

NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES



3 3433 06825003 8

EXPRESSION
TO
IMMORTALITY



H. S. Brooks



May 18 08

The Yentry Association
Compliments
Camp Brooks

(Brooks)

ZFRM

THE PHILOSOPHY OF
PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

BY

HENRY S. BROOKS

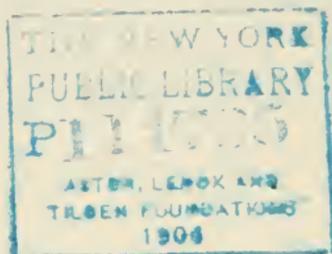
*Author of "A Catastrophe in Bohemia," "Dona
Paula's Treasure," and other Stories*



NEW YORK
A. WESSELS COMPANY

1902

Copyrighted, 1902
By A. WESSELS COMPANY
NEW YORK



PRESS OF
BRAUNWORTH & CO.
BOOKBINDERS AND PRINTERS
BROOKLYN, N. Y.

INTRODUCTION

THE evolution of our planet inscribed on the face of nature records full of profound significance in characters mysterious and undecipherable to the countless ages of men that preceded us. The key has recently been found. The most gifted minds of this age are devoting life and learning to their interpretation. We begin to comprehend the astounding disclosures already made, while anticipating with ever-increasing awe and interest others still impending.

It is a mistake to suppose these subjects are for the consideration of the learned only. Fragments already unveiled of the great record have been translated literally from the divine data with scientific exactitude. Much of the original has been blurred or defaced, much has been swept away entirely; but that which remains has been made as clear to our comprehension as to the great minds so long engaged in its study and translation. The revelation is only more wonderful and fascinating because of the vast research displayed in reconstructing the missing evidence. What is the import of these records left so marvellously to the divination of the present age?

He needs not knowledge of Greek or Hebrew

INTRODUCTION

who has a faithful translation. Happily, it is not the province of a translator to interpret the text. Already the official interpreters are in profoundest disaccord. He who does not of purpose resign his powers of analysis to others more or less fallible must inform himself of the facts, certainly not impossible of comprehension by average intelligence.

Few modern writers or lecturers underestimate the intellectual capacity of an audience. They who do so are soon divested of their illusion and find leisure to repent. The specialist, the digger, and delver of any field is rarely the best interpreter of the results of his labor. It is not impossible that in matters spiritual and immaterial even the intellectual faculty may be supplemented by endowments infinitely more subtle and indeterminate. He who has most swayed the world so presented the learning of the schools. It is for you and me, reader, to interpret the transcripts from the accumulating facts of evolution furnished by the ever-industrious scholars of the century. Let each and every one read and reflect. Amid the masses are many master minds intelligent to grasp the import of facts faithfully and luminously presented. It will be strange indeed if the truth be not discoverable, no matter how long or profoundly it may have been concealed. Let no one fear to contribute his earnest efforts; rest assured that recondite and immaterial as the subject may appear, the nation or race that most truly comprehends its full significance must obtain the supremacy of the world.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION,	5
CHAPTER	
I. THE RELATION OF MAN TO CREATION,	11
II. THE EVIDENCES OF DESIGN IN CREATION,	16
III. THE ARGUMENT FROM DECREE,	22
IV. THE LIMITATIONS OF OUR SENSES,	27
V. OUR PRETERNATURAL ENDOWMENT,	33
VI. THE HOMOGENEITY OF THE UNIVERSE,	44
VII. THE MYSTERY OF GOOD AND EVIL,	49
VIII. THE LAW OF SUFFERING,	54
IX. THE NEW DISPENSATION,	59
X. DEATH A TRANSITION ONLY,	63
XI. THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST,	68
XII. WAS JESUS CHRIST DIVINE?	75

THE EARTH.

Æons she sped through vast yet measured space,
Then held her record to man's 'wilderer eyes:
His dull perceptions could no meaning trace
Till quickened powers bade quickened thought arise.
Probing, he found, with joy and wild surprise;
Flung to the winds all he could not define,
Thus missed the truth that nature underlies—
Imperishable life, slow reaching to combine
Through mystery, love and suffering, with the divine.

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

CHAPTER I

THE RELATION OF MAN TO CREATION

THE most conclusive evidence of a supreme Creator is man. Man may be termed the overlord of earth. Compared with the vast concourse of inferior creations, his intelligence is god-like. As he increases in knowledge, he is becoming more supreme. He has modified the form and characteristics of some creatures to serve his need or pleasure, and has subjugated or exterminated others. He is gradually extending the duration of human life, and the life of animals he has domesticated. He has studied the organic forms of nature, his own included, with ever-increasing intelligence, and has dared to probe the mystery of life itself. He has made himself so far master of the mechanism of the animal world that he may be said to assist nature, to be at times a collaborator, a student aid with the Creator. He renders intelligent service at birth, through infancy, youth and maturity to old age, which he assists and prolongs.

Nature is not always prescient. She proceeds

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

tentatively, experimentally, one might say. If an organ prove unsuitable, it is suppressed; disused, it is liable to become atrophied. In the human organism certain impedimenta are sometimes thus occasioned which become a source of serious danger during man's progression from the quadrupedal to the erect form. Here man renders active assistance, not hesitating to anticipate nature by removing the superfluous part.

Man analyzes the elements, so called, and controls them to his service. He resolves the atmosphere to its component parts, decomposes light, and interprets the spectroscopic "hand-writing on the wall" from remotest suns in answer to his daring interrogatories. He has discovered the composition of stars so remote that their light transmitted at a speed of one hundred and ninety thousand miles a second requires generations to reach our earth. He has gauged with accuracy their rate of motion, their advance or recession. He has discovered the great fundamental law which holds the celestial bodies of the universe in subjection, and has calculated the weight, dimensions, and orbit of planets unseen. Thus, he is not only over-lord of his own domain, but he seeks to penetrate the mysteries of the universe.

At this day few question man's animal origin. There is conviction in his structure, his comparative anatomy, his scientific classification (sub-kingdom Vertebrata, class Mammalia, order Bimana)—conviction if we retrace our steps to his origin when he first emerges from his immediate progenitor "the animal with tail and pointed ears,

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

probably arboreal in its habits." But what is more wonderful than his emergence from so obscure a source to obtain dominion over terrestrial nature; to trace his origin from the molecule of protoplasm through countless ages; to supplement his vision a thousandfold in order to penetrate the secrets of the heavens or to behold the equally mysterious and wonderful minute creations invisible to the natural sight with which he has been endowed?

Some years ago there lay upon the beach the remains of a huge mammal, a species of whale. It was partly buried in the shifting sand, but the gigantic ribs, bleached by the sun and wind, projected high above the surrounding drift. In the immediate vicinity lay also the remnants of a stranded vessel, its frame exposed upon the upper beach. One of these wrecks was a relic of creation, life long extinct, the vital organs and outward envelopment decayed and distributed to the elements; the other, once a majestic steamship, its deck and compartments, machinery and metal-work so completely destroyed that naught but a ruin remained. In that condition, speaking with profoundest reverence, one was compelled to a comparison between the work of the Creator and the work of the creature. How alike in their decomposition and decay; how unlike in their creation and inception. We know only superficially the evolution of nature's organism; with that of man's masterpiece we are familiar—the raft, the dugout, the canoe, the oar-galley, the sailing vessel, and

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

“the ocean greyhound.” We have studied, very imperfectly, the methods of the Creator, but we know nothing of the relation of one creation to another, or the ultimate purpose of the design. The mammal was not created at once for a specific object, its *ovum* was a product of evolution; it grew, adapted itself gradually to its environment, was endowed with volition and a certain degree of intelligence. The creation by man was complete, immediate, for a specific object. It possessed no volition, being directed only by man’s intelligence. Unquestionably man sought his inspiration from the work of the Master, and to that extent at least must be accorded a certain intellectual kinship.

It is necessary to reflect that while the vast majority of organisms appear exquisitely beautiful and perfectly adapted to their environment, some at least are far from beautiful, and some, as in the case of certain hybrids, are infertile. It is probable that not any are unadapted to their surroundings, since only the fittest survive or are reproduced. Nevertheless, to our conception, there is a certain crudeness of design in some organisms which it is difficult to reconcile with the extreme beauty and perfection of others. Some microscopic forms, for example, are supremely hideous, also some marine organisms. It would almost appear that nature is occasionally capricious as well as experimental.

In the Museum of Natural History, Central Park West, New York City, is the model of a gigantic squid, or cuttle-fish. The original was found stranded on the banks of Newfoundland. The re-

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

production, enormous as it is, is only half life size. It is suspended from the ceiling in the attitude of pursuing prey. It is difficult at first to believe in the reality of this extraordinary creature, native of an element with which we are unfamiliar, designed to prey upon crustacea, of which we know little. The monster has an eye perfectly round, half a foot in diameter, a huge pair of forceps for crushing the armor of shell-fish, tentacles projecting twenty or thirty feet beyond the cavernous orifice, in which it receives its food. One is at a loss to conjecture its method of propulsion until a sort of pipe is discovered, for the suction and discharge of water, and a fin, somewhat resembling the blade of a screw propeller, attached to its tail, if tail it can be called. This creature is known to science as a dibranchiate cephalopod.

It would be interesting to describe the remarkable equipment for deluding and entrapping its prey, for fishing, and for concealment, apparently of a very primitive character. Studying this monster with the profoundest interest, we are compelled to the conviction that not all the works of creation are grand or beautiful or "humane." We must inquire further in our endeavors to understand the meaning of nature as manifested to our view, and our relation to it, so far as the imperfection of our faculties will permit.

