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MORAL LEADERS

EDWARD HOWARD GRIGGS

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GRIGGS
MORAL LEADERS

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EDWARD HOWARD GRIGGS

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FOREWORD

Drew Lectureship in Biography

THE Drew Lectureship in Biography was established in 1928 by President and Mrs. Ezra Squier Tipple, it being their desire to make accessible to the students of Drew Theological Seminary and the other students of Drew University an annual course of lectures in Christian Biography. Six notable courses of lectures have already been given:

Voices of the New Room, T. Ferrier Hulme.

Charles Wesley: Evangelist and Poet, F. Luke Wiseman.

Creative Men: Our Fathers and Brethren, William Fraser McDowell.

Men of Zeal, The Romance of American Methodist Beginnings, William Warren Sweet.

Men of the Outposts, Herbert Welch.

Saints in Action, Dumas Malone.

These lectures, the seventh in the series, were given in March, 1940.

INTRODUCTION

How the Moral Leader Serves Mankind

THERE is no nobler subject in the history of human culture than the study of Moral Leaders, for they have been, not merely great, but dedicated to the welfare and progress of humanity. There have been many great men in human history willing to use their powers for selfish ends. The career of Napoleon is an outstanding example. What unparalleled military genius, power to dominate men, win their devotion and mold them to his purposes! The map of Europe remade, hereditary monarchs pushed from tottering thrones, their seats filled by members of the conqueror's own family or by military followers! The result: an outraged world rising to put down the raider; all things reverting to much what they had been before, and a solitary figure on a rock in the ocean looking mournfully at the setting sun!

It is not so with these moral leaders: even when they have gone down to defeat, the cause to which they were dedicated has in the end triumphed, for it has been the cause of humanity. Always, therefore, the study of these men is rewarding; but just now, in this dark hour of

human destiny, we particularly need to return to them.

Has there ever been a time when leadership in the life of the spirit was needed as it is today? The throwing away of liberties achieved through centuries of struggle, the abandonment of representative government in many lands, the drift to dictatorship, to propaganda of set opinions in the interest of dominant authority, with the merciless destruction of all who oppose it and the cynical assassination of weaker peoples—these trends cry to Heaven for a moral leader, an emancipator of ideas and men, a prophet of the eternal hope in the breast of man.

Dictators dominate; moral leaders guide. Dictators suppress freedom of thought and speech; Leaders of the Spirit inspire it. Dictators drive men; moral leaders point the way and waken men to follow.

We need a Socrates to teach the eternal truths and accept martyrdom cheerfully for the sake of the mission, a Saint Francis to revive the slumbering life of the spirit, an Erasmus to proclaim the new humanism, a Carlyle to interpret life, a Tolstoy to arraign the evils of society, an Emerson to guide men to the soul's serenity.

The leaven of moral progress is the ideals of men and women on the advancing margin of life. Great dreams are the energy of the spirit, the force in remolding institutions and life.

Through the leaders chosen we will seek to interpret the great epochs of culture, with our resulting heritage. Different as the men are, each fulfilled the same high functions; and all shine as stars in the heaven of the spirit, illuminating our pathway from the firmament of the past.

Democracy needs moral leadership more than any other form of society, since under representative government little can be achieved by authority. If laws are enacted that violate public opinion or are well in advance of it, after the first flurry of interest in them is over, they are apt to remain dead letters on the statute books, worse than useless, because increasing the dangerous disrespect for all law that has been growing upon us as a people.

Just where moral leadership is most needed are special obstacles to developing it. We speak, with Tennyson, of "That fierce light which beats upon a throne"; it is nothing to the terrible searchlight that plays upon every leader of democracy. One of the ugliest features of democracy in its formative stage is the tendency to cover with obloquy those at the front and blame them for all the ills for which we ourselves are responsible. Men who are morally our superiors rebuke us, and we foolishly imagine that by pulling them down we advance ourselves. The result is that men of sensitive refinement and

high character, who can succeed in other fields, are reluctant to pay the price that must be paid for leadership of democracy.

This age of machinery, intellectual and economic as well as physical, adds a further obstacle. Individuals seem to count for so little, as contrasted with the past, in the ever more complicated and mechanized social organism. There are even those who hold that future progress will depend, not as hitherto upon individuals, but on the activities of massed organizations of men.

They are utterly wrong in this, and victims of sheer illusion. Always the light has come through individuals on the advancing margin of life. It is no accident that every great religious and every high moral teaching in the history of the world bears the name of some person. The first function of the moral leader has thus always been to see the light shining on the mountain summits, while his fellows slept in the valley below, to proclaim the shining of that light, until at least some of them have been wakened to recognition of it and inspired to follow it.

The value of this universal service increases as civilization progresses, and culminates with the free democratic organization of society. Without moral leadership, democracy falters, degenerates into parties representing crystallized average opinion, and progress ceases.

There is a second service of moral leadership that similarly grows in importance as life moves forward: the mediating function. All men instinctively look upward. Higher ideals brood just above the level of the common mind and heart; but these would remain vain illusions except for their annunciation by the moral leader. He interprets men to themselves, makes them aware of their ideals, and converts their vague dreams into definite aims of conduct. Socrates, a supreme example of such leadership, said that his vocation was like that of his mother, who was a midwife. As it was her function to bring to birth the children of others, so his service was to bring to birth the thoughts of others. That states effectively the second service of moral leadership.

Great thought is always simple thought. You turn the pages of Plato and come upon one of those illuminating insights, sheering down into the very heart of life. What do you say—"How strange and far away it seems"? On the contrary, you are much more apt to say, "I have believed that all my life;" but it took Plato to say it for you. Originality and novelty are never the same, and, indeed, are usually mutually exclusive. What is novel is rarely greatly original; and what is truly original is rarely novel. Novelty is calcium light, that gives undue brilliancy;

originality is sunlight, that carries its own warrant and illuminates itself.

A third function of leadership results from the fact that there are psychological moments in the life of the race as in the individual. Every parent and teacher knows these moments in the child and youth, when if the right personal influence be present or the right book be read, years of waste and retarded growth may be saved. Similarly, such crises come for the race, where if the guiding leader appear, a decade, even a century, of stagnation may be avoided. The third service is thus to assume the direct guidance of one's fellows in movements of constructive reform and sometimes of revolution, for revolution becomes necessary and right just at the point where evolution has hopelessly stopped. Carlyle portrayed it in his *History of the French Revolution:* men must have light; and where sunlight fails, they turn to the lurid lightning of revolution. Then especially the leadership is supremely needed.

The fourth and final function of leadership results from the fact that the world always distrusts those who vary from its conventional type, and with considerable justice, since the majority of variants are below rather than above its level. To be entirely comfortable live as your neighbors do. If you cheat just as much as the men who do business in your street, and

not any more, if you lie as much as the women in your social set and no more, in those petty white lies that never deceive anyone anyway, you are entirely respectable. If you are appreciably worse than your neighbors, they will jail you. If you are considerably better, they will ridicule, abuse, persecute, and in the end, martyr you.

Ask a biologist why there are no white blackbirds; and he will tell you that when a blackbird's plumage varies toward white, the other birds fall upon it and kill it. That is what the world has been doing to its saints and saviors through the ages: giving a Socrates the hemlock poison, hanging a Savonarola on the scaffold, burning a Giordano Bruno at the stake, nailing Jesus to the cross. Forms of persecution change, but martyrdom continues. The rack and stake of the darker ages are rarely used today, but it may be questioned whether it is not as painful to have one's personal life and ideals torn to pieces in the pages of a sensational newspaper as to have one's muscles pulled apart on the cruder rack of the Middle Age. The pitiless pinpricks of public opinion may equal the torture of monotonous water drops falling upon the skull. Persecution thus continues under new forms, and the test of the moral leader's sincerity is the willingness with which he accepts

the measure of martyrdom involved in his mission.

It is these four services we shall find exemplified in the six leaders chosen, studying them on the background of the significant epochs of culture in which they lived and worked.

EDWARD HOWARD GRIGGS.

I

SOCRATES

Moral Leadership in the Old Greek World

SOCRATES is a prototype of moral leadership for all time, since in his life and teaching its four services are fulfilled in balanced relation and harmony. He has the further distinction of being "an unofficial patriot," called by the spirit within to a high moral mission, fulfilled as a self-appointed, unpaid teacher of the young men of Athens, and crowned by his martyrdom. Our course is under the head of *Christian Biography;* and Socrates died four centuries before Jesus was born, yet he was far more Christian than many coming after that birth. Three several times, twice in the *Republic* and once in the *Phaedo,* Plato portrays Socrates as rising to the highest point of Christian ethics, teaching that it can never be right to return evil for evil, but always to return good for evil.

For us, in our ceaselessly driven and complicated modern life, there is endless charm in that old Hellenic world. The Greeks seem to us like glorious children, in their eager acceptance of life, yet with all the wisdom of harmonious

maturity. They represent the youth of humanity, with life still fresh and sweet, undisturbed by disconcerting dreams, and undistorted by morbid self-consciousness.

When you sail down the waters of the moonlit southern sea, land at the Piraeus harbor, make your way to the modern city of Athens, straggling upon its hillsides, you climb at once to the Acropolis, which always has been the dominating center of the city. You stand there, with all about you the ruins of the noblest temples and statues the world has seen. At your left is the majestic ruin of the Parthenon, with its mutilated marbles, glorious even in death; at your right, the beautiful Porch of the Maidens, surviving fragment of the Erechtheion. Further away to the left is Mount Hymettos, fabled home of the bees; to the right, majestic gnarled olive trees dot the plain that stretches away. Behind rises marble-scarred Mount Pentelikon, quarry for sculptors. Before you are the remains of the stately Propylaea and the delicately molded little temple of the Wingless Victory; below, the outline and fragments of the theater, where the plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides were given. Beyond is the blue sea, with the bluer islands, and the still bluer sky overhead. When you try to call before your imagination the civilization that centered here—the noble, wise men and beauti-

ful women, the forest of statues and temples on every rise of ground, the glory of the Persian wars, with Marathon and Salamis, the dramas of the great masters, the conversations of Socrates with the splendid Athenian youths, the teaching of Plato in the Academy and of Aristotle in the Lyceum—there comes over you a kind of homesickness for that old Greek world, and you realize that its achievement, in every field of art and intellect, is simply the despair of subsequent ages. The civilization of the Hellenes, culminating in the Periclean age of Athens, is the source and inspiration of all the culture of the Occident.

For the student interested in the history of human thinking there is a still deeper meaning in the Hellenic past. The Greeks were the first people to develop an independent science and philosophy, since they looked out on the world with open-eyed intellectual curiosity, hungry to know the truth of things, just for the sake of knowing it. Through the marvelous versatility of their intellect they took all the normal steps the mind of man takes in seeking to find unity in the seemingly infinite variety of the universe. That is why the history of the Greek mind is the most illuminating single chapter in the entire record of human thinking. All later philosophy is a more complicated development of what is given in simple form in the thought

of ancient Greece. Schopenhauer is a gloomier Heraclitus, Hegel a more difficult Anaxagoras or Empedocles, Kant states in complicated form the questioning of Socrates and the Sophists, Spinoza is the logical extreme of Pythagoras, while even Democritus, with his theory of the universe as "a fortuitous concurrence of invisible atoms," is a forerunner of many a pseudo-scientist of our time.

The steps taken by the Greek mind were achieved through many individuals, but they are so significant with reference to the mission of Socrates that it is well to state them in brief outline.

The first solution of the problem of unity in variety was childlike—an endeavor to explain the universe by its material elements. They said, there are many things in the universe but only a few elements. Is there anything but earth, water, air, and fire? Cannot these be reduced to lower terms? Take water, for instance: it can be frozen into a solid like earth or dissipated into air; is not water mother of all things? So argued Thales, first of the Ionic natural philosophers; and those who followed him in that school sought to discover unity in variety through some one of the physical elements, or a combination or opposition among them.

Under the leadership of Pythagoras the second step was taken. Those philosophers

held that it is not the matter which is important but the form it takes. With later Emerson they asked,

> "Why Nature loves the figure five,
> And why the star form she repeats."

They argued that all things could be reduced to quantitative measurement. On the one hand they developed an extensive science of mathematics, rising to an anticipation of Copernican astronomy; on the other, a mystical symbolism of number, always attractive to a certain type of mind.

Then came the Eleatic school. Their view was that it is not quantitative measurement that explains the universe but qualitative likeness and difference: God and the creation, mind and matter, being and nonbeing, or the resolution of these in the "eternal flux" of Heraclitus.

At this point the scientists reacted upon the metaphysicians, questioning the value of spinning out such theoretical systems, affirming in Democritus the universe to be merely "a fortuitous concurrence of invisible atoms."

In those four phases of thought all the normal steps have been taken that the naïve, uncritical mind of man can take, in the endeavor to find unity in the seemingly infinite variety of things. Now, inevitably, comes a paralyzing doubt, in a sort of return of the mind upon itself.

Men ask: "Why go on endlessly with these vain speculations? When a hundred doctors disagree, is it not time to consider the patient? What is the nature of this human mind and its relation to the universe? Can it know the objective truth of things?"

So came to consciousness in the old Greek world, the vexing problem of human knowledge, crux of all philosophy. It was, indeed, a return of the Greek mind upon itself, for here lies the difficulty: besides the objective universe, we are aware of another, the universe within the mind; and it is a complete universe when we begin to think. To conceive one star in the abyss of space, you must think all space around that star. When I say that Socrates was born about 470 B. C., I am putting a point in a line which extends to infinity in both directions. The progress of our knowledge is, in a sense, a calling out to the surface of what was implicitly in our mental universe from the start.

Once this problem of knowledge, of the relation of man's mind to the universe, has come to consciousness, it never can be dismissed unanswered. This was the riddle puzzling the Sophists, those so-called wise men, a sort of ancient university-extension lecturers, who went about the Greek world teaching young men their wisdom. Among them were earnest, good men; but Greek thought had not advanced far

enough for them to solve constructively the problem of knowledge, and the dominant tendency of Sophistry was skeptical and destructive. It is this that has given the bad sense to the word. A favorite maxim among the Sophists was, "Man is the measure of the universe," and from it many drew the dangerous conclusion that, therefore, whatever I choose to think true is true for me. From this some went on to the still more dangerous conclusion that, since man is the measure of the universe, whatever I choose to think right is right for me. So they went about the Greek world, teaching an art of rhetoric, which was not an art of expressing truth in beautiful form, but an art of personal success, under the troubled conditions of Greek political life. They taught young men how, at need, "to make the worse appear the better reason"; how, when accused of crime, to get off, whether guilty or innocent, by making an eloquent, specious oration, or winning the Court with a dramatic spectacle of weeping wife and children.

How modern all this sounds! For it must be acknowledged that the Sophists and their pupils are still with us. Their skepticism widely prevails, and even in our time juries have been so won by the dress, make-up, smiles, and wiles of a clever adventuress as to free her, though well aware of her criminal guilt; but that is another story.

The Sophists naturally appeared just as Greek civilization was culminating. When men are climbing the hill of progress, all their energy goes into mastering the ascent. When they near the top and realize the declining slope before them, they look within and ask the introspective questions. Socrates was contemporaneous with the Sophists; and think what his one lifetime covers. Born, as already indicated, about 470 B. C., he came twenty years after Marathon, ten from Salamis. He was ten years old when Pericles assumed the guidance of the Athenian State, forty at the breaking out of the terrible Peloponnesian War, sixty-six at the close of the ruinous fratricidal struggle, and was put to death by his fellow citizens, a few years later, in 399 B. C. The one lifetime of Socrates thus covers the whole major history of Athens, from the glorious rebirth following the Persian wars, through the splendor of the Age of Pericles, the war that ended the leadership and destroyed the Empire of Athens, into the beginning of the decline that followed!

Socrates was regarded by his fellow citizens as one of the Sophists; and when the poet of Attic comedy, Aristophanes, wished to satirize the whole movement of Sophistry, he caricatured Socrates as the outstanding example. How could they have been so mistaken? The answer is not difficult. Socrates, like the Sophists, was a

child of the time, and equally represented a return of the Greek spirit upon itself. He dealt with the mind of man and the conduct of life, rather than the objective universe, and could accept the dictum that "Man is the measure of the universe." In the popular opinion, he was distinguished from the Sophists chiefly by his eccentricities. His dress was poor and mean. He went about barefoot, and would stand on one foot all day, like a crane, thinking out some intellectual problem. His face was a caricature; and, then, he would take no money for his teaching, which was a scandal to the other university-extension lecturers. In the popular mind he was thus merely an eccentric among the wise men.

While accepting the premise of the Sophists, Socrates drew from it a widely different conclusion. They had argued, "Since Man is the measure of the universe, whatever I choose to think true and right is true and right for me." Socrates held, "Since man is the measure of the universe, if I can find, not what this or that man thinks, but what mankind thinks, shall I not have the truth?"

Was he not right? Common thought, in the day and hour, may be anything but the voice of God: it is more apt to be the voice of all the powers of darkness; but common thought, sifted through uncommon thought, is about as close

to the voice of God as we can hope to get in this world. It is never the surface whim of public opinion that can be trusted, but its greatest common denominator.

We know, for instance, where Shakespeare stands—that he is the greatest master who has written in our English tongue. How do we know this—because a group of experts has settled the question for us? Not at all: many books, by specially trained university scholars, can be cited that are wide of the mark. No, we know where Shakespeare stands because he has been sifted through three centuries of common thought, because his plays hold the stage today, beside the last bizarre spectacle or salacious vaudeville of the hour.

Socrates, moreover, remained a democrat. His great pupil, Plato, was an aristocrat, seeking always expert knowledge, the opinion of "the one man who knows"; but Socrates kept faith with what is fundamental in all men. He thus sought what Aristotle calls "an induction among conceptions." Our induction is among facts. We seek to get all the facts in a particular field together, and then to find the threads of connection that run through them, which we call laws. Socrates, on the other hand, sought the play of mind upon mind, with the aim of working down to what is universal in the minds of all men.

This explains his delightful irony, assuming complete ignorance, in order to draw out the minds of others. In one of Plato's *Dialogues* Socrates tells the story of his enthusiastic disciple, who went to the Oracle of Apollo, at Delphi, inquiring who was the wisest man in Greece. The answer was that there was no man wiser than Socrates, so the delighted Chaerephon returned to proclaim Socrates wisest of the Greeks. Socrates says he knew he was not wise, so thought it his duty to go about examining men until he had found one wiser than himself, thus disproving the Oracle and retaining his own modesty. He therefore investigated all sorts of men—pilots, poets, traders, and statesmen, but found that while each of these possessed special knowledge in his own field, he felt equipped thereby to pass final judgment on God, immortality, justice, courage, friendship—all the deepest questions of life. Again, how modern, since recently several successful captains of industry have spoken to settle for us the eternal problems! As a result of his investigations, Socrates says he concluded that, while all these other men thought they knew what they did not know, Socrates alone knew that he knew nothing; and perhaps, in that sense, he was a little wiser than the other Greeks!

Socrates thus used the question-and-answer

method, which we still call the "Socratic method"; and it remains the best of all. He had first to show those who came to him that what they thought they knew they really did not know, that their cherished ideas were chiefly ignorance and unenlightened opinion. Then he had the deeper problem of bringing their minds to recognize those fundamentals that are truth and virtue.

It must be admitted frankly that there was an unpedagogical element in the method of teaching Socrates employed. Unfortunately, if you are a good reasoner, it is easier to put the other person down, and show up his ignorance and prejudice, than it is to open his mind to the truth. In consequence, some of those who most of all needed the teaching of Socrates were offended and turned away by his pitiless examination. A Plato, high-minded, seeking only to know the truth, could sit at the feet of Socrates day after day and smile when his cherished opinions were made ridiculous, but the very youths who most needed the influence were often turned aside by the method.

This gave the apparent justification to the attack of the Athenians upon Socrates. They could point to Critias and Charmides, both relatives of Plato, who had been pupils of Socrates and afterward were of the thirty tyrants who overthrew the democracy and established

the short-lived tyranny. They could cite Alcibiades, who had sat at the feet of Socrates, and later become the gravest menace to the State, betraying his country in her hour of direst need.

Let me turn aside a moment to ask, Why did Alcibiades, brilliant pleasure-seeking voluptuary and adventurer, ever come to learn from Socrates? Was it merely to gain skill in argumentation from the keenest logician of the time? Perhaps so. Was it, rather, that Alcibiades at one period of his life was so touched by the spirit of Socrates as to be almost persuaded to live a decent life? My own opinion favors the latter hypothesis; but whatever the explanation, the fact remains that Alcibiades fell away from the teaching, and helped to ruin Athens.

If it be true that there was this fault in the method of teaching that Socrates employed, his aim was nevertheless wholly constructive—to build the foundations of truth and virtue in the young men of Athens. We have, moreover, no apology to make for Socrates. With so many of the great of the earth, we are compelled to say, "Yes, the ideal was high, but how far the man fell short of it in conduct!" Not so with Socrates: all that he taught he lived; his conduct was a complete expression of his philosophy.

It may be asked if I have not forgotten his domestic life. No, I have not. We know comparatively little of the domestic life of Socrates; tradition tells us that he married Xanthippe for the sake of philosophic discipline, and tradition adds that he got it! That is about all that we know, but under the tradition it is not difficult to understand the situation. The position of women in the best days of Athens was sad indeed, far worse than in the Homeric age. Respectable women were the head of the household slaves, little removed from the condition of the latter. Men went out into the world and got, in contact with other men, much that with us makes beautiful the life of marriage and the family circle. Aristotle argues frankly that the idea of justice does not strictly apply to a man's relation to his wife and children, because justice does not apply over one's property. That sufficiently defines the position of women in the crowning period of Greek culture. It is true that some women succeeded in freeing themselves from these restrictions, obtained education, and became the much sought and admired companions of highly cultivated men, but those Aspasias of antiquity bought their freedom and culture at a tragic price!

In relation to women and children, Socrates was on the plane of his age, and not above it. This is his most striking limitation; but what

am I saying? Only what must be said of every great leader. No man is humanity. Each has his strength and his limitations; and a limitation is merely the point at which an excellence stops. That is so obvious that it should be axiomatic; yet were we fully to appreciate and apply it, life would be far sweeter and happier; we should be more kind to our friends, and even to our enemies, and we should enter far more deeply into our heritage of culture from the past. There is never any value in negative criticism, except *after* affirmative appreciation; no use in pointing limits, until we appreciate what is limited.

In every other aspect Socrates was far in advance of his time. He did see the light shining above, and awakened others to recognize it. He did interpret men to themselves, and led them forward in a great movement of moral reform and constructive education.

Like many great teachers, Socrates was so deeply interested in improving the lives of the men about him that he was careless of leaving behind any written record of his teaching; but the books that Socrates wrote were his pupils, and especially Plato. Indeed, there are two written records of the teaching of Socrates, singularly complementary in character. Xenophon, statesman, warrior, and man of affairs, able to lead those ten thousand Greeks out from

the heart of Asia, till they exclaimed with joy on beholding again the light-lipped waves of the Hellenic sea; Xenophon had sat at the feet of Socrates. When the Athenians had put to death the noblest man in their State, Xenophon got out his old notebooks, worked them over, and published them, that the world might know what sort of man Socrates really was, and what was the nature of his teaching.

When you take down the *Memorabilia* of Xenophon and turn its pages, you find him telling how Socrates met such and such young men, the questions he asked them and the answers they gave him. You feel it is a Boswell recording his Johnson: that the *Dialogue* took place substantially as Xenophon narrates it. Nevertheless, you lay down the book at the end, and the figure of Socrates is somewhat dim.

You turn to the *Dialogues* of Plato, and find some of them, such as the *Charmides, Laches,* and *Lysis* (tentative dialogues we call them), seeming to begin where Socrates stopped, putting into beautiful literary form what was probably the oral teaching method of Plato's master. In other *Dialogues,* such as the *Republic* and the *Phaedo,* you find Plato using Socrates as a dramatic mouthpiece for ideas we are sure Socrates never held, ideas developed by Plato long after his master's death. Nevertheless, as you read through the *Dialogues* of Plato, behind

the great figure of the disciple rises the greater figure of the master, and you feel that you know Socrates.

I have long sought in other literature for some parallel to this experience. The best I can offer is Fitzgerald's translation of the *Rubaiyat* of Omar Khayyám. Those who love that poem know that Fitzgerald took the more than five hundred quatrains of the Persian astronomer-poet Omar, reduced them, changed them, sometimes letting one English stanza represent three or four in the Persian original, occasionally writing in a stanza that does not appear at all in Omar; and yet the hundred stanzas of Fitzgerald's version are a better expression of the mind and philosophy of life of Omar Khayyám than the five hundred that Omar himself composed. It took two men to produce that poem: one to live the life and develop the ideas, another to mold them into beautiful verse.

In similar fashion it took two men to create the *Dialogues* of Plato: one to live the life and inspire with the great ideas, the other to work them out into beautiful balanced rhetoric and dramatic literary form. Which is greater—to live the life or develop the philosophy and create the literature? Well, we need not answer the question; but this much we may say with assurance: it is certainly not less great to live the life!

So we turn to Plato's *Dialogues* for the best understanding of Socrates. Of those we believe were written soon after the death of Socrates, the *Lysis* shows well his method of teaching. In it Plato portrays Socrates as meeting the beautiful youth Lysis at a Palaestra or Gymnasium school. Athenian boys of good family were then kept as carefully unspotted from the world as girls formerly were in the convent education of Continental Europe. Socrates thus begins talking with Lysis, as one might have spoken with such a girl. Let me condense and paraphrase the initial argument.

Socrates asks Lysis, "I suppose your father and mother love you dearly?"

"Why, of course, Socrates."

"Well, then, they let you do whatever you like?"

"No, indeed."

"Do you mean to say that your father and mother love you, and yet restrain your desires?"

"Certainly they do."

"Well, now, they let you drive the chariot?"

"No, there is a hired charioteer for that." (Evidently, boys of good family in ancient Athens were not allowed to drive around, unchaperoned, at all hours of the day and night, in the ancient analogue of the automobile!)

Socrates says: "At least, you may drive the mule cart?"

"No, one of the household slaves is assigned to that duty."

Socrates thinks it strange that a slave should be given more freedom than the son and heir of the family, and asks, "Tell me Lysis, are you a free man or are you not?"

"No, Socrates, I have my tutor to direct me, he is one of our slaves."

"Well, well, this is the first time I ever heard of a free man being subject to a slave! How do you explain it, Lysis?"

Lysis thinks it must be because he is not old enough; but, of course, that is not it, since he is allowed to do many things a slave could not do. He stumbles about for a time and then hits the point: "I think, Socrates, it is because I do not know enough;" and that is just it. So we come to the eminently Socratic conclusion that knowledge is not only power but freedom. We are not born free, but born so that we may climb up to a knowledge of the laws of life, and by voluntarily obeying them become free. That explains why Socrates and also Plato believed that virtue could be taught.

This, however, is not the conclusion of the *Dialogue,* but merely its prelude. Other youths enter, friends and lovers of Lysis, among them Menexenus, whom Lysis is eager to see Socrates put down.

Socrates tells them that all his life he has

wanted a friend, but, being ignorant, has not known how to get one; since they are friends, will they please tell him which is the friend, the lover or the beloved? The boys try one answer, then the other, but neither works, nor does the answer that both are friends.

As was the Greek custom, a fresh start is taken from the poets, who tell us that "like draws unto like." Oh, yes, friends are those who are like each other. Socrates points out that then the good would be friends only to the good and the bad to the bad; but no bad man can be a friend to anybody!

Again they try the poets, and find a quotation which says that opposites unite; but that would make the good the friend of the bad, which is absurd. The idea is proposed that friends are those who are useful to each other; but that is too sordid. The boys are driven to the absurdity of arguing that it must be the good who are friends of the neither good nor bad; which would leave much of the world friendless!

