be cutting and hammering, but out of it all should come characters that are by



divine grace perfected, and that are all the better prepared, because of trials, for making the symmetrical home. The chiselled and polished stones, those who have been properly disciplined, will drop noiselessly into their respective niches, combining to form the ideal household of faith.

3. Once more, there should be silent building in the case of the individual. There is a freedom of speech which is not Christian, which unnecessarily hurts the feelings of others, and excuses itself on the ground of being honest and frank, of speaking right out what one thinks. Criticism is freely passed upon others, and fraternal and friendly relations are thus disturbed. The plea often made is that a person might as well say the adverse thing as to think it, but this is a mistaken desire to be open and sincere. For the selfish purpose of getting the reputation of being blunt and outspoken, he will give his opinions about others in a way that cuts their sensitive souls to the quick.

We need to curb this propensity to which we are all so prone. We may keep up a terrible thinking, if you please, but we might better keep still oftener than we do. Von Moltke, the great general who planned the campaigns that humbled Austria and France and that secured German unity and supremacy, did not appear on the field, but quietly at home arranged all the details which proved so successful. Quite as wonderful as this was is the fact that though

## 166 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

he was a fine linguist and could write and speak ten languages, he yet was specially distinguished, we are informed, for being able to keep silent in all ten. How he ever could have done so is a mystery to us, who find it difficult to maintain a proper silence in one language. But then he was a great commander, and his greatness perhaps appeared more in his masterful self-control than in the military movements which he directed to such a successful issue. "Better," says Scripture, "is he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city."

An Athenian maiden, Lanæa, which means lioness, refused to reveal the names of her lover's accomplices in striking down a tyrant. She was put under torture, but still she held her tongue, and she died silent. A bronze lioness without a tongue long stood on the Acropolis to commemorate her fortitude even to the point of silence until death came to her relief, when many would have spoken. She in this respect is a good example for us to follow under less trying circumstances. We too easily yield to sharp and unwise expressions. If we must form harsh judgments, if we must hew to the line in our estimate of others, let it usually be in the quarry of our own minds, but when we come to express ourselves, let it ordinarily be in the way of what we can say in commendation.

Dr. Goodell, in his last years pastor of the largest Congregational Church in St. Louis, recorded a

## The Silent Building of the Temple 167

prayer which we should make ours, namely, "O Lord, help me never to speak of one person to another, save in respect to his virtues." If all would cease their uselessly critical remarks, those that do no good, for just a day, what a silence would fall upon the world, but it would be a most genial and delightful atmosphere in which all the Christian graces would spring up spontaneously. We promote our own religious growth by maintaining a judicious silence, whatever may be our thoughts. The expression of opinions confirms us in the same, and we thus acquire an excessively critical spirit which is not Christlike. We necessarily form opinions, and sometimes we should advance them vigorously even to the extent of denouncing individuals for cruel wrong and injustice, but oftener we should be discreetly reticent.

Among the divinities of classic times, the good and wise Numa, says Plutarch, "recommended to the veneration of the Romans one in particular, whom he named Tacita, the silent." We more frequently should be taciturn, walking in silence. The ancient writer just quoted says of Pericles, "Once, after being reviled and ill spoken of all day long in his own hearing by some vile and abandoned fellow in the open market-place, when he was engaged in the despatch of some urgent affair, he continued his business in perfect silence, and in the evening returned home composedly, the man still dogging him

## 168 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

at the heels, and pelting him all the way with abuse and foul language; and stepping into his house, it being by this time dark, he ordered one of his servants to take a light, and to go along with the man and see him safe home." He lighted homeward one who had abused him all day and all the way to his house at night. That is a pagan example worthy of Christian emulation, answering admirably to the Master's ideal, though reviled to revile not again.

We should learn to be patiently silent under exasperating circumstances, and especially should we ourselves refrain from the acrimonious. We should not throw off criticisms in the rough. We should trim them in our private quarry, till they lose all that they contain of asperity and of personal reflection and of venomous sting. Then as generally we speak only words of praise about others, our own Christian character will grow silently and beautifully in the considerate silence which we have maintained. We shall find ourselves steadily rising in the religious life, noiselessly and undemonstratively it may be, but none the less surely than rose the temple in silence, when the quarrying was all done out of sight and hearing.

The conclusion of the whole matter is that a certain silence is essential to the best development of the church, of the home, and of the individual, and that what hewing and hammering may be necessary should be in the hidden quarries. Even in these

secret recesses we should remember the watchful eyes of Him who is above. Phidias, the ancient Greek sculptor, polished the backs of his statues which stood against the temple walls, on the ground that if men did not see what was thus out of the public gaze, the gods saw all. We should be equally conscientious in the sight of the Omniscient. We should be silent builders for God, praying to the Father in secret over difficulties and deficiencies that only He need know, and that we should be glad to have Him know. He stands ready to help us in a quiet way to attain unto the perfection which will be finally reached, when the topstone of Christian character shall be laid amid the breathless attention of angels, who will break out into the applause of "Grace, grace unto it," only when the moral structure we have been rearing has been silently finished in heaven.

### XIII

#### Limited Though Ample Opportunities

**W**HEN we are urged to a life of Christian activity, we often excuse ourselves on the ground of lack of opportunity. There seems to be no conspicuous place where we can make our strenuous efforts count. We too frequently are looking for some open door, which will fairly challenge our highest capabilities. But the most active man who ever lived was accustomed to consider *limited* opportunities as entirely ample. What did the chief of the apostles write to the Philippians? Simply this: "Now I would have you know, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the progress of the Gospel; so that my bonds became manifest in Christ throughout the whole prætorian guard, and to all the rest." That was a cheerful view for Paul to take of what was certainly a cramped situation. His imprisonment, which hampered and restricted his movements, turned out to the benefit of the cause.

This is the way the matter worked: The soldier, to whom he was chained to-day, might be converted, and to-morrow be standing before the emperor as

one of the imperial guard, and thus some of "Cæsar's household" might be reached, as we are informed they were. Or soldiers, who had become Christians while guarding Paul, might be transferred, we will say, to Britain, and so carry the Gospel there, where indeed the wife of the Roman general in charge of that province *is* said to have become a convert. When Tacitus says that she was "accused of a foreign superstition," since this Latin historian termed Christianity a "superstition," this is evidence that she had become a disciple of Christ, not improbably through the influence of soldiers who had become Christians while acting as guard to Paul.

Through the same agency, it is not unreasonable to suppose that British princess may have been converted of whom the Poet Martial in the first century sang in these lines :

" Though British skies first beamed on Claudia's face,  
Her beauty far outvies the Latin race :  
E'en Grecian nymphs her form cannot excel,  
Or Roman matrons play the queen so well."

She is thought by some to have been the Claudia who joined Paul in salutations to young Timothy from Rome, where she may have been visiting at the time. She is alleged to have taught the apostle's principles to our benighted ancestors in England, her native country. Paul's chain, therefore, seems to have linked him, in the influence which he exerted,

with every part of the Roman Empire. His bonds resulted in "the progress of the Gospel," as he himself said, "throughout the whole prætorian guard, and to all the rest." He worked out to the length of his chain, and how wide-spreading have been the results!