CHAPTER II

THE EVIDENCES OF DESIGN IN CREATION

UNTIL recently, in studying nature to obtain the evidences of design, we have been led astray for want of a key to its mysteries. The great students of natural law—Darwin, Huxley, Tyndall, Spencer, and others—have penetrated far in advance of formerly accepted theories, and have unfolded before us so much that is new in a manner so convincing that we are enabled to understand something of the methods, at least, of the Creator. It now appears that nothing is made “to order.” There is no evidence of specific design, no finished plan which can be tested by rule or scale. *Purpose* we can discover, but not design, as we understand the word; decree, intent, the will of the Creator made manifest in His works.

It is not necessary to question the theory of La Place relative to the origin of our solar system, or the more recent theory of accretion. There can be little doubt that both have been and are still in active operation. Accepting the nebular theory as generally understood, we have a ring of incandescent matter ejected from the sun with no more apparent design than the ejection of a mass of

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

scoriaceous matter from a volcano. Such was the origin of our earth, which explains its eccentric poise, its inexact motion upon its axis, and the variability of its orbit, all of which are foreign to man's conception of design. Neither can we discover design or premeditated plan in the details of the earth's surface, in the distribution of land and water, of its mountain ranges, its winds, or its currents. In fact, no immutable plan is possible because *change* is incessant. Everything we behold is constantly undergoing change, and has ever been changing, and, so far as we can discover, those changes man would characterize as accidental: such as might be expected to occur upon a piece of slag launched in a state of fusion into space.

The Swiss have made elaborate topographical models of portions of their country designed to a scale. Examining these one can survey a fragment of the earth, such as our restricted and imperfect organs of sight cannot obtain from nature direct. Thus beheld one exclaims: "It is a piece of slag!" Thus it must have appeared before it was beautified with verdure, with running water, and all the exquisite variety of organic life. Something of the same character we behold in photographs of the moon—to all appearance a fragment of waste primarily ejected from that restless volcano, the sun.

What power, then, controls these gigantic fragments? "The law of the attraction of gravitation" we are answered. True, "the law"; but where is the lawgiver? Can there be a law

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

without a lawgiver? The law, the manifestation of purpose, the *decree* of the Almighty!

Thus we find not a plan, not a design, but an immutable law, to which not only the earth and our entire solar system, but all matter throughout the universe is subject. To answer that the suns and systems of the universe are sustained by the law of gravitation is but to say they are sustained by the will of the Creator.

If all the planets, our earth included, were thus detached, or are the product of accretion wholly or partially, subject to the conditions of their environment, their specific gravity, the inclination of their axes, distance from the primary and the infinite variety of what may be termed circumstance, for want of a better word, it would appear only reasonable to believe that organic life upon our planet is subject also to its environment. The decree once issued: "Let there be fertility! Let there be life!" that life would be subject thereafter to evolution in accordance with the conditions surrounding its birth.

It would seem that the matrix, sustained by the law of gravitation, became replete with life as soon as the conditions were favorable to the production and support of life. But that life was certainly in the womb of the matrix whatever the origin of its birth. The acorn gives birth to the oak as soon as conditions are favorable to its germination and growth. We know more or less accurately the method of its growth, how the seed fructifies, projecting roots into the soil in search of nourishment, and leaves to the air to perform the function

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

of lungs in breathing; but when we follow its method we are no nearer the mystery of creation. The acorn could not give birth to the oak, no matter how favorable the conditions of its environment, if the potentiality of the oak had not existed in the acorn. Nor could the earth have given birth to its myriad forms of life if the potentiality of all forms of life had not been contained in the matrix. We say the acorn gives birth to the oak; true, but whence the acorn?

So far, the researches of the learned have determined there is "no life without antecedent life." Formerly it was asserted that life is the product of corruption and decay. The theory took hold of the imagination, but it has been completely disproven. Recently Haeckel, the celebrated German physicist, has lent the weight of his great authority to the theory of spontaneous generation. He has even ventured to build upon this foundation, which at least has not yet sufficient warrant in experiment or research. He says: "First simple monera are formed by *spontaneous generation*, and from these arise unicellular proteids, first plasmodomous primitive plants, and then plasmophagus primitive animals," etc. What avails it to question thus the origin of life? The assumption of Professor Haeckel has raised a storm of protest; justly so, perhaps, because no biologist has a right to build upon conclusions which must be considered unproven. But let us assume the facts to be according to Professor Haeckel's theories. If simple monera are formed by spontaneous generation, they are born subject to the law of genera-

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

tion, as they must be subject to the laws of growth and development. What imports it whether the Creator ordained that the potency of all life should be borne in the matrix or separately in the monera? In either case that life and all life was *ordained*. If we could ourselves convey the vital spark to the monera, say, by an electric current, we should be no nearer the mystery of creation. It would simply be to set in motion that which nature has prepared, and it would perish instantly unless the conditions of its environment had been evolving æons in advance of its appearance. We can produce a crystal—many crystals, but the forms are always the same, according to the potentiality within the solution, as the potentiality of the plant is borne by the seed.

Learned experimenters in the biological laboratories have recently discovered that by treating the eggs of certain sea urchins with saline solutions or solution of sodium and magnesium chlorides, their development is greatly stimulated. It is stated that *unfertilized* eggs have thus been made to produce swimming larvæ. These experiments are most remarkable and suggestive; but even assuming that it may prove possible hereafter by virtue of still profounder knowledge to produce life itself, *in petto*, from entirely unorganized material, why dispute that the creation and evolution of the world is the result of still more supreme—of divine intelligence?

The purpose of the Creator lies behind all : in the past, in the forms which research is gradually making familiar; to-day in the forms which we behold;

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

to-morrow in forms which we can only conjecture, ever varying, ever unfolding new and still newer forms, to meet new conditions and to fulfil purposes, the nature of which surpasses our conception.

CHAPTER III

THE ARGUMENT FROM DECREE

WHEN the philosophical student of nature tells us that man is evolved from some lower form, he simply makes known a scientific fact. Opinions differ as to the deductions to be drawn from it; but surely a special and separate creation of each organism must appear less wonderful than the creation of a protoplasmic cell, in which under the most powerful microscope no evidence of organic form can be discovered, but which holds within its miraculous *ovum* the germ of all created organisms, even of man himself.

When the student in "Frankenstein" created the monster which haunted him, he made it of flesh and blood, in human form, and breathed into it the breath of life. That was an ordinary, clumsy, mechanical achievement by comparison. The wonderful facts of evolution, as we now know them, surpass the imagination of man. We could never have conceived a fraction of the romance of evolution, if we may use the term, had we not become familiar with it in consequence of the indefatigable research of the most gifted of our race.

The most unimaginative and exact of scientific men are sometimes compelled to advance beyond the limits of proven fact. In no domain of science

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

is this more true than when we approach the genesis of matter. The sixty-four elements, so called, of the old text-books are gradually shrinking under the light of modern research, aided by the intense heat of the electric furnace and kindred solvents. Sir Norman Lockyer is authority for the statement that all are probably resolvable to two, or possibly only one, element, as water and air, once thought to be elementary, are already resolvable.

That statement seems to bring us visibly nearer the awe-inspiring presence of the Creator. Man has learned to take the chemical elements and compound them in the laboratory. He can produce water, by adding two parts of hydrogen to one of oxygen; but he must know the laws which govern the combination of atoms, otherwise they refuse to unite. No student supposes for a moment that he has *created* water when it is thus produced. Its potentiality lay in the antecedent elements. Why the elements refuse to unite, except under the laws of the "atomic theory," the wisest professor is as ignorant as a child. That is the decree—the law—which demands exact knowledge and implicit obedience.

When the decree "Let there be life!" was issued, was issued also the decree of progress. In this field of research man has made no discoveries which can be called exact. Darwin tells us that occasionally a variation or "sport" is formed; and if it prove of service, if it aid the creature in the great struggle of life, during which the fittest only survive, it is perpetuated. The experience of man,

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

in his efforts to vary the natural progression of creation, throws some light on the subject. Man can vary the organism by interbreeding within certain decreed limits and by various expedients; but the moment his supervision is withdrawn the organism reverts to its previous form. Take the pigeons, of which man has bred so many varieties: they all return to the typical blue pigeon, the wild pigeon of the woods, as soon as man withdraws his care. It is the same in the vegetable world. All organisms have the germ of variability, apparently in order that they may be susceptible of improvement. Here man has made still greater changes; but here also his variations speedily revert to a state of nature as soon as he withdraws his interference.

Man breeds the mule, finding in the hybrid a most useful servant. Nature herself doubtless made the experiment originally; but, seeking to continue the evolution, both man and nature encountered sterility. Why? Who shall say? Nature experiments, or appears to experiment, repeatedly, but there is always a restraining power, as is the case with man. Restrictions of a similar character are made manifest in so many directions that the fact cannot be questioned. Some creatures appear to be permitted to escape danger by a sort of subterfuge, as when certain organisms take refuge in an armored shell. That subterfuge nature plainly resents by refusing to grant the evolution of the species to the higher forms, which doubtless it might otherwise have reached. It must be understood that nature does not always

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

advance. As she permits variations which sometimes prove to be useful, and others which are detrimental, and which are therefore discontinued, so entire species sometimes diverge from the course which they have been pursuing, some to their advantage, others to remain quiescent, because nature prohibits further thoroughfare. Some naturalists declare that the birds forfeited all further material advance when nature permitted them to develop wings from the fore-limbs with which their progenitors were originally endowed.