There is a moment of perplexed silence, and then one youth exclaims, "I have it: friends are those who are congenial to each other!"

"Good," says Socrates, "but wait a minute—what is the difference between being congenial and being like each other?"

Well, there is none; so the argument has gone around in a circle and got back where it started!

What Socrates really had done was to lead the boys to analyze friendship into all its elements; but nowhere were these brought together into a synthesis. At this point the tutors enter, telling the boys it is time to go home; and Socrates sums it up: "Here are you young boys, and I an old boy, who would fain be one of you: we thought we were friends all the time, and it seems we don't even know what friendship is!"

You see why we call this a tentative dialogue, since it ends with no conclusion; but do not imagine that the boys would stop there. Their minds have been wakened to go on and think out the conclusions for themselves. Socrates was too wise a teacher to state them. Great teaching is not the easy process of reeling off the teacher's own ideas, but, rather, it is stimulating the student to think and discover truth for himself. To make the point clear, however, let me indicate the two implied conclusions: first, it is more important to be friends, than to define friendship; but, second, to live merely by instinct and feeling is insecure; and if we can come to clear knowledge of friendship and its laws, we shall have a far safer basis for a permanent relationship.

Thus the *Lysis* accomplishes for friendship what the *Charmides* does for temperance and the *Laches* for courage, opening up all aspects of the problem, but not settling it, stimulating

the minds of the pupils to think on and find the answer for themselves. This is the way we believe Socrates actually taught; and these early *Dialogues* of Plato seem to begin where the master stopped, putting into beautiful literary form the method of teaching Socrates habitually employed.

Between the tentative *Dialogues* and those, such as the *Republic* and *Phaedo,* where Socrates is dramatic mouthpiece for ideas Plato developed after his master's death, is one writing of Plato's that is particularly close to Socrates. It is the *Apology* or defense which Plato portrays Socrates as giving on the occasion of his famous trial. It is Plato's one great dramatic monologue, and we long to know how much of it is the master, how much the disciple. We cannot be sure, but we know that the *Apology* is in entire harmony with the character and teaching of Socrates, as it is with Xenophon's record of the defense. Plato, moreover, represents himself as present at the trial scene, but absent when the dialogue of the *Phaedo,* portraying the death scene, took place. Perhaps it is not too much to say that, while the beautiful balanced rhetoric is Plato, the ideas expressed and the fundamental attitude toward life and death are Socrates.

Think of the occasion when this defense was given! After the disastrous close of the Pelo-

ponnesian War, Athens turned on her leaders like an angry dog. It is a sad time in the life of any people when the party of reaction that would turn back the hand on the dial of progress can summon to itself the moral conscience of the time. It was so in Athens. Men said: "You see what your culture and art have done to us: our empire gone, our walls leveled, Sparta supreme. We would better go back and do as the Persians: teach our boys to ride, to shoot, to tell the truth, and let it go at that."

So victims were demanded, on which the anger of the populace might be vented, for one of the painful features of democracy is that it seeks a scapegoat to carry the sins of the people.

Socrates was one of the chosen victims. Why? Well, there were reasons enough. He had gone straight forward on his own path, refusing equally to obey the democracy and the tyrants when ordered to commit an act of injustice. He opposed the favorite Athenian custom of choosing magistrates by lot and also the paying of salaries to public servants, which did not make him popular with the politicians. In the popular view he was merely one of the skeptical Sophists, while his constant ironic satire in regard to selling truth for money angered the other teachers. His very method of teaching, moreover, invited trouble. Plato recognized this in remarking that youths should not begin

the study of dialectic, the philosophic development of the Socratic method, lest they become like puppy-dogs that delight in tearing everything they get their teeth upon. Young men would thus come to Socrates, get a smattering of his question-and-answer method, then go home and try it on father, with consequences in many an Athenian home that can readily be imagined.

Whatever the reasons, Socrates was haled before the Athenian law Court, accused of impiety and of corrupting the young men of Athens. The irony of it: the most reverent man in Athens accused of impiety; the one who was giving his life to building the foundations of truth and virtue in his young associates accused of corrupting them! So it is: the moral leader is struck where he is strongest, accused of the crimes correlative to the virtues he represents!

There were three accusers: Meletus the poet, Lycon the rhetorician, and Anytus the leather-worker, showing that both the cultivated and artisan groups had risen against him.

The Court was composed of five hundred citizens, chosen by lot. Imagine defending yourself before such a tribunal, with no professional attorney to aid you! It was worse then than it would be now, for we have printed books and can thoroughly review the argument. The

Greeks had only manuscripts, few in number, possessed by scholars and the wealthy. The Greeks were an outdoor people, their wits sharpened by contact with other men in the gymnasia, assemblies, and law courts. They were, moreover, a southern people, highly emotional, keenly interested in a dramatic spectacle. Grave abuses had thus crept into the Athenian Courts. The five hundred judges were more influenced by an eloquent oration or a weeping family than by the justice of the case they were deciding.

Socrates rises to defend himself before such a Court. What would you expect him to say? He begins very quietly, telling them not to expect him to speak like a juvenile orator, since he is more than seventy years old, and this is the first time he has ever appeared in a Court of Law. One thing, he says, puzzled him—when his accusers warned the judges to beware of his eloquence; for he is not eloquent, unless, indeed, the truth is eloquent, for he will tell them the truth; and may it be good for them and for him.

The eternal questioner then insists upon examining his accuser, Meletus, who reluctantly submits. Socrates quickly entangles him, in a few moments of argument, casts him aside and says:

> I have said enough in answer to the charge of Meletus: any elaborate defense is unnecessary; but I know only too well how many are the enmities which I have incurred, and this is what will be my destruction if I am destroyed: not Meletus, nor yet Anytus, but the envy and detraction of the world, which has been the death of many good men, and will probably be the death of many more; there is no danger of my being the last of them.[1]

What a look across the coming centuries!—no danger that a day will come, so poor, that some man will not accept death gladly, though unjustly meted out to him, that the world may grow through his sacrifice.

He remarks that some one may denounce him for a course of life leading to an untimely end. Such a critic he thinks would be mistaken, since a man who is good for anything ought not to consider the chance of living or dying, but only whether he is doing right or wrong, acting the part of a good man or of a bad. It would be strange if he, who at Delium and in other battles remained at his post, as ordered, like any other man, facing death, were now to desert the post to which God orders him, of examining other men. Such a desertion would make just the charge of impiety. He does not pretend to know of the world below, but he does know that injustice and disobedience to a better, whether God or man, is evil

[1] *Apology*, Jowett's translation.

and dishonorable, and of that he will never be guilty.

Changing the key, as Plato always does at the highest point, Socrates tells them that he is a sort of gadfly, sent by the God to sting the sluggish horse of the State into action; and if they kill him, they will not easily find another gadfly. How such an one is needed today!

The judges declare him guilty, but by a small majority. Had thirty-one of the five hundred changed sides, he would have been acquitted. His accusers demand the penalty of death. Under the Athenian law, the one convicted could propose a counter penalty, the Court to decide which should be adjudged.

Socrates tells them he must say what he thinks. He has given the best part of his life to unpaid service of his fellow citizens. What he really deserves is to be maintained for life in the Prytaneum, at public expense, as is done for other heroes who have signally served the State! However, he recognizes that they expect him to suggest a fine; he thinks he could raise a mina, a little sum of silver.

At this point his disciples pluck him by the sleeve, and, after a moment's conference with them, he tells the judges that Crito, Plato, and his other friends say they can raise thirty minae; he suggests that as his fine.

Why did Socrates behave in this fashion? His

judges did not wish to kill him and would have been glad of an excuse to let him off, had he humbled himself to beg life of them.

Perhaps he wished to die, recognizing that his death, under those circumstances, would do more for his mission than any ten or twenty years of subsequent teaching. There is something more than that, however. All his life Socrates had taught that it is not important whether a man lives or dies, but only whether, in doing anything, he is acting the part of a good man or a bad. Now his own life is at stake: shall he whine, beg, and cry? No, he will treat the problem in the same quiet, impersonal way in which he would decide any other ethical question.

The judges thereupon sentence him to death; and now Socrates is no longer prisoner at the bar but judge upon the bench. He tells them they think he was condemned for lack of words. Not so; for he would rather die, speaking after his manner, than speak after their manner and live.

Turning to those who voted for him, he tells them not to feel too sad about death, for what is it? Perhaps it is a dreamless sleep. Well, remember the nights spent in unbroken slumber: have you happier memories? If death is a dreamless sleep, it is well; but perhaps there is an awakening. Again changing the key, Soc-

rates remarks how interesting it would be to be able to examine Homer, Hesiod, the great Agamemnon, the much-traveled Ulysses, and other heroes of the Trojan wars! It suddenly comes over you that those Homeric heroes have a bad quarter of an hour coming to them when Socrates reaches the Elysian Fields!

Concluding, he says:

> Now I depart hence, condemned by you to suffer the penalty of death; they (my accusers) also go their ways, condemned by the truth to suffer the penalty of villainy and wrong: and I must abide by my award: let them abide by theirs. I suppose that these things may be regarded as fated; and I think that they are well. . . .
>
> Wherefore, O Judges, be of good cheer about death, and know of a certainty, that no evil can happen to a good man, either in life or after death.[2]

We are left vibrating to the beautiful poetry, high thoughts, and heroic attitude, recognizing that the *Apology* is philosophy made into life at the crisis of a supreme experience.

The sacred ship had sailed away, however; and during the month of its absence, no death sentence could be executed in Athens. Socrates was therefore confined in the common criminal prison, apparently kindly treated and allowed daily conversation with his disciples. So the month wore away.

In the *Crito,* Plato portrays the disciple of that name as coming to the prison in the early

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[2] *Apology,* Jowett's translation.

morning; but finding Socrates asleep, waiting for him to waken. Crito is the Saint Peter of the group, as Phaedo is Saint John, the beloved disciple, if you care to follow the analogy with the disciples of Jesus.

When Socrates awakes, he asks why Crito delayed wakening him, and Crito answers that it was to save him another hour of misery, for the sacred ship has touched at Cape Sunium, and passengers from it are already in Athens; thus Socrates must die tomorrow. Socrates replies that he has had a dream, and thinks it will not be till day after tomorrow!

Irritated by the calm demeanor of Socrates, Crito begs him to escape, tells him men will think his friends were unwilling to use their money to help him escape, whereas they are here for just that purpose. The jailer can be bribed; Socrates can go to Thebes or Sparta, and wait till this blows over, or remain there and teach: Athens is not the only place. Besides, Crito urges, why did you bring sons into the world, if you are going to desert them in this fashion! Crito, you see, was fulfilling the highest office of friendship—rebuking the friend when you believe he is wrong.

Socrates accepts the rebuke gratefully, but asks if they should abandon their principles because his life is at stake; they must talk about it. Have they not always held that they should

disregard the opinion of the many and respect alone that of the one man who knows?

Reluctantly Crito sits down to the argument, or, rather, the spiritual poem that Socrates unfolds. The heart of it is that, while under ordinary circumstances it might have been right to run away, to do so now would violate his life-teaching and defeat all that he had done for his mission in the trial scene. Concluding, he tells Crito that he hears the Laws of Athens saying to him that they have brought him up, guarded, and watched over him; and now that evil men are treating him unjustly, will he break them, the Laws of Athens; will that bring him a welcome from their brothers the Laws of the world below? This Socrates says he hears, like the sound of the flute-girl in the ear of the mystic; but if Crito has anything further to say, let him speak on; but Crito responds that he has no more to say.

So Socrates remained in prison, and the last day dawned. Plato portrayed it in the *Phaedo,* written long after the death of Socrates, and given as a narration of the day's events by Phaedo, to a disciple who had not been present at the death scene. In the course of the narration Phaedo mentions that Plato was ill and therefore not present.

The disciples are portrayed gathering at the prison in the early morning and spending the

entire day with Socrates, discussing with him what would be uppermost in the minds of all: death and the mystery of what comes after, the problem of immortality.

The *Dialogue* is a high hymn of the spirit, the noblest writing the world has on immortality, but Platonic rather than Socratic, containing ideas developed by Plato long after the death of his master. Its metaphysical arguments for the eternity of the soul, before birth as after death, leave us a little cold, with all their lofty spiritual poetry. Plato never bridged the chasm between necessities of our thinking and what may or may not be necessities in the objective universe.

There is one argument, however, that Plato gives for the eternity of what is deepest in the soul of man that is as vital and impressive now as when Plato presented it. It is no metaphysical reasoning whatever, but the attitude of Socrates. That a man can calmly accept death, unjustly meted out to him by his fellows, in the assured conviction that "no evil can happen to a good man, in life or after death" is a stronger argument for thc eternity of the soul than any metaphysical reasoning in the entire history of philosophy.

We turn, therefore, from the dialogue to its closing scene. The argument is finished and the groping questioners silent. As the sun sets,

the jailer enters to warn Socrates that the hour has come, addressing him as the noblest and best of all who have entered this place, so assured that he will not behave as others have done, and bursting into tears as he leaves the room. Socrates remarks how charming the man is, and how much he has enjoyed talking with him during the month.

In a few moments the jailer returns with the cup of hemlock poison. Socrates, taking the cup, asks if he may pour a libation to the god, the Greek custom before drinking wine. The jailer responds that they prepare just enough. Socrates says that he understands, but at least must make his prayer to God. With the prayer he quietly drinks the cup, walks to and fro, until his limbs begin to get cold, then lies down and covers up his face. Remembering that he had promised an unpaid offering to one of the gods, he uncovered his face, called Crito and asked him to pay the debt. A moment later, in the silence broken only by the sobbing of his disciples, there passed out the noblest ethical teacher of the ancient world.

If that other scene on Calvary is unique in divine pathos, this quiet scene in the common criminal prison of Athens is in sheer human majesty, unrivaled in the annals of moral leadership. It caught the imagination of the time and of after ages, so that Socrates has come

down to us as the lofty symbol of philosophy made into the conduct of life. He saw the light and proclaimed its shining. He interpreted the best thought of Athens to itself. He led a significant movement of education and reform. He gave not only years of devoted service as an unpaid public teacher, he gave life itself as a testimony to his sincerity and for the sake of his mission. To us he is even more, for out of all that dim sky of the past he shines as one clear star, blending its radiance with the spiritual firmament arching over us today.

II

SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI

And the Spiritual Awakening of the Middle Age

WE are turning, across sixteen centuries, from the crown of classic civilization to a transformed world, with widely contrasting ideals and aspirations; from the philosopher-teacher, and examiner of men, to a sweet, unlettered, loving and lovable saint of the Middle Ages, in whom is a reincarnation of the original impulse of apostolic Christianity.

The period of Francis is a sealed book to many of us. Excepting those who are special students of the medieval world, the rest of us are apt to class it with the Dark Ages, thus blinding ourselves to its light.

There was a dark age in the history of Europe. If you descend through the lurid sunset of Roman greatness to the chaotic night that followed, you come to an epoch so dark, that there is a whole century through the debris of which you may search almost in vain, in church, monastery, museum, and gallery, for some significant work of art, some evidence that artistic and intellectual culture had not utterly disappeared from among men. In just that darkest time, however,

a new force was building the foundations of a new and entirely different civilization.

As someone phrased it, "A great hope had swept across the earth!" Coming out of the East, beginning its conquest of Greek and Roman civilization at the bottom, with those on whom that dying world order rested most heavily, slowly working upward, layer by layer, the new Christian faith and ideal emerged at the top, center of a new culture, strong where the ancient world was weak, if weak where it was strong.

Both Greek and Roman civilizations sought limited ideals, realizable in the earth life of man. The Greeks strove to develop rounded, harmonious, cultivated individuals, in whom there is nothing too much; and achieved the dream beyond all other peoples. The Romans strove to build the all-conquering State; and attained it in an empire, establishing law and order over practically the known world.

In contrast, the new Christian ideal demanded eternity for its fulfillment. The edict was, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect"—a dream requiring eternal life for its realization.

The Middle Age despised this world overmuch, failing to see fully the beauty and significance of the earth life; but it was brooded over by the sense of eternity. One philosopher

has told us that the trouble with our modern life is the loss of the sense of eternity. The phrase may be too strong, but characteristically we live for proximate aims: to get a little more money, dress our children a bit better than the neighbors', move into the next street of aristocratic prominence and then into the next, always imagining the last move will satisfy, always discovering a street higher up or a bigger town further away, till we drop out of this scene of things. Only in rare crises do we see the things of time "under the aspect of eternity." The medieval world, conscious of the effect of every action on the eternal life of the soul, saw all things under that aspect.

This gave a profound moral dualism to the thought of the time. The Greeks, except where influenced by the Orient, never developed the consciousness of sin. They held the aesthetic view of moral evil, as repugnant to refined sensibility. The same word, *kalos,* served them for the beautiful and the good. Moral goodness was but a part of the general harmony of beauty. The Middle Age, on the other hand, saw good and evil as moral opposites. One meant life, the other death forever! The duty of the good man was to take sides with the minority of the good and fight the majority of evil while life lasted. The spiritual heights of infinity and eternity challenged man; the abyss

of sin and death yawned at his feet. The serene harmony of Greek aspiration was forever gone!

The crown and flower of medieval culture was the marvelous thirteenth century, which began with the spiritual mission of Saint Francis, and closed with the *Divine Comedy* of Dante and the bell-tower and frescoes of Giotto. Unfortunately, no Symonds has done adequately for that hundred years what that admirable scholar achieved for the later period of the Renaissance. It is only as you go about Europe from place to place, asking when that bell-tower was erected, that cathedral founded, when that Order existed and this philosopher lived, that you begin to realize the thirteenth century, not only in its religious life but in every aspect of art and intellect, was one of the most remarkable centuries in the whole history of human culture. It was the century when half the cathedral building in the history of Christian architecture took place. It was the period when those painters of the dawn, as I like to call them, Cimabue, Giotto and their pupils, were breaking with the thousand years of Byzantine religious symbolism in art and beginning to express the teachings of the faith in forms beautiful and true to life and nature. We think of that century as a time when thought was oppressed. It surprises the student to discover that every phase of modern

religious thought, heretical as well as orthodox, may be found in some thinker of that time.

With this breadth of culture, the center and inspiration of the thirteenth century was nevertheless in the religious life. That hundred years is so far away that we are apt carelessly to class it with the earlier Christian centuries. If you have had no awakened interest in Saint Francis, you are apt to think of him, with Saint Jerome and Saint Augustine, as one of the great, dim figures far back in the history of the Church. You forget that between Saint Jerome and Saint Francis lay the major development of Christian institutions and Christian doctrine. You forget, moreover, that the world has always been modern to the men who lived in it. Always they have seen the past as a long, unfolding process ending in themselves. Never have they been able to foresee the future. Only a few prophetic seers and dreamers have been able to grasp some of those "organic filaments" which Carlyle says are always "weaving the world of tomorrow."

The world thus seemed old to those who lived in the thirteenth century. At its close Dante portrays himself taken to the courts of Paradise, under the guidance of Beatrice, and the Heaven of the Redeemed is revealed to him as a great yellow-white Rose, in the petals of which are seated all who have returned from earth to

heaven. Beatrice says, "Behold, the convent of our white stoles is almost full!" Only a few more persons were to die and be saved before the end of the world, according to Dante. He could not imagine that the world would roll on for another six centuries, with the promise of continuing to roll for untold aeons to come!

Equally somber was the mood at the beginning of the century. Antichrist seemed abroad, evil was in high places. Christianity had developed its complex ritual and institutional forms: it seemed impossible to return to the simple gospel of the Apostolic Age. Out of the world of common life arose the saints of the Middle Age; they entered the Church and gave it new life and a new lease of power, not only over the institutions of Christianity but over the heart and imagination of men. So far as that movement had any individual cause it was the work of Francis of Assisi, and he was at the same time the supreme expression of the awakening.

That spiritual rebirth had much more to do with the later artistic and intellectual Renaissance than modern scholars have generally recognized. They have been impressed with the naturalistic and pagan motive of the Renaissance, which, indeed, was dominant; but under it was a deep religious influence from the period of Saint Francis and Dante. More than half of

the content of art in the great epoch came directly from that Christian source. Dante and Giotto would have been impossible but for Saint Francis of Assisi; and what would have been possible in the art of the Renaissance but for Dante and Giotto!

This, indeed, is but one example of a general law. Great art never comes merely to please the senses: always it springs from some deep stirring of the moral and spiritual life of man.

Francis was born in 1181 or 1182, and died in 1226. Thus his working life, the period of his mission, covered almost exactly the first quarter of the century; and his teaching was the first vital force in that hundred years.

It was Assisi that gave birth to Francis: a little Umbrian hill town, stagnant upon its hilltop, as if to preserve for our inspection a bit out of the Middle Age.

You make your pilgrimage to Assisi; and do not go unless it is truly a pilgrimage of the spirit: going down from Florence toward Rome on one of the Italian trains, passing beautiful Lake Trasimene, where the Romans suffered their sanguinary defeat at the hands of Hannibal and the Carthaginians; and in the late afternoon you alight from your train near the large church, built around the little chapel of the Portiuncula, and take a cab to climb the hill. Before you have gone half way the shim-

mer of the evening light on the gray-green leaves of the olive trees, the glory of the Umbrian sunset, is so beautiful that you alight and go the rest of the way on foot, to enjoy the beauty of the evening hour.

As you approach the brow of the hill there comes on your vision the double Church of San Francesco: one church built on top of another, both erected so soon after the time of Francis; and the two together forming one of the most naïve and childlike, yet one of the most venerable, of all the monuments of Christian art. These churches were the natural theater for those painters of the dawn, Cimabue, Giotto, and their fellows, who, invited down from Tuscany while the tradition of Francis was still fresh, painted the walls of both lower and upper church with frescoes instinct with his spirit. They worked together, whole schools of them, careless of personal fame, making art religious worship. Sometimes the master sketched out the painting and the pupil completed it, or the pupil began the fresco and the master gave the finishing touches. It is thus often impossible to tell where the master's brush ends and the pupil's begins. Nevertheless, these paintings are done with such sincerity, such belief in the ideas expressed, that they have an appeal not always equaled in the more technically perfect work of the high Renaissance.

Here, in the lower church, is Francis in an attitude of veneration toward Virgin and Child; below, Francis and the early companions of the Order. Over there is a world-old portrait of Santa Clara. Above the altar, radiating from the center, are four frescoes representing the virtues associated with the life of Francis and his marriage to the gaunt figure of Poverty. These, we are reasonably sure, were painted by Giotto. The quaintest of them portrays the virtue of purity or chastity. Enclosed in a kind of cage, lifted above the throng to preserve her from all stain, is a female figure representing the virtue. At the extreme right of the fresco is the poor little God of Love, fitted with horns and tail like a medieval demon, and being driven off the scene. At the left, last of all the figures yearning up to the virtue of purity in the center, is Dante, one of the two almost certainly authentic portraits of Dante from the hand of his friend Giotto! As we brood under these medieval frescoes we are reminded of the frequent visits Giotto paid Dante during the latter's exile; and we wonder: Could the poet have suggested the treatment of these themes to his painter-friend, as they are instinct with the very spirit of the *Divine Comedy*?

Climbing to the upper church, we find a whole series of frescoes portraying the life of Francis. Here the insane youth spreads his

garment for Francis to walk upon, recognizing his spiritual greatness before his conversion. There Francis casts the devils out of the city of Arezzo. On the end wall, more charming, is Francis preaching to the birds, portraying the story told in the *Fioretti,* or *Little Flowers of Saint Francis,* the medieval legend of unknown authorship. Francis was walking in the fields one day and the birds were twittering in the trees beside him. Francis stopped and spoke to them, preaching a little sermon to them. He told them they should be very thankful for the power of flight and of song, for the fresh air and the sunshine; and when he had given them his blessing, they all flew away in the form of a cross! Such are the legends, with the dew of the spirit on them, that are portrayed in the frescoes on the church walls.

Beside the double church is a monastery with an upper outer arcade, where the brothers could walk to and fro meditating on the things of the spirit, but with the view across the valley to the fold on fold of blue mountains with the roofs of Perugia in the distance to the right; for the Franciscans have kept throughout their history that love of the nature mother and desire to be close to her beauty that marked their Saint and founder beyond all other teachers of the Middle Age.

Leaving the church and monastery, we find

the little lanes climbing steeply among the old stone houses of Assisi, so steeply that even the Italian donkey cart cannot go everywhere, and only the foot traveler can visit every part of the city. Here and there little squares open out. The central one is the market place of Assisi, where the peasants bring and sell their wares. If you would realize how remote Assisi is from our industrial civilization, consider that a peasant will drive his donkey in, miles distant from the countryside, the beast loaded with a few armfuls of wood. He may stand by the donkey all day, and toward evening sell the wood for enough lire to make a half-dollar; and go home well pleased with the earning of more than a day's labor. So far is Assisi from our industrial strife and prosperity!

At one side of the square is the little church of Santa Maria Sopra Minerva—a classic temple, for centuries converted into a Christian church. This was the first Greek temple Goethe saw in his Italian journey. He was thrilled by it, and wrote home enthusiastic letters about it to his Weimar friends, with never a word regarding the Christian art of Assisi that so charms us!

At the top of the hill is the ruin of a feudal castle, whose very legend seems covered with the dust of ages. Behind, rising bare and majestic, so lofty as to make the hill on which Assisi rests shrink into insignificance, is Monte

Subasio, connected with so many legends of the early history of Francis and the Order. Such is Assisi today, let me repeat—a stranded bit out of the Middle Age, preserved for our modern inspection.

In the time of Francis, however, Assisi was not a stranded town; rather, it was a busy, active community, able to keep its little army for the ever-recurring neighborhood warfare of the time, and to send its merchants far and wide, not only through Italy, but to France, Flanders, and beyond. Indeed, the father of Francis, Pietro Bernadone by name, was one of the traveling cloth merchants of Assisi; and that meant, if not more than it would mean today, at least something widely different. It meant that the father of Francis, going on those long journeys to France and beyond, would take with him not only personal servants but armed retainers to protect him and his property from marauders by the way, for life and property were not safe in the Middle Age to the degree to which we have made them safe today. Such a traveling merchant would be the news-gatherer and disperser of the age, welcomed as guest at castle, abbey, and palace alike, because bringing the last news from some far-off land.

It was on the father's return from one of those long journeys into France that he found the little son had been born to him in his

absence; and the careful mother, anxious for her child's spiritual salvation, had already had him baptized under another name; but the father had him rechristened "Francesco," doubtless in honor of France, which he seems to have loved dearly.

We know that all through his boyhood Francis came intimately in touch with that French Provençal poetry and song, just then coming into being, since in the period of his mission, Francis would at times pick two pieces of wood from the ground, hold one to his shoulder, as if it were a violin, and with the other pretend to be playing upon it, and singing a French love song; but singing to the music, not the words of the French poem, but the story of the sacrifice of Christ. God's troubadour, Christ's jongleur, he was called. He was so indeed, for he united with the high spiritual gospel that love of nature, chivalry toward womanhood, and eager interest in far-off lands that marked the troubadour songs, and made them prophetic of later poetry.

That is about all we know of the early education of Francis. Perhaps it would be fairer to say that we know he had very little conventional schooling: his education came from other sources, as we shall see.

In his youth it was planned that Francis should succeed his father in the cloth business,

but he seems to have paid little attention to that coming vocation, spending his time in a careless round of pleasure-seeking with the young men and women of noble family in Assisi. Apparently, his parents rejoiced that their son, who was not of aristocratic lineage, was the welcomed comrade of these youths of the nobility.

