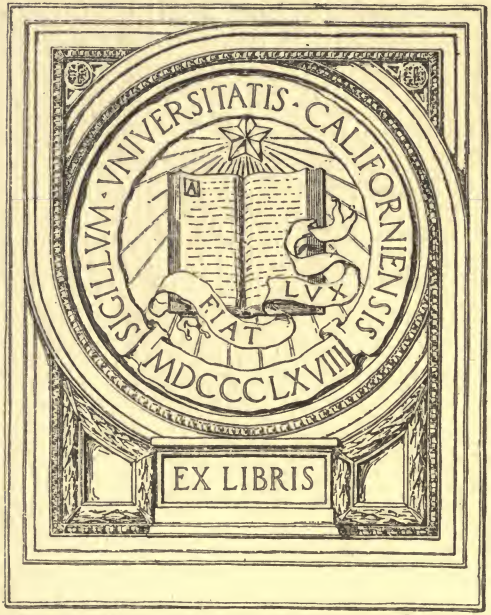
The Poet of Galilee

William Ellery Leonard



THE POET OF GALILEE

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BY

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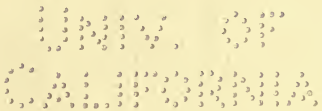
"Who do men say that I am?"



NEW YORK
B. W. HUEBSCH
1909

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FOREWORD

The following pages, written during vacation weather three summers ago in a sequestered village of New England, apart from libraries and scholars, under shade trees overlooking meadow and hillside, and thereafter reconsidered and revised by the inland lakes of this beautiful Academic City, are sincerely and humbly offered to any reader who, realizing that the subject is one that needs detachment of mind and the argument one that must be briefly suggestive rather than logically complete, has his own quiet hours and a willingness to do himself a share of the thinking.

WILLIAM ELLERY LEONARD.

Madison, Wisconsin, April 7, 1909.

THE POET OF GALILEE

I.

Gods of the south and the north,
Gods of the east and the west,
Ye that arise and come forth
On the good quest—
Out of a wonderful place,
Out of the pregnant gloom,
Out of the soul of the race,
Out of humanity's womb,
Fed on humanity's breast,
On the stars and the sea,
Treading unsoiled the Augean
World and its primitive slime that so often befouls such as we,
Cleansers with lyric and paean:
Praise be to all! but to thee,
Praise above praise, Galilean! . . .
Even from me.

II.

Gods of the coasts and the isles,
Gods of the hill and the plain,

Who with your beautiful smiles
Come not in vain—
Out of a wonderful place,
Out of the smoke and the fire,
Out of the soul of the race,
Out of its upward desire,
Nurtured with pleasure and pain,
With the rock and the tree,
Loosening us from the Circean
Drink and the cloven-hoofed beast that
too often degrades such as we,
Restorers through song empyrean:
Praise be to all!—but to thee,
Praise above praise, Galilean! . . .
Even from me.

III.

Gods, O our cleansers, restorers,
Coming as lovers to greet,
Of the wine for our lips the outpourers,
Of the waters for hands and for feet!
When our knees to the sly Cytherean
Were bowed in libidinous rite,
When our eyes with the tears Niobean
Were wet on a desolate night,
When we craved the ignoble Lethean
Banks for our sin or our grief,

Then ye came!—and O thou, Galilean,
Camest the swiftest and chief.
And ye kindled the radiant fountains
Of flame, like a swift borealis,
In the Mediterranean mountains,
On the Mexican's grim teocallis;
And they who were near, by your high light
Saw upon earth a new stream,
Where golden cities your sky light
Returned, beam for beam
(Even I, who was far, in your twilight
Dreamed a new dream).
And ever the vision of fire
Gendered new fire in men
(As the sudden song of a lyre
Wakes us to singing again)—
O ye that reveal and inspire:
Praise and amen!—
But io! and praise hymenean
And palms, dewy-fresh and unfurled,
At sunrise to thee, Galilean,
Light of the world!

IV.

Gods, because more than all others,
Gods, because men at man's worth,
Ye, both our masters and brothers,
Poets of earth!

THE POET OF GALILEE

Out of a wonderful place,
Out of the ancient Design,
Out of the soul of the race,
Out of the nameless Divine,
Fed on the past and its dearth,
Fed on the fulness to be,
Whether from Ind, or Aegean,
Jordan, or Tiber, or waters that flow
through our land to the sea,
Saviors from aeon to aeon:
Praise be to all!—but to thee,
Praise above praise, Galilean! . . .
Even from me.

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THE POET OF GALILEE

INTRODUCTION

I

"WHO do men say that I am?" once asked the Man of Nazareth; and the question has perhaps never interested the race more than it does today.

The offspring of humble parents among the Hebrews of ancient Galilee, he grew up in an age of religious formalism and political oppression, until, fired by the words of prophet and psalmist, by the sturdy example of an earnest and gloomy fellow-countryman, by his own profound insight into the universal soul of Man, the brother, and God, the father, he arose to tell of the Kingdom of

Heaven, first among his peasant neighbors on the mountains and by the waters of the north, afterwards among the priests in the very temple at Jerusalem itself, to suffer at last the penalty of his independent thought, reviled as a seditious upstart by those who guarded his country's altar, crucified by foreign soldiers, and deserted by the members of the little cult that had followed and loved him.

Yet to call him the martyred teacher and reformer, though an important service of historical criticism, is but to define his relation to society, not his essential individuality. And to bring him before us as he moved about on earth—his cheek tanned by the mountain air and sun; his feet dusty with the highways of Samaria; his lips passing the time of day with neighbors in Capernaum or acquaintances about Jerusalem; his soul sometimes cast down by doubt or disappointment; his feelings annoyed by importunities of disciples or impertinence of Scribe and

Pharisee—though an important service of the historic imagination, is to relate him, after all, only to the flesh and blood, the heart and soul of humanity at large: his essential individuality remains as obscure as ever.

But we have, of course, the means for a more intimate acquaintance with the individual mind of Jesus. There was a speaking Voice on the Galilean shores in the days of old: that we all know. Friendly ears heard, and friendly tongues repeated its words; and at last friendly hands wrote some of them down, preserving them, just as other disciples preserved the sentences of Hillel and the Rabbis which we read in the *Talmud*. Those words are few, a mere handful of fragments; and the scholar may ransack the sandpits of Aegypt long years in a vain quest for scroll or palimpsest containing the least authentic addition. Yet they are alive with divine breath, melodious witness of one man's singular genius for high

things. From them we may not be able to restore the outline of a system of thought, as we have restored, from the fragments cited by the doxographers, something of the philosophic systems of Heraclitus and Empedocles; from them still less can we restore any such formal wholes of consecutive discourse as have come down to us from Ezekiel and the Second Isaiah; from them least of all can we restore, as from the words of Horace or Cicero, a biography of external facts; but they do furnish us the data wherewith to restore a life.

For that restoration, however, neither theological nor ethical exegesis, nor indeed any study devoted exclusively to the *ideas* in his utterances is sufficient. Critics have not generally been so one-sided in the study of other masters of thought and expression. The critic of Socrates, though he may expound the sage's practical maxims and spiritual principles, aims above all at an interpretation of a great soul,

its bias and gifts, as deducible from its words. Not any one who would comprehend Dante stops with the intellectual analysis of the scholastic philosophy, ethical precepts, or political allegory in his book; but the words of Dante lead the student home to the unique temper and talents of a great soul. The student of Jesus should have no less an incentive to examine bias and gifts, temper and talents, implicit in the sayings and stories of a soul more momentous than Socrates or than Dante.

Then may come a new answer, or new answers, to the ancient query "Who do men say that I am?" Be it remembered that every mind has a right to its own answer, and mine replies with a fresh joy that is not shamed by the presence of a learned and venerable host of schoolmen and devotees: "More than all else, to one among men, thou seemest the poet, and I shall call thee the Poet of the Galilean Lake." In the sunlight of that

conception my thoughts of Jesus of Nazareth flower best. Perhaps that conception may be not without meaning for others.

II

But enthusiasm cannot dispense with the results of critical scholarship. Jesus is known to us only through four brief biographies, uncertain in provenience and date. Not everything in the records can be accepted without question. Even if the miraculous elements be eliminated, there still remain important difficulties. The case is not parallel to that of the document with which Jesus' biographies are oftenest compared. The *Memorabilia* of Socrates purport to have been written by a friend and pupil, otherwise famous as author, soldier, and man of affairs, who lived in that civic center of intellectual life, the age-long synonym for enlightenment and culture. The work contains no contradictions that impugn its unity of

authorship, no tendencies that betray any purpose save to tell honestly the thought, and to defend zealously the memory and fame of a beloved teacher and a good man.[1]

But the *Gospels* were not written in the clear light of an intellectual day whose sun yet shines across centuries and continents and seas; and the spirit of truth cannot but point out how, quite apart from the legendary growths of fifty or seventy years, the "Memorabilia" of Jesus are sometimes open to query in what they report both of act and of speech. We must grant that no one event can have had birth in one place at one time in more than one form. Moreover, it is obvious that one or another of Jesus' biographers had a particular purpose in view, honorable enough according to his lights, but detrimental to his historic sense. Matthew, in-

[1] The author is aware that some recent German criticism denies the ingenuousness of Xenophon.

deed, in his eagerness to show the Galilean as the Messiah promised by the *Old Testament* prophets, makes Jesus perform the unlikely feat of riding into Jerusalem on an ass and the colt of an ass, thus missing entirely the parallelism in the ancient poetry. We know too that the early Christian communities had their several ideas influencing this way or that the traditions which were growing up about the Master. Again scholars have traced in the *Gospel* narratives the influence of books concerning the signs of the times and the import of Jesus. There is an apocalypse embedded in the *Synoptics,* manifestly occasioned by the fall of Jerusalem; and Jesus is made to quote (in *Luke* XI, 49) one book by name, the "Wisdom of God," written about the time of Domitian (81–96 A. D.), words from which are apparently put into his mouth also in *Matthew* XXIII, 37. And *John,* with its metaphysics derived from Philo and the gnostics, yields us (however beautiful it be

as a composition and interesting as early Christian thought) no records of the earth-born son of Joseph and Mary, except perhaps a few pregnant sayings reflecting the mysticism of Jesus, and the passage in chapter VIII, usually bracketed as spurious, but possibly from the lost *Gospel According to the Hebrews,* of which we have a few quotations in Jerome. Finally, Jesus spoke Aramaic, and in some brief but crucial phrases the Greek may misrepresent him, a possibility brilliantly illustrated by Schmidt's chapter on "The Son of Man," in *The Prophet of Nazareth.*

Yet, although the critical conscience must in these pages pass over those utterances certainly never delivered by the historic Jesus, and although it will do best to pass over those on which there is any doubt, the vital things are still ours: the deepest apothegms, the shrewdest replies, the loveliest of the parables. It is a fact of the greatest significance that the in-

sight of a sympathetic genius like Emerson or Tolstoi, and the results of philological investigation of scientists like Wellhausen and Schmidt, are in practical agreement: they both discard the same legends and the same imputed ideas and expressions; and they both assure us of the same indisputable soul. These pages are concerned only with what after long study and reflection I have come to believe to be the authentic pronouncements of this soul.

III

And when it is said that this soul found its expression in poetry, we should need no reminder that poetry consists not in strophe, or metre, or rhyme, wonderful devices and adornments of the imagination though they may be. Without an attempt formally to define meanings or logically to limit the scope of the discussion in subsequent chapters, we may well recall that poetry, at least as soon as it

becomes something more than mere tumult in the blood, implies insight into the realities of the spirit, the sympathetic vision which seems at times almost to penetrate the mysteries of life and of nature —passions and desires of men and women, grass and flowers beneath our too often heedless feet, moon and stars over our unuplifted heads. It implies again that exaltation which, according to an inviolable law, forever accompanies the vision; and finally it implies the nobler speech, which in the elect of Apollo transmits the vision and the exaltation to all who having eyes can see, and having ears can hear and understand. Poetry is vision, exaltation, speech; and with Jesus it was vision, exaltation, speech, touching the City of God.