Not that he never chafed under his restrictions, for he did. With an outburst of feeling before King Agrippa he wished that others were altogether such as he was, "except these bonds." He evidently longed to be freed from the limitations thus placed upon his activities. There is pathos in the request which he sent to the Colossians, namely, "Remember my bonds." The Ephesians must have been touched by his portrayal of himself as Christ's "ambassador in chains." Never under civilized conditions had the representative of any human government been subjected to such indignity. It was a violation of international law even among the ancients to put a diplomatist in chains. But a minister from the high court of heaven was thus shamefully treated by an earthly power. He, however, made the best of the situation. He turned the providential limitation upon his freedom to a circumscribed though very potential service for the Master. His chains even increased his influence.

We have illustrations of this from the confinement at Cæsarea, in that it gave him the opportunity to speak to Felix till this Roman governor trembled, and to Agrippa until this king was almost persuaded



to become a Christian, however ironically this admission may have been made. Then in the Roman imprisonment we have him saying in his epistle to Philemon of that master's runaway slave, Onesimus, "whom I have begotten in my bonds." That is, he was the means of saving that poor wretch, who had robbed Philemon, and who had fled to that city which Juvenal compared to a "vast sewer," into which flowed "the dregs" of all lands. But the hitherto worthless, miserable fellow, who came in contact with the imprisoned Paul at Rome, went away a new creature in Christ Jesus, no longer a slave but a "brother beloved." That was the kind of work the apostle was doing even in bonds, rescuing from sin either directly or indirectly British princess and Roman slave. Confined to a hired house, and part of the time, it has been conjectured, to the famous Mamertine prison, whose two dark subterranean chambers very appropriately at present serve as chapels for worship, and whose chill and gloom some of us have felt, as we have entered them on visiting the eternal city:—deprived of his liberty in these underground vaults, prevented from going everywhere as he would have liked, he yet did good, and through those nearest his person he reached out after others, till every part of the empire felt his influence.

It is not strange that so grand a man was sought out by Onesiphorus, who went to Rome, and who,

## 174 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

says the apostle in writing to Timothy, "was not ashamed of my chain." Paul himself came to recognize more and more the triumphs he was gaining notwithstanding the hindrances of his imprisonment. His farewell words, issuing from his dismal dungeon, came forth like a trumpet blast, as we have them in the last letter he ever wrote, "I suffer hardship unto bonds, but the word of God is not bound." Five of his epistles, Colossians, Ephesians, Philemon, Philipians, and Second Timothy, came from him during the Roman imprisonment. The Word of God, as coming from his own inspired heart under such circumstances, has been moulding lives and reconstructing society ever since, through a stretch of nineteen centuries. He scarcely could have appreciated the mighty truth he uttered, that the Gospel was not to be restricted in its victories. He hardly could have realized how widely the religion he proclaimed *was* to prevail; that it was to pervade the whole Roman Empire, and eventually the entire world; that many hundreds of years after he wrote, his words, penned with shackled arm, were to be the theme in pulpits clear round the globe. Again and again has it proved true that no prison walls can frustrate the divine purpose.

From Luther, while a prisoner at the Wartburg Castle in the Thuringian forest, came the German Bible in the vernacular of the fatherland. From Bedford jail came Bunyan's immortal allegory, the

“Pilgrim’s Progress,” which has been translated into almost every language of earth. The dreamer in his narrow quarters well wrote :

“ For though men keep my outward man  
Within their bolts and bars,  
Yet, by the faith of Christ, I can  
Mount higher than the stars.”

From the Tower of London, where have languished kings and martyrs and delicate women like Anne Boleyn and Lady Jane Grey,—from that fortress first came the hymn which is still sung, as composed, it is said, by Francis Baker :

“ Jerusalem, my happy home !  
Name ever dear to me !  
When shall my labours have an end,  
In joy, in peace, in thee ? ”

That hymn could not *be* confined, not by the walls of London’s Tower itself, which no dynamite can easily overthrow. Like the song from the jail at Philippi at midnight, it still rises towards the sky. Like the nightingale’s song it soars away upward through the darkness. That which has the inspiration of heaven cannot *be* fettered.

Madame Guyon in imprisonment, with something of the French but with more of the Christian elasticity of spirit, could and did echo the apostle’s sentiment, as she burst out in the uplifting strain :

## 176 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

“ My cage confines me round,  
Abroad I cannot fly ;  
But though my wing is closely bound,  
My heart's at liberty.  
My prison walls cannot control  
The flight, the freedom of the soul.”

Paul recognized that his sphere was restricted, but he faithfully used every opportunity which he had, and we all see how the work expanded. He did the best he could under the circumstances, and his labour was not in vain in the Lord. There are chains yet which hamper, but which need not destroy our usefulness.

1. There is, for instance, the chain of business. With links of adamant it binds us to store, to office, to shop. If we only had our freedom, we sometimes say, how much good we could accomplish. If we could spend all our time in religious work, if we could devote ourselves exclusively to it, or at least if we could have more leisure for the things of the kingdom, we would be encouraged to attempt something. There is where we make our mistake. Paul did not constantly lament his bonds, but he worked out to the length of his chain, he did all he could under the circumstances. He applied himself to the conversion of his guard, and as this was changed daily, he had different soldiers with whom to talk and pray. But it was one at a time, or certainly it was only a few, for many could not crowd into his

lodging or into his cell. Through those with whom he was brought into immediate contact, from soldier to servant, through those right around him from day to day, he reached out after others, until Cæsar's household and not improbably Britain's isle thus learned of the Gospel.

The Christian merchant or manufacturer, who is bound to his business, can yet make his influence felt for Christ upon those in his employ, and upon those with whom he has dealings. There must be opportunity somewhere to speak a word for Jesus, or at any rate by a consistent life to testify to the reality of religion. Perhaps if any are confined to their office, they can send to some friend a letter indicating a tender interest in his spiritual welfare. Though they may be tied down to their work, there is alongside of them, at the same bench or by a neighbouring machine, some one whom they might induce to go to church, or might persuade to become a Christian. Those, whom they thus reach, may be instrumental in saving others, and influence thus exerted will continue in ever-widening circles down the future. There is nothing wrong in persons being bound up in their business, or their profession, or their work, but let not the Word of God be bound, let not the chain grow too heavy till the interior life is crushed out by the weight of care.

Scripture well speaks of the "deceitfulness of riches." The golden fetters may seem light and

## 178 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

harmless, but there may be in the inordinate pursuit of the material the fate of the Roman maiden, Tarpeia. She coveted the bracelets of the Sabines, and promised to betray the citadel on the Capitoline Hill to them for "what they wore on their left arms." She opened the gate at night, and, as they passed through, they cast upon her their *shields*, which also they carried on their left arms. She was crushed thereby, and will ever remain a warning against covetousness, of which one naturally thinks as he stands on the Tarpeian Rock in the ancient city. We may think that in getting riches or in our efforts in that direction, we are only securing golden bracelets, whereas the accumulations of years or our continuous endeavours therefor may prove a veritable mountain of brass, of heaviest metal, to overwhelm us utterly so far as religion is concerned. We should be careful what kind of a chain we forge for ourselves, as we prosecute our business, as we give ourselves to the secular. A reasonable degree of attention thereto is proper, but we should leave some room for what is of eternal interest. In the midst of the worldly we should not altogether cease to be religiously active. Our sphere in the latter respect may be restricted, but a fine opportunity nevertheless is offered for Christian usefulness, if we do the best we can, while we receive the commendation bestowed upon the woman of old, "She hath done what she could."