On one occasion Francis went out with the men of Assisi to fight in one of the ever-recurring battles with nearby Perugia. This time the men of Assisi were defeated. Francis was one of those taken prisoner, and carried away for an entire year of captivity. Though kindly treated he was much of the time alone, with no opportunity for association with his young companions, and he seems to have done much earnest thinking. He must have asked himself: "Suppose I had been killed on the field of battle, instead of being taken prisoner, what then? Is there anything in my life that is worth while and that has eternal meaning?" You know what the answer must have been.

Released at the end of the year, he came home to Assisi. The young companions sought him out; he joined them for the old round of festivities, but somehow they had lost their meaning. More and more he tended to draw apart alone for meditation and prayer. Then followed a period of desperate illness; for weeks his life was despaired of, and during the long

period of slow recovery again he did much earnest thinking. He rose from the sickbed a changed man. It was no longer possible to join the young companions. Instead, he wandered through the town, out the great gate in the stone wall, down among the gnarled trunks and under the shimmering leaves of the olive orchards, to a little half-hidden and abandoned monastery and chapel of Saint Damian, there to kneel in prayer before a world-old figure of Christ on the cross.

We made our pilgrimage to Saint Damian; we too stood before the Christ of Saint Damian, kept today as a cherished relic in the older portion of the church of Santa Clara in Assisi. It is not a true work of art, done as it was by some forgotten artisan of the Middle Age; but done with such sincerity, such belief in the idea expressed, that as the dark-robed sister held the sacred object up, in the dim light, for our inspection, it almost seemed as if the Christ of Saint Damian might speak to us. Must it not have spoken to Francis, ear and heart alike aquiver, waiting for some message out of the spiritual universe? So, as he knelt there hour after hour in the silence, it seemed to him that the lips moved, the head bent toward him, and he heard, if not with his physical ear, at least sounding through every chamber of his heart, the words, "Francis, build my house!"

Francis of Assisi was one of the few entirely literal Christians we are privileged to know about, one of the few who do not make allegorical what is difficult to live literally; who do not say that the Sermon on the Mount is a lovely gospel and well fitted for the Kingdom of Heaven, but rather too good for our business and social world. He was one of the few—you can almost count them on the fingers of your two hands—who seek to live in their conduct what they take to be the literal teaching of their chosen Master.

So, with the message ringing through him, Francis sprang to his feet and looked about him, saw that the little chapel in which he had been praying was tumbling down in one corner. With his own hands, quite unused to hard manual labor, he sought to lift the rude stones back into place. If some passer-by paused, curious to see this son of a wealthy family engaged in such humble labor, Francis asked the traveler to lend his hands, and lift at least one stone into place, for the honor and glory of Christ. It all was symbolic of what he was to do in the period of his mission.

Afterward this initial annunciation was interpreted by his followers. You remember how Giotto portrays it: Francis, Il Poverello, the little poor one, with a great cathedral tilted over on his shoulder. He was to rebuild the house

of Christ, remold the institutions of Christendom. That was the view of his followers; but to Francis the message meant that he should take the task just at hand, and do it with all his might.

What shall we say of this conversion of Francis? Well, we will not try to explain mysteries of the spiritual life. This much we can say without question: most men and women go through this world never facing ultimate questions except in rare crises of life. When the fabric of our ambitions lies in ruins at our feet; when we have sinned, and in an agony of unavailing remorse realize the sad mess we have made of our lives; when Death meets us by the way and we stretch our hands into the gloom, hungering

> ". . . for the touch of a vanished hand
> And the sound of a voice that is still,"

then we cry out, "Why are we here, what does it all mean, and whither do we go?" The days come and pass, however, beating one after another on the sensitive shores of the heart, like the waves of a quiet summer sea upon the sand. We get benumbed, and the ultimate questions are put aside and forgotten. Perhaps it is well that it is so. Perhaps life would become too unbearably tragic if many of us had to face ultimate questions most of the time. There are

some men and women, however, who are driven by the nature of their own souls into the presence of these ultimate questions. Once they have come to consciousness, these few can never put them aside again unanswered. Like the patriarch of old, they must wrestle with the angel, and, even at the expense of being lamed in the contest, dare not let go till the blessing is won. Such an one was Saint Paul, overcome by the vision on the road to Damascus. Such an one was Dante, in the heart of the Middle Age, wandering from place to place, seeking for his proud, hot soul, peace. Such an one was Tolstoy, struggling with all the powers of darkness, striving to wring some answer from the spiritual universe. Such an one was Francis, forced by the nature of his own soul into the presence of these ultimate questions, compelled to find an answer or perish in the attempt.

He meditated long and earnestly on all the passages of Christ's teaching known to him, and especially on the word of Jesus to the rich youth, which seemed to fit his own situation: where Jesus told the young man that it was not enough to have obeyed the law and the prophets from his childhood on: he must go home and sell all his possessions, give the proceeds to the poor, and then he might come and begin the spiritual life. The youth, you remember, went away sorrowing, as he had great possessions!

So, on one occasion, after much meditation and without taking anyone into his confidence, Francis went into his father's stable, saddled and bridled a horse, loaded it with rich cloths from the shop, rode away to a neighboring town where a fair was in progress, sold the horse and all it carried, and came back to give the money to the priest of Saint Damian for the poor.

When he returned home, he found his father furious; and you say, "The property was his father's and did not belong to Francis." Ah, I think he would have responded, "That is making too fine an intellectual distinction when the words of Christ are at stake." Let us acknowledge frankly that Francis had comparatively little of that much lauded and quite important virtue of our industrial civilization which we call common sense. He had much, however, of that vastly more important virtue of uncommon sense—the sense for divine things, for what is most worth while—the Kingdom of God and his righteousness. Since many of us spend most of our lives seeking things we care little about, always imagining leisure will come to seek ends for which we care deeply, and usually passing out from this scene of things before the leisure comes, is it not well that now and again there come into the world men and women so all-absorbed in the thing most worth while, the

Kingdom of God and his righteousness, that they have neither mind nor attention for all those other things that may or may not be added unto us? Such an one was Francis, all absorbed in the one thing needful, and careless of all else.

After the episode with the horse, Francis was confined in his room for a time by his father, but that was not the way to break even his gentle spirit, and the mother, from whom he seems to have got his own gentleness, in the end released him. Then the Bishop of Assisi was asked to decide between father and son. You know the scene of the renunciation of Francis, portrayed by Giotto, in a chapel in Santa Croce, in Florence, which Ruskin calls "one of the most perfect little Gothic chapels in all Italy." In the center is the Bishop, before him the father, in threatening attitude, his son's clothing on his arm, and friendly neighbors about him. At either end of the fresco, quaintly enough, Giotto has placed a little boy, with a great stone in his hand which he is about to hurl at the undutiful son. Beside the Bishop is Francis, who had just gone aside, removed all his clothing, and returned to give it to his earthly father, and, naked, to take refuge under the robe of the Bishop, dedicating himself to his Father in heaven.

It is a scene I have always felt would have been ludicrous or impossible in any Anglo-

Saxon land, in any Teutonic land. It is only in sunny, fanciful Italy and in the sweet personality of Saint Francis that it becomes sublime. It is sublime there, since it unites the two characteristics that were in Saint Francis throughout his mission—the intense literalness: he would have returned his earthly body to his father, could he have done so; since that was impossible, he gave every stitch of clothing upon it; but with the literalness, a far-reaching idealism, making every action a symbol of something far beyond itself. Giotto, the shepherd lad, whom Cimabue found drawing with a bit of charcoal on a piece of stone, and took to Florence to make of the pupil a greater painter than the master had been, Giotto had the same two qualities. To the limit of his technical skill he copied the animals, trees, men, women, and buildings that he saw about him, but with that literalness, the same lofty idealism, making every figure in his paintings a symbol of something beyond itself. Truly he was a child and follower of Francis of Assisi!

The Bishop decided the case in favor of Francis; and he was free now to go about what he considered his Father's business.

He went down in the valley and lived for a time in an earthen cell, near a poor little stone chapel, so humble that it was called the Portiuncula, or Saint Mary's of the Little Portion.

The spirit of Francis, however, was far removed from conventional monasticism. He was not fleeing from a doomed Sodom and Gomorrah to save his own soul. Rather, his cry was, "Master, what wouldst thou have me do?" He wanted to live the Christ life and do Christ's work in the world. So, after some weeks of meditation and prayer, he bethought him of some task he might fulfill. He went down the valley to a group of lepers, wretched outcasts of the Middle Age, sometimes herded together in dens that would have been unspeakable for the beasts of the field; but their hideous sores and the stench of their habitations so overwhelmed his aesthetic sensibility that he turned back. In a night of weeping and prayer, he achieved the great victory: he conquered himself. The next day he was able to return to the lepers and give them not only Christian counsel but actual physical ministration, cleansing their wounds and relieving their sufferings. This too was symbolic of all he was to do in his mission.

Now, this man, with nothing of the assurance that might have come from having sat at the feet of the masters and been trained in the rhetoric of the schools, dared something than which no task could have been more difficult: he dared to go up to the great church of Assisi and preach to his townsmen, to the men and

women who had known him since his childhood. It would not have been so hard had he gone somewhere else, to Florence, Milan, or nearby Perugia; but to preach in Assisi, where everybody knew him, was indeed hard, for "can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" and Nazareth is the place where we have always lived. Why, we say, we knew the boy's father, what can this son of a carpenter teach us? He has not even learned from the masters, and, besides, if God had meant to make a revelation, surely he would not have passed us by, to light on such an one! As they said in the Galilee of old so they said in the Assisi of Francis. In the face of it he went up to preach to them.

There were two qualities in Francis that won individuals, in the throng that came to scoff and ridicule or from idle curiosity. The first was the man's transparent spiritual sincerity. He meant what he said, and he meant it out of the heart of his life. He was not preaching of something he had read about, that happened long ago, but out of his own spiritual struggle and experience. Such preaching touched men then, as it always moves them.

There was a second quality. Francis had lived so close to the nature mother, he had spent so many nights on the hillside under the clear-shining stars, he had listened to the spheric music the wind made in the umbrella pines,

had watched so often the sunset light on the gray-green leaves of the olive trees, that all this beautiful nature world had become a vocabulary, to clothe his spiritual gospel.

May I turn aside for a moment to say that the same two qualities marked pre-eminently the Teacher Francis chose to follow? The One who walked by the Sea of Galilee and taught the multitude from the mountain was not only characterized by transcendent spiritual sincerity; he too considered the lilies of the field, how they grow, and clothed the spiritual gospel in all the beauty of the nature world. I mention it merely to show how true a follower of his chosen Master Francis was.

So they came to Francis, men of high estate and men of low, but alike tired out with the world, saying, "We want to live this glad, free life of the spirit of which you tell us."

What was Francis to do with them? He had not meant to found an Order. I suppose nothing was further from his original intention than to add one more to the already numerous institutions of the Church; but the men came; he had to plan a way of life for them; and so the embryonic Order came into being.

Francis seems even to have broken rules of the Church, apparently because he was unaware of them. He did not realize that he should demand a period of novitiate from those

who wished to join him, before admitting them to the Order. He read nothing like that in the teaching of Jesus. Jesus had said, "Come, leave the plane beside the bench and the net beside the sea, with the fish uncaught; let the dead past bury its dead and come!" So Francis said to them.

So far as he knew it he taught them the conventional rule of medieval monasticism, with its three vows of obedience, celibacy, and poverty. He dwelt particularly on poverty, however, and it had unusual meaning for him. By poverty Francis did not mean beggary, living by the labor of others; but as he looked over the world, it seemed to him that everywhere men were the victims of their own possessions. He saw men of great wealth living to keep their estates running—the most melancholy form of slavery known to man! At the other end of society he saw poor wretches struggling for the dry crust of existence. To both alike he said, "Come out from under this slavery to things and be free in the glad freedom of the spirit."

To this gospel of blessed poverty, however, he added a more blessed gospel of work. Each was to go on doing anything he could do helpfully: work at the carpenter's bench, plant vegetables in the garden; but be free part of the time to preach the gospel, and all the time to live it.

To these teachings he added the even more blessed gospel of personal service. In the early days Francis and his first companions would go into the kitchens of persons dwelling about, cook the dinner for them, and wash and dry the dishes and put them away. Of course that could not last; it was too beautiful to last. In a brief time the companions of Francis were the welcome guests in the homes of the rich and powerful; but in the early days no form of personal service was too humble for them to fulfill it.

Just here we come upon a singular paradox. Personal service, done for love's sake, is about the sweetest thing there is in human life. If you look back over the years, you find the high points of memory are the little, not unremembered acts of kindness and of love done for you by those who loved you: the gift of a flower, the little courtesy that made the day sweet—actions so slight that you would hardly tell your dearest friend of them lest he misunderstand; yet it is those same deeds, done for hire in the ordinary work of the world, that make the one form of labor which many still look upon with contempt. I do not know that there will ever be a solution of the vexed problem of domestic and other forms of personal service; I would even be willing to say that I hope there will not be while present attitudes prevail; but

of one point I am sure: if a solution ever comes, we must take a hint from Francis. He knew, what his Master knew, that the sweetest work in the world is not that done for a vague humanity, but work done for individuals, that makes life sweeter and happier for them. Francis understood that, as did his Master, and thus in the early period there was all the beauty of joyfully given personal service.

There were days, oh, weeks at a time, when Francis could not remain with the brothers in the cells near the Portiuncula. Like every other saint, poet, prophet and spiritual leader in the history of mankind, he needed his forty days in the wilderness, and needed them again and again. At times, therefore, he would leave the brothers, climb the hill to Assisi, go through the town and out the great gate in the city wall, through the olive orchards and over the shoulder of Monte Subasio, till he came to a canyon that swept its way down the bare mountainside. There, with Assisi far hidden over the shoulder of the mountain to the right, the valley beneath him and the fold on fold of purple mountains beyond, Francis would spend weeks at a time, gathering in solitude the spiritual balance and serenity that sent him back to the brotherhood and the world, better equipped for service.

We made our pilgrimage to the Carceri, as

the little monastery in the fold of Monte Subasio is called. It was on a lovely December morning, not long before Christmas, with the sky deep blue, the sun brilliantly shining, but the valley below filled with a billowy ocean of white fog, like any other sea, only the waves piled hill high, with here and there the top of an umbrella pine rising out of the surge. As we made our way through the ruined gate into the olive orchards, everywhere we heard snatches of peasant song, for it was the time when the olives were ripe, and the peasants were gathering the crop. We came upon them, whole families working together: little children picking up an occasional olive and feeling that they were helping, young men and maidens with the dream of life over them, strong men in the fullness of the day's work, old persons looking toward the valley of the shadow; but all working and singing together with that joy in outdoor labor in the sunshine which the Italians understand so much better than any other modern people. As we looked upon them it seemed to us that here was the very audience of Francis. These were the simple, everyday people, whose lives he sought to lift, with the new-old, old-new gospel of love, brotherhood, and personal service.

The day grew hot and the road dusty. It was past the hour for our noonday meal when we

reached the little monastery in the fold of the mountain. After the time of Francis, this monastery had been prosperous; but with the modern disestablishment of so many church institutions in Italy, it has returned to its primitive Franciscan poverty and simplicity. We found just a few brothers living there in utter poverty, for the sake of their faith. One of them welcomed us, acted as guide, showing us the scenes associated with Saint Francis. Here was the stone bed where he slept. Then the brown-frocked brother took us to the middle of the canyon, and in his musical Italian, told the story of one of the reported miracles of Francis. In deep meditation Francis was sitting here one day and a stream of water was tumbling down the canyon. Francis turned and said, "Sister Water, you disturb my meditation; be still and let me think." The brother added that from that day to this no water had ever come down the canyon; and we believed him; for it is one of those legends, so much truer than history, because instinct with the very spirit of the life about which it plays.

As we were about to go, with a hesitation born of his poverty, the brother said, "Could I not offer you a glass of wine?" We were tired with the long tramp up the mountain. It was, as I have said, past the hour for our noonday meal, and we gladly accepted. We were taken

into the refectory, a large, bare room, with an earthen floor, and seated beside a centuries-old pine table. Another brother, who acted as steward, served us the cheap native wine, then with renewed hesitation, some of the unsalted bread of the Italian peasant; for salt was a government monopoly, bought at a tobacco shop of a uniformed official of the Italian government; and the poor people could have little or no salt in their bread. Finally, to grace the repast, we were offered a bit of sheep's cheese from Monte Subasio. That was all; but it was given with such courtesy, such recognition of our common need and brotherhood, that it seemed as if, for the first time, I could understand what the Lord's Supper might mean in certain circumstances and relations.

As we went down the mountain, not by the high road but over the rocks and through the plowed ground under the olive trees, it seemed as though Francis were with us all the way. At last we understood what he tried to do; it was so simple—not to bring in a remote theology or philosophy, but to live and teach and make prevail again the new-old, old-new gospel of love, brotherhood, and personal service.

There was now to come into the life of this man the most powerful of all influences making for noble living—the love of a woman. Yes, much abused as the word is by unworthy atti-

tudes, there is no other word in our language quite good enough to describe the friendship of Saint Francis and Santa Clara, except the one word "love." When I use it, however, I must add, to show the plane on which the word is used, that in spite of all the abuse and scandal that has been heaped on everything medieval by those who had one cause to build up and another to tear down, no breath of suspicion has ever touched this sweetest of friendships. Indeed, this delicate wild flower of medieval personal life is so fragile that one hesitates even to bend and breathe its fragrance, lest one crush its petals. We must get its perfume, however, to see the full meaning of the mission of Francis.

Santa Clara was the daughter of one of the noble families of Assisi. She had been one of the throng that went to the Cathedral Church to hear Francis preach. Deeply moved by him, she had gone home to face in her turn ultimate questions. In deepening perplexity she called to her the one who had awakened her and asked his counsel. Francis advised her to come away then, and live the higher spiritual life. Other women wished to join her, and Francis led them down to the abandoned monastery, near the chapel where the light had first come to him, to Saint Damian, and there established them. Francis had not meant to found this Order any more than the first, but

the women came; he had to plan a way of life for them; and so the Sisters of Santa Clara were born.

The relation of the two Orders in the early days was very lovely—like a great human family. The brothers came and tilled the garden for the Sisters of Santa Clara; the sisters mended the brown frocks of the brothers when these were torn. There was the interchange of courtesy and service that makes life sweet. Of course, that could not last. The ideal that Francis, in common with all high souls of the middle ages accepted, made it impossible that it should last, for Francis never questioned that marriage, even sanctioned by the Church, was below the celibate life, above and apart—an ideal, if I may express my own conviction, that has caused more unnecessary suffering, than any other that has appeared in the religious life of mankind. While thus it was possible at first to have this close companionship with one who understood him better than any man could understand him, just when his work seemed reeling to ruin and he most of all needed a friend, he had to fight the battle all alone.

A little story tells the situation better than any amount of exposition. It is one of the saddest stories of medieval personal life. It tells how, in that dark hour, when all his consecrated work seemed defeated and in vain,

Francis went out from his cell on Monte Averno one winter night, barefoot and clad only in the simple woolen robe of his Order. He knelt in the snow, wept bitterly, and prayed for a long time. Then he rose and made in the snow one large mound and a number of little ones, and said, "There is thy wife, and these are thy children;" and, the story concludes, went back into his cell, and was never tempted in that way by the devil again!

It is so sad, this bit of medieval personal life, for the temptation of Francis was no blind riot of the senses. It was utterly different from the lustful dreams of an Antony in his desert cell. It was a longing for the life that is sweet and human and consecrated from above. It was the hunger to see:

> "Their unborn faces shine
> Beside the never lighted fire;"

and this sweet human desire, which most of us would think so natural and right, seemed to Francis a temptation from the powers of darkness.

If there be an element of limitation here, note that it is not ours, and we are in no danger from it. There is no danger that we may sprinkle ashes on our food to avoid the vice of gluttony, as Francis did, or that we should spend nights in the snow, struggling with dreams of

our imagination, as he may have done. There is grave danger that we may accept so carelessly the great annunciations of life as to lose their high significance in the bare light of the commonplace. There is a familiarity that breeds contempt: it is the jangling, discordant contact of the outer life, when the intimacy of the spirit and the vision of the ideal are gone. Only too often, when yesterday lies still and clear in the pitiless white light of the irrevocable, we realize the truth of the common proverb, which tells us that "The gods visit us in household guise; and we never know them till they have left us." Thus even here, Francis is corrective to us, with a strength complementary to our weakness.

Early in his mission Francis had begun those troubadour journeys that marked him as the wandering minstrel of the spirit. One of the first had been to Rome, to gain papal sanction for the embryonic Order. Francis and certain of the first companions walked all the way from Assisi to Rome. The Pope, though perhaps at first amused, was finally deeply moved and gave a qualified sanction, telling Francis to go home and do his work, and if he succeeded, he would receive the papal benediction. Francis went back to Assisi singing hymns all the way, having the confidence of the born leader that he must succeed.

Even with this partial sanction, Francis and the brothers were free now to go through Italy and beyond preaching the gospel. Everywhere they found men and women eager to respond, as they always are, when the same gospel is preached, out of the heart of life, with the same sincerity. So they came to him in throngs, since they too would live the glad, free life of the spirit, of which he told them. What was Francis to do with them? They had their duties in the world; many were married, with children: they could not abandon their responsibilities and become members of the two celibate Orders. So the Third Order was born. Francis had not thought to found it any more than the other two, but the people came; he had to plan a way of life for them, and the Third Order was formed. Two Orders for the apostolic, one for the common Christian life: two for the brothers and sisters, living above and apart, with special consecration; one for men and women in the world, accepting its duties and opportunities but dedicated to the Christian ideal—such was the plan.

Now the inevitable happened: men high in authority in the Church saw that here was a wonderful instrument to be used for the purposes of the organization. Do not blame them that they sought so to use it; they would have been derelict to every idea of duty they held

sacred had they not done so. They came, therefore, to Francis, men who were his superiors in the Church—for Francis never took other than minor orders—and talked to him in this way: "Francis, you are a wonderful preacher of the gospel of Christ; there has been no one in a hundred years who could touch the hearts of men as you can; but you know nothing about organization; that is our work, we are trained statesmen. You do your work, and let us do ours; you win the converts, and let us decide what is best for the Orders."

The brain of Francis, his humility, his obedience as a true son of the Church answered, "Yes, certainly;" but the heart of Francis, his closeness to his Master answered, "No." He must obey the literal teaching of Jesus, as his conscience interpreted it, and not turn the regulation of the Orders over to those influenced by expediency. Thus he fell into that bitterest of situations, where one part of the mind and spirit struggles with another part, and the man does not understand the meaning of the conflict.

A story tells it better. There is good reason to believe that Francis made that romantic troubadour minstrel journey to the Orient and preached before the Soldan of the East. On his return he found the Order changed: the monasteries as institutions holding property. This was opposed to his deepest conviction of the

teaching of Jesus. He could not violate his conscience, nor could he go against his superiors in the Church, so he resigned the minister generalship of the Order, remaining within it only as a private member.

A lesser incident reveals the situation still better. After this time one of the brothers wanted to own his prayer book and went to the minister general, obtaining permission to do so. He was not quite content, however, without the sanction of Francis, and kept asking him: "Can not I own my Psalter? I will read the service and do my work better." Worn with much asking, Francis finally said, "Go to the minister general and ask him; if he says you may, you may."

The brother turned away rejoicing, having already obtained that permission. He had gone but a little way when he heard Francis calling to him, and turned to see Francis running to catch up with him. When he came, Francis said, "O Brother, where was I when I told you to go and ask the minister general?" They turned back together in the sunshine, the spot was pointed out, Francis knelt upon it and said: "O Brother, forgive me; I did wrong! The Brother Minor should have nothing. He should go out in utter poverty in things of the earth, but with all the wealth of the spirit, to preach the gospel of Christ!"

You do not hold his ideal; but believing it as he did, can you not see how he suffered in being prevented from fulfilling it by forces he could not control?

Toward the end the clouds lifted from his long-troubled spirit. Francis learned one more lesson, the hardest that all of us who would help the world must learn—the lesson that our task is to drop a pebble into the pond of time but not to see the ripple touch the distant shore; that our work is to plant seed corn in the furrow of life but not to see the harvest which lies in hands higher than our own.

With the learning of this hardest lesson the skies brightened over Francis, something of the old geniality returned to him, and with a lighter heart than he had known for years he went to Assisi and to Saint Damian, for what he knew would be a last visit with Santa Clara. He was almost blind. Poor Sister Body, as he called the temple of his spirit, had borne her burden almost to the end of the path.

There at Saint Damian, under the daily ministration of his friend, in the little upstairs garden of Santa Clara, from which you look away to the blue mountains, Francis composed the crowning expression of his spirit: that *Song of the Creatures* or *Canticle of the Sun,* which a modern critic, Renan, has said is prophetic of all later poetry. It is so, indeed, for in it Francis

thanks God not only for our brother the sun, who "shines with a very great splendor"; for our sister water, who "is very serviceable to us, and humble and precious and clean"; for our brother fire, who is "bright and pleasant and very mighty and strong," but for winds and all weather by which "Thou upholdest life in all creatures"; and for "our mother the earth"; then changing the key, for "our sister the death of the body," and that we may die in such faith as will bring us into the life everlasting.

It does forecast what is best in the poetry that followed, since it unites the Francis of the spiritual gospel with the preacher to the birds, the lover of the trees and mountains and of all God's creatures.

Not long after this last return to Assisi the end came to the life of Francis. Soon changes came in the Orders. There was such falling away from his teaching that, in a later time, men high in authority felt it necessary to disestablish the Franciscan, with other monasteries, to relieve the industrial life of Europe from the burden of idle people.

So you say he failed? No, he did not fail! On the last night of our first stay in Assisi we went out from the little medieval inn to the piazza of Santa Clara to view one more Umbrian sunset. The sky was filled with fleeces of white cloud that turned to gold, deepened to red, then

softened to dimmer hues, until from cloud tip to cloud tip the color faded; the stars came out, clear-shining, and there was over us that leaden-gray night air, *"aer bruno"* Dante calls it, that strikes the chill to the heart. It seemed so sad: that marvelous sunset, holocaust of nature to God, all gone, lost in the abyss of night and nothingness, never to be recalled!

The sunset from the piazza of Santa Clara was not lost. It had touched our hearts. It was a precious memory for many a weary day that was to come, for many a hard place in the road we were to travel.

So is it with these men, who come out of the darkness into the light, do their work, pass so swiftly across this scene of things, and again are lost in the darkness. Their work becomes covered with the dust of ages, their very names may be forgotten; and we ask, "For what was it all?" But no work that has touched a human mind and heart can pass while man is. We may not see the issue, but it is there. Always there have been true children of Francis within the portals of his three Orders; but not all his true children are there. Dante and Giotto rank high among them; and there are men and women on the earth today, who may know nothing of him, but who believe more deeply in the life of the spirit and live it more worthily because Francis of Assisi walked the fields and

olive orchards of Italy, living and teaching the new-old, old-new gospel of love, brotherhood, and personal service.

Is he not a symbol of the living and teaching that will redeem the world in any time? It is not that we should put on his brown robe, but that we should live with his consecration; not to follow his ideal but to strive toward our own, with the same earnestness. It is not a new gospel that is needed, but *the gospel anew*. The world needs today, as in every yesterday, to be called back from the senseless pursuit of fashion, dissipation, and the possession of many things, back to the few great, deep, simple realities, that make life in every age; back to love, work, little children, personal service, hunger to know truth and appreciate beauty—the eternal realities of the spirit, by which alone men live in all times.

So, high in the group of spiritual heroes who have given the inspiration of moral progress, we place this sweet, unlettered, loving and lovable saint of the Middle Age, Francis of Assisi, the most perfect Christian since Christ!

III

ERASMUS

The Humanist

THE forces of modern civilization first appear in the Renaissance, that rediscovery of the earth life of man in all its significance and beauty, and the first expression came in the marvelous flowering of art and intellect in Italy.