If man doubts the intelligent purpose of nature, let him enter a museum of comparative anatomy and study the progression of forms. The steps of a ladder do not lead more directly to a summit. In presence of the higher vertebrata we can imagine the evolution intercepted midway and an intelligence akin to that of man called upon to reconstruct it. That intelligence could at least forecast the next succeeding form and possibly follow the progression until it culminated in man. Something of a similar character was actually achieved when Professor Owen reconstructed the form of a missing link never beheld by man from a few imperfect fossil fragments, the exactitude of his knowledge being verified most signally by the subsequent discovery of actual remains of the animal thus wonderfully restored. So much of the purpose of the Creator was made manifest that one of His creatures could follow, could conceive at least, the development of its form, and reproduce exactly its anatomical structure. The achievement illustrates at once the greatness and

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

the littleness of man—his capacity and his limits. Still more signally does it prove the existence of a supreme Intelligence, directing the evolution of nature, which only the ignorant and unthinking dare to characterize a blind and aimless force.

It is this argument from decree doubtless which inspires Professor Haeckel to assume the theory of spontaneous generation, despite the fact that the highest scientific record of the age has pronounced "No life without antecedent life." It cannot be expected that specialists, after exhaustive labor, will reject the evidence of their verdict. Of all conservatism scientific conservatism is the most persistent. But in this matter he who surveys the broad field of modern research without preconception or prejudgment is more likely to reach correct conclusions. If there be no evidence in favor of spontaneous generation, it is true also that none can be found against it; while, on the other hand, the argument from decree points distinctly to the sufficiency of the forces of nature to carry out the will of the Creator without the necessity of occasional or incidental interposition. If it be admitted that the potentiality of all life is latent in the protoplasm, as is unquestionably the fact, then what is termed spontaneous generation is an inevitable corollary. The fiat, the decree, was all sufficient, from the hour when darkness brooded over the face of the deep to the present—and still further, until the final unfolding of *His* will.

CHAPTER IV

THE LIMITATIONS OF OUR SENSES

OF all our senses we deem the sense of sight the most trustworthy. The other senses we instinctively distrust. Can we then believe our sight? Most assuredly we cannot. All our senses combined are insufficient to inform us of the elementary fact that the earth is round, and not only whirling on its axis, but borne through space at an incredible rate of speed by our gigantic primary, the sun. We all know what happened to the philosophers who first dared to announce the true relation of the earth to our system.

Most of the animals with which we are familiar greatly surpass us in the acuteness of their senses. The most ordinary tricks of sleight can deceive the sense in which we place our main reliance. And not only are our senses untrustworthy, nature has imposed absolute limitations upon them. We can see only certain colors of the spectrum, and hear only certain sounds of the scale of sound. Until recently we ignorantly trusted our sight and hearing. Now we know that a fraction only of the vibrations of sound or color is made manifest to us. Some one has endeavored to illustrate the imperfection of our senses by comparing the vibra-

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

tions which produce sound, light, heat, and other phenomena to a ladder reaching to the moon, of which we are conscious of only a few steps, widely displaced.

Doubtless those vibrations are utilized by organisms of varying degrees of intelligence vastly inferior to man. Colors and sounds, invisible or imperceptible to us, convey sensations to them, the nature of which we cannot even conjecture. Some insects, almost microscopic in size, as also others of varying proportions, possess innumerable "ocelli," the uses of which have awakened the greatest interest and curiosity. Why an insect should possess hundreds or thousands of eyes, or organs resembling eyes with countless facets, organs of the greatest complexity, is beyond our comprehension; they seem to indicate that not one vibration of the vast scale, unrecognizable by us, is purposeless. So also with the antennæ and other organs pertaining to an infinite variety of organisms. On the other hand, it appears that the sounds which we hear and the colors we behold are either inaudible or imperceptible to some at least of these organisms, or the vibrations which yield sound and color to us yield sensations to them of an entirely different character.

The experiments of Sir John Lubbock and other naturalists in this direction are most interesting and instructive, but they accentuate most forcibly the fact that these organisms live practically in a world almost entirely unknown to us.

Nothing is more suggestive than the efforts of man to establish some connection, or at least some

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

understanding of his relation to the more familiar organisms. We rarely stop to reflect that countless thousands of more or less intelligent creatures share our country places with us, organisms which take as little heed of our presence as we do of theirs. To them doubtless our intelligence must appear god-like, if comprehended at all. No doubt some organisms, quite nearly related to us, our faithful friends, the dogs, for example, worship us with zeal and devotion as great as we dedicate to the Creator; but we have only the most imperfect means of communication even with animals we have domesticated. We estimate their intelligence by an entirely false standard—the standard of their familiarity with human requirements. Their capacity is adapted to an entirely different sphere, the sphere in which it was originally developed. Ages of domestication and familiarity with our steadfast servants and friends have not enabled us to communicate with them, except most superficially and imperfectly, no matter how affectionately and reverently they worship us. The dog is born in our kennels, the horse in our stables; they hear the same sounds, see the same objects, but the very extent of our superior intelligence seems to place a gulf between us which we can never bridge.

When we come to consider our relations to intelligences vastly *superior* to ours, the existence of which we cannot doubt, we must bear in mind the countless myriads of creatures upon this our earth, invisible to us, inaudible to us, and of other myriads visible, but practically as remote as though on another sphere. Man's instincts assure him of the

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

vast superiority of supermundane—of “celestial” intelligences, assurance which reason confirms and science appears distinctly to forecast. When we study the subject more fully, it will be well to remember the impossibility or difficulty we experience in bridging the gulf, more or less narrow, which prohibits or limits our communication with inferior creations on this our planet.

At present the utmost effort is being made to discover what may be termed the physical unit. So far it has defied all research. This unit is termed a “molecule”—the smallest atom of any substance capable of existing in a separate form. Sir William Thompson has ventured to convey to the unscientific a definite conception of this elusive atom as follows: “If a drop of water were magnified to the size of the earth, the molecules would each occupy a space somewhat larger than a small shot.” In a gas these molecules are in violent motion, and what might be termed antagonism. In a liquid they are much less active. In what we term a solid they are to all appearance motionless. Our conception of a solid is a body in which all its parts are coherent. This we now know is an error, as can be easily proven. If we cut a thin section of “solid” stone and place it under a microscope of even small power, it appears like a piece of lace. The original fragment will absorb water without visible expansion, which is conclusive proof of incoherence. On the other hand the most compact metals expand with heat and contract with cold: proof that they also permit

the intrusion of an elastic medium. In fact, the molecular theory itself is based upon the supposition that the molecules, of which matter is composed, too minute to be conceivable by us, are *all* in active motion. As we cannot penetrate beyond the threshold of the illimitable expanse of the heavens, with its myriads of suns and systems, so also we meet an impenetrable barrier when we seek to exceed the limits of our imperfect endowment, to explore the mysteries of the infinitely little. There may be, there are worlds within the compass of a drop of water, worlds of matter and of organic life utterly beyond or beneath our conception. Nothing in nature appears to us as it really is.

Many of the most exquisite forms in nature are found in the microscopic Desmidiaceæ and Diatomiaceæ—objects of which there are thousands of millions to the square inch! They propagate themselves by fission. They are on the confines of the vegetable and animal kingdoms. Although they have independent motion, naturalists hold divided opinions concerning them. Why all their extraordinary beauty or occasional equally extraordinary repulsiveness as viewed from our standpoint? Man is absolutely unconscious of their presence in their native habitat. But for the amazing power of the modern microscope, in alliance with delicate machinery scarcely less wonderful, their forms could never have been presented to our vision. Every increase of the power of the lens serves but to reveal mysterious organisms farther and still farther removed from us. Im-

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

penetrable as are the vast distances of the celestial universe, and innumerable as are the majestic systems therein, the universe of the infinitely minute is equally inexhaustible, and the multiplicity of its mysteries not less remote or wonderful.

As to the color-blind there are no colors, so we in turn are practically sightless where organisms of a nature inconceivable to us are gifted, and deaf to all sounds attuned too high or too low for our hearing. It is thus handicapped, groping, as it were, in the dark, that we pursue our inquiries as to the true meaning of our relation to the world we live in and to the universe beyond.

CHAPTER V

OUR PRETERNATURAL ENDOWMENT

It is certainly most strange, considering our destiny on earth, that the insufficiency of our senses seems to give us but a slight hold upon it, so to speak. It is equally strange that we are endowed with some faculties which, if not "supernatural," are something more than "natural," endowments which, speaking with all reverence, seem to point toward the existence of beings superior to ourselves, and even to a degree of kinship with them.

There are certain prodigies of childhood occasionally born into the world with faculties either of a different nature or of a different degree from the ordinary gifts of mankind, children who solve problems without apparent effort, and of a nature so complicated that very excellent mathematicians can verify the results only after long and careful calculation. If these children are asked how they obtain the results, they do not know. They have a preternatural gift which enables them to give the solutions without the labor which would be exacted from the cleverest of adults. The same may be said of music. Mozart was a composer at four years of age. At four he composed a concerto which his father said was so difficult that no one could perform it. That seems incredible,

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

but it is authoritatively on record. At six his father took him on an extended tour, during which he played before most of the sovereigns of Germany. An ordinary student of talent, mature, thoroughly prepared and persevering, might hope to compose a concerto of the character only after many years of faithful study. We call these extraordinary gifts "genius"—in the case of children "precocious genius"—and we seem to consider the wonderful endowment thus sufficiently explained. Inspiration is a better word; it implies a faculty superior to the ordinary faculties of man. The child Mozart, we say, "must have been inspired." It is impossible that he could have mastered the rules of musical composition at that age by any mental effort. Nevertheless, when his father protested that the concerto was too difficult to be performed, the child replied that "No one could be expected to perform a composition of that character without long study and practice." Whence the child's inspiration?