IV

This poetry of Jesus is conventionally bound up in a few pages near the close of a vast book. The poetry of the *Old Testament* is universally recognized. Shel-

ley and his gifted companion would read the Prophets together in their Italian nights as they read Æschylus and Shakespeare; the sonorous passages in the royal succession of English divines were born of the *Old Testament,* and the Miltonic is the Hebraic of the old dispensation. In the Jewish Scriptures we find the lyric of personal joy or grief, gnomic wisdom of intimate experience, a lyrical drama, a collection of love songs, plangent elegies on cities and human life, and a sublime and gorgeous oratory never equaled in the senates of the world. The work of divers men in divers ages, the *Old Testament* celebrates the moral law in individuals and in nations; the mystery of affliction, the beauty of holiness, the destruction of the great and the proud, the devotion of lovers, the loyalty of friends. It gives broad surveys of the activities of field and city, and vivid descriptions of the phenomena of nature—the fire, the thunder, the whirlwind, the sandstorm, the

locust pest, the grass, the green pasture and the rivers of waters. It has infinite grandeur, infinite passion, infinite tenderness, whilst its imagery ranges from the vaguest atmospheric something, terrible and unnamed, to the homely, concrete metaphors of the potter and his wheel, the sour grapes and the children's teeth set on edge.

If one approaches our topic from a reading of the *Old Testament,* let him bear in mind that we have there many works of a great literature, as here against a few words of a great man, and that its oriental blaze and prodigality of power, though more striking, is not therefore more beautiful than the reserve and simplicity of Jesus.

And let us never forget that the consummate charm of the *Gospels,* which sooner or later wins us all, comes primarily[1] from the words of Jesus himself, not

[1] Primarily, not exclusively: see last chapter, "A Hero of Folk-lore."

from the compilers who quote them. "Matthew," "Mark," and "Luke," with chapter and verse, are ingrained habits of speech; but these names must not stand between us and reality, between our gaze and the Poet himself.

THE OBSERVER

THE OBSERVER

WE are prone to take the familiar as a matter of course. The universal mechanical devices of the race,—the wheel, the lever, the screw, its universal cultural devices,—the alphabet, numerical notation, the calendar—are so familiar that they seem practically one with organic nature about us, with the activities of plant, stream, and moon. A proverb long familiar seems itself like a primitive unit of our language; and the sayings of Jesus, even when their meanings are but half divined, are part of our ethical and religious consciousness, as if one with the law that leads us to worship and the law that leads us to desire the Good. When thought has come thus to deal with its objects, it gives best proof

of their fitness to human needs: but it also makes difficult an appreciation of their real character. The wheel and the alphabet are the products of age-long experiments by our fellow-men; the proverbs of the race and the sayings of Jesus came out of concrete experience not generically unlike our own.

Coming at the Master's words from this starting point, what must strike us first is their testimony to his wide observation. Jesus saw the world about him with an alertness and impressionability without which all prayers to the muses are vain: he had first the physical senses of the poet.

The light shone clear over the hills behind Nazareth; northward it shone to the snows of Hermon, westward to the silver line that was the border of the midland sea, southward across the plains and villages of Galilee on toward the heights of Samaria, and eastward down to the broad

blue breast of waters, the waters of Tiberias crowned with synagogues and cities. Sharp and bold the cliffs and the trees and houses and shadows stood out in the Galilean air; and man plied his task, and sang his song in the open. A lovely home it was for one with eyes to see.

And the same blue light lay over the Mount of Olives and the white towers of the city to which the Galilean came at last, and over all the hill country of Judea, down to the Mediterranean on the one side, and the Dead Sea and the wall of Moab on the other; and it played among the thick trees and shrubs of the Jordan, among the tamarisks, acacias, silver poplars, terebinths, cedars, and arbutus, and among the long grasses where caroled and flew so many birds—sparrows, cliff-swallows, turtle-doves, and nightingales: a catalogue of beautiful things of which the very names are poetry. And over all, north and south, in the wide homes of

night burned the clear stars, nowhere in those days shut away from man by the pestilential smoke.

What did the Galilean Poet see in the holy land of his fathers? He saw the mountain, the crag where bleats the lost sheep; the lilies of the field; the peasant's plot of waving grain, with sometimes the tares scattered through it; the reeds in the river shaken by the wind; the rock and the sand by the dry stream on which men, for good or ill, build their houses; the sparrow that falls to the ground; the moth, and the rust, and the gnat floating in the wine; the red evening sky that lowers; and the rain that falls on the just and the unjust. He watched the ancient process: behold the fig tree and all the trees—where they now shoot forth; ye see it and know of your own selves that the summer is nigh . . . the seeds spring up and grow, man knoweth not how . . . the earth beareth fruit of herself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in

the ear . . . and the cloud rising in the west presages the shower, and the south wind blowing the heat, and it cometh to pass.

And toward nature, as toward all things deep and fair, his spirit went out with an affectionate tenderness, so simple and genuine and waking a kindred emotion so immediately in our own hearts that we are scarcely aware of it as being a distinctive element in Jesus' attitude to creation, until we meet with some jarring anecdote, like the cursing of the fig-tree, the contradictory harshness of which brings us to a sudden realization that his song of nature has in other passages been kindlier than we marked. Herein is the disharmony and difficulty of the anecdote of the fig-tree, the meaning or the authenticity of which has been so often debated: it violates Jesus' attitude to creation. This fact alone would cast doubt on its historicity, did it not also plainly enough suggest the necromancy

common to that class of legends referred to below as characteristic of the *New Testament Apocrypha,* albeit its more spiritual connotations relate it to the *Synoptic* class.[1] Over the works of nature Jesus pronounced his benedictions, not a curse. He was never her enemy; he was always her friend.

But he was a friend of nature, not like some poet who loves her for a philosophy which she whispers, nor like one who loves her for a refuge, nor like one who loves her for her picturesqueness and soft odors; nor could he have been touched with that cosmic emotion which is the response of the imagination to modern science; nor yet was he awed or exultant in her presence, like Mohammed or many a prophet or psalmist who saw in her the mighty energies of the Creator. Doubtless he conceived nature as God's work, beautiful or terrible; doubtless he felt her peace and

[1] See last chapter, "A Hero of Folk-lore."

charm, which we quite unnecessarily assume to be the reaction of modern sensibility; but his attitude when he spoke was more akin to that affirmed of the sophisticated Greek poets after the ages of myth had passed away, and nature appears, in the record he has left us, as subordinated to man, as the background or the illustration of man's life and labors.

He knew the day's work. His stories reflect the diversified activities and customs of his people: tillage, vine-growing, shepherding, fishing, baking, mending, sweeping, affairs of money and civil law. He saw on the caravan along the road that passed through Nazareth the merchant and his pearl of great price, and the rich apparel to be worn by those who dwelt in kings' houses; he saw the plowman that did not look back but kept his eye on the share and the turning glebe ahead, the sower that went forth to sow, the peasant that put forth the sickle because the harvest was come, the shepherd entering the

fold, the swineherd with his charge trampling and groveling in the mire, the fishermen drying their nets in the boat, the vinedresser who built his vineyard with press and hedge and tower, and got him new wine-skins for new wine,—though oddly enough Jesus never refers to the carpenter's trade in his own household. He saw, too, the woman who trimmed her lamp and set it on the bushel, or put the leaven in the three measures of meal, the man who sewed a patch of dressed cloth on a rent garment, the scribe and his roll with the Hebrew jot and tittle in big black letters, and the physician, and the taker of toll at the gate.

He saw the joy-makers: the bride and the bridegroom at festival or meal, the children playing in the market-place, the father that killed the fatted calf and got out the ring and the robe, the householder who gave the thirsty wayfarer a cup of Nazareth's cold water.

The foolish, the sinful, and the weak

he saw also: the virgin who forgot her oil,[1] the selfish rich man, the thief in the night who crawled over the wall of the pinfold or into the house of the strong man, the harlots in alley or portico, cut-throats with their knives, and unjust stewards that tinkered with their masters' accounts, riotous young spendthrifts, and the hypocrites who made long prayers and got the chief seats in the synagogues and white-washed the sepulchres in the month Adar and garnished the tombs of the prophets whom their fathers slew.

We need not Josephus to tell us that Galilee was a busy world in those days, fertile of soil, teeming with populous villages on lake shore and mountain side, intersected with highways along which came alike Hebrew pilgrim, Roman soldier, or Syrian caravaneer; and here Jesus accumulated an experience that never failed him.

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1 Obviously these references to his inventions are not cited as literal examples.

Doubtless all these things passed before the eyes of his friends and countrymen; doubtless we would have seen them too had we been there. But we do not realize how deeply what strikes the senses must be absorbed ere it can become material of eloquence or poetry, and how much energy that absorption implies. Jesus could not have put so much of the world into his discourse had his mind not been plenished with the world: his words have the abundance of life in a literal no less than in a spiritual sense; and his gaze into the unseen was no more alert than his gaze at the seen.

So the author of the *Odyssey* must have watched—we know not when—among the sea-faring folk of Asia Minor where the ships were set to west and the daughters of the isles washed their garments on the beach; so Dante observed, going about among the light-hearted or evil-eyed Florentines or in the gloom of wooded Fiesole; so Shakespeare won his precious material

in the fields of Warwickshire or in the London taverns; and so Goethe from the lanes and meadows of Frankfort, from the kellers of Leipzig, from the salons of Weimar, from Rome and her ruin, created that world—

"Die kleine, dann die grosse Welt" [1]—

we know as *Faust.*

Here Jesus is supreme among the religious geniuses of the world. Not Buddha with his sublime austerities; not Zoroaster, who sang the Goddess of Waters, having

"A golden crown with hundred silver stars,
And eight sharp rays ascending at the front
. . . clothed
With skins of beavers";

not Mohammed, with his praise of him "who hath made the sun for shining and the moon for light and ordained him mansions that ye may learn the number of the

[1] "The little, then the larger world."

years and the reckoning of time," with his rich imagery from earth— [1]

"Prepared for living things,
Therein is fruit and the palm with sheaths
And grain with its husk and the fragrant herb"—

with his lyric sensuousness of color and perfume and

"Gardens . . .
Dark green in hue
With gushing wells therein" . . .

and

"The shy-eyed maidens neither man nor Jinn
Hath touched before,"

had Jesus' familiarity with the concrete and visible universe, with all that stands or passes before men's eyes. Nor will one find it in the Rabbinical tales or discussions of the *Talmud,* nor in the *New Testament Epistles;* nor in the moralists either: not in Socrates, with all his homely illustrations, not in Plato, dramatic artist and psychologist though he was, nor in Epictetus, nor in Aurelius.

THE LOVER

THE LOVER

BUT the power of the poets to see and remember depends profoundly upon the degree of their sympathy. They enter into the House of Life as the friend of Life, even though in the end often cruelly deceived and repulsed. Only thus can the words they would speak have universality and pith; only thus can they become mediators, interpreters, answerers. It is this sympathy which differentiates them from so many men who, having the zeal to delight, counsel, and uplift the race, fail so sadly in the end. Many a sage, reformer, pulpiteer, orator, truly feels for his fellow-men; only one with the touch of the poet feels for and with them, and only the supreme poet thus feels supremely. But his is not a

petty philanthropy; his is not so much a conscious plan as a bias and motion of the soul.

This bias and motion existed in the soul of the Master. It was deeper than his philosophy and deeper than his purpose to do good and establish good; it was the soil out of which these grew to be so beautiful and so strong. The son of Mary was dowered at birth above the rest with the impulse and the power to love and to minister. Out of his character sprang his philosophy and his purpose. He loved men not as a corollary to a philosophic maxim that they were all children of one God; and earth, not because it was the footstool of the Most High; but because he loved, it was given him so to conceive both man and nature, and to find in that conception, if need be, rational support for his loving. He went about doing good not with a sense of duty, but with that sense of peace that comes to any creature in the fulfilment of its being.