2. There is also the domestic chain. One is kept closely to the house. She is a mother, and her children take most of her time. She sometimes complains of her humdrum sort of existence. If she only had her liberty, she feels that she might be of some account. She chafes at the thought of so restricted a sphere. She grows impatient over her lot. She aspires to something grander than the care of little ones, and she is anything but the Scriptural "*joyful* mother of children." She forgets that the home can be made the center of mighty influences for good, if she does not rebel against the restraints imposed by the responsibilities of a family. The household furnishes a field for the exercise of the most queenly gifts of mind and heart. There are moulded characters, which are soon to shape history. As the walls of Athens are said to have fallen before the music of Dorian flutes, so a mother's lullaby gives easy access to a child's innermost being. Along this line of the affectional is often fought the battle which determines individual destiny, though there is no sound of heavy cannonading but only of sweetest music, as the maternal life, in gentle influence, is attuned to heavenly harmony. Mightier than great generals are consecrated mothers in giving direction to human lives and events.

In the silent but steady conquest of paganism by Christianity, Libanius, the most literary pagan of the fourth century, recognized this, when upon seeing

the influence of a saintly mother upon Chrysostom, the golden-mouthed Greek preacher of his generation, he exclaimed, "Ah, gods of Greece! what wonderful women there are among the Christians!" The home may seem a contracted sphere, but it is the very center of all radiating influences for good. The chain, that binds to the household, is indeed golden. There may be bonds in domestic duties, there may be restraints, but the word of God need not be bound. There is abundant opportunity for the highest usefulness, if one gracefully accepts the situation.

We recall how the beautiful queen of Palmyra, the renowned Zenobia, successfully resisted the Roman arms during the reign of two emperors, but how before Aurelian she fled defeated on her fleet dromedary, and how she was overtaken, and how she was made the chief attraction in the imperial triumph, appearing in the long and splendid procession in fetters of gold. There was grace and there was dignity in her answer to Aurelian, who sternly inquired why she had presumed to stand out against his predecessors: "Because I disdained to consider them as Roman emperors," she said, while she added, "You alone I acknowledge as my conqueror and my sovereign." She was a prisoner, but a gold chain encircling her fair neck was the symbol of her easy captivity. She was presented with an elegant villa near the capital, where as a loyal subject she doubtless found greater enjoyment than as a queen in rebellion.



She became, says Gibbon, "a Roman matron, her daughters married into noble families, and her race was not yet extinct in the fifth century," two hundred years after her submission.

Better than to rebel against the King of kings, who is *worthy* of obedience, is a graceful yielding to Him, and to the obligations imposed by Providence in the domestic chain, whose every link is love, is pure gold, while children are reared for the kingdom of the truth, the blessing of God descending for thousands of generations upon such as fear Him and keep His commandments. In the seclusion of the home, in domestic bonds, the Christian spirit need not be fettered, and should not be, when immortal souls are directly subject to the maternal influence, which is so potent for good or for evil. The sphere of usefulness to those largely confined to the hearthstone may be and is restricted, but the opportunity nevertheless is immense, in view of plastic natures which can there be given their eternal set, in view of everlasting destinies which there can be determined.

## XIV

### A Larger Sphere

**N**OTWITHSTANDING what has been said in the preceding chapter, that we should make good use of what opportunities we have, there are ambitious persons who still long for what they term a larger sphere. That is what our aspiring modern man wants. That is what the children of Joseph in Old Testament times wanted. In the allotment of territory after the conquest of Canaan, they were not satisfied with their portion, which they declared to be "too narrow." They intimated that they were greater than the other tribes, and the argument was that they should be given a correspondingly larger field in which to work out their destiny. But the facts and figures did not bear out their claim. They had an exaggerated notion of their importance, and of their ability to accomplish great things. They did not sufficiently appreciate the opportunity which they had.

It is the simple truth to say that they were assigned the central and choicest part of Palestine, where there was the greatest fertility, and the best supply of water. There were very rich valleys alter-

nating with the hills, but they were dissatisfied, and they went to Joshua with their complaint, that they were not as highly favoured as they ought to be, that their abilities were too much restricted. A little more modesty on their part would have been becoming, and somewhat less jealousy of others, who were imagined by them to have fared better. But the leader of Israel took them at their own estimate, as he said, "If thou be a great people, get thee up to the forest, and cut down for thyself there." That is, if they wanted more land, they could have it, by clearing it up, by going to work right where they were, by improving what they had.

There is mentioned another way in which they could have enlargement. The plains were still occupied with the Canaanites, who were so formidable with their iron chariots that the sons of Joseph shrank from proceeding with the dispossessing process which had been bravely begun. They were, therefore, urged to conquer completely what they already had in general. There, it was implied, was a place where their alleged greatness could have full play in an actual demonstration. So that the perhaps rather unpalatable advice of Joshua to the boastful petitioners for more territory was, Help yourselves; you have your fair share now, but if you want more, get it, by clearing up the mountainsides at present covered with forests, and by driving from the valleys your foes there established, whose iron chariots must be dis-

dained by so great a people as you are. You have land enough, they were told, if you will only see that it is properly cleared and made habitable: cut down the forests primeval, and cut down your foes on the battle-field, and your greatness will be proven, and your enlargement will be all that heart could wish.

There are sons of Joseph yet who feel that they are underestimated, and who spend their time in sighing for a larger sphere, whereas they should do their best just where their lot happens to be cast. Genuine greatness can be the achievement of but few, if Arnold of Rugby was right in saying, "The three great objects of human ambition" are "to be the prime minister of a great kingdom, the governor of a great empire, or the writer of works which should live in every age and in every country." Not many of us can become rulers of nations, or the powers behind the throne, or authors of undying fame. We *can* waste much time in fretting because we do not have the chance, which we fancy some one else has for rising to distinction. We can build air castles, and dream dreams, and talk about our restricted sphere and our narrow field for operations, but the practical thing for us to do is to accept the situation as it is, and to do what we can under the existing conditions. If we want a larger sphere, we can enlarge it by doing our best where for the time being we are providentially placed.

1. We may apply this truth, first, to school life.

Shakespeare paints a very realistic picture when he says in lines familiar to all:

“ Then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel  
And shining morning face, creeping like snail  
Unwillingly to school.”

His slow pace would quicken into eager, elastic steps, and he would fairly jump, if he were on his way to some game. There is too often reluctance to resume studying; the opportunity for getting an education is not appreciated. The boy longs to get away from books, as he expresses it, into real life where he can accomplish something that is worth his while. A son of a friend of mine became restive in his enforced pursuit of knowledge, and he ran away from a most excellent home, that he might exchange mental drudgery for physical freedom, but exposure and inability to get work and to make money brought him to his senses, and he was finally glad to have his father telegraphed for the means to get back. He, however, still talked about his intention of earning his living by his brawny muscles. That he might have a little experience of what he longed for he was set to work during his vacation as a section hand on the railroad, and he was put through in good shape every day, and he was glad enough of rest and sleep each night, and the result was that the glamour of bread-winning by the sweat of his brow disappeared. When fall came, he very willingly took his place in

the high school, and after that he pursued a collegiate course with great satisfaction.