The infant Mozart possessed a preternatural sense. He could conceive and record the most refined and complicated choir music without the aid of sound—not only melody, but all the intricate chords of perfect harmony. When we reflect that music is produced by vibrations only, and that our organs of hearing are specially adapted to their reception, the creations of the child Mozart inevitably suggest the existence in nature of faculties superior to our ordinary physical endowment.

Similar inspiration is manifest in the genius of the improvisatore. The "gift" is not always at

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

command. It shuns the presence of strangers. It prefers closed blinds or the most subdued roseate light. The inspired ones, consciously or unconsciously, seem to seek superterrestrial communion. They play or sing as in a trance. Soon the head is uplifted, the eyes are intent upon some mysterious beyond, the form is transfigured, the face spiritualized. It is difficult to resist the conviction that one beholds a being in communion with the harmonies of supernature.

Most of us can bear testimony to somewhat similar preternatural gifts in art—the painters' art. Children are generally extremely fond of drawing and what may be termed design. Occasionally some child manifests extraordinary faculty in this, the most difficult of all arts—supremely difficult because, no matter how great the natural gift, the hand must be trained before it can manifest what the mind conceives. But imperfect as must necessarily be the art work of the most gifted child, preternatural gifts fail not to make themselves occasionally manifest. The infant indicates, and even attempts, to elaborate conceptions which cannot have been suggested by aught it has seen during its brief existence. The mature artist discovers unquestionable evidence of what we term genius in these crude efforts. The inspired child already sees beyond the material which surrounds it and penetrates without apparent effort to the realms of "unreality." The material organs of sight are inspired by an inward mental sight—sight which perceives color and form where material form and color have no existence, and which

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

finds the material endowment inadequate to a sufficient expression of the wondrous visions it beholds.

Some of the curiosities of telepathy, mind-reading and presentiment, accepting none but such as is fully authenticated, are equally mysterious. They verge on the supernatural. It is unnecessary to cite instances. There is scarcely a student of this subject but has preserved some curious data. "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in our philosophy."

There are some fulfilments of prophecy on record of a very remarkable character, leaving inspired prophecy entirely out of the question. They can be explained only by assuming that the prophets were possessed of some preternatural endowment, some remarkable insight into the future. The subject in all its ramifications has been grossly abused and vulgarized. Quacks and charlatans have used it to prey upon the ignorant, the credulous, and unwary; but, nevertheless, after divesting it of every element of doubt or distrust there remains a very remarkable accumulation of fact, which no careful inquirer can afford to reject or to despise.

In the presence of some masterpieces of human achievement, particularly while hearing certain music or poetry, scarcely an exaggeration to call divine, we are conscious of a supreme exaltation, an ecstasy which seems to carry us temporarily beyond ourselves, and leave us eager and trembling, as though the sombre veil of our humanity were about to be parted to afford a glimpse of paradise. We

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

feel the soul imprisoned leaping toward the beyond, anxious to spurn the material to which we are enchained, conscious for the moment of a higher and nobler life. Even when not under the influence of exaltation, we are inspired by aspirations superior to this frail human tenement. When all our animal wants are satisfied and we have laid up stores which seem to preclude the possibility of present or future want, either for ourselves or those dependent upon us, our nature is still far from satisfied. Under like conditions the animal lies down to chew the cud or sleep in supreme content, but man seeks to spurn the earth and aspire toward the unknown. Music, poetry, painting, sculpture, the arts and sciences are within his attainment. In order that his intellect may grasp them, he is willing to forego the pleasures of appetite, the seductions of ease, and even the gratification of his passions. He is conscious of a nature superior to the animal clay which he has inherited and seeks to qualify himself to be worthy of admission to the grander mysteries of the universe.

If some celestial visitor were to descend upon this planet, ignorant of the nature of man, it is probable that the places of worship in every city and village would first attract his attention. Upon learning their purpose and character he would be informed at once of the preternatural instincts and aspirations of man; he would find him conscious of imperfections, sinful, but devout; struggling constantly to overcome the impedimenta of his animal inheritance—conscious of hopes and aspirations impossible to be realized on earth, even

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

claiming a certain kinship with the Creator, supplementing his inferior and insufficient sight with aids to vision of his own creation, in order to obtain a grander outlook and more perfect comprehension of the universe; decomposing the elements in order to understand and harness them to his service; sacrificing life itself in its too brief maturity, in order to uphold a principle; dedicating his supremest efforts to the glory of God, and cheerfully accepting martyrdom in the certainty of inheriting eternal life. What could the celestial visitor infer upon discovering pretensions so daring and confident? When we detect in nature a plant in its first development, putting forth tendrils, we know that it is destined to climb and that it has been endowed accordingly. The aspirations of the plant are not falsified; they are verified. When we see the insect preparing to abandon its larval condition to enter upon the chrysalis, we know that, despite the considerable period of insensibility and absence of nutrition which it must experience, it is destined ultimately to leave its temporary shroud and issue forth to the sunlight endowed with organs adapted to a world of light and beauty. Some premonitions the insect must have had in the caterpillar condition of its future destiny, its glorious resurrection, for the naturalist watches with never-decreasing wonder and interest the preparations which it makes in anticipation of its future life. Its instincts are not vain. No matter what the nature of its anticipations, whether blind perception merely or some measure of intelligence, they are fulfilled.

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

And here we must pause to reflect that it is not man's reason alone which leads him to expect and prepare for a future life, but also his instinct. All races of men worship some superior power. The vast majority of mankind anticipate a future life, and are influenced by the hope of reward or the dread of punishment hereafter. It is safe to say, instinct assures us of a future and reason apprehends the hope of reward or the fear of punishment. Our assurance of a future life does not decline with increasing knowledge and civilization, of that we have ample assurance. The agnostic does not deny it. He is content to search unceasingly for evidence.

Huxley says: "The principle first clearly formulated by Descartes leads not to the denial of the existence of any supernature, but simply to the denial of the validity of the evidence adduced in favor of this or that form of supernaturalism. Indeed, looking at the matter *from the most rigidly scientific point of view*, the assumption that amid the myriads of worlds scattered through endless space there can be no intelligence as much greater than man's as his is greater than a black-beetle's; no being endowed with power of influencing the course of nature as much greater than his as his is greater than a snail's—seems not merely baseless, but impertinent. Without stepping beyond the analogy of *what is known*, it is easy to people the cosmos with entities in an ascending scale, until we reach something practically indistinguishable from omnipotence, omnipresence, and omniscience. If our intelligence can in some matters surely re-

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

produce the past of a thousand years ago, and anticipate the future thousands of years hence, it is clearly within the limits of possibility that some greater intellect, *even of the same order*, may be able to mirror the whole past and the whole future. If the universe is penetrated by a medium of such a nature that a magnetic needle on the earth answers to a commotion in the sun, an omnipresent agent is also conceivable. If our insignificant knowledge gives us some influence over events, practical omnipotence may confer indefinitely greater power."

It is the spiritual element in man which, not content with the mere material, leads him to make effort to know more than is apparent concerning a future life, and which, having made, he is fain to dismiss as "incapable of proof." But what can be proven? Nothing can appear more motionless than the earth we stand on, or the fragment of solid matter, so called, in our hand. We can prove that it is in motion only by appeal from our material sense to a faculty within us superior to our material endowment—from the material to the immaterial. Why, then, reject the evidence of the higher sense when we are called upon to consider our relation to supernature or the cosmos? Our aspirations may be likened to the instinct of the insect which prepares for a transformation, the nature of which must be inconceivable to its imperfect sense. Man aspires craving knowledge of the infinite, because he has received a preternatural as well as a natural endowment. When we consider how imperfectly he is allied to

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

the material, and how his nature aspires and craves higher knowledge—when we consider his faith and hope and preternatural endowment, we can, we must, believe that his shroud in death is but the enwrapping of the chrysalis, from which he shall emerge to a higher and more glorious life.

Science can offer no valid argument against the possible or probable fulfilment of the most exalted aspirations of man. Professor Haeckel represents the most advanced and radical theories of the school of modern philosophy. He assumes spontaneous generation, and erects an elaborate scientific superstructure upon that foundation, apparently with absolute confidence. But if there be spontaneous generation, here or elsewhere, why not spontaneous spiritual birth? What can be more wonderful than the spontaneous generation of simple monera? Man would term spontaneous generation a miracle. But nature is full of miracles. What is a miracle? It is but a term used by man to denote a process with which he is unfamiliar. The most exalted spiritual conception that man has indulged finds a physical parallel in nature. In abiogenesis or parthogenesis we have virgin reproduction. Solitary females lay eggs which are fertile, which yield larvæ which at maturity are males. The queen bee can produce males or females at will. The Hymenoptera furnish an infinite variety of what might well be termed miraculous genesis.

The monera of Professor Haeckel multiplies itself by simple fission. The "single cell" transforms itself into a complicated organism. Any of

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

these illustrations familiar to every naturalist are as wonderful as would be the spiritual birth or rebirth of man.

“A nucleated mass of protoplasm is the structural unit of the human body.” Thus Huxley, who is responsible also for the statement that there is an essential unity of protoplasm throughout the animal kingdom—a general identity in the structural unit of all life. The extraordinary significance of these facts must be apparent to every one.

When we consider that man is an epitome, physically, of all animal life, that for some occult reason there is an occasional though constant and universal tendency to reversion of type; that man, in common with many animals, bears on his person organs atrophied from disuse during countless ages, irrefutable evidence of a period when nature differed materially in her most important functions from the present, it provokes surprise that mere virgin reproduction—a fact so common in nature—should have proven so long a stumbling-block to faith. They who care to investigate more fully must beware of intent to scoff, for assuredly they will remain to pray.