His compassion for the multitudes because they were distressed and scattered as sheep not having a shepherd, his charity for the outcast, the oppressed and the weary, his affection for the innocence of childhood, are among the tenderest and sweetest chapters in the history of our race, and seem to have made the profoundest impression both upon those whose exceeding fortune it was to see his human countenance and upon the ages that came after. But men have neglected to note that this was an expression of his genius for assimilating the world to himself, from the lilies of the field to the publicans and sinners with whom he was so often seen eating and drinking; an expression of that imaginative sympathy with the varied manifestations of life which, while it gave his deeds their quality of beauty, contributed also to give his words their scope and vitality, their enduring poetry.

THE SEER

THE SEER

AND this thought leads us on; for the sympathy of the lover is related to the vision of the seer.

In attempting high themes we may lose ourselves in the blue sky; yet to the good word seer, often so carelessly spoken, there is a meaning quite definite enough for the uses of earth. We observe a faculty or action of mind that comes at the heart of things directly, an intuition, an instinct that sees through and into: it may be balked, it may deceive itself; but it exists, as something acting after its own law. It dispenses with the discursive reason, and may achieve results beyond the reason. In some degree it is a faculty of all men: of the merchant who sees at a glance the issue of an intricate venture in business;

of the scientist who anticipates experiment and proof with a new application of electricity; of the scholar who swiftly restores a corrupted reading; of the statesman who times without counting the pulse of a commonwealth; of the general on the hill, with the smoke and confusion of contending armies before him, who divines and orders the movement which is victory. But it is most active in the realm of the spirit, in the intimate relations of soul to soul, or soul to itself, or to nature, or to God; and it is here that we call its possessor a seer.

The mother who anticipates the wants of her child, the humanitarian who, in his appreciation of a fellow's motives, pardons his poor performance, the poet that knew

"Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,"

is each in so far a seer. Napoleon, rebuking an arrogant English lady who refused to budge for a heavy-laden laborer

in the narrow path at St. Helena with the quiet words, "Respect the burden, madame," was in so far a seer. And such was Socrates when he assured the judges that "no harm can befall a good man, whether he be alive or dead," and went quietly away to his doom.

Insight in any case depends upon an unembarrassed familiarity with one's objects of thought, upon keen interest, and, like the power to see and remember phenomena (the subject of a former chapter), it depends, in the realm of spirit, above all upon sympathy. Those who possess it least are known as the tactless, the literal-minded, the Philistines, the bores, the plodding slaves or the recalcitrant obstacles of society, according as their temperaments are docile or refractory; those who possess it most become the men and women of genius, discoverers, inventors, helpers, and

"Singers of high hymns."

Jesus consecrated himself to one interest. In many ways he gives evidence of high talents any one of which might have made him distinguished; but they were all devoted to his vision of the Kingdom of God. He renounced, rather it is likely he scarcely knew, the ordinary ambitions of men. It is probably not literally true that he was tempted in all things just as we; it is probable that he never knew, as most of us know too well, the craving for praise of honorable achievement, praise so often long deferred or denied altogether at last, the craving for social standing, for money to live generously, for a plot of land on which to set a house. He had not to conquer the sullen pride of the strong man who is wounded forever by seeing the sons of mediocrity and convention preferred again and again in place and fame. It is probable that he never felt to the full the mysterious power, old and fundamental as life, that depends upon sex. And

the domestic ties, that, noble as they sometimes are, may yet divide, disastrously for his individuality and for the world, a man's duties between his vision of things beyond and his wife and children about him,—these he never contracted. If in some ways, then, his life, in spite of its imaginative comprehensiveness, was less varied in personal experience than Goethe's or Shakespeare's, his masterful singleness of purpose gives a unity to that life not often paralleled in history—a unity made perfect by a sacred martyrdom.

Thus all that he saw and all that he reported as seen had to do with the spiritual life; and not the least of his intuitions, as it was the principle of his living, was that by seeking first the Kingdom of God all else needful would be added unto the seeker; and, whatever regeneration or structure of society, or empire of the future may have been in his thought, that

Kingdom meant to him, it is clear, in all that is essential to an understanding of his spirit, the reign of righteousness.[1]

Though we have no test of his validity beyond the applause of our own souls, he was surely the seer of seers.

He was the great seer of the real values of life. He knew what counts when man is estimated by eternity and not by time, by his infinite possibilities and not by his ephemeral whims, desires, vanities. He knew the heritage of man, his birthright in a kingdom not of this world, with this world's petty and factitious successes and honors. He knew that the body was more than raiment, and that, as it was written, man should not live by bread alone.

He saw through shams: the pretense of the complacent rich and sanctimonious—verily they have their reward, a miserable reward equal to their miserable fatuity.

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[1] So with the opposite conception: the outer darkness meant essentially separation from that God in whom is no darkness whatever, neither shadow of turning.

He saw through shams: the formalism of long robes, chief seats, broad phylacteries, vain repetitions, and punctilious observance of sacrifice and ritual, washings of cups and pots and brazen vessels, that were but a cleansing of the outside of the platter at best, and often sheer misunderstanding and spiritual loss. He knew that the sabbath was made for man and not man for the sabbath, and that the altar is greater than the gift which by that altar is sanctified.

He saw through shams: and not even the magnificence of king or palace disturbed that sure vision; nor did the silver trumpets, blown daily by the priests from the gleaming towers of the temple to usher in the sunrise over Jerusalem, win his ear from sounds that told him of a more glorious dawn. And it is recorded that his disciples once wanted to show him the marvels of the temple architecture: "What manner of stones and what manner of buildings!" they cried, as they went

with Jesus down the majestic flights of steps, by pillar and portico, through the passages within the huge outer gate, on either side, as they looked, the splendid constructions of Herod the Great, which Josephus described and the excavations are now revealing and Titus desired to spare as among the wonders of the world. . . . But Jesus called the disciples and went on to the Mount of Olives—these things counted after all not much beside the temple not made with hands.

As nothing was too imposing to distract him, so nothing was too insignificant to escape. There is a story that once he sat down over against the treasury of the temple, and beheld how the multitude cast money into the treasury. And many that were rich cast in much. And there came a poor widow, and she cast in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called unto his disciples and said unto them, "Verily I say unto you, this poor widow cast in more than all they which are cast-

ing into the treasury: for they all did cast in of their superfluity; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all of her living."

He came so close to the ultimate realities that we startle and draw back: even the traditional ties and the primeval affections of family and fireside, that so universally influence in thought and action the independence of men far less loving than he, could not impede his sight or turn his steps. Real kinship of man to man he knew depended not upon the accidents of a common blood and the birth of the physical body from a common womb, but upon the spiritual relationships of a spiritual household with common spiritual aims. He who doeth the will of the Eternal and Divine is my brother and sister and mother, he said; and he departed from the Galilean roof of his infancy, and the unhappy woman who in her girlhood had given his physical body to the world could never call him home.

He was the great seer of spiritual laws. He knew the principles which, unseen but sure, are forever at work building up or breaking down the soul: except ye turn and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; the wages of sin is death, and he that findeth his life shall lose it. He knew that love begets love, and that hate begets hate, and that whoever takes the sword shall perish by the sword; that to him that hath shall be given; that whosoever shall humble himself shall be exalted, and the meek shall inherit the earth. To him man without God was man without life.

With courageous initiative and self-reliance he shifted the emphasis from action to motive, from the outer to the inner life: not that which entereth into the mouth defileth a man, but that which proceedeth out of the mouth, this defileth a man; everyone that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath already committed

adultery with her in his heart; the Kingdom of God is within you. And even the extravagance of the woman who broke the alabaster cruse of ointment of spikenard very costly, pouring it over his head, however much the action clashed with the austère poverty he preached, he could still receive as a good work of impulsive love, that should ever after be spoken of for a memorial of her.

His use of the Scriptures of his people shows the same man: he quotes its living ideas and inspiring examples, as a great poet rejoices to quote his peers.

For, if the Poet of Galilee was a seer, he was also a scholar, as the poets have always been scholars, that is, investigators, critics and adapters of the best that their predecessors or contemporaries, their fathers or their brothers in spirit, had delivered unto men. There is no human occupation that combines originality with tradition, the look ahead with the look behind and around, more than that of the

poet. Hence the popularity of histories of literature—in their essence histories of poetry or what has significance only in so far as it partakes of poetry. In one connection or another these pages will refer to the generally unappreciated similarities between the words of Jesus and the words of other wise men of his race. There is his use of parable, of question and answer, and of religious terminology, indicating probably personal association with influential Rabbis, whose methods he adopted as they suited his needs.[1] There is his use of Hebraic parallelism and of parabolic and invective passages from Isaiah, which, with his ready quotations and his incisive arguments on sacred texts which he handled with the freedom of a higher critic, indicate a degree of familiarity with a past literature that belongs only to the makers of literature.

[1] He was himself sometimes addressed as Rabbi, if the tradition be reliable.

And these points it has seemed necessary to anticipate here in connection with the thought of the page before us: Jesus had the scholarship of the poet. And because he was poet, his scholarship never betrayed him, as scholarship was all around him betraying his educated countrymen, into the pedantry of a narrow intellectualism.

Seer and scholar also: to these add Man of Thought. The genius to see into reality, the curiosity to master and the skill to adopt the products of other minds do not exclude but do directly imply the meditative habit. The life of Jesus was one long meditation, a conning over and over of all that he heard or observed, or read or felt or devised. Behold him, true kinsman of all the poets that he was, forever thinking and forever thinking. Now he is fitting the planks for a neighbor's door, and we overhear the murmured fragments of a proverb or a psalm. Now he is seated at sunset before the house, while

Joseph and Mary are talking; but the youth Jesus is silent. Now he is in the synagogue or by the shore, now he is sailing across Gennesaret, now he is walking along the mountain highways of Samaria, now he is with friends in Bethany, olive-crowned suburb of the Holy City. And if we look into his eyes, wherever he be, still is he the Man of Thought.

Note what this means. Our modern plotting and planning for self-aggrandizement in business, politics, or learning, our restless reading of magazine and newspaper and empty book after empty book, our weeks and years of gossip in drawing room, club, and dining hall, the squandering of our sabbaths in the vanities or boredom of conventional worship, varied only by the equally melancholy waste of our deeper selves in vacations devoted to aimlessly killing the creatures of the stream and forest, or to rushing about through galleries and museums without why and wherefore, this manner

of being affording us, as it does, but the flimsiest opportunities for thought, is as far from the daily conduct of Jesus as is the ultimate and abiding light of the patient stars from the rolling planet on whose burrowed and builded circumference this feverish and trivial life of ours goes on. Out of such a life issue nevermore the poets and saviors of men. But to understand how different the thinking of the Man of Thought was from our own, we must remember that the difference is not only in environment and habits, but in individual capacity. Our incapacity to think, our resourcelessness when alone and thrown back on the secret places of ourselves, this it is that perpetuates a petty and external existence. Had we every opportunity to think, we would be long in learning to use it; and when perchance we had learned, how little could we report to a thinker like Jesus of Nazareth?

But he outtopped his own generation

also. He is as far beyond Paul who came after as he seems to be beyond John who came before—the only men of his time with whom he may be compared. Of John we know too little; but Paul, though he mastered an idea, dynamic indeed for those days, that neither is circumcision anything nor uncircumcision but a new creature, and realized that the letter killeth but the spirit giveth life, and rose at times to a trumpet eloquence for his Master and the cause, is yet chiefly engrossed with dogmatic theology and somewhat with practical matters of form and church discipline. Paul was a tremendous moral force, but he was an expounder and organizer rather than a seer, logician rather than thinker. To him the Christian movement owes its start and direction; but it is a question if to-day his influence has not become a hindrance to the truth of Jesus.

To enlarge upon these things were to attempt a detailed interpretation of the

teachings of Jesus, and this were not within my purpose, even were it within my power. It is enough here to grasp the fundamental fact that these teachings are the beautiful enunciations of spiritual insight, like the great ideas and the great sentences of all true answerers and poets: like the

"Καδδύναμιν δ' ἔρδειν ἱερ' ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσι" [1]

of Hesiod, which Socrates loved to quote; like the

"Αεὶ γὰρ εὐ πίπτουσιν οἱ Διὸς κύβοι" [2]

of Sophocles; like Dante's

"In la sua volontate è nostra pace"; [3]

or Goethe's

"Nur der verdient sich Freiheit, wie das Leben,
Der taeglich sie erobern muss"; [4]

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1 "According to thine ability do sacrifice to the immortal gods."