Many young people are foolishly uneasy in school, they are eager to get out into the busy world where they can make their mark, but a practical trial would disabuse them of their ability to succeed without an education. Of course, there are exceptions to the rule, but generally one gains every way by taking time to train the mind. And yet not infrequently there is a confident youth, who thinks he does not have a chance to show in the contracted schoolroom the stuff of which he is made. If he could only get into business, or go on a farm or to sea, he would be a most marked success. He should demonstrate what he can do where he is. What he needs is a realizing sense of what he can accomplish as a student, if he will only apply himself. He may repeatedly get in the woods intellectually, but let him hew down the forests. Sometimes there may seem to be arrayed against him whole hosts of difficulties with iron chariots, but *these* can be swept away.

Even the naturally dull can do wonders by patient continuance. That distinguished English teacher, Thomas Arnold, came to have a profound respect for what he termed "the mere plodding boy." He had once, he said, become impatient at such a one, and had spoken sharply to him, who replied, "Why do you speak angrily, sir?—indeed I am doing the best that I can." The grieved look showed the honesty

of this answer of the pupil, and years afterwards Dr. Arnold said, "That look and that speech I have never forgotten." It was in view of this experience, which doubtless was often duplicated, that he paid his tribute to the simple plodder. If he who is regarded as a dullard will apply himself, if he who does not naturally take to books will hold himself firmly to his appointed tasks along educational lines, he will make at least a comparative success. He is certain to lay the foundations of a more substantial record than would otherwise be his.

The fine attainments of manhood often grow directly out of something creditably done in one's school days. A prize essay, for instance, by Macaulay in college on William of Orange is said to have suggested the subsequent writing of the immortal History wherein William has a conspicuous place. The young are always preparing themselves for something better when they give themselves unflaggingly to their studies. He who fails in life is the braggart, who neglects his passing educational opportunities and talks about the wonderful things he is going to do when he gets out of school. Thoroughness in early life makes for efficiency in manhood; youthful discipline spells subsequent success.

2. Keeping purposely to the ordinary round of life, our subject has also an application to business. One ought always to do his very best there, however

## 188 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

low down he may start. He who sweeps the office with thoroughness and cheerfulness is more likely to be promoted than he who feels the menial task to be beneath him, and who does it with reluctance and carelessness. When Montezuma received the tidings of his election to the Mexican throne, "he was found," says Prescott, "sweeping down the stairs in the great temple of the national war-god." He was like Cincinnatus, who was summoned from his plow to the dictatorship of ancient Rome. The call to a higher sphere usually comes to the one who is busily occupied, and who is doing his best in a lower position. The painstaking clerk is the one who after a while is taken into the firm. When a person talks about his having no sort of a position, that he is no partner in the concern, and therefore he does not care if he does slight things, he is not going to rise. He may sigh for a time when his ship shall come in, but it never will. He may dream of coming success when he has a better opportunity, but he is doomed to disappointment, unless he hews his way along, unless he cuts down the forests that lie immediately before him, unless he drives his chariot like Jehu against the iron chariots of difficulty in the valleys along which he struggles. Commercial triumphs, ships of trade on every sea, are the rewards of none but the toilsome.

Illuminating here is the career of Magellan, who gave his name to the straits southward of South



America, and who triumphed over the Pacific, being the first to sail across its broad expanse, and as a consequence the first to circumnavigate the earth. He did not accomplish all this without laborious and even painful effort. When his provisions began to grow short, his men wanted to return home, but he declared he would go on, "if he had to eat the leather off the ship's yards," and he and his followers were reduced to precisely that strait before reaching Asia. He, however, effected his purpose, being slain, to be sure, by some savage islanders in the moment of his victory, but not till his ship had, so to speak, reached port, in one of the Philippines, his followers afterwards completing the circuit of the globe. If one's ship, of which he sometimes talks, is going to come in, or is even to go out, there must be a strong hand steadily at the helm. No haphazard attention to business in its initial stages can lead up to success.

It is, therefore, a sound maxim as well as a religious duty not to slight work that may not be exactly to one's taste. It is folly, and it is wicked, for him to be discontented and negligent and unfaithful in the humbler stations, while there is an idle wishing for some position where he can prove that he has business capacity. He is to work up from where he is to where he wants to be. He is to achieve success in his narrower sphere, and a wider one is certain to follow. By always doing his

## 190 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

best, he will have a fairer prospect of promotion, and a surer passport to ultimate success.

3. Again, not to go far afield but to confine ourselves to a circle wherein we have hitherto moved, the truth being developed should be operative in the home: A sacred poet has said :

“ The trivial round, the common task,  
Will furnish all we ought to ask.”

Many a woman chafes at the drudgery to which she feels that she is tied down, and she goes about the house with a querulous spirit, as if she did not have an equal chance in the world with others. She gets the masculine idea of having no opportunity, unless there is something big to rouse her energies. She laments that by her very sex she is shut out from most of the openings which have any attraction, and in which alone is there any prospect of realizing her destiny. She does not have a sufficient appreciation of the noble sphere which is hers. By a Christian graciousness and love she can create about her an atmosphere that will be mentally and spiritually stimulating, and she can thus shape characters for eternity. By cultivating a spirit of contentment and thankfulness, by minimizing the evil there is in others and magnifying the good, by dwelling in thought upon the manifold blessings of life, by looking on the brighter rather than the darker side of things, by esteeming it a privilege to influence im-

mortal souls, by planning better and better things for the family,—in such ways can the household be made a sphere large enough for the utilization of the highest talents.

This is happily illustrated in Tennyson's story of the "Princess," who said:

" O I wish  
That I were some great princess, I would build  
Far off from men a college like a man's."

She talked much of "ladies' rights," and she founded her university, from whose grounds those of the male sex were excluded by a threatened penalty of death. She became a misanthrope, cold and hard in her nature,

" And sweet girl-graduates in their golden hair,"

to use the poet's well-known line, could never have come from her tuition. Such a one, while gaining fame perhaps, yet missed

" Meanwhile, what every woman counts her due,  
Love, children, happiness."

Fortunately the princess herself eventually became a convert to

" Sweet household talk, and phrases of the hearth,"

and then

" The dew  
Dwelt in her eyes, and softer all her shape  
And rounder seemed."

We need to read and reread Tennyson's "Princess" for the portrayal therein of the home as a sufficient sphere for the most aspiring of the gentler sex. Instead of sighing, "O that I were some great princess," one can *be* a princess of the finer mould, along the line of domesticity. It is to homes made in this spirit that strong men look back with grateful recognition of their influence in shaping the lives, which they have been enabled to live, to the benefit of society and perhaps to the adorning of history.

4. Once more, steadily holding ourselves to the prosaic round of life, the principle under discussion applies to the church. There are those who have great aspirations, and who would like to be set to work where their talents could be made properly available. And yet they may not be giving themselves to the ordinary activities of the Christian life. If there could be some new scheme of religious propagandism under their leadership, they might be brought into active service. But some of us are feeling that Christianity is already sufficiently organized, or at least that only one more organization is needed, and that one to prevent the formation of any other societies. People should respond to the suggestion to move out along the lines of existing institutions. Let them enter into the present activities of the church. There is outlet enough now for the abilities lying dormant in any community. And then those, who have already become identified with

this and that branch of the work, can still further improve matters by putting more of themselves into that at present engaging their attention. One may be fitted for a more responsible position than he has in the kingdom, but he should not repine. He should rather fill so well the sphere which for the time being is his that he will be called higher. To any thinking they could accomplish something for the Master if they had the chance, the advice is, Improve the opportunities you have in connection with the organized church. "If thou be a great people, get thee up to the forest, and hew down for thyself there." Persons can have a clear field by clearing it themselves.