When the impulse crossed the Alps into the northern world, among a less cultivated but more earnest people, it took widely different form. Its first phase, fostered by the scholars of the New Learning, was a movement of humanism, seeking to recover the culture of classic antiquity and unite it with the teaching of apostolic Christianity. This constructive work was broken in upon by the second phase, the storm of the Reformation, plunging the world again into theological controversy, but followed by the counter-reformation in the mother Church of Christendom, deeply fertilizing the spirit and preparing the way for the depth and complexity of modern culture. This double awakening of the Northland may be called the second birth throes of the modern spirit, moral and religious in character, as the first, in the

Italian Renaissance, had been aesthetic and intellectual.

If the northern peoples were less cultivated than the Italians, they were more solid and earnest in character. In contrast with the outdoor life of sunny Italy, they had a grayer nature world, with long, hard winters and indoor evenings for reading and study. Thus in place of a brilliant Platonic Academy they developed solid Latin and Greek learning, with studiously prepared editions of the classics.

While Italy continued to be a group of warring city-states, the northern and western peoples were developing national consciousness and unity, with churches increasingly independent, in contrast to the complete subordination to the papal system in Italy. This led to resentment of the overlordship of Italy, and especially of the draining away of funds, needed for northern churches, further to embellish those of Italy.

Feudalism was declining in the North, and industries and trade were rapidly developing. Cities were becoming increasingly independent, with the burgher class freeing itself from domination by petty princes and establishing the beginnings of republican institutions.

Painting was not the chief avenue of expression, as it had been in Italy. The Dutch and German painters turned from the religious tradition, with its sensuous and spiritual mysti-

cism, to studies of common life: peasants making holiday, candle-lighted interiors, or portraits of men and women.

Gothic architecture, grave and towering, uniting the grotesque with the tragic, was at home in the North. The northern peoples took their religion more seriously, drawing back from the gorgeous ritualistic forms of Italy and shocked by debaucheries the more fanciful temper of Italy accepted.

In the northern awakening was thus an earnest, brooding new life, promising a widely different culture from the South, growing in independent consciousness into a solid moral and religious humanism.

Of the first and more normal phase of this northern awakening, Erasmus was the prophet and leader. Without the unfaltering heroism of Socrates and the transparent spiritual consecration of Saint Francis, loving luxury, cultivating wealthy patrons, disliking martyrdom, worldly and life-loving, nevertheless Erasmus was profoundly earnest in seeking to unite the inheritance of classic culture with the moral teaching of apostolic Christianity, in a reform which should begin at the top of European society and work down layer by layer until both the world and the Church were purged and transformed.

Enemy of the dying system of the Middle Age,

prophet of modern culture with its enlightenment and toleration, solid in learning, tirelessly working, in spite of frail health and recurring money difficulties, Erasmus went steadily forward on his own path. Working for constructive aims, he stood between the warring parties, furiously attacked from both sides.

Foregoing opportunities and declining appointments that would have given him the ease and luxury he desired, because they would have tied his hands and interfered with his aims, consistently following those aims in spite of everything and everybody, shrugging his shoulders and accepting, if reluctantly, the measure of martyrdom necessary to his mission, Erasmus deserves his place among the great moral leaders.

Erasmus was born about 1467 and died in 1536. His work was thus the first strong impulse in the sixteenth century, as that of Saint Francis had been in the thirteenth.

The background of his life is shrouded in romantic mystery. Charles Reade has portrayed and interpreted this in the charming, but now seldom read, novel, *The Cloister and the Hearth.* Reade claimed his story was based on authentic documents, though later scholarship is skeptical. Anyway, the story carries the spiritual elements influencing the development

of Erasmus, and for that reason is worth briefly retelling, as Reade gives it.

Margaret and Gerhard were betrothed young Hollanders, at a time when betrothal was often accepted as marriage. Trouble came, and Gerhard was compelled to flee from his native land. He went south to Italy, and word was sent to him, probably with the purpose of breaking off his love relationship, of Margaret's death. In grief and despair he threw himself into the arms of the Church, taking monastic vows. Returning home later, he found Margaret not dead but the mother of his little son. So follows the struggle between the monastic vows and the human leading and duty, between the Cloister and the Hearth.

Margaret, a high example of the "Eternal Womanly," is one of the noblest women in literature. Always she sees right and rings true; but Gerhard, with the man's need to get things in terms of the understanding, falls between—hence the tragic suffering.

The measure of truth in Reade's story is hard to estimate. We know from Erasmus himself that he had a brother. Nevertheless, some such romance as the story tells must be assumed behind the life of Erasmus, not only to explain his enemies' reiterated charge of illegitimate birth, but to account for the intense hatred of

the monastic life and all it represented, which marked Erasmus from childhood on.

He was his mother's child: gray-blue eyes, flaxen hair, clear-cut features, and a melodious voice. His name, Gerhard Gerhard, meant "doubly desired." In the pedantic custom of the time he transliterated it into the Greco-Latin Desiderius Erasmus.

At nine Erasmus was sent to a school at Deventer, kept by a friend of his father's. Already his passion for books was evident. He learned quickly to write and speak Latin, which was the language of the fraternity of scholars throughout Europe, and in which his own books were later written. We are told that, while at school at Deventer, Erasmus memorized the whole of Horace and Terence. It is interesting to note that among his fellow pupils was the Adrian, who afterward became Pope, and with whom then Erasmus had intimate correspondence.

At the age of eleven Erasmus was left doubly orphaned. There was some inheritance, enough he indicates to take care of his brother and himself, but it was in the hands of guardians. They neglected or misused the property until it was dissipated. To escape an accounting they brought every sort of pressure to force Erasmus to enter a monastery. In his letter to the Pope, later on, asking a permanent

dispensation, Erasmus tells how he was cajoled, tricked, and threatened. Instinctively hating the monastic life, the boy heroically resisted. Finally, the guardians appealed to his love of study, making him believe that the monastery offered the one opportunity for him to lead the life of student and scholar, and so bribed him to the experiment of a novitiate. He was given liberal access to books, entire freedom to study, with generous promises for all he desired. So at seventeen he succumbed and took his vows. It is a pitiful story!

For a time he was well treated and allowed to continue his studies; but since books were his passion, that passion had, of course, to be mortified, under the monastic theory, and all books were taken from him. He was subjected to the rigid monastic regime, and assigned the hardest tasks, to break his spirit. Frail in health, subject to recurring illness, needing delicate food and regular hours for eating and sleeping, he was utterly unfitted to endure the monastic fasts and other ritual. He had, moreover, no call to the monastic life and no interest in its aims; thus his condition became one of abject misery.

There are two senses in which we use the phrase "divine service": one is moral and the other ritualistic. We feel that we are serving God when we endeavor to lead upright lives

and do good to our fellow men; but we also call it divine service to go to church on Sunday and engage in religious worship. With the frequent degradation of the monasteries that came at the close of the Middle Age, the moral service declined, while the ritualistic was substituted for it and carried to the last extreme. Luther, also an Augustinian monk, remarked that he had tried faithfully that path, and had it led to salvation, he must certainly have found it, but had been compelled to abandon that path as hopeless. It was ritualism combined with immorality, in the monastic life of the time, that caused Erasmus to attack the monasteries as he did, throughout his career.

The wretched condition of Erasmus finally aroused the sympathy of the Prior and of a neighboring Bishop. With the Bishop's help, there was an appeal to the Pope, who granted Erasmus a temporary dispensation, to leave the monastery and serve as secretary to the Bishop of Cambrai, with the requirement that he should continue to wear the monastic dress. In spite of all the subsequent efforts that were made to compel him to re-enter the monastery, he never returned.

Freed from the bonds of the monastic life and working for the kindly Bishop, Erasmus was now launched on his life vocation as student and scholar. He spent some years at Cambrai,

increasingly chafing under giving so much time to routine secretarial work. Finally, with the Bishop's consent, he broke away and went to the university of Paris, eager to study Greek.

He had no funds except a small allowance from the Bishop. Advancing rapidly in his mastery of the Greek language, he began teaching it to pupils, to eke out his living expenses. Among his pupils were several young English noblemen: Lord Mountjoy, who became his friend and benefactor, and Lord Grey, uncle of the ill-fated Lady Jane Grey.

Erasmus was fortunate in being able to earn his living by teaching what he most of all wished to study. It is an ideal situation where one's cultural activities can be made one's vocation. That, let me say, has been one of the rewards of my own lifework: always I have been able to teach what I most desired to study.

The attitude of Erasmus in these Paris years is well shown in the advice he gave a young student:

> Read first the best books on the subject which you have in hand. Why learn what you will have to unlearn? Why overload your mind with too much food or with poisonous food? The important thing for you is not how much you know, but the quality of what you know. Divide your day, and give to each part of it a special occupation. Listen to your lecturer; commit what he tells you to memory; write it down if you will, but recollect it and make it your own. Never work at

night; it dulls the brain and hurts the health. Remember above all things that nothing passes away so rapidly as youth.[1]

We may be quite sure that Erasmus himself worked at night! Note, however, the combination of wise counsel and eager student spirit with delightful humor and irony. The one seemingly bad bit of advice is urging the student to commit his lecturer's words to memory, but we must remember that they had none of our rich educational paraphernalia at that time. The lecturer had to be both textbook and dictionary!

Erasmus had formed a lasting friendship with Jacob Battus, a relative of the Lord and Lady of Vere, who dwelt at the Castle of Tournehem, in Flanders. The Lord of Vere was apparently for a time a member of the student circle gathered about Erasmus. Erasmus disliked him but admired his Lady and hoped she might become his patroness. With no salaried position, ecclesiastical or secular, it was necessary to secure money assistance from private patrons to continue to work as independent scholar.

An invitation came to Battus and Erasmus to visit the Lord and Lady of Vere at their castle of Tournehem. Erasmus decided to combine the trip with one to Holland, in the hope of recovering some part of his inherited prop-

[1] Froude, *Life and Letters of Erasmus.*

erty. The journey was a wild one, in a fierce winter storm. He describes it with sparkling humor in a letter to Mountjoy: tells of leading his horse over the ice, and of sliding down the last hill with a spiked staff for a rudder. The only consolation, he remarks, was that there was no fear of robbers! Arriving, he found the Lady most gracious and charming, but the old man cross-grained and malignant, in spite of all that Erasmus says he had done for the Lord of Vere.

There was a sort of gay, adventurous mood in Erasmus, with an eager love of life. He went on alone to Holland, but failed to recover anything of his lost inheritance. On his return the plague, then afflicting Paris, drove him to Orleans. He wished to go to Italy to take his Doctor's degree and used every means to find a subsidizing patron. The Lady of Vere seemed the most promising chance, especially when her husband's death left her in unhampered control of the wealth. So Erasmus wrote repeatedly to Battus, urging an appeal to her. In a characteristic example, he says:

> Go yourself to the Lady. Take Adolf with you to present my petition, that he may touch his mother's heart, and do not let him ask too little. . . . Insist upon my delicacy. Say that my pride forbids my representing my necessities directly to herself. Tell her that I am in extreme distress . . . that a Doctor's degree can be obtained to advantage only in Italy, and that a

person so weak in health as I am cannot travel there with an empty purse. Tell her . . . that Erasmus will do more credit to her liberality than the theologians whom she has taken into her favor. They can only preach sermons: I am writing books that will live forever. They address single congregations: I shall be read by all the world. Theologians there will always be in abundance: the like of me comes but once in centuries.[2]

Not overly modest! If, however, conceit is overvaluing oneself, that is not conceit. Theologians there have always been in abundance: the like of Erasmus does come but once in centuries. His books have been read at least through several hundred years, and are delightful reading today. What saves the letter is its delicious humor, the quality that must have saved Erasmus in many a bitter crisis of attack and abuse.

His career raises the whole question of working under private, as compared with public, patronage. Carlyle, who, like Erasmus, struggled for years as an independent man of letters, questions whether we of this latter day are any better off, catering to the many-headed patron of the public, than when artist and man of letters sought the favor of Popes, princes and fine ladies.

At thirty Erasmus made his first visit to England, under the urging and with the help of his

[2] Froude, *Life and Letters of Erasmus.*

friend, Lord Mountjoy. England was just recovering from the long and destructive Wars of the Roses, and wakening to the new learning. She was particularly the land of promise. The fame of Erasmus had preceded him, and her scholars warmly welcomed him. He formed deep and lasting friendships, an outstanding one being with young Sir Thomas More. At Oxford University his knowledge of Greek greatly assisted scholars working without dictionaries and other conventional apparatus of later days.

Erasmus greatly enjoyed his stay in England and hoped he might find his permanent opportunity there. In his letters to friends on the Continent he praises the soft and delicious air, the learned scholars and thinkers, the large number of young men studying the classics, and remarks that "nature never formed a sweeter and happier disposition than that of Thomas More." He tells them that their friend Erasmus gets on well in the hunting field, can make a tolerable bow and smile graciously in polite society, whether he means it or not! One custom particularly charms him: the girls kiss you when you come, kiss you when you go, and again when you return; and he remarks that when one has tasted how soft and fragrant those lips are, one wishes to live forever in England.

It is clearly evident that Erasmus was not suited for the monastic life!

Through Sir Thomas More, Erasmus met the young Prince Henry, a boy of nine, who was to become king as Henry VIII, and was much impressed with the boy's fine promise.

The satisfactory position he had hoped for failed to develop, and Erasmus decided to return to the Continent. He had accumulated about a thousand dollars, from gifts of pupils and services he had rendered. England then had a law prohibiting the export of money, similar to that of Germany and some other countries at the present time. More, misunderstanding the law, advised Erasmus to have his money exchanged into French coin, which was done; and at the Dover customhouse the entire sum was taken from him, so that he arrived in Paris penniless! What he had earned in England was the largest sum he had ever had in hand at one time, and he was chagrined and disgusted over losing it.

Battus wrote to Mountjoy how thankful they were to have Erasmus back, but shocked to have him return insulted and plundered; however, they must not complain when Erasmus bears up so bravely, telling them that he has made friends in England who are worth more than all the gold of Croesus!

Shortly after his return Erasmus learned of a

poor fellow in the Netherlands imprisoned for heresy, with drastic punishment extended to all members of his family. Erasmus used all his influence to get the sentence reversed, and secured the victim's pardon. Like Voltaire in a later century, Erasmus fought repeatedly, at his own grave risk, to protect and free those suffering under ecclesiastical tyranny.

At thirty-three, following his return from England, Erasmus published his first important book, the *Adiges*. It contained a wealth of proverbial wisdom out of the classic past, with witty comment of his own. The book was immediately popular; and its wide sale not only helped the cause of humanism, but somewhat replenished his impoverished purse.

With all his love of ease and comfort, Erasmus continued to refuse tempting offers of ecclesiastical appointment, to dedicate himself untrammeled to the scholar's life. Fresh difficulties and disappointments came, but with irritation toward his patrons he held steadfastly to his aim. Although he wandered about almost as a vagabond student, his reputation and influence were rapidly growing. He was eager to edit, with commentaries, the New Testament and the Church Fathers, but was prevented by fresh difficulties.

In 1504 he published the *Christian Knight's Manual,* the subject having been earlier sug-

gested to him by the Lady of Vere, who wanted guidance for her husband in ruling his estates. The book was a new moral and spiritual Machiavelli, in which Erasmus sought to awaken the independent consciousness of the North, and the sense of Christian responsibility in her rulers. He argued that taxation should be lessened, and that kings should not go to war, except to protect and benefit their whole people—an idea far in advance of the age! The book is, indeed, one of the best expressions of Erasmus as social reformer.

There were new wanderings: to Antwerp, Orleans, and a second journey to England. Meantime the feeling that he must get to Italy had been steadily growing. He decided to make a personal appeal to the Lady of Vere. After a somewhat fulsome compliment, telling her he hoped to make her the fourth famous Anna, he wrote that he must acquire the absurd title of Doctor to be regarded as learned, though it would not make him a hair the better: since, like Hercules, he had to fight with monsters, he must wear the lion's skin. So he adds, he had brazened himself to beg her help.

Evidently, the worship of educational badges, which now afflicts us, had begun early! Well, the Lady responded generously, and the long-anticipated journey began.

Erasmus crossed Switzerland on horseback.

Imagine the experience: riding leisurely through the valleys and over the passes in that marvelous circle of mountains rising behind mountains till their snow-clad summits seem to touch the blue bosom of the sky! Well, Erasmus mentions three things impressing him in the journey: the stuffy rooms of the Swiss inns, the impossible porcelain stoves, and the sour wine that gave him indigestion! Not a word did he say of the thrillingly beautiful landscape! The point is, the response to the beauty of nature had not yet come to consciousness in Europe. Rousseau was to awaken it, and be followed by Goethe, Schiller, Byron, Shelley, Wordsworth, Bryant, and their successors. In this aspect Erasmus was simply a child of his time. When he descended into Italy, he was filled with enthusiasm over every Greek manuscript he unearthed in a dust-covered library; but Switzerland was merely an obstacle to be overcome.

He received his Doctorate at a northern Italian university, and pressed on to Rome. It was the Rome of Julius II, statesman and warrior, of Michael Angelo and Raphael, where were gathered the leading scholars of Italy—indeed, of the world. It was a glorious experience for Erasmus. He was welcomed by Pope and cardinals, among whom were most highly cultivated men. He formed friendships that

were to be great protection to him under later attacks. He had the joy of intimate intercourse with the most gifted minds Europe possessed. They wished to keep the distinguished scholar in Rome. He was tempted with offers of high ecclesiastical appointment, which would have solved the material problem happily for the remainder of his life. Reluctantly he refused the offers, and somewhat sadly went back to France. Why? It was his deep-seated conviction that he must keep himself free and untrammeled to do effectively his work as independent scholar, and so serve the cause of humanist culture and moral reform to which he was dedicated.

A second brief visit to Rome followed, and then a third to England. It was now the England of Henry VIII, who remembered Erasmus with friendly appreciation; and it was not without good reason that he now hoped for an appointment consistent with his entire intellectual freedom. Again he was doomed to bitter disappointment, though he did receive a benefice from Archbishop Warham, which was commuted into a permanent pension. He renewed his friendship with Sir Thomas More, and his descriptions of More's personality and life are the best that have come down to us. Of the two, Erasmus was the greater scholar and intel-

lectual leader, but More was the finer spiritual personality.

On his return to the Continent Erasmus published, at forty-five, his *Praise of Folly.* Its Latin title, *Encomium Moriae,* was a pun on his friend's name, and its preface was an introductory letter to More. In this work he deliberately put on the cap and bells, to arraign with mocking and pungent humor the follies of the world. With the rapier of irony and satire he attacked them, in Church, monastery and in all aspects of the conduct of life. Thus the earnest aim was under all the jesting.

That aim comes to clearest expression in the work on which he had been laboring for years, and which was most epoch-making of all his books—the publication of the Greek text of the *New Testament,* with a translation into the current Latin and added paraphrases and pungent comment. This work appeared in 1516, the year before Luther placed his theses on the door of Wittenberg Church.

It is difficult for us to realize the general lack of first-hand knowledge of the Bible at that time, not only in the public but among priests. Only the passages used conventionally in religious worship were widely known. Now, with this publication, the entire teaching of apostolic Christianity was made available to all who could read the universal language of scholarship of

the time; and with what drastic comments! Erasmus contrasts the simple teaching of Saint Peter with the armies and conquests of Julius II. He mockingly portrays the complicated ceremonial ritual and opposes it to the simple act of reverent worship. He is particularly effective in ridiculing the intricate finesse of metaphysical discussions by theologians, of the dual nature of Christ and the meaning of sin, asking why it is not enough to hate sin and endeavor to walk in the footsteps of Jesus.

The book is thus the supreme expression of the aim of Erasmus, to call the world, ecclesiastical and secular, back from its vices and follies, its conventionalized ritualism and sterile theological controversies, its dogmatic prejudices and suppression of freedom of thought, back to the simple and lofty moral teaching and conduct of Jesus and his followers, uniting this with the recovered intellectual and artistic culture of the classic past in a true humanistic reform.

The book exactly met both the curiosity and the awakened need of the time. It was eagerly bought and read. A hundred thousand copies were sold in France alone within a short period of publication. It is interesting that the *New Testament,* as edited by Erasmus, proved to be one of the earliest "best sellers" in the whole history of European literature!

Outraged theologians and ecclesiastics fell upon it, striving to suppress the book and to punish the author; but Pope Leo X, cultivated and scholarly, was warmly friendly to Erasmus, and generously gave the book papal sanction; so the enemies of Erasmus howled in vain.

It was at this time that renewed strong efforts were made to force Erasmus back into the monastery. He wrote a long letter to the Pope's secretary, giving the history of an imaginary "Florence," under which name he narrated the whole story of the trickery and deception that had inveigled him into the monastery. The secretary replied that he recognized who "Florence" was, that he had read the entire letter to the Pope, who was deeply moved by it, and would take action in regard to it. So Leo X granted Erasmus a permanent dispensation; and there was no further fear that he might be compelled to resume the monastic life.

Erasmus was now entering upon a period both of worldly prosperity and success in his mission. He saw humanism widely advancing, the new learning winning many converts, liberal rulers occupying the important thrones, manners becoming more refined, even theological controversies lessening. He had good reason to hope for the progressive achievement of his aims.

This high promise was sadly broken by the

second wave of the northern awakening—the storm of the Reformation.

The year following the publication of Erasmus's edition of the *New Testament* Luther posted his theses on the door of Wittenberg Church. He expected no break in the Church, but wished to discuss his theses with other theologians, in the hope of awakening an intelligent opinion that would correct the grave evils he saw in the issuing of indulgences. At that time he spoke of the Hussites as sinful heretics, and said that to deny the authority of the Pope would leave every man free to interpret the Scriptures for himself—which, by the way, is true!

To Luther's surprise, the posting of the theses caused an explosion, and he was rapidly pushed far beyond his original intention.

The first cause of this unanticipated result was that Luther's theses caught the awakened national spirit of the North, and united with it. There was deep resentment toward the overlordship of Italy, and especially over the draining away, through the issuing of indulgences, of funds for building Saint Peter's in Rome, when those moneys were needed for the construction and care of their own churches.

Behind this was the earnest moral awakening, causing a reaction upon the evils and

abuses which the more fanciful and cynical temper of Italy could tolerate or disregard.

Luther was thus pushed quickly onward, and was soon swinging the Saxon broadax at evils Erasmus had attacked with the slender rapier of irony. The struggle was thus on, disrupting Europe, plunging the world again into theological controversy and religious wars, undoing for a time the work of Erasmus and the humanists.

Luther wrote a humble letter to Erasmus, expressing his admiration for their recognized leader, and asking his help. After an interval Erasmus wrote a kindly response, addressing Luther as his "Dearest Brother in Christ," telling of the storm that had arisen and of his efforts to defend Luther, but urging Luther to be more temperate, to use courtesy rather than violence toward opponents, and not to hate anybody.

When the papal bull was issued against Luther, the Elector of Saxony traveled all the way to Cologne to see Erasmus and ask counsel as to the course he should follow. Erasmus urged him to restrain Luther's violence, but advised him to protect Luther and not give him up to be burned by his enemies.

There can be no question about the fact that Erasmus had prepared the way for the explosion. His attacks on the evils that had crept into the monasteries, and, indeed, on the whole

monastic system, his mockery of sterile theological discussion, his arraignment of all ecclesiastical abuses, all had awakened the moral reaction. It was widely said at the time that "Erasmus laid the egg that Luther hatched." Hearing it, Erasmus replied that it was true; but the egg he laid was a harmless pullet, while Luther had hatched a game cock! That wittily describes the relation of the two movements.

Erasmus hated war, and especially war over religion. He deplored all theological antagonisms, as thwarting the moral reform and cultural progress he strove to further. Meantime, striving to continue his constructive literary work, he asked and graciously received permission to dedicate his edition of Saint Jerome to Leo X, thus publishing it with official papal sanction.

The hope of Erasmus for conciliation and peace was quickly defeated. Viewing the disruption of Christendom as the greatest of evils, he was compelled to stand between the warring parties, unable to join either side, and not from cowardice, as has so often been charged, but from deepest conviction.

He was urged by the Catholic party, by his friends More and Mountjoy, even by the Pope, to write against Luther. Honor, fame, and highest appointment awaited him had he yielded. He asked how could he write against

Luther, when many of the ideas of Luther were those of Saint Paul: he might be writing against the Holy Spirit! The Lutherans expected him to join them, but how could he throw the great weight of his influence into a movement that was breaking the unity of Christendom, plunging the world anew into theological controversy, threatening hateful religious wars, and destroying much of the constructive work to which he had dedicated his life?

From sincerest conviction, therefore, he stood between, and was furiously attacked from *both* sides. It was the hardest situation possible. Luther, who had written so humbly and admiringly, came to have for him only scorn and contempt. A characteristic expression is given in Luther's *Table Talk,* translated by William Hazlitt:

> Erasmus of Rotterdam is the vilest miscreant that ever disgraced the earth. He made several attempts to draw me into his snares, and I should have been in danger but that God lent me special aid. In 1525 he sent one of his doctors, with two hundred Hungarian ducats, as a present to my wife; but I refused to accept them, and enjoined my wife not to meddle in these matters. He is a very Caiaphas.[3]

Further on in the *Table Talk* Luther says:

> I hold Erasmus of Rotterdam to be Christ's most bitter enemy. . . . Erasmus is the enemy to true

[3] Luther, *Table Talk,* Bohn Library edition.

religion, the open adversary of Christ, the complete and faithful picture and image of Epicurus and of Lucian.

That from the man Erasmus had called his "Dearest Brother in Christ"!

The storm gathered headway. Erasmus, alarmed, realized that his hopes for conciliation and the continuation of constructive education were being sadly defeated. That Adrian, who had been a schoolmate of Erasmus at Deventer and who was now Pope, sent a confidential letter to Erasmus, urging him to come to Rome and write in defense of the faith and against Luther. Erasmus responded with one of his most characteristic letters, giving, with some humor, his fundamental attitude. Let me quote a fragment of it in Froude's translation:

> Your Holiness requires my advice, and you wish to see me. I would go to you with pleasure if my health allowed. But the road over the Alps is long. The lodgings on the way are dirty and inconvenient. The smell from the stoves is intolerable. The wine is sour and disagrees with me. . . . Meanwhile you shall have my honest heart in writing. . . .
>
> As to writing against Luther, I have not learning enough. You think my words will have authority. Alas! my popularity . . . is turned to hatred. . . . One party says I agree with Luther because I do not oppose him. The other finds fault with me because I do oppose him. I did what I could. I advised him to be moderate, and I only made his friends my enemies. . . . I could find a hundred passages where Saint

Paul seems to teach the doctrines which they condemn in Luther. . . .

Alas that I in my old age should have fallen into such a mess, like a mouse into a pitch-pot![4]

Let me emphasize that in taking this position he was absolutely sincere. Condemning religious controversy as sterile and destructive, deploring the breaking up of a united Christendom, hating wars and recognizing that they would follow in most hideous form, he was acting from deep-seated conviction and with no element whatever of cowardice.

Was he right? An hour strikes when a man must take sides and fight for one against the other, even at the price of narrowing his aim and sympathy. Had such an hour struck, and did Erasmus fail to recognize it? At least his course was the only one his conscientious conviction permitted him to follow; and, attacked from both sides, he held to it consistently to the end.

Had it been possible for his dream to have been fulfilled, of a constructive moral and educational reform, regenerating European society from the top down, purging both the Church and the world of their evils, and combining truly Christian conduct with enlightened culture in a united Christendom, that had been a destiny! What waste and destruction, hateful

[4] Froude, *Life and Letters of Erasmus.*

antagonism and destructive warfare might have been avoided! It was not to be; and Erasmus turned sadly to continuing his scholarly work as man of letters.