2 "Nature's dice are always loaded."

3 "In his will is our peace."

4 "Only he deserves freedom and life who daily must conquer them anew."

or Milton's

"They also serve who only stand and wait."

I cite purposely from men of different times and tongues; but were I to name that seer who is most like the Master in his vision of these things, however different in respect of temperament, environment, and much besides, I should name Emerson. No man that has spoken out since Jesus has gazed so directly, so steadily, so calmly into the Face of the Eternal; and no man that has spoken out since Jesus has mastered so completely the laws of spiritual being. The "Divinity School Address" has passages almost as wonderful as the Sermon on the Mount, and there, and there above all the writings of men, it seems to me, is something like just interpretation of the thought of Jesus.

If the great poets are the answerers, as one of the greatest has told us they are, and as the response of our ears tells us they are, though the court musicians and

singers come and go in their own right too, then is Jesus among the great poets —for his words are the bread of life.

But like all great poets he saw his ideals so absolutely that he disregarded any practical details of their realization: he published no catechism of morals, no "instructions" for worship. And like every great poet, he failed to exhaust his subject—there is more day to dawn, more light; "The sun itself," says Thoreau, "is but a morning star." Yet, as an educator and comforter of the spirit, he cannot soon grow needless or old.

But it demands the poet to understand the poet, the seer to read aright the seer. Embrangled in literalism and logic from the Fathers down through the Schoolmen to the rationalism of the late Renaissance and modern theology, distorted in the symbolism of Catholic rhapsodist and Protestant metaphysician, burlesqued on the ungentle tongues of latter-day revivalists, the thought of Jesus, no less than

the person of Jesus, has suffered more from our human dullness than that of any other messenger to men.

That thought is not always easy. There are no harder sayings anywhere than are to be found in the logia of the *Synoptics*. How many sermons have ever fully expounded the "texts," the sayings, quoted above, or the Beatitudes, or the Lord's Prayer, or these?—

"Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in Heaven."

"Where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also."

"He that seeketh, findeth."

"Swear not at all."

"Follow me; and leave the dead to bury their own dead."

"But whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness."

"And there are eunuchs, which made themselves eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake."

"It is more blessed to give than to receive" (preserved by Paul in *Acts*).

We are told that the common people heard him gladly; we may be sure that they did not always understand him fully. Indeed we get hints that they did not from the *Gospels* themselves.[1]

We forget that the living Jesus may well have attracted his fellows more by his personality—more by his gentleness, faith, and goodness, by his tone, look, and gesture—than by his ideas. The common people understood his heart indeed better than others in a more artificial and calculating society have ever understood it. They felt those generous emotions, which, in the common people, are peculiarly strong to over-ride the cold dictates

[1] I have since been pleased to find this somewhat unusual point of view taken also by one from whom I differ so radically in other respects, the eminent evangelist, the Rev. W. J. Dawson of London, who says in *The Empire of Love,* "He spent his wealth of intellect upon inferior persons—fishermen and the like, who did not comprehend one tithe of what He said."

of prudence or justice, strong also in him (witness his forgiveness of Peter and of the adulteress), and present also in the stories he told them (witness the welcome to the prodigal and the rebuke to the dutiful son). But this must not be mistaken for understanding his thought. So the stage-drivers, ferrymen, and wharf-loungers loved Whitman the comrade, but never divined Whitman the poet.

Moreover, there must have been among Jesus' words, also quite apart from his teachings, much to attract the interest of humble men by virtue of his swift repartees and the lively incidents of his tales, even though he himself seems to have used both always only to enforce his teachings. And, unless human nature has radically changed in these two thousand years, they must have heard him gladly also for his forthright denunciations of the ruling classes, even as they must have followed him expectantly for his repute as a worker of wonders.

And though some of his precepts seem simple enough, as "Love your enemies," "Do unto others as ye would that they should do unto you,"—their implications are far-reaching, and they are perhaps still not much more completely realized in the thought than in the practice of mankind.

On the other hand, had there not been from the beginning some to whom their meaning was not entirely hidden, some who guessed something of their significance, tradition would not have preserved them for the written record, nor would they have since become the proverbs of all the lands.

But deep and beautiful as is his thought, it is not in its genesis uniquely inexplicable. His insight, be it repeated, is the common gift of all the seers, in one degree or another,—indeed of the whole race in so far as it understands its seers. Jesus still belongs to the brotherhood of man.

His ideas were his and not his. Here

and there one or another of them may be found by the rivers of China and India, on Persian plateaus, in Athenian market-place, grove and portico, by the seven hills of the Eternal City, in the tombs of dead Egypt; for the World-spirit has not at any time long left itself without a witness in the world which is his.

Again, if the thought of Jesus from the point of view of the universal mind of man is not absolutely unique, it is also not unique from the point of view of history. His ideas were his and not his. They were among the ejaculations of the ancient prophets and psalmists whom he read; they were to be found even among the maxims of the Rabbis of his own time whom, doubtless, he heard. The phrases of the Lord's Prayer and the Beatitudes, and the Golden Rule itself, find their parallels in contemporary Jewry. They were the gifts of his people to Jesus. Indeed, this is so true that some Jewish critics have affirmed that Jesus was chiefly a

popularizer of Hillel and others, and have denied him originality altogether.

But a truth of the intellect, a fact in astronomy, physics, or philology, needs to be discovered but once, and it becomes forthwith the possession of all. The truths of the spirit must be forever discovered and spoken anew; the soul too readily lapses with fatigue or disgust. It becomes blind: its eyes demand to be touched with the finger of a new prophet; hence the eternal need of new poets. But reiteration of spiritual truth is only a rediscovery and brings only an awakening when it comes from the mouth of a vitalizing personality. The originality of Jesus was not that he alone saw the heavenly vision, but that it gripped his whole being as it did. The originality of Jesus was that he spoke as one having authority and not as the Scribes and Pharisees. With this I do not mean that his originality was not also in his seeing more and farther, and in his speaking with more

skill than any one other; but it is their emotional stress even more than their content and their form, the sincerity of conviction, the vital experience out of which they spring, that makes his words carry so far. So, more than all arguments of theologians, more than all assertions of pulpiteers, more than all my own reasoned theism, is to me the assurance of Emerson: "Ah, my brother, God exists."

THE INSPIRED

THE INSPIRED

IN his hours of vision the poet seems to have had from of old a feeling of ravishment, a sense of obligation to a superior power. With the court singers Apollo is a literary convention, as with the court preachers the Almighty is sometimes a priestly convention; but in the earnest times and in the earnest places of the world they have been and still are the great realities. The subjugation of the Sibyl in *Vergil,* the divine coal that touched the prophet's mouth in *Isaiah,* are abiding symbols of the poet's belief. "The man who is his own master knocks in vain at the door of poetry," said Plato. "I like my poems best [i. e., of what I have done], for it was not I who wrote them,"

said Emerson; and they spoke for all the poets.

Whether this belief have foundation in a spiritual fact, or be but one more delusion of the human soul in its growth toward self-realization and power, I fear to assert. Nor is it necessary: I want here to emphasize not a fact in the divine economy, but a fact in the soul's life, if indeed in the last analysis such a distinction be possible. The poet feels that he is inspired, and the greater the poet, the greater and more immediate his conviction, whether he phrase it as Jehovah in the whirlwind, or as the Sungod on Parnassus, as

> "Calliope of the beautiful dear voice,"

or as the

> "Heavenly Muse, that on the secret top
> Of Oreb or of Sinai didst inspire
> That Shepherd, who first taught the chosen seed . . ."

or simply conceive his inspiration as the divine principle awake within him.

No man ever experienced this conviction more intensely than Jesus of Nazareth: the word of the Lord was upon him, and he was appointed to preach glad tidings. It was not a sudden conviction, we may well believe; it began even in childhood, if we may trust the striking anecdote in *Luke,* when he wist he must be about his Father's business; and it grew with long brooding and prayer, whilst he himself grew in wisdom and stature in his Galilean home. It was the law of his soul slowly working itself out; but the form of the law's expression depended with him, as with all men, upon the age in which he lived and the ages from which he came. He knew the thought of his time and the thought of his fathers; and out of this knowledge he built his conception of himself as a prophet in Israel, and, it seems fair to conjecture in spite of some critics, as the Messiah himself. This conception seems to have mastered him in life and to have sustained him in death.

With it went the consecration that ever accompanies the poet's dream, and gives even to those poets whose visions are of the holiness of beauty and not of the beauty of holiness, or perhaps of aught entirely outside of the ethical life, a profoundly ethical character. In spite of temporal ambitions and vanities that may beset him, in spite of mere joy of creative speech that we call art for art's sake, every true poet has at least his moments of consecration. With some it is not realized in self-consciousness; with others it becomes their silent admonition and noble pride. I believe the consecration of Jesus in its ultimate nature differed not from the consecration of Milton or Wordsworth: it was one with the consecration of the poet conscious of his aim.

With the conviction of inspiration and with the consecration goes, too, the seer's, the poet's confidence of mien, which in their imitators appears as arrogance or conceit. They feel it is their ultimate

right, founded in the nature of things, to be heard and heard through; their large egotism silences conventional rebuke by the sincerity and strength of its pronunciamentos. Thus we may understand the exalted confidence of Jesus.

THE MAN OF SORROWS

THE MAN OF SORROWS

THE poet's vision of the unseen Completeness makes poignant his realization of the imperfection and incompleteness of the world about him. If his ideal be beauty, it renders him sensitive to earth's ugliness and filth; if it be goodness, then to earth's selfishness and sloth; if it be truth, to earth's error and confusion. Not even a faith in the ultimate triumph of his ideals, nor a philosophy that makes all things alike manifestations of divine energy, usually subdues his nature altogether to resignation. His discontent with Earth is the price he pays for his visitings in Heaven.

Jesus was a sublimely discontented soul. What might be on earth, what he felt should be on earth filled him with

grief and dismay before what he saw was upon earth. He preached glad tidings—tidings of the fatherhood of God, of the brotherhood of man, and of a coming day of righteousness; he bade men rejoice and be exceeding glad; sometimes he sang with triumph and joyousness; but how often we hear the undertones of quiet sadness—

"Der Menschheit ganzer Jammer fasst mich an." [1]

And this was inevitably deepened by his personal afflictions, by the abuse and isolation he endured; for he was from the beginning the rejected of men, and while even the foxes had their holes, the Galilean prophet had not where to lay his head. Touched with the oriental melancholy as he was, though never yielding long to despair, he had not the temperamental buoyancy of Emerson, the Occidental, who, a rare exception among the poets, seems grandly incapable of taking evil seriously.

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[1] "I feel the whole sorrow of the human race."

The Nazarene's, as we know, was a supreme vision of righteousness. But he found naught like it in Galilee, or in Judea, or in the regions beyond the Jordan. This is the tragedy of his life, of which the tears of Gethsemane, the scourge, the crown of thorns, were but the last eventful scenes. It was the discontent of the poet; his pain was "the pain of genius": he was crucified many times before Calvary.

But one pain at least, let us trust, was spared him. Legend has loved to dwell upon Jesus as among men alone the sinless one; but, though we have little warrant from the fragmentary facts of the *Synoptics* and from Jesus' explicit words [1] in making him a perfect being, nothing can impugn the essential sublimity of his character. Thus one pain was spared him: he had not to suffer the pain of mocking his own visions by any disloyalty or weakness in himself.

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[1] "Why callest thou me good?"

With men of genius the power of seeing is peculiarly greater than the power of being: Byron, who knew

"The high, the mountain majesty of worth,"

hated himself, with defiant scorn, for his own defection to impurity, and in this his fellow poets have reason to understand him best. But it was not so with Jesus; and what he saw so little realized around him he could feel wonderfully realized and justified in his own life.

And a corollary. The validity of a man's thought in no wise depends upon his conduct—it is what it is. Yet when his conduct is in accord, there is not only the gain of joy to him, but a gain to man in the authority of his message. So Emerson, with his gentleness and self-control, is more than Carlyle, the fractious and gruff; so Socrates and Jesus emphasized for all time their great thoughts by living and by dying greatly.