They may *not* be sufficiently appreciated and advanced, but they can win positions for *themselves*, and all the more if they are left to their own resources and outgoing energies, if without encouragement and help they work to the front by pure merit. They can have the experience of the famous Black Prince at the battle of Crecy in 1346. He, with a much less force, found himself confronted by one hundred thousand Frenchmen, and being hard pressed he asked his father, Edward the Third of England, to support him with the reserve. But the monarch, watching the conflict from a distance, declined to move to the son's assistance, because he saw that there was no such necessary emergency. He simply replied, "Let the boy *win his spurs*, for,

if God will, I desire that this day be his, and that all the honour of it shall remain with him and those to whom I have given him in charge." The Prince did win, gaining a most decisive victory, thereby coming to the front in English history. If one is capable of greater things, and he *is*, let him win his spurs where he is, and the King of kings will advance him, and will bestow upon him eternal honour and reward, in accordance with the religious success that may have been won.

## Commendatory Letters: Worth - While Testimonials of Things Achieved

**T**HE most tremendous problem which one can face is when he seeks to determine human destinies, to mould the lives of others for the kingdom. We are to show how this can be done, and how a person can thus gain testimonials that are worth while, because they testify both to his own genuineness and to the highest efficiency which can possibly be his. Here is where every man, who wishes to count for the most, has his greatest opportunity. He can enter the apostle's "great door and effectual," where he can make his life sublime by leaving his impress on other personalities. There are in lives, that he may have helped to shape, testimonials of which he need not be ashamed. This is what Paul meant when he said of his Corinthian converts, "Ye are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men; being made manifest that ye are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in tables that are hearts of flesh."

## 196 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

It is sometimes said that church-membership does not figure at all in the determination of one's commercial standing. His habits, his associations, and various items are taken into account, but it is not asked if he is a professing Christian. A church letter, it is averred, would not assist him in the least at the counter of any bank in the country. Probably these are exaggerated asseverations, but it is unfortunate if they are in any degree true, as they very likely are. They perhaps indicate a too great laxity in ecclesiastical discipline. At any rate, it cannot be doubted that church-membership is not made to mean enough. A letter too often commends an unworthy character. Possibly the venerable Leonard Bacon was right when he used to say to us, who were his students at Yale, that it should sometimes read: "In good and regular, but by no means high standing."

Still it is difficult to maintain the exalted standard, which would be desirable, in an organization that is designed to help the weak and erring and sinful. The apostle's glorification of charity or love as the supreme virtue, and the Master's caution against removing the tares lest the wheat also be rooted out,—these considerations may have made the church more careful than she should be in dealing with offenders, whose inconsistencies are not glaring. It can hardly be questioned, however, that a greater effort should be made to have the church more nearly approximate



the gospel ideal, "holy and without blemish." Nevertheless, in apostolic times, church letters did not always signify what they should. They were frequently more complimentary than truthful, till Paul ceased to carry with him to a new field the certificates which it was customary to grant. The flattering epistles of recommendation were so often false that to his mind they became well-nigh worthless. He seems to have been challenged to produce the ordinary testimonials of the day, the formal resolutions which were common. To such an apparent demand he wrote to the Corinthian Christians that he had better credentials. "Ye are our epistle," he said, "written in our hearts, known and read of all men."

In view of the low estimation in which church letters are frequently held now, we need to be able to appeal to something more conclusive. It is not sufficient to have our names on the roll of church-membership. "Faith without works is dead," is the old test which at present is very properly being insisted upon. When we can point to souls that we have been instrumental in saving, the world will recognize their validity, the force of such an argument. There is nothing which so convinces of the truth as a walking, living epistle. Very remarkable is the telephone, by which we can talk at a distance, but more wonderful is a letter which has hands and feet, which can be sent hither and thither without

## 198 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

guiding poles. Every person converted through our influence is such an epistle recommending our religion to others. It is a letter whose impression we retain on our own heart, we are conscious of having led such a one to the Saviour; and it is a letter which going here and there is known of all men.

Present the usual church letters to people, and that does not settle for them the question of the reality of our religion; but show them some drunkard we have saved, refer them to some professional man to whose life we have given an entirely different direction, name some young person we have rescued from the ways of sin, and such evidence cannot be rejected. So that souls saved through our instrumentality are the commendatory letters from us, which the world desires to see. Can we adduce for sceptical minds such credentials? Is there a solitary individual in whose salvation we have humbly wrought with God? Here is a test for ascertaining if we are true Christians, and for proving to others that we are.

Benjamin Franklin is said to have tried to persuade the farmers of his day that plaster would enrich the soil. He failed to convince them, till with this fertilizer by the roadside he formed a sentence. The wheat came up in luxuriant letters of green, and every passer-by could read in raised characters, "THIS HAS BEEN PLASTERED." All around us should be converts of ours, each of whom should bear the inscription, "OUR EPISTLE." Such commendatory

letters we all should be able to produce, and the process of their production should be noted.

1. First of all, in letter-writing, there must be the paper, or the prepared surface upon which the inky impressions are made. The ten commandments were inscribed upon tables of stone, to which there is an allusion in the language, "not in tables of stone, but in tables that are hearts of flesh." That upon which people have written has varied with the age and country. Gracing the shelves of many a modern Museum are volumes of baked bricks, which stood in Assyrian and Egyptian libraries six to fifteen hundred years before the Christian era. The plastic clay after receiving the cuneiform inscriptions was hardened by heat, to preserve for future generations the deeds of the past. In New Testament times the tablet neither of stone nor of brick was used, but the skins of animals were manufactured into a fine vellum, or the reeds of the Nile were converted into papyrus, rudely resembling and leading up to our modern paper.

The apostle institutes a comparison between the heart and the ancient table of stone upon which the finger of God wrote the decalogue on the mount, after the manner of the inscriptions on the Rosetta Stone in the British Museum, and on the Moabite Stone in the Louvre at Paris, and on that stone which archæology has recently discovered, and which contains a code of laws by Hamurrabi, who reigned

nine hundred years before Moses, and who, about 2200 B. C., antedated Abraham himself. "I will take away the stony heart," says Ezekiel, "and I will give you an heart of flesh." God causes the surface upon which religious impressions are to be made to be soft and tender. He prepares the heart for the divine writing. He renders the very brick plastic clay, into which arrows of conviction sink, making cuneiform (arrow-headed) inscriptions indeed. He makes the soul as susceptible to truth as delicate vellum or papyrus is to ink. He in short furnishes the clean paper, the new heart, for this spiritual letter-writing.

There is an analogy between the preparation of the heart and the manufacture of paper. Of the many paper mills of the country, enter a single one of them, turning out every day a white roll one hundred and forty miles long, and what is seen? Quantities of wood pulp, tons of coarse rye straw, bales of filthy rags. It would never be imagined that from such unpromising materials could come the polished quires and reams upon which are written our messages of love. Wonderful are the processes of inventive genius bringing about such a transformation. The rags, for instance, the most repulsive of all the combining elements, are cut into small bits and cleared of dust on rapidly revolving cylinders, are subjected to chemical baths which render them colourless and which subdue the fibre, and eventually they unite

with the renovated straw and wood-pulp to form, as a great *Daily* has said, "beautiful, light-blue foam or suds," which are run through a wire screen, which are pressed and rolled, until they come out pure, white paper. The rags become a metropolitan newspaper, they become a handsome book, they go flying through the mail in charming epistolary missives all over the world. It hardly seems possible that filthy rags could be converted into that smooth, glossy surface upon which we write our letters, and yet they can be and are by what is termed "a complicated series of washings, and bleachings, and churnings, and boilings."