Nature authoritatively declares that under certain conditions, impelled by higher laws not at present understood, reproduction by a solitary female is not only a possibility, but a necessity. To the mystery of supplying her needs the organism labors with indefatigable zeal. If that latitude has been conceded, perhaps for the full perfection

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

of the dual nature of man, is it not easy to conceive the spiritual temporarily dominating the material, to call forth at will power far exceeding that bestowed upon creatures of comparative insignificance—endowment without precedent or sequence in the case of man—which we may call supernatural; but which, if we were sufficiently informed, would doubtless prove to be in perfect harmony with the progression of nature as ordained from the foundation of the world?

When we are surrounded upon this our earth by miracles of nature so extraordinary, it is only ignorance which dares deny the possible or even probable regeneration or rebirth of man under conditions which, though unrevealed to our imperfect endowment, may be scarcely more remote or unknown than many of the incomprehensible mysteries of this our planet.

CHAPTER VI

THE HOMOGENEITY OF THE UNIVERSE

ONE of man's greatest achievements is the discovery of the homogeneous character of the visible universe. That we poor insignificant mortals have been able to make a qualitative analysis, so to speak, of suns so remote that their distance is simply inconceivable, the light of which has been thousands or hundreds of thousands of years in reaching us, is almost incredible.

The compound character of light is generally known, and we have all seen the phenomenon of its decomposition in a common prism, which yields our color scale. When a specially constructed prism is held so as to reflect the rays from a superheated substance, or, to speak more correctly, a substance heated to a certain degree of temperature, we can project the color rays of that substance upon a screen; but when the substance is heated to a degree of incandescence, which causes the vapors of the molten matter to arise between the prism and the furnace, certain lines are projected upon the screen instead of colors. Those lines are termed spectra, and the process is termed spectrum analysis. The spectrum of every terrestrial substance, "elementary or compound," is now well known. Some are exceed-

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

ingly curious and complicated, some extremely simple, but all invariable and unique.

When the spectrum was first directed toward our sun, and subsequently to the fixed stars so called, the spectra were projected upon the screen as sharply as from a common furnace. It was distinctly a message from those remote incandescent suns, "hand writing upon the wall," in answer to man's audacious inquiry. It was long before an interpreter was found; but Fraunhofer solved the extraordinary problem, and lo! our kinship with the heavenly bodies stood revealed!

These spectra are so peculiar that mistake is impossible. The instrument has been improved and developed to so great an extent that not only do we learn from it the nature of the elements of which these giant suns are composed, but also whether they are approaching or receding, and at what rate of speed, as also other particulars of vital interest and importance, from all of which we learn, beyond question, that the composition of the visible universe is homogeneous, or, to speak more definitely, that it is composed of elements similar to those of our planet, there being but few spectra the nature of which is unfamiliar to us.

The extreme significance of these facts must be at once apparent. We are not dwelling upon an isolated fragment of matter; we are part of a great whole. The vast space between us is not vacant; it is full of the subtle ether which conveys to us the glowing light of the celestial spheres and the astounding messages of their spectra. That some of these remote suns are accompanied by attendant

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

planets we know because of their occasional occultation by opaque bodies. There are binary suns—suns circulating around each other, suns of inconceivably brilliant color, which we term “variable stars”—systems of suns, some brilliant in incandescence, some more or less burned out and opaque, but all sending the story of kinship. We can estimate approximately their temperature, their elements, their distance, their speed of motion, and we even classify them according to the nature of their composition and degree of incandescence.

Is it not remarkable and suggestive that, while we are comparatively so little in touch with this our earth, that there are countless sounds unheard and colors unseen by us, incessant motion of particles too minute to be detected by our vision, and vibrations of a character incomprehensible to our imperfect senses, we can, nevertheless, place ourselves in communication with and interpret many of the secrets of the heavenly bodies? True, we recognize our descent from “the animal with tail and pointed ears”; but in some respects at least the gulf is not greater between this our planet and Sirius than between the astronomer surveying the heavens and that “immediate progenitor.” If we are imprisoned on earth by the ties of our animal nature, we have a certain kinship with the remote creations, born of similar elements under dissimilar conditions, and thus our hopes of a future life have their foundation and origin in fact. Our instincts have not deceived us. It is by virtue of this preternatural endowment that we venture to accept

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

the assurance that "God created man in His own image." In nothing is man's correspondence with the Creator more marked than in thus seeking to reach the infinite beyond, to study the laws of the vast universe, to weigh and measure and analyze. Comparing man with other organisms, his endowment is in some respects more than natural, more even than preternatural; it is supernatural. The spirit of man appears for the time being released from its earthly ties as he ignores temporarily his animal inheritance to enjoy for a brief moment his celestial endowment, his kinship with the universe. Swifter than the astounding motions which he critically analyzes, swifter than light is his thought. The heat, one breath of which would instantly destroy him, he measures and compares. The speed which would wreck this fragment of earth he gauges, and the mystery of mysteries he ponders unceasingly.

No greater gift can be bestowed upon man than the leisure to devote himself to the pursuit of knowledge. No occupation is so ennobling or so richly rewarded. Of all the sciences, astronomy must be considered the grandest—the most awe-inspiring. Man is led by the contemplation of the stupendous character of the universe to a realization at once of his insignificance and of what we have termed his preternatural endowment, which enables him to survey and study the majestic works of the Creator and supplement his imperfect senses by devices fruit of his achievement in other departments of science. "The undevout astrono-

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

mer is mad," and mad is the man who, having once tasted the fruits of knowledge, is not inspired to hope and believe that there may be, must be, in store for him a future life, in which the astounding mysteries of the universe may be revealed in gradual progression to higher and ever higher aspiration; his spiritual nature permanently released from the material ties of earth, endowed with eternal life to enjoy the imperishable fruits of perfect knowledge.

CHAPTER VII

THE MYSTERY OF GOOD AND EVIL

OUR fundamental conception of the Creator is a spirit all-wise, omnipresent, and omnipotent. It is not reconcilable with the conception of Satan, found in the New-Testament and Christian theology as "the unfailing and formidable adversary of God and man, the supreme spirit or prince of a kingdom of evil." It is not conceivable that omnipotence would permit the existence of a kingdom of evil, or of a rebellious spirit such as caused Luther the persistent consciousness of contact and opposition in bed, in his cell, or even at his worship. Nevertheless, we have an indelible impression of a great malignant power seeking always to tempt and take advantage of man's animal inheritance, or, as the theologians term it, his "original sin." Speaking with profoundest reverence, the mission of Christ, necessary to our salvation, his passion and sacrifice, add still further mystery to the subject. The conception that there is no evidence of design on earth, as man understands design, that the decree of the Creator was all-sufficient, the evolution of nature being tentative and self-regulating, until man in his ascent from the animal reached a certain degree

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

of affinity with the divine spirit, is of importance in studying this mystery.

Our descent or ascent from the animal, now an incontrovertible and acknowledged fact, is sufficient explanation of the origin of good and evil in mankind. The progression of organic nature from the lowest to higher and ever higher forms, from the monad to man, from mere consciousness to intelligence, and from intelligence to a capacity for spiritual communion, is irrefragable proof of benign power and purpose. Our animal appetites and passions, conflicting with our intellectual and spiritual aspirations, we cannot conquer without aid. In the figurative language of theology: "Evil was in conflict with Jehovah to prevent the redemption of man, and to 'the divine man' was confided the salvation of mankind."

Entire disbelief in God, "atheism," seems incredible. If a supreme Intelligence be not author of the evolution, we behold then what we term "nature" is evolving intelligence. There is absolutely no escape from the alternative. A supreme Intelligence must have decreed the evolution of matter or matter evolves Intelligence. What avails it to deny a supreme Intelligence and assume the supremacy of a "blind force," giving birth to intelligence—to progressive degrees of intelligence, as we behold even on this fragment?

If we concede that nature, the universe, is in labor with Intelligence, she must have been giving birth to high and ever higher forms during countless æons, and not one supreme Intelligence only has been evolved, but myriads of every degree.

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

We behold nature's fecundity on earth, and we have superabundant evidence of her activity in so much of the universe as our imperfect senses supplemented by art enable us to behold and measurably analyze. No "blind force" can possibly give birth to intelligence; that is simply inconceivable. Still less is it possible to conceive a systematic and progressive evolution as the product. We behold intelligence as the result of evolution on earth, but it has been a manifestly preordained development. Man finds it impossible to more than temporarily divert the evolution of nature because a greater Intelligence, whose purpose was preconceived, does not permit. The variations which man has obtained revert, as we have seen. Nature returns to the status when interrupted, and resumes her progressive and tentative evolution as soon as man withdraws his interference. We must therefore assume that the existence of brutal and ferocious carnivoræ in the evolution of our planet was preordained or at least permitted. The fact appears to bear some relation to the more or less vague assertions of the Hebrew and other chronicles relative to the existence of a spirit of evil in supernature. Evil, as we know it on earth, is the passion and cruelty of the baser animal, directed by the intelligence of the creature called man, the immediate descendant. It is only necessary to look into the eye of a rattlesnake to realize in its expression of deadly malignity, an ineffaceable conception of a relentless and malevolent spirit, as in the eye of the Cervidæ, on the other hand, we behold all that is benignant and

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

beautiful. It is indeed difficult thereafter to discredit the existence of elemental antagonistic forces even in supernature.

We ought to be prepared to expect vagueness, crudeness, and uncertainty relative to traditions from all sources, sacred or profane. Greater or less obscurity does not disprove inspiration. If it be a fact that the original decree of the Creator has been all-sufficient in the material development of this planet, then inspiration has been and is subject to physical obstacles occasioned by man's inferior nature. Are we not already seeking to communicate with our sister planet Mars, supposed to be in a more advanced stage of evolution? It does not require great imagination to conceive the difficulties we must experience if successful—difficulties not alone consequent upon the superiority of the intelligences assumed to exist in Mars, but upon our inferiority, the impossibility of receptivity superior to our elementary spiritual development.