THE SCOURGER

THE SCOURGER

THE dissonance between what should be and what is made Jesus the Man of Sorrows; but though acquainted with grief, he was not the weak, almost complacent sufferer, long celebrated in art. He was a man, and that makes his tears the more poignant. Nor did his pity render him a sentimentalist or coward. A recent author explains the writing on the ground in the scene with the woman taken in adultery as evincing the maiden modesty of Jesus, and reverently commends his delicacy toward womankind: away with such mawkishness forever in the presence of such men as Jesus of Nazareth! Do the masters of life fear to look the Scarlet Woman in the face? Do they blush? Do they fidget? Jesus was a

man, and this makes his pity pity indeed.

But again, not in all moods was he the Man of Sorrows. This eternal dissonance of the world at times kindled within him a quick and devastating flame. Jesus had not the winsome serenity of Emerson, nor the unruffled grimace of that divine old meddler of Athens. He had not the resignation and supineness of the Indian sage; in this, as perhaps in some other things, the great Hebrew was not a typical Oriental. He could lose his temper magnificently. His indignation could use the whip on the money-changers; it could heap upon the Scribes and Pharisees rebuke and sarcasm, and call them blind guides, hypocrites, serpents, offspring of vipers—stinging names, the meaning of which, unlike that of his maxims, was certainly never likely to be missed by his hearers. He had a side that resembles the harsher John the Baptist, if indeed their characters and words have not more or less coalesced in the Apostolic

tradition. The Lamb of God of the *Fourth Gospel* is sometimes the Scourge of God in the *Synoptics.*

His indignation could drive him, it seems, even to ungraciousness and defiance, to gratuitous discourtesies incongruous with

"The first true gentleman that ever breathed,"

if *Luke* XI, be historical and typical; for the anecdote records that, accepting an invitation to dine with a Pharisee, he deliberately sat down to meat without first washing, and thus forced a discussion of his peculiar views, which he was not slow to follow up with hard words to his host and the guests. Yet perhaps he suspected that the Pharisee had invited him, not from courtesy, but from curiosity; and he may have thus felt justified in giving his drastic object lesson.

In a prophetic age he might have surpassed the fierce "woes" of the First Isaiah, which he obviously emulated; in

a literary environment the truculent satire of Juvenal, without Juvenal's taint of grossness and literary affectation; his invective has the same keenness and forthrightness, and springs from a like element in his nature.

The "saeva indignatio" of Jesus, like that of the First Isaiah, bears witness not only to a fearlessness and zeal for right, but to the essentially passionate temperament of the man. When the usual reserve of Jesus gives way we look in upon a heart of fire.

Yet the finger of a subtler criticism traces its heat even in his gentlest mood: the emotions are the fountains of all speech that rains in upon the soul; and in the living, speaking Jesus they must have had that intensity which is the endowment of the poet.

THE HUMORIST

THE HUMORIST

CERTAIN conventions of Christianity have made its founder the gloomiest visage in history; and Nietzsche, looking upon that Christ, upbraided him that he never laughed: neither Christian nor Iconoclast has dealt here with the real Jesus. The Indignant, the Man of Sorrows, having the humanity of universal humanity, was the Humorist too. Indeed such a nature, so responsive, so subtle, so rich in emotions, in imagination, in understanding of his fellow-men, would have been an anomaly had it marked and felt only the tragedy, never the comedy, of the incongruous. But we need not altogether theorize: a few of his jests are on record.

According to the first chapter of the

earliest gospel, Jesus founded his little order with a jest: after some brief addresses, presumably in the synagogues, which having no regular minister were free on the sabbath to any speaker in Israel wise in the Scriptures, Jesus was passing one day along by the sea of Galilee; and he saw Simon and Andrew, the brother of Simon, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishers. And Jesus said unto them, "Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men" (ἁλιεῖς ἀνθρώπων). Socrates once playfully used a similar figure: "I am not altogether unversed in the art of catching men" (οὔκ ἀπείρως οἶμαι ἔχειν πρὸς θήραν ἀνθρώπων. *Mem.* II. 6, 29), but without the pun which gives point to the former.[1]

The homely hyperboles so habitual with him, as in "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed," may have more than once

[1] The pun on the name of Peter in the Greek of *Matt.* XVI, reflects the Petrine tendency of that Gospel and the growing "hierarchy of Rome," and in the Aramaic of Jesus would have been impossible.

been accompanied by a smile, the difference after all between the meaning and the humble symbol having a happy quaintness.

His fancy indulged at times in grotesque exaggerations, which need but to be pictured by us as they were by his original auditors to be recognized at once. The picture of a busybody with a stick of timber in his eye, solicitous for the sight of a neighbor with a fleck of dust in his, is itself ludicrous, and doubly as a type of the fault-finding hypocrite; thus, also, punctiliously to strain out the gnat before drinking a cup of wine, only thereafter to swallow a camel, is ludicrous, and doubly as a type of the punctiliousness and inconsistency of religious formalists. Are not these exactly paralleled in kind by the famous

"Parturiunt montes, nascitur ridiculus mus" [1]

[1] "The mountains are in labor and bring forth an absurd little mouse."

where the picture is also grotesque exaggeration, introduced in the same way to typify a human frailty. We smile at this line in Horace; but who ever smiled at those lines of Jesus? I think the Galilean peasants did.

It was Jesus, too, who conceived the desperate anxiety of self-interest in terms of the short man trying by worrying about it to add a cubit to his stature—the humor of which was remarked by Beecher; and we remember the comparison of the difficulty of the rich man, worming his way into heaven, with the easier feat of the camel, squeezing, legs, hump, and all, through the eye of a needle.[1]

Thus the Jester could riot in wild and

[1] I take "eye of a needle" in its literal sense, rejecting on a number of grounds the archæological ingenuity of those commentators who assure us that it means one of the city gates. This term of the comparison, which has its parallels in the proverbs of Arabia and India, may have been current in Palestine before Jesus; but, if so, the mere fact that he chose to make use of it would itself bear testimony to his sense of humor—the topic under discussion.

grotesque whimsies; but perhaps oftener to his mood was the delicate humor of a gentle realism: the children in the market-place at their games of mock funerals and weddings, chiding their comrades for not doing their mimic roles as agreed; the disgruntled householder roused in the night by an importunate neighbor come after bread for his guest, and constrained to open the door at last because the man kept up such a merciless knocking; the judge who yielded to the widow, not because he feared God or regarded man, but simply to get rid of her continual coming; the recipients of an unwelcome invitation who straightway began to make conventional excuses, especially the much-married man who could not remain away from his wife —how genially he handled such themes! Here, too, the humor is not only in the picture, but in the application.

Moreover, he was alert to get the humor out of a situation in actual life, as exemplified by the story of the new wine in

old bottles, told at the chief Pharisee's table at the expense of the listeners, where he "pricked the bubble of their assumed superiority."

And may not the Knower of men have smiled as he saw the connoisseur drink the old wine and smack his lips and say, "That is good"? May he not have smiled at the simple shepherd and the women who, finding their lost possessions, gleefully called in their neighbors to gossip about it all?—or at the unseemly haste of the guests when he marked how they chose out the chief seats?—or at Martha, cumbered about much serving, who would enlist the Master against her sister, apparently idling at his feet? May not a sense of humor have reinforced his appreciation of the zeal of the little Zacchaeus with whom he decided to take lodgings? Was there not grim humor as well as bitter rebuke in his comment on those who think they shall be heard for their much speaking, and on those who disfigure their faces to

be seen of men to fast? No man could look through human nature, as Jesus looked through it, without smiling sometimes in very truth.

Humor is as old as speech. Laughter rings round the world. And even Galilee had its mirth; and even we can hear it.

The above paragraph suggests two related subjects: the adroitness of Jesus in turning any situation, even the most trying, to the advantage of himself or his cause, which will fall into the next chapter; and the irony of Jesus, which it seems proper to make a part of this.[1]

I mean an irony quite like that of Socrates, where superiority, conscious of its own, plays the part of inferiority; where knowledge pretends the ignorance, where wisdom pretends the folly, where purity pretends the impurity of the other party to the conversation, who is meanwhile com-

[1] It has been treated in a masterly fashion by Paulsen (*Schopenhauer, Hamlet, Mephistopheles; Anhang,* Berlin, 1900), to whom I am under some obligation.

placently unaware of the situation until the real master choose by a deft stroke to reveal it. As Socrates pretended to humble himself before the Sophists, politicians, and smart set of Athens, so Jesus before the Scribes and Pharisees of Palestine.

This irony seasons, and will explain, many of his sayings: "They who are whole have no need of a physician," i. e., you Pharisees whose lives are such models of ethical and religious propriety, I can do you no spiritual good; but possibly [in a changed tone] with all your wisdom there is something for you in the old word, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice." The difficult parable of the Unjust Steward is certainly ironical.

Ironical, too, is his habit of clinching an argument, or of concluding a story with a question, the answer to which is perfectly obvious: "Doth not each of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall and lead him away to watering?" "Whether of the twain did the will of his

father?" "Which of them therefore will love him most?"

At times his irony becomes bitter sarcasm, as in *Luke* XIII, 31ff.: "It cannot be that a prophet perish outside of Jerusalem," i. e., as a prophet I have a just claim to be murdered in the Holy City which from old has murdered the prophets; so Herod that fox—sly old villain though he is—won't have the pleasure of doing with me as with John.

In the story of Lazarus is a grim humor, happily compared by Paulsen with that of a mediæval Dance of Death, a grotesque, ironic politeness in Abraham's nonchalant conversation with the poor fellow in Hell, reminding one of those gruesome old pictures, where Death invites the rich and great, who have fared so well at the table of life, now to come and have a dance with him.

The attitude of Jesus toward earthly riches and power is ironical in that he affects to take seriously the point of view

of those who take these things so seriously, as in answering the question, "Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar?"—itself introduced by the Pharisees and the Herodians with an impertinent irony not lost on the quick comprehension of Jesus.[1] "Bring me a denarius that I may see it," he replied. And they brought it. "Whose is this image and superscription?" [As if he did not know!] And they say unto him, "Cæsar's." And Jesus said unto them, "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's [i. e., you enjoy Rome's civic protection, and use her coin, and should not object to taxation] and unto God"—here abandoning all pretense of concern for such matters, and dismissing them

[1] They said, "Master, we know that thou art true and carest not for anyone: for thou regardest not the person of men, but of a truth teachest the way of God." This is irony toward Jesus, because they did not believe it: they were mocking him; but Fate, in thus putting the real truth unwittingly into their mouths of scorn, revenged Jesus with its own irony: it made their words, as unconscious asseverators of fact, mock their own egregious complacence.

with eloquent speed—"and unto God the things that are God's."

He saw the irony in the rich man's care of his possessions, which are not only of no positive value, but actual hindrances to getting the real values of life and the Kingdom of Heaven. "The ground of a certain rich man,"—so runs one of his stories—"brought forth plentifully, and he reasoned with himself, saying, 'What shall I do, because I have not where to bestow my fruits?' And he said, 'This will I do: I will pull down my barns and build greater; and there will I bestow my corn and my goods, and I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry!' But God said unto him, 'Thou foolish one, this night is thy soul required of thee, and the things which thou hast prepared, whose shall they be?' So he that layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."

He saw the irony in his own end: in the

Gardens of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives, when the coming of the chief priests and the captains of the temple and the elders awoke the disciples sleeping for sorrow even as Jesus in sorrow had come from his prayer and was standing over them, he turned to his enemies; and to Judas he said, "Betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?"—and to those who seized him, "Are ye come out as against a robber with swords and staves?"

And the bitter irony of it all must have filled his soul before the High Priest, who believed with fatuous ignorance that this man, the best of his race, must perish, lest the whole ancient order and all righteousness be undone; and before Pilate who, possessing the power of this world, was yet so powerless against the spiritual King of the Jews, to whom Jesus vouchsafed only the laconic "Thou sayest," as the irony of the situation compelled him to an irony of attitude toward it. The bitter irony of it all must have filled his soul

under the jeers and the scourging in the house of Caiaphas, under the crucifixion on the hill—until his broken spirit joined the defeated mortality of yesterday's twice ten thousand years with the despairing cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!"