He went to Louvain for a time and then took refuge in Basle, Switzerland, where liberal thought and government prevailed. There he continued steadily his work of editing the Church Fathers.

In 1521 he published his *Familiar Colloquies,* one of the most charming of his books. There was no falling off in the skill with which he used the rapier of irony and satire on the evils he had long fought. One of the most delightful of the *Colloquies* is a dialogue between an Abbot and a learned woman, Magdalia. It is entirely modern in spirit, and reads like a recent document for the emancipation of women. The Abbot asserts that the pursuit of wisdom makes fools of women, whose function is solely to give pleasure to men. Magdalia asks if wisdom does not help one to lead a good life, and if that is not an end to be desired. She adds that her husband approves of her studies and holds that they make her a more desirable companion. Unable to confute her, the Abbot gives her a Mae West invitation to come and see him sometime and they will sport and laugh. Magdalia closes the discussion with "You make me laugh now!"

So we see that the suffering of Erasmus over the torn world had not destroyed his gay humor!

Whole processions came to Basle, with gifts from kings, prelates, and noblemen, for the one now recognized as "Sun of Learning," "Star of Letters," the foremost literary scholar in the world. Pope Clement VII, another highly cultivated member of the house of Medici, offered Erasmus a cardinalship. For the old reasons he refused, to remain free to do his work, and not become entangled with either side in the conflict.

Erasmus went to Freiburg, in Germany, for a time, and then returned to Basle, dying there in 1536. In spite of constitutional frail health and recurring illnesses he had lived to be sixty-nine years old. The first great modern man of letters, Erasmus achieved for his time what Voltaire accomplished for the later eighteenth century.

I have endeavored to interpret the spirit of Erasmus in a *Dramatic Monologue,*[5] imagining him as soliloquizing in his student room at Basle, on a February evening of 1523, the year of his correspondence with Pope Adrian:

> In this ill-smelling, student's room I sit
> And shiver, leaning against the monstrous stove,
> That vainly radiates deceptive warmth;

[5] Published in the author's volume, *Blossomed Hours,* Bobbs-Merrill Co.

Without, the circle of bleak mountain slopes,
While streets of Bâle are piled feet deep with snow.
Why did I not accept Pope Julius' gift,
And stay at Rome, to drink his mellow wine
And eat his ortolans? A sunny land,
Much honor, easy wealth had then been mine.
But no, I must away, to wander wide,
Through France and Holland, England, Germany;
Settling at last in this bleak, icy land,
To write with fingers numb, and drink sour wine,
With brain befuddled by the musty air!
Why did I do it—I who have no taste
For martyrdom, but love the things of earth—
The luxuries and comforts of the flesh?
It was a power stronger than my desires:
A driving love of freedom, and a sense
Instinctive of a mission to this age—
To shock men out of lethargy, and laugh
Their shallow forms and dry beliefs to scorn;
That so a true enlightenment might be,
A culture that should unify in one
The learning and the art of classic times
With character and conduct like to Him
Who preached upon the mount in Galilee.
That was my dream: that thus the world might be,
And so the church, remolded from within.
But Luther came, and broke my half-won hope,
Plunging the world again into a storm
Of controversy over sacraments
And medieval doctrines, best unknown.
Yet what a man! How fearlessly he smote
With Saxon broadax at the root of ills
As old as man! While I, with mocking smile,
And slender rapier of irony,
Sought but to fence with clumsy fools, and pierce
The paper breast-plate of their prejudice.
Was his the way, or mine? I wonder oft:
But his way was not mine, and cannot be.

For he has set the whole world by the ears,
Destroyed the slowly fostered humanism,
Stirred up a mess; and I, in my old age,
Like to a mouse caught in a pitch-pot, strive
In vain to extricate my work and self.
Pope Adrian bids the crab to fly to Rome
And write against the Lutherans; while they
Attack me, since I cannot join their sect,
I stand between, berated by both sides.
Best is I wrap me in a cloak of scorn
For both antagonists, and go my way—
A lonely way—and let them fight it out;
In hope that when enough of both are slain,
The controversial smoke may draw away;
And in a later age men may arise,
Who love the simple Christian character,
The solid learning of antiquity
And all the arts that grace the life of man.
There is no other hope; so let it be:
Reluctantly a martyr, I must wait,
And hope that some day all I sought to do
Will be made clear, and all my many books,
Swift writ, with pungent satire for the hour,
Will then be read as prophecies of light
And heralds of that better world to be.
Another glass of this sour wine, and then
To sleep!

I have portrayed Erasmus with peculiar satisfaction because his aim is, in a more modest way, my own aim. Our time needs not destructive revolution but just the enlightenment, emancipation from prejudice and intolerance, progressive culture and moral reform, the *humanism,* for which he struggled, and which I have sought to further in all my own lifework.

IV

CARLYLE

The Man of Letters as Prophet and Interpreter

IT was the function of Carlyle as leader to become the channel through which the two great streams of European thought that fertilized the nineteenth century entered the English-speaking world.

Let us recall that the first birth throes of the modern spirit were artistic and intellectual in character, occurring in the Italian Renaissance, while the second wave of awakening was moral and religious, appearing in the Northland, in the humanism of Erasmus, merging into the storm of the Reformation.

Following that storm Europe settled down into opposing religious camps. With the seventeenth century came the beginnings of modern philosophy, merging in the eighteenth century into a movement of enlightenment centering in France. The aim of its leader, Voltaire, was to emancipate the mind from prejudice and superstition, thus achieving complete intellectual freedom with the widest expansion of positive knowledge. It was the age of the Encyclopedia,

and regarded itself as the most enlightened the world had seen.

With this movement on the surface, the deeper motive of the century was slowly beating its way up from underneath, and burst forth, toward the century's close, in the explosion of revolution. The intellectual emancipation had led inevitably to the struggle for political and social freedom.

We call it the French Revolution, and France was the beautiful white mother who bore on her breast the terrible child of revolution: the child that turned and tore the mother breast that bore him. If France paid the price, all the world reaped the benefit, for the Revolution represented the third and final birth throes of the modern spirit, social and political in character. It was a plunging of all social and political institutions into the fire, and testing them over again. It was a reaction against the class organization of society, an affirmation of positive freedom, with a more inclusive, unified humanity. Those great words the French placed on all their public buildings, which sound ironic in view of what followed—Liberty, Equality, Fraternity—after all, represent the final fruit of the Revolution.

Such revolution is not characteristic of Anglo-Saxon civilization. With the English, freedom broadens down gradually, from generation to

generation, and rarely comes through a wasteful explosion. In their own expression, they "muddle through." Nevertheless, England was profoundly influenced by the social and political idealism that preceded and accompanied the French Revolution. It entered through English literature and sifted out into all aspects of life.

Cowper in England and Burns in Scotland first express the new spirit. They were followed in the early nineteenth century by Byron and Shelley, both poets of revolution. Coleridge interpreted the new idealism. Even Wordsworth, conservative as he became in later years, went to France in his youth, and dreamed of becoming a leader in one of the revolutionary parties there.

Just as this social and political idealism was taking hold in England there entered the second great stream of fertilizing European thought far more akin to the English genius—the flood of German literature and philosophy.

The German development began with the philosophy of Immanuel Kant, child of the eighteenth century. In his thinking Kant found himself face to face with one puzzling and all-absorbing problem. In all other fields of science he saw that each generation builds on the labors of those preceding, but in metaphysics the first act of the philosopher is to tear down

the work of all who have gone before and then proceed to build his own system anew. Kant sought, therefore, to discover the limits of the human understanding, and so to lay the foundations for a true progressive science of metaphysics.

He spent a dozen years reflecting on the problem, a few months writing out the results in one of the most difficult books ever written, his *Critique of Pure Reason*. In it he developed the "Transcendental Philosophy," holding that all our knowledge is "phenomenal," that is, composed of two elements neither of which can be finally known. We never know the pure subject, nor *"Das Ding an sich,"* the ultimate object. Space and time he held were not objective realities, but forms of the mind, by which we organize phenomena given us by intuition, that is, through sense perception.

In parallel columns on the same pages of his *Critique* Kant developed the "Antinomies" of pure reason, proving and disproving, with equal facility and thoroughness, the great spiritual theses, God, Freedom, and Immortality. The final result was thus negative, placing the theses of spiritual faith beyond speculative proof.

Kant's philosophy, nevertheless, produced a great moral awakening. To see how that was possible we must turn to his *Practical Philosophy* or Ethics. In that field Kant found him-

self under one imperative conception—the idea of Duty. No other philosopher, not excepting Socrates, ever had the profound reverence for Duty shown by Kant. You may recall his famous dictum:

> There are two things that command my veneration, the more often and earnestly I reflect upon them: the starry universe about me, and the law of Duty in the mind of man.

Of the two ultimate mysteries Duty was the more impressive to Kant. It was "apodictic," necessary, "a priori," beforehand, impossible to derive from sense experience. Strangely enough, Kant thus gave back, through the idea of Duty and as bases of practical conduct, the God, Freedom, and Immortality which he had held were speculatively beyond proof.

The argument is a singular one, but deeply impressive. I find myself under this pure idea of Duty, noumenal not phenomenal, absolutely binding on my will. Therefore I must believe that the ultimate nature and cause of the universe is akin to this law to which I am subject; and I believe in God.

Similarly with the second thesis: since I am under this supreme obligation of Duty, I must believe that liberty and power to fulfill it are granted me; and I believe in the practical freedom of the will.

Most singular of all is the argument for Immortality, but increasingly impressive as you reflect upon it. The obligation to which I am subject demands complete fulfillment. The edict is, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." I can imagine no future time in which that law can be fulfilled. Therefore I must believe that eternity will be granted me to fulfill the edict; and I believe in Immortality.

Note that it is not necessary for noble living to prove all that we would like to prove, but, rather, to know what we can dare to believe, lay down as a basis for the conduct of life. Can I dare to live as if God were, or as if the universe were merely the "fortuitous concurrence of invisible atoms"? Can I dare to live as if I were practically free, and so responsible for my conduct, or as if every act were the result of forces over which I have no control and hence no responsibility? Can I dare to live, believing in the eternal significance of the soul of man, or viewing us as merely grass, that today is and tomorrow is utterly gone? Such are the practical questions that determine the conduct of life.

Kant's philosophy thus gave a new dignity to the human spirit, since through the idea of Duty, the great theses of spiritual faith were reestablished as the basis for the conduct of life. In a new sense Man became, in Carlyle's phras-

ing, "the true Shekinah and revelation of the Most High."

Kant's disciples, moreover, went far beyond the limits he had set for the reason. Fichte is an extreme example, in making each mind or ego creator from within of its own universe.

The philosophical movement met the wakening German spirit, and the result was the great period of German literature, carrying Kant's influence far beyond philosophical circles. Herder, Schiller, less directly even Goethe, were influenced by him. The movement carried over to France, England, our own country. The awakening in New England took its name from Kant's philosophy, though widely changing what it borrowed.

The significance of all this with reference to Carlyle is that he was the chief channel through which these two streams of Continental European thought entered into British and American life; for he was the historian, or, rather, the epic poet of the French Revolution, and the outstanding interpreter of German literature and philosophy to the English-speaking world.

Besides these streams of world thought there were other, more personal, influences molding Carlyle's genius. He was born in 1795 in Ecclefechan, a village in southern Scotland—a late born child of the great, now little appreciated, eighteenth century. His family was poor

but proud, with that intense clannishness marking a certain type of the Scotch. They were sure the Scotch were the best of all peoples, and that their family was a little better than any other in Scotland.

The mother was fine, tender, and pious; the father forceful, wild, and irascible. Both inheritances were in Carlyle, but apparently never quite fused in him. I have wondered if some of his sufferings did not result from the fact that he was now his father's, now his mother's child.

Though poor the parents wanted better education for their children than they had received. At an early age Carlyle was sent to a neighboring town to school. One story of his schooldays is worth repeating, since it shows the boy as father of the man. In sending him away to school his mother had unwisely exacted from her son a promise that he would not fight. In that school, as always, there were older bullies who, finding that the small boy would not fight, tortured him unmercifully. Finally the fighting spirit of the Scotch lad stood up in him. He turned on an older tormenter, soundly threshed him, and came home with his head up, to say that he had broken his promise, but it was right that he should do so. Truly the boy was father of the man, since with deep reverence for duty

there was in Carlyle a sort of "Norse Berserker rage," exploding against all oppression.

At fourteen Carlyle walked a hundred miles across the country in company with an older lad to enter Edinburgh University. Boys went to college earlier then than now, which meant perhaps that the college of those days did not go so far beyond the well-equipped high school of today. Carlyle was intellectually precocious, however, and went with high hopes, expecting to find the university a Mecca of learning, which would equip him fully for his lifework. He was doomed to somewhat bitter disappointment, which he has recorded in his spiritual autobiography, *Sartor Resartus.* He tells us his hero, Teufelsdröckh, attended "the worst of all hitherto discovered universities, outside of England and Spain." Later he acknowledged that he had his own university of Edinburgh in mind. The teachers, he says, were hidebound pedants, with no appreciation of growing young life. There was one exception, the Professor of mathematics! We do not usually take mathematics for spiritual nourishment, but it is only one more illustration of the fact that it is far more important with whom you study than what you study, and most important of all that somewhere in the course of education you come into contact with a live man or woman able to irradiate something of that contagion of the

spirit that is the ultimate force in education. Carlyle said it:

> Mind grows not like a vegetable, by having its roots littered with etymological compost, but like a spirit, by mysterious contact of spirit, thought kindling itself at the fire of living thought.

At Edinburgh the professor of mathematics happened to be such a live man. Carlyle promptly fell in love with the subject and dreamed of becoming a professor in the field.

There was one aspect of the university in which Carlyle was not disappointed—the library. It was his first opportunity to come into contact with a great collection of books, and he reveled in it. We are told that during one period of his university life he absorbed the contents of four volumes a day, other than novels; and I have no doubt the statement is well within the truth. With a marvelously retentive mind and an urge for expression, he could use, all his life, what he had just read as if he had always known it, and what he had learned years before, as if he had read it yesterday. Thus in the university years he was accumulating a wealth of ideas and knowledge, equipping himself for his career. Had his teachers known what he was doing, doubtless they would have rebuked him for not specializing more carefully, but it exemplifies the fact

that genius will find its own, and should be left free to find it.

Possibly it was this personal experience of Carlyle's that led him to remark in *Sartor Resartus* that "the true university of these days is a collection of books"—a statement that is not true and is made rather incidentally by Carlyle; yet I have wondered whether it had not something to do with the work of a later Scotchman in sowing libraries generously over the English-speaking world!

Carlyle left the university at nineteen, tutoring and teaching for a time to earn his living while continuing his studies for the ministry. With the family background, that was the appropriate vocation he was expected to enter. He was not a naturally successful teacher, being too much absorbed in his own ideas and dreams. Nevertheless, he was so earnest and deep that among the students associated with him were individuals who recognized his greatness and were permanently grateful for his influence upon them.

Even before leaving college Carlyle had begun to question whether he could honestly wear the garment of a minister of religion. He did not easily put it aside: the struggle was a bitter one, continuing through several years. It was complicated by ill health, for the demon of dyspepsia had already settled upon him.

We should know now that whatever affects one aspect of life reacts upon the other. If you stand erect and breathe deeply, you think more clearly and have a better grip on the ideal. On the other hand, if your physical organism is disordered, the effect is to cloud the mind and depress the spirit. I recall an educator telling a gathering of teachers, "Beware of mistaking your indigestion for your conscience!" It has always seemed to me a wise warning. So if a fresh inspiration comes, the whole body is vitalized, while somber spiritual depression hampers all natural functions.

Carlyle had little of what the French call *savoir vivre;* we do not call it anything, as it is not an Anglo-Saxon characteristic. "Tact" is too small a term, and "art of life" too large. *Savoir vivre* is an instinctive recognition of the appropriate in behavior, of the best next step. Lacking it, Carlyle would study and ponder late into the night, throw himself on the bed for a few hours of troubled sleep, and wonder why he could not digest his breakfast in the morning.

Finally, he peremptorily solved the vocation problem. He tells us he actually experienced what he describes for his hero in *Sartor Resartus.* The Everlasting No pealed authoritatively through his being; he rose up, affirmed himself against it, passed through the Center of Indifference, and out into the Everlasting Yea of

faith. To speak less metaphorically, Carlyle gave up all hope of becoming a minister of religion and dedicated himself to the precarious life of an independent literary worker.

It would have been less difficult had he been able to join either party of the time, but the one calling itself liberal was only a little less hidebound than that frankly conservative. When one has a party behind one, even though it be a minority, the result is to give courage and strengthen one's hands. Carlyle had to work alone; and he tells us he questions whether the man of letters is better situated working for the many-headed patron of the public than when he served princely and ecclesiastical patrons in the olden days.

After starving on hack work for a time, Carlyle struck his first lead in the field of German literature and philosophy. He was the Columbus of that intellectual continent, till then practically undiscovered by the English-speaking world.

His first important book in this field was his *Life of Schiller*. Reading it today, one finds it singularly conservative. You miss those three emphatic monosyllables coming together, that irregular music, like a North Sea storm, marking his later work. Similarly in content: Carlyle sticks to his text, giving Schiller's ideas rather than his own. You miss those passages

of inspired preaching, so characteristic of his later work. The point is, Carlyle had not yet matured, come into the circle of ideas for which he was permanently to stand. He was writing, in good English, a faithful piece of scholarly work. Nevertheless, no one can read the *Life of Schiller* today and not recognize the new, strong voice appearing in English letters.

Carlyle turned next to the translation of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*. Strange that he chose that book, for Carlyle, after all, was a kind of fine flower of Scotch puritanism, while Goethe, whatever else he was, was neither a Scotch nor any other kind of puritan! Indeed, while translating the book Carlyle remarked that at times Goethe seemed to him the wisest of mankind, at other times the most asinine! The first view won the victory, however, and Carlyle remained permanently convinced that Goethe was the wisest of our time.

To understand this we must remember that Goethe was Carlyle's personal emancipator. It was through the wide, balanced, cosmopolitan wisdom of Goethe that Carlyle was lifted out from a provincial Scotch-English point of view to a world view, and Carlyle was permanently grateful for the supreme service. Indeed, if you care to read one of the most charming bits of literary biography, take down the volume of letters, exchanged by the young Carlyle, on the

threshold of his lifework, and the aged Goethe, at the end of his great career, and you will find the reverence and devotion of the disciple quite equaled by the simplicity, modesty, and kindliness of the master.

There are four large volumes of Carlyle's writings on German literature and philosophy. Reading them through today, you find little that is new in them. You find Carlyle championing as new ideas what you always have believed; but you have believed them because Carlyle championed them. They have become part of our intellectual atmosphere, which we breathe without being aware of it. Nevertheless, no one can read through those four volumes without receiving a cumulative impression of the new prophetic voice that had appeared in English literature.

At thirty-one occurred the most important event in Carlyle's personal life—his marriage. With the vulgarity of our partly developed democracy, to which nothing is sacred, with our delight in pulling to pieces the personalities of those who, by their superiority, seem to rebuke us, far too much has been written and said about the married life of Carlyle and his wife. Far be it from me to add to this mass of vulgar exploitation. This aspect of Carlyle's life, however, is so revelatory of his strength and limita-

tions as moral leader that I must touch on it, I trust reverently.

Jane Baillie Welsh was one of the most intellectually brilliant women of her time, or of any time. Carlyle met her through his friend Edward Irving, who helped Carlyle to a tutorship. An affection had already developed between Irving and Miss Welsh, which probably would have resulted in marriage had Irving not felt himself bound by a previous engagement. He did feel so bound, however, and went away, Carlyle inheriting, in a sense, the young lady.

At the time when Carlyle met her, Jane Welsh was a sort of gay mockingbird, courted and feared by all the young men of her social group. Quickly love sprang up between her and Carlyle, and soon the gay mockingbird was a dove with folded wings in Carlyle's great Scotch hand. Both recognized, however, that their marriage might be dangerous. If you read the letters that passed between them before marriage, you discover that each made more than one effort to break off the engagement; but the drawing together was too strong, and they were married.

Very likely it was a mistake. If two persons are to attempt the difficult task of living permanently together, there must, of course, be a wide identity of interest, taste, and desire. The first law of love is likeness of personality. Granted

that there is enough likeness to hold two lives together in happy union, the more different two persons are from each other, the more they have to give each other. Love depends as much on complementary relationship as on likeness of personality.

The Carlyles had many qualities in common. Both were highly intellectual, with an unusual endowment of sharp, sarcastic comment. They fulfilled the Norse proverb, which says: "Put one stick in the fire, it goes out; put two in together, and it flames up brilliantly." Together the Carlyles flamed up brilliantly, but they could not rest each other. It is one of the pathetic facts of their joint biography that they regularly spent their vacations apart.

I am asked often in public discussion why great men, especially those intellectually gifted, so often marry mediocre women. I have an answer to the question: they don't. I know the cases currently cited. Goethe's is conspicuous; and one readily admits that after Friederike, Lotte, Lili Schönemann, and Frau von Stein, not to mention several of the others, Christiane Vulpius does seem too bad; yet who shall say! No one knew better than Goethe that what he has taught us to call the "Eternal Womanly" does not consist in a particular artistic or intellectual faculty. Rather, it is a fundamental reality of being, giving an im-

mediate insight into the deeps of life in personal relationship, that women usually have in greater degree than men, just because they have suffered so much, been protected too much: because the story of their gradual emancipation is one of the most tragic in human history. In the case of the Carlyles, with all their mutual stimulation, neither could rest back quietly on the other.

Then, too, Carlyle, with his lack of *savoir vivre,* did about the worst thing he could have done. Within a few months of his marriage, he took that brilliant woman, who should have been the center of an intellectual salon, with gifted persons about her every day, to the lonely farm of Craigenputtock, for six dreary years, broken by one winter in Edinburgh and one in London!

They owned the farm, you say, and it was the natural adjustment, with their limited financial resources. Ah, Carlyle would better have done anything else, have rented one room in Edinburgh, and let them eat, sleep, and entertain their friends in it, rather than have taken her to that lonely farm, to struggle with just the problems she was least fitted to solve, while Carlyle was wrestling to bring to birth the offspring of his mind and heart, almost forgetting to come to dinner, and when he did come, so absorbed in his own thinking that he nearly

forgot to speak to the woman across the table, who bit her lip to choke back the tears. Is it any wonder these two persons were measurably unhappy, and neither much to blame?

Then, too, a Scotch Puritan is apt to be his own worst enemy, through regarding all warm expression of feeling as moral weakness. If you have ever been in a home where that view prevailed, I am sure you escaped from its chilling atmosphere at the earliest possible moment. Denied expression, love can be starved to death. In Carlyle were deep fountains of tenderness and love. How do we know? Why, when he sat at his desk, and sufferings of oppressed humanity came before his imagination, those fountains of tenderness and love welled up in him, and flowed forth from his pen, in some of the most impressive passages of prose poetry ever written; but toward the woman with whom his life was associated expression was not so easy.

Further, there was no baby hand. Little children are God's missionaries to fallen and crystallized humanity. With an older person, to whom your life is bound, it is easy to quarrel. The sharp word is spoken, the quick retort given, each is too proud to make the initial apology; and the little rift within the lute spoils all the music of domestic happiness. You cannot do that with a little child. The baby

hand, soft as the petals of a June rose, smoothes the wrinkles of irritation from face and brow. The baby smile looks insistently up into your own face till it wins the answering smile. The world would grow old, dry up, and die out were it not for the missionary service of the little child. One can only wonder what the married life of the Carlyles might have been had there been one such missionary; but there was not. Again, is it any wonder these two persons were unhappy, with no one much to blame?

It was at Craigenputtoch that Carlyle brought to birth the most wonderful child of his mind and heart, his *Sartor Resartus*. It is a strange book. Carlyle chose to put the sound kernel of his thought inside two hard shells which one must crack to get the meat inside. The book purports to be the philosophy of an obscure German thinker, Diogenes Teufelsdröckh, of the city of Weissnichtwo—of I don't know where—any city you choose. That philosophy is translated, with comments, by an almost equally heavy English Editor, also an imaginary character. Nevertheless, the kernel of Carlyle's thought is so sound, it is worth all the effort to extract it.

The book is Carlyle's spiritual autobiography. It tells the story of his Scotch childhood, his awakening to the beauty of nature, his early struggles, and love affair with Margaret Gordon,

the "Blumine" of *Sartor Resartus*. It portrays his struggle to get under way, his religious conflict, his facing of the Everlasting No, passing through the Center of Indifference, out into the Everlasting Yea!

The volume is more than that, however. "Sartor Resartus," "the patcher repatched," "the tailor made over": it is the philosophy of clothes. Its central thought, reiterated over and over, is that all we see, hear and touch, all that comes to us through the senses, is only a garment, half-revealing, half-concealing the life within and behind. We strip off garment after garment, never reaching the absolute, but going far enough to recognize that the last word of science and first word of religion is wonder, deep, awe-struck wonder, in the presence of the mystery of life! In its inspired passages *Sartor Resartus* is thus, after all, a sort of sublimated translation into moving prose poetry, of the philosophy of Immanuel Kant.

Let me give one typical passage carrying the spirit of the work. Carlyle portrays Teufelsdröckh as in his watchtower, looking down over the sleeping city of Weissnichtwo, and soliloquizing:

> I look down into all that wasp-nest or beehive, and witness their wax-laying and honey-making and poison-brewing, and choking by sulphur. From the Palace esplanade, where music plays while Serene Highness is

pleased to eat his victuals, down the low lane, where in her doorsill the aged widow, knitting for a thin livelihood, sits to feel the afternoon sun, I see it all; for except the Schlosskirche weathercock, no biped stands so high. Couriers arrive bestrapped and bebooted, bearing Joy and Sorrow bagged up in pouches of leather, . . . a thousand carriages and wains and cars, come tumbling in with Food, with young Rusticity, and other Raw Produce, inanimate or animate, and go tumbling out again with Produce manufactured. That living flood, pouring through these streets, of all qualities and ages, knowest thou whence it is coming, whither it is going? Aus der Ewigkeit, zu der Ewigkeit hin: from Eternity, onwards to Eternity! These are apparitions: what else? Are they not Souls rendered visible: in Bodies that took shape and will lose it, melting into air? Their solid pavement is a Picture of the Sense: they walk on the bosom of Nothing, blank Time is behind them and before them.

Such are the passages of imaginative reflection and sublimated rhetoric that transfigured the philosophy of Kant, and made Carlyle a great interpreter of life.

It took two years to secure a publisher for Carlyle's greatest book, and then it appeared as a continued story in *Fraser's Magazine*—surely the most remarkable serial story ever "continued in our next"!

Carlyle had to wait three years more before *Sartor Resartus* was issued in book form; and then it was published in America, through the help of Emerson. It is one of the charming bits of literary biography that Emerson, with his

transcendental head in the air but his Yankee feet shrewdly on the earth, printed and sold over here, at a time when there was no copyright to protect the British author, enough of Carlyle's early books to send over on one occasion two thousand dollars as profits of the sale, when the Carlyle purse was running particularly low.

Two more years elapsed before the work appeared in book form in England, and then only when friends of Carlyle guaranteed the expense of publication. It was thus seven years from the completion of Carlyle's most significant work before it received even subsidized book-form publication in England—consoling surely for struggling authors today!

At thirty-nine Carlyle felt sufficiently successful to remove to London, which became the home of the Carlyles for the remainder of their lives.

The first important work Carlyle undertook after removing to London was his *History of the French Revolution*. The well-known story concerning the first volume of the work is worth repeating, since it answers one of the chief criticisms of Carlyle.