We know that the luminiferous ether can convey a message because it conveys light, heat, and electricity, all of which we already utilize to our celestial as to our terrestrial service. Assuming inspired communication to have been an unquestioned fact, more or less obscured because of the imperfect faculties of the original recipients, it would reach us, as all records reach us, inexact, defaced by time, corrupted or misinterpreted by repeated transmission.

As man was not capable of realizing the affinity

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

of our planet with the elements of supermundane nature until he had proved the homogeneous character of the universe, and had mastered at least the elementary knowledge of physics necessary to that conception, so man was not capable of receiving spiritual communication or inspiration until his soul was sufficiently developed to receive spiritual impressions. His receptive faculties are still imperfect as his understanding is still vague; but the vital spark has been received and is kindling within him. The superhumanity of man, if we may use the term, is a profound mystery—still more mysterious is the element of humanity in the divine; but the knowledge which has come to us so recently of our physical kinship with the celestial universe sheds a refulgent light which is guiding us as we grope out of the darkness toward its source.

Thus considered, the nature of good and evil appears no longer so mysterious. Evil is our animal inheritance—good our spiritual inspiration and aspiration. There is an incessant struggle between them in which we cannot conquer without the aid which we have received and still solicit. Why should man doubt that he is so aided while receiving constantly light and life from the celestial universe?

CHAPTER VIII

THE LAW OF SUFFERING

THE greatest stumbling-block in the way of belief in an intelligent and beneficent direction of our destiny is the apparent cruelty of nature's methods. We see the strong preying upon the weak, the ferocious slaying and devouring the timid and inoffensive. The student of nature becomes conscious of what appears to be wanton and inexplicable cruelty. Some of the devices of certain insects to perpetuate their kind in the still living bodies of their victims man can only characterize as devilish. On the earth, in the ocean and air, nearly every living thing preys upon some smaller or weaker creature.

Man, himself one of the most destructive of the Carnivoræ, is victim to some of the least formidable but most dangerous of organisms. Certain invisible microbes are not less pernicious to life than the ferocious beasts of prey which he has learned to conquer and defy. The fecundity of nature is so great there is not place for all. The stronger, the swifter, the wiser, the more cunning, or perhaps the more insignificant, survive. The organisms, strong or weak, great or small, most in harmony with their environment, either by natural endowment or by self-adaptation, survive. Only a

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

fraction of the organisms to which nature gives birth reach maturity; only a certain proportion of the mature complete the full cycle of life accorded the race.

This outcome of the struggle for existence philosophers have termed "the survival of the fittest"—not necessarily the strongest. Some find refuge in speed of flight, some possess the faculty of assimilating themselves to their inanimate surroundings and thus escape detection, some put on armor of proof. Nothing is more interesting than the devices adopted to escape pursuit. Nevertheless a certain proportion of all organisms fall victims. The more intelligent, being most constantly on guard to protect themselves and their inexperienced offspring, succeed the best in propagating and protecting their kind.

Considered superficially, the law of incessant strife would seem to indicate the prevalence in nature of the supremacy of brute force; in fact, we behold the survival of an infinite variety of organisms of all conditions of strength and weakness. The utmost intelligence of which these creatures are capable being exercised in the struggle for existence, the more superior of their kind are survivors, the least alert, the least intelligent falling victims, either in their own person or in that of their offspring.

This leads us to the conviction that nature is not a blind force, cruel and purposeless, her aim being the elimination of the unfit and the survival of the types and individuals most worthy of survival. Man, himself the chief survivor, is not the

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

strongest or the swiftest—perhaps not the most cunning. His progeny is the most helpless during the earlier years of life. The struggle of prehistoric man, by nature defenceless and weaponless, with the monster Carnivoræ by which he was surrounded must indeed have been fierce and terrible; but the outcome is as we behold—the dominion of intelligence as superior to brute force. That intelligence could not have been developed except under conditions calling for the utmost energy, activity, and skill as a condition of survival. The spear, the bow and arrow, and the stone axe were man's earlier weapons. These were replaced by copper, iron, steel, and gunpowder. In this age it would appear that the weapon of Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton's "coming man" is destined shortly to supersede all—a light slender rod controlling the deadly electric current.

Thus considered, the law of suffering is evidently purposeful. It can scarcely be characterized a cruel law since the elimination of the weak is necessary to improvement. Nature is progressive—not with apparent design, but struggling slowly, groping doubtfully through countless obstacles toward a predestined, preordained goal, of which at length we can occasionally obtain a glimpse more or less distinct through the veil which surrounds our ultimate destiny and the final purpose of creation.

The law of suffering is enhanced because of man's superior intelligence. He suffers not only in the universal struggle for existence, but in the equally fierce struggle for race supremacy. The

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

conditions of survival are knowledge and effort. Physically he is the most helpless of creatures. He enters the world with a pitiful cry, betraying his forlorn condition. For years he is liable to fall a ready prey to the least strong and daring of the Carnivoræ. His infancy is menaced by innumerable disorders. His youth must be spent in long and laborious preparation and competition to fit him to succeed in the great battle of life. The gardens and strategic spots of the world can be held only by a race advanced in knowledge and organization. It is still the rule of the fittest—that is, of the best prepared, the most capable—and man must suffer to be strong.

Disease, pestilence, the plague, deadly fevers, war, and famine, all threaten his extermination. Knowledge alone is his safeguard. It occasionally happens that the race is exterminated throughout entire districts. All these foes he must learn to conquer. Suffering may be termed a cruel law, but it is a law—a condition of progress, of development. For the sufferers there is compensation, if only in release from suffering; but there may be compensation entirely unknown to us. The shroud of death which releases may be only the veil which it is decreed shall not be prematurely withdrawn, lest the radiance blind alike the weak and the strong, and we fly as insects to the light.

But what if there be a dispensation on this our earth as the final fruit of all suffering, in which the strong shall protect the weak, the learned the ignorant, the rich the poor? Not yet—not yet;

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

but assuredly the seed has been sown, its first fruits harvested: a scanty and imperfect harvest it is true ; but we can already behold the promise of future abundance and a glorious provision for all, when the faint and weary shall not only be provided for, but be the first chosen.

The law of suffering is indissolubly connected with the mystery of good and evil. The existence of evil implies, necessitates suffering, as the existence of good assures and develops happiness. The expectation that good will be rewarded and evil punished, as our nature is constituted, is an inevitable corollary.

Man having reached the culmination of his physical development, the law of suffering becomes one of the birth pangs of his spiritual life. Instinctively conscious of a divine intelligence, and of the element of affinity in his own nature, he seeks communion in affliction and gathers strength and fortitude to endure. With renewed hope and trust he returns to the unceasing conflict inspired by the conviction that he can rise superior to his earthly environment and become worthy of spiritual succession upon release from the material of his animal inheritance.

CHAPTER IX

THE NEW DISPENSATION

PHYSIOLOGISTS have crowned man king of the Vertebrata. The perfection of the erect form, of the brain development, and of the cultivated hand has been reached. No art or science can suggest physical amendment to nature's masterpiece. The gradual progression of forms through countless ages terminates in man, and man himself has reached his meridian. Has evolution thus ceased? By no means. We have entered upon a new dispensation. The law of force is not to prevail. A new law is being unfolded for our guidance—a law mightier than the law of force, a law destined, we believe, to supplant even the law of suffering—the law of *love*.

The helplessness of the offspring of man during so many long years, helplessness which increases greatly during the progress of civilization, the constant necessity of self-sacrifice and devotion on the part of parents and older children has refined and ennobled man until he is learning that it is more blessed to give than to receive—more blessed to yield than to demand. The little helpless infant is the autocrat who first taught us to yield—how much more grateful it is to love, to cherish, to serve, to deny one's self, than to grasp and op-

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

press. Behold the parents or a group of young children cooing around the infant's cradle! Behold in their faces the sanctification of love which seeks no recompense greater than a smile from the rosebud mouth or a kiss of the dimpled hand, and we are in presence of the origin and foundation of the law of the new dispensation. There is no bliss on earth surpassing that of the mother ministering to the wants of her children. She knows no motive but love; love is her inspiration—love the only reward she seeks.

The love of the father, less supremely tender, has less of intensity and sublimity, perhaps, but little less of unselfish sacrifice. Who has not seen him walking with his young daughter, devoting to her every hour he can spare from the strife of life which he wages in her behalf? What reward does he ask for all his efforts and sacrifice but love? After years of devotion he shall yield her to another willingly—more than willingly, that she may fulfil her destiny and know a love of greater passion and intensity. He may see her thereafter only at rare intervals, or, perhaps, never!

Do we not know those parents are fully repaid? Behold their beatitude! They may retire to live alone, their future joy in the happiness and prosperity of the beloved for whom they labored so long with love so supreme.

Who has not seen the mother and father who, having lost an only child, have lost all? They can no longer pour their treasures of love at his feet—treasures material or impalpable; but thereafter every gracious deed of benefaction is dedicated

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

to his name and sanctified to his memory. No, love shall not, does not, end at home, the hundreds and thousand of blessed and noble charities of the world bear witness; man is learning to love and cherish the weak, the feeble, the helpless, the afflicted, the despondent. It is enough that strength fails; that the limbs totter; that the burden is too heavy to be borne. Blessed, forever blessed, be the hands that circle the yielding form, the kind eyes that reassure the doubting, sorrowful, upturned gaze, that inspired and inspiring by love bring rest and peace and hope to the weary and worn. Hail you disciples of the new dispensation! Hail you unconquered that seek to rally and support and reanimate the disheartened! Hail you salvationists of all lands and creeds! What if the seeds bear not fruit to the sight! They have fallen in stony places; lo! one grain seized by the fleeting winds, borne far, far beyond your vision, has fructified a hundred, a thousandfold. Your eyes behold it not, shall never behold its germination, its florescence, or its fructification. You did believe it lost; but it has clothed the very desert with undying verdure!