Indeed, the irony of Jesus has been succeeded by the irony of history: as Jesus mocked the sin, weakness, and folly of Time, so has Time in its sin, weakness, and folly mocked Jesus. It preferred Barabbas, the destroyer, to him, the redeemer; it crucified the most honest of men between two thieves.[1] And thereafter it made the lover a tyrant; him who would suffer the little children to come unto his bosom it transformed into the fiend that whipped them into Hell; his spiritual in-

[1] But in the ironical inscription, "The King of the Jews," Fate again, by the same subtlety as noted in the remark of the Herodians, did revenge Jesus: it made those who set it up tell the truth unwittingly in their very mockery at what was but their own dull misunderstanding thereof.

tuitions it parodied in the vast systems of the theologizing intellect; discipleship to him, which he said (or someone speaking in his spirit said) was in loving one another, it made dependent upon a metaphysical "credo quia absurdum." The Brother of Peace it made the source of one half and the excuse of the other half of the wars of the East and West and North and South; and the rejecter of all earthly goods, the contemner of all earthly magnificence, the way-faring preacher in sandals and girdle, it gave over to be represented and defended by Pontiff and Prince, clad in robes of cardinal and purple and dwelling in palaces of marble and of gold.

THE ALERT

THE ALERT

THE poetical mind is eminently alive, not only quick to see, but quick to take advantage. Though proverbially abstracted from the world—or what the unconscious complacency of many men calls the world—the poet knows where he is and what to do. His intellectual embarrassments are most brief, his resources most abounding, his repartees unexpected and dangerous. The poet in Joan of Arc confounded the brutal ecclesiastics who examined her, no less than the heroine in her confounded the executioners and the mob which watched the transfigured white girl in the flames. "Did not the archangel Michael appear unto thee all naked?" obscenely insinuated a priestly official; and "Of a truth," replied La Pucelle, "Wot

ye not that God who clothes the flowers of the valleys can find raiment for his messenger?" The unhappy English poet, on trial in a sordid London court-room, degraded, hopelessly in the wrong, could yet force cheers from the floor by his trenchant replies to the stolid lawyers who cross-examined. And when a poet takes up his pen to fight, his critics look out, for he is apt to be an alert man of affairs no less than a dreamer of dreams. There are many indications of such alertness in the Poet of Galilee. His intellectual side has not always been sufficiently recognized. He had something of the readiness of the Greek intellect, of Plato, Socrates, and the Sophists, a quality not present to such a degree in the Hebrew prophets, or in Zoroaster, or in Buddha, who were very different types indeed; and present perhaps in Mohammed, not as poet, the man of words, but as general, the man of action.

His reformer-soul put him in hard case with his countrymen. He knew opposi-

tion, from the pettiness of provincial scribe to the domineering of Jewish High Priest and Roman Procurator. We can conceive of a Jesus who would have answered ever with a magnificent look of godlike silence and turned away; so, indeed, at times we may be sure he did answer. But not always; the historic Jesus of Nazareth did not always let slip his opportunity, nor abrogate his power to make a home thrust, if it was vital to his propaganda.

In the *Synoptics* we read of several efforts to entrap him: the Pharisees, Sadducees, or Herodians went and took counsel how they might ensnare him in his talk, apropos of the tribute money, or of the proper punishment of an adulteress, or of marriages in Heaven, or of other things on which they trusted he would commit himself to his hurt in the eyes of the people; and one has but to recall his answers to see how he perceived their craftiness, and how no man was able to answer him a word, how even his enemies recog-

nized his adroitness and durst not thereafter ask him any question. In a contest of wits he was a genius at fence, parry or thrust. He was a master of situations that would have embarrassed many men not less sure of their cause, but less sure of the circumstances and of themselves. He not only saw directly how the matter stood, with that same insight which in spiritual issues made him a seer, but he had the presence of mind to handle it with effect, and at times with eloquence and dramatic éclat—a presence of mind which, had not other elements in his character interposed, might have made him a political force in the forum or a general in the field.[1]

Sometimes he replied, like Lincoln, with a story; sometimes, like Socrates, with the

[1] And understanding human nature as he did, he was also not without a certain practical sagacity. At least there is something politic in the instruction to the twelve, for their journey, "Be ye wise as serpents and harmless as doves." But his moral earnestness forbade him to employ much conciliation and compromise.

irony noted above; sometimes with the formulation of a dilemma, sometimes with all three, as in *Matthew* XXI, 23–32: "And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, 'By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?' And Jesus answered and said unto them, 'I also will ask you one question, which if ye tell me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven or from men?' And they reasoned with themselves, saying, 'If we shall say from Heaven, he will say unto us, "Why then did ye not believe him?" But if we shall say from men, we fear the multitude; for all hold John as a prophet.' And they answered Jesus, and said, 'We know not.' He also said unto them, 'Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things. But what think ye? A man had two sons, and he came to the

first, and said, "Son, go work to-day in the vineyard." And he answered, and said, "I will not;" but afterward he repented himself, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered, and said, "I go, sir," and went not. Whether of the twain did the will of his father?' They say, 'The first.' Jesus saith unto them, 'Verily I say unto you that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye saw it, did not even repent yourselves afterward, that ye might believe him.' "

His use of the dilemma is a part of an antithetical habit of thought, illustrated in his fondness for briefly put alternatives and contrasts, when he supplemented the pronouncements of intuition by the arguments of the discursive reason: two men in the field, one taken, the other left; ten

virgins, five wise and five foolish; the house on the rock and the house on the sand; John, fasting, who, as they say, hath a devil, and the Son of Man, eating and drinking, whom they call a glutton and a wine-bibber; the saving and the killing of life on the sabbath; God and Mammon—alternatives usually symbolic expressions of the everlasting alternatives, light and darkness, good and evil,—the main subject matter of Jesus and of all dialecticians of the soul.

Only once in his conversation does he seem to have been outwitted, and then not by one of the mighty that sat on Moses' seat, but by one of the humble far away. On his visit to the lost sheep of Israel on the borders of Tyre and Sidon, a woman, a Gentile, a Syrophœnician by race, came to the house where the weary man had hid himself, and fell down at his feet, and besought him that he would cast forth a devil out of her daughter. And he said unto her, with what to western ears seems

a transient touch of the racial exclusiveness of the ancient Jew, "Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs." But her anguish found her a better word, and she said unto him, "Yea, Lord; even the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs." And the keen, no less than the tender man within him was roused, and he said unto her, with instant approval of her speech, and cheer for her grief: *"For this saying* go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter."

His readiness in bending his wit to a situation suggests his readiness in bending a situation to his wit. He would often seize on some object immediately at hand to point his moral or adorn his tale; such must be the force of the pronoun "this" in "Ye shall say unto *this* mountain, 'Be thou taken up,'" as Jesus passed with his disciples one morning from Bethany toward Jerusalem along the foot of the

Mount of Olives; and of the same pronoun in "Ye would say unto *this* sycamine tree, 'Be thou rooted up, and be thou planted in the sea,' " the sycamine waving even there not far from the rippling beach of Gennesaret. It was immediately after his melancholy conversation with the rich young man, who asked what he should do to inherit eternal life and then made the great refusal—"il gran rifiuto"—going away sorrowful, that Jesus looked round about at the puzzled and grieved disciples and commented, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God!" The invitation to the fishermen to become fishers of men, already instanced as illustrating the Humorist, may also be instanced here. And men will not forget how once he answered the query, "Who, then, is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?"—one of those several queries, by the way, that show wherein the disciples really failed to appreciate their Master's teachings—how forthwith he

called to him a little child and set him in the midst of them, a living, breathing symbol of his thought, and said, "Verily I say unto you, except ye turn and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." And when he bade those of little faith to consider the lilies of the field, how they grew, toiling not as men, nor spinning as women, yet in their array more beautiful than Solomon in all his glory, I know that the same lilies nodded round him out of the grass, gleaming with speckled white and gold in the same sunlight that fell across the Poet's face.

THE STORY-TELLER

THE STORY-TELLER

THE stories of Jesus furnish by-words for conversation and literature; but their movement and color and passion are too seldom felt: they have been added to the conventionalities; hence their significance for the mind of Jesus may be overlooked. They bear witness to a teeming, creative brain. When Jesus walked by the lake or mountain, and the crowds gathered, and he began to speak to them in parables, where did he get his abundant supplies?—were they casual inventions of the moment?—had the artist before worked over them in secret?—what personal observation, experience, or folk-gossip or reading suggested this story or that?—did he bring them to their present perfection by successive retelling

and remodeling, like the modern speaker with his favorite anecdotes?—with what tones, gestures, pauses, did the story-teller emphasize the pageantry of his fancy for his oriental hearers, those proverbial lovers of stories? To these things no man will ever reply. But answers are not always of chief moment. Often a question will do more to arouse thought than an answer [1]—a realization that problems exist, a stimulation of curiosity, when we begin to understand because we begin to be properly astonished.

These stories came out of a teeming, creative brain that spoke to the living; and as such it is well to recognize their position in the written records of the race, among the fables, allegories, and apologues that human ingenuity has wrought out to illustrate a point or to teach a lesson. Someone should write a book com-

[1] So Ibsen conceived it his mission to question and not to answer: "Jeg spörger helst; mit kald er ej at svare."

paring in their art and purpose the stories of Jesus with the *Old Testament* parables (as that of the vineyard in *Isaiah* V, elaborated by Jesus), and the *Old Testament* fables (those of vegetable life [1] in *Judges* IX, 8-15, and *II Kings* XIV, 9) with the parables of Buddha and the *Talmud,* with the fables of the *Hitopadesa* and Æsop, with the myths and parables of Plato, with the allegory of Hercules at the cross-roads of Prodicus, with the homely apologues of republican Rome, etc. His words begin to be examined by the Department of Comparative Religion; they still await examination by the Department of Comparative Literature.

If, on the one hand, the stories of Jesus are fresh creations, on the other hand as a type and method they have not only general analogies among other peoples, but closer parallels among his own people and

[1] The beast fable is not found in the *Old Testament.*

in his own time than a Christian public unfamiliar with Rabbinical lore usually suspects.

But they concern us now only in the former aspect, as stories illustrating spiritual truths, as the manifest products of one mind, one artist, one creator. They belong to the world's "little masterpieces of fiction." Not only have they delighted the populace, but they have satisfied the severe standards of the Academicians. The clearness of outline and grace of form, so unlike anything in ancient Hebrew literature, is perhaps the most notable manifestation of that Hellenic quality in the mind of Jesus which we have already noted more than once. Jesus is perhaps the greatest artist the Jewish race has produced.

With wonderful economy of effort he sets his characters before us as living men and women. His device is not to describe, but to show them doing or speak-

ing, whether it be the Good Samaritan binding up the wayfarer's wounds, or the shepherd coming home rejoicing with the lost sheep on his shoulder, or the woman sweeping her house, or the Unjust Steward with his account books, or Lazarus begging Father Abraham to dip a finger-tip in water and cool his tongue. With the realistic exactness of one reporting an incident out of his own experience, he mentions now one, now another characteristic detail such as only a poetic imagination would emphasize. With him it is not simply a grain of mustard seed, but a grain of mustard seed that a man took and cast into his garden, and it grew and became a tree and the birds of the heavens came and lodged in the branches thereof. Even in the brief mention of the woman making bread, he tells us she hid the leaven not simply in the meal, but in three measures of meal—and that makes the difference between a lay-figure and an actual

housewife. It is just these apparently trivial touches that betray the born story-teller.

Again, his people are always represented as occupied with something interesting, something in which they are themselves vitally interested—whether it be buying land to make sure of a treasure buried there, or hunting for a lost sheep, or building a house, or guiding the plow—usually something that his peasant companions or groups of chance listeners would have found particularly interesting, as a part of their own world. Though Jesus tells the story of a king and his army, and of a rich merchant and his pearl, most of his inventions concern the homely activities of fisher, and vine-dresser, and shepherd, or the quite familiar, if learned, professions of scribe and judge.

It is part of that homeliness that runs through so much of his imagery, and that doubtless characterized his speech, noun,

verb, and adjective, in the original Aramaic never to be restored.