John Stuart Mill, who at that time considered himself a disciple of Carlyle, had intended to write on the subject, and had collected a mass of notes and books relating to it. When

Mill discovered that the one he regarded as his master wished to deal with the theme, he generously offered his collected material to Carlyle, who gratefully accepted it. When the first volume was complete, after Mrs. Carlyle had read it, Carlyle naturally took it to Mill, for advice and criticism. Mill left the manuscript on the table in his study, and through some mischance of carelessness, it was thrown into the fire!

Mill and Mrs. Taylor, afterward Mill's wife, drove to the Carlyle home to tell of the disaster. Mrs. Taylor narrated it, while Mill stood shamefacedly by. When they had gone, Carlyle turned to his wife and said, "Jeannie, we must not let Mill know how terrible this is for us, poor fellow!" I think, in view of the criticism of Carlyle's grumbling, of his frequent unfairness to contemporaries, it is worth remembering that when tried literally by fire, his first thought was not of his own irreparable loss but of what must be the grief of the friend who inadvertently had caused it.

Carlyle had kept no scrap of notes or manuscript: the thing was gone, utterly! Mill sent a check for a thousand dollars, which Carlyle returned. Mill finally prevailed upon Carlyle to accept half that amount. In his *Reminiscences* Carlyle says that amount about paid their living expenses, while he was rewriting

the volume. He adds that he wishes there were some way to get Mill to take the money back now, but supposes there is not. That remark reveals his less gracious side!

Carlyle was so overwhelmed by the disaster that he tells us he took a bath for three weeks in modern novels, just to keep from thinking—a device I would recommend, if you ever wish to avoid thought! Sufficiently recovered, he took up the task again. It was no labor of love this time, but sheer dead work, but done so faithfully that Mrs. Carlyle, who alone had read the destroyed volume, said the rewritten one was even better than the first—a signal example of how loyally Carlyle fulfilled his own gospel of work!

His *French Revolution* can hardly be called a history: it assumes that you already know the facts of French history in the time; but if you do know them, Carlyle's volumes become a great epic poem on the series of events, with marvelous dramatic pictures scattered across the pages. I call the work an epic poem, because it is dominated by two great epical or ethical ideas. The first is that the bizarre, confused stream of history, so full of what seems accident, is, after all, the working out of a divine idea. The second is that we who pass across the stage of time, imagining that we lead or follow, that our actions are of such importance

in determining the course of events; we are but instruments for that divine idea, puppets in the grip of destiny.

While Carlyle was writing the work he was urged to give some courses of public lectures to replenish his purse in the meantime. Reluctantly he accepted, and each winter for four years gave in London a memorable course of public lectures.

It is interesting to think of Carlyle as a lecturer—the audience not vast, from four to eight hundred. Carlyle looking across his audience, speaking to the ideal listener, who may not have been present at all; his voice now mellow-cadenced, now rising to the irregular music of a North-Sea storm. It must have been a moving experience to hear Carlyle lecture.

The first of the four courses was, characteristically, on German Literature. The second, of twelve lectures, was upon European Literature, described as "The whole spiritual history and development of mankind from earliest times up to the present"—a subject large enough, surely, to furnish a winter's program for an American Woman's Club, and interesting in showing that Carlyle had come to clear consciousness of his life vocation. He saw what we ought to see, that with the rapidly multiplying mass of positive knowledge, if that knowledge is to serve life, there must be in each

generation some scholar or group of scholars large enough in vision, human enough in appreciation, to gather the whole mass together and interpret it in terms of the human spirit. Carlyle deliberately made that his lifework. He chose to be what he calls his hero in *Sartor Resartus,* "Professor of Things in General." He paid a price for it, kept out of professorships that would have solved earlier the financial problem, but he paid it cheerfully, proving his place among the moral leaders.

The last of the four courses, the only one that has come down to us complete as given, was on *Heroes and Hero Worship and the Heroic in Human History.* Next to *Sartor Resartus,* it is Carlyle's most important writing as a moral leader. His theory of history is one-sided, holding that it is chiefly the work of great men. He regards them as lightning sent from heaven, with common men the lumber which the lightning sets in flame. That, of course, is not true. The one wave rises and breaks into foam, because lifted by the swelling breast of the ocean of humanity. A Napoleon can lead France in his generation because he was what most Frenchmen desired to be. Carlyle's emphasis is nevertheless the tonic, challenging one on the will to control one's own life, not yielding to threatening fate. His *Heroes and Hero Worship* is indeed, with Plato's *Apology of*

Socrates, the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius, Victor Hugo's *William Shakespeare* and certain of Emerson's *Essays,* one of the literary bibles of the world; and any young person, who fails to absorb those bibles in the years from fourteen to eighteen, has missed certain of the great influences for noble living.

The publication of the *French Revolution* closed Carlyle's long struggle with poverty; and though urged to continue his courses of lectures, he emphatically refused, giving a reason that some of us have pondered to our own instruction. He said public lecturing was too much "a combination of popular preacher and play actor" to suit him. As he wanted to save his own soul, he would give no more public lectures. In fact, he did give, in the remaining years, only one important address.

I said the wide sale of Carlyle's *History of the French Revolution* closed the decade-long struggle with poverty. It had not been grinding poverty: the wolf was not just at the door. Sometimes it was far enough away in the forest for its howl to be almost musical; but always it had been within hearing, with no telling when it might be at the door. That was all past now: recognition, adequate means, even affluence came to Carlyle in increasing measure.

One questions, however, whether Carlyle did not need just the challenge of material diffi-

culty to do his best work. From this time on there is a subtle change in him. He began believing that right is might: he came perilously near concluding that, therefore, might is right. His early faith had been that whatever is in the right must in the end conquer, which is true. He came dangerously near holding that whatever has conquered has thereby proved itself to have been right—a very different idea, and distinctly not true. Oh, the old fire continued to glow in him! It shows in *Past and Present,* in *Cromwell,* and many other writings, but increasingly it seemed necessary for him to see a great man across the centuries in order to recognize his greatness. He misjudged our own Lincoln, failed to see the significance of the greatest reform of his century, the freeing of Negro slaves. He somewhat disgraced himself with such pamphlets as *The Nigger Question,* and *Shooting Niagara and After.*

The strength and weakness of his later work are alike shown in his *History of Frederick the Great.* With our topical and fragmentary method of studying history, and because of our incessantly distracted lives, we have nearly lost the good old habit of reading in leisurely fashion whole books other than novels. There was great cultural value in reading an author's entire work and getting his whole view. When, therefore, you wish to enjoy an intellectual

debauch, which is desirable occasionally, take down the four heavy volumes of Carlyle's *History of Frederick the Great,* and read them through to the end. You will have the satisfaction of knowing you are one of the few living persons accomplishing the task, and the further satisfaction of getting a cumulative impression of Carlyle's thorough scholarship as historian, of his exhaustive study of original material, his careful plotting of every battlefield; but you will also get a cumulative impression of his worship of the merely strong man who can do things effectively, without asking how he got his power or what cause he serves in using it. In a day such as this, with much of the world turning to ruthless dictatorships and we ourselves showing an unthinking admiration for mere efficiency, the fault in Carlyle's later work becomes peculiarly instructive.

At seventy Carlyle received what he regarded as his greatest public compliment. The students of his own University of Edinburgh elected him Lord Rector for the year—a purely honorary office, involving the giving of an inaugural address. Carlyle was pleased, because the election meant that the younger generation in Scotland had at last accepted him. We in America recognized him first, then Eng-

land, and last of all Scotland. So he went to Edinburgh and gave the address, greeted with a storm of applause, which much embarrassed him. His address contained a passage which expresses the very heart of his faith and teaching. He told those young men:

> I believe you will find in all histories that religion has been at the head and foundation of them all, and that no nation that did not contemplate this wonderful Universe with an awe-stricken and reverential feeling that there was a great unknown, omnipotent, and all-wise and all-virtuous Being, superintending all men in it and all interests in it—no nation ever came to very much, nor did any man either, who forgot that.

In the same month with the address, before he had returned to the wife who had remained behind, word came to him of Mrs. Carlyle's death from heart failure as she was driving in her carriage in Hyde Park, London. So the old man went home to the dead body of the comrade of forty years! Then, when yesterday lay so still and clear in the pitiless white light of the irrevocable, Carlyle scourged himself with lashings of remorse, for deeds done and not done, as only a repentant Scotch Puritan knows how to scourge himself; and it is a pity that prosaic biographers have taken those self-scourgings as sober statement of fact. Carlyle is expressed in the tenderly sad epitaph he wrote for her:

In her bright existence she had more sorrows than are common, but also a soft invincibility, a capacity of discernment, and a noble loyalty of heart which are rare. For forty years she was the true and loving helpmate of her husband, and by act and word unweariedly forwarded him as none else could in all of worth that he did or attempted. She died at London, 21st April, 1866, suddenly snatched from him, and the light of his life as if gone out.

Sixteen years of lonely life remained to him. For a time he continued writing, but a palsied hand stopped that. He took refuge in dictating to a secretary, but soon that device failed him. In the late years he gloomed apart, and only occasionally in private conversation were there flashes of the old fire, showing that, under the ashes of the years, the lava of his life still glowed with the old intensity.

When he came to die, in 1881, at the age of eighty-six, it seemed as if his work had long been done. The whole tendency of that period of the nineteenth century was toward natural science, with the view of human life, in its vices and virtues, as wholly determined by soil, climate, and other natural forces. Buckle's *History of Civilization* is typical of the time.

Already the tide has turned. If the nineteenth century was a century of naturalism, the twentieth century promised to be a century of humanism. In spite of the wars that have deluged its first phase, and the hideous rever-

sion to the rule of brute force, over a large part of the world, there is wide evidence giving hope that its promise will yet be fulfilled. We have learned at least, that it is the ideals and actions of men that give the dynamic energy to all human progress. Carlyle is coming into his own again; and it is not too soon to say that he will go on challenging and inspiring generations of young people to come.

Carlyle is a prophet on the mountain, iterating and reiterating a few great central ideas: to hate shams, to be real; to take the duty just at hand and do it with all one's might; to recognize that this moment is the meeting point of the immensities and eternities, that the situation never existed that had not its ideal, that "here or nowhere is my America," as he quotes from Goethe's Lothario in *Wilhelm Meister*, that here and now the high deed can be done and the noble life lived: such are the central ideas of Carlyle as prophet and interpreter of life.

He wrote much poetry in prose form, but occasionally bits of verse. One of these, published in the appendix to a volume of *Essays*, so simple that a six-year-old child can understand it, so significant that the wisest philosopher may well ponder its meaning, expresses the heart of Carlyle's message as moral leader:

"So here hath been dawning
Another blue day;
Think, wilt thou let it
Slip useless away.

Out of Eternity,
This new day is born;
Into Eternity,
At night will return.

Behold it aforetime
No eye ever did;
So soon it forever
From all eyes is hid.

Here hath been dawning
Another blue day;
Think, wilt thou let it
Slip useless away!"

V

EMERSON

And Spiritual Leadership in Democracy

IN Carlyle we found the largest interpretation for the English-speaking world of the two streams of Continental European thought that most deeply fertilized the nineteenth century. We are turning now to his contemporary and lifelong friend, our own Emerson. We have had many leaders far more important in the State and public affairs than was Emerson. It has seemed well to choose him nevertheless as our representative moral leader, since his has been the most fertilizing mind so far appearing in America. Emerson has the further significance that, like Socrates, he was "an unofficial patriot," called by the spirit within to a high moral mission, fulfilled in a life of almost unexampled purity and nobility. As moral leadership becomes increasingly important with the progress of civilization, so it reaches supreme significance under democracy.

The same world forces that molded the genius of Carlyle were behind Emerson, but with them were other influences not appearing in the Scotch-English man of letters. First of

these is the effect of the New World itself. There is, blowing through the prose and verse of Emerson, something of the fresh, open air that sweeps across our prairies and through our native forests. There is in Emerson a forward look, an instinctive faith and optimism, born of a world of new, open opportunity, unhampered by the traditions and conventions of the European past. From the beginning he had a native democracy of spirit.

With this, it must always be remembered, Emerson had behind him a half dozen generations of Christian ministry, in New England and old England. If there has been a true aristocracy of culture and intellect, it is found in that old-time New England ministry. It was in no degree an aristocracy of wealth, in small measure one of family, but supremely an aristocracy of culture, exercising almost a spiritual dictatorship over private and public conduct. If ever it has been your experience, as it has been mine, to climb up into one of those old-fashioned New England pulpits, far above the audience gathered below, and endeavor to speak with them on a plane of simple human equality, you know the relation of that ministry to the life of the people. The generations of such ministry behind Emerson became increasingly liberal, until Emerson himself is the fine

flower of that aristocracy of culture and intellect.

With this combination of influences he was thus exceedingly fortunate: a democrat in his principles, he was an aristocrat in his behavior; and the combination is as precious as it is rare. Only too often the man of the people makes his theories into his behavior, while the aristocrat converts his behavior into his principles. Either way the fine balance of human nature is lost. Emerson had it in rare degree. With instinctive principles of democracy, he met all sorts of human beings with that distinguishing courtesy that calls out the best in everyone. In the finest sense of that good old phrase Emerson was a man of the world, a gentleman.

Besides these influences the great streams of world thought found expression in Emerson, but they took different form in the new world. To make clear the change it is necessary to see the steps in the development of our literature before Emerson.

The English language and literature were brought over here at the highest point of their development. Our American English at its best is just as close to the roots and history of the language as British English at its best. Lowell and later essayists have established that. We have thus no reason to copy British pronunciations and locutions. The British have

one advantage we must acknowledge: they respect their language; generally speaking, we do not respect ours. In England it is the mark of belonging to the cultivated class to speak accurate, if not beautiful, English. With us the number of persons speaking either accurate or beautiful English is so small that you could hardly call them a class. Our language, however, descends from the English of Shakespeare's time. Certain forms survived here and dropped out in England; others continued in use there and disappeared here. I ran across a quaint illustration of this in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. The Clown remarks that "Malvolio's nose is no whipstock." I found the British editors carefully annotating the word "whipstock," explaining that it meant the handle of a whip. The American editors made no comment. This was not due to careless scholarship but to the fact that the word has disappeared in England, while with us it continues in use, at least where a horse survives! The illustration could be multiplied many times.

We thus received our linguistic and literary heritage at the top of its development. The colonists, however, settled in isolated groups on separate portions of the Atlantic coast. Pilgrims and Puritans in Massachusetts, Quakers in Pennsylvania, Catholics in Maryland, Cavaliers in Virginia. Each divergent fraction of

the English people was thus able to develop its particular characteristics more freely and conclusively in the New World. In mother England they lived side by side, rubbed off each other's angles, and were compelled to recognize their common humanity. Over here, living in widely separated sections, each group could express its specific tendencies without restraint. The Puritan became ultra Puritan in New England. The Cavalier could carry out his adventurous tendencies with complete freedom in Virginia; and so with the other groups.

The result was that our colonial literature was far more provincial than the contemporaneous literature produced in England. In New England there were heavy tomes of abstruse theology, volumes of alleged poetry, with the feet limping lamely through the verse, the titles sometimes running over to the second page, but little that could be called artistic literature. Similarly in Virginia there were stories written by fine gentlemen, who came to the New World to find El Dorados of gold and fountains of youth, and sat down to write the history of their disappointment; but there was little that deserved the name of artistic literature.

As time went on, the population rapidly increased, chains of forts stretched through the wilderness, and the colonies came more and

more into physical contact. Then all alike had to meet the same problems: to conquer the wilderness, protect themselves against the Indians, the threat of the French on the north, and then to face neglect and oppression by the mother country. The several groups were thus forced to act together; and during the Revolutionary period of a half century we experienced the first birth throes of a nation.

In such an epoch, centering on the long years of bitter warfare, naturally there was neither time nor interest for the production of artistic literature. What was produced was largely concerned with the struggle in which the country was absorbed. There were political essays and orations, verses to challenge soldiers and stimulate patriotism.

As we turned from England we were naturally more receptive to other influences. A stream of French social and political idealism poured into our American thought during the period of the Revolution. Our War for Independence preceded the Revolution in France, but the French social and political idealism preceded both. Its influence is evident in the writings of Paine, Jefferson, Franklin, even of Hamilton and Washington. Our very Declaration of Independence is, in its formulation, a French rather than an Anglo-Saxon document. The freedom it proclaims is, of course,

the English freedom, achieved through centuries of struggle in the mother country, but the phrasing is French. We begin by affirming that all men are born equal, though we know quite well they are not! It is the French who thus lay down an idea beforehand, and then proceed to the endeavor to realize it in conduct and institutions. Entering in the period of the Revolution, the French social and political idealism thus became a permanent element in our American life.

After the close of the War for Independence two decades were needed to reconquer the wilderness and establish again the foundations of material civilization. Thus, about twenty years after the war, appeared the first distinctively artistic school of letters in America. Naturally, it developed first in New York City, then as now the cosmopolitan business center of the country, including in its important names Bryant in poetry, Cooper in the novel, Irving in historical story and prose essay.

From New York the inspiration was carried over into the sterner, deeper life of New England, where it found a fertile and prepared soil. New England awakened after the Revolution to find she did not believe as she had believed. That is usually the way we grow intellectually: not by consciously abandoning a program of ideas, but by suddenly discovering

it is gone and that we are face to face with new problems. So was it in New England. In the colonial period it was possible to enact and enforce those "blue laws," prescribing how many ribbons a woman might wear on her gown and how a man's boots must be cut, regulating all details of private conduct. That was impossible after the Revolution. New England was seized with a liberal ferment of thought life. We call it the Unitarian Movement; but perhaps the name is not wisely chosen, for in any such ferment those who remain within the old organizations are only a little less deeply influenced than those who establish the new ones.

Just as this ferment was on in New England the second stream of Continental European thought entered—the influence of German literature and philosophy. One has only to consider how many German books were translated into English by American authors in the period of Emerson's youth to realize how strong that influence was. The movement that followed borrowed its name from the philosophy of Immanuel Kant, though New England Transcendentalism was widely different from his abstruse philosophy.

The Transcendental Movement in New England was not a definitely formulated school of thought, rather it was a spiritual awakening.

Everywhere in New England young people were aware that they did not believe as their fathers did, and they were conscious of a new dignity in the personal spirit and of a deeper meaning in human life.

In such a fermenting period of thought there will be many false prophets abroad. I have come to question whether even today, when apparently any teaching can get a hearing if only it be phrased vaguely enough or with sufficient prejudice, are there as many vagaries and superstitions abroad as in the New England of Emerson's youth. Many a self-called prophet mistook eating locusts and wild honey for fulfilling the mission of Saint John. Nevertheless, it was a deeply significant awakening.

Emerson is simply the incarnation of the Transcendental Movement in New England just because he expresses all that is best in it, and rises above it, as a great interpreter of life. His relation to New England Transcendentalism is parallel to that of Dante to the Middle Age. As Dante brought to expression all that the Middle Age was and all it aspired to be, yet transcended it as a master interpreter of life for all time, so Emerson stood in relation to the thought ferment of his age. The very materialism of American life made his spiritual emphasis the higher and stronger.

The most significant fact in Emerson's rela-

tion to Transcendentalism is that, in a time of eccentricities and vagaries of thought, he never lost his balance but traveled his own path, following consistently his own star. For instance, he welcomed to his home the poet of Transcendentalism, Jones Very. The evening was spent in deep conversation, but Jones Very went away deeply disappointed that Emerson had not become a convert to the particular program of ideas Jones Very advocated.

Similarly, Emerson welcomed Thoreau, listened appreciatively to Thoreau's dreams and plans, gave Thoreau permission to build his hut on a portion of Emerson's own land, near Walden Pond; but Emerson was not tempted to sit down for a couple of years beside the Pond, as Thoreau did, to "settle his private business with Nature," as Thoreau expressed it.

The founders of Brook Farm, the finest experiment in practical socialism our country has seen, were Emerson's close friends and associates. He was a frequent visitor at Brook Farm and gave the experimenters the benefit of his counsel; but he was not tempted to sell out his own property and join them, to care for "Margaret Fuller's transcendental heifer," as Hawthorne did.

His relation was the same toward the later anti-slavery movement. He offended Whittier and other abolitionists because he would not

join them. Emerson's view was that the federal government should buy the slaves from their owners at a fair price and free them. The plan was ridiculed as too costly—and think what we paid, in men and money, to eliminate that inheritance from barbarism!

Once Emerson was tempted, but the situation merely shows his generosity. Emerson and Bronson Alcott, Neo-Platonic dreamer, with his head in the air, on one occasion hatched out a scheme for uniting the two families, in a sort of domestic communism. That would probably have meant both families living on the Emerson purse; but the wives of the two philosophers put their feet down so hard on the proposition that it was never carried out, and Emerson was saved from what would have been his one mistake, in relation to Transcendentalism!

Emerson was born in Boston in 1803. Do you realize what our country was in that year? New York City then had a population of about 75,000, Boston 25,000. No street car had gone over the rails in any city in the world. The steamship, railroad train, and telegraph were undreamed of inventions of the future. Boston was a busy trading community, like a Western boom town, sending its ship captains far and wide, to West and East Indies, but with little of the later tradition of culture, due just to the work of Emerson and his contemporaries.

When a young child Emerson had the misfortune to lose his father, and the mother had considerable difficulty in rearing her family and securing for her children the education she desired for them. It was not the grinding poverty that depresses and makes bitter, but just enough to call out the strength in the family stock. For example, the biographers tell us that during one particularly cold winter in Boston Emerson and his little brother had only one overcoat to wear between them. The prosaic biographers seem to have forgotten that there never was a little boy who liked to wear an overcoat; so one of the Emerson brothers was happy all that winter! That shows the measure of hardship the family had to endure—just what strengthens character and stimulates effort.

Emerson went to school in Boston, and then, of course, to Harvard College. It is noteworthy that neither in his school nor college days did he show unusual intellectual ability. This is the more remarkable, since inquiries have been made assiduously of all Emerson's early associates. Now, almost any mother of a poet can recall dreaming of bees lighting on her son's lips, *after* he has become famous. So almost any early associate of a great man can look back across the years and remember the promises of coming greatness, *after* these have

been realized. It is the more significant that Emerson's early associates could recall nothing that evidenced his coming great intellectual career. They say, "Yes, he was spiritually minded; he did seem to be above and apart; it was often not easy to get personally close to him;" but they can recall no promise of what he was to become intellectually.

This may further exemplify the law that intellectual precocity often means early exhaustion; since the apparently more brilliant brothers of Emerson seem to have burned out, in early life, the rather slight biological foundation of the family stock, which in Emerson himself developed slowly through a long life of high service.

I have come to believe, however, that there is a still deeper significance in Emerson's lack of early intellectual promise. After all, his greatness was far more moral than intellectual. I say that, remembering his marvelously phrased apothegms and epigrams, his searching insights into the heart of life. Those illuminating thoughts come nevertheless from the height of his viewpoint rather than from the logic of his intellect. He came near to fulfilling his own maxim: he was, if not man thinking, at least *the* man thinking. His high thoughts and deep insights came from the application of his character to the problems of life.

The Occident collects knowledge, accumulates facts, and seeks to discover the threads of connection running through them, which we call laws. The Orient strives to climb away from the plain of facts to the mountaintop of the spirit, to look off and get the view of life in far perspective and wide relation. Emerson is akin to the Orient in giving always the spiritual vision. No wonder he loved the Neo-Platonists, the poets and dreamers of Persia and India!

Emerson graduated from college at twenty, and, like Carlyle, taught school for a time, to replenish his purse and continue his studies for the ministry, the vocation to which, with his family inheritance, he inevitably turned. Also, like Carlyle, he was not a naturally successful teacher: he was spiritually apart, absorbed in his own thinking, not easily coming close to other persons. Nevertheless, among his pupils were those who recognized his high spirit and permanently acknowledged their debt to him.

At twenty-three Emerson was licensed to preach, and after a period of miscellaneous preaching was established at twenty-six as associate pastor, shortly after as chief pastor, of one of the principal churches in Boston. Early in his ministry he married and settled down to a life of quiet domestic happiness and spiritual service.

It is again noteworthy that Emerson made no unusual record as a preacher. You may recall the story of the dear old lady of his congregation who said they "were a very simple people, and wanted no one but Mr. Emerson to preach to them." Interesting, in the light of the universally recognized profundity, and frequently alleged obscurity of Emerson's thought! The point is he had not yet matured the ideas for which he was permanently to stand, and was preaching within the limits of a quiet Christian gospel.

The year that Emerson was thirty, two events occurred which we should call bitter tragedy had any other man than Emerson been the center of them. Early in that year his young wife died. Emerson does not seem to have descended to the Inferno of suffering, and emerged with his face darkened with its black air, as a Dante or a Shelley would have done. He seems singularly devoid of personal passion. Following the death of the "Hyacinthine boy," in whom the father's heart was so wrapped up, we find him saying in a published essay, "In the death of my son, now more than two years ago, I seem to have lost a beautiful estate,—no more." Of course the statement is made to illustrate a spiritual thesis, but one gasps at it. No, Emerson was not characterized by personal passion.

Some six months later the second event oc-

curred which would seem disaster were a less serene soul the center. We find Emerson suddenly resigning not only from his pastorate, but from the Christian ministry for which he had been trained, owing to a difference with his congregation over the administration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Oh, no; do not think Emerson left the ministry over the question of a sacrament! That was merely the focusing point, bringing to expression a change that had been going on in him for a long time. He has told us why he left the ministry, in the poem called "The Problem"—the problem, being as he phrases it,

> "Why should the vest on him allure,
> Which I could not on me endure?"

In the course of the poem he answers his own question:

> "The hand that rounded Peter's dome
> And groined the aisles of Christian Rome
> Wrought in a sad sincerity;
> Himself from God he could not free;
> He builded better than he knew;
> The conscious stone to beauty grew.
> . . . .
> These temples grew as grows the grass;
> Art might obey, but not surpass.
> The passive Master lent his hand
> To the vast soul that o'er him planned."

Believing that all great thought and art had

thus flowed spontaneously forth from the Universal Heart, Emerson wanted his own thinking to come in the same way, and he had become convinced that it could not if he continued to wear that vest, so he quietly put it off. If he suffered, he made no sign; yet he was a man of thirty, with little inherited property or savings, at a time of life when most men expect to be well into their chosen vocation. The contrast with Carlyle in meeting the same problem is striking: Carlyle's years of spiritual suffering and struggle; Emerson quietly putting off the garment, no longer satisfactory, and serenely awaiting the next step.

He used the waiting time in a journey abroad. It was on this first trip that Emerson came down upon the Carlyles at Craigenputtock "like an angel from heaven," Mrs. Carlyle somewhat pathetically said. The hours were spent in deep conversation; and when Emerson departed, he left behind two lifelong friends. That friendship with Carlyle was more to Emerson's credit than to Carlyle's; for Carlyle's grumbling, his frequent sarcastic references to Emerson's insistent optimism, gave more than one occasion when Emerson might have broken the friendship had he not been magnanimous enough to see through the rough shell of Carlyle's expression to the sound heart of the man.

On this first journey abroad Emerson visited

England, Scotland, portions of France, Belgium, Germany, and Italy. It is significant that neither on this occasion nor on his two later trips abroad did Emerson get from foreign travel what most of us expect from that cultural opportunity. If we travel seriously, as students, or from any other reason than to escape our own disgust with life, our aim is to be lifted out of our provincial and national viewpoint into a world view. We want to look through the eyes of a Frenchman, a German, an Italian, and become cosmopolitan. This was not the result for Emerson. His cosmopolitanism came from native catholicity of mind and spirit, but he went through the world taking only what belonged to him. He was great because so much did naturally belong to him, but he made little effort to think himself into fields not natively his own. While in Italy, for instance, he wrote certain poems on Italian themes. They are slight, as far as any warm appreciation of Italian painting is concerned. The point is that Italian art, with its flaming wealth of color and sensuous mysticism, did not appeal to Emerson's cold New England temperament, and he did not try to enter the alien field.