Under the new dispensation love is teaching us to love. The mother loving the child at her breast learns to love the child at the breast of another—learns to love that mother and all mothers. The father laboring and struggling to feed and clothe and educate his own is learning sympathy with the efforts of all struggling, striving, self-sacrificing humanity.

A stranger wearing darkened glasses passed

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

through a little flock of deaf and dumb children, who surrounded him, touching their eyes and placing their hands upon their hearts in token of deepest sympathy with the affliction under which they supposed him to be suffering. Poor little darlings, their afflictions had made them the wards of humanity. The love of the world we so often call cold and hard had gone out to them, and they touched their gentle bosoms in sympathy with the afflicted stranger.

As amid the toil and stress of the unceasing strife of life our hopes and aspirations point faithfully heavenward, so he who has eyes to see may pause a few seconds, and even amid the hurrying throng he shall hear some word, behold some sign or deed to reassure his soul, to strengthen his faith and trust. The sacred spark, latent, he shall see if only for a moment kindled—the sacred spark which proclaims our kinship with the divine.

The law of love has birth here in this world of ours, to be perfected here, we trust—to rise to a kingdom. As we cultivate and perfect it, we cultivate and perfect the elements of the divine in humanity—elements which encourage our aspirations and sanctify our faith, that not only man, but mankind, may become worthy of the immortal life to which he so daringly aspires, and to which the progression of nature assuredly indicates his succession.

CHAPTER X

DEATH A TRANSITION ONLY

THE instinct of self-preservation is so strongly implanted in man that he is attached to life, and cherishes it with the greatest care. It is a fact, nevertheless, that nature appears to hold life in light regard. There is nothing of which she is more wasteful. The spawn and the young of fish, for example, are no more considered than the blades of grass. The same is true of all lower forms of life. As we ascend in the scale, nature appears less regardless: the organism acquires some means of self-protection. But the higher organism shows no respect for the life of the lower; on the contrary, the stronger not only destroy to satisfy hunger, but with a certain wantonness of destruction, as when the wolf enters a sheepfold and ravages amid the entire flock. This is measurably true also of man. It is man's life only he considers precious. He is regardless of the life of all beneath him, even of his nearest of kin in the animal world. He is as wantonly destructive of life as the worst of the Carnivoræ.

We are not supremely regardful even of the life of man. We throw it away upon the battlefield, or sacrifice it more or less readily in behalf of a noble cause. This is unpremeditated, instinctive

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

evidence that there is a principle in nature superior to life. Nature, the creature, and the Creator evidently thus bear testimony. The purpose, the goal, is beyond life as we know life. The sublime fact of the surrender of life to principle assures it: or does nature for the first time bear false witness? Do we behold the unfledged pinion, and is there to be no flight?

If we can assure ourselves of purpose in the creation and development of man, we can assure ourselves of purpose in his death. Man approaches death as the solution of a mystery. That the long procession of high and ever higher forms is proof of intelligent purpose it is impossible to deny, and it is equally impossible to deny the significance of death. So long as evolution is in alliance with the material, death is necessary to make room for the succession. The mere material is used over and over again: death is necessary to disassociate it. Death is a process, as the evaporation of water or the precipitation of a crystal. Something new is generated by the liberation and reconstruction of matter. The mere material is re-resolved. In the material world death, as man conceives death, has no place. "The stillness of death," the cessation of all activity, is apparent only. The material particles are as active as during what we term life. The activities of disintegration and distribution replace those of aggregation and selection. Nature performs many such processes, but never without a purpose and a result. When two parts of hydrogen unite with one of oxygen, the hydrogen and oxygen disappear; but there is

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

a new birth—water. What we term natural death is a decay of the material. Even in health the material is in constant process of decay and renewal. Sudden death is an arrest of the circulation of the blood, which puts an end to the exchange of matter and energy by the organism. The entire organism was originally from a single cell, the *ovum*. The process of assimilation and rejection arrested, life, as we know it, ceases. That there is something superior to the material in human life we know. In illness what we term the “mind” can aid or retard recovery. Spiritual consciousness does not necessarily decay with the material. Frequently it kindles at the very moment of dis severance to survey with studious attention the approach of death, even to the very verge of dissolution.

We know that matter is indestructible. We can cause it to disappear so that our senses can detect no evidence of its presence; but it has only assumed another form—not a grain has been destroyed. Man can destroy the life we so highly prize by a breath; but all his art and effort fail to cause one grain of matter to cease to exist. If the material be indestructible, is it not reasonable to assume that the spirit which animates matter is imperishable? It is certain that in the material world there is no dissolution which is not followed by a new creation. The phenomena of dissolution simply precede the phenomenon of rebirth.

Our senses—so affected by the phenomena which attend the dissolution of life—are absolutely unreliable as evidence. The organism, as

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

we knew it, dies and disappears. What becomes of the spirit which so recently animated the clay? That we cannot behold or detect any evidence of its presence is no greater proof that it has ceased to exist than the disappearance of water by evaporation is proof that the elements of which water is composed have ceased to exist.

Nature, which ordinarily proceeds so cautiously, so tentatively, step by step, sometimes even rejecting the result of her own evolution, has also her cataclysmic periods when she reaches the culmination of her efforts in a given direction, and is about to renew her labors on a superior plane. Such a cataclysm attended the birth of inorganic matter from the inchoate planet; another at the birth of organic life. If, as we cannot doubt, man is the culmination of the organic series, a similar cataclysm precedes his transition to immortal life. The evolution of the material fulfilled, is inaugurated the evolution of the spiritual.

Why should evolution cease at man? We cannot imagine the cessation of evolution any more than we can imagine a limit to time or space. Evolution implies, proves purpose. Man is the heir to spiritual life; he only is endowed with spiritual instincts and aspirations. He alone probes unceasingly the mystery of creation. Clothed with the encumbrance of his descent, he still aspires to a life after death which shall satisfy his spiritual nature. He seeks light unceasingly during life, and awaits the approach of death in doubt, or hope and trust, according to the measure

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

of spiritual communion he has sought during his material existence.

Assuredly man's instincts do not deceive him. The spirit which seeks and measurably receives celestial communion while still in this imperfect human frame, disentangled from the material by death, shall transport the germ, the ovum, of spiritual rebirth to another sphere—to a nobler, a celestial evolution.

CHAPTER XI

THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

IT is nineteen hundred years since the doctrine of the new dispensation was formally announced. Man was at the maturity of his physical evolution. The new doctrine was to aid his spiritual development, in danger of suffocation by his animal nature and passions. It was the age of the later Roman Cæsars, when humanity had reached a condition of almost inconceivable abasement. In the words of Tacitus: "It was rich in disasters, terrible in battles, rent by seditions, savage even in peace." The most awful tragedies of impurity and bloodshed were enacted even in open day. There was no protection for virtue, beauty, or innocence from the lust or caprice of the mighty. Crimes unnamable, despotism beyond credence, pollution, corruption, and infamy pervaded society from the throne to the hovel. Such was "the world," such the stage on which appeared the august figure of Christ to teach the doctrines of peace, purity, and charity, of self-denial, mercy, *love*, and the forgiveness of enemies.

The rumors and prophecies current among the Jewish people at the period led them to anticipate the advent of a champion who should release "the chosen people" from subjection and restore their

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

ancient grandeur—a champion militant and glorious. When the gentle Nazarene presented himself, preaching principles utterly subversive of all their hopes and expectations, it brought extremest ridicule upon them, wounded their pride, and exasperated them beyond endurance.

The Roman dominion represented brute force; might was right. Their enemies were forced to pass beneath the yoke, and were dragged in triumph at their chariot wheels. The conqueror was crowned with laurel and ultimately deified. No mercy was shown, none expected. Entire nations were reduced to slavery. Neither master nor slave questioned the decree. It was not the slavery of an inferior race, but the slavery of equals accepted as a consequence of defeat in battle. The only avenue of escape was to fall upon the sword. Cicero when overtaken in his litter by the centurions in pursuit thrust his head through the curtains awaiting the blow which instantly fell.

It was inevitable that the Jews should believe naught could subvert this rule of the sword but a sword still stronger and keener, wielded by a militant King, royal in presence, masterful in command, resplendent in victory. It is easy to comprehend how futile must have been the result even had all their visions of power and splendor been realized or exceeded. The world had suffered enough from the rule of the sword, from war and victory, so called.

Christ preached no subversion of authority, no sentiments of revolution or rebellion, no attack

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

upon place or power. To all appearance the superstructure of society, as it existed, remained unmenaced; but in reality the new doctrines undermined its very foundation; it was shaken until not one stone remained upon another, to be reconstructed finally upon the rock of ages. He who never uttered a word of revolt or resistance shattered the civilization of the sword to fragments and insisted that not one stone of the old should be used with which to rebuild. How paltry would have been the triumph of a Jewish warrior-king as compared to a victory so complete, so enduring, so subversive! The kingdom of Christ was not to be of the world only. Every stone not rejected was divine. The edifice he designed was of law, of liberty, of love. There was, there is, no haste. Time matters not in building for eternity. Not in a day or a generation or in centuries could the pollution, the animality of the ancient world be entirely eradicated. Nothing that is for permanence can be built hastily, much less that which is to endure till time shall be no more.