Near to the folk also was his constant use of what our Latin grammar calls "direct discourse"—the lively dramatic method of the Scotch cotter or Irish politician, which is lost to the more elaborate syntax of polite society. He reports the householder, which went out at different hours of the day to hire more laborers into his vineyard, as in actual conversation in the market-place; he does not tell us the Prodigal said he would arise and go to his father, but he lets us overhear the Prodigal's own spoken resolve.

Near to the folk, again, are his repetitions, like those familiar in Homer and in ballad poetry, found in the *Gospel* narratives about Jesus as well (e. g., *Luke* XIX, 31-34), and in all primitive recitals: as "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" in the parable of the Talents; and "I have sinned against heaven," etc., of the Prod-

igal Son; and "I pray thee have me excused," in the parable of the Invitations: each repeated with the simple directness of an old folk-tale.

His characters belong to the literature of the world, even with the more developed creations of so-called secular letters, with Thersites, Nestor, Achilles, with Paolo and Francesca, the Canterbury Pilgrims, and Shakespeare's Theater.

The background is but lightly drawn, even in such a vivid scene as the Prodigal feeding the swine; or it is omitted altogether, where, however, the convincing reality of the actors suggests it so truly that we are surprised to find on rereading that our imaginations have supplied so much. Here again is seen the magic of the artist: it is not what his imagination does for us, so much as what it is able to make our imaginations do for ourselves, that distinguishes from the dauber or poetaster, the painter or poet whom we love for making us so gloriously competent.

Hence the wearisome inanity of most efforts to fill in the parables by paraphrase. Yet our world—our customs, our tastes, the very look of our fields and houses and markets, our occidental sky itself—is so different that imagination, always making use of memory, may sometimes go astray; and a work of such wide and exact archæological information, with such intelligent sympathy and such sweet quaintness of manner as *De Gelijkenissen van het Evangelie*[1] of Dr. Koetsveld, hausvater, pastor, and scholar, is a delightful help and a welcome gift to any friend of Jesus: he brings back to us the world that was about Jesus, when the Poet of Galilee spoke to his villagers from boat or hillside; and to Jesus' allusions he gives for us something of the significance they had for his countrymen.

One might expect the realistic habit that adds so many little touches of accurate de-

[1] Utrecht, 1886. I doubt if the work exists in translation.

tail would have led him to locate, as is so common in folk-lore and legend, his stories in some appropriate place, feigning, for instance, that the sower went forth to sow in the fields back of Capernaum, or that the Prodigal wandered from a house in Nazareth to the rich Roman city on the coast, or that the virgins were the daughters of Cana; but he is thus definite only in the story of the man who was going down to Jericho. Moreover, his characters are unnamed, save the beggar on Abraham's bosom, who may have been named by the tradition after the Lazarus whom Jesus was reputed to have raised from the dead. And in this way his stories, with all their simple realism, acquire something of that remoteness and mystery characteristic of fairy tales, which usually tell of what happened somewhere, once upon a time, to some certain prince, or maiden, or forest child whose names we shall never know. The result is for us not unhappy: the literary instinct of men

has long since devised from out the stories of Jesus signatures more significant and pretty than proper names: The Vineyard, The Prodigal Son, The Ten Virgins, The Talents, the Good Samaritan.

The character of his materials—the personages and incidents—and his manner of arranging and setting them forth offer beautiful evidence of Jesus' power to play upon the human heart. So many-sided and so elusive is his personality that his critic is constantly tempted to readjust the emphasis or alter the treatment of chapter and paragraph. Indeed, Jesus' power over the human heart is perhaps his power above all other powers as poet; and I can imagine a discussion of the Poet of Galilee which might be in effect but an analysis and exposition of this truth. Not that such a discussion would necessarily repudiate any of the ideas in these pages; but that it might set some of them in clearer relations and in a clearer light. It is certain at least that the power over the

human heart he possessed as few even of the greatest artists who so far excelled him in complexity and ingenuity of form, and in quantity and variety of production.

But these stories exist not for themselves alone; like all great art, they have a meaning beyond themselves. Each exists for an idea; they all illustrate the ethical or religious principles that fired the imagination of the Poet of Galilee; and, despite certain tendencies in modern criticism and art, it must never be forgotten that the love of goodness and the love of God have been through the ages and will still be in the ages to come among the passions and themes of the creative mind.

The fitness of the stories as illustrations is quite independent of their excellence as narrative compositions.

They are a part of the glowing concreteness of a poet's thinking; but in this they are sometimes misunderstood. The parable of the Sower (with one or two

others) is really an allegory, where each element in the story is symbolic of an element in the thought of the speaker; "it gives us," says Menzies,[1] "under a thin disguise the experience of Jesus as a preacher;" though the correspondences are confused in the explanation which the Evangelists make Jesus give privately to his disciples.

But this is not their usual character. They are similes. In some this is formally obvious: "The Kingdom of Heaven is *like* a woman," etc.; "Everyone therefore which heareth these words of mine, and doeth them, *shall be likened* unto a wise man, which built his house upon the rock," etc. But even the longest, The Prodigal Son, is, in relation to the thought illustrated, a simile. The point of comparison is that God forgives a repentant soul as a human father a son. The vivid

[1] *The Earliest Gospel*, p. 108.

details—the patrimony, the wandering to a far country,[1] the swine, the fatted calf, the ring and the robe—but complete and vitalize the picture; they have not more symbolic meaning than the details of a Homeric simile. In either poet there is but one point of comparison; in either case the poet makes the comparison interesting and effective by dwelling on the independent characteristics of the material which furnishes the illustration.

Thus Jesus is not to be held responsible for the morality of people in these stories: neither for the harshness of the king that bade the man who owed him ten thousand talents to be sold with his wife, and his children, and all he had; nor for the injustice of the householder who gave the laborers of the eleventh hour as good a wage as those who had borne the scorching heat of the day; nor for the thrift of the gleeful, sly fellow that found a treasure

[1] Possibly this might symbolize a long journey from the goodness of God, but it need not here.

hid in a field and bought the field without letting the man who sold it know why. In the same way he is not always careful of literal probability, as possibly in the story of a certain king which made a marriage feast for his sons, though the more intimately we acquaint ourselves with Jesus, the more we appreciate how his utterances abound in accurate knowledge of the customs and ways of his folk and times. What he chiefly desires is that these stories furnish him with a point to his purpose.

And Jesus, leaving the moral to take hold as it might, was loath to tag his parables with elucidations. He had too much literary taste: as artist he loved the eloquence of suppression, silence, stopping short. He had too much cleverness: he knew human nature too well; he knew the greater force of a point when the listener can catch it for himself; and though the quick-witted Pharisees and their kind seem to have got his drift easily enough,

he was, as we read, chagrined at the obtuseness of his disciples in wanting glosses, and would have been chagrined at those glosses which, as seems likely, the Apostolic age was afterwards prone to put into his mouth. Moreover, he was too adroit: simple parabolic teaching "enabled him to avoid harsh contradictions of the hopes cherished by his countrymen, and to insinuate into their minds his own spiritual views," [1] without unduly antagonizing.

But certainly he desired to be understood. Apparently the Apostolic age, wondering why not more of those who heard Jesus were converted, sought an explanation in the fact that he spoke in parables, so that, in the bitter words of Isaiah,

> "Seeing, they may not see;
> And hearing, they may not understand."

This contradicts the nature of Jesus: he no more intended to hide his thought un-

[1] Menzies, *The Earliest Gospel*, p. 116.

der a mystification than he advised hiding a lamp under a bushel.

These observations have touched on the parables, first, simply as inventions of a unique story-telling gift, and, second, as concrete symbols of spiritual ideas, according to the familiar function of the poet as discoverer of analogies between matter and spirit. A third aspect of their poetry concerns the quality of those ideas themselves; but any analysis of the underlying truths of the parables must be left until the years make me wiser for the task. It seems indubitable that no other body of poetry so slight in quantity ever contained teachings of equal loftiness and equal scope.

THE SAYER

THE SAYER

THE preceding chapters have inevitably implied Jesus' mastery of expression; indeed, those on "The Humorist" and "The Story-teller" were compelled directly to allude to it in several of its characteristics. But it calls for the emphasis of a separate discussion: had the intellectuality, the insight, the imagination, the moods of Jesus burned themselves out within a speechless soul, he would never have become a flame upon the mountains.

Gifts great as his are never absolutely tongue-tied: they always to some degree force or awaken words, as it is their nature to crave expression of themselves to others. In so far "always the seer is the sayer." Yet the gift of speech is not

necessarily commensurate with other gifts. It is possible that, of two men equally sensitive to beauty, truth, and goodness, one goes under to oblivion, while the other lives to exert a wide influence and to compel a splendid renown. There are those who die with all their music in them. Two men with such similar gifts and opposite fates have I known. For several years of an upland boyhood it was my rare privilege to be almost daily with an aged clergyman whose life began with the wonderful century. Thomas Stone (under the familiar maples and elms of whose revisited house I am writing this book) had been among the first, as he was among the last, of the New England Transcendentalists. From his first work, *Sermons on War,* printed far back in 1828, down to his last words of faith on his death-bed in 1895, and through the long years between of earnest affiliation with the spiritual movements of and ahead of his time, he was in temperament prophet and seer.

He was the spiritual, as he was the physical, neighbor of Emerson, the intimate friend of whom he told me so much. He saw the same stars through the same trees. But it was denied him, as he often remarked in quiet reminiscence, to find the fit words; he could not speak out loud and bold, like his celebrated kinsman. Those who knew him remember; but his volumes, pleasingly and not greatly written, gather the dust in the second-hand book-stores of Boston, while Emerson's are sent round and round the world. This enormous difference in fate corresponds to no equal difference in vision, independence, or character; but the mute lips must perish. There is the weakness, no less than the power, of silence. The seer is not always the sayer.

As a prime source of his influence and of his renown, the Galilean's genius for expression can hardly be too much stressed, especially as it is seldom stressed at all. Why is it that his words are quoted

on all tongues? Not alone because they have mighty meanings. The words of his mouth equaled the meditations of his heart. Adequate speech is the last gift of the Giver of gifts.

The halting tongue, used only to asking for bread, or to telling the hour of the day, must halt indeed in attempting to speak fittingly of the speech of such men. After all, only a poet should speak of the words of a poet. Why did not Shelley, or Goethe leave us more of their thought of the speech of Jesus? Did they fail to recognize him as their contemporary, an eternal master of their own eternal stores?

But one can surmise some of the points they might have made:

1. Jesus, the sayer, is the revealer of Jesus, the man. He gives himself—thought and feeling—to all the world with the frankness of a child, with the frankness and richness of self-expression of the poet. "None tell more freely their

deepest secrets than the truly great," says Nathaniel Schmidt, and he is thinking of the Prophet of Nazareth.

2. But he gives himself without garrulity or violence. His impulse to communicate, his intensity of temperament, was under a fine control. But this may not be the right word: control implies somewhat of plan and effort; and the reserve and strength of the phrase of Jesus depended upon the natural action and direction of his mind: it was not calculated or compelled; it came. The sincerity of a great inspiration needs no course in rhetoric as the propædeutic against loquacity and loud tones: on that side it takes care of itself. Thus the austerity and power of his diction that wastes no energy and never distracts has its roots in his ethical character: it is one more witness to the nobility of Jesus.

3. He has what is called "finality of expression," a hackneyed usage which may derive a certain freshness, thus used for

one so far from the houses of criticism and reviewers. All his words have that fine ultimateness which is in natural things, in the flowers and birds and trees—perfection of being after their kind, which, like the flowers in their perfection, are so beautifully adjusted to the soul of man that he delights in them long before he appreciates the wonder.

4. This, alone, were there not much besides, would prove his originality. His vocabulary was not altogether new. "Such terms as Redemption, Baptism, Grace, Faith, Salvation, Regeneration, Son of Man, Kingdom of Heaven, were household words of Talmudical Judaism." [1] "Eternal Life" (ζωὴ ἀιώνιος), Jesus' name for the "summum bonum," was current also in Jewish teaching. Truly it would be strange if Jesus had not used something of the terminology of his age. Originality is not a question of

[1] Emmanuel Deutsch, *The Talmud.*

words but of context: it is not whence they came, nor what they are, but where they stand and what they do. These old terms, woven into the web of his speech, become like threads newly spun, and parts of new patterns; just as old ideas, passing through his crystallizing imagination and vitalizing personality, were born again, this time to larger life.