The human heart by mysterious processes of grace goes through similar cleansings, and emerges from them 'a new heart upon which can be written most effectively the words of God. But Omnipotence alone can work this marvellous change. Isaiah says: "We are all as an unclean thing, and all righteousnesses are as filthy rags," but from such pollution God brings clean, renovated natures. Out of all that is mean and wretched and debased in humanity He can make new creatures, even as out of wood-pulp and straw and rags can be manufactured the finest, ivory-finished paper. He turns hearts of stone into those of flesh, upon which religious impressions are easily made, upon which can be written very readily our letters of commendation.

Have we any of these living epistles testifying to

the reality of the religion we profess? Are there any conversions which under God can be attributed to our influence? We ought to be able to say of some as Paul did, "Ye are our epistle." We ought to have such clear, undoubted evidence that we are faithful Christians. "By their fruits ye shall know them," not by the church roll, not by certificate of church-membership, but by living epistles, by the converts which we have made. We should be stimulated by this thought to greater activity. To be sure, it seems a hopeless task for us to make any religious impression upon cold and indifferent and hard and even wicked hearts. But God prepares the tablet, though it be of stone or brick. He furnishes the clean, sensitive paper out of very rags, out of the most unpromising elements.

2. There will be farther encouragement, if we consider next who writes the letters. It certainly is not ourselves, for they are epistles of commendation, and it would not be proper for us to write our own recommendation. The apostle says, "being made manifest that ye are an *epistle of Christ, ministered by us.*" Every conversion to which we stand personally related is a kind of testimonial which we bear about, but which after all is written by the Lord. What wondrous letters He does write! Never man so spake, and never man so wrote.

It has generally been supposed that the Master's teaching was wholly oral. There is only one reference

in the gospel narrative to His writing, and that is in John where it is said of Him on one occasion that He "stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground." Very interesting it would be to know the words thus traced in the dust or sand. But there is no record of what was then and there written, if indeed the writing (as is believed) was not merely mechanical, without any actual formation of words. Have we, then, no writing of His? When we think of Paul's numerous epistles it would seem strange if the apostle's Lord and Master never wrote a letter. Did He ever?

In almost all the Lives of Christ there is an allusion to what is related by Eusebius, the church historian who died about 340 A. D. As early as that prevailed the tradition that Abgarus, a prince of Edessa, being afflicted with some malady and hearing of the Lord's miracles, wrote Him a letter, asking Him to come to his relief, and promising Him for the persecution of Jerusalem freedom and peace in "a beautiful and agreeable city which," such was the royal language, "though it be not very large, will be sufficient to supply you with everything that is necessary." To this reputed invitation, Christ is said to have returned this epistolary reply: "You are happy, Abgarus, thus to have believed in me without having seen me; for it is written of me that they who shall see me will not believe in me, and that they who have never seen me shall believe and be saved. As to the desire you

express in receiving a visit from me, I must tell you that all things for which I am come must be fulfilled in the country where I am; when this is done, I must return to him who sent me. And when I am departed hence, I will send to you one of my disciples, who will cure you of the disease of which you complain, and give life to you and to those that are with you." Eusebius states that he found this in the archives of Edessa. But the authenticity of this letter, though defended by some (by Tillemont and others), has been denied by most.

If now the writing upon the ground was not transcribed and preserved, and if the document, mentioned by the ecclesiastical writer of the fourth century, must be pronounced a forgery, have we *no* letter of the Lord? Certainly, for says Paul to the Corinthian Christians, "ye are an epistle of Christ." Upon every converted soul, upon the tablet of every renewed heart, He writes. We can read the living characters which He traces. Very legibly stands out this sentence as recorded in the prophecy of Jeremiah: "The *sin* of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond, it is graven upon the table of their heart." The great fact of sin is that which Christ impresses first of all upon the human heart. He imparts the consciousness of guilt. He engraves with the point of a diamond into the quivering soul, Thou hast sinned. But there is something more to this letter which He writes in the



breast of humanity. The revelation of *sin* is followed by that of *redemption*, as we learn from Job who says :

“ Oh that my words were now written !  
Oh that they were inscribed in a book !  
That with an iron pen and lead  
They were graven in the rock forever !  
For I know that my *Redeemer* liveth.”

When the great thought of immortality first dawned upon the patriarch, when the glorious doctrine of salvation was wrought out in his experience, he was afraid the blessed truth would be lost, unless it were written with an iron pen in everlasting rock, in imperishable stone. He did not realize apparently that multitudes of redeemed souls would have as vivid a sense of the Saviour as himself.

Now we are the pens which Christ uses to impress these two great facts of sin and redemption upon the human heart. With us as instruments He writes His letters upon precious souls, His letters containing the two revelations of lost and saved. We should be able to name persons upon whom through us Christ *has* wrought conviction of sin and assurance of pardon. These are the testimonials which we should seek to bear witness to the genuineness of our Christianity. If we can present, not a letter of the church, but an “ epistle of Christ,” not a religious certificate, but a religious person as the fruit of our activity, if we can show such credentials, the world will be

forced to take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus, and seeing our good works to glorify our Father in heaven. We should, therefore, seek to be iron pens with diamond points in the hands of the master letter-writer of the universe.

3. One more need is indicated by these words : "written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God." We shall be useless as pens without that influence from above flowing through us, without heavenly grace conveyed through us as channels, without an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. What ink the divine is! superior to any vegetable or animal or silver or gold ink of which we read. Says Byron :

" A small drop of ink  
Falling, like dew upon a thought, produces  
That which makes thousands, perhaps millions, think."

Not that the convictions produced are always clear at first. They may lie concealed for a while. There is such a commodity as sympathetic ink, which makes no visible marks upon the paper till heat is applied, when the letters come out distinct. So it is with the ink of the Spirit, shed from us as pens upon some soul. The convictions which we secure may not come out so as to be really seen, until there is the heat of some revival or of some trial, and then the sympathetic ink, by which impressions have been made, develops in a manner to be read by all. If only we have the proper spiritual equipment, if only

we are divinely inspired, we shall not approach people in vain.

If the poet needs inspiration, much more does the disciple. Pausanias is our authority for this story regarding one of the earliest of Greek poets : “ It is said of Pindar that when he was a young man, as he was going to Thespia, being wearied with the heat, as it was noon and in the height of summer, he fell asleep at a small distance from the public road ; and that bees, as he was asleep, flew to him, and wrought their honey on his lips.” If we speak the Gospel with the sweet unction of the Spirit, if our words to the unconverted distill like honey, if the appeal be kind and tender and affectionate, hearts *will* be impressed. The hard pen needs the gentle flow of the ink. Surely with God to furnish the paper, to prepare the heart, and with Christ to wield us as instruments or pens, and with the Holy Spirit like ink to leave indelible impressions, we need not be lacking in living epistles to testify to our Christian character and to our religious efficiency.