No, what Emerson got from foreign travel was widely different. He came home believing that the Great Spirit of our American wilderness is better than the gods of the Philistine

nations dwelling round about. To speak less metaphorically, what Emerson got from travel abroad was self-trust and trust in the opportunity of the New World. He returned with the conviction that we need not rest back forever on the culture of Europe; that here the great life could be lived, the high thinking achieved, the noble art produced. It meant much for his lifework.

On his return home Emerson felt his way toward his future vocation by giving that winter in Boston a course of public lectures; and, strange to say, on Natural Science—the one field, it would seem, in which Emerson was not fitted to lecture! The demand was in that field, however, and he responded. The following year he was much more sure of himself and conscious of his mission, for his subjects that season included George Fox, Edmund Burke, John Milton, Martin Luther, Michael Angelo—those pathmakers who blaze the trail that other men follow.

The next year—Emerson was now thirty-three—he published his first book, that little volume entitled *Nature,* which remains one of the most logical and at the same time mystical of his writings. The book is divided into what are almost chapters, each actually beginning where the other ends! Emerson never did that again. It is worth asking what would have been

the result had he chosen to express his thought with the measure of logic shown in his first book. There is no way to answer the question: we can only be grateful for Emerson's high thinking in the form he chose to give it.

Nature is, however, also deeply mystical. Its central thought is that Man and Nature are two aspects of one truth, each interpreting the other. What we read in the silent shining stars, in the irregular melody of the pine forest, the dancing pond waves, we know in the moods of the heart and thoughts of the mind. Therefore we should live close to the nature mother, and find in her beauty, the supreme calming and exalting influence on our lives.

The little book is thus interesting in a further way: it lays down the program of Emerson's personal life. He had married again, happily, and settled in the quiet, picturesque village of Concord. There, in the simple, stately house, hills rising across the road, the shimmer of the birch leaves lending gayer beauty to the deep somberness of the pines, his farm extending to the brink of Walden Pond, whose placid waters mirrored the trees surrounding it, or rippled under the breeze, with the eternal motion of the sea: there Emerson was to live his life out, finding in that nature world the supreme inspiration for his serene spirit.

It took fifteen years to sell the first edition of

five hundred copies of Emerson's first book. Take comfort, rising authors of the present generation! Emerson was not troubled: he had written the book largely for himself and his small group of friends and disciples. The moment it was published he turned from it and was ready for the next step.

The following year Emerson, now thirty-four, gave a memorable address before one of the literary societies of Harvard College: that address on "The American Scholar," which a later writer has called "our American literary declaration of independence." It is that, but it is more than that; for in it Emerson told those young scholars that young men in libraries turn the pages of Locke, Bacon, and Cicero, forgetting that when Locke, Bacon, and Cicero wrote their books, they were young men in libraries. He urged them to self-trust, to be, not thinkers, but *man thinking*. He had come to recognize that when a man becomes either a head or a hand, he fails, in the end, to do either good headwork or good handwork. There must be a whole human being at the job, to get good work permanently done; and that applies, above all, to the life of thought.

The young men who heard the address needed the lesson. Young men and women today need it many times as much, for since Emerson gave the address there has been the

greatest development of specialization the world has seen, alike in scholarship and in all vocational fields. Our need is even greater than in Emerson's time for a scholar or group of scholars broad and human enough to interpret the rapidly accumulating wealth of knowledge in terms of the human spirit. As Carlyle in England, so Emerson in America, chose that as his lifework. He also paid a price for it. The great university, that now builds its stately hall and puts the name of Emerson over the door, had not even a minor place on its faculty open to Emerson in the day when that would have given him the opportunity he desired. He paid the price willingly, proving his place among the moral leaders.

The address on "The American Scholar" thus lays down the program of Emerson's life in the second aspect, as student and scholar. He said, "The Lyceum platform is my pulpit."

The next year Emerson, now thirty-five, gave a still more memorable address: that unnamed one to the *Divinity Graduates* of Harvard, which begins with the loveliest description of a New England summer ever written, and proceeds quietly to discuss the work of the Christian ministry.

He told those young men that there were two faults in the preaching of that time: the ministers dwelt too much on the person of Jesus,

too little on the moral mission of Christ; and they preached with faces turned toward the past instead of looking out on the present and future. If I may paraphrase his thought and set it in lower key, to bring out more pungently its meaning, what he practically said was that the ministers preached as if God had been, at some time in the past; had started the universe and left it running like a great machine, intervening occasionally, by special providence, to change a lever or set a brake; while Emerson believed that the God who was, is; that if we keep clean channels for the waters of the spirit, the inspiration that came to prophet and teacher of old may flow through us today.

It was all said quietly and constructively, but the publication of the address produced a veritable storm of attack and abuse. Even the Unitarians gave him up: they said he was undermining the very foundations of Christianity!

Emerson was hurt by these attacks, but for an interesting reason: he said they made him think about himself, and he wanted to think his thought! That is one of the best keys to Emerson's character. He wanted his thinking to remain unbiased by personal elements, whether of praise or blame. If what he spoke were the truth, he was sure it would win in the end; if it were not, he did not wish it to win; either way he was satisfied. For that reason he would

never answer an attack nor enter a controversy. He believed men may begin arguing with some interest in finding the truth, but that they argue only a little way before they forget all about the truth and continue only to win and put down their adversary.

Let me ask you: Was he not right? How many persons do you know who are glad to be defeated in an argument for truth's sake? Do you know one such person? If you do, stick to him, for he is a saint of the intellect, and you may well mold your intellectual life under his guidance!

We must remember, further, that it was not the Emerson of whom we are thinking, who gave that address. The Emerson we have in mind is the one who has won his way to universal recognition as the most stimulating mind America has produced. Even in 1903, when we celebrated the hundredth anniversary of Emerson's birth, it was amusing how persons of all religious confessions and of none at all pressed forward to claim that they always had believed what Emerson taught, while often they were the spiritual descendents of those who most bitterly attacked him. No, the Emerson who gave that address was a young man of thirty-five, little known outside a group of friends and disciples, speaking to somewhat younger men on their work and his.

What helped him was his method: the opposite of such a reformer as Luther, for instance. Luther would have said to his adversary, "Friend, this picket in your fence is rotten!" If the other objected, Luther would have pulled the picket out of the fence and belabored his opponent over the head with it, to prove that it would break.

Emerson never did that. His way was to lay his intellectual adversary's fence on the ground, and then say: "Friend, did you ever note the wonderful view of the mountains you have from your back yard?" The man was puzzled, having never seen anything in that direction, except the backyard fence of dogmatic theory he had built across the mystery of the universe. Often only after Emerson was gone, did he realize that his fence was down; then he may have been furious, but at least he could not forget the vision of the distant mountains; and not all the fences got put back in the same place. That was Emerson's method—quiet, affirmative teaching of the truth as he saw it, and letting it work.

Perhaps I should turn aside a moment to remark that the affirmative method is of value only when you have something significant to affirm. I wish the weak diluters of Emerson, who have changed his robust intellectual meat into skimmed milk for the babes of learning, would get that. If you have little to say, better

argue: there is at least interest in the controversy. Emerson had something deeply significant to say, and the affirmative method was his natural vehicle.

The address thus lays down the program of Emerson's life in the third and final way: as spiritual leader and minister to the souls of others.

This threefold program, projected in the book on *Nature,* in the address on *The American Scholar* and in that to the *Divinity Graduates,* Emerson fulfilled consistently to the end of his life. As time progressed he went more and more widely afield with his public lectures, always reading them from manuscript in a serene, mellow voice. He traveled repeatedly through the Middle West, experiencing all the discomforts of the itinerant teacher's life, in days when there were not the Pullman palace car and the air-conditioned express train. He knew the miseries of poorly heated rooms in village inns, of badly cooked meals, and irregular hours. He never complained; but wherever he spoke he left behind at least a few young persons who felt that the angel of God had passed that way, realizing that there was something in human life beyond the pleasure of the moment and the commercial interest of the day. The moral leaven thus injected into American life by the public teaching of Emer-

son is beyond all that we can yet estimate. That there is a saving minority of us continuing to believe in the things of the spirit and endeavoring to live them is due to Emerson in deeper ways than we understand.

As the years passed he gathered up his public lectures, revised them, and with other writings, published them, in volumes of *Essays, Addresses, and Lectures.* At intervals he wrote beautiful poems, free in expression, and, at least equally with his prose, pregnant with epigrammatic phrasing of lofty thought. Compare:

"For what need I of book or priest,
Or Sibyl from the mummied East,
When every star is Bethlehem star!"

"The fiend that man harries
Is love of the Best:
Yawns the pit of the dragon
Lit by rays from the Blest.
The Lethe of Nature
Can't trance him again,
Whose soul sees the perfect,
His eye seeks in vain."

A further illustration is in the "Concord Hymn," with its unforgettable lines:

"Here once the embattled farmers stood,
And fired the shot heard round the world."

One wonders at times whether Emerson in

both verse and prose is not, first of all and above all, poet.

When the end came for Emerson in 1882, at the age of seventy-nine, even then it could be said that he had won his fight. The decades that have followed have only deepened our recognition of this, until now we can say with complete assurance that Emerson is the most powerfully fertilizing mind, fulfilling the masculine function of impregnating other minds and making them bring forth fruitfully, that America has so far produced. When Matthew Arnold visited our country, he remarked that he found Emerson preached from all American pulpits. It might be added that where this was true they were remarkably good sermons!

One of Emerson's British biographers, Doctor Garnett, who writes charmingly of him, says that Emerson was unkind to those who wished to write the story of his life, in that he "never did anything bad and interesting"! That is just it: he never did anything bad and interesting; his life is devoid of romantic incident on the surface of it. In other words, the true story of the man is the history of his thinking, which explains why I have dwelt on the development of his life of thought rather than on the few external incidents of his career.

In that thought life is deep unity, though not logical consistency. Emerson, indeed, stigma-

tized consistency as "the hobgoblin of little minds," and never strove for it. The unity in his thinking is that of a living organism: a tree that strikes its roots into the earth, lifts its leaves into the air, draws from both worlds, and converts all that it draws into its own growing life. Such is the unity in Emerson: all the ideas on the circumference of his thinking are related to his character at the center; if you take your viewpoint at that center, all the seemingly contradictory ideas become a consistent unity.

For example, there is no thought more constant in Emerson than that which finds its fullest expression in the essay on "The Over Soul": the idea that, as the earth rests in the arms of the atmosphere, so we may rest back upon a life larger than our own; and through the open channels of the spirit it may flow forth, so that we too may become organ pipes of immensity and eternity. He urges us, therefore, not to trust ourselves, but to trust God, to rest in that larger life, and let it find expression through us.

One turns, then, to such essays as "Self-Reliance" and "Heroism," and finds Emerson urging us to trust ourselves, to keep the integrity of our own minds: if all Europe applauds Aeschylus, and he fails to appeal to us, we should frankly say so.

The casual reader exclaims: "You see how he contradicts himself; what is one to do?" Not

at all: there is no contradiction whatever; for the self Emerson is urging us to trust is not the imperfect personality, but just that deeper background of mind in which we rest, the bit of God that he has lent us.

The lack of logical progression of thought in Emerson results in part from his method of writing. He kept his books of thoughts going through all the years, assiduously writing down ideas as they came to him. There are quaint stories of his later years, telling how his wife would be wakened to hear him fumbling for a light, and in some alarm would ask, "What is the matter?" Emerson, in that mellow voice, would reply, "Oh, only a thought"; and when he had written it down, he put out the light, went to bed again and, we trust, to sleep.

When he wished to publish an Essay, he would take passages from these books of thoughts, others from a lecture manuscript, write in other paragraphs; and call it an essay on "Spiritual Laws," or "Circles," or "Intellect": you could exchange the titles, with little harm. The result is that a scoffing critic remarks that one could begin the reading of an Emerson essay with the last paragraph and read toward the front, with as good effect as reading in normal fashion. The scoffing critic was almost right, but what he failed to see was that Emerson's Essays are marvelously good read-

ing either way! Emerson's strength is not in the logical development of a thesis, but in the illuminating paragraph, the effectively phrased apothegm, the searching insight, thought so perfectly expressed that one must quote Emerson in using the idea afterward, since he has said it better than anyone else.

It thus becomes possible to rearrange the ideas of an essay of Emerson's in logical order and show their organic unity. I did this during my first year of college teaching, with all the essays in the First Series, and some in the Second. It proved to be about the best intellectual gymnastic I had given my mind, with the exception of mastering the arguments in Plato's *Dialogues*.

As an example take the first essay of the First Series, on "History." What is its basic thought? Fortunately, Emerson has answered the question for us, by prefixing a bit of verse:

> "I am the owner of the sphere,
> Of the seven stars and the solar year,
> Of Caesar's hand and Plato's brain,
> Of Lord Christ's heart and Shakespeare's strain."

Each of us is a unit part of humanity, a sort of germ cell, containing the potentialities of the whole.

History should therefore be read with the center not in Athens, Rome, Paris, London, or

New York, but in one's own soul. The hours should be read by the ages, and the ages by the hours. When I understand the painting of the Renaissance, I know the meaning of my own wakening to beauty. When I go through the religious struggle in my own life, I know what the Reformation and other religious crises in history meant.

It follows that the whole value of history is as an inspiration for life today. If we are overshadowed by the past, we would better know less about it, which explains why so many great men come out of the wilderness. Only when our knowledge of history enables us to live better now, to fulfill today's duty more effectively, has it served us aright. I leave it to you if that is not a logical development of thought. Well, all the ideas cited are in Emerson's essay, but not in the order given.

For a second illustration, consider the essay on "Art." Its central thought is that there is a Universal Life behind all individuals which gives meaning to them. Hence art should be ideal, expressing the life behind the forms.

Art will, therefore, reveal to us the artist, epoch, and race, since the artist's hand seems to be grasped by a giant hand that moves the brush over the canvas and drives the chisel into the marble.

Still, why should we seek expression in art, since the Universal Life is expressed in all nature? The answer is that we grow through the expression, and enter into our heritage from the human past.

Art, therefore, should be one with nature, and the beautiful and useful should be united in our lives. Again, the long logic underlying the seemingly casual ordering of ideas, giving organic unity.

What of the limitations in Emerson? I would rather ask certain questions. Why is it that when Emerson's central ideas had fully matured, he did not go on and develop a further range of ideas? If we had only the First Series of Essays and the Poems, we should have all of Emerson's great thoughts. Understand, the other volumes are very valuable, but they consist largely in the fresh application to other aspects of life of the same few great ideas. This is so true that in Emerson's late years, when, famous, he was invited to speak on less important occasions, the address would seem slight, were it not for the high spiritual personality speaking. What does this mean?

There is a passage in Goethe's *Autobiography* that throws light on the situation. He was speaking of Klopstock and Gleim, who so influenced Goethe's boyhood, showing how they

developed a new vein of poetry by rendering the material of the Bible into German verse. He points out that they did not go on and develop a new vein of poetry, but, rather, formed a sort of mutual admiration society, each praising the work of others in the group. He adds the illuminating comment that men lay up a sorry future for themselves who dwell too much in a world of inner ideas and fail to grasp down and out into the many-sided human world.

That, of course, does not strictly apply to Emerson; but compared with the *Welt-Kind* Goethe, he did dwell in a range of inner ideas, while Goethe continually grasped down and out into the many-sided human world.

There are thus phases of human experience that find no interpretation in Emerson. Where in Emerson is the gospel for those who are caught in the whirlpool of the senses, and go round and round and down? Emerson went into Boston to the meeting of the Transcendental Club, read his Essay, and returned to Concord. Where in Emerson is the gospel for the barefoot children, who froze and starved in back alleys of Boston while the Transcendental Club met?

I confess there are times when Emerson's Essay on "Compensation" seems almost an impertinence in one's grief. I confess that at

times Emerson seems to me rather like that angel which Dante describes so impressively in the ninth canto of the Inferno: sent from heaven to open for Dante and Virgil the gates of the City of Dis. Dante portrays him striding over the acres of the lost, not seeing them, waving aside from his angelic countenance the black air of the hell of suffering. He opens the gates, rebukes those within, turns without looking at Dante and Virgil, going back, Dante says, like one not thinking of his road but only of that high place to which he is to return.

At times Emerson seems like that—brushing back from his serene face the black air of human suffering, not seeing the multitude of the lost, thinking less of his road than of that high place to which he is to return. His gospel is not of the Hell of failure and the Purgatory of struggle, but of the Terrestrial Paradise of rest and peace, and the Celestial Heaven of light multiplied into light, rising to the glory of the Beatific Vision.

This is saying of Emerson only what was said of Socrates, and must be said of all the others: each has his strength and his limitation, the point at which the excellence stops. Broadly speaking, there are two types of men, who help us in contrasting fashion. One of these is in the battle, fighting the hosts of evil. The smoke

of the conflict obscures his vision and he cannot see the issue. He knows only that he must fight well while it is yet day. Such men are Aeschylus, Dante, Carlyle.

There is another type of man who climbs away from the plain where the battle is raging, higher and higher on the Olympic peaks. He looks off over the wide plain of discordant struggle. The cloud of smoke covering the battle obscures its horror. He does not know how bitter it is to go down fighting, ignorant of its outcome; but from his high vision point he can see that, while a wing of the forces of righteousness is losing ground, the center of the army of life and light is moving resistlessly forward to certain victory. Such men are Sophocles, Goethe, Emerson.

We need both types of leaders. As we need the tonic challenge of Carlyle's gospel of work and sincerity, his teaching to take the duty that lies just at hand, and do it with all our might, so we need Emerson's serene vision, of life seen from the mountaintop, in wide relation and far perspective, the pain of the process obscured, but its splendid issue clear.

As we found the heart of Carlyle's teaching in the briefly simple "Blue Day" poem, so in the appendix to Emerson's volume of *Poems* are four lines of verse, which carry the spirit

of Emerson's mission and may be taken as the motto of his life:

> "Teach me your mood, O patient stars!
> Who climb each night the ancient sky,
> Leaving on space no shade, no scars,
> No trace of age, no fear to die."

VI

TOLSTOY

THE MORAL LEADER IN MYSTERIOUS RUSSIA

FOR our concluding study we are turning to a leader almost of our own time: a bizarre figure, springing from a puzzling background, but rising to a high spiritual gospel, most significant for life today.

When in November, 1910, Tolstoy's death occurred under those pathetic circumstances—the old man going out alone to die, in a kind of last futile protest against a society he could not accept—there followed the flood of articles in magazines and newspapers over the world, some appreciative, others beside the mark, but all seeming like the buzzing of flies over a dead lion. A little time elapses; the lion is dust and the flies are still; so perhaps the time has now come when we may fairly estimate Tolstoy and the value of his message for this disturbed modern world.

The background from which Tolstoy sprang is a puzzle to the rest of the world. Russia is a country of contradictions, a land of vast and benumbing gloom, but developing a fine flower of culture; capable in one generation of freeing

the serfs and meeting the resulting problems in a way to astonish the world, yet guilty of vicious racial and religious pogroms; maintaining late a Czarist autocracy, yet reacting against it to the extreme of Communist revolution. The more we study Russia, the more puzzling she becomes. Of any other European people I think we may say that we understand their dominant characteristics; but Russia remains a mystery. We should remember, however, that the Russians never speak of their country as part of Europe; they say, "Europe, and Russia," with the sense that she broods apart, with a unique destiny.

One cause of the contradictions is the land itself. Russia covers so vast a territory that she has many varieties of soil and climate, but the characteristic Russian world that has stamped itself so deeply on the people is the endless expanse of rolling green steppes under a gray sky; a land with a long, desolate winter season and short, quick-passing summer, where life is a perpetual battle with the brute forces of the nature world.

More important than the land is the race, as far back as we can trace it in history. The Slavs have an emotional quality akin to the Celts, are alternately somber and careless, with a capacity for extremes of passion.

With this, in the Russian, is a contrasting

dumb, resistant quality, reminding us of the Orient. Whether resulting from the direct injection of Tartar blood or from the millenniums of contact with the East, it is deep in Russian character. In the Czarist regime it showed in pushing onward the remorseless imperialism, with the ability to draw back when the waves rolled up from without, to wait a decade, a hundred years if necessary, and then push relentlessly forward again.

Such a people can be defeated but not conquered. That was evident in the Napoleonic wars. A people capable of abandoning and leaving in flames its capital, and of retiring into the snows of the Northland, merely that its conqueror might freeze and starve within its gates, is, indeed, a people that can be defeated but not conquered.

A still deeper cause of the contradictory aspects of Russian life is found in the way in which Russia took on the garment of civilization. While western Europe was rapidly developing, Russia remained in the barbaric sleep that had characterized her for a thousand years. Then quite suddenly, under Peter the Great and Catherine the Great, she wakened, reached out and lifted over the garment of civilization, elsewhere elaborated, borrowing it chiefly from Germany and France. Inevitable results follow such action.

If barbarism has a virtue, it is in storing up those biological energies that civilization dissipates. Under barbarism the weak are ruthlessly crushed out and only the strong survive. In civilization the intelligence of science and the mercy of humanitarianism are alike devoted to enabling weaklings and defectives to survive and reproduce themselves in offspring. Life under barbaric conditions is, moreover, relatively simple, consisting in winning a low degree of food, clothing, and shelter, while civilization subjects us to a thousandfold nervous stimuli every waking hour.

In both ways a thousand years of barbarism incubates and stores up the fundamental biological energies. Let such a barbaric people suddenly be brought into contact with the stimuli of civilization, and it can readily be seen what follows. The accumulated energies are quickly released; and everything the barbaric people borrows from a highly civilized one will be carried to extreme conclusion.

That is just what occurred in Russia. In the last period of the Czarist regime, if you wished to find the last word in poetry, the novel, and modern music, you turned to the studios and schools of Saint Petersburg and Moscow. To Russia one turned to discover the extreme reaction of science on religion. To find the best-dressed persons, who talk the polite nothings

that are the staple of aristocratic society throughout the world, one went to the drawing rooms of Saint Petersburg and Moscow. All that Russia borrowed from western Europe was swiftly carried to extreme expression.

A still graver result follows from the same cause. Where civilization is a long and gradual growth all the people share in it. Even the illiterate peasant breathes the intellectual and cultural atmosphere that is developed. On the other hand, where the garment of civilization is lifted over from without, only those at the top are immediately affected, and a long period is required for its influence to sift down to the mass of people below.

That also was completely exemplified in Russia. The aristocrats and intellectuals gave the extreme form to the borrowed culture, while the vast mass of Russian peasants remained in the semibarbarism that had been their condition for thousands of years. The further and final result was that in Russia the chasm between high and low, aristocrat and man of the people, was more terrible and unbridgeable than elsewhere in the modern world.

This throws a flood of light on subsequent happenings and the present situation in Russia. In the World War the Russian people were sincere in the desire to protect a sister Slav nation, but the regime was half-hearted from the

start. Whether from neglect or inability, the government did not adequately support its armies in the field, with the resulting sacrifice of vast numbers of men who otherwise need not have died. The anguished people finally revolted, in the bloodless Revolution of 1917, with the establishment of the Kerensky regime. I am convinced that Kerensky was entirely in earnest in the endeavor to make Russia a representative democracy; but the task was too great, or he was not big enough for it. He did not have the courage to shoot the few he should have shot in order to forestall the murder of a million.

The second Revolution thus became possible, when a fraction of a fraction of the handworkers of the cities were able to seize the State and make themselves masters of a hundred and forty millions. At the time no enthusiast claimed more than seven hundred and fifty thousand believing Bolshevists. Thus representatives of less than a million became dictators over a hundred and forty millions. Such a thing could have happened nowhere else in the world. It was possible in Russia because of the chasm between the two ends of society, the ignorance of the mass of the people and their servile condition under autocracy.

The leaders of the Bolshevist Revolution were fanatically devoted to Marxian theories,

and they sought immediately to establish the extreme form of the Marxian Communistic State. They took over the capital, plants and tools of production, driving out or murdering the burgeois owners and operators. Wherever possible, they seized as well private capital and property. They then applied the collective principle to the land and farming, where it is least applicable. We are told that three millions perished under that operation. They weakened the family bond, dismissed God, attempting to suppress all religion and propagate atheism.

Meantime there has been a substitution of one phase after another of the despised and hated capitalism, while the Communist organization of the State has passed over into the most brutal of dictatorships, more mercilessly murderous than the Czarist government had ever been. That the cynical dictator could carry out the wickedly aggressive war on Finland, in direct violation of all Communist principles, sufficiently shows how completely the dictatorship has abandoned those principles. Under Stalin, Russia has again become "The bear that walks as a man."

There is no question that the Russian people have dreamed a great dream, which should bring some good to them and to the world,

but what the future holds is on the lap of the gods.

Such a mother will give birth to strange children; and the school of Russian novelists, culminating in the late Czarist rule, is one of the strangest births from the breast of that Sphinx-like mother. Tolstoy is Russian of the Russians. Nothing could be more characteristic of his people than the first half of Tolstoy's life, though he reached a bizarre and seemingly contradictory conclusion.

He was born in 1828 of noble Russian family, and spent his boyhood on the large family estates out from Moscow. In that early period he came into close contact with the common people, but only as "Little Master" in relation to the serfs.

Tolstoy attended the Universities of Kazan and Moscow. His interest centered in two contrasting fields of study—natural science and metaphysical philosophy. On leaving the University he entered the army as officer, was advanced in rank, fought through the Crimean War, and commanded a portion of the Russian army at the terrible storming of Sebastopol.

Sickened with the bloodshed he had witnessed and in which he had taken part, disgusted with army life, he resigned his commission at the close of the Crimean War and went to Saint Petersburg to join the literary circle

there. He had already gained a name in Russia as a writer of stories, and quickly strode to definite headship of the remarkable group of novelists and poets gathered in Saint Petersburg at that time.

During this period he traveled somewhat, visiting portions of Switzerland, France, Italy, and Germany. Like Emerson, he did not get the usual result from foreign travel, but for a different reason. Everywhere he carried with him the problems of his own Russian world, and saw chiefly what threw light upon them.

He lived for a time in Paris, that city which fascinates us with its every extreme of art, vice, and virtue. Did Tolstoy see and know the Paris we love? Apparently not, or if so, he has little to say of it. What he does speak of, at length, is an execution he witnessed; and he says that when the severed head of the criminal fell into the box on one side of the guillotine, the trunk of the body on the other, it came over him that the deliberate putting to death of a human being by his fellows was absolutely wrong, and never could any reasoning justify it.

Tolstoy dwelt for a while in that pearl of cities by Lake Lucerne. We go to Switzerland to have our hearts lifted and our minds exalted by that circle of mountains rising behind mountains, till the snow-clad summits seem to scale the sky, and to study the earnest, industrious,

freedom-loving Swiss people. If Tolstoy saw these in Switzerland, he says little of them. What he does dwell upon is the rootless, luxurious life of those people without a country who live at the great Continental European hotels; and still more he arraigns the unjust social conditions that permit poor wretches to be kicked away, starving, from the back doors of the same hotels.

He never understood German music, Italian painting, nor our own America. Late in his life one of our garrulous tourists asked Tolstoy who was our greatest American writer and thinker. Tolstoy passed over the names that would occur to you, our Emerson, Hawthorne, Jefferson, Lowell and Lincoln, and responded with a name, perhaps unknown to many of you, Adin Ballou, because that man had developed a social theory appealing to Tolstoy. This is said, not in criticism, but to indicate the point of view from which Tolstoy must be studied if we are to understand him. Only on the background of that bizarre Russian world, with its unique problems, can Tolstoy's message as moral leader be understood.