And many current expressions he adapted to new uses. In current Rabbinical speech a Rabbi, distinguished for skill in the law or excellence of character, was called an "uprooter of mountains;" Jesus applied the figure to faith. "Yoke" was current to express the relation of a disciple to his master; the Rabbis said "the yoke of the law;" Jesus used the figure while drawing men away from their influence. "In Rabbinical theology," remarks Bruce in the *Expositor's Bible,* "leaven was used as an emblem of evil desire: Jesus had the courage to use it as an emblem of the best thing in the

world, the Kingdom of God coming into the heart of the individual and the community." That he spiritualized the meaning of the phrase "Kingdom of God," we all know now; and the failure of his contemporaries to understand the new meaning is one reason why he was done to death, mocked as "the king of the Jews."

5. Reference has been made to the repetitions employed by Jesus, a formal device of folk speech; in like manner he sometimes employs parallelisms, the formal device of Hebrew poetry, which he doubtless caught from reading and from hearing read or sung the ancient *Psalter* of Israel. They are scattered like little lyrics among his fragments:

"Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat;
Nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on:
For the life is more than food;
And the body than the raiment."

Or again:

"For of thorns men do not gather (συλλέγουσι) figs,

Nor of a bramble bush gather (τρυγῶσι) they grapes,"

where, it will be noticed, the English fails to bring out the Hebraic peculiarity—obviously preserved in the Greek—of substituting a different word, while repeating the thought, in the second verse.[1] This couplet in both thought and form might have found a place in the old collection of gnomic poetry of his people; it reads like one of the Proverbs.

Sometimes the lyric effect is no less strong where the parallelism is less formal:

"Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden,
And I will give you rest;
Take my yoke upon you,
And learn of me;
For I am meek and lowly in heart;
And ye shall find rest for your souls;
For my yoke is easy,
And my burden is light."

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[1] Different Greek words (κοιμωμένους and καθεύδετε), are also unhappily rendered by one word, "sleeping,"

I think this little poem induces the same elemental mood of unquestioning trust as Whittier's:

"I know not where his islands lift
Their fronded palms in air:
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond his love and care."

And one other instance:

"Consider the lilies how they grow:
They toil not, neither do they spin;
Yet I say unto you,
Even Solomon in all his glory
Was not arrayed like one of these.
But if God doth so clothe the grass in the field,
Which is to-day, and to-morrow is cast into the oven;
How much more you, O ye of little faith?

Fear not, little flock;
For it is your Father's good pleasure
To give you the Kingdom . . .

"sleep ye" in *Luke* XXII, 45–46, though here there is no parallelism.

Make for yourselves purses which wax not
old,
A treasure in the heavens that faileth not,
Where no thief draweth near,
Neither moth destroyeth,
For where your treasure is,
There will your heart be also."

There is in such passages an almost elegiac tenderness by no means unknown in old Hebrew poetry. They recall that most perfect lyric of the *Anthology* of his ancestors:

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures;
He leadeth me beside the still waters.
He restoreth my soul:
He guideth me in the paths of righteousness for
his Name's sake.
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the
shadow of death,
I will fear no evil; for thou art with me:
Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.
Thou preparest a table before me in the presence
of mine enemies:

Thou hast anointed my head with oil; my cup runneth over.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:
And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

The Beatitudes and the Lord's Prayer have long been chanted in all cathedrals: they have the same inherent singing quality as the *Psalter*.

But beautiful as such passages are, they encounter as the work of Jesus two objections: first, the English and the Greek may have their own movement and overtones, subtle effects, not correspondent to anything in the lost Aramaic of Jesus; secondly, the longer of them may sometimes be centos,[1] like the Sermon on the Mount, brought together from sayings of Jesus not originally uttered as wholes. Yet at all events they remind us that there must have been at times a lyrical

[1] They have not, like the Parables, so exact a unity as to make this internally impossible.

note of much loveliness in the Master's voice.

6. But were a poet-critic permitted to name but one quality of the speech of the Poet of Galilee, that would be, I think, its expression of universal and spiritual principles in particular and concrete terms. "Jesus," says Renan, the one biographer of Jesus who could have best developed the theme of this book, "is at once very idealistic in his conceptions and very materialistic in his expressions." Ever is he thinking, dreaming, beholding the invisible and intangible life of the spirit, a world out of time and space; but ever does he speak of it, as was observed in the preceding chapter on the parables, in figures drawn from this world of rock and stream, with its sunbright houses and vineyards. He almost never pronounces maxim or idea in abstract literality: the Golden Rule is a rare exception. Thus he becomes a stumbling-block to literal minds; and creeds over which armies have

fought, and cults which have sapped the life-blood out of men, have been evolved from his figures: the coming of a great poet is sometimes fraught with peril.

A HERO OF FOLK-LORE

A HERO OF FOLK-LORE

BUT Jesus was not only the Seer and the Sayer, but the Doer, who lived independently, picturesquely, helpfully, bravely, and died grandly; and a personality so extraordinary in thought, speech, and act leaves no ordinary impression behind it. It becomes a hero in the memories of generations; in any age for good or ill the theme of poetry—one with the sun and the stars that fire the imaginations of men; in a credulous age of oral traditions and story-telling, the center around which develop innumerable legends. So in the mediæval Teutonic world, Theodoric became the Dietrich of Bern in Middle High German; Carolus the Charlemagne, and the British king the Arthur of Old French and Middle English romance; so in ancient India Gautama

became the Buddha of the stories lately retold by Edwin Arnold. And so it is that much about Jesus belongs to the poetic folk-lore of the race; and it seems fit, in concluding this essay on the Poet of Galilee, to make some mention of the poetry to which he gave rise.

I shall omit reference to those religious ideas, so widespread just before the beginning of our era, which are reflected in such documents as the book of *Enoch* and the *Psalms of Solomon,* and in the Messianic interpretations of the *Old Testament* prophecies, disregarding as well the beliefs peculiar to the Apostolic church, like those in the power over scorpions and in the gift of tongues; for, although they all helped to create and shape the biographical material of the *Gospels,* they do not concern the unconscious and loving activity of the popular imagination out of which, in the main, the *Synoptic* legends must have grown.

These legends tell chiefly of marvels

that happened to Jesus, or to those associated with him, and marvels that he himself accomplished. They employ the machinery of the divine intervention of dreams, supernatural visits, heavenly voices, and signs, so familiar in the legends about other great men. The miraculous birth of Jesus recalls Gautama's or Zoroaster's; Pythagoras was supposed to be the son of Apollo, Apollonius of Tyana of Zeus, Simon Magus of the Most High and a virgin; and it was rumored during Plato's own lifetime at Athens that he was the son of Apollo, a rumor which his nephew Speucippus took seriously enough to deny at Plato's funeral; and on the temple of Luxor, Egyptologists tell us, may still be read of the birth of Amonhotep III (18th dynasty) from a virgin mother, though in this instance the statement is not a legend but a royal boast.[1]

[1] Cf. "Most heroes of ancient romance were born as the fruit of a love attachment in which at least one of the parties was originally represented as of divine origin."

They relate portentous cures and other mighty works of their hero, not without parallels in the legends of other heroes of the human race. From Empedocles to Xavier men have raised the dead. The chronicles of the saints down to the present day describe circumstantially their wonder-working powers.

But the legends about Jesus are peculiarly a factor of poetic charm in an ancient narrative; for, though the miraculous in the *Gospels* be not true as history, it is usually true as beauty, and may serve the truth of history as its witness and as its symbol.

The miraculous in the *Gospels* serves as the witness to the preëminence of Jesus, in that it could never have grown up around a base or an inferior man. There is no smoke without some fire. The roots of praise grow only in a fertile soil. The imagination has never exalted the

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Schofield, *English Literature from the Conquest to Chaucer,* 1906, p. 189.

renegadoes to the high priests, nor the cut-throats to the saviors. Its glowing creations must be kindled by living coals. Thus the legends about Jesus are welcome.

The miraculous in the *Gospels* serves as a symbol of the life and thought of Jesus, in that it powerfully interprets and enforces their meaning. It is a translation of a difficult spiritual into a simple material language. It is, in each case, to borrow Carpenter's words, "the pictorial utterance of an idea." [1] It is an unconscious poetic product of the folk-mind, analogous to that translation of his spiritual ideas into material symbols, consciously made by Jesus.

Thus the myths of the immaculate conception, the star in the east, the voices of angels and the descending dove, the temptation, the transfiguration, the rending of the temple veil,[2] the darkness and

[1] J. Estlin Carpenter, *The Bible in the Nineteenth Century*. Chap. IV.

[2] The rending of the veil before the Holy of Holies is

the earthquake, and the resurrection, have meanings, which I will not be rude enough to expound. In the leaping of the babe in Elizabeth's womb there is the same naive symbolism in a quaint and homely form, and quite clear in origin and meaning—obviously a reflection of the historic relations between John and one whom he recognized as greater.

The miracles ascribed to Jesus have the same significance. It is quite likely that his gentle and commanding personality quieted the epileptic and the mentally deranged, who in those cruelly ignorant times roamed at large in such numbers; and it is quite likely that this contributed to the legends of his cures; as many another miracle might be traced by critics to some basis in an occurrence imperfectly remembered (for instance, the story of the shekel in the fish's mouth hints that Peter

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developed in the *Hebrew Gospel* into the fracture of the lintel: "Superliminare templi infinitæ magnitudinis fractum esse atque divisum."

eked out the small purse of the disciples by occasionally plying his trade), or to some basis in a parable or figurative saying not understood (as, for instance, the twice reported miracle of the feeding of the multitudes). But whatever their source, as finally wrought out these legends symbolize the love and the faith that dominated a man who went about doing good and preaching the power of God. Truly did Jesus make the lame to walk and the blind to see; and he did feed the multitudes, and cast out devils, and those who had his faith in his truth were made whole. And to those who were with him his assuring voice may well have calmed the tempest and the waters. So legend has dealt with Gautama and with Francis of Assisi.

Though in the so-called *Apocrypha* are a few stories of the same beautiful symbolism—some in a vein of the miraculous, like that of the clay birds made to live as the child Jesus claps his hands and shouts,

"Go, fly away, and while ye live remember me;" and others surprising us by their simple realism, like that of Jesus crowned with flowers by his playmates—yet as a whole they but bring into relief the superiority of the *Synoptic* legends. Like the story in *John* of the turning of the water into wine, they reduce Jesus to the level of the mediæval wizard, delighting, like Mephistopheles, who drew wine from augur holes, in astonishing by grotesque surprises. Such tales are the offspring of a degraded ideal of Jesus, as one arrogantly and aimlessly powerful, and thus totally lack the lovely symbolic propriety of those in the *Synoptics*. And they bear no witness to the man we have there become acquainted with.

If some great poet, after studying the historic figure of Jesus, had devised an epic to celebrate him with the conscious inventions of symbolic beauty, he could never have rivaled the unconscious creations of the poet folk-soul of Palestine.

Slowly and surely, with unerring imagination of personal affection, it gave birth and being to those legends which the unknown authors of our *Gospels* none too soon gathered up into the story of one of the most majestic of all the masters and deliverers of life that ever came forth "out of the bosom of humanity." [1]

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[1] As a pendant to the foregoing chapter, the following disconnected observations may be permitted.

1. Many details of the legends illustrate this symbolic propriety, as the casting the devils into *swine* and the grotesque stampede into the lake.

2. The legend of the Walk to Emmaus bears peculiarly the folk character, in distinction to traditions of an ecclesiastical or doctrinal origin. Its motif is a common one in old balladry and popular tale, and it is worked out by the author of *Luke* with an artless skill beyond all praise.

3. The myth of the resurrection is not only a symbol of the spirit and influence of Jesus as still unsubdued, but an outgrowth of humanity's craving for a sequel, when Death has written at the end of the story its blunt FINIS.

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