## XVI

### The Quest of the Grail and of the Christ

**W**E reach our climacteric in the challenging Christ. Very significantly all the Lives of Him, outside of the gospel narratives, have been written in the last hundred years. To such an extent has He arrested the attention of the modern man, of him more than of persons in any other century of the Christian era. The cry of Job has been that of the human heart, "Oh, that I knew where I might find him!" To the satisfying of that yearning, writers have addressed themselves in our day as never before. Many have heard the summons of Herod, in a deeper sense than he meant the command, "Go and search out exactly concerning the young child." In our concluding chapter we are to give ourselves to the quest, symbolized so beautifully in the legend of the Holy Grail. Our course of thought would be incomplete if we did not come face to face with the transcendent character, the most commanding Personality, of all history. Was there really such a one as we have been supposing to have been the motive power in all right conduct? Can we clearly determine that there was the advent of the Messiah?

It is worth noting that His coming was predicted by inspired prophets. There were even what have been called the unconscious prophecies of heathenism. The passages of Scripture foretelling the great event are familiar, and need not be cited. The longings of pagan hearts for a divine Redeemer are not so well known, and yet these feelings have been expressed in language hardly less striking and prophetic than the words of Holy Writ itself. A single illustration will suffice. Forty years before the Christian era, the celebrated Latin poet, Virgil, wrote these lines, which seem to savour of a true inspiration :

“Lo ! from the high heavens

Comes a new seed of men. . . .

. . . The child shall purge

Our guilt-stains out, and free the land from dread.

He with the gods and heroes like the gods

Shall hold familiar converse, and shall rule

With his great Father's spirit the peaceful world.

\* \* \* \* \*

Come, claim thine honours, for the time draws nigh,

Babe of immortal race, the wondrous seed of Jove !

Lo, at thy coming how the starry spheres

Are moved to trembling, and the earth below,

And wide-spread seas, and the blue vault of heaven !

How all things joy to greet the rising age ! ”

Gibbon says that Virgil's fourth eclogue, from which this quotation is made, “ contributed to the conversion of the first Christian emperor,” Constantine, who considered the Roman bard's verses as among the

proofs of the Gospel. Very remarkable *are* such sentiments coming from a pagan less than a half century before the great Child Prince was born. But was the hope realized, was there the birth of any such person? Did He, the anniversary of whose nativity we annually observe, actually appear on the earth? The event occurred, if at all, a long while ago. Nineteen centuries constitute a tremendous chasm for human belief to leap with much confidence. May it not all be a mistake about Christ and the religion He is said to have established by such indubitable signs?

I. First, we will search along the line of the historical. We will all admit that memorial days rest on a solid basis. We would not celebrate the Fourth of July except for the *fact* of national independence proclaimed in 1776. Regarding Him whom Bethlehem claims, we have memorials of His resurrection in Easter and of His birth in Christmas, and either of these anniversaries can be traced far back. Confining ourselves to the latter, can we by searching ascertain that the alleged advent of the Lord was a fact? We certainly can. If we traverse the centuries back from the present, we discover evidence of Him all along the shining way. We do not have any doubt about the coming of the Pilgrims to our New England shore in December of 1620. Our annual celebration of Forefathers' Day testifies to the actuality of the landing on Plymouth Rock.

We would not enthuse every year over a mere fiction. We are at a remove practically of three centuries from the event, but our ever-recurring anniversary shows what our belief is. Can we trace back the observance, commemorating the divine nativity, till we are as near to Christ as we are to-day to the Pilgrims?

There will be no question about recent times, and with one bound we go back to 1066. As long ago as that, on Christmas in that eventful year, William the Conqueror after the epochal battle of Hastings was crowned King of England. That is a matter of record. We recall again that historic scene of the splendid coronation of the immortal Charlemagne in Rome, and we are informed that *this* was on Christmas of the year 800. More than a thousand years ago, therefore, the nativity of Christ was undoubted. There was also that well-known crisis in early French history, when the Frankish King, Clovis, vowed that if he gained a certain battle he would adopt his wife's religion and become a Christian, and he did. France has never forgotten that memorable day when the proud monarch and three thousand of his warriors and a great many women and children were baptized. When did this occur? On Christmas, 496 A. D. So that fourteen hundred years ago the birth of Christ was a matter of commemoration; so anciently as that was it taken for granted that He had been born in human conditions. We can go

still farther back, even to the year 386, when the golden-mouthed Chrysostom preached a sermon at Antioch, taking as his subject Christmas, and though it appears from him that there had been some variation as to the exact date, so has the Plymouth anniversary alternated between December the twenty-first and the twenty-second. There we are, then, with a Christmas observance about as near to Christ as our last Forefathers' Day was to the beginnings in the Old Colony on the Massachusetts coast. We have thus found Him, of whom Moses and the prophets wrote, by working gradually back over historic ground.

The fact is that Christianity in some shape or other is prominent through all of nineteen centuries. Art is interwoven with Christian thought. Science revolves about the sun of righteousness and the bright and morning star, as its relation to religion is ever eagerly discussed. Music has received much of its inspiration from the divine Son, whose praises have been sung in hymn and oratorio. Eliminate the Master, and poetry and general literature would largely lose their vital elements. Law is permeated with the principles of the Gospel, and with the teachings of Christ. Political revolutions have been carried forward with a momentum that came from an effort to approximate the ideal kingdom of the truth. Christianity can be lost sight of nowhere.

Step by step we thus get back to the very begin-



ning, and there not Christians only but pagans also testify to the great fact of Christ, and of Christianity. Pliny the Younger, for instance, was a cultured heathen, who from the vicinity of the Black Sea wrote some letters to his emperor early in the second century. Did he make any reference to the Christians? He gave to Trajan this picture of them: "They are accustomed to meet on a stated day, before sunrise, and to repeat among themselves a hymn to Christ as to a god." Suetonius about the same time wrote his "Lives of the Cæsars," and did he know of any such persons as Christ and the Christians? In referring to a banishment of Jews from Rome, he says it was because they were "continually making disturbances at the instigation of one Chrestus," which is only another form of the name Christus or Christ. This same pagan writer elsewhere says of Nero that he "inflicted punishments on the Christians, a sort of people who held a new and impious superstition." Tacitus is another classical author, who is linked to the apostolic age, and he, in speaking of the Neronian persecution, says that the emperor "punished those persons who were commonly called Christians. . . . This name was derived from one Christus, who was put to death as a criminal by Pontius Pilate."

Does Christianity, then, have a historical basis? Did Christ ever live on the earth? "Go and search out exactly concerning the young child." We have

## 214 The Modern Man Facing Old Problems

thus searched along one line, the historic, and we are glad to learn that we do not, as Peter says, "follow cunningly devised fables." We really find the object of our search, even Him whose nativity is yearly celebrated. The child, whose coming Virgil seems to have sung no less than Isaiah, *was* born nineteen centuries ago in Bethlehem, and *was* the founder of a religion which sings jubilantly :

"Glory to God in the highest,  
And on earth peace."

2. In the second place, we can prosecute our search not only along the historical but also along the experiential line. The Lord Himself said that if we would do His will, we would learn of the doctrine. We can find Him in our personal experience, if we will lead Christlike lives. Under such circumstances He will manifest Himself unto us as He does not unto the world. We are taught this by the fascinating tale of the Holy Grail, whose quest has ever been the inspiration of poets.