How insignificant to all outward appearance the means to achieve so profound a revolution, or the still greater revolution to come—the full establishment of Christ's kingdom on earth! But who can distrust the future in the light of the past? The Christian doctrine is the foundation of modern civilization. To it we owe all that we have achieved and the faith that the new dispensation shall ultimately bind the entire human race in the bonds of peace and love.

The figure of the Son of Man wandering weary

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

and footsore through Judea preaching and teaching has become so august that the exquisite beauty and reality of his humanity is partially obscured. We veil our eyes from the radiance emanating even from the canvas bearing his image. When we picture the presence to ourselves, he is surrounded by a halo so refulgent that we desist. The very efforts of art, poetry, and worship to illustrate and glorify him render elusive the gentle, enduring figure we would recall. But his humanity should be ever present with us. That humanity is for our guidance—his patience, his prudence, his dignity and endurance, his absence of pretension, his sympathy with the poor and afflicted, his unwillingness to judge harshly, his divine forgiveness, his reverence of woman, his love for children, his obedience to the Father. It is not only Christ's doctrine, but Christ's life that must guide us in our aspirations, our development toward the spiritual. It being possible for us, despite our animal descent, to reach a spiritual life hereafter, his guidance is necessary in order to enable us to reach the goal—his transcendent aid, relieved from the taint of man's inheritance.

The doctrine of Christ, as handed down by his disciples in the New Testament, taught an entirely new principle of ethics to that arrogant, supercilious, corrupt age. To accept it required the subversion of all practice as of all traditions. What greater contrast of doctrine can be conceived than "An eye for an eye" and "Love them that hate you, pray for them that despitefully use you?"

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

And we who are familiar with the new dispensation, we who hear it preached so constantly and eloquently, that strenuous, unselfish humble life is as necessary to our humanity as his doctrine. His example is for our guidance, as for the guidance of the past. It is for all humanity. It is necessary not only to accept the doctrine, but to live the life. We cannot hope to emulate his example, but we have the standard both of theory and of fact. We are not called upon to question the law or to subvert what we condemn. It is not necessary to distribute our riches to the poor unless we would become disciples and follow him in very truth. It does not say that great possessions close the door, but that "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." That is a metaphor, variously interpreted by the commentators. Alas! it is not necessary even in this age to dwell upon the corrupting influence of great wealth—all recognize it. Christ's example is before us. We can and do misinterpret his doctrine, but his life cannot be misunderstood. It exquisitely illustrates his teaching, and they must be taken together.

Not all can enter the kingdom. It has been rendered possible for humanity, for man, to win a spiritual life hereafter; but man must seek to be purified from the dross of his material nature during his life on earth. As he loves his children, his heir, his family, he must learn to love mankind—to give the best he has of wealth, or skill, or knowledge, or power. That is the essence of

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

Christ's doctrine, the motive of his sacrifice, the example of his life, and it is as perfect, as "scientific," as exalted and purposeful. Humanity, society, can be purified and regenerated only from the apex to the base. The wise, the learned, the rich, the prosperous, must use their wisdom, learning, and wealth to help the less fortunate. Christ seeks nothing less than the redemption of mankind. It is in redeeming others that we follow his example and redeem ourselves.

The doctrine of the New Testament, fully accepted, is the charter of man's happiness on earth and of his heirship to immortal life. It is for all men—for mankind. There is no preference to the great, the learned, the "successful." On the contrary, Christ's sympathy is with the poor, the unfortunate, the oppressed—yes, with the sinner! How can man or woman question or reject it? No mother's love and care of a sick child surpasses the love he bears to all. He is the incarnate spirit of love, of mercy, of charity. The virtue of his merest touch was such that it healed the sick and afflicted: his benediction was an assurance of heaven. Faith in him destroys the victory of the grave, the sting of death. His hands are outstretched to sustain and comfort us as we approach the dark gulf through the gathering shadows.

Christ's doctrine is divine by every test and standard. Man cannot add to it or detract from it. So great is its perfection that he alone could illustrate it in his life. It is sanctified by his death. It has not one tenet, but is material to our guidance. No "new religion" can possibly

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

be constructed by man's genius or perversity. It is indestructible, being as necessary alike to our material and spiritual nature as the air we breathe. It is elemental; thus all man's efforts to build anew can result only in dissolution and recrystallization. Any and every "new doctrine," if good, must be of Christ; if bad, of Antichrist.

CHAPTER XII

WAS JESUS CHRIST DIVINE?

WE fail to discover any evidence of direct intervention on the part of the Creator in the evolution of this planet; but it is impossible to deny purpose—the progression of higher and ever higher forms culminating in man. It is not unnatural, therefore, for man to question the existence of “a personal God,” since it is impossible to realize His presence or conjecture His nature. It is equally impossible to comprehend why nature has been left so wide a latitude within certain limits; but we can readily understand that an infinitely higher power is thus made manifest than that of a god called upon to superintend an infinitude of special creations.

The entire effort of nature being dedicated to the creation of the highest type of life possible to existing elements under existing conditions, and some purpose far beyond our present understanding being unquestionably indicated, man turns from his animal to his spiritual endowment, hoping and aspiring to a spiritual evolution corresponding to the evolution accorded the physical. While recognizing our descent or ascent from the animal, we also recognize that we are related, however remotely, to an infinitely higher endowment, which,

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

having no existence in what we term nature, we must look for in supernature, or the divine. Why not? Most certainly this our earth, our system, is a part of the celestial universe. The luminiferous ether connects us with it. We feel the rhythmic beating of its pulse as we feel the beating of our heart. Our physical evolution complete, having already at least the germ of spiritual endowment, we aspire heavenward.

Even while thus daring we believe ourselves to be the lowest form endowed with capacity for spiritual evolution, and in groping from our animal obscurity toward spiritual light, seeking vainly to comprehend eternity, immortality, and God, we are granted an emanation from the divine, sufficiently in accord with the material to hold communication with us and to participate partially in our nature. Whosoever rejects this faith can adduce but one reason: it is without precedent—it is miraculous. Most true, it is not natural, it is supernatural. But man claims to have and has a supernature. That is the culmination of his evolution. He stands on the brink of emergence from this to a higher life.

We cannot expect to behold a spiritual world with our imperfect sight, or to have material consciousness of it with organs attuned to only a fraction of the vibrations of this planet. We cannot even behold the stars of heaven by day. Without the light we are blind: and we are equally blind in its slightest excess. He who deprived of sight has never beheld the astounding, awe-inspiring splendors of the heavens at night can form no

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

adequate conception of their glory; but having faith he accepts the rhapsody of sight without doubt. We who have beheld know it still endures, though obscured by the sun's midday splendor. "If light so much conceals, why may not life?"

We accept too readily the evidence of our imperfect senses. We refuse to believe what we cannot see, or to give credence to what we cannot understand. We enthrone reason a god and worship it, though assuredly no heathen god or idol of savage more often betrayed its worshippers. How could it be otherwise when we reason from faculties so imperfect and incomplete? If so much be obscured by the light of day, and the splendors of the celestial universe be revealed only by darkness, why seek light, the material light of the organs of sight and sense, before yielding belief? If thus unconscious of our material environment, how can we expect to be spiritually conscious? Why seek material evidence of the immaterial? This explains the need, the imperative necessity, of faith and Christ.

When man is called upon to reject the evidence of his senses and believe in spiritual things unseen, in a mystery concerning which he can find no guide, because his spiritual endowment is at best elementary, he rebels and takes refuge in "agnosticism." But is he not wiser who, conscious of imperfect endowment, seeks to nourish the germ of the spiritual; wise the sightless who believe the splendors revealed to others more perfectly, albeit still most incompletely endowed;

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

wise they who yield faith in the heavenly mystery in full assurance of receiving perfect light?

“The fierce light which beats upon a throne” has passed into a proverb; but no light so searching or so prolonged was ever shed as upon the life and teaching of Christ from the day when he first entered upon his public ministry to the present: all the learning of the centuries has been concentrated upon that sad, suffering, momentous career. Hundreds, thousands of men have been educated in order to dedicate their learning and their life to the study of his teaching and the testimony of his disciples. The archives and libraries of the world have been ransacked again and again; languages long obsolete have been restored in order that not a phrase or construction or comparison between the old and the new should be lost. Every village and mountain and cave of the Holy Land has been searched by zealous pilgrims and devoted scholars. Nor have there been wanting doubters and enemies as researchful and eager in the cause of disbelief; for, great as is the hostility of good to evil, the hostility of evil to good exceeds it a hundredfold. As a result, we have the pure, sacred form of the Christ enshrined in our hearts, the one grand, unfaltering, absolutely stainless figure of all the ages—of all records, sacred and profane. As the doctrine of Christ is superior to humanity, so the person of Christ is superhuman or divine.

The religious thought of all ages is filled with the conception of a divine mediator. Man, unable to communicate with supernature, as with the inferior of his own domain, has ever dumbly im-

PROGRESSION TO IMMORTALITY

plored light and guidance, and in response, since he first reached a conception of his relation to the Creator, some spiritual and supernatural intervention appears to have been brooding over nature awaiting the psychologic moment, the kindling of the sacred spark in humanity to unite it with the divine. Rumors of the advent of "a Son of God" have pervaded all the ages, rumors of a "Saviour of mankind" centuries before Christ. That is nature's testimony to man's divine inheritance. As in the long progression of forms of the Vertebrata she proclaimed the approach of man ages before his appearance on earth, so she has long proclaimed, and still proclaims, the advent of spiritual man, man regenerated, man redeemed to inherit eternal life.

THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY
REFERENCE DEPARTMENT

**This book is under no circumstances to be
taken from the Building**

JAN 25 1917		