At thirty-four Tolstoy married, apparently happily, and left Saint Petersburg to live on his inherited estates out from Moscow. The serfs had just previously been freed by order of the Czar, and Tolstoy devoted himself to the solu-

tion of the problems that lay heavily on the brain and heart of every earnest Russian proprietor, as a result of that sudden and drastic action. Also he was occupied with the education of his children, who came in quick succession. Continuing his literary work, he produced, in the decade following his marriage, his greatest novels, *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina.*

As Tolstoy entered middle age a sudden transformation occurred. He was converted, in the etymological sense of the word: turned round about and made to face the other way. We find him hating what he had previously loved and loving what he had hated; repudiating his great novels, ashamed of having written them; refusing pay for further writings, dedicating them to public causes; desirous of renouncing all his inherited and acquired property, and withheld from that extreme step only by the vigorous protest of wife and children; putting on the dress of the Russian peasant and working part of each day with his own hands; and for the remaining thirty years of his life, living to teach, preach and make prevail a certain spiritual and social gospel.

I quoted Doctor Garnett's remark that Emerson had been unkind to his biographers in having done nothing "bad and interesting." Tolstoy did much that was both bad and inter-

esting. His life is remarkably full of dramatic incident, yet it is as true of Tolstoy as of Emerson that the real biography of the man is the history of his thinking, centering on the spiritual crisis in middle age. To that deeper story I must now turn.

Fortunately for our purpose, all of Tolstoy's works are in some measure autobiographical. Even the great novels, in which he holds the mirror up so faithfully to objective reality, not only contain basic phases of his philosophy, but reflect chapters of his own experience. Other writings are slightly veiled autobiography. In the *Stories of a Russian Proprietor* and *Childhood, Boyhood, and Youth* the discerning reader can easily remove the veil of fiction and recognize the personal chapters of Tolstoy's life.

We may go beyond even this. Other writings of Tolstoy are frank, unveiled autobiography. Among these are *My Religion,* the story of taking the census of Moscow in *What to Do?* and best of all, *My Confession.* The last does not tell the whole story of Tolstoy's life, the first forty years of which are sketched in twenty pages. The little book is written to show the meaning of the spiritual transformation that came in middle age; but as that is the hinging center of Tolstoy's life, which looks before and after and explains the whole, his *Confession*

becomes one of the most illuminating spiritual autobiographies we are privileged to read. To its story we must now turn.

Tolstoy begins by telling us that when he was a lad of eleven, one of his schoolmates informed him that it had been discovered that God did not exist. Tolstoy accepted the discovery as fact; and from that time on had no faith in God. He thus grew up to manhood in the skepticism of the young aristocrats of the time. It was not the worthy skepticism that tests all things and holds fast only the good, but the skepticism of intellectual indifference. God, Freedom, and Immortality simply did not exist for him. He had, moreover, fallen into something even worse than religious unbelief, and that is moral skepticism. There was no idea of duty, no moral law that he recognized as binding upon him. He goes so far as to tell us that he and his young comrades constantly ridiculed a brother of Tolstoy's, who was in training for the priesthood, and so striving to live a half-way decent moral life. It was such a man, he tells us, who entered the army officer's life.

Where professional militarism prevails moral evils develop, usually in proportion to the number of men kept apart from ordinary business and domestic life. Professional militarism asks in peace time only the virtue of little children

and primitive men—unreasoning obedience. If the soldier obeys orders, everything is done for him. His clothing is furnished, his food prepared, his housing arranged. He is told just what motions to go through on the parade ground, for just such time, every day. Even his vices are catered to by convenient arrangements near the barracks.

In war time, besides obedience, another quality, which cannot be called a virtue, is demanded of the soldier: recklessness of life. Not moral courage, for that results from faith in the cause for which you fight, and from caring for it more than you love your life. Under professional militarism it is not desired that the soldier should understand why he fights: he is expected to obey orders, and fight as daringly for a bad cause as for a good one—which explains why an army is often made partially drunk before battle.

The moral evils resulting from such a situation have probably never been worse than in Russian army life. Tolstoy experienced them to the full. Officer differed from common soldier only in having greater freedom to indulge his whims. Tolstoy's confession is painfully explicit:

> I put men to death in war, I fought duels to slay others; I lost at cards, wasted my substance wrung from the sweat of peasants, punished the latter cruelly, rioted

with loose women, and deceived men. Lying, robbery, adultery of all kinds, drunkenness, violence and murder: all committed by me.

It is true that after conversion one may speak with undue bitterness of one's unregenerate years; but Tolstoy's statement is so definite that the substance of it must be accepted. Moreover, the intense earnestness that marked him temperamentally would have carried him far on any path he had entered.

Such a man it was who became the head of the literary circle in Saint Petersburg. At that time Tolstoy thought he was teaching something, but "knew nothing to teach," imagined he was living for the progress of the species, but was really living for his own ease, comfort, and indulgence. With his marriage and settlement on his estates his ideal became more specific. It was to serve the progress of his family and dependents.

So his life continued until about the age of forty-five. Then suddenly the ground seemed to go from under his feet, and he found himself hanging over an abyss. Such questions as these kept surging through his mind: "I now own so many thousand acres of land in the Government of Samara, with so many thousand head of cattle and horses upon them—what then?" Or, "Suppose I could attain all that I desire, the

education of my son and welfare of my peasants —what then? Would it mean anything to me?" You know what the answer must have been!

My Confession tells us that he fell into abject despair. He found himself taking down a rope that hung in his study, lest he hang himself, hiding away his revolver, lest he take too easy a way out.

Do not misunderstand this bitter reaction of Tolstoy. It was utterly remote from the picturesque pessimism of youth, so sentimentally pleased with its own melancholy. This is a man of middle age, happily married, wealthy, famous as author in his own country and abroad, suddenly discovering that the cup of life tastes bitter and he can no longer drink from it, that the apple of life has turned to dust and ashes in his hand!

With his rare literary skill Tolstoy tells what he suffered, by narrating a weird Russian folk story from the steppes. A traveler, lost in the endless plain, turned to find himself followed by a wild beast. Running to escape, he came to a well, down whose wall he sought to climb. Glancing below, he saw a dragon, with yawning mouth, waiting to devour him. With the beast above and the dragon beneath he clung to the branch of a wild plant growing out of the inner wall of the well. As he clung, with failing strength, two mice came, one white and one

black, gnawing alternately at the branch. He saw that soon it would break and he would fall into the mouth of the dragon. Meantime, with the dumb curiosity born of despair, he looked about him and saw two drops of honey on a leaf of the wild plant, stretched out his tongue and licked them.

Tolstoy says that was his condition: pursued, does he mean, by the wild beast of the unanswered enigma of life; climbing down the blind well of existence, with the dragon of death waiting to receive him? The two mice, white and black: does Tolstoy mean day and night, gnawing in quick succession at the frail branch of life by which we cling? He adds: "I also had my two drops of honey, to alleviate my sufferings—my family and my writings."

The two drops of honey now palled on his tongue, and in hope of some light he turned back the page of the years to the studies that had occupied him in his college days. He says —and please note that it is his statement, not mine—that when he turned to natural science, he received exact answers to his questions, as long as they were of no importance; but the moment he asked a significant question the scientists not only had no answer but laughed at him for asking the question. You see what he means. Science deals with finite problems. The moment an infinite factor enters, the sci-

entist recognizes there can be no solution; but the problems for which Tolstoy needed solution all involved an infinite factor. What he required was a living faith in God, Freedom and Immortality; and he did not get it from natural science.

He next tried metaphysics and found (again it is his statement, not mine) that while the philosophers pretended to answer his questions, what they really did was to restate the questions in more difficult terminology! Of course that is not fair to the metaphysicians, but it is so nearly fair to a considerable group of them as to be an illuminating comment. What Tolstoy forgets is that the right statement of the question is half the answer. Kant understood that. He said:

> It is a great and necessary proof of wisdom and sagacity to know what questions may be reasonably asked.

Who that has conducted discussions with public audiences can fail to recognize the truth in Kant's epigram! Tolstoy nevertheless did not find in the great philosophers the living faith he needed, and was again driven back upon himself, in deepening despair.

Tolstoy next turned to what he thought was humanity, to the men and women of his social class in Russia, to discover how they met the problem. He found four attitudes. The first,

which he says was that of most women and some men, was ignorance that there was any problem.

Is Tolstoy just to women in this, even to Russian women? There is no denying that women are better able than men to live without knowing why. Is that due to greater ignorance, or to something deeper in women, that Tolstoy never came to understand? We will return to the question, so you may be considering it.

Tolstoy found a second view. Those holding it were aware that life had no meaning, was sheer vanity and illusion; so they adopted the Epicurean solution: "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow you die!" Always, of course, there is a skeleton at that feast, a sneer behind the laugh; but these men could see nothing else, so gave themselves recklessly to pleasure-seeking.

Tolstoy discovered a third attitude. Those taking it were strong and thoughtful men. Knowing well that life was meaningless, they adopted the old Stoic solution: the room smoked; they quietly opened the door and went out, taking the way of Stoic suicide.

He found a fourth way of meeting the problem. Those adopting it also knew the utter vanity of life, but, being weak, merely drifted. Tolstoy adds that to this last group he himself belonged!

He is not fair to himself in that concluding statement. He was held back from suicide not by cowardly weakness but by a dumb instinct slowly beating its way up into consciousness: a growing recognition that while all these people, the men and women of his social set, were so sure life had no meaning, all those other people, the unnumbered millions of Russian peasants, had gone on, from generation to generation, in the assured conviction that life had infinite and eternal meaning. More and more it seemed to Tolstoy worth while, before he went out, to discover how all those people could be so mistaken!

In other words, Tolstoy was saved from suicide by the discovery of humanity: the phrase is not too strong. He came to recognize that those of his social class were only a thin veneer over the deeps of Russian life and that those millions underneath represented humanity.

It is interesting that Goethe portrayed the same experience for his imaginary character, Faust. In the first scene of the poem, after Faust has been swept from his stand by the thunder speech of the Earth Spirit, and Wagner, representing the surging back upon him of the commonplace, has tortured him with inanities, Faust turns sentimentally to the thought of suicide. He takes down the crystal cup, pours the poison into it and lifts it to his

lips; but as he is about to drink there sounds out on the night air the song of the angels, disciples, and women, on the Easter morning, "He is risen!" Faust, in a gush of tears, puts down the cup, with the exclamation, *"Die Erde hat mich wieder!"*—"Earth has me again"—the earth mother takes back to her breast her human child.

Faust did not believe: he was saved by the faith of others, which had been the faith of his own childhood. Carlyle, perhaps in conscious imitation of Goethe, makes his hero in *Sartor Resartus* say that he was saved from suicide by "a certain Nachschein, or afterglow of Christianity."

What Goethe and Carlyle portrayed for their purely imaginary characters Tolstoy actually lived through. He was saved from suicide by the echo of the faith of others, which had been the faith of his own childhood.

So he turned to the common people to discover upon what they lived. He found, of course, that it was the Russian-Greek form of Christianity, in which he had been reared. So he attempted to return to it. That is almost always impossible. Once the chrysalis is broken, there is no hope of going back and becoming a respectable worm again; the only hope is to grow wings. Tolstoy says that in the orthodox religion he found so much of super-

stition and ignorance, mixed up with what was significant, that he could not swallow the compound.

He then tried the other sects, the evangelical groups, that had long persisted under the surface in Russia. He indicates that he found each of these proclaiming itself the one authentic follower of the Prince of Peace, and willing to go to war with all the rest to prove the claim. That leap in the dark he could not take; and was again in deepening perplexity.

Finally, he asked himself what it was that the common people believed, under all the superstition and ritual, that gave meaning to their lives. He found two items: they believed they were in the world not for their own pleasure but to do the will of God, and that they were not here to serve themselves but to live for others.

Where did the common people get those two articles of faith? You know: the two commandments that Jesus said contained all the law and the prophets—to love God with all your heart and your neighbor as yourself. Thus, through the faith of the common people in Russia, Tolstoy made a further discovery: of the four Gospels and the teaching of Jesus.

He had, of course, known passages of that teaching, chanted forth in the sonorous ritual of the Russian-Greek Church. I shall never

forget my first introduction to it, in the Metropolitan Greek Church in San Francisco on a New Year's Eve. A long, narrow hall, with no chairs or benches for the worshipers, who knelt on the floor or leaned against the wall. A raised platform at the end, strange ikons of the faith; a priest and followers who came out and chanted the service, the leader in a voice so searching as to seem almost to draw the breath from one's body: Oh, yes, Tolstoy had heard passages of Christ's teaching chanted forth, until he had almost forgotten that they had intellectual meaning and application to the conduct of life. Now he searched that teaching in a new way—to find guidance in conduct and some answer to the riddle of life.

He discovered, as he thought, that Jesus taught absolute nonresistance to evil, always to return good, and never evil, for evil. So Tolstoy began practicing it, and remained to the end of his life consistently opposed not only to the military but to the entire police system of modern society. Similarly, Tolstoy believed that Jesus taught a gospel of social communism, to give to him that asketh, your coat and your cloak too. That teaching also Tolstoy put into practice for the remainder of his life.

It is not my wish to defend Tolstoy's interpretation of Christ's teaching; but this must be said: Tolstoy, like Saint Francis, is one of

the few entirely literal Christians, not taking refuge in allegorical interpretation, but striving to live their Master's teaching just as given. For the remainder of his life Tolstoy sought to live, teach, and make prevail the social and spiritual gospel that had given the answer to his own life.

So he found peace? Well, he says so, but at the top of his voice. He reminds us of the Queen's remark concerning the Player Queen in *Hamlet:* "The lady protests too much, methinks." Tolstoy protests so loudly that he is entirely still, that one wonders whether he had not taken a flying leap in the dark, and was trying to convince himself, as well as others, that he had found the peace for which he longed. Again and again come glimpses of the intense flame of his life, under the ashes of the years.

There was indeed a fundamental conflict in the converted Tolstoy. A man of strong passions and vigorous organism, he had reacted to an almost celibate fanaticism. With a rich environment, wealth he could not give up, aristocratic family and social rank from which he could not escape, he had turned to Communist convictions. He resented his wife, and lived with her. He worked in peasant garb, with his own hands, part of the day, and came in to a luxury-loaded dinner table. His ideals were

thus thwarted by his environment; which throws light on his final futile effort to escape.

To recognize his strength and weakness, compare the work done before his conversion with that achieved after the spiritual crisis. Let me speak for a moment of the two great novels produced in the decade between his marriage and his conversion.

War and Peace is more than a novel. Like Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables,* it is a number of novels heaped into one colossal, many-sided work. In it Tolstoy portrays the struggle of the seasoned veterans of Napoleon with the dumb resistant mass of barbaric Russian population, and shows the ramifying effect of that struggle in a far-off hut in the steppes, and in a chamber of a palace in Saint Petersburg. Wide as is the scene, through it all one idea beats up to the surface: that we on the stage of time, who imagine that we decide events, are really but puppets in the hand of destiny, that works inexorably through us. With all this somber philosophy is there in all Tolstoy's later work a deeper ethical teaching than is given in the simple portrayal of the relation of Prince Andrei to his little wife in the early portion of *War and Peace?* There is no preaching about it, simply the objective portrayal, but it sends you home to deep searching of heart. Perhaps there was more unity in Tolstoy's life before

and after the conversion than he himself realized.

As *War and Peace* portrays the larger world of national conflict, *Anna Karenina* deals with the little world of one woman's heart and soul. Full as it is of wild passion, Slavic gloom and woe, here too one idea beats up to the surface. It is that as we sow, inevitably we must reap; that the deed that flows out from our will into the abyss of the universe becomes destiny, arching over us to bless or curse us, according to the character of our lives.

That other conception, of the infinite power of recovery after sin, Tolstoy does not give us. We must go to Goethe for that; and even he could not, or dared not express it, as it is true in life; but the inexorableness of the moral order *Anna Karenina* teaches with relentless fidelity.

Let us turn to the work produced after Tolstoy's spiritual crisis, and consider for a moment the little book on *Art*. The initial thesis in it is right—that art should never seek merely to give pleasure to the senses, but should carry a religious enthusiasm and awaken aspiration in common. The whole history of art warrants that view; but when Tolstoy applies his thesis, who can follow him? He speaks of the "wild, coarse and meaningless creations of the ancient Greeks, Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, and especially Aristophanes, and of the modern

Dante, Tasso, and Shakespeare"! He refers to Michael Angelo's "meaningless Last Judgment," the most grotesquely inapplicable adjective imaginable. He cannot find language harsh enough to express his contempt for the pseudo-art of Wagner! One gasps—and then recalls the common proverb which tells us that when one man proclaims that all the world is mad, it is time to invite in a lunacy commission to investigate his own sanity; when one artist exclaims that all the other artists are bad and wrong, it is time to question whether, as artist, he is even sane. You are not asked to accept the conclusion. The point is, Tolstoy's initial thesis is just and right, his applications, at least so questionable.

Consider Tolstoy's later treatment of social and industrial problems, as given in *The Slavery of Our Times*. Here again, the primary idea is right: that there can be no true and lasting reform of society except by making over the individuals who compose that society. I believe every subsequent effort for social reconstruction must proceed on that basis. Here again, when Tolstoy applies his thesis, who can follow him? He would sweep away the entire range of social institutions that represent the slow adjustment of will to will and interest to interest, through the ages of irregular human progress.

After long study of the problem, and with no cynicism, I have come to believe that ordinary business, with all its faults, is more just to those engaged in it than most social Utopias are to their members. Ordinary business results from exactly that conflict and adjustment of wills and interests through a long period of time. If institutions protecting it are suddenly overturned, at once both the altruism and the greed and selfishness of human nature are released. Now, if you were to count heads—which you should never do—it would be necessary to admit that there are many more greedy and selfish persons in the world than altruistic ones.

I say one should never count heads, because a little leaven raises a great mass of dough. The leaven of society is the men and women who are awake, who think for themselves, and follow clearly formulated ideals. The dough of society, if I may carry out the figure, is the great mass of those who do no independent thinking, but merely echo their environment and live as their neighbors live. Just as a little leaven raises a great mass of dough, so an injection of the ideal by the few who are awake will raise the inert mass of society beyond our dreams. We want the leaven in the dough, however, not segregated in an Altruria, Brook Farm, New Harmony, or other Utopia. Again, I do not

ask acceptance of my argument and conclusion, but only recognition of the fact that in all his dealing with social problems Tolstoy's fundamental idea is so just, his applications so questionable.

Turn for a moment to the artistic work achieved in the later period of Tolstoy's life. It is true that his novel called *The Resurrection,* which should be named, "When We Dead Awaken," may have been written before his conversion, but at least it was revised and had his sanction in the late period.

It tells the story of Prince Nekhludoff, so like the youthful Tolstoy, who spends the summer at the home of his aunts in the countryside, and meets there the young girl, Maslova, half ward, half servant in the family. The two come to love each other with that innocent boy and girl love that draws a veil over the deeper intimacies of life and makes it impossible rudely to tear that veil.

Prince Nekhludoff then goes away for a couple of years of Russian army officer's life, that Tolstoy knew so well. He returns for another summer in the countryside, his whole organism aflame with the egoistic demand for its own gratification. You could guess in advance what would happen. It does happen. Prince Nekhludoff goes away. What the girl has done is discovered, and she is driven out. Her baby dies.

She goes down and down, until she becomes of the lowest of the abandoned women of the street. Then she is arrested, charged with the crime of murder. She is innocent, but her daily life is a sad presumption against her; and on the bench of the judges, chosen to decide her fate, sits the Prince Nekhludoff, guilty of her initial step down into the abyss. That is an exceedingly uncomfortable place to sit!

If you have injured anyone, you can react on your misdeed either morally or aesthetically, that is, selfishly. If you react morally, the effect is to send you back to the scene of your misdeed, not to undo it, that is always impossible, but to take the best next step, the only atonement any human being can offer for an evil deed, to God or man. On the other hand, if you react selfishly, the effect is to make you flee the scene of your wrongdoing, because it is exceedingly painful to look upon the consequences of your own evil deed.

Prince Nekhludoff experiences first the selfish, then the moral awakening. He is very uncomfortable on that judge's bench, and would like to get off. He lets day slip by day, and suddenly awakens to realize that he has allowed the woman to be condemned as guilty when he knows she is innocent.

Then he who was dead awakens. Within the hard shell that habitual gratification of selfish

desire had formed around it, the dull spark of what had once been a man's soul took flame: he who was dead awakened. He goes to Maslova to try to help her. She greets him with a leer, as a possible patron of her shameless trade. He persists, goes to her again and again, accompanies her with the other convicts, on the pitiless road to Siberia, and finally the persistent loving-kindness and tenderness penetrates her, and she who was dead awakens. Under all the slime of the desecration of her womanhood the ashes of her woman's soul flamed up again: she who was dead awakened.

The two lives draw together; you think there will be some solution for the story; suddenly Tolstoy breaks off. Maslova refuses Prince Nekhludoff's offer of marriage, not because she does not love him—she does with all her heart—but because she feels unworthy and fears she would burden his life. Prince Nekhludoff goes off into the world, half glad and half sorry; and Tolstoy stops.

That is no solution: *The Resurrection* is as pitilessly incomplete as *War and Peace* or *Anna Karenina.* There is, indeed, more unity in Tolstoy's life than he realized; and perhaps we are ready now to answer that question, asked a few moments ago. I will ask it in different form: Did Tolstoy ever understand that immediate insight into the deeps of personal life

which Goethe has taught us to call the Eternal Womanly? Or, did Tolstoy ever come to understand the highest form of personal love? Passion he understood, in all its scorching flood, and that general humanitarian love that seeks the best for all. Between these two, I would say, higher than these two, did he ever know the love that fuses two lives in one life, and makes of that larger life a doorway to the appreciation of humanity? I think not, emphatically not! Whether the cause be the scars of his reckless years or the gloom of his desolate steppes, that highest personal love he failed to know; and that failure is his most striking limitation.

To clinch the argument, consider a further bit of his late art, called in one translation, *The Romance of Marriage,* in another, *Family Happiness.* It is the story of an aspiring girl of the countryside, who, in the cherry-blossom time, is thrown much with an older man of the world, her guardian, who has sold something of his birthright for the mess of pottage of careless self-indulgence. Each seemed the answer to the other's life. He, tired, wished to settle down in a quiet country home, with a pretty girl as the center; and she seemed the anchorage. She, eager for life, longed to get out into the big world and feel its tides flow through her; and he seemed the gateway. She loved

him with the forward-looking love of youth and aspiration; and he loved her with that backward-looking love, whose autumn colors are, for the moment, more brilliant than those of spring. The paths of their two lives met, and crossed; and they could not see beyond the meeting point.

Soon after marriage each turned on the other: Oh, not in words, but in the more forceful language of conduct. He turned on her, as if he had said, "Here you were, a quiet, lovely girl of the countryside, and now, forsooth, you want to drag me back to the very world I married you to escape from!" She turned on him, as if she had said, "You were that experienced man of the world, gateway to that vivid life I longed to enter, and now you desire to chain me to the very life I married you to escape from!" Both bitterly disappointed, and nobody to blame!

Tolstoy portrays the woman as breaking away and going out into that world, saved from moral ruin only by the purity of her woman's instincts. In the end he portrays her as coming back and saying that she is through with all that, and does not struggle and suffer any more, because, she says, she has learned to love her husband only as the father of her children.

I have known persons to read that book and think that it had a happy ending. Perhaps

Tolstoy thought the conclusion was about as happy as we can hope to have in this world; yet think what it means. The woman's soul had hungered and thirsted, until it starved to death. Then it did not struggle any more; but to mistake the peace of death for the "peace that passeth understanding" is to misread the deepest lesson of personal life. I think Tolstoy misread that lesson; and that, indeed, is his most striking limitation.

Is it not also a fault in him that he sees all the evil of society at the top, all the good at the bottom? Does not his own drama, *The Might of Darkness,* portraying the sordid brutality of Russian peasant life, contradict the view?

Is it not a further limitation that he would sweep away all those institutions that represent our inheritance from the past and compel us to start over again?

Finally, does it not limit his faith that he achieved it by a blind reaction upon his life instead of as its fulfillment? There is, it is true, something challenging in the situation. Life fails; he turns his back on it, and believes anyway; but it has not the serenity of Browning's faith, crowning, as a flowering of the spirit, the conduct of his life.

How small these limitations seem in contrast to his affirmative message! He teaches the true simplification of life: not that false

simple life which is a pleasant novelty between two chapters of debauch, but the return from the adventitious to the real, from the things on the surface to those at the heart, which truly make our lives.

He greatly contributes to this floundering world by urging the necessity of faith, affirming that man cannot live in the closed circle of knowledge, but must rest in that larger, though more vague, circle of faith, "the substance of things hoped for."

Above all, Tolstoy meets our need by insisting on the solidarity and brotherhood of all humanity, teaching that we need each other and all the others, that he who cuts himself off from any part of our common humanity does so to his own moral detriment.

There is something still deeper: that intense moral earnestness that marked him early and late, uniting the Tolstoy before and after the conversion. It is that moral earnestness which, under the gloom of the steppes and in spite of the scars from wasted years, gives Tolstoy his place among those moral leaders, whose life, teaching, and character are the lifeblood of our civilization and the dynamic element in the moral progress of mankind.

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CONCLUSION

The Challenge of Moral Leadership

WE have studied these six men on the background of six widely contrasting epochs of culture. Had they all lived in the same time and place, they might not have understood each other. We, however, may understand them all, on one condition: that we welcome light from every quarter of the heaven, asking, not what right had it to shine, but only, Is it light: that we welcome truth from every source in history, asking, not its authority, but only, Is it truth?

It takes all the stars of heaven to make the glory of one night. It takes all the great minds of the past to make the spiritual firmament that arches over us today. The night would be poorer if we lost the shining of a single star; and our day would be poorer if we lost one of the great minds irradiating us from the firmament of the yesterdays. We can be

> "Heir of all the ages,
> in the foremost files of time,"

only if we welcome all the light and truth in our heritage from the past.

That is the thought that has underlain this

discussion of moral leadership—that and one still deeper thought. We see how these men gave themselves, served, struggled, and suffered, and applaud their heroism. Then we are asked to serve or lead in our own community, and we say, "Oh, let someone else do it, someone better equipped and with more influence." Do you know what that is? It is what Dante stigmatizes as "cowardly virtue," and shows in its worst form in those who think they are the salt of the earth, who, because they have done nothing conspicuously wrong, imagine they are good, whereas they may be good—for nothing!

The cowardly virtuous, who had done nothing bad, because they feared to, and nothing good, because they did not love the good with all their hearts, Dante places in the black Limbo, with the angels who did not take sides in the battle of the heavens. They were not for God or Satan, but for themselves. They wished to sit on the fence, watch the celestial battle, and join the winning party. Dante says of them:

"The heavens expelled them, not to be less fair,
Nor them the nethermore abyss receives,
For glory none the damned would have from them."

So they are in the Limbo, outside both hell and heaven, where all cowardly virtuous, negatively respectable people ought to be, for the

benefit of the rest of the world. We can handle the criminal group, difficult as that seems sometimes; but the cowardly virtuous, negatively respectable, who will never stand with truth when she is on the scaffold, but are always afar back in the noisy procession, following her already victorious banner, are the dead weight we have to lift, in every struggle onward and upward.

The deeper thought, therefore, that has underlain our study of these moral leaders is that we owe, where we stand, in the communities in which we live in relation to the people about us, to the limit of our ability, the same kind of leadership fulfilled conspicuously by these great men. As you know, you owe. As you can, you owe. Obligation is measured by power and opportunity. If you have money, social or political influence, it is that much obligation for leadership and service. If you have education, culture, superior to those about you, it is that much more obligation for leadership and service.

If we can take that thought and apply it in our conduct, then our study of these moral leaders will have been something more than some hours of intellectual entertainment, and our coming together will not have been in vain.

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