When with the destruction of Jerusalem the disciples were scattered abroad, Joseph of Arimathea is said to have gone first to Gaur or France. Spreading the gospel story there, he heard of the need in pagan Britain, for which he sailed. He made his way to what was then the lovely island of Avalon, since called Glastonbury. Arriving the night before Christmas, he thrust into the ground his thornwood staff, which he had carried all the way from Palestine.

Awaking on the morning of the anniversary of the Lord's nativity, he was astonished to see that, like Aaron's rod which budded, his staff had miraculously blossomed. He naturally decided to build on the sacred spot a church, which became the Mother Church of England. This Abbey still continues as a most attractive ruin, which has been personally visited by me because of the associations.

Now the sacramental cup, used for the wine at the last supper, and mystically at least receiving the precious blood from the pierced side of the Saviour on the cross, came, according to the interesting legend, into the possession of the wealthy Joseph, who with Nicodemus had given the crucified one tender burial amid sweet spices in a fragrant garden. He bore the holy relic, according to Tennyson's "Idylls of the King," to the English Glastonbury, and there it was long kept by the Arimathean's descendants. The keepers became an order of nobles, knights of the round table, and as long as they remained chaste in deed and word and thought, they were to be allowed to retain what, like the ark of God, always brought a blessing to its fortunate possessors. In the course of time, however, one of the highly favoured circle sinned, violated his vow, and immediately, as the English poet has written, the Grail disappeared, vanished from Glastonbury,

"Where the winter thorn  
Blossoms at Christmas, mindful of our Lord."

There followed an earnest quest of it by different knights, who for this reason left King Arthur pretty much to himself in his castled hall. Why was Sir Galahad successful in his search? Why was he alone permitted again a vision of the chalice with its contents blushing rosy-red? He was rewarded with the longed-for sight, since he could say,

“ My strength is as the strength of ten,  
Because my heart is pure.”

The Lord's own beatitude is still true, that the pure in heart shall see God, shall be granted a vision of the Christ. We do not need to sweep back through the centuries in order to find Him; we shall discover Him in our lives if these are Christlike.

James Russell Lowell, our American poet, teaches us this same lesson in his interpretation of the romantic quest of the Grail. He makes one Sir Launfal go in search of it, in flashing armour and on a spirited charger dashing away from the castle, while he tossed a gratuity to a leper at the gate. After long searching in every country, only to be disappointed, he came back after many years a broken old man. At the gate of his former estate, which another now owned, was found again the leper, with whom this time he lovingly shared the single crust he had, while he broke the ice in an adjacent stream, and with a wooden bowl filled therefrom he quenched the thirst of his companion in distress, in whom as

one of the least he tried to see his Saviour, and then a marvellous transformation took place.

“The leper no longer crouched at his side,  
But stood before him glorified,  
Shining and tall and fair and straight  
As the pillar that stood by the Beautiful Gate,—  
Himself the Gate whereby men can  
Enter the temple of God in man.”

Such was “the vision of Sir Launfal,” who ultimately found the Christ in the one he had first passed by at his own door. He was given this needful lesson :

“In many climes, without avail,  
Thou hast spent thy life for the Holy Grail ;  
Behold, it is here,—this cup which thou  
Didst fill at the streamlet for me but now ;  
This crust is my body broken for thee,  
This water His blood that died on the tree ;  
The Holy Supper is kept indeed,  
In whatso we share with another’s need.”

It was in this way, and “at the Christmas time,” that the knight was made to have learned that Christ lived not only centuries ago, but lives yet, and that He may be served in those we help in His name. It may be some trifling thing that we do, a considerate word spoken, a self-forgetful and graceful yielding to another on a minor point, a pleasant smile given with its cheering effect, a cordial hand-greeting extended, a small gift made where it is needed. Any kindness which we may do, a cup of cold water

which we may give,—anything of that sort is the holy cup wherein we often get the revelation of the Christ. What we do unto the least, we do unto Him, according to His own teaching, and we thereby secure the blessing we covet. Our search for the Christ no less than the quest of the Grail will be successful when we steadily show the spirit of the Master.

Not only again did the wise men of the east find the Christ at Bethlehem, but we all agree that Van Dyke's charming "Story of the Other Wise Man" is essentially true. When in middle life he converted all his vast wealth into three precious stones of enormous value, and with his portable riches set out in search of the new King heralded by the star, and when on his journey he helped the sick man in the desert which with his caravan he was crossing, saved the babe of the house in Bethlehem, where he was being temporarily entertained, from the historic slaughter of the innocents, and redeemed the young girl in Jerusalem from the slavery with which she was threatened, he was really finding the Christ in these ways, though he knew it not as yet. When to do all this he parted with his costly jewels one by one, and when as an old man he sank to his death in the streets of the holy city from the falling of a tile that had been loosened by an earthquake shock following the tragedy of Golgotha, he of course at the end, after such a life of helpfulness on every side,

heard sweetest music, which, coming nearer, became vocal with the Lord's own words, that what he had done to others he had done to the King, who was rightly revealed to him in a ravishing, dying vision. He found the object of his quest otherwise than did the wise men, but he found the Christ all the same.

We are likewise taught this lesson by the legend of St. Christopher, who in an early century wanted to serve his Lord, but who found himself tied to a very humble task. It was his to carry pilgrims across a bridgeless river. Being of heroic size, indeed a giant in stature, he could do that very well, for his head and shoulders were well above the water of the stream which he forded. He probably felt that there was not much if any Christian service in such lowly employment. But one day he lifted a child to his neck, and never before had such hard wading. It seemed to him that his burden would sink him into the swirling waters, but he struggled on till he reached the farther shore. Thereupon in amazement he looked upon the small bundle of humanity who had weighed him down, and who immediately revealed Himself as the Christ Child, warmly commending him for what he had done and was doing, and naming him, from two Greek words, Christopher or Christ-bearer. If we will give another a helpful lift, if we will seek to carry him over a difficult place, if we will assist a young person at his studies, if we will do any such loving service, there

will come to us a disclosure of the Lord, and we will find ourselves bearing the image of the Christ, and the Christian life will become a glad and thrilling reality, and our doubts will vanish.

As Christopher found the Christ in the child he carried over the river, as "the other wise man" finally learned that he had seen him in each of the cases he helped, as Sir Launfal at last saw the same Lord in the needy person by his own gate, *we* should see the Christ in those with whom we daily come in contact, as we seek to do them little kindnesses for His sake. If we invariably would act towards others as we would to Him were He on earth, the vision of the Holy Grail would always be ours, the whole year round would be a blessed Christmas or a glad Easter, those anniversaries on which, with the sway of tender thoughts and feelings and acts, the Lord is particularly revealed to longing hearts.

In such ways, along the lines both of the historical and of the experiential, can our quest have a most happy end, while ours can be the triumphant expression of the first disciples, who said, "We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, wrote, Jesus of Nazareth." At least we will feel that here is the ideal manhood after which to strive, a most unique combination indeed of the human and the divine, and with the doubting Thomas each of us in a burst of conviction will say, "My Lord and my God." Richard Watson Gilder was



only reëchoing this when with a forceful ruggedness  
he wrote :

- “ If Jesus Christ is a man,—  
    And only a man,—I say  
    That of all mankind I cleave to Him,  
    And to Him will I cleave alway.
- “ If Jesus Christ is a God,—  
    And the only God,—I swear  
I will follow Him through heaven and hell,  
    The earth, the sea, and the air !”